



New public management and collaboration in canterbury, New Zealand's freshwater management



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ABSTRACT

Reconciling often-conflicting economic and environmental values, uses, and interests for freshwater is a policy challenge worldwide. Examining the Canterbury region of New Zealand's South Island between 1999 and 2010, this paper focuses on the outcome of neoliberal reforms intended to achieve the political-economic imperative of environmental protection alongside economic prosperity. Linking the literature of multiple clientelism with New Public Management, we use the concepts of 'authority' and 'autonomy' to evaluate the challenges faced by local government to implement its decisions to manage freshwater in this neoliberal context. The case study shows that local government struggled to attain authority and autonomy over freshwater under a New Public Management regime, which has resulted in the degradation of freshwater quality and quantity in the region. The paper concludes that the adoption of collaborative governance in response to the failures of New Public Management has the potential to entrench the problems it seeks to resolve.

1. Introduction

This paper examines freshwater management in New Zealand's South Island region of Canterbury where New Public Management (NPM) has been the dominant governance paradigm for 30 years. After 30 years of dominance environmental governance is shifting towards a "post-NPM" style in New Zealand (Duncan and Chapman, 2010), in part by transitioning towards collaborative governance. This paper investigates one local government's efforts to manage freshwater in a period of transition from NPM to collaborative governance.

Following Paul Culhane (1981) we focus on local government's struggles for authority and autonomy. The NPM and collaboration literatures propose different degrees of authority and autonomy in policy creation. The NPM literature argues that policy is often captured by vested interests, and as such, politicians should retain a high level of autonomy which is exercised through a hierarchical bureaucratic decision-making structure (Boston et al., 1996; Flinders and Buller, 2006). By contrast, the collaboration literature argues that public, private, and community actors ought to be engaged within the decision-making process, and that neither actor ought to dominate the others (Emerson et al., 2012; Purdy, 2012; Weber, 2003).

Given this, we ask: 1) how did the Environment Canterbury Regional Council (ECRC) try to attain authority and autonomy over freshwater from 1999 to 2010; 2) did these attempts succeed and; 3) what do the attempts and their degrees of success reveal about NPM,

post-NPM collaborative governance, and freshwater management in New Zealand? The paper proceeds as follows: Part 2 describes the methods. Part 3 constructs a conceptual framework through which to evaluate the empirical resources we draw on. Part 4 presents the case study. Part 5 links the theory with the case study results and discusses. Part 6 concludes (Table 1).

2. Methods

This paper employs a qualitative case study examining the ECRC between 1999 and 2010 (Yin, 2013). The first author collected the primary data through semi-structured interviews and the secondary data from an analysis of archives and documents. After a preliminary literature review of secondary resources such as newspapers, magazines, and journals, key stakeholders were identified who contributed to, or were affected by, decisions, processes, and actions in Canterbury's freshwater politics (Freeman, 2010). Twenty-nine stakeholders were interviewed in which, following Gillham (2005), confidentiality and anonymity were offered.

3. Conceptual framework

NPM is a global public management reform project which placed "a new (or renewed) stress on the importance of management...in public service delivery, often linked to doctrines of economic rationalism"

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Table 1
Timeline of key moments in Canterbury's freshwater politics – 1999–2010.

1999	January – Canterbury's water supply at critically low levels as a result of a multi-year drought. December – Plan to dam the Rangitata River revealed.
2000	January – Fish and Game propose WCO for the Rangitata River to prevent damming. March – The Minister for the Environment accepts the WCO application for the Rangitata River. December – Central Plains Irrigation argue that their mid-Canterbury irrigation scheme could create 4000 jobs and inject \$600 million annually into the Canterbury economy.
2001	February – ECRC Councillor, Diana Shand, argues that WCO's could be placed on multiple Canterbury rivers due to the ECRC's failure to implement a regional plan. March – Fish and Game accuse the Minister for Agriculture of unfairly influencing the Rangitata WCO process. ECRC approve the Barhill Chertsey irrigation scheme which would provide water to 40,000 ha of land. April – Canterbury enters a period of drought. July – Fish and Game begin 'dirty dairying' advertisement campaign. October – Rangitata WCO Tribunal hearing begins.
2002	February – Christchurch City Councillors split regarding their support for the proposed Central Plains irrigation scheme. Meridian Energy releases plan to dam the Waitaki River known as <i>Project Aqua</i> . August – Christchurch City Council give Central Plains Water \$625,000. October – The Minister for the Environment approves WCO for the Rangitata River. November – The Minister for the Environment approves WCO for Te Waihora Lake Ellesmere. ECRC formally decide to appeal the WCO for the Rangitata River at the Environment Court.
2003	March – ECRC begin hearings on <i>Project Aqua</i> . May – Fonterra announce the <i>Clean Streams Accord</i> , a voluntary accord which suggest ways dairy farmers can limit their environmental impact. October – Environment Court hearing into the Rangitata WCO commences.
2004	February – Lynton Dairy submits application to abstract groundwater. March – Meridian Energy abandon <i>Project Aqua</i> . May – ECRC release groundwater zoning plans. July – ECRC reject Lynton Dairy's groundwater consent application. Lynton Dairy decide to appeal decision at the Environment Court. August – Environment Court recommend WCO for the Rangitata River.
2005	February – Construction of the Benmore Irrigation Scheme in the Mackenzie Country begins. August – Rivers and groundwater plummet to record levels due to lack of rain over winter. Lynton Dairy Environment Court appeal begins. During the Court hearings, Judge Jeff Smith declares Te Waihora Lake Ellesmere "technically dead" and in "serious ecological condition". September – Environment Court overrule ECRC's decision regarding Lynton Dairy, approving the consent with conditions for ten years. November – ECRC release report into Canterbury's groundwater which suggest aquifer levels are at historic lows.
2006	February – Drought conditions persist in Canterbury. April – Hurunui District Council moot plan to dam the south-branch of the Hurunui River. The Hunter-Down Irrigation Scheme is also proposed for the first time. June – Central Plains Water request \$1.1 million loan from the Selwyn District Council towards feasibility work. July – ECRC announce Restorative Programme for Lowland Streams in which they review 600 groundwater consents.
2007	March – Independent commissioners overturn ECRC's decision to reject 69 groundwater consents in the Rakaia-Selwyn groundwater zone. June – Christchurch City Council approve a third-party \$350 million loan to the Central Plains Water Scheme. October – ECRC election results in the appointment of new pro-environment councillors.
2008	September – Record winter rainfall refills lakes and groundwater. November – The National party form a new minority government following central government elections. December – <i>Consumer Magazine</i> reports that fifteen Canterbury waterways are unsuitable for swimming due to faecal contamination.
2009	January – ECRC release the Canterbury Regional Environment Report which argues that water is over-abstracted in some catchments. March – Rumours spread of conflicts of interest within the ECRC council. May – The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry give funding to the Hurunui Water Project and four other South Island irrigation schemes. June – ECRC demand water metering in groundwater 'red zones'. The new National-led government outline support for water-storage in Canterbury. September – The Canterbury Water Management Strategy is published. ECRC chairman Kerry Burke is replaced. Four councillors receive letters from the Auditor-General stating they are being investigated for conflicts of interest in setting water charges. Canterbury's Mayors send letter to the Local Government Minister outlining their concerns with the ECRC's performance. October – Review of ECRC ordered by the Local Government and Environment Ministers. The review is led by former Parliamentarian Wyatt Creech. December – Auditor-General clears ECRC councillors of conflict of interest charges.
2010	February – Rumours emerge of a new Canterbury Water Authority to replace the ECRC. March – Central government replace elected ECRC councillors with commissioners given the recommendations of the Creech Report. April – Commissioners given new powers to manage Canterbury's freshwater through the Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Act. The Act also suspended elections due to take place in 2010. June – Central Government moot funding Central Plains Water Scheme. September – A large earthquake strikes mid-Canterbury damaging local irrigation systems and pipes.

(Hood, 2001; p. 12553). NPM shifted the emphasis of public management from "process accountability towards accountability for results" (Bach & Bordogna, 2011; p. 2284). Accountability for results is ensured by establishing goals and specifying outputs to meet these goals. This process is strengthened by testing "with well-defined output performance indicators" to determine whether the strategy taken was successful or not (Klijn, 2012; p. 205).

Scholars argue that the NPM reform agenda was influenced by economic-based theories of politics as well as private sector managerial practices (Aucoin, 1990; Boston et al., 1996). One of these economic-based theories of politics is Public Choice Theory. Public Choice Theory assumes that politicians, bureaucrats, and voters are all self-interested, and given this assumption, uses tools of analysis derived from economics to understand "the traditional problems of political science" (Tullock, 2008). NPM reformers also advocated for the adoption of

private sector managerial practices in the public sector. As a result, NPM reforms introduced short-term contracts with tightly specified details (Put and Bouckaert, 2011), performance linked pay, and the development of strategic and corporate plans (Hood, 1995; p. 97) into the public sector.

NPM reforms were introduced to New Zealand after the election of the fourth Labour government in 1984. Scholars praised New Zealand's NPM reforms – initiated between 1984 and 1999 – for their speed, depth, innovation, and sophistication (Hood, 1991; Halligan, 2007; Whitcombe, 2008). A comparative analysis of NPM reforms in thirteen different countries concluded that New Zealand's reforms were "probably the most comprehensive and radical set of public management reforms of any OECD country" (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004, p. 280). NPM reforms are associated with neoliberalism – a theory of political economy that extends markets and economic thought into public and

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