

A multifocal viewpoint in the (re)telling of geomorphic river stories

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- **This abstract is for an Oral presentation**
- **GIS/Remote Sensing of Connectivity and Geomorphic Change, Numerical Models of Morphodynamics and more..**

ABSTRACT

The science of landscapes embraces multiple forms of storytelling based on multiple knowledges, synthesising and expressing insights into forms, processes and rates of landscape evolution derived through field analyses, automated real-time measurement and monitoring, numerical modelling simulations and oral (local and traditional) narratives. Much depends upon the information and data that are used and how they are used. River stories provide an effective mechanism to convey the values and individuality of a river system, in turn informing generative ways to live with and alongside them. While the benefit of story-telling in river 'management' practices is increasingly appreciated by practitioners, a deeper understanding of the perspective through which a river's story is crafted has received limited attention to date.

Such deliberations are especially important when interrogating 'meanings' of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene concept is rife with contestations, the centre of which is the inability to determine which indicators mark its initiation and who are the decision makers in this process. Our analysis of 'river stories as method' interrogates decisions in determining what is said and heard, assessing how this frames landscape understanding. Building upon research in the Waimatā Catchment in the Gisborne district of the East Cape region of New Zealand, we reflect upon the conduct of a river ethnography as part of the *Let the Rivers Speak* team at the University of Auckland. Our work seeks to unravel legacy effects and path dependencies associated with the cleaving of the land into discrete parcels which has disrupted human relations to the river and set in motion a trend of underappreciating connectivity.

The current story of the Waimatā is being told from the perspective of the Anthropos, with capital as its punchline. To disentangle ourselves from the current trajectory, a logical first step would be to listen to the river itself. Let us leave behind the dichotomy of the Anthropocene and gaze through a more-than-human lens to a spectrum of relationships between the human and non-human. In this way we will pivot catchment planning away from geomorphic *restoration* as an anthropocentric construct towards perspectives and framings that protect the things that matter.