Kotahi te Moana, Only One Ocean: Pacific Environmentalism, 1970–1995

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Abstract

"Pacific environmentalism" emerged as a regional ethic connecting Oceania and protecting Pacific peoples' ways of thinking and relating to the natural world. It combined a customary body of knowledge about Pacific ecologies shaped over centuries, with decolonial politics, international science, and regional principles. This thesis considers the place of Pacific environmentalism within Pacific societies and the global environmental movement from 1970–1995. It argues that Pacific people consolidated knowledge about their ocean and islands, specifically that they are interconnected, indigenous, and inviolable, and used this to further self-determination—first as part of a regional movement, and then to make global interventions.

To account for Oceania's vast geographical distance and thematic diversity, while demonstrating the operation of a new environmental regionalism, the thesis is structured episodically around the origins and early work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), an intergovernmental regional organisation. After locating SPREP in Pacific responses to nuclear colonialism, insular laboratories, and preservationist national parks in the mid-1970s, the thesis shows how Pacific scientists, diplomats, community leaders and allies retooled environmental management for regional socio-ecologies. Research conducted regionally maintained Pacific people were an indivisible part of island systems, connected by the ocean into a shared, interdependent environment. Environmental regionalism through SPREP proceeded collectively, effectively mediating technocratic metropolitan influence by emphasising traditional knowledge and community-based management, while counteracting extractive mining, fishing and forestry. Advocacy on the issues of nuclear waste

dumping and climate change turned self-determination into sovereignty, using United Nations forums to challenge neo-colonialism and dependency, establishing Pacific regimes of ocean governance and interregional associations of like-minded island regions.

Pacific environmentalism prevented further ecological imperialism and the region's integration into globalised environmental management; its elaboration contributes an environmental dimension to Pacific histories of political regionalism and a regional critique of "global"-yet-Western histories of environmentalism.

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Glossary of Terms

Gagana Samoa (Samoan Language)

‘Ie toga — Fine mat, a treasured ceremonial gifting item woven from thin strips of pandanus.

Aso o le La’au — Arbor Day.

Ava niu kini — *Derris elliptica*. Used as a strong fish poison.

Fa’amatai — The Samoan chiefly system.

Fa’aSamoa — ‘The Samoan Way’, the customary way of life.

Fale — House, frequently an open-sided dwelling (esp. fale Samoa).

Fale palagi — European-style house.

Fanua — Land.

Fue lautetele — *Merremia peltata*, a vigorous creeping vine.

Fue saina — *Mikania micrantha*, an invasive creeping vine.

Ifilele — *Intsia bijuga*, a tree, a high value timber used for handicrafts.

Kava — *Piper Methysticum*, kava root is powdered to make a bitter sedative ceremonial beverage.

Kugage — Clam.

Malili — *Terminalia richii*, a tree, an all-purpose timber used for building.

Matai — Samoan chief.

Palagi — Non-Samoan, foreigner, or person of European descent.

Palolo — *Palola viridis*, a coral worm, rises annually to spawn at the end of spring.

Poumuli — *Flueggea flexuosa*, a tree, round timber used for housing poles.

Pulenu’u — Village mayor.

Supo — Soup.

Talomua — An agricultural showcase.

Te reo Māori (Māori Language)

Hapu — Sub-tribe, a section of Iwi comprised of several whānau (families).

Iwi — Tribe, extended kinship group, a people.

Kaimoana — Seafood.

Kaitiakitanga — Guardianship, stewardship.

Kāwa — Māori protocol and etiquette (esp. governing behaviour in a meeting house).

Kina — Sea urchin.

Mana — Spiritual power, authority, status, derived from atua (gods) and the esteem of kin.

Manaakitanga — Hospitality, kindness.

Mātauranga Māori — Māori knowledge, understandings.

Motu — Island.

Pākehā — Foreigner, commonly European.

Paua — Abalone, a shellfish.

Tapu — Sacred, restricted, a condition apart from the common or profane.

Te Ika–a–Māui — The North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand

Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Te Tiriti — The Treaty of Waitangi.

Tikanga — Customary procedures, correct protocol.

Ūkaipō — Home, place of origin.

Vosa Vakaviti (Fijian Language)

Balolo — See palolo.

Dalo — Taro.

iTaukei — An Indigenous Fijian.

Lairo — A yellow brown mudcrab.

Maqo — Mango

Salusalu — Garland, a necklace of woven flowers and hibiscus bark.

Tabu — See Tapu.

Tagimoucia — *Medinilla waterhousei*, Fiji's red and white national flower, grows at altitude.

Ura — Prawn.

Vesi — See Ifilele.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADC	Arthur Dahl Collection
ADPC	Arthur Dahl Personal Collection
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANZ	Archives New Zealand
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
ASPEI	Association for South Pacific Environmental Institutions
ATOM	Against Testing on Mururoa Committee
CEMP	Comprehensive Environmental Management Programme
CfE	Commission for the Environment, New Zealand
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, United States Navy
DOC	Department of Conservation, New Zealand
DoD	Department of Defence, United States
EAP	Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, United States Department of State
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
INC	International Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change
INSULA	International Association for the Development of Small Islands
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LDC	Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other matters

MERT	Ministry of External Relations and Trade, New Zealand
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand
MIRAB	Migration, Remittances, Aid, and Bureaucracy
NFIP	Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement
NZ	New Zealand
OCA/PAC	Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre, United Nations Environment Programme
OES	Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, United States Department of State
OPA	Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs, United States Department of State
OTA	Office of Technical Assessments, United States Congress
PSA	Pacific Science Association
PSIDS	Pacific Small Island Developing States
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	South Pacific Commission
SPEC	South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation
SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCLOS III	Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea
USP	University of the South Pacific
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
YWCA	Young Women’s Christian Association

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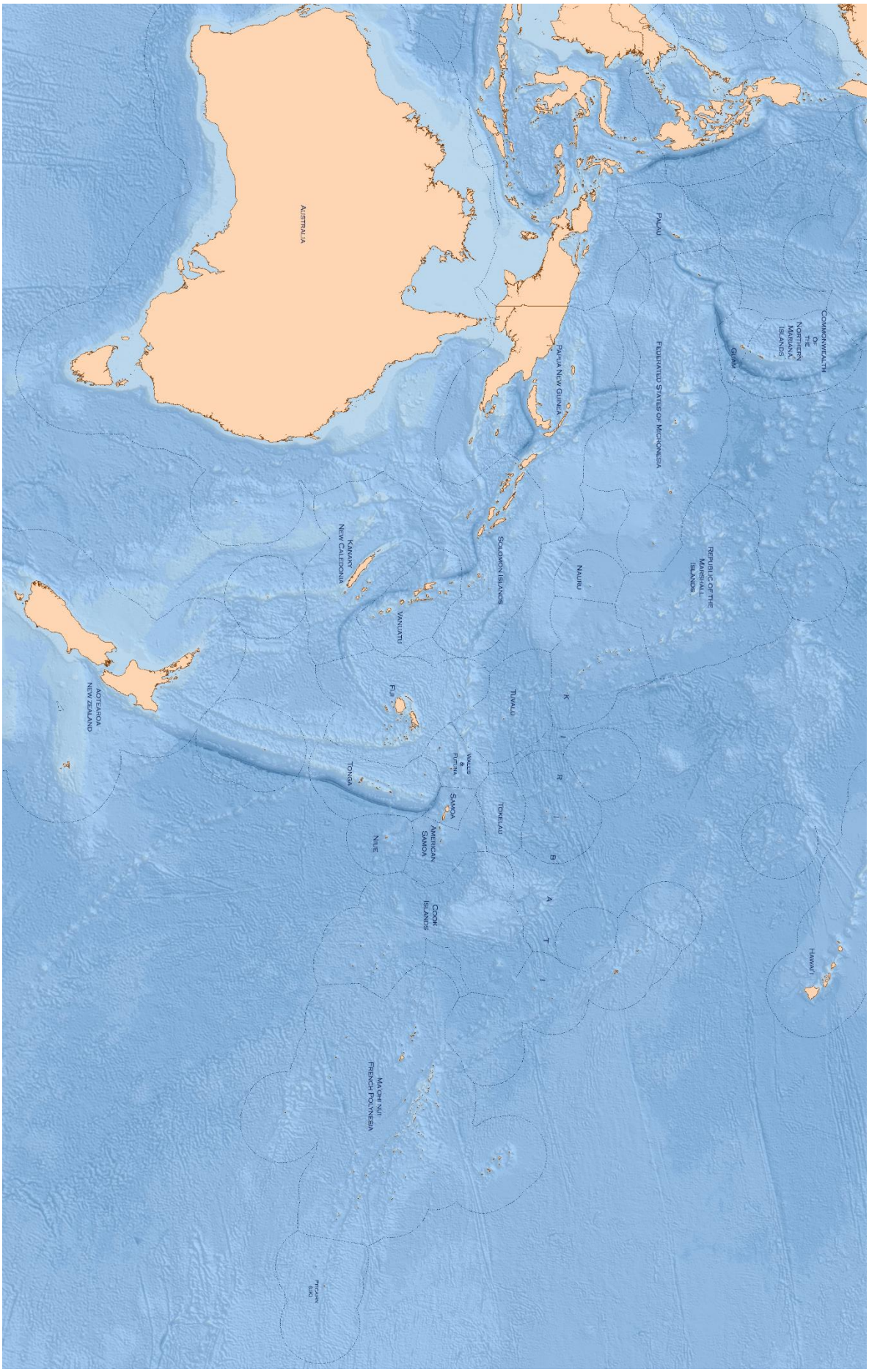


Figure 1– Map showing Pacific countries and territories, exclusive economic zones, ocean features. *Map Generated by ArcGIS.*

Introduction:

Pacific Environmentalism and a Genealogy of Island Life

The Pacific Ocean stretches across a third of the world's surface, its nations constitute a blue continent with territory exceeding 27 million kilometres. The region is flanked by a red continent, Australia, and a partially submerged one, Te Riu a Māui or Zealandia. It is home to hundreds of unique cultures spread across tens of thousands of islands, as striking and varied as the forested highlands of Papua New Guinea or the reef-fringed atolls of Kiribati. But while Oceania is characterised by vast distance and great diversity, connections run deep through an ocean united by historic voyaging, imperial occupation, and an interconnected environment. The belief in a shared identity and common purpose among Pacific people has generated a strong collective voice. Historically, the region has acted together on issues ranging from decolonisation and development to anti-nuclearism and fisheries conservation. Today, talk of geostrategic competition, wealth inequality, and the climate crisis swirl around a changing ocean. This past and present places Oceania at the centre of the future. We cannot understand it without the history of Pacific environmentalism.

This thesis explores the formation of a regional environmental movement in Oceania in the mid to late twentieth century. It asks how Pacific people articulated their own environmentalism, showing how it was incorporated into regional structures and what effect that had on global systems. By combining oral history and archival work undertaken across

Oceania, *Kotahi te Moana* provides an inside look into regional environmental politics and management from 1970–1995 and across a broader decolonial and scientific moment.

Kotahi te Moana aims to make three contributions. First, by historicising Pacific environmental knowledge and its relationships to decolonial politics, international science, and regional structures, it argues that there is a distinctive "Pacific environmentalism". Second, by locating Pacific environmentalism in regional movements and organisations such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), it argues that Pacific environmentalism was a guiding ethic, that it justified and deepened a new form of regionalism that was environmentally and politically engaged. Lastly, it shows how Pacific environmental regionalism enabled Pacific people and organisations to mediate international influence while empowering them to make global interventions.

This introduction works through three sections, first consolidating Pacific environmental knowledge before situating it in key regional and international contexts. It identifies areas where the thesis makes an intervention and establishes its place within broader historiographical debates over Pacific history and Indigenous methodology. The introduction finishes with a series of sub-questions that structure the thesis' approach to establishing and testing Pacific environmentalism historically over the five body chapters of the work.

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Knowing Pacific Environments

> To me Kaho'olawe was like a marae. There were no city distractions. People had to work together to make anything come about. Kaho'olawe had a real sense of sadness… like a quiet tangi. Kaho'olawe is like an old kuia, who seldom sees her grandchildren—she's happy when they are there but lonely when they are away. And where the land is bombed and plundered—a spirit of sadness is conveyed to the rest of the island. It is almost like the old kuia knows that the young people are her hope to keep her alive.
>
> [I] returned the kohatu [stone] that my husband had been given last year when he was present on another access. One of the Hawaiian men, Makanani, later said he was real happy to see

> the kohatu again. For him it meant they had sent the stone forth for support and it had returned bringing a message of solidarity… We then hiked to Mooula. This is the point of the island where the two ocean currents meet. There is where the Hawaiians came to plot their navigation courses through the Pacific with the help of the stars. This was probably the place where the migration to Aotearoa was planned when our ancestors left their homeland of Hawaiki.[1]

Hilda Halkyard-Harawira, recollections from Kaho'olawe, May 1984.

In 1984, Hilda Halkyard-Harawira of the Pacific People's Anti-Nuclear Action Committee visited Kaho'olawe, the sacred voyaging school turned scarred bombing range, to show solidarity with Hawai'ians opposing the Rim of the Pacific military exercises. Her recollections, framed through Māori understandings, reveal that this was more than a protest. It was a voyage, both physical and mental, back across the storied waters of Te Moana nui a Kiwa to an ancient homeland. Kaho'olawe invoked a sense of place that was generational, deeply oceanic, and rooted in a trans-Pacific struggle for justice.

Knowledge about Pacific environments has a deep antiquity born of relationships with ocean and island ecologies, but it is seldom discussed in critical and regional ways, or outside of ethnographic framings. The following section explores Pacific environmental knowledge and its intersections with international science, development, colonisation, and environmental management. It suggests that Pacific environments are commonly understood as simultaneously traditioned, colonised, and adaptive, and that in the mid to late twentieth century a distinctive Pacific environmentalism arose around these ideas. I argue this was a new form of regional ethic and that historical practice must shift to analysing its political life.

[1] 'Kaho'olawe Access', *PCRC steering committee Aotearoa/Australia report*, May 1984, reprinted in *Te Hui Oranga o Te Moananui a Kiwa*, 1985, personal collection of George Armstrong.

Traditioned

'Te Moana nui a Kiwa is not just an ocean', Witi Ihimaera tell us, 'it is a set of relationships, a branching whakapapa involving transactional exchanges between man and sea'.[2] And so, while there are many places to start a discussion of Pacific environmental knowledge, we ought to start at the beginning. As Ihimaera reminds us, this is the original ocean—indigenous and progenitor.

The knowledge that the Pacific Ocean is not an empty expanse but traversed and traditioned has been richly reinscribed. Following Epeli Hau'ofa's visions of a unifying 'Sea of Islands' and internalised 'Ocean in Us', Pacific historians have paid close attention to an Indigenous oceanography.[3] Toeolesulusulu Damon Salesa calls this knowing native seas, ecumenical spaces bound by shared stories and voyaging pasts.[4] Such seas are continually recharted in the present, in negotiation with other designs for the ocean. Paul D'Arcy refers to 'seascapes', 'crowded with navigational markers, symbols of tenure, fishing and surfing sites, and reminders of gods and spirits', that now brush up against exclusive economic zones for example.[5] Elsewhere I have argued that the transnational activism of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement reconstituted native seas into an 'Indigenous Ocean', drawing on ancestral ties but inclusive of Native Americans, Africans, and Filipinos.[6] There is fruitful work in describing the continuing political life and communities such crosscurrents engender.

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[2] Witi Ihimaera, 'Te Moana Nui a Kiwa: The Original Ocean', in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean,* eds., Ryan Tucker Jones and Matt K. Matsuda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 23.
[3] Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994); Epeli Hau'ofa, 'The Ocean in Us', in *Culture and Sustainable Development in the Pacific*, ed., Antony Hooper (Canberra: ANU Press, 2005).
[4] Damon Salesa, 'The Pacific in Indigenous Time', in *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People,* eds., David Armitage and Alison Bashford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[5] Paul D'Arcy, 'Variable Rights and Diminishing Control: The Evolution of Indigenous Maritime Sovereignty in Oceania', in *Water, Sovereignty and Borders in Asia and Oceania*, eds., D. Ghosh, H. Goodall, and S. H. Donald (New York: Routledge, 2009); Paul D'Arcy, *The People of the Sea: Environment, Identity, and History in Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 169.
[6] Marco de Jong, 'Ki te la Pacific! Get out of the Pacific!': Anti-Nuclear and Independence Activism in Pacific New Zealand, 1970–1985' (Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Auckland, 2018).

Similar can be said of islands and their ecologies. Forests still resonate with the footsteps of Samoan pigeon hunters and Solomon Islands medicine gatherers.[7] Nearshore fisheries and the coastal zone have complex patterns that are discernible to, and managed by, Palauan and Marovo master fishers.[8] Tongan agriculturalists speak of the personalities of yams, training some to face the sun and others to hide from cyclones.[9] In all cases, tapu systems, proverbs, and stories hint at a deep ecology and the way that the environment has structured Pacific life.

We must nurture this knowledge, but carefully. There is concern that increasingly plentiful literature on Indigenous and local ecological knowledge is focused only on its relevance for contemporary management and does not historicise by its very nature.[10] Such acts of salvage are not new. Western scholarship has a long track-record of snap-freezing Indigenous cultures at contact or colonisation; it is this moment that is used to define the "traditional". When culture shifts, it is often painted as loss. The result, Vincente Diaz has observed in the context of voyaging practices, are two sets of peoples: those who have retained their culture but live in a "timeless" state with no "history", and those who have a history (of dispossession) but are vestiges without culture.[11] This cuts both ways and has provoked the misleading stereotypes of green noble savages, or the denialism characteristic of "moa

[7] Geoff Park, *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape and Whenua* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2006); Judith Bennett, *Pacific Forest*: *A History of Resource Control and Contest in Solomon Islands, c.1800–1997* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[8] Robert Johannes, *Words of the Lagoon: Fishing and Marine Lore in the Palau District of Micronesia* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1981); Edvard Hviding, *Guardians of Marovo Lagoon: Practice, Place, and Politics in Maritime Melanesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996); Elodie Fache, Simonne Pauwels, and Joeli Veitayaki, 'Introduction: Pacific Islanders as 'custodians of the ocean' facing fisheries challenges' in *Fisheries in the Pacific: The challenges of governance and sustainability*, eds., Elodie Fache and Simonne Pauwels (Marseille: Pacific-credo, 2016).

[9] Futa Helu, 'The Ethnoscience of the Cultivation of the Frail Kahokaho', in 'I F Helu, *Critical Essays: Cultural Perspectives from the South Seas* (Canberra, ANU Press, 1999), 300–308.

[10] Fikret Berkes, Johan Colding, and Carl Folke, 'Rediscovery of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Adaptive Management', *Ecological Applications* 10, no. 5 (2000); Robert E. Johannes, ed., *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: A Collection of Essays* (Gland: IUCN, 1989); G. A. Klee, ed., *World Systems of Traditional Resource Management* (London: Edward Arnold, 1980); Jacques Barrau, *Preliminary list of Economic Plants in New Caledonia* (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1950).

[11] Vicente M. Diaz, 'Voyaging Ancient Futures', lecture delivered at Otago University, Dunedin, New Zealand, December 11, 2012.

hunter" truthers.[12] We ought to remember that Indigenous Pacific cultures were born of many centuries of sustainable resource management, but also that this was often learnt the hard way after early exploitation reached ecological limits.

So, while a form of environmental consciousness is fundamental throughout the Pacific, especially for those working the land or sea, one must be careful not to essentialise it, or evaluate it narrowly through the lens of nature preservation. For most Pacific people, almost always, the everyday concerns of living on islands and maintaining a resource base predominate. That which is so fundamental, is not ecocentric. Bill Clarke, the longstanding University of the South Pacific geographer, followed Asesela Ravuvu in unpacking the Fijian word *vanua*, meaning both people and land and the relationality thereof.[13] Pacific cultures' holistic conception of environments, he argued, lends itself to use but with a 'truer sort of sustainability than one based on the political necessity of continued material expansion'.[14] There exists ongoing reverence not for scenery but 'the arrangement of productive diversity all around: Medicine here, perfume there, fibre in the hibiscus stem, fruit, timber, edible leaves, and so forth'. Clarke differentiates between the principles and the techniques of Indigenous ecological knowledge, advocating the relevance of both but stressing that neither 'offers [a] panacea to the present-day problems [of] inshore marine pollution, disposal of domestic waste, forest loss, soil erosion or endangered species'.[15]

[12] James Belich, 'Race', in *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*, eds., David Armitage and Alison Bashford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). For debates about the figure of the 'ecological Indian' see Eric Alden Smith and Mark H. Wishnie, 'Conservation and Subsistence in Small-scale societies', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (2000); Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: Norton, 1999). The extinction of avifauna like the moa or the Hawai'ian rail is sometimes used in bad faith to discredit claims of contemporary stewardship.

[13] Asesela Ravuvu, *Vaka i Taukei: The Fijian Way of Life* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1983).

[14] William C. Clarke, 'Learning from the Past: Traditional Knowledge and Sustainable Development', *The Contemporary Pacific* 2, no. 2 (1990), 246.

[15] Clarke, 'Learning from the Past', 237.

My suggestion, however, is that in 'learning from the past', Clarke may have missed aspects of it, what his contemporary Graham Baines referred to as the 'all-important social context'.[16] The ongoing exploitation of Indigenous peoples forces an acknowledgement of piracy, colonialism, and extraction, [and] what Baines calls the 'benefits which have accrued for the "First World" through application of "Third World" knowledge without [reciprocal] reward… or even to [Indigenous] detriment'. Researchers who advocate traditional knowledge, Baines argues, 'must inevitably involve [themselves in] actions to protect the rights and dues of those societies who shaped and supplied [it]'. The implication is that 'present-day problems' do not reveal the shortcomings of Indigenous knowledge, so much as its decolonial potential for addressing them.

In sum, Pacific environmental systems are sustainable and durable, but they also need maintenance and critical reinterpretation. The structures that govern relationships between people and place have continued to shift across the Pacific. Whether this was by technology, social development, or outside imposition, scholars ought to show how practices and beliefs shift too—not least because stereotypes are incompatible with effective, Indigenous-led management.

Colonised

Challenges to Pacific lifeways, ostensibly "environmental" or otherwise, often have common causes in colonial and global systems. From the late eighteenth century, the age of European scientific "discovery" pioneered by Magellan, Cook and Roggeveen led to one of imperial rule and resource extraction. "Polynesia", "Melanesia" and "Micronesia" became ways to group the islands by size and race, even as they became British, French, German, Dutch, or American. Whaling and sealing soon made way for harvesting sandalwood,

[16] Graham Baines, 'Conclusion: Issues in the Application of Traditional knowledge to Environmental Science', in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: A Collection of Essays*, ed., Robert E. Johannes (Gland: IUCN, 1989), 67.

gathering sea cucumbers, mining phosphate, and planting coconuts.[17] As habitats for unique flora and fauna, islands inspired early evolutionary and biogeographic breakthroughs on the origin and distribution of species, establishing them as outdoor laboratories.[18] This is a familiar story of ecological and other imperialisms, and island life faced extensive change through warfare, species introductions, blackbirding, new religion, trade, and disease.[19]

In the twentieth century, the multiple reimaginings of empire as development, security, or neoliberal commerce did not spare the Pacific the worst excesses of environmental and social degradation. The extractive industries of mining, forestry, and fishing continued to consume islands, decimate forest biodiversity, and gradually empty the ocean.[20] Pacific Islands' strategic importance brought warfare and military bases, and the contrast of coral and concrete.[21] The testing of hundreds of nuclear weapons by Britain, the United States, and France turned atolls into "nuclear playgrounds", irradiating and displacing Pacific people.[22] Now, an increasingly inhospitable climate compounds ecological crises, with increased storm severity, agricultural inundation, and coral death.[23] These forces bring with them a different kind of knowledge of Pacific environments, that of loss and dislocation.

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[17] O. H. K. Spate, *The Pacific Since Magellan* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1979); Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood: a study of the sandalwood trade in the South-West Pacific 1830–1865* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967); Ryan Tucker Jones, 'Running into Whales: The History of the North Pacific from below the Waves', *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 2 (2013); Sujit Sivasundaram, *Waves Across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

[18] Famously, Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859) and Alfred Russel Wallace, *Island life, or, the Phenomena and Causes of Insular Faunas and Floras: Including a Revision and Attempted Solution of the Problem of Geological Climates* (New York: Harper and Bros, 1881).

[19] Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900, 2nd ed.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); J. R. McNeill, 'Of Rats and Men: A Synoptic Environmental History of the Island Pacific', *Journal of World History* 5, no. 2 (1994).

[20] Katerina Martina Teaiwa, *Consuming Ocean Island: Stories of People and Phosphate from Banaba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

[21] Greg Dvorak, *Coral and Concrete: Remembering Kwajalein Atoll Between Japan, America, and the Marshall Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2020).

[22] Bengt Danielsson and Marie-Thérèse Danielsson *Moruroa, mon amour: the French nuclear tests in the Pacific* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1977); Stewart Firth, *Nuclear Playground* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987); Nic Maclellan, *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-bomb tests* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017).

[23] Patrick D. Nunn, 'Responding to the Challenges of Climate Change in the Pacific Islands: Management and Technological Imperatives', *Climate Research* 40 (2009).

Adaptive

While acknowledging the violence of colonial legacies and the fact that Oceania has changed irrevocably, Pacific people have long interpreted and adapted. If Pacific cultures were survivalist, now they are necessarily activist, scientist, and jurist. Pacific feminists have led work towards critical environmental scholarship in the region. Teresia Teaiwa playfully subverted ecological racism and touristic gaze while discussing the violence of nuclear testing and the erasure of Pacific bodies in Bikini(s).[24] 'Atu Emberson-Bain centred Levuka's fishwives in discussions of Fiji's tuna canning industry and 'de-romanced the stones', showing the gender violence of Bougainville gold, New Caledonian nickel, and Nauruan phosphate mining.[25] Claire Slatter and Vanessa Griffen questioned Pacific bureaucrats' application of Western, technological, and capitalist doctrine to environments. With roots at the University of the South Pacific, and in the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement, meetings of Pacific non-governmental organisations from the 1980s produced landmark collaborations.[26] Interdisciplinarity and creative practice played a prominent role and the poems of Konai Helu-Thaman, Noumea Simi, Momoe Malietoa Von Reiche, Grace Mera Molisa, and Déwé Gorodey capture the spirit of this scholarship. They show how Pacific people can resist hegemony without shying away from identifying Pacific coloniality or complicity in injustice.

While Pacific governments are criticised for carrying through colonial and donor attitudes to resource development, work on the issues of climate change, fisheries management, and biodiversity loss shows instances where they have employed Pacific scientists, lawyers, and

[24] Teresia Teaiwa, 'Bikinis and Other s/Pacific n/Oceans', *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994).
[25] 'Atu Emberson-Bain, ed., *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?: Perspectives of Pacific Island Women* (Suva, Fiji: Marama Publications, 1994).
[26] Notably Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era and the Fiji Association of Women Graduates. See especially, Emberson-Bain, ed., *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth;* Leatuailevao Ruby Va'a and Joan Martin Teaiwa, eds., *Environment and Pacific women: from the globe to the village* (Suva: Fiji Association of Women Graduates, 1988).

diplomats to mobilise and defend Pacific environmental knowledge.[27] Former Marshall Islands President Hilda Heine and daughter Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, herself a prominent climate activist and negotiator, argue that scientific and diplomatic results must recognise cultural understandings. For them as Marshallese this means upholding Indigenous relationships and 'nature's provision of clean water and access to traditional food and herbs within a prescribed, hierarchical, social organization of authority in relation to resources'.[28] Without this focus they argue, legislation or research 'will be purely based upon a Western, scientific view of Indigenous peoples and our traditional knowledge and will not be representative of our story'. This is the extension of thinking and work done locally. Jenny Bryant-Tokalau describes similar in the past work of the South Pacific Action Committee on Human Ecology and the Environment, and Randy Thaman of the network of Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas.[29] Both arose from community and student groups, utilise Pacific understandings, and have been funded by the Fiji Government and through the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Historical work might show further instances where Pacific people have worked between civil society, research institutions, and governments to embed Pacific environmental knowledge.

Pacific Environmentalism

An association with Pacific ecologies over generations has produced distinctive environmental cultures. Between them, Pacific people recognise a common heritage and a shared ethic. The ocean features centrally, binding Pacific people through ancestral ties and shared stories.

[27] George Carter, 'Pacific Island States and Thirty Years of Global Climate Negotiations', in *Coalitions in the Climate Change Negotiations*, eds., Carola Klöck, Paula Castro, Florian Weiler and Lau Øfjord Blaxekjær (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).
[28] Hilda Heine and Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, 'Climate Change, Rising Seas, and Endangered Island Nations', in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, eds., Anne Perez Hattori and Jane Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023). 725–32.
[29] Jenny Bryant-Tokalau, *Indigenous Pacific approaches to climate change: Pacific Island countries* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Jenny Bryant-Tokalau, interview with the author, July 31, 2019; Randy Thaman, interview with the author, November 29, 2019.

Islands are structured and their resources used according to kinship and convention. Self-determined development aims to respect culture and subsistence lifeways. Ecological knowledge is often passed down through work, and that held by elders is especially respected. There is widespread opposition to Western colonial appreciations of islands as remote, exotic, exploitable, and expendable. This does not mean Pacific people are opposed to innovation, other perspectives, or using new means to time-honoured ends. In modernising, Pacific environmental knowledge has not become dispersed. Considering these commonalities and how they permeate political life, my suggestion is that anthropologised fixation on the content of Indigenous environmental knowledge has missed the point. Here, Pacific environmentalism is purpose beyond protocol. As a set of mobilising and legitimating principles, it has given rise to environmental movements that are broader and more engaged than current scholarship allows.

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Pacific Environmental Regionalism

> Successive generations of Pacific Islanders traditionally enjoyed relatively high levels of economic self-reliance in harmony with their environment. At the time of European contact, sustainable or rational land management, including food preservation, was practised, along with systems of food production and consumption based on principles of communalism and reciprocal exchange. In other words, 'sustainable development' flourished prior to colonial conquest, military occupation, the imposition of a cash economy, and the fostering of Western 'development'—i.e., long before the concept was 'invented' by the North and then sold back to the South.[30]

‘Atu Emberson-Bain, in *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?,* 1994.

‘Atu Emberson-Bain sees two versions of sustainable development in the Pacific, the internal and the inculcated. She appeals to Pacific Islanders’ regional sensibility, calling for them to reclaim an original environmentalism. Emberson-Bain’s comments are perceptive but go

[30] Emberson-Bain, ed., *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?*, x.

unheralded in history writing. To date, scholars of Pacific regionalism have focused on development and decolonisation, but it is unclear whether the work of regional organisations and movements reflects a Pacific environmentalism. This is despite high profile issues with an "environmental" dimension, such as nuclear testing or fisheries management, or the existence of bodies such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. This thesis analyses Pacific environmentalism's provenance and representativeness at a regional level, dealing also with the concerns of elitism and neo-colonialism raised by current regional studies and detailed in the following section.

Regionalism: Pacific and Political or Expatriate and Technical

Pacific leaders explain regionalism as the belief that Pacific peoples' shared identity should lead to cooperation amongst them.[31] Over the past 75 years, this ideal has guided intergovernmental regional organisations to seek collective developmental solutions and to mediate colonial and international influence. Alternatively, recent works on transnational solidarities, especially within the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, Black Power, and ecumenical movements, have stressed a parallel grassroots regionalism, both informing and critical of intergovernmental action.[32] Pacific regionalism remains contested because as an identity and political grouping it raises ongoing questions of *what* is 'Pacific', and *how* these people or nations should come together. These questions also apply to the study of environments and provision for their management. Put differently, what environmentalism was represented regionally, and for whom?

[31] John Momis, 'Unity in Diversity', in *The Pacific Way: Social Issues in National Development*, eds., Sione Tupouniua, Ron Crocombe and Claire Slatter (Suva: South Pacific Sciences Association, 1975).
[32] Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific, Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Quito Swan, *Pasifika Black: Oceania, Anti-colonialism, and the African World* (New York: New York University Press, 2022); Christine Weir, 'The Opening of the Coconut Curtain: Pacific Influence on the World Council of Churches through the Campaign for a Nuclear-Free Pacific, 1961 to 2000', *The Journal of Pacific History* 54, no. 1 (2019); Cecilie Rubow and Cliff Bird, 'Eco-Theological Responses to Climate Change in Oceania', *Worldviews* 20, no. 2 (2016).

There has long been an appreciation for a form of 'regional environment' and the ways Pacific ecologies share issues of island circumstance or are bound oceanographically and through the migrations of animals.[33] Institutionally, however, this knowledge is associated with colonial scientific bodies and thus marginal to histories focused on Pacific peoples' desires for self-determination and motivations for pursuing their own regionalism. For instance, the creation of the South Pacific Commission (SPC) by the colonial powers in the aftermath of World War II is discussed for its contradictory purposes of administering "native welfare" trusteeship and facilitating continuing control through its "apolitical" purview.[34] Less attention is paid to its work programme, which by undertaking plant quarantine, pest control (notably of the rhinoceros beetle), and fisheries, established a "regional" approach to resource management. The assumption is that because this work largely involved studies and workshops undertaken by metropolitan experts to promote technocratic efficiency between colonial possessions, it is unrepresentative of any Pacific environmentalism. Gary Kroll has characterised the work of the Pacific Science Board (an American equivalent to the Commission), as a mix of 'big natural history' and 'routine frontier science' that prepared Micronesia for miliary occupation.[35] However, it may be that such programmes inadvertently created a conduit for long-held Pacific relationships with land and water to enter new regional spaces.

The Commission's consultative body, the South Pacific Conference, provided a voice for Pacific leaders into the period of Pacific decolonisation. While the metropolitan-dominated

[33] F.R. Fosberg, ed., *Man's Place in the Island Ecosystem: A Symposium* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1965); A.B. Costin and R.H. Groves, eds., *Nature Conservation in the Pacific: Proceedings of the Symposium on Nature Conservation in the Pacific of the Twelfth Pacific Science Congress held in Canberra, Australia, 18 August to 3 September 1971* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1973); Arthur Lyon Dahl, and Ian Baumgart, 'The State of the Environment in the South Pacific', *Report of the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 8–11 March 1982.* (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1982).
[34] T. R. Smith, *South Pacific Commission: An analysis after twenty-five years* (Wellington, New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1972); Greg Fry, 'The South Pacific 'Experiment': Reflections on the Origins of Regional Identity', *The Journal of Pacific History* 32, no. 2 (1997).
[35] Gary Kroll, 'The Pacific Science Board in Micronesia: Science, Government, and Conservation on the Post-War Pacific Frontier', *Minerva* 41, no. 1 (2003).

Commission focused firmly on cash crops, literature promotion, and nutrition research, Conference participants often took a more holistic view. At the Second Conference in 1953, Prince Tungi (later Tupou IV) spoke about population pressure in his native Tonga and the increasing inability of young Tongans to assume their birth right of 8¼ acres of land. Likewise, the Chamorro representative of the US Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, lgnacio V. Benavente, spoke on 'problems of conserving and improving the resources of the land and water', and 'warned against the standard of living being taken too far out of balance with resources'. [36] A talented botanist, Benavente could 'identify any plant of the Marianas by sight, smell, touch or taste' and had travelled to Honolulu in 1947 to attend an agricultural extension course under the auspices of the Pacific Science Board. A firm believer in Pacific peoples' natural heritage and subsistence foundation, Benavente stressed that islanders 'should be educated to understand that they were farmers and fishermen, and that they could not compete industrially with countries which had complex techniques and skills'.[37]

Dissatisfaction with the Commission's provision for Pacific development and inability to "talk politics" over decolonisation or French nuclear testing led to the South Pacific Forum being created in 1971 by the self-governing nations of Fiji, Western Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, and Nauru.[38] Leaders of these nations advanced 'the Pacific Way', a political philosophy based on regional and cultural self-determination and Pacific-led, consensus-based decision making.[39] The Pacific Way has been praised for its diplomacy and dignity as well as critiqued for its conservatism, elitism, and 'Poly'-centrism, but not analysed for its environmental commitment.[40] Again, this is despite the Forum's active positions on trade, law of the sea,

[36] 'Second South Pacific Conference–Agenda (1951–1953)', Western Pacific High Commission Archives, University of Auckland Special Collections.
[37] *South Pacific Commission Quarterly Bulletin* 3, no. 2 (1953), 4.
[38] Along with New Zealand and Australia, which sought to monitor and capitalise on the new forum.
[39] Sione Tupouniua, Ron Crocombe and Claire Slatter, eds., *The Pacific Way: Social Issues and National Development* (Suva: South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1975).
[40] Epeli Hau'ofa, 'The New South Pacific Society: Integration and Independence', in *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*, eds., Antony Hooper et al. (Auckland: Centre for Pacific Studies, 1987); Stephanie Lawson,

fisheries and nuclear testing throughout the 1970s. Analyses of the revised 'Melanesian Way' concerning Papua New Guinea come closest, expressing local distrust of exploitation from above, contrasted with belief in people and land.[41] Stephen Tago, the Papuan Minister for the Environment, said of the passing of three environmental bills in 1978 that,

> We must find and use Papua New Guinean ways of doing things such as conserving our environment. We must build a system of conservation based on the land tenure situation here and not import a model way of doing it from overseas based on the government taking it away from the people in order to protect it for future generations.[42]

We have still to connect domestic conservation work in Papua New Guinea to its advocacy within the South Pacific Forum. Michael Somare's agenda item 'Environmental Conservation in the South Pacific' at Nauru in 1976 would lead to Forum involvement in developing a regional environmental management programme for example.[43] However, in stressing such links, historians must be wary of emphasising unity at the expense of diversity or obscuring neo-colonial capture. Tago's nationalistic appeal to 'Papua New Guinean ways' played down differences amongst highly localised groups, and between government workers in Port Moresby and those living in the villages. It also obscured the co-opting interests of industry and how decisions can emanate from enclaves. Tago himself was accused by Papuan historian John Waiko of leading villages astray, betraying them for logging interests.[44] Tago also worked closely with the Australian Peter Ellyard, Papua New Guinea's Director of Environment from 1976 through 1978, who seeded the bills and wrote his speeches.[45] Papuan academics, such as

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Tradition Versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Stephanie Lawson, ''The Pacific Way' as Postcolonial Discourse', *The Journal of Pacific History* 45, no. 3 (2010).

[41] Bernard Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way* (Boroko: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1983).

[42] 'Second Reading Speech by Stephen Tago… Minister for Environment and Conservation', Arthur Dahl Collection, SPREP Library, Samoa.

[43] Leaders' Communique, Seventh South Pacific Forum, Nauru, July 26–28, 1976.

[44] John Waiko, 'The People of Papua New Guinea, their Forests and their Aspirations', in *The Melanesian Environment*, ed., John Winslow (Canberra: Australian National University, 1977), 407.

[45] 'CEMP Report', 'International Affairs: South Pacific Commission - Work Programme - General Projects: Conservation of Nature', ABHS 950 W4627 2833, File 116/10/7/28 Part 1, R20753433, Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga [Hereafter, ANZ].

Sam Sirox Kari and Vergil Narokobi have taken aim at the role of expatriates in the independence period, and what was referred to contemporaneously as the 'colonial bureaucratic network'.[46] Sirox Kari asserts that formative documents such as Papua New Guinea's National Goals, were 'made to look like a collective indigenous vision; but emerged from foreign ideas, theory and practice and were used by an educated elite obsessed with and overwhelmed by the rush to take over political and economic power'.[47] Sirox Kari folds environmental matters into this mix, saying they were the preoccupation of consultants and administrators who feared a form of fatal impact by outside corporations after Australian withdrawal, so sought to inculcate 'a post-independence nation that would monitor sustainable exploitation of the natural resources'.[48]

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme was launched in 1982 as an intergovernmental programme in cooperation with the South Pacific Commission, South Pacific Forum, United Nations Environment Programme, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. It gained institutional independence in 1993, moving from Noumea to Apia and amending 'South' to 'Secretariat' within its name to better

[46] Vergil Narokobi, 'The Implementation of Papua New Guinea's National Goals and Directive Principles and Basic Social Obligations' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2016); J. Kairi, 'The Purari Scheme: Some Comments', in *The Melanesian Environment*, ed., John Winslow (Canberra: Australian National University, 1977), 341–343. See also, Rob Pardy, Purari Action Group, *Purari overpowering PNG?* (Fitzroy, Victoria: International Development Action, 1978), 341.

[47] Sam Sirox Kari, 'The Origin and Setting of the National Goals and Directive Principles in the process of writing the Constitution of Papua New Guinea' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2004), 2–3, 68.

[48] Sirox Kari's work dovetails with literatures stressing continuities between environmentalism, colonialism and participatory development, the obvious being Arun Agrawal's 'environmentality' or Uma Kothari and Bill Cooke's work on participatory management and indirect rule. Such episodes would appear to reinforce how globalising environmental governance could engender Western environmental ethics and render Pacific people as 'green subjects' in the Foucauldian sense. Alan Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact: An account of the invasion of the South Pacific, 1767–1840* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Arun Agrawal, 'Environmentality: Community, Intimate Government, and the Making of Environmental Subjects in Kumaon, India', *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 2 (2005); Bill Cooke, 'A new continuity with colonial administration: Participation in development management', *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2003); Uma Kothari, 'From Colonialism to development: Reflections of former Colonial Officers', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 44, no. 1 (2006).

reflect participation from the North Pacific. SPREP's early work focused on pollution monitoring, baseline ecological studies, protected areas promotion, legislative development, and environmental education, but has gained increased prominence through coordinating Pacific responses to the issues of nuclear waste dumping and climate change.

There has been no comprehensive history written of SPREP's origins or place within environmental transnational regionalism. International relations experts explore its relationship to the larger regional organisations and key issues like nuclear testing.[49] Former staffers and legal scholars have written on its work programme and the efficacy of the Rarotonga Declaration and Noumea Convention (which give its work programme standing).[50] Here there is a suggestion that SPREP aimed to reflect traditional knowledge. For instance, the preamble of the Noumea Convention 'takes into account the traditions and cultures of the Pacific people as expressed in accepted customs and practices'.[51] There is, however, no discussion of how such provisions came to be there, or whether the research or diplomacy under its auspices represented a Pacific environmentalism. Moreover, we do not know the effect of Pacific governments' priorities, the Commission's colonial science, or the Forum's Pacific Way in shaping SPREP's agenda, or the role of the UN agencies and expatriate consultants in its operations thereafter.

[49] Greg Fry, *Framing the Islands: Power and Diplomatic Agency in Pacific Regionalism* (Australia: ANU Press, 2019), 151–66.
[50] Jeremy Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism in the South Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1989); Richard Herr, 'Environmental Protection in the South Pacific: The Effectiveness of SPREP and its Conventions', in *Yearbook of International Cooperation on Environment and Development 2002–2003*, eds., Olav Schram Stokke and Oystein B. Thommessen (London: Routledge, 2002); Lori Osmundsen, 'Paradise Preserved? The Contribution of the SPREP Convention to the Environmental Welfare of the South Pacific', *Ecology Law Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1992); Arthur Lyon Dahl, 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', in *Environment and Resources in the Pacific: A Regional Approach*, eds., A. L. Dahl and J. Carew-Reid (Geneva, UNEP, 1985).
[51] Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region and Related Protocols, 24 November 1986.

Situating Pacific Environmentalism in Regionalism

In telling a history of Pacific environmentalism regionally, the key questions surround originality and representativeness. In short, was the environmentalism that operated at a regional level and in organisations like SPREP endogenous or homegrown, and did it represent the views of most Pacific people? Further, did it serve them? My contention is that it was, did, and at least tried to. Environmental regionalism was representative because it was built on, and referenced explicitly, local cultural values. Its foundation was a genealogy of island life. Of course, the projection of local values to national and regional levels of organisation that did not previously exist was a fraught process, complicated by colonial science undertaken in bodies like the Commission and through consultants like Ellyard and politicians like Tago.[52] However, a Pacific environmental ethic was not deterred by these obstacles and was broadly reflected in the new type of regionalism that emerged. This thesis argues that this was no coincidence. While environmental management did fit into broader agendas and did map onto colonial contours at least initially, it became genuinely participatory and receptive in a way that suggests that the Pacific's cultural and geographic specificities demanded certain types of environmental management.

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The Pacific in Global Environmentalism, the Global in Pacific Environmentalism

> We are all island people. Most of us did not fully realize this until we sent our astronauts into the skies and were shown a picture of Island Earth against its background of a black and star-specked sea of space. We know now that we live on a small area of habitable land in an inhospitable ocean. There is no continent to which we can flee, only other island planets where the environments are hostile and forbidding. We must do the best we can with what we have—other resources are not available. If we destroy those elements that we need for survival, we cease to exist…

[52] Arthur Dahl, personal communication, April 1, 2021.

> But Island Earth, crowded though it may be, is still a large and complex area, difficult to fully comprehend… For this we need smaller areas, and it is here that the islands of Earth achieve an unusual value.
>
> Each oceanic island is not only a laboratory for organic evolution, it is also, if inhabited, a laboratory for the social sciences, in which the rules that govern the behaviour of human societies, and the relation of these societies to their environments, may be tested. Islands are unique and fragile, but so is the total biosphere. If we cannot determine the means for survival on islands, how can we hope to survive on earth?

Raymond Dasmann, IUCN Senior Ecologist, speech delivered to the First Regional Symposium on the Conservation of Nature—Reefs and Lagoons, Noumea, New Caledonia, 1971.

In the late 1960s, regional efforts at resource management through the South Pacific Commission met the work of international agencies expanding their conservation programmes into the Pacific Islands. The collaboration would prompt regional conservation initiatives, as well as producing some eyebrow raising moments. Raymond Dasmann's presumptuous appeal to a shared islandness and desire to set representative samples aside for ecological and social science study was one. Pacific people have understood what insularity has meant for centuries but if this islandness holds secrets, they remain hidden from such continental experiments.

But Dasmann was a great admirer of Pacific people with a long association, so we might sense inspiration and a lesson learnt in his speech. An ecologist with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Dasmann further developed these ideas. By comparing those people who live within the bounds of one ecosystem to those that exploit many to overcome limits to growth, he argued that humanity must act and develop more like the former, more like islanders. In doing so, Dasmann broke with 'protectionism' or 'preservationism' and conservation's long focus on national parks, becoming a key theorist of 'ecodevelopment', the forerunner to 'sustainable development'.[53]

[53] For the thought of Raymond Dasmann see, Randall Jarrell, *Raymond F. Dasmann: A Life in Conservation Biology* (University of California, Santa Cruz: Regional History Project, 2000); Raymond F. Dasmann, *Called by the Wild: The Autobiography of a Conservationist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). The Pacific contribution to Dasmann's thought is hard to pinpoint. Dasmann spent time in the region, was conversant with its ecology and praised its environmental thinkers, however Dasmann was a true internationalist and nowhere held

Only recently have historians explored environmentalism as anything other than a series of green thought experiments out of Washington D.C., Stockholm, or Geneva.[54] Still, internationalism is smothering.[55] There is little acknowledgement of sub-global or regional environmentalisms, rather than simply a universal(ised, Western) environmentalism or its counterpart for the Global South "the environmentalism of the poor". Less appreciated still is that Western environmentalism may have been heavily influenced by these other environmentalisms. It is startling that ignorance persists despite the movement's long flirtation with the 'developing' world, that one might read histories of national parks full of elephants but devoid of Africans, or exciting stories about Greenpeace replete with whales and nuclear bombs that play out against an impossibly static or shallow Pacific background.[56] This section explores the place of Pacific environmentalism in major global environmental and Indigenous literatures, before making reference to similar negotiations occurring between Pacific history and global "oceans" histories.

Decolonising Island Earth

We need not assume the universality of Western environmentalism, that all are guided by the same stars. A thesis about Pacific environmentalism should not address a familiar constellation of Earthrise photos, silent springs, nuclear fears, population bombs, and oil spills, but speak

him for long. Moreover, in the early 1970s Dasmann followed the dominant view that the Pacific had largely lost its environmental heritage. See Raymond Dasmann, 'Difficult Marginal Environments and the Traditional Societies which Exploit Them', *News from Survival International* 11 (1975), 11. If there was a Pacific inflection to sustainable development's genesis, it likely came in the period 1975–1979, after the Wellington National Parks conference demonstrated Pacific environmentalism's endurance (see Chapter I). Anne Egelston outlines this as sustainable development's formative period. Anne Egelston, *Sustainable Development: A History* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013).

[54] Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes Since Ancient Times* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1998).

[55] The conceptual tide has turned with works such as, Roderick P. Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) or William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Political ecology is also diversifying case studies but the focus remains on Western agents and global knowledge. The "other side" of the story is often told with an impoverished source base. Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction, 3rd ed.* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019).

[56] My comments on the Pacific stretch to works as recent as Frank Zelko, *Make it a Green Peace: The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

from an oceanic region and to those facing up to the realities of such processes in their island homes.[57] Nevertheless, in doing so one will likely encounter Western environmentalism anyway, partly because many of its key ideas came from outside continental Europe and America. The international nature protection movement, pioneered by famous naturalists such as Julian Huxley or Russell Train, saw swathes of the Serengeti or Amazon as its preserve and spawned the idea of natural world heritage through bodies such as the World Wildlife Fund, or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.[58] Stephen Macekura, writing on what is now called 'preservationism', shows how it was spurred by 'the experience of working on the ground in the developing world, and the perception that global trends, like decolonisation and the push for development, would destabilise environmental protection arrangements everywhere'.[59] A second generation of 'conservationists', would revise these apprehensions, responding to advances in ecology and demands for self-determined development from the Global South, and shifted from national parks to encouraging eco-efficiency as part of IUCN or the United Nations Environment Programme. Dasmann's ideas were key to conservation's evolution and Macekura argues that such figures 'came to believe that environmental protection had to serve human ends above all else; they became more sympathetic to global socioeconomic inequality; they grew to support indigenous lifestyles and embraced local participation in conservation'.

[57] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962); Eliza Griswold, 'How "Silent Spring" Ignited the Environmental Movement', *The New York Times Magazine*, September 21, 2012; Nadia Drake, 'We saw Earth rise over the moon in 1968. It changed everything.' *National Geographic*, December 22, 2018; Lila Thulin, 'How an Oil Spill Inspired the First Earth Day', *Smithsonian Magazine,* April 22, 2019; Jodi Burkett, 'The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Changing Attitudes towards the Earth in the Nuclear Age', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 45, no. 4 (2012); Charles C. Mann, 'The Book That Incited a Worldwide Fear of Overpopulation', *Smithsonian Magazine,* January 2, 2018.

[58] Raf de Bont, *Nature's Diplomats: Science, Internationalism, and Preservation, 1920–1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021).

[59] Stephen Macekura, 'Of Limits and Growth: Global Environmentalism and the Rise of "Sustainable Development" in the Twentieth Century' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Dartmouth College, 2013), 7.

Nevertheless, a lack of depth in discussions of non-Western environmentalisms has limited what might conceivably contribute to, or contradict, a global movement. Even if historians recognise that overseas experience, inspiration, and criticism factored into the rise and revision of environmentalism in the West, there remains limited acknowledgement for other environmentalisms on their own terms. There is no reverse 'transfer' of anything of substance beyond the idea that development is important, and no pause to think that there may be environmental 'cultures' that destabilise the idea of a secular, universal environmentalism. The irony is that Western environmentalists themselves considered the world's cultures a catalogue of human potential.[60] *The Ecologist* co-founders Robert Allen and Edward Goldsmith—authors of *A Blueprint for Survival* which catalysed the green movement in the UK—used Indigenous peoples as a model for their decentralised societies.[61] The Pacific Islands were the prototypical closed system or outdoor laboratory, inspiring Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories, Margaret Mead's nature versus nurture arguments, and Dasmann's biosphere and ecosystem dichotomy.[62] The full and precise Pacific contribution to the history of a Westernised, global environmentalism is uncertain however it is manifest. Environmental history can no longer uphold a naïve intellectual tradition which naturalises and primitivises Indigenous people while assuming environmentalism is something only to be worked up and implemented primarily through metropolitan capitals.[63]

As a subtext, this thesis outlines a Pacific contribution and challenge to "ecodevelopment" or "sustainable development" during its formative period. There are takeaways for the

[60] This phrasing is used in Robert Allen, *Natural Man* (London: Aldus Book, 1973) and Robert Allen and M. Ross-Macdonald, *Man and Nature: Every Living Thing* (London: Aldus Books, 1975).
[61] Goldsmith was influenced by Malinowski, Moorehead, and the Club of Rome and would feature prominently in the establishment of the Indigenous-rights non-profit Survival International with the explorer Robin Hanbury-Tenison and ethnobotanist Conrad Gorinsky. Peter Bunyard, 'Teddy Goldsmith: a tribute', *The Ecologist*, September 1, 2009.
[62] Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1928).
[63] Raf de Bont, ''Primitives' and Protected Areas: International Conservation and the 'Naturalization' of Indigenous People, ca. 1910–1975', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 76, no. 2 (2015).

international view here—inspirations and lessons learnt—but the focus is on what a historical take can add to a Pacific discussion of sustainable development. The literature from the region, mostly written by developmentalists or life scientists in the last decade of the twentieth century, has already considered sustainable development's conceptual flaws and other practical, actionable lessons for and from the Pacific context. Nevertheless, because the concept comes fully formed there is a certain ahistoricism about these analyses, so when John Overton tells us that, 'the Pacific Islands have not been prominent in the sustainable development literature', he cannot see Pacific *experience* in its very genesis.[64]

(Indigenous) Environmentalisms of the Global South (Seas)

The 'environmentalism of the poor' arose in the late 1980s as a conceptual umbrella term, used to differentiate the post-material and privileged environmentalism of the Global North with social movements in the South struggling for livelihood against corporate or state power.[65] Rather than emphasising notions of preservation or species conservation, the focus of the celebrated Chipko or Green Belt movements was environmental justice.[66] Joan Martinez-Alier, a key theorist, suggests that the 'environmentalism of the poor" might account for Indigenous peoples too: that while 'undisturbed indigenous peoples have often lived in harmony with nature, with limited needs easily satisfied with a few hours of work', many others 'have been

[64] For an overview see, John Overton and Regina Scheyvens, eds., *Strategies for Sustainable Development: Experiences from the Pacific* (London: Zed Books, 1999). For a candid discussion of Pacific environment and developmental politics, see Suliana Siwatibau 'Who controls development in the South Pacific?', in *Environment and Development in the Pacific Islands*, eds., Ben Burt and Christian Clerk (Canberra: ANU Press, 1997). For specific environmental issues with relevance to sustainable development, especially those on land use and agriculture see, John Morrison, Paul Geraghty and Linda Crowl, eds, *Science of Pacific Island Peoples* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, The University of the South Pacific, 1994). On the relationship between technology and sustainable development see, Suliana Siwatibau, 'Technology, Development and the Environment', in *Island Technology: Technology for Development in the South Pacific*, ed., Tony Marjoram (London: Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd, 1994). For a governmental view with overviews on individual countries and case studies from leading Pacific environmentalists see, Robert Thistlethwaite and Gregory Votaw, eds., *Environment and Development: A Pacific Island Perspective* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 1992). For a critical perspective see Emberson-Bain, ed., *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?*

[65] Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (New York, Longman, 2000).

[66] Vandana Shiva and J. Bandyopadhyay, 'The Evolution, Structure, and Impact of the Chipko Movement', *Mountain Research and Development* 6, no. 2 (1986); Wangari Maathai, *The Green Belt Movement: sharing the approach and the experience, rev. ed.* (New York: Lantern Books, 2003).

impoverished in history because of land grabbing and forced labour' and 'their fights to keep the resources they need for livelihood are nonetheless in line'.[67]

While there is the potential for solidarity in this idea, a grouping of capitalism's have-nots is insufficiently flexible to comfortably include Indigenous or Pacific environmentalisms. Its rhetorical function glosses the thoughts or actions of Indigenous peoples, especially in the Pacific, where "poverty" cannot explain the role of the ocean, insularity, or Pacific cultural traditions in shaping activism, especially when Pacific Islanders are removed from a subsistence livelihood. This said, scholars of imperialism or global Indigeneity often miss or mischaracterise the environmental component of (Pacific) Indigenous movements as well. Events like Halkyard-Harawira's intervention at Kaho'olawe are placed within site-specific but thematically similar 'modern' colonial resistances or protests, with parallels to the Civil Rights, Women's, or Anti-Vietnam war movements. In this story a growing network is unified under notions of an internationalising 'Indigeneity' or 'The Fourth World' and encapsulated in bodies like the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.[68] Such scholarship ties together well the commonalities in colonised world stories, as well as describing processes of international organisation and general arguments for Indigenous identification. However, because it is largely "national"-to-international and concerned with political or legal representation, regional or sub-global Indigeneities and their environmental aspects are not satisfactorily described or else fitted in uneasily. There is little attention paid to voyaging pasts or how islands were viewed in shared, sacred ways.

[67] Joan Martinez-Alier, 'The Environmentalism of the Poor', *Geoforum* 54 (2014).
[68] Hanne Hagtvedt Vik, "Indigenous Internationalism", in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, eds., Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Globalising Pacific Environmentalism

Histories of environmentalism chart either the expansion of a green movement (from within the West) or critical variations that focus on issues of class or social justice (as with the 'environmentalism of the poor'), and there remain underdeveloped Indigenous and Pacific dimensions. Indigeneity confounds supposed divisions between the multi-faceted, stateless, post-material protest of the wealthy and the single issue, localised, material activism of "the poor". Pacific peoples' oceanic mobility and the values they placed on environments mean they escape neat categorisation. There exists then, a dual blind spot where the Pacific and environmental components of global Indigenous politics and the Pacific and Indigenous components of global environmental politics are both neglected. This thesis shows how blind spots become problematic in analyses of complex multilateral forums, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, where disentangling Pacific motivations and priorities is important for establishing causation and nuance within movements. Addressing absence remains difficult and not always possible simply with the addition of content, however.

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Pacific and Ocean Histories and Historians

In many respects, debates about representation within environmentalism resonate with another, happening at the heart of Pacific history. Histories of oceans and islands threaten to proceed without the voices of those most acquainted with them. The issue is institutional, disciplinary, and methodological and tears at the corners of this work. This section explains debates about the direction of Pacific History, before pivoting to a discussion of the thesis' approach to sources and storytelling.

We ought to remember that Indigenous-minded academic history practice in Oceania is young, although few of its scholars would see meaningful distinction between their current work and storytelling, crafting or performing as mediums for genealogy and culture that are deeply historical. From the mid-twentieth century, a commitment to decolonisation and cultural nationalism in regional universities overturned the assumption that Oceania and its peoples were not worthy subjects of History.[69] Since then, academic allies and associates have been joined by Indigenous Pacific scholars themselves, refashioning colonial narratives and recentring historical practice. But the contradiction of academic History in Oceania remains its unfulfilled potential, despite the near-universal acceptance of the importance of history amongst Pacific peoples. Whether the cause is disciplinary, institutional, or even epistemological is hotly debated. However, the fact remains that expertise in history making, broadly conceived, has not translated into a broad or enduring presence in history departments.[70] This has remained so even as the number of students and scholars has increased across universities, say, in the Social Sciences or Māori, Indigenous or Pacific Studies. The result, rightly or wrongly, has been a proliferation of historical work by Indigenous scholars but largely outside of History.[71] This is not always a problem for researchers themselves and indeed Indigenous history lends itself to the methodological flexibility of interdisciplinary inquiry. It is, however, an issue for the discipline and the type of knowledge it produces about others. Globalisation has led to an increasing historical interest in both Indigeneity and Oceania, but without the people, their practices, or priorities.[72] Institutions like the University

[69] James W. Davidson's tenure as the first chair of Pacific History at the Australian National University began in 1949 and is often marked as the advent of Pacific History. Doug Munro and Brij Lal, eds., *Texts and Contexts: Reflections in Pacific Island Historiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

[70] Sereana Naepi, 'Why isn't my professor Pasifika? A snapshot of the academic workforce in New Zealand universities', *MAI Journal* 8, no. 2 (2019); Damon Salesa, Keynote Address, Pacific History Association Conference, Cambridge, UK, December 4, 2018; Teresia Teaiwa, 'Charting Pacific (Studies) Waters: Evidence of Teaching and Learning', *The Contemporary Pacific* 29, no. 2 (2017).

[71] For disciplinary differences between Pacific Studies and Pacific History and implications for teaching see the special forum, 'The Teaching of Pacific History', *The Journal of Pacific History* 46, no. 2 (2011).

[72] Christopher Smith, reflecting on tokenistic Indigenous participation in UK-based research, makes the point that work must move beyond a 'marginally more socially embedded research practice'. This means 'empowering

of Oxford can have nearly two hundred full-time historians but include no specialists on the Pacific Islands. Manifold gains in Indigenous methodologies—encompassing research ethics, oral history, community collaboration, and cultural competency—are seldom adopted, meaning outside researchers proceed with an impoverished and inequitable source base.[73]

In the past decade, 'global' and 'oceans' historians have charted new courses over the Pacific Ocean. Recent histories of 'Pacific worlds' describe transnational networks that stretch from continents into islands, integrating them into wider global systems.[74] Case studies are often materialist and multi-scalar, focusing on the flows of goods, labour, or technologies and complementing earlier work on Pacific environmental history.[75] Many are elegant and uncover novel connections between areas such as Southeast Asia or Russia or the United States.[76] They received praise from global, Atlantic worlds, and continental United States historians who immediately saw their expansive, transformative potential (and stood to gain a new ocean).[77] However what is described as the 'oceanic turn' or 'rush for Oceania' has raised concern amongst Pacific historians.[78] Some feel a recolonial impulse and that Pacific Islands'

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others, not aggrandising ourselves'. Funding systems and institutional structures, as much as ways of thinking, he argues, must align with 'inclusive, participatory, and holistic approaches to the generation of knowledge that builds community'. Christopher Smith, 'Foreword' in *Indigenous Research Methods: Partnerships, Engagement and Knowledge Mobilisation*, ed., Paul Heritage (London: People's Palace Projects, 2021).

[73] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

[74] Notably, Matt Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); David Igler, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Armitage and Bashford, eds., *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*.

[75] See for example, McNeill, 'Of Rats and Men'; Ryan Tucker Jones, 'The Environment', in *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*, eds., David Armitage and Alison Bashford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Paul D'Arcy, 'Oceania: The Environmental History of One-Third of the Globe', in *A Companion to Global Environmental History*, eds., J.R. McNeill and E.S. Mauldin (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

[76] Paul D'Arcy, 'General Editor's Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, eds., Ryan Tucker Jones and Matt K. Matsuda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

[77] Work on guano and labour trades has proved particularly innovative, see Gregory Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Gregory Rosenthal, 'Life and Labor in a Seabird Colony: Hawaiian Guano Workers, 1857–70', *Environmental History* 17, no. 4 (2012); Adam McKeown, 'The Social Life of Chinese Labor', in *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities and Networks in Southeast Asia*, eds., Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen Ching Chang (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[78] Jane Samson, 'Blue Continent to Blue Pacific' in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, eds., Anne Perez Hattori and Jane Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

historiographical insights are being neglected in favour of extending the modes of the Pacific Rim into new (and assumedly empty) spaces. It is unclear how these approaches interact with internal histories of connection, many of which have under-appreciated global implications themselves.[79] Salesa argues that Pacific history rendered faithfully poses a challenge to those global analyses seeking to build the Pacific into precast narratives. Many "world histories", he suggests, are 'fashioned around divisions, categories and metaphors that [cannot] seriously engage or comprehend an extra-Eurasian, oceanic, and chiefly nonliterate immensity of human history'.[80] For Pacific historians like Salesa, bold claims for a 'new' ocean are shallow. Attempting to represent the stories of Oceania's hundreds of unique cultures, spread over twenty nations and third of the world's surface is ancient, difficult, and worldly enough.

In Respect to Pacific History and Methodology

Straddling the imperatives of academia and activism, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith notes the difference between 'getting the story right', and 'telling the story well'.[81] To chart the turbid waters of globalisation and commodification, where power and truth have an uneasy relationship, she argues for the necessity of both. For academic history the challenge is a pertinent one. I argue that blindspots and institutional absences perpetuate inaccurate histories about global environmentalism, and that there is potential for Pacific knowledge and priorities to 'right' the record. But doing this 'well' requires more. This section argues that if historical practice is to access Pacific knowledge equitably it must be reworked for and with the inclusion of Pacific people. Bluntly, it cannot maintain extractive, fleeting relationships between academic experts and Indigenous informants. These promise only advocacy while benefitting scholars

[79] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands'; Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*; Quito Swan, *Pasifika Black*.
[80] Damon Salesa, 'The World From Oceania', in *A Companion to World History*, ed., D. Northop (Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 392.
[81] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 'Getting the Story Right – Telling the Story Well: Indigenous activism – Indigenous research', in *Pacific Genes and Life Patents: Pacific Indigenous Experiences & Analysis of the Commodification and Ownership of Life*, eds., Aroha Te Pareake Mead and Steven Ratuva (Wellington: Call of the Earth, 2007), 74–81.

undertaking fashionable topics divorced from broader struggles for rights and cultural retention.[82]

For generations, Pacific scholarship has sought to establish that research done for and inclusive of its peoples, is better work. This is true for History, where oral testimony or interdisciplinary inquiry can revise narratives resting on *partial* documentation and where Indigenous knowledge often explains *why* people acted. In this sense, Indigenous stories are themselves often truer, fuller histories. But it is only through opening space for the voices of Pacific people that the salience of factors such as cultural understanding or regional specificity come to the fore. Historians must listen to and engage Pacific people on their own terms, lest they miss the hinges on which Pacific histories turn. Without taking Pacific understandings seriously and using them as the basis for methodology, without placing them centrally and as goals for history itself, not only is causation missed but stories are not well told.

Pasifika academics practising talanoa have long known that when it comes to interviews, it is the relationships from which conversations flow that take priority over the substance of chatter.[83] Out of respect to such relationships, this thesis has started from talanoa oral histories, and 'ecologically based oral traditions'.[84] When quoting these sources I have not curtailed the

[82] Lily Sar of the University of Goroka, recounts, 'Many times I hear communities saying, "what is in this research for us?" And people say, "Advocacy, we are going to make awareness". But sometimes awareness is not enough... How do you bring change in a community, it has got to be that'. Pelenise Alofa from Kiribati Climate Action Network echoes this stance, saying, 'We are the keepers of our knowledge and skills. We cannot just give it away… We have assisted so many researchers, Kiribati was flooded with researchers because of climate change. But what for? For who? What's the centre for your research? Is it about you getting a degree? Or getting your doctorate? Or is it about the people that you come to work with?... We own [the knowledge] and we [must] benefit from it'. Transcripts from the International Seminar on Indigenous Engagement, Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilisation (Rio de Janeiro, 2019).

[83] Talanoa are culturally considerate, participant-led, semi-structured interviews, carried out face to face and informally, 'in order to tell stories or relate experience', Timote E. Vaioleti, 'Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position on Pacific Research', *Waikato Journal of Education* 12 (2006).

[84] Tevita O. Ka'ili follows 'Okusitino Māhina in arguing 'that ecologically based oral traditions should be treated as valid sources for academic history, equal to written documents'. Tevita O. Ka'ili, 'Ancestral Voices of the Sea: Hearing the Past to Lead the Future', in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, eds., Anne Perez Hattori and Jane Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); 'O. Māhina, *Reed Book of Tongan Proverbs: Ko e Tohi 'a e Reed ki he Lea Tonga Heliaki* (Auckland: Reed Publishing, 2004), 107.

voice or inserted undue commentary. Ethics protocols make provision for redactions, but also to spread the interviews widely as community access is as important as information security. I have sought to tell Pacific stories that were important to participants—stories that they could see themselves in. I considered this my foremost responsibility and at times it ran up against other academic requirements. Suliana Siwatibau's priority was to encourage knowledge about plants' usefulness and tabu areas and seek acknowledgement for the work of the Student Christian Movement in the story of Fiji's anti-nuclear movement. Iosefatu Reti, Neva Wendt, and Vili Fuavao wanted a history not about themselves but of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, which was not possible within the limitations of a doctoral thesis. This has meant committing further years to documenting SPREP.

Pacific archival research is difficult and fragmentary. Safua Akeli Amaama, writing on Pacific repositories makes plain that documents are inconsistently kept, frequently scattered, and difficultly preserved.[85] They are also skewed to neglect the contributions of Pacific actors and Pacific women especially. Iosefatu Reti believed that documents from his two decades in Samoan forestry in the 1970s and 1980s were likely burned when computers arrived.[86] Eucalyptus plantations and reports from New Zealand supervisors archived in Wellington seem to be the only trace. This is a Pacific reality and was no surprise to the author. However, encountering Arthur Dahl's 21 box collection in the SPREP library, still taped up a year after it was received, was another reminder of the privilege of historical work and the shortage of resources for preserving documentary heritage in place. Dahl's collection remains one of the only repositories for SPREP's early history, as most other files were waterlogged in transit as the organisation relocated to Samoa. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated issues of access

[85] Safua Akeli Amaama, 'Missing in Action; Women's Under-representation and Decolonizing the Archival Experience', in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, eds., Anne Perez Hattori and Jane Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).
[86] Iosefatu Reti, interview with the author, February 15, 2020.

and made travelling to yet-uninfected Pacific Islands and interviewing the elderly unthinkable. This meant a greater reliance on archives and video conferencing, but also called into question broader expectations placed on students in global history departments to travel widely—something that likely relied on the open world, cheap commercial air travel, and carbon ignorance of yesterday. The project was extended by one year and the shortfall made up with applications to Wellington and Canberra to have a series of 400 files declassified.

Research done in the Pacific Islands is difficult and does not guarantee adequate representation for Oceania's diverse voices or thematic, geographic, and chronological breadth. Difficult decisions must be made. For example, this thesis chose forestry instead of fishing in considering extractive multinational corporations, and nuclear waste dumping over fishing (again) to examine ocean governance. The work begins in 1970 to account for the start of truly "regional" environmental management and decolonisation but there is likely more to be said about the genesis of that moment itself. The focus drifts towards institutions and Polynesia at times, reflecting the sites of regional organisation and the author's own Samoan heritage and connections. The francophone Pacific features, but largely through forums where there was translation, and I neglect the obvious environmentalism of leaders like Jean-Marie Tjibaou for example.[87] Nevertheless, the project attempts to locate an authentic and substantive transnational and Indigenous regionalism historically and using a wide range of Pacific sources. Each chapter "turns" on an unexpected Pacific document or piece of testimony, from unwritten pacts to protest French nuclear testing to secrets about Fiji's 'red turtle cave pool'. The methodology might be described as "storying environmental regionalism and its practice",

[87] Tjibaou wrote that 'the great ocean that surrounds us carries the seeds of life. We must ensure they don't become the seeds of death. These matters are our responsibility, and we must face them to live and protect our lives' when he was Vice-President of the New Caledonian Territorial Assembly (before becoming leader of the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste). 'Anti-French Test Campaign Picks Up', *Pacific Concerns Resource Centre Pacific Bulletin* 3, no. 1 (1983); See also, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, *Kanaky*, eds., Alban Bensa and Eric Wittersheim, trans., Helen Fraser and John Trotter (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005).

while seeking to contextualise and understand it. Each of the five chapters narrate events that contribute to a regional vision but are centred on specific locations and characters. Transnational spaces like conferences are used to make broader claims without obscuring the priorities of participants.

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Storying Environmental Regionalism: The Structure of the Thesis

'Pacific environmentalism' ties together a history spread across a multitude of islands, peoples, and ecologies. It is a common philosophy and approach, capturing the ready understanding of the oceanic, interconnected nature of Pacific environments and the importance of Pacific cultures and pasts within them. As a new community and political grouping, Pacific environmentalists expressed a firm commitment to principles of self-determination and to dealing with problems regionally. Because Pacific environmentalism encompasses a particular character and set of priorities, it emphasises the distinctiveness that was not only present in the way people talked about environments, but best explains their actions within them. The concept thus challenges regional analyses of Indigenous ecological knowledge and decolonial politics that neglect one another, arguing that Pacific environmental thought was holistic and worldly. Lastly, because Pacific environmentalism engaged with and mediated global movements, it has the potential to alter perceptions about the Pacific's relationship with other environmentalisms and Indigeneities.

In order to historically establish how Pacific people expressed their own environmentalism, and demonstrate how it was incorporated into regional structures and mobilised internationally, *Kotahi te Moana* is split into five chapters, with each guided by a core question:

The first, 'When it Rains in Suva', asks how Pacific people understood their environments over a period of dramatic ecological and social change from 1970–1976, and whether this differed from the Western environmentalism being trialled in the region. It shows how the danger of radioactive rainfall revealed stark differences between Pacific calls for environmental justice and colonial attempts to import a preservationism centred on island laboratories and national parks. Conferences leading up to the 1976 Apia Convention provided space for Pacific people to justify their own environmental approaches based on holism, sustainable use, and traditional controls. My argument is that this process consolidated a regional ethic, Pacific environmentalism, which in turn justified further demands for self-determination and the refusal to sign the Apia Convention.

The second, 'Traditioned Conservation for a Modern Pacific', questions whether the vision for environmental management establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme was truly 'South Pacific' or 'regional'. It follows a new category of Pacific people, steeped in their culture but schooled in the life sciences, as they combined with sympathetic allies and shaped SPREP's environmental management to be Indigenous-led and village-based. It places this discussion of form into a broader debate over SPREP's function and governance between the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Forum, and between those regional organisations and UN agencies. Ultimately it shows how a commitment to Pacific environmentalism embedded traditional values and united the region against international overreach.

The third, 'Kotahi te Moana', one ocean united, explores the potential for *Pacific* ocean governance through the environmental regionalism of SPREP. From 1982–1986, Pacific nations used negotiations towards the Noumea Convention to oppose the dumping of nuclear waste (both planned and prospective). The implications for colonial nations' territorial rights

and future dumping options resulted in an aggressive response, and negotiations stalled for three years. Despite intense diplomatic pressure, however, Pacific nations maintained a collective position and eventually had their mandate over pockets of the high seas recognised. Looking at the justifications for Pacific regionalism, this chapter asks whether diplomacy was governed by Pacific environmentalism as opposed to the merely "political" motivations alleged by metropolitan powers. It makes the case for rethinking Noumea as a highly successful instance of Pacific environmental diplomacy that established capacity for similar on climate, rather than as the Treaty of Rarotonga's technical complement.

The fourth, 'Island Limits and Pacific Ways', asks what drove efforts towards reforming SPREP in the mid-1980s and whether the region demands certain types of environmental management. It shows how an expatriate monopoly on recognised expertise produced disconnected research and excluded Pacific governments from participating in SPREP. However, and ironically, the failure of earlier colonial attempts to foster a regime of national parks and plantation forestry strengthened a commitment to developing a conservation concept that accounted for regional capacity and was "truly South Pacific". This suggests that the physical and societal characteristics of the region inhibited its integration into globalised environmental governance, allowing dependency to be overcome. In other words, it showed that Pacific environmental management was not only more equitable and effective, but also essential as outside models simply would not work.

The fifth, 'Mana Motu', the status of islands, considers what a consolidated regional platform enabled internationally and in response to climate change. It examines the role of SPREP in establishing a distinctive Pacific "islandness" through which to advance interregional associations with Caribbean, African, and Indian Ocean islands. It shows how Pacific people sought recognition for the specific needs and special characteristics of islands across the United

Nations system, with a distinctive focus on Indigenous rights, anti-nuclearism, and traditional knowledge. Such advocacy led to a recognition that Small Island Developing States were a developmental category, a 'special case' entitled to a dedicated structure for international cooperation. This was a global intervention that gave structure to the Alliance of Small Island States' transformational climate advocacy. I argue that it was made possible through Pacific environmentalism.

The conclusion unpacks the work's title. Many Pacific languages have an elegant, intricate way of expressing oneness. Pacific environmentalism unified the ocean by showing its interconnectedness: it appreciated natural phenomena like the currents of oceans or the migrations of birds or fish, it understood the role of people as an indivisible part of islands. Pacific environmentalism created an ocean union by using this knowledge as the foundation for regionalism and an environmental programme, working collectively against outside exploitation and towards global solutions. Captured today in concepts such as the "Blue Pacific" and "Wansolwara", Pacific environmentalism sees Pacific people work ceaselessly to safeguard their one and only ocean.

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When it Rains in Suva

Towards Pacific Environmentalism, 1970–1976

> The South Pacific Commission was basically focused on technical assistance. There was no scope for discussion of issues like nuclear testing—[so-called 'political'] issues and what the French considered as being internal issues for France, nothing to do with anybody else… So, we got together with the other Pacific Island countries, before that subject was raised [at the 1973 South Pacific Conference in Guam] and it was agreed that there would be a joint resolution by most of the Pacific Island countries represented, which would be started off by our delegation [Cook Islands] in the presentation to the Conference. So basically, we used the 'technical' issue of nature conservation as the basis for introducing our opposition to nuclear testing because of its potential impact on our ocean resources [and] atmosphere.

Tamarii Tutangata, interview with the author, April 30th, 2022.

Tamarii's revelation has avoided documentation, and with it, generations of scholars. Now, the knowledge that environment and other 'technical' issues were arenas of strategy and anti-colonial contestation opens wide the fields of Pacific and environmental history. For what Tutangata describes is not merely instrumental, the technical-made-political, but the advent of new, regional forms of organisation based upon shared appreciations of the environment. In other words, a distinctly *Pacific* environmental movement.

This chapter takes this revelation and tests it historically. It asks if similar strategies to Tutangata's were utilised earlier, and whether expressions of environmental self-determination were limited to nuclear issues. Perhaps they also occurred across multiple levels, from individuals and communities up to national and regional assemblies. If so, how were attempts at environmental justice linked and did they interact with other environmentalisms present in the region, including those governed by Western science or Pacific culture. Answering such

questions requires an attentiveness to niches within movements and openness to connecting diverse struggles across unusual, unstudied Pacific pasts.

The chapter is structured in four sections to build out the case for a Pacific environmentalism. It begins in American Samoa, a Pacific place undergoing particularly rapid and disruptive environmental change and reacting to the (shifting) excesses of Western scientific enterprise. It moves to Fiji and New Caledonia next, demonstrating how an international and colonial science was threatened by anti-nuclearism and diverted Pacific environmental concerns down apolitical avenues. Similar looked to be happening in New Zealand during the events of section three, before Pacific nations reacted collectively to stress the legitimacy of their own approaches to environmental management. The last section returns to Samoa, showing how international assistance to conservation was given an ultimatum by Pacific people when it prevaricated on issues of colonialism and nuclearism.

Tracing the conservation of nature item Tutangata mentions back in time reveals it featured at the South Pacific Conference in Suva three years earlier to explosive effect. Originally tabled by prominent ecologists, who envisaged a programme to designate islands as nature reserves and insular laboratories (so-called "Islands for Science"), the item would place international science at odds with Pacific peoples' opposition to nuclear testing. In imposing their own conservation agenda, however, institutions like the Pacific Science Association (PSA), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Smithsonian Institution unwittingly created forums in which Pacific people could give voice to opposition and their own environmental knowledge. Over a series of meetings from 1970–1976, Pacific people repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to resource rights, human development, and traditional conservation practices. As the Pacific changed dramatically through developmental efforts, decolonisation, and creeping ecological crises, environmental management became both imperative and increasingly contested. Western environmentalism was split between an older

apolitical, preservationist orthodoxy focused on national parks, and new forms of conservation allied to Pacific values, ecological principles, and participatory approaches. The chapter ends by taking Tutangata's revelation forward to the collision of these two movements during the 1976 Apia Convention meeting. When colonial attitudes threatened to abort moves to make conservation operate on Pacific terms once more, Cook Islanders would make an unwavering assertion of the right to environmental self-determination, recentring proceedings and giving them a distinctive character and commitment.

In telling this story, my contention is that Pacific environmentalism emerged in the mid-1970s as a new ethic combining decolonial politics, international science, and regional structures, with longstanding Pacific environmental knowledge systems. This ethic was mobilised by Pacific people and their allies in a movement that conserved Indigenous ways of being, opposed outside imposition, and advanced collective approaches. It might be thought of as a form of environmental regionalism, the extension of anti-nuclear and independence politics into questions of place and environmental justice.

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Islands for Science

> I think the time to say whether we want the new ways or not has passed. That was the time when you, the white man, first came into contact with us, the Samoans. I think the choice was made right then and there.
>
> The entire world is changing and the Samoan has just got to go along with it [and] change a lot. He can continue to be a Samoan but he will definitely be a different Samoan. Well, I mean, he will be a Samoan who likes to drive a car. Where he used to be able to enjoy walking one mile to work in the morning, now he likes to drive a car to work. He's going to lose the exercise he used to get by walking that mile. This is a different Samoan.
>
> Well I think in the next 30 years we are going to get more and more into the Western society way of living, there is no choice that is where we are heading. I view the change with regret

> certainly, but on the other hand I realise too that the changes have got to be made. There is no question that we are moving forward…[88]

Interviewed in 1966, the tulafale Fofō Iosefa Sunia, spoke of change. Alongside the car he now drove, Sunia had a new role as American Samoa's first Director of Tourism—he appears before the camera both open and cautious. This is reasonable, considering how recently and abruptly Governor Rex Lee had pulled the Islands from seclusion into a quasi-mainstream of American life. Having been partitioned from its western sibling in 1899, American Samoa languished under navy administration before being transferred to the Department of the Interior in the 1950s.[89] Now, caught in the fervour for Kennedy's "New Frontier" of governance-thought-different, Pago Pago was the crucible of Pacific development done the American way. As elsewhere, this meant corporate entry and federal initiatives. New material goods flowed in and consumerism was burgeoning. Rising tourist numbers and resort life tested cultural mores. Work was reorganised and family structures altered as the wage of the tuna canneries and government offices displaced taro grown in the plantation or the fish caught at sea. The television was ascendant and hastened a generational shift, with educational programming fronting classrooms during the day and *Bonanza* beamed into fale at night.[90] Population growth stretched a town already transformed by roading and Palagi housing built after the 1966 cyclone. Understandably, fa'aSamoa was felt to be under threat.

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[88] *American Samoa: Paradise Lost*, directed by Dan Klugherz (New York: National Educational Television, 1966).

[89] For a history of American Samoan governance from historical and naval perspectives see, J. Robert Shaffer, *American Samoa: 100 years under the United States Flag* (Honolulu: Island Heritage Pub, 2000); J. A. C Gray, *Amerika Samoa. A History of American Samoa and its United States Naval Administration* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1960).

[90] There is extensive study on the televised education system in American Samoa, with debates about its usefulness (or lack thereof). At its height in the mid-1960s, television was the primary instruction tool in about 300 classrooms, by 1980 it was a minor, supplementary tool. Its failure is variously ascribed to the rollout, budget, or deficiencies in the medium itself. See: Thomas, R. Murray, 'The Rise and Decline of an Educational Technology: Television in American Samoa', *Educational Communication and Technology* 28, no. 3 (1980), 155–67; Edward N. Vargo, 'A Historical Study of the Educational Television System in American Samoa from 1961–1983' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1983); W. Schramm, L. M. Nelson and M. T. Betham, *Bold Experiment: The Story of Educational Television in American Samoa* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1981).

Among the discontented were those Samoans who felt development was Westernised and disempowering. District Governor High Chief Asuemu Ulufale Fuimaono was at times a vocal critic of the American administration under Governor Owen Aspinall, whom he felt had a paternal attitude:

> The inference from the outside world, and people who try to introduce this, believe that this is the good change for us, they want us to change from our way of living to the better, but to me, I don't believe in it. I still believe that as long as I am a Samoan, I should live like a Samoan.
>
> I would like us to be independent, complete from the United States. I want the United States to be aware that they treat us very, very fine from the very beginning, but still they are holding the complete control of the whole island here, and this is what I don't like… We want to do our business the way we want it. A lot of outside customs and many new ideas, not only from America, from other parts of the world are bringing to the island that's influencing our Samoan customs. They think they are trying to influence for the better, but I don't think so… I don't care about tourists; I care about my land and my people… The number one resource here in the Islands is the water, we got tonnes and tonnes of fish there waiting for us, and this is the only way we can be independent.[91]

Both Sunia and Fuimaono would have lengthy careers in government, representing American Samoa abroad and as two of the first Samoans in the US House of Representatives. Their preoccupations match those of many Pacific leaders of the time, pondering issues of cultural change, viable industry, and self-determination. The sense of profound change is palpable, as is the feeling that this change was being imposed—in this case through ill-suited development. These would be the sentiments that precipitated environmental action in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, even if "environmentalism" is not reflected in Sunia or Fuimaono's statements here (or was even their foremost concern later). Their discontent came before and went beyond any environmentalism. Similarly, because American Samoa felt change before its effects, disjuncture was the pretext for environmentalism and the context into which it came.

[91] Alongside his role as District Governor in the mid-1960s, Fuimaono worked for an American-owned fish cannery and believed America could better help by financing a new fishing industry in which Samoans could work. As it stood, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese fleets serviced the factory. There is footage of Aspinall's and his assistant rejecting Fuimaono's advocacy, doubting Samoan tolerance for the work and referring to Rostovian "stages of growth"—comparing the Samoan industry to a crawling child. Klugherz, *American Samoa: Paradise Lost.*

Governor John M. Haydon assumed office as Aspinall's successor in August 1969. A political appointee with slim Pacific experience, Haydon needed advice on the territory's growing problems. All ears, he tripped around the island's villages and to Washington D.C. where he sought counsel with Samoan leaders and the scientists of the Smithsonian Institution. An improbable environmentalist, the Governor would be propelled by those around him. Principal among Haydon's Samoan advisors was Palauni (Brownie) Tuiasosopo, assistant to Governors Lee and Coleman before him, and future Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission (SPC). At the Smithsonian, he would be welcomed by a coterie of leading ecologists, some of whom, like F. Raymond Fosberg and Marie-Hélène Sachet, had Pacific expertise through their work on the Pacific Science Association and the Atoll Research Bulletin.

The minutes of the Smithsonian meeting capture Haydon's concerns and ambitions, reflecting once again the tensions between culture and development—as stressed by men like Sunia, Fuimaono, and Tuiasosopo—as well as a nascent recognition of environmental problems.[92] Note also the opportunity seized by the Institution:

> The Governor feels a strong responsibility towards helping the Samoans and providing for them the improved medical care, education, and modernization they are aspiring to attain. At the same time Haydon feels the past culture must be preserved. He is very concerned about new road and harbour construction destroying archaeological sites, disturbing the ecology, and in other ways negatively impacting on the area. He wants help and expertise to ensure that technological progress is not coupled with cultural and natural disaster. His concern is so great, in fact, that he is attempting to fill the vacant position of Lieutenant-Governor with an ecologist-anthropologist-archaeologist-oriented candidate.
>
> The [Smithsonian] participants in the session were unanimously taken with the attitude and candour of the Governor. Enthusiastic support and active participation by a multidisciplinary group of [Smithsonian] scientists for a program in support of Governor Haydon's interests is certain.[93]

[92] Environment had reached a new height on the political agenda. Earlier in 1969, America's Pacific coast had been inundated by the Santa Barbara Oil spill. It is suspected that Haydon arrived at the Smithsonian conscious that American Samoa must have environmental problems and that, although he could not identify them personally, he ought to be taking action. Arthur Dahl, personal correspondence, January 29, 2021.

[93] Memorandum from William Aron to Mr. Ripley, Visit of John M. Haydon, Minutes of Smithsonian Meeting, October 31, 1969, Box 1, Arthur Dahl Collection [hereafter ADC], SPREP Library, Samoa.

A young postdoctoral fellow in Botany present at the meeting, Arthur Lyon Dahl, wrote to Haydon in the following weeks expressing his interest. A practising Bahá'í, Dahl sought to live abroad in the Global South and was impressed by Haydon's 'concern for the ecology and traditional culture of American Samoa'.[94] Moreover, Dahl's scientific endeavours and interest in complex systems meant he saw a greater opportunity, namely:

> …the possibility of developing American Samoa under your administration as an example of the proper management of a fragile island ecosystem for the long-term benefit of its inhabitants. The problems arising from the conflict between economic development and the natural ecological balance are going to have to be faced by more and more of the developing nations and islands of the world. The example of American Samoa could therefore have broad applicability.[95]

Haydon accepted and Dahl left on a preliminary visit in late-December 1969. En route to American Samoa, Dahl visited neighbouring Western Samoa, which provided a reference point for the newcomer—same culture, different colonisation. Walking through the villages of Savai'i, which he noted were 'neat, parklike, with few westernised houses', Dahl talked to Western Samoans who appeared 'anxious to adopt new ways'—a high chief wanted a fale palagi and village improvement, while a young person in Puleia thought Savai'i 'very poor' *(Fig. 2)*.[96] On Upolu, the extensive clearing for agriculture and pollution in Apia harbour drew comment, but the problem was not deemed major. The young scientist jotted 'Western Samoa as control' in his notebook. Pago Pago would prove the extent of American experimentation.

Dahl arrived in American Samoa on January 7th, 1970, for a 10 day stay. With the backing of the Agriculture and Marine Departments, he undertook ecological surveys while gauging local attitudes towards conservation principles and life in the territory. January 8th brought a road trip around Tutuila and visit to Olovalu crater with Assistant Agricultural Director Pemerika Tauiliili, revealing terrestrial problems. Cut and fill roading and expanding hillside agriculture,

[94] Arthur Dahl to John Haydon, November 20, 1969, Box 1, ADC.
[95] Dahl to Haydon, Box 1, ADC.
[96] 'Samoa Fieldnotes 69–73', Box 1, ADC.

combined with the islands' steep slopes and heavy rains brought the threat of serious erosion *(Fig. 3)*.[97] Dahl noted his suggestions: agriculture should be redirected to flat areas; hillside agriculture needed study; trees needed to be planted alongside suitably paved roads or tramways developed. Marine Director Stanley Swerdloff helped Dahl to extend his investigation to the ocean environment with a series of transects across Tutuila's reefs, bays, and Pago Pago harbour *(Fig. 4)*. Over the next week Dahl swum, studied, and collected coral across the island. Oil pollution and sewage seepage were worsening near the urban centre, while erosion of the land and dredging in the harbour were causing a build-up of silt liable to smother corals *(Fig. 5)*. Again, the young scientist noted proposals: harbour pollution should be monitored from Pago Pago's cable car; dredging ought to be intense but brief; and significant reefs ought to be protected by reserves with some others selected for tourist development. Dahl's notes quickly swelled to thirty pages.[98]

Alongside observations in the physical environment, Samoans told Dahl of social developments, suggesting links between the two. Conversations with Swerdloff's lab assistant Lafaele and tuna cannery supervisor Feti outlined once again the feeling of change, which Dahl connected to a broader distancing of Samoans from the environment and the 'cultural restraints that maintained ecological balance'.[99] Lafaele described the desire to 'keep up with the Jones'', to pursue an American-style house, drive a car and to stop giving widely to 'anyone who asks'—although he simultaneously wished for a simpler life and to get back to his village of Afono. Feti, a man 'sensitive to injustice' was dissatisfied with the matai system but equally—having turned down a matai title three times and working up from 'sanitation (toilet-cleaner)' in the cannery to be one of only three Samoans at management level—was not paid palagi

[97] Pemerika Tauiliili graduated in Agricultural Economics from University of Hawaii in 1964. 'Samoa Fieldnotes 69–73', Box 1, ADC.
[98] 'Samoa Fieldnotes 69–73', Box 1, ADC.
[99] 'Samoa Fieldnotes 69–73', Box 1, ADC.

wages or given appropriate benefits so was considering quitting. Dahl suggested the basic problem was the clash between American and Samoan values, and that with a 'laissez-faire approach, Samoans will inevitably lose out because of the flow of wealth behind America'. Being around Samoans had a profound effect on Dahl, both ecologically and socially, and he noted the territory should 'consciously aim towards a new value system… giving equal weight to advances of science and technology (American) and values making for richness in life (Samoan)'. He noted that currently 'the government and societal structure is all for Americans'. That American 'interest in Samoan culture, while genuine, is still just a veneer on American-style power structures'. And that the American 'attitude should be one of guests adopting local ways out of courtesy to their host… [with a] sincere appreciation that Samoan ways are better in this climate and island society'.[100]

There remains ambivalence when an outside expert advocates looking within, whilst simultaneously offering suggestions. And although remarkably sensitive to Samoan culture, in his enthusiasm for utopia Dahl could stray beyond what was possible given fa'aSamoa or desirable given the upheaval some of his suggestions would entail. For example, and as was typical of the time (especially on island or 'closed systems'), population growth was highlighted as an issue, with rates among 'the highest in the world'. This resulted in notes for a 'master plan for island development' with planned areas for growth, alongside areas for agriculture, fisheries, tourism and those left natural. A 'small island territory with good education system' might be an opportunity for a 'population control programme', Dahl mused, but then again 'people do not like to be guinea pigs'.[101] Similarly, Dahl pondered a complete overhaul of the matai system, with matai being converted into cultural figureheads, 'like the queen of England'—'responsible for learning and telling stories, traditions and histories,

[100] 'Samoa Fieldnotes 69–73', Box 1, ADC, 17.
[101] 'Samoa Fieldnotes 69–73', Box 1, ADC, 19.

leading villages in traditional ceremonies, [with] an advisory role to government [and] power only in prescribed areas of culture and villages activities'.[102]

American Samoa's first environmental assessment concluded in a report to Governor Haydon, with polished observations and a list of 20 interim recommendations. The report condensed Dahl's whirlwind trip and many associations, as well as his voluminous notes. 'Much of Tutuila', he wrote, 'is still in a relatively natural state… however, population growth and economic development have reached the point where major degradation of the environment is occurring in those regions where the topography has concentrated the population'.[103] He continued, outlining how 'the traditional culture was ecologically sensitive… cultural practices and taboos protected both the land and marine resources from overexploitation, and the people were close enough to their natural surroundings to see the cause-and-effect relationships of their activities'. 'With the breakdown of the traditional culture [however] traditional controls have been lost… what is needed is to develop a new ecological balance'. In a further report to the Smithsonian, Dahl reiterated the islands' suitability as an ecological unit, developmental model, and potential Smithsonian programme:

> An island is in many ways an ideal system for ecological studies. It is an approachable unit, in which the small size brings the problems within reach of study and experimentation. It also is possible to implement solutions without too great an expenditure of resources. Margaret Mead has recently called for the study of islands as ecological models, and their use as training grounds for a new generation of broadly-based ecologists.
>
> American Samoa is perhaps the ideal system for pioneering a total approach to human ecology and environmental conservation… It is small… and has most of the problems of developing nations. The population is growing rapidly and is in the process of adopting Western values. Destruction of the natural environment has only recently become serious… The nearby islands of Western Samoa would serve as an excellent control since they have been much less touched by Western influences. American Samoa has educational television reaching almost every village, providing a mechanism for implementing an environmental programme.
>
> The Smithsonian Institution is in many ways ideally suited to take on such a project. It is ecologically oriented and can draw on a wide range of expertise ranging from anthropology to

[102] 'Samoa Fieldnotes 69–73', Box 1, ADC, 17.
[103] 'Preliminary Ecological Report on Tutuila, American Samoa, 1970', Box 1, ADC.

> the natural sciences. Whether is takes on a broad project or limits itself to a narrower range of scientific contributions, its participation cannot help but benefit both the Smithsonian and the islands and people of American Samoa.[104]

American Samoa's place in this story is not surprising, nor was the pioneering nature of Dahl's study. For the scientist, a rapid transition and ready-reference with the shared culture of Western Samoa made it a pre-formed experiment, complete with a baseline and control. The disruption due to Americanised development and the degree of US control created conditions both demanding study and facilitating it. A supportive Dahl listened to Samoans, and their dissatisfaction both influenced him and meant any criticisms of Westernisation had backing. And yet, Dahl was freely able to examine the island and make experimental suggestions directly to the Governor. This tension caught Dahl balancing his personal sympathies and professional liberties. It also meant contradictions, whereby Dahl supported Samoan calls for cultural maintenance and was a critic of American imposition, and yet made suggestions which could impact the former while acting as an agent of the latter. A pioneering mentality could create progressive research even as it was sustained by a degree of assumed superiority or was made possible by an imposed colonial structure. Fortunately, in Dahl's case this was balanced with a genuine desire to see American Samoa develop in the fullness of its culture and environment. This was not true of all research.

Dahl would return to Samoa many times over the following five years, undertaking further environmental work before taking up a job at the South Pacific Commission. His work is a good place to start as it formed part of a larger entrance of Western environmentalism into the Pacific to study islands, while speaking to broader ideas. Dahl's experimental approach reflected long-held but shifting Western scientific notions that islands are both ecological repositories and developmental microcosms.[105] On islands one could supposedly preserve the

[104] 'Proposals for a Smithsonian Program in American Samoa', Box 1, ADC.
[105] For a comprehensive discussion see Edward Towle, *The Island Microcosm* (Columbia: Research Planning Institute, 1985), 5.

far-flung vestiges of biological diversity or extrapolate broader socio-ecological systems from miniature. I use this phrasing because it mirrors a debate occurring at the heart of Western environmentalism at the time, one that would play out across the Pacific Ocean.

Since its inception, nature conservation had focused mainly on protecting endangered species through national parks. Large conservation bodies such as the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for Conservation of Nature had become household names and images of elephants and pandas were synonymous with care and respect for nature. Now faced with rapidly deteriorating environments in their places of work, however, the movement became split in thinking. On the one hand, were 'preservationists', famous zoologists like Julian Huxley and Russell Train, who believed that decolonisation and development threatened environments and environmental protection alike. On the other, was a nascent second generation of leading figures like Raymond Dasmann, Barbara Ward, Lee Talbot and Maurice Strong, who, guided by ecology and its study of interrelationships, would look at 'conservation' as it related to human needs and development.[106] To generalise, amongst environmentally conscious scientists there existed a spectrum between those preserving and looking back, and those conserving while going forward. National parks were hallmarks of the older brand, while environmental impact studies aligned with the newer.

In the Pacific, the prevailing mood of international science was preservationist. At the 1966 Pacific Science Congress in Tokyo, the Pacific Science Association, International Biological Programme, and International Union for Conservation of Nature had launched the 'Islands for Science' programme, whereby uninhabited islands were set aside as nature reserves for

[106] Stephen Macekura suggests a key intellectual change away from preservationism occurred at the Founex meeting in 1971 and was be given a boost by the 1972 Stockholm Conference and Maurice Strong's heading of the newly formed United Nations Environment Programme. Stephen Macekura, 'Of Limits and Growth: Global Environmentalism and the Rise of "Sustainable Development" in the Twentieth Century' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Dartmouth College, 2013), 7, 290.

ongoing study.[107] The Pacific was a focus for Islands for Science, with the mission statement that 'ever since Galapagos served Charles Darwin so decisively in demonstrating the origin of species, the great value of undisturbed Pacific Islands as outdoor laboratories for science has been well known'. The programme gave 'practical means of ensuring the conservation of remote unpeopled islands valuable for research'.[108] Under the chairmanship of Ray Fosberg, a draft list of 33 such Pacific islands were compiled for a 1968 meeting held in Koror, Palau. At the same time, IUCN incorporated a Pacific dimension to existing national parks programmes, providing funds for regional partner organisations to do conservation work. These initiatives were spearheaded by Dr Harold Coolidge, a long time representative of PSA and current President of IUCN, leading to a 'conservation of nature' item being placed on the agenda of the South Pacific Conference by 1970.

Islands for Science thus represents one end of the spectrum, as a biogeographical or natural history view of degrading Pacific environments resulting in a preservationist response. The change scientists saw was focused on the physical environment. With an emphasis on preserving the remnants of 'remote, unpeopled' islands in an 'undisturbed' state as 'outdoor laboratories', the logic was misanthropic. This had murky ramifications for Pacific self-determination. For one thing, 'unpeopled' did not mean unknown, unowned, or unused. The values attributed to islands were not those of islanders, nor were their assessments necessarily figured into environmental management. Without overstating it, the view that islands are objects of science distant from global affairs was colonial, and that which led to their selection as nuclear testing sites.[109] Even if this project aimed to preserve rather than to destroy, the

[107] M.W Nicholson and E.W. Holdgate, 'An International Conservation Programme for the Pacific Islands', paper presented at Symposium on Island Ecosystems of the Eleventh Pacific Science Congress, Tokyo, August 25, 1966; Gina Douglas, 'Eleventh Technical Meeting Papers and Proceedings, New Delhi, India, 25–28 November 1969', *International Biological Programme: The CT Survey of Undisturbed Oceanic Islands* 1 (1970), 200–228.
[108] 'List of Islands Proposed for International Scientific Supervision', *IBP Technical Meeting on Conservation of Pacific Islands, Koror, Palau Islands, November 1968* (Morges: IUCN, 1971).
[109] Pacific science has had a long and uneasy alliance with the military, which often provided motivation, funds or access for research. For example, the documentation of the thousands of uninhabited Pacific islands was an

justification for scientific preservationism played on notions of universal value, implying world heritage and thus responsibility and ownership. Coupled with scientific expertise, this resulted in both a mandate for, and a confidence in, Western scientific preservationism that soon passed beyond uninhabited islands.

Arthur Dahl entered the Pacific as a next-generation conservationist and his work represents the other end of the spectrum. Of course, its progressiveness was as much a negotiation as it was enlightenment and looking at Dahl's associations in American Samoa reveals it was clearly co-created. Pacific people compelled the understanding that environmental management must incorporate aspects of culture, existing environmental knowledge, and the legitimate developmental desires of the Global South. Moreover, while environmentalists came to the Pacific with ideas and training behind them, their experiences of the region often modified these, with those ideas then re-entering global debates.

In this sense, Dahl was correct in that American Samoa *did* represent a case study—of disruptive and dominating change—and *did* develop programmes with broader application, so it is a good place to establish themes for a regional exploration. The Smithsonian work is notable because Samoans and Dahl saw changes in a related and complementary way. For both parties, changes in the social environment precipitated all others, and remedying the cultural clash was the primary concern. Thus, Fuimaono saw the ocean in the context of political domination; Dahl saw erosion and pollution as symptoms of declining traditional ecological values caused by Americanisation. Their solutions, independence and a negotiated value

American WWII and reconstruction initiative undertaken by the Bishop Museum scientist, E H Bryan Jr. *South Pacific Bulletin* 14, no. 1 (1964). The eventual validation of Darwin's subsidence hypothesis of coral reef development was proved by drilling on Bikini, Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls prior to nuclear testing. C.D. Woodroffe, 'Subsidence Hypothesis of Reef Development', in *Encyclopaedia of Modern Coral Reefs*, ed., D. Hopley (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011).

system, easily translate back into assessments of a disputed environment. We might say, then, that in American Samoa, cars eroded culture before land and fish could be freedom.

The following section explores how the other, earlier 'Islands for Science' approach to Pacific environments found its way onto the Pacific political agenda. This was embodied in a South Pacific Commission 'conservation of nature' item which ultimately became the Pacific's first regional environment meeting, the 'Regional Symposium on the Conservation of Nature—Reefs and Lagoons'. Through this process scientific preservationism would interact with Pacific people who saw their islands in a different light, that of political independence and the nuclear threat. My focus is on the way preservationism gained colonial support as a seemingly apolitical approach to the disputed environments of islands, before conservation gained the ascendency with the endorsement of Pacific people.



Figure 2—Photos of villages near Puleia, Savai'i (top) and views of Apia harbour and Palolo Deep (bottom). December 1969. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*



Figure 3—Road building on Tutuila using the cut and fill method, with an abandoned road above Fagasa (top). Hillside agriculture on the north shore of Tutuila above Fagasa Bay (bottom), January 1970. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*



Figure 4– Badi Ala'i assists with reef transects (left). Diving amongst comparatively healthy coral on the south coast of Tutuila (right), January 1970. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*

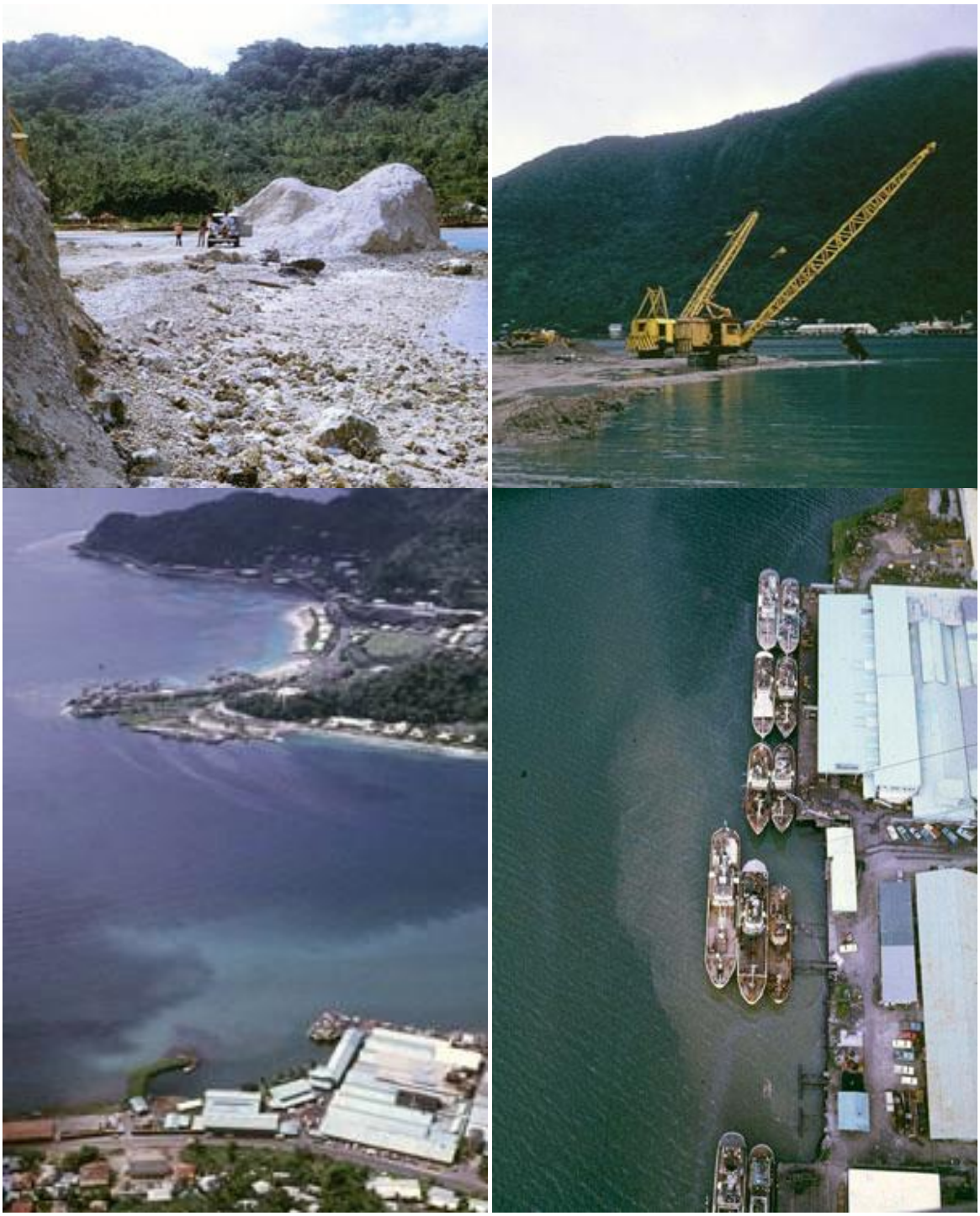


Figure 5—Coastal dredging for roading and construction destroys nearshore reefs (top). The mouth of Pago Pago harbour showing canneries with water discolouration due to siltation and oil pollution (bottom), January 1970, *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*

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The Rain in Suva

On the eve of Fijian independence, September 1970, delegates met in Suva for the Tenth South Pacific Conference. With anti-nuclear protestors gathered outside the venue and reports out of Suva expecting a combative Fijian delegation, there was a warm air of anticipation entirely independent of the drought scorching Fiji at the time. Word had slipped that Fijian Chief Minister Ratu Mara intended the nuclear question to be broached at the conference, and that, regardless of colonial reluctance, the Pacific *would* be talking politics.[110] Added to these sensitivities was the question of the South Pacific Commission's finances. Metropolitan countries had set budgets that were beginning to look paltry beside those of UN agencies and increasing bilateral aid. The Commission needed to prove its worth and relevance in the era of Pacific independence and faced reform or division.

No one was left waiting or wondering when multiple delegates used their opening addresses to take aim at the Commission's ineffective work, miserly budget, and the Conference's apolitical purview. American Samoa's Fofō Iosefa Sunia said the Commission was 'spread too thin', 'trying to do too many projects [and] not really doing them well', adding that training courses were 'little more than just a trip for the officer doing the course'.[111] Papua New Guinea's delegate Oala Oala-Rarua accused the Commission of being inadequately resourced and thus incapable of meeting the development needs of the Pacific territories. The French Polynesia

[110] The Canberra Agreement establishing the SPC in 1947 stipulated that the organisation should be technical and thus political discussions were forbidden in conference sessions. This was rigidly upheld, for instance in the case of West Papuan calls for independence at the 1962 Conference. 'Report of the New Zealand Delegation to the 1970 Meeting of the South Pacific Conference and South Pacific Commission, Suva, Fiji, 14 September -3 October 1970', 'International Affairs: South Pacific Commission - South Pacific Conferences – Reports', ABHS950 W4627 2817, 116/6/3 Part 1, R20753286, Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, Wellington [hereafter ANZ].

[111] 'Spread too Thin', *Fiji Times,* September 22, 1970, 19.

representative Romuald Allain attacked the other extreme, stating his islands were 'artificially overdeveloped' by an influx of French testing and tourism.[112] When French Commissioner Henri Nettre objected to the mention of nuclear testing, deeming it political and outside of the bounds of discussion, he was rebutted by Cook Islands' Joe Williams, who argued they were politicians to a person, in a conference of islands defined by their political status—how could they be expected *not* to talk politics?[113] As clouds gathered signalling an approaching storm, similar stirred between territory and metropole.

The drought broke on the 21st of September, rain pounding down on Suva's Civic Centre where sheltered delegates moved to consider the Commission's work programme.[114] Project by project they progressed over the following days, a Conference of health directors got $5,000 while $20,000 was earmarked for fisheries development. Next, the Conference heard a proposal for a 'Regional Symposium on the Conservation of Nature', to be held in Noumea in 1971.[115]

Jonati Mavoa threw Fiji's full support behind the proposed symposium, stating that Pacific Islanders supported a clean environment and that although their territories were spread widely, they were not exempt from pollution which threatened the waters of the Pacific and its marine life. 'Recently', he continued, 'nuclear tests were carried out in the Pacific and in Fiji public protests were made. My delegation has been instructed to raise this matter, not to start a long

[112] John Eccles, 'Not so much togetherness now', *Pacific Islands Monthly* 41, no. 10 (1970), 18–21.
[113] Eccles, 'Not so much togetherness now'.
[114] This was a standard procedure evolved to give Pacific leaders some oversight over the activities undertaken by SPC's technically driven (and historically metropolitan dominated) Secretariat.
[115] This was Harold Coolidge's initiative. He had been involved in the establishment of the South Pacific Commission and was a former member of its Research Council. Among his associates was Dr Guy Loison, the current SPC Programme Director of Health. Together, Coolidge and Loison had attended numerous South Pacific Conferences and the 1966 Tokyo Congress where 'Islands for Science' was established. The two men would serve as an institutional bridge between the work of the Commission and that of PSA and IUCN. The proposal concerned 'bacterial and chemical pollution of land, rivers and lagoons; the protection of birds and game; the restriction of shell collecting… the indiscriminate burning of forests [and] the blasting of reefs', as well as the predatory effects of the coral-eating crown of thorns starfish. 'Press Release, South Pacific Conference – 7th Day' (Noumea: SPC, 1970); *Report of the Ninth South Pacific Conference, Noumea 8th– 18th October* (Noumea: SPC, 1969), para 27.

and controversial discussion, but to let it be known that we have fears of the likely danger to human life.'[116] While there were conflicting opinions over what 'permissible' levels of radioactivity were, there was 'no difference of opinion that this activity is harmful'.[117] And while, 'we have been told by eminent scientists that radioactivity in our region is only 2.3 percent of the permissible danger level, other scientists of equal eminence dispute this figure. The very real fear we have is that marine life may be affected.' The proposed seminar, Mavoa hoped, might attract international agencies to 'make objective tests of radioactivity'. A New Zealand report captures the reaction, when:

> The French Senior Commissioner, in a rather patronising manner, replied that he did not want to discuss the matter in this forum—that fallout from nuclear tests was unimportant when compared with other sources of pollution… There was, he concluded, more reason to be concerned at the amount of radiation given off by certain luminous wristwatches and alarm clocks.[118]

Before the New Hebrides delegate could add anything, the conference was moved on. $3,000 was approved for the Symposium.

This was not the end of the matter, however. In an act of apparent collusion, the conference chair Sidiq Koya, leader of Fiji's opposition party, stalled the conference during the 'other business' item. Meanwhile, a group of anti-nuclear protestors took their places in the gallery and the Samoan alternative delegate Lofipo Ropati asked the Commission's Programme Director of Health, Dr Guy Loison, to comment on health hazards arising from exposure to testing. Put on the spot, the question was referred to the United Kingdom and New Zealand which both operated monitoring programmes. Seeing the conversation drift back towards a discussion of 'permissibility', the Papuan delegate Oala Oala-Rarua once again seized the initiative. He declared that, regardless of the levels, Pacific Islanders deplored the testing of nuclear weapons in the Pacific and that the metropolitan governments must respect this. Freshly

[116] Press Release, 7th Day, 1970, *Report of the Ninth South Pacific Conference.*
[117] Press Release, 7th Day, 1970, *Report of the Ninth South Pacific Conference.*
[118] 'Report of the New Zealand Delegation', R20753286, ANZ.

emboldened, Fiji's Mavoa re-joined the offensive, outlining what he saw as a 'contradiction between claims by France and others that there was no danger to life from tests, and the fact that they were carried out in the Pacific, rather than the Atlantic or Sahara'.[119]

Seeing the debate develop beyond control, the French Senior Commissioner insisted the matter was only for metropolitan governments to discuss and fell outside of the jurisdiction of the conference. The chairman promptly ruled in favour of discussion, stating that because nuclear testing affected the welfare of the Pacific Islanders it was in order. Spectacularly and without hesitation, the French delegation walked out. The Conference was stunned. This was the first time overtly political discussion had been upheld and the result was telling. The New Hebrides' delegate had the last word, berating Nettre's coattails and pointing out the contradiction between metropolitan concern for Pacific welfare as stated in the Canberra Agreement and their readiness to carry out nuclear tests in the region.

The drought was broken, but as Mavoa made his storming stand during the deluge I imagine many Fijians were taking cover anxiously. Though their island was parched the rain brought little relief; they feared what it would do to their bodies. In May, Fijians had read with alarm that Strontium-90 levels in Suva's rainfall increased fivefold following the 1968 French tests. Anti-nuclearism quickly became a major issue in Fiji, and its SPC delegation acted on the advice of the newly formed Against Testing on Mururoa (ATOM) Committee. The author of the Fiji Times article in question, Dr Graham Baines, an environmental biologist at the University of the South Pacific, had been invited to speak by the Student Christian Movement.[120] After a larger public meeting saw 600 people gathered in the new Suva town hall to protest French testing, the ATOM Committee was established formally in June 1970 to

[119] 'Report of the New Zealand Delegation', R20753286, ANZ.
[120] Dr Baines had studied the science of radioactivity, particularly Strontium-90 and the movement of radiation through the atmosphere for the Canadian government and in the UK respectively. 'Ban that French Bomb', *Pacific Islands Monthly* 41, no. 7 (1970), 33–34.

keep up momentum and represent Fijian groups with anti-nuclear interests: namely the Fiji Young Woman's Christian Association, Student Christian Movement, University of the South Pacific Students Association, Fiji Council of Churches, and eventually the Pacific Council of Churches.[121] The Committee's first chairperson was Dr Baines, joined by incoming secretary Suliana Siwatibau, also a lecturer at USP and expert on plant genetics.[122] The two ecologists would quickly become a force in Fijian and Pacific environmental politics, and were responsible for the anti-nuclear arguments circulating in Fiji in late 1970. ATOM published material that refuted claims made by France (as well as British, Australian and New Zealand testing stations) that radiation levels were 'permissible', highlighting the damage even 'small' amounts of radiation could do. If figures reached 'permissible' levels, they asserted, Fiji could expect 170 excess deaths every year, mainly amongst infants and the unborn.[123] In the days before the Conference itself ATOM produced information pamphlets for delegates, protested outside of (and inside of) the conference buildings, and briefed Fiji's delegate Mavoa, who referenced the committee's work and its 'scientists of equal eminence'.[124]

The 1970 South Pacific Conference was pivotal for politics and environment in the region and its effects need elaboration. Most apparent is the political. France's walk-out laid bare priorities and allegiances, and while budgetary support seemed doubtful, French nuclear stubbornness was certain. Equally clear however, was that Pacific leaders would no longer tolerate being

[121] The public meeting was chaired by Dr David Lancaster, lead gynaecologist at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva and drew the attendance of prominent health experts from the Fiji Medical Department and Ratu Edward Cakobau, the Minister for Labour, on behalf of Chief Minister Ratu Kamisese Mara. Walter Johnson and Sione Tupouniua, 'Against French Nuclear Testing: The A.T.O.M. Committee', *The Journal of Pacific History* 11, no. 4 (1976), 213–216.
[122] Suliana Siwatibau, interview with the author, Fiji, December 1, 2019.
[123] ATOM also noted that 'permissible' levels were open to manipulation or provided a blanket assurance that was not always met. The levels had been doubled in the case of Strontium-90 by the British authorities after their own tests in 1961 and 'permissibility' covered the French even after 1967 when Iodine-131 levels recorded in milk collected in Apia were three-and-a-half times the permissible levels. 'Letter from ATOM to delegates to the SPC 1970', September 14, 1970, Kathleen Hancock Papers [hereafter KHP], MS-Papers-8286-038B, Alexander Turnbull Library [hereafter ATL].
[124]'Letter from ATOM to delegates', KHP, ATL. See also, Yoko S. Ogashiwa, *Microstates and Nuclear Issues: Regional Cooperation in the Pacific* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1991), 47.

silenced for scraps. The 1970 Conference hastened the establishment of the South Pacific Forum as an alternative regional organisation body allowing political discussion.[125] Similarly invigorated by the Conference and its clear demonstration of Pacific independence, anti-nuclear sentiment was bolstered throughout the region. Organisation by the ATOM Committee in Fiji ultimately led to the 1975 Conference for a Nuclear Free Pacific in Suva, the first gathering of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement (NFIP). The NFIP movement advanced a regional politics opposing an indivisible nuclear colonialism that was hugely successful and presented a genuine threat to the nuclear ambitions of colonial powers. I have argued elsewhere that the interrelationships and movement of NFIP activists within an Indigenised ocean force us to reconsider the Pacific, both as a functioning entity and as an environment of embodied and very present pasts.[126] The environmental sentiments of ATOM do not carry so far at this early stage, but they might be considered as a propellant, bringing attention to issues of environmental justice and regional solidarity in the face of an insistent nuclear colonialism.

The Tenth Conference brought together competing visions for the form environmentalism would take in the region. The Symposium, with its ties to international science and conservation, attracted support from the Pacific but not necessarily because of its content. Instead, it offered a natural segue to a critique of French testing and demonstrated a refusal to separate politics from environment. ATOM's background research and advocacy warned of an environment of interconnectedness and outside imposition, where the rain in Suva poured down a nuclearised Pacific Ocean. The solution leaders saw was independence. This lay in stark contrast to the perceived need to preserve outdoor laboratories for science. In this sense,

[125] Greg Fry, *Framing the Islands: Power and Diplomatic Agency in Pacific Regionalism* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019), 151–66.
[126] Marco de Jong, 'Ki te la Pacific! Get out of the Pacific!': Anti-Nuclear and Independence Activism in Pacific New Zealand, 1970–1985' (unpublished Masters thesis, University of Auckland, 2018).

Suva functions as a statement of new priorities, an early Pacific challenge to Western preservationism. Whether the planned Symposium would reflect these priorities remained to be seen.

Preserving Pacific Apoliticism

The Regional Symposium on the Conservation of Nature—Reefs and Lagoons (Noumea, August 5–14, 1971) was a first attempt at a regional approach to environmental management in the Pacific. With a wide scope and high profile, it served as the Pacific's first major ecological stocktake and gave a technical basis to further cooperation and regional initiatives. But while the following paragraphs highlight the Symposium's scientific achievements, we should also note the assumptions and omissions that arguably prevented it being truly of the region. In the case of nickel mining and nuclear testing, French pressure interacted with an international orthodoxy to preserve an apoliticism that was antithetical to Pacific environmental concerns expressed in Suva.

Sponsored by IUCN and timed as a precursor to the Pacific Science Congress in Sydney, the Regional Symposium was a showcase for global island science. Chaired by Professor Bourlière of the Faculté de Médecine, Paris, the Symposium featured amongst its 72 participants the likes of reef ecologist Robert Johannes, naturalist Kazimierz Wodzicki, geographer François Doumenge, ecologist Graham Baines, and marine biologists René Catala, Dr B. Salvat, and Dr Marie-Hélène Sachet. They were joined by the Commission Secretariat and an impressive IUCN delegation including President Harold Coolidge, Deputy Director Frank G. Nicholls, and Senior Ecologist Raymond Dasmann. Discussion was wide-ranging, encompassing problems of demography, such as over-intensification of agriculture or urbanisation; problems of resource exploitation related to industry, mining, forestry, fish dynamiting or pesticide use;

and problems of social change that eroded culture and caused pollution through tourism or car use.[127]

With Commission involvement and a mandate to establish an environmental programme, delegates strived to turn papers into practical outcomes. Although many lamented the lack of Pacific participation (with only 9 of 19 countries and territories represented), delegates Pemerika Tauiliili of American Samoa and Tomasi Simiki of Tonga made powerful interventions on erosion, pest introduction, and tourism. Kazimierz Wodzicki, an ecologist with research ties to Tokelau and Niue, stressed practicality in his report to New Zealand authorities. He noted that of the Symposium's 21 recommendations, the last two were the most significant and tangible. They proposed regional environmental education via workshops and distributable materials, and an environmental office at the Commission responsible for advising territorial governments, liaising with international organisations, and incorporating ecological principles into its development planning. Wodzicki was proved correct. Both initiatives were popular with territorial representatives and when the Commission's straitened budget allowed it convened a 1973 Sub-regional Seminar on Conservation Education in Guam and hired a Regional Ecological Advisor in 1974.[128]

The Regional Symposium was scientifically significant and practically foundational but owed a great deal to outside assistance. With limited territorial buy-in and dominant expatriate personalities its character was firmly international. This was not necessarily negative—with the idea, personnel and funds supplied, international involvement was elevating and ultimately enabling. The strong and successful part that IUCN played in the Symposium gave profile and

[127] South Pacific Commission, *Regional Symposium on Conservation of Nature - Reefs and Lagoons Proceedings and Papers* (Noumea: SPC, 1973), 137.
[128] SPC had $8,000 allocated for post-Symposium activities, which was spent on the education seminar. Duncan MacIntyre to Michael Proctor, September 12, 1972, 'International Affairs: South Pacific Commission – Work Programme – General Projects: Conservation of Nature 1971 – 1977', ABHS950 W4627 2833, 116/10/7/28 Part 1, R20753433, ANZ.

meant it was able to commit funds to future initiatives. The drawback of this international character, however, was the eliding of Pacific specificity. This is critical and would become a recurring theme over the following years as the IUCN emphasis on national parks permeated environmental management. Wodzicki recognised it early when he wrote:

> Everyone appreciated the ideas of the IUCN and [International Biological Programme] people of securing a number of islands for science and of the necessary international legislation, but the time spent on these items prejudiced discussion on some urgent problems affecting most of the Pacific Islands. By tacitly admitting that these islands for science may in future be the only islands left in their natural state, the [international] representatives may have been out of focus with regard to some immediate problems of paramount interest to territorial representatives.[129]

The Islands for Science concept vied for budgetary and political attention with pressing Pacific concerns. The bigger picture is that the Symposium itself embodied preservationist and 'high science' values. The assuredness of mandate and expertise that led to Islands for Science, is the same which insisted on the authority or relevance of the Symposium, even when it was short on Pacific people or priorities.

I would like to suggest here two ideas that help to elaborate this ambivalence. The first is that although the Symposium was a success and generated positive initiatives, it probably was not what Pacific leaders envisaged when they gave support to the concept in Suva. The second is that certain forms of environmentalism were more politically and scientifically acceptable than others, especially in international fora. This leads back to the idea that there were competing visions for environmentalism in the Pacific at the time, and to a loose thread in the archival record that I would like to tease out.

Given that its introduction led to one of the most heated exchanges in SPC history, it is remarkable that the Symposium progressed almost entirely without controversy. The limited

[129] 'Kazimierz Wodzicki – Report on The Symposium on Conservation of Nature: Reef and Lagoons, Noumea, New Caledonia, Wellington, NZ, October 1971', 'Papers Relating to the South Pacific Commission', CCP, MS-Papers-6869-36, ATL.

Pacific turnout and the chosen venue in the French territory of New Caledonia certainly contributed, but I say *almost* entirely because there were a few recorded instances that hint at friction. The first relate to discussions of nuclear fallout, initially broached as part of Fiji's territorial report, where:

> Mention was also made of health hazards attributable to nuclear testing in the region, which had been reflected by a fivefold increase in radioactivity of Suva's rainwater after the tests in 1968 and discussed in a paper privately circulated by Dr G. Baines.[130]

During a later discussion of air pollution, Baines reiterated the threat from 'the topical subject of radio-isotope pollution from nuclear tests in French Polynesia' and suggested that a monitoring centre located in the South Pacific with an associated network of sampling stations was essential.[131] In this effort, he was joined by Nacha Siren of the US Trust Territory, who, recalling the testing in the Marshall Islands in the 1950s, 'expressed concern that continuation of nuclear testing in the region might repeat the adverse effects on man, who ranked as an endangered species in this connexion'.

These contributions were likely unwelcome, politically, and even scientifically. IUCN Senior Ecologist, Ray Dasmann recalls how politically sensitive the French government were, even to international scientists:

> I caused more than a little controversy with the comments I made in my address when I focused in on New Caledonia…[and criticised the strip mining of nickel ore]…the French were very upset by my remarks. After the formal meeting was ended, the governor of New Caledonia… turned away and did not shake my hand or greet me. The next morning, the local newspaper described the conference under the heading "Swiss go home!" Fortunately, they did not know I was American.[132]

However, Wodzicki suggests that both nickel and nuclear radiation may also have been deemed scientifically irrelevant. IUCN Deputy Director General Frank Nicholls reportedly introduced

[130] *Regional Symposium on Conservation of Nature - Reefs and Lagoons Proceedings and Papers*, 16.
[131] *Regional Symposium on Conservation of Nature - Reefs and Lagoons Proceedings and Papers*, 52.
[132] Raymond F. Dasmann, and Paul R. Ehrlich, *Called by the Wild: The Autobiography of a Conservationist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 167–170.

the item on air pollution by stating that problems arising from nickel production were '[surprising] and against expectation', and furthermore, that 'he thought that problems arising from the release of radioactive materials were not worth discussing at this Symposium'.[133]

Recalling Jonati Mavoa's support for a Symposium and suggestion that, as a corollary, independent agencies might monitor the effects of nuclear testing, in reality Noumea and its international involvement facilitated almost the opposite. None of the Symposium's resolutions mention nuclear issues in any form, and the only mention of monitoring pollutants concerned "pesticides and other toxic chemicals". This is unlikely to be a coincidence.

France shut down unfavourable discussion at the Symposium, deliberately cultivating an environmental programme that precluded, or distracted from, critical study of nuclear testing. It was unable to countenance the alternative and supporting a particular brand of environmentalism was a way of acting in the Pacific whilst preserving its nuclear ambitions. In addition, the involvement of international organisations in Pacific environmental matters served to pull discussion and action towards an orthodoxy that did not align with the environmental priorities of most Pacific people. Nuclear discussions were passed over, developmental problems competed for time with preservationism, and Indigenous environmental knowledge did not yet make the agenda. At this stage at least, islands were firmly for science.



[133] *Regional Symposium on Conservation of Nature - Reefs and Lagoons Proceedings and Papers*, 18–19.

Conservation and Co-option

International conservation and demonstrations of Pacific self-determination changed location and focus shortly after the Noumea Symposium. The Australian and New Zealand governments, supported by IUCN, engendered a national park movement in the Pacific that would peak in the mid-1970s as the (Apia) Convention on Conservation in the South Pacific. But although Pacific nations took readily to the idea, a regional mood of political assertiveness reinvigorated by the South Pacific Forum and an increasingly self-reflexive Western conservation would challenge the national parks orthodoxy. At the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves in Wellington this assertiveness questioned parks' strictness and offered Indigenous alternatives. This display of a nascent Pacific environmentalism was reinforced by the anticolonial actions of the Cook Islands when it came to signing the Apia Convention.

At the same time scientists gathered in Noumea, a very *political* meeting was taking place in Wellington, New Zealand. From August 5th–7th, 1971 the leaders of the independent Pacific met for the first South Pacific Forum, initiating a sea change in regional politics. Although born from the desire amongst Pacific leaders to convene independently and without censorship, the Forum reflected more than a dissatisfaction with the Commission, which was still valued for its long history, technical expertise and Pacific-wide membership.[134] The Forum was a statement of ownership over key sectors, evolving out of the Pacific Islands Producers Association which had explored common marketing problems and attempted collective bargaining for Pacific crops since 1965.[135] In this sense, the motivations to talk freely and do shared business stemmed from a deeper, *principled* self-determination. Beyond the 'effort to

[134] Albert Henry believed SPC should be left as a technical organisation and that the insertion of politics would be detrimental to its technical role, which was valued especially by the smaller islands. 'Visit of Chief Minister of Fiji', 'Pacific Islands: Political Affairs – Political Forum: General, 1970 – 1971', ABHS950 W4627, 4189 301/4/2/1 Part 1, R20765325, ANZ.

[135] The idea for a Pacific leaders' Forum was mooted through multiple PIPA meetings, in backroom SPC discussions and also reportedly during Fiji's independence celebrations. Fry, *Framing the Islands*, 104–107.

gain control of decision-making structures' and '[establish] Indigenous political agency' was a regional vision of decolonisation that was territorially broad and included the issue of French nuclear testing.

On the surface, the Forum allowed an independent Pacific bloc to collaborate on foreign policy and pursue aid relationships with rim countries they now saw as equals. But while supportive, Australia and New Zealand also looked to capitalise and ensure they were included in, or were the conduit for, this new political regionalism. New Zealand Prime Minister Keith Holyoake suggested his country assume the posture of 'close neighbours involved in the region, [and] friendly and reliable counsellors'.[136] This neighbourly counsel invariably meant reigning in anti-nuclear impulses in a way that negated any stated support for self-determination or equality. A confidential briefing to New Zealand Forum delegates reveals a deep expediency, stating that,

> We have not reacted favourably to suggestions of joint action against [French nuclear testing] because we have felt that the possibility of damage to our interests elsewhere far outweighs the chances of any such action being effective in bringing France to abandon the tests…
>
> A call for joint action against the tests by Fiji or other Pacific states would therefore be distinctly embarrassing for us. On the one hand, if we responded positively we would risk an unfavourable French reaction (and stand little chance of stopping the tests), while on the other hand, if we refuse we would possibly lose a considerable amount of our influence in the Pacific…
>
> In May 1970 Dr Graham Baines, a scientist of the University of the South Pacific and chairman of the ATOM committee, created some alarm in Fiji by stating that there had been a vast increase in radioactivity levels in Fijian rainwater since the beginning of the 1970 tests [sic]… The Director of the National Radiation Laboratory wrote to Dr Baines asking for an explanation of this statement and discovered that Dr Baines was referring to short-term peak levels of radioactivity and not long term average levels… Dr Baines was therefore misusing data in a way calculated to arouse anti-test agitation…
>
> Dr Baines and his committee have been trying to pressure the Fijian Government into arranging for concerted action against the tests by other countries including New Zealand. The Fijian Government has resisted this pressure so far, although the Fijian delegate did criticise

[136] 'Confidential Bulletin 1971/7 Item II South Pacific', 'New Zealand Affairs: Foreign Policy – General – New Zealand Interests in Pacific 1966 – 1973', ABHS950 W4627, 1405 56/1/3 Part 2, R22475639, ANZ.

> the tests at the last meeting of the South Pacific Commission. The net result of this manoeuvre was a walk-out by the French delegation.
>
> The question of French tests is not on the agenda for the Forum. It could be, however, that the island leaders will wish to discuss it in some way or, as pointed out above, they may come under pressure from the [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament] or other groups (who are in contact with protest groups in Fiji, for example). The situation, moreover, is changed in that Fiji is now a member of the United Nations, and the power of initiative in that forum no longer lies with New Zealand and Australia alone… If discussion takes place, or indeed if there are any stirrings at all in the group on the subject it would be appropriate to feed in the paper prepared by the National Radiation Laboratory… This will ensure that any discussion of the health aspects is soundly based…
>
> If it were to appear that the Fijians were thinking in terms of action in the United Nations, an attempt should first be made to persuade them that there is little profit in such a course… It must be recognised, nevertheless, that if Fiji were to step out in the United Nations, New Zealand, for reason of its standing in the Pacific, domestic pressures, and consistency with its past attitudes would have little option but to join in…[137]

While the briefing is striking for its realpolitik, the nervy anticipation of Fijian action demonstrates the subversive power of the Forum and groups such as ATOM. The rubbishing of Baines' science shows a fundamental disconnect—nuclearism considered permissible—but is also slightly ironic, given that Holyoake's National Party would be swept at the next election partly on nuclear matters, and that New Zealand would touch on this same science when it brought a case to the International Court of Justice and sent a frigate to Moruroa the following year to monitor French tests. New Zealand's ambivalent attitude to nuclearism surrounded French influence on its access to the European market and was a politics of convenience. An insistence that discussions be 'soundly based' extended to environmentalism more broadly, where it soon promoted a convenient orthodoxy.

While the first South Pacific Forum mostly dealt with questions of security, trade, shipping, education and tourism over its three-day meeting, there was a curious addition on its second day. Two representatives from the NZ Department of Lands and Survey, Director General, R

[137] 'South Pacific Forum… Brief for New Zealand Delegation', 'Papers relating to the South Pacific Commission', CCP, MS-Papers-6869-33, ATL.

J MacLachlan and P.H.C. 'Bing' Lucas, the Director of National Parks and Reserves, gave a presentation to the assembled leaders on 'National parks and equivalent reserves in the South Pacific'. Holyoake's 'friendly and reliable counsel' was about to get an environmental spin as New Zealand seeded a preservation movement in the Pacific through exporting the national park model.

'The concept of reservation of outstanding natural and historic areas was a worldwide one', the two men began, 'but at the moment the oceanic area of the South Pacific was something of a void as far as national parks were concerned'.[138] Such parks, MacLachlan and Lucas argued, 'preserved a nation's heritage in scenery, flora, fauna and history'; 'provided for public recreation and enjoyment'; 'retained unmodified areas for comparison with developed land' and 'stimulated tourism'.[139] They outlined the international criteria for national parks, developed by IUCN, stipulating that:

> A national park is a relatively large area:
>
> 1) where one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation, where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educative and recreative interest or which contains a natural landscape of great beauty; and
> 2) where the highest competent authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or to eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area and to enforce effectively the respect of ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features which have lead to its establishment; and
> 3) where visitors are allowed to enter, under special conditions, for inspirational, educative, cultural and recreative purposes.[140]

The men predicted that the national park movement would gain momentum in 1972 when America observed the centennial of Yellowstone National Park and that New Zealand could assist should Pacific nations wish to take up the concept. For example, NZ personnel might

[138] 'National Parks and Equivalent Reserves in the South Pacific', 'Department Of Lands And Survey – National Parks – International Relations – NP's + Equivalent Reserves In Sth Pacific', AANS7613 W5942 92, NP/1/14/5, R24339014, ANZ.
[139] National Parks and Equivalent Reserves', R24339014, ANZ.
[140] 'National Parks and Equivalent Reserves', R24339014, ANZ.

provide legislative and site-selection advice as well as training for rangers at a later stage. A range of glossy literature on New Zealand's own national park programme was left with the leaders, who passed a vote of thanks.

If the New Zealanders had looked into the region before declaring 'something of a void', Queen Elizabeth National Park, on the slopes of Mt. Austen in the Solomon Islands may have given some pause. Established in 1953 with legislation borrowed from an African game park, it provided for nothing beyond prohibiting the taking of large game, of which there was none. By 1973, land claims and farming by Guadalcanal people from an expanding Honiara had eroded any pretence of management or 'conservation value' and it was reduced from 15,000 to 2,000 acres.[141] As with Islands for Science, preservationism came to the Pacific with outside priorities foremost. National parks' celebrated history and international acceptance meant that their appropriateness for the Pacific was never questioned.

Following the Forum meeting, the national park movement took off in the South Pacific. Western Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and American Samoa joined New Zealand and Australia at the Second World Conference on National Parks, held at Yellowstone and Grand Teton in 1972. A Fijian delegation toured New Zealand's West Coast parks. Multiple Pacific states also expressed interest in attending a 1972 Australian National Parks Conference where there was a session devoted to Pacific national parks.[142] Pacific delegates from Samoa, New Hebrides, Nauru, and Papua New Guinea attended and the Sydney conference heard a paper from PNG on conservation in developing countries.[143] Preparations were made for a full-scale South Pacific National Parks and Reserves Conference, to be held in Wellington in 1975.

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[141] *British Solomon Islands Protectorate News Sheet*, May 7, 1973.
[142] 'Department Of Lands and Survey - National Parks - International Relations - NP's + Equivalent Reserves In Sth Pacific', AANS 7613 W5942 92, NP/1/14/5, R24339014, ANZ.
[143] While mix-ups with invitations meant the Pacific delegates from Samoa and Papua New Guinea arrived to a conference that was not expecting them and had wiped their item from the agenda, when this was realised the organisers hurriedly reinstated the session. 'NP's + Equivalent Reserves In Sth Pacific', R24339014, ANZ.

Of the interested Pacific Islands, Western Samoa pursued national parks especially and became closely involved with IUCN as a state member. As yet, Samoa had no 'protected areas', excepting Mt Vaea which housed Tusitala Robert Louis Stevenson's tomb. In October 1974, ecologist Dr Colin Holloway and physical planner C.F. Floyd visited Samoa, resulting in a series of (thirty-seven) parks proposals and legislation providing for their possible establishment.[144] The legislation passed soon after, and Samoans looked forward to declaring their first parks. During the tour, Holloway persuaded the Samoan Government of another opportunity. As the newest state member of IUCN and the only one in the Pacific, the proposal ran, it would be fitting if Samoa would host the signing of IUCN's newest initiative: a planned 'Convention on Conservation in the South Pacific Region'. This treaty would provide for parks establishment region-wide and the signing of a major international agreement in the Pacific would be highly significant. Samoa gladly took up the offer.

Although the Pacific showed enthusiasm for national parks and Western-style environmental management, there was a degree of orchestration happening behind the scenes. Long before Holloway approached the Samoan government, IUCN Deputy Director General Frank Nicholls had visited Wellington and decided, with Lucas and MacLachlan, on the need for a Convention and that it ought to be signed in Western Samoa. This was necessary, Nicholls wrote, 'since neither Australia nor New Zealand wished to take an overt lead in the South Pacific (countering the "big brother" image)'.[145] Nicholls' trip even came before consultation with the South Pacific Commission, despite the organisations' previous collaboration at the Noumea Symposium and IUCN anticipation that SPC would provide secretarial services to the

[144] Floyd represented the United Nations Development Advisory Team (UNDAT) which funded the mission. It must be noted that while the proposals were extensive (with 37 suggested sites) there was a disconnection between the legislation, which provided only for parks on government lands and the proposed sites, the majority of which were on customary land. 'A National Parks System for Western Samoa', ADC, 17.

[145] 'Discussion with Ministry of Foreign Affairs Officials During Visit by Mr FG Nicholls…', 'South Pacific Land – Proposed Convention On Conservation In The South Pacific 1974 – 1977', AANS 6095 W5491 465, 22/5362, R16130706, ANZ; FG Nicholls to Don McMichael, September 27, 1974, R16130706, ANZ.

Convention meeting.[146] In addition, Nicholls had pre-circulated a draft convention to Australia and New Zealand parks officials (unbeknownst to NZ's Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and requested prompt feedback, 'anxious to avoid the feeling on the part of other Governments that there have been official consultations between IUCN and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand before the draft was sent to all Governments concerned'.[147]

Moves by IUCN and Australasian national parks officials were designed to make national parks initiatives appear Pacific-inspired. The implications of this behaviour are obviously colonial and run counter to notions of self-determination, however *what* was being determined is also significant. The nature of the relationship between Frank Nicholls, Bing Lucas and Australian Secretary of Environment Don McMichael meant their common interest in national park promotion was foremost and prioritised over other environmental measures. When Nicholls met NZ officials in February 1974, he followed up with a letter outlining the convention, which he had considered since Noumea and would be drafted by himself:

> We have in mind a rather broadly based convention which would cover action by the contracting States to undertake conservation action within their own territories, particularly to preserve representative samples of the ecosystems occurring in those territories, the creation of national parks and other reserves, the conservation of endangered species, and other related conservation issues… This treaty could be modelled along the lines of the [1940 Western Hemisphere] treaty covering conservation in North, Middle and South America that was concluded many years ago...
>
> Canberra indicates a considerable interest in such a convention. As you know, Western Samoa has recently become a state member of IUCN; we thought it might be appropriate for IUCN approach the Government of Western Samoa suggesting that it might sponsor such a convention and might convene an intergovernmental meeting to conclude the convention.[148]

A NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs internal memo gives a more concerning take on the *particular* form the convention would take, reporting:

[146] RJ MacLachlan to GFD Betham, April 19, 1974, R16130706, ANZ.
[147] FG Nicholls to Don McMichael, September 27, 1974, R16130706, ANZ; PHC Lucas to FG Nicholls, August 20, 1974, R16130706, ANZ.
[148] FG Nicholls to W Dawson, February 15, 1974, R16130706, ANZ.

> Nicholls also floated the idea of a Pacific Regional Conservation Convention that would have 'teeth' only in that it was a declaration of principles. He did not consider that such a Convention, which he proposed to draft in original himself, would raise the conservation-at-the-expense-of-development spectre, although he took Mr Beeby's point that such a Convention could be the peg on which Pacific basin states might choose to hang their criticisms of nuclear weapons tests in the region.[149]

Nicholls sent Lucas a first draft of IUCN's proposed Convention in June 1974. Its articles principally provided for 'The Establishment of Protected Areas', 'Protection of Fauna and Flora', 'Cooperation between States' and the 'Avoidance of Pollution'.[150] In Nepal promoting national parks at the time, Lucas did not reply till August but considered the draft adequate. He acknowledged the view of the other reviewer, Don McMichael, that it could be given more point or direction, but replied that 'we are in a situation where we must walk before we can run and that there has to be a starting point somewhere'.[151] The draft did not change materially from this point onwards, and plans were made to show it to the upcoming National Parks Conference in Wellington for Pacific approval.[152]

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Pacific Environmentalism and the National Parks Conference

> We are pleased and honoured to have this opportunity of welcoming each one of you personally, for each person is, in essence, the representative of the hopes and aspirations of their countries air, water, humanity and all forms of life…
>
> [The South Pacific] is still a paradise. It is still beautiful but there is the danger that uncontrolled, unplanned development could result in undesirable change… change is not in itself a bad thing. The extreme concern results from bad planning, lack of an eye for beauty and the lack of feeling for what nature has given.
>
> We have this legacy to the yet unborn to leave what nature has freely given in a better or improved state when we pass it on…
>
> Our national park system had its genesis in 1887 when Te Heuheu Tukino, paramount chief of the Ngati Tuwharetoa Tribe and other Māori Chiefs presented it to the Crown, land which was to form the nucleus of the Tongariro National Park.

[149] 'Visit of Mr Nicholls…'; 'International Affairs: Social Affairs – General – Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources', ABHS 950 W4627 2470, 108/1/9 Part 4, R22484294, ANZ.
[150] FG Nicholls to PHC Lucas, June 5, 1974, R16130706, ANZ.
[151] FG Nicholls to D. McMichael, cc. PHC Lucas, August 20, 1974, R16130706, ANZ.
[152] Nicholls to McMichael, August 20, 1974, R16130706, ANZ.

> Te Heuheu's concern was that the mountains, Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro and the surrounding land of his forebears should be kept in perpetuity… [He] was a far-seeing man who wished [that Tuwharetoa's] sacred areas [would] be the property of all the people of New Zealand…
>
> Although desirable, it is not necessary that parks and reserve areas be held in government ownership and our legislation makes provision where freehold ownership is not feasible, for natural and other areas to be held under leasehold tenure… a case in point is Lake Waikaremoana, situated within the Urewera National Park, through which delegates will remember passing last week.
>
> My forebears coined an appropriate phrase "whatu ngarongaro te tangata, toi tū te whenua" ("people pass on, the land remains").[153]

Keynote address by Matiu Rata, New Zealand Minister of Māori Affairs and Minister of Lands, to the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves, Wellington, February 24th,1975.

Matiu Rata ensured the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves' started with a Pacific spirit. A pre-conference familiarisation and inspiration tour to Te Urewera and Tongariro National Park was accompanied by meetings with iwi of Te Ika-a-Māui. When the Conference began proper, Rata, who was renowned for his 'deep affinity with Pacific peoples', used his keynote address to describe the New Zealand national parks system which he admired, and outline the place of his Māori culture within reserved spaces. [154]

The South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves 1975 promised to be a landmark occasion. Bringing together ministers from across the Pacific for nearly three weeks, it would be remarkable for its grandeur and its sense of purpose.[155] It would also stand as a milestone

[153] Rata's whakatauki is incomplete in the Conference proceedings, it is printed it in full here with contemporary punctuation. Department of Lands and Surveys, *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves, 24–27 February* (Wellington: Department of Lands and Survey, 1975), Annex I.

[154] Tiopira McDowell explains, '[Rata] indicated a deep affinity with Pacific peoples, far deeper than any other Māori MP had ever displayed. His interest may have been stirred when he travelled the trade routes of the Pacific as a merchant seaman in the 1950s. Rata repeatedly addressed parliament on a wide range of Pacific issues, discussing the rights and interests of Cook Islanders, Niueans and Tokelauans at home and abroad, the needs of Western Samoa, the strengths of Hawai'i's radio stations, and the exploitation of Nauru's phosphate deposits by western nations. Rata was particularly concerned about French nuclear testing in the Pacific, which he claimed in 1972 to be 'the most crucial issue facing New Zealand and Polynesia at this time'… [stating] in clear unambiguous terms that he would 'support any move or action undertaken voluntarily and lawfully if it leads to the cessation of nuclear testing in the region'. Tiopira McDowell, 'Te ana o te raiona: Māori Political Movements and the Māori Seats in Parliament, 1867–2008' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Auckland, 2013), 219.

[155] The most notable exceptions were the American Pacific territories, especially American Samoa which was working towards establishing national parks.

for the theorising of environmentalism in the Pacific, producing forthright discussions on problems and approach. The conference represented a negotiation between the two contrasting schools of Western environmentalism at work in the region, set against the prevailing mood of Pacific self-determination and desire to elevate Indigenous environmental knowledge. And so, while national parks were in ascendance through the work of Nicholls and Lucas, there were ecologists like Dasmann and Dahl, as well as outspoken Pacific leaders, ready to provide balance and offer the islands context thus far lacking. This was the first time since Suva that the Pacific would be so strident on environment.

Rata's address prompted a discussion on the appropriateness of national parks in the Pacific which questioned the strict parks criteria outlined by IUCN.[156] In response to concerns that the land of Pacific Islands was typically held customarily, was thus inalienable and therefore unsuitable for reservation or IUCN designation, Frank Nicholls elaborated on Rata's point that national parks could be established without land ownership if leasing or covenants were acquired. Another concern, that Pacific Islands were too small to host large reserves was answered by Dasmann, who said IUCN criteria could be adjusted to account for insular ecosystems and Rata, who said 'size of any area was irrelevant as far as the purpose of the Conference was concerned'. Rata added that, 'the Conference covered not just land and wildlife, but also the cultural aspect of life in each country represented'.[157] Gradually, as it accounted for the physical and cultured nature of Pacific environments the parks concept was adapted to Pacific contexts.

[156] Interestingly, the spirit of the discussion contradicted Rata's speech, which contributed to the proselytising of Lucas and MacLachlan and generally lauded the parks concept without questioning its basis in Māori land loss. The speech was probably written in part by ministerial staffers, likely Ken Piddington, while Rata's Conference posture perhaps anticipated growing Māori sentiments that criticised him and led to the land march of 1975. Tiopira McDowell, personal correspondence, March 31, 2021.
[157] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves,* 17.

The second key discussion occurred in response to Isakala Paeniu's report on the situation in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and subsequent interventions, which focused on environmental degradation being driven from abroad. Paeniu made the point that although all contributed to 'present world problems such as the population explosion, scarcity of basic commodities and the nuclear threat…[that] the major contribution to the World's problems comes from the West'. 'It was very frustrating for small communities in the Pacific', he suggested, 'to watch world resources being recklessly exploited'. However, it was also an 'advantage in being able [to] see the hollowness of the Western way of life'. i-Kiribati and Tuvaluans were thus 'prepared to make radical innovations to suit themselves and overcome the influence of British Colonialism and have a golden opportunity to avoid the mistakes made by other countries, and really to be themselves'. Two Australian Ministers, Dr Moss Cass and W.A. Borthwick, praised Paeniu, saying his 'was the most significant contribution so far', that it '[raised] the question of conservation in its broadest terms'.[158] Certainly they added, 'what is most valuable to an Islander is not for the Westerners to say, [we] are mostly lost, trying all the time to get back to nature [ourselves]'. Nicholls noted that the same countries that exploited Pacific Islands 'were careful to conserve their own assets' and that this serious matter 'should perhaps be taken up in other places'. This discussion was quickly added to by the New Caledonian report, which focused on environmental destruction through nickel mining. It was noted that no progress had been made by France since Noumea, despite the recommendations, and that perhaps this conference ought to add its weight. Tupui Henry from Cook Islands took this opportunity to suggest that nuclear testing might also be considered a serious disturbance to the environment and perhaps this might also make it into the resolution. In a subtle move, the Chairman Rata referred this to the recommendations committee (which Henry himself chaired). With key

[158] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves,* 20–24.

interventions calling for environmental justice, the Conference was developing an independent flair.

The following two sessions, on 'conservation for development' and 'the tradition of conservation in the South Pacific', established Pacific Islanders firmly at the forefront of critical environmentalism. All recognised that because the environmental ethic of peoples accustomed to living on islands was that which ultimately undergirded the health of the ecosystem, an approach that severed people from place was damaging. This insight would inform ecological critiques of preservationism for decades to come as large parks took up vital resources without touching or benefitting those in the majority who worked and lived on the land.[159] Pacific Islanders thus challenged the logic (and underlying hypocrisy) of the Western push for nature preservation in the region and provided an alternative vision based upon the Pacific environmental ethic that existed already.

The first session surrounded IUCN Senior Ecologist Ray Dasmann's keynote address 'National parks, Nature Conservation and "Future Primitive"', an elaboration on a (now-famous) speech the ecologist had given two months earlier in Cambridge on "ecosystem people" and "biosphere people". Dasmann had identified a division between those who are sustained by one ecosystem and those who exploit many to overcome limits to growth (he would later use these arguments to popularise the 'ecodevelopment' concept that became 'sustainable development'). However, Dasmann prefaced his new speech by declaring himself redundant,

[159] Literature on the problems with Pacific national parks is split between older literature that identifies the problems as they became apparent for example that in: Peter Eaton, *Land Tenure and Conservation: Protected Areas in the South Pacific* (New Caledonia: South Pacific Commission, 1985); P.H.C. Lucas, Sylvanus Gorio and Kalati Poai, *SPREP Topic Review No. 2, Parks and Reserves in the South Pacific* (New Caledonia: South Pacific Commission, 1981); Jeremy Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism in the South Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1989); Arthur Dahl, *Review of the Protected Areas System in Oceania* (Gland: IUCN, 1986). Newer literature catalogues the results of parks after decades. The most damning assessment comes from a report on locally managed marine areas which suggests that 'older models of larger, centrally planned reserves have failed in almost all cases resulting in the need to review the inclusion of some 14,000 km^2 of such "paper parks" in national and global databases of the region' Govan, H. et al., *Status and Potential of Locally-Managed Marine Areas in the South Pacific: Meeting Nature Conservation and Sustainable Livelihood Targets Through Wide-Spread Implementation of LMMAs* (Apia: SPREP/WWF/WorldFish-Reefbase/CRISP, 2009).

'[realising] that he was in fact preaching to the converted… since the conference was already thinking so well in advance on all these and related matters'. He then launched into a scathing attack on the concept of national parks that touched on questions of ownership, of imperialism, of outside influence and participatory approaches:

> National parks must not serve as a means for displacing the members of traditional societies who have always cared for the land and its biota. Nor can national parks survive as islands surrounded by hostile people who have lost the land that was once their homes...
>
> Here in the South Pacific there is no doubt that more national parks, or something equivalent to them, are badly needed. There is some question, however, about what kind of national park and how it is to fit in with the patterns of life, and the necessities of life, for those people who inhabit the Pacific. I would suggest that the ideal national park for the Pacific Islands would be fairly close to what existed here before the invaders from Europe and Asia took over.[160]

Dasmann's address as well as Cass and Borthwick's comments above speak to how highly Pacific thought was regarded amongst Western environmentalists—some of whose most enduring ideas were inspired by, or refined by, discussions with Pacific Islanders.

An address on 'the tradition of conservation in the South Pacific', penned by Niue's Young Vivian, gave a conceptual basis for the discussion that preceded it, but avoided essentialism or romanticism of Pacific cultures—noting that conservation measures such as tapu on fishing grounds or around Huvalu forest, '[were] practical [and] bred of necessity' and that there were examples of destructive processes in the Pacific also.[161] In the ensuing discussion, Tupui Henry said that 'the point he had grasped was that traditional methods of conservation were practised in Niue as a natural part of life and there, by trial and error, they had worked out their own methods of conservation and he thought the Conference should unite as a team to help these people conserve what they now had… For instance, Cook Islands might have to protect copra farming on Pukapuka Island or eel farming on Mitiaro Island…'[162] Mitiaro Island, Henry had described earlier, was '5400 acres of land where 4/5^{ths} is a lake [that] breeds the tastiest eels

[160] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves,* Annex II.
[161] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves*, Annex III.
[162] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves*, 35.

ever'. Sure, Henry argued, 'there is wildlife on the lake but only 300 people live there', these 'people have got to live… how are they going to live in a park in the twentieth century?'[163] Henry wondered aloud how the Conference might support people like those on Mitiaro, bringing up the question of aid and joking that, 'if no aid was possible that they might have to destroy Lake Mitiaro or the 24 different types of flora in the Ikurangi Mountains and plant the mountains in bananas'.[164] Rata appreciated Henry's joke and picked up on the suggestion of aid, before giving further endorsement to tapu (also practised in Māori culture), noting unfortunately that a NZ parliamentary select committee had refused to incorporate it into law, as it was not 'natural' to all sections of the community.

The final two addresses, by Frank Nicholls on international conservation cooperation and Arthur Dahl on environmental management, attempted to convert what had been said already into programmes. Frank Nicholls went off script 'as he thought his paper had already been overtaken by the discussions and also by resolutions on the table'. He stated that, 'the national park concept is a rather fluid one', but could not build far on this, stating, 'parks vary widely in their purpose, ranging from protection of wilderness areas for public enjoyment, to those that are protected as particular examples of the natural environment as strict nature reserves, to areas which include ancient buildings and are reserved as examples of early cultures'. He finished by saying that 'The IUCN was having a meeting in Western Samoa next year to conclude a convention for conservation in the South Pacific, a copy of which was tabled for conference members'.[165]

Arthur Dahl attended Wellington in a new capacity, as the Commission's Regional Ecological Advisor, having been hired in 1974 following recommendations from the Regional

[163] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves,* 30.
[164] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves*, 34–35.
[165] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves,* 56.

Symposium. Because the 'Conservation of Nature' item that established the post lacked specificity, Dahl had spent the last eight months touring Pacific Islands extending the consultative style of work he had begun in American Samoa. Photos taken during this time are an invaluable environmental record and supplement the conference proceedings, speaking to both the beauty of Pacific environments and their growing ecological problems. A trip to the revered Huvalu tapu forest on Niue revealed to Dahl the destructive mechanised agriculture and forestry Vivian implied was located elsewhere *(Fig. 6).* While visiting Mt Marau in Papeete, Tahiti, Dahl saw road construction and waste dumping on steep ridges *(Fig. 7)*. In Samoa, Dahl observed the Potlatch logging operation in Savai'i and mangrove infilling on Upolu *(Fig. 8)*. Diving in the unique marine lake in the Palau Rock Islands proved mesmerising, but Dahl also found coral-eating crown of thorns starfish out on the reef *(Fig. 9)*. Lastly, flying over sugar plantations in Fiji demonstrated ongoing plantation style agriculture and near-desertification *(Fig. 10)*. He presented findings to the Parks Conference in the form of a draft proposal for a 'South Pacific Commission Environmental Programme'. The Conference signalled the direction conservation would take in the region and is best summed up by his concluding remarks that:

> Discussion has focused specifically on the protection of the most significant natural areas with some type of legal status. Much of the South Pacific environment will never lend itself to such special status, yet it too needs to be appropriately managed if the environmental values of the area are to be maintained. This will require a much broader long-term programme of activities ranging from environmental education to planning and possibly land use control, and including the careful ecological evaluation of development projects to ensure that their environmental impact is minimised…
>
> The preservation of the South Pacific environment will not be easy. The short-term pressures for development and personal gain are strong and not easily overcome… Now is the chance to demonstrate another dimension of the Pacific Way, the harmonious development of natural resources for the continuing benefit of Pacific peoples.[166]

[166] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves,* Annex IV.

Remarkably, in a conference about national parks, the agenda had been pushed well beyond the rigidness of strict preservationism. Delegates had adapted the national park concept to Pacific contexts and explored its blind spots. Their interventions ranged from environmental justice and Indigenous cultures, to aid, development and environmental management. A certain reflexivity was reflected in the Conference's recommendations, the very first of which, 'urged the governments of the region to place greater emphasis on restoring and maintaining traditional methods and customs which formerly enabled communities to live in harmony with nature'. The second '[recommended] the governments of the region use such methods to provide machinery to enable the indigenous people involved to bring their land under protection as national parks or reserves without relinquishing ownership of the land or those rights in it which would not be in conflict with the purpose for which the land was reserved'. Plans were drafted for a regional ecosystem survey that would catalogue the region's environmental heritage and provide baseline data for environmental management. The mood at the Conference's closing was summed up by Paeniu, who:

> Expressed regret that all the territories of the South Pacific were not represented at this Conference. In his view this Conference was more important than any previous one which he had attended. The matters under discussion were crucial to the people in the region… [and] he made the point that the individual Islands and Territories could not face these problems alone and a regional front must be presented… [167]

By refusing the imposition of a concept that severed people from place, through insisting in the work of culture to support the life of islands, and in its desire to pursue regional solutions, the Wellington conference both theorised and embodied *Pacific environmentalism*.

[167] *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves,* 48.



Figure 6—Huvalu tapu forest on Niue (top left) with logging elsewhere (top right). Plowing of Niue's shallow soils using heavy machinery can expose limestone (bottom left), after which only ferns and grasses grow (bottom right). October 1974. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*



Figure 7—Ridge road, Tahiti, Ma'ohi Nui, French Polynesia showing discarded erosion (right) and discarded waste (left). September 1974. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*



Figure 8—Samoa's parliament building with land reclamation and mangrove infilling. October 1974. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*



Figure 9—Palau's Ngerukewid Islands Wildlife Preserve, comprises seventy rock islands and includes a unique marine lake (left) that supports a limited, symbiotic ecosystem with one seaweed, one mussel, one fish and one jellyfish in large numbers (right). July 1974, *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection*.



Figure 10—Fiji's talāsiga (low fertility grasslands) showing sugar cultivation. September 1974. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*

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Colonial Conventions

> On the night before the palolo rises the villagers dance and sing... The high point in this communion with nature is to my mind reached when the tautai escort shoals of fish to the shore… The shoal follows compulsively. "O le i'a a le tautai e alu i le fa'alolo'… In some cases the fish enter traps, in other cases they throw themselves suicidally on the beach. In the latter case we have only the photographs of the German anthropologists to testify to this unusual phenomenon.
>
> Today it is a different story. Fish inside the reef, which was once the mainstay of our protein diet, is becoming increasingly scarce. Ava niu kini [Derris root] and dynamite are largely responsible. I have experienced the trauma of witnessing the deathly white and softened sea plants a day after the laying of the ava niu kini. There is an eeriness which bespeaks mutilation, profanity and even death… As fish become scarce the [methods] are even more necessary to ensure a respectable catch…
>
> In 1976, Western Samoa will import slightly over US$1 million of canned fish. This represents approximately 5 million 1lb cans of fish, or approximately 32 cans for every man woman and child… This importation of canned fish includes the entirely wasted cost of approximately US$150,000 for cans and the untold environmental pollution that 5 million empty cans cause.
>
> The traditional [woven] containers [are] easily disposable… but what is not easily disposable is not as bad as what is not dissoluble. The chemicals from weed killers, pesticides, DDT do not dissolve but remain in the soil and the water and frequently find their way into the fatty tissues of animals. A substantial portion of the smokestacks from British factories find their way into Swedish lakes… Pollution is no respecter of national boundaries and it has become as much your problem as mine… we inhabit one earth, [the] solution must be an international solution.
>
> Your task as I see it now is to seek to resolve the disharmony either by finding a new harmony or by reducing the disharmonies to the levels that would ensure a stable existence for human and animal life. It is no small task and I bid you well in your endeavour.[168]

Tufuga Tupuola Efi, Opening Address, Apia Convention Plenipotentiary Meeting, Apia, Samoa, June 9th, 1976.

After the success of Wellington, expectations were high for a major international agreement, to be signed in the island Pacific. The Plenipotentiary Meeting to Conclude a Convention on

[168] 'Summary Record of the Plenipotentiary Meeting to Conclude a Convention on Conservation in the South Pacific', 'Pacific Islands: Social Affairs - Convention on Conservation', ABHS950 W4627 4745, 301/6/9 Part 2, R20765458, ANZ.

Conservation in the South Pacific was held in Apia from June 9–12, 1976.[169] It was opened by the Prime Minister Tufuga Tupuola Efi, who spoke metaphorically about the rising of the palolo worm, alluding to the decline in fishing and the rise of imports with their associated pollution. Tupuola's address was echoed by Samoa's country statement, which outlined the 'considerable wealth of natural and cultural resources from which many generations [have] been able to derive benefit', followed by an acknowledgement that 'appreciable areas of natural vegetation are being lost annually to development for agriculture, housing and communications… the inevitable result of pressures imposed by a rapidly increasing human population that is undergoing substantial changes in lifestyles and with aspirations for higher living standards'.[170] The host country had set the tone for what looked to be a self-critical and fruitful attempt at solving the region's shared problems. The conference proceeded then to the draft convention, which it discussed clause by clause.

Disharmony reigned from this point onwards. The text of the convention was nowhere near as forward-thinking as the Wellington conference resolutions and had not changed materially from its drafting in 1974. Based as it was on the Western Hemisphere Convention of 1940, and given it was designed as an inoffensive set of preservationist principles, it was doubly outdated and lacked the crucial Pacific context and provisions for development deemed essential a year prior.[171] Its principal Article II stated that a contracting party,

> Shall, to the extent that it is itself involved, encourage the creation of protected areas which together with existing protected areas will safeguard representative samples of the natural ecosystems occurring therein (particular attention being given to endangered species), as well as superlative scenery, striking geological formations and regions and objects of aesthetic interest or historic, cultural or scientific value.[172]

[169] This was accompanied by the Second Regional Symposium on Conservation of Nature, from June 14–17, 1976.
[170] 'Summary Record of the Plenipotentiary', R20765458, ANZ.
[171] 'Visit of Mr. Nicholls', 'ANZ International Affairs: Social Affairs - General - Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources', ABHS950 W4627 2470, 108/1/9 Part 4, R22484294, ANZ.
[172] Article II, Apia Convention, 'Pacific Islands: Social Affairs - Convention on Conservation', ABHS950 W4627 4745, 301/6/9 Part 2, R20765458, ANZ.

During the Conference, some effort was made to alter the text of the Convention to match Pacific priorities—principally via a new article on 'appropriate provision for customary use of area and species in accordance with traditional cultural practices', and an addition under Article VIII 'international cooperation' that encouraged parties to 'examine the possibility of developing programmes of education and public awareness relating to conservation of nature'.[173] Even so, there was no consideration of the marine environment, or any provision for existing environmental regimes, some of which, like tapu areas, may have benefitted from international recognition. In a changing region where the environmental problems of development and outside exploitation were to the fore, a convention that made no mention of any problems besides those which directly affected a to-be-determined list of indigenous plants and animals or proffered any solutions besides reserving areas was a missed opportunity.

Any deficiencies in the text soon proved minor beside colonial attitudes, which threatened the entire convention. As France 'eliminated anything in the draft which in any way seemed to affect the way in which it determined and administered its internal policies', it became apparent that little had changed in the seven years since the conservation item was first tabled. This was especially true of the nuclear question, and any clause that could give pretext for Pacific objection was quickly expunged. Despite hearing Tupuola Efi's concern over the flood of waste coming into the islands, Article VII, originally entitled 'Avoidance of Pollution', then changed to 'Avoidance of Disturbing Activities' before Wellington, was removed altogether. This attitude was not limited to France. That the Convention merely 'encouraged' the creation of protected areas was a dilution allowing complacent countries such as New Zealand to accede while doing no extra. The metropolitan countries were eager to promote environmentalism in

[173] 'Summary Record of the Plenipotentiary', R20765458, ANZ; 'Pacific Islands: Social Affairs - Convention on Conservation', R20765458, ANZ.

the region, but only on their terms. This issue came to a head when it came to the act of signing the Apia Convention.

The Cook Islands, which had recently announced Manuae Atoll as a World Marine Park and were again led by Tupui Henry, had arrived in Apia with the support of New Zealand, 'fully expecting to be a party to it'.[174] France flatly refused, unable to suffer a precedent where a country without full independence signed an international convention. Like the nuclear issue in Suva before it, decolonial matters were not up for discussion or compromise. This infuriated the Cook Islands delegation. Tupui Henry played along with backroom discussions which encouraged Cook Islands to sign under the NZ umbrella, until that is, it came to the open meeting. Here, Henry made a stinging attack on the French attitude, saying that the Cook Islands 'had no intention of ever severing its special relationship with New Zealand', and that the terms of that relationship were of no concern to France. He made the point that Cook Islanders were expected to bring the terms of the convention into effect and yet were not permitted to be party to it.

When it came time to put pen to paper, Henry refused. If the Cook Islands could not sign independently, it would not sign at all. The meeting had been soured, and the Apia Convention sat on the shelf for a year. Time passed and it was not ratified, even when the issues of sovereignty were worked through some years later, partly for its turbulent history, partly for its legislative irrelevance. The Apia Convention stands as a significant moment of environmental diplomacy in the region, and in stark contrast to the Conference in Wellington that preceded it. It revealed and entrenched difference between the litigious, preservationist, salvage environmentalism of metropoles and the decentralised, traditioned, independent Pacific environmentalism that was emerging.

[174] 'IUCN Meetings… Report on Attendance', R20765458, ANZ.

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The chapters title, *When it Rains in Suva*, references the anticipation or dread of radioactive rainfall. The thought of being drenched by one's own, nuclearised Pacific Ocean at once demonstrates the ocean's interconnectedness while capturing the feeling of environmental change imposed from without. And because that moment (quite literally) precipitated a regional expression of Pacific environmentalism, it shows clearly how the environmental values and valuations of Pacific people aligned with their responses.

The Fijians who sheltered from a tainted sky share a lot with Samoans who looked to the ocean dissatisfied with Americanised development or Cook Islanders who refused to put pen to paper if it meant succumbing to colonial estimations. Coming together, they explained their environment in similar ways, as regional and supporting of life and culture, threatened by the same forces as themselves. Although they were frequently misunderstood by those who came with expertise and saw Pacific Islands differently, as fragile or in need of preserving, others were more open and added to the dialogue. Together, they gave perspective to environmental problems, revising unpeopled assessments and unaltered solutions. These efforts contributed to the theorising of Pacific environmentalism, which would become the guiding principle for actions like Henry's.

When it Rains tells a story of negotiation without compromise. It shows how Pacific people contended with Western appreciations of their environment becoming cemented in scientific conferences or preservationist legislation and how this became terminal when fundamental differences could not be worked through. And while individual scientists could approach the Pacific and see it for its worth, this did not readily translate to the broader scientific community or the colonial project, which insisted on their ways. Pacific people wanted a conservation programme receptive to an existing environmental ethic and which engaged their

environmental priorities focused on imposed ills. This could not exist alongside Islands for Science-type reserves or a nuclear testing regime, both of which were integral to colonial science. When it came to choosing, Pacific people were equally unflinching.

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II

Traditioned Conservation for a Modern Pacific:

The Making of a South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, 1976–1979

> People felt close to the sea… We used to have the whales come every year. They come to breed in our area. They named one particular whale… They used to call her Bu Se, and they would know exactly where she would come and what time she would come.[175] That's the kind of thing you identify with, you call that whale by a human name and you give her her sex, she's female, so you feel close to things like that… In the rural areas, they have sacred places. In my village we still have those sacred places.... you are not allowed to go cut anything there, some places you are not even allowed to go walk there… One of the places that we [have] octopus come up the stream into the bush. Don't know whether to breed or what, but the little ones go back. And near that place too we have the turtle. Turtle comes to nest and goes back again, and you watch the little turtles go. But only the chief can eat the turtle egg, nobody else allowed to. We have land crabs, there are two types of land crabs in Fiji—one that lives by the sea and one that lives inland. Ours lives inland and every year it comes down. We have a special ceremony around it, we have to present it to the high chief in Bau and then we have to take it to all the villages in the island and to relatives. That's the sort of culture that centres around the bounty of the land. So, in my village, people feel very privileged—that's why they share and they have good soil so they have good crops. When they have a bounty in terms of crop harvest, they share that too. So that was the traditional culture associated with environment. We also have, about this time or early in the new year, we have what they call balolo, palolo in Samoa, so that's something else too. I don't know if they do it in Samoa but here we get all dressed up, new clothes, salusalu, blahblahblah. Go and get it. So those are the sort of traditional ceremonies that reflect our values on the environment. We appreciate our environment and what the environment provides. And you try to conserve so you don't exploit it too much…. A lot of people don't know about those things anymore. They have a different life they live now, different values…

Suliana Siwatibau, interviewed by the author at her home in Wailoku, Fiji, December 2nd, 2019.

Suliana's garden was meticulously labelled. *Colocasia esculenta; Family: Araceae; Common Name: Dalo/Taro; Note: Various Cultivars*. As we walked amongst the plots, she spoke from a deep past and lifelong purpose: about an early life on Moturiki in the Lomaiviti group, her

[175] Suliana explains that Bu means grandmother while Se, 'refers to the break in the sea resulting in the formation of white foam'; Suliana Siwatibau, personal correspondence, September 17, 2021.

training in botany, work in the anti-nuclear movement, and on development throughout the Pacific, but always somehow about the plants. Her message was clear and she seemed to embody it. The foundation of Pacific culture is productive biodiversity and vice versa. And since that which maintains or threatens one, does so to both, Pacific people must sustain the relationship between culture and environment, even as they shift or change one another.

Suliana explained how environmental solutions could come through (re)instilling the importance of cultured biodiversity in the minds of the people who work the land every day. Fiji is largely, and has long been, mixed use agricultural and forest land. Those in the village actively plant dalo and cassava amongst maqo and vesi. But Suliana pointed out that that many medicinal, ceremonial, or ornamental plants are also endemic. It follows that if one encourages the revival of the cultural knowledge about plants' usefulness, it will in turn increase the diversity and the depth of ecosystems as people will plant widely.[176] Such knowledge is manifestly at the heart of Pacific environmentalism, it is the product of a generations-long association with the island environment, adapted to a changing Pacific. And after many such lifetimes of advocacy, these and similar insights have widespread recognition and underpin efforts to revitalise 'traditional' or Indigenous environmental knowledge as a self-perpetuating force for biodiversity conservation. My contention here, however, is that historically, knowledge like Suliana Siwatibau's was foundational in another way and supporting of a broader movement and new form of *environmental* regionalism.

This chapter explores Pacific environmentalism as it relates to environmental science, management, and governance. It moves through a series of grouped ideas, showing how Pacific environmentalists advanced scientific knowledge about islands and how their insights

[176] As an octogenarian Suliana has published her lifetime project, *Healing Plants of Fiji*, the index to which she was working on when the author visited. Suliana Siwatibau, *Healing Plants of Fiji* (Suva: iTaukei Trust Fund Board, 2021).

informed the new South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Environmentalism was a congested international space, but my argument is that SPREP was born of a bottom-up, village-to-region consensus process, and reflected the island knowledge that propelled its development.

Through the 1970s, Pacific environmentalism involved an increased interplay between the cultural or place-based understandings of Pacific people and the international science at work in the region. This was a process of co-development, epitomised by those who occupied or met at new intersections. The chapter opens at such a junction, sketching the activities of Suliana Siwatibau, a plant geneticist and University of the South Pacific lecturer, in the lead up to a key conservation symposium. She exemplifies a new category of Pacific people who were internationalising island knowledge, pairing their village upbringings with university training in the physical sciences. They came together with another key group, sympathetic expatriates, such as Arthur Dahl or Graham Baines, who had developed understandings aligned with the Pacific by virtue of their associations and residence. Together, this growing ensemble of practitioners traded frames of reference and fluency in multiple epistemologies, allowing them to further island knowledge and international science in tandem, as a truer "Pacific science". For example, Siwatibau reiterated the efficacy of Fiji's traditional practices with the scientific method, while Dahl undertook community-based initiatives to better reflect the place of the village in Pacific life. In this way, international science adopted Pacific insights to become more responsive and relevant in the region, while environmentally conscious Pacific people imbricated ecological science with prior understandings born from the genealogy of island life. This created the core of an influential broader movement of Pacific environmental care or stewardship.

The insights of Pacific environmentalism formed a new scientific consensus, giving justification for an environmental management programme based upon regional ideals. In

conceptualising what would become SPREP, practitioners like Siwatibau, Baines, and Dahl sought recognition for the shared physical characteristics of the Pacific Islands and the common place of Pacific people within island ecologies. By incorporating landmark Pacific research that embodied these ideals, SPREP was built ground-up from Pacific environmentalism.

Ultimately, SPREP came into being as politicians working in regional governmental organisations adopted and actioned the scientific consensus established at the grassroots. However, this 'collective consensus' for the environment, in the words of Papua New Guinea's Michael Somare, was hard won. Infighting between the regional organisations—the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Forum—over the shape and leadership of the programme threatened to derail proceedings at multiple points. Moreover, Pacific efforts to have the programme be *Pacific* were contested at all levels through the actions of international organisations. This occurred both accidentally and by design. When shaping SPREP's philosophy, Pacific values found competition with some of the latest international concepts, most notably in the United Nations Environment Programme's notion of 'ecodevelopment'. While deciding its scope, outside experts and donors stage-managed elements of the process to imply support for these concepts and the priorities of the donor organisations behind them. Lastly, when settling the issue of SPREP's governance, the wrangling regional organisations found themselves having to hastily unite against United Nations advances that sought to divide the two and quite literally take SPREP away from the Pacific.

This was a high stakes conversation, at once environmental, political, and cultural, that played out across years of regional political and scientific meetings. It involved the competition or rival sponsorship of ideas, with real and immediate consequences for the Pacific, and by extension, humanity which was understood to rely upon a healthy Pacific environment. The crucial point is that even as SPREP seemed certain, whose environmentalism it would represent, who would lead it, what language and forms it would take, and what would get

funded was not. So, while this chapter recounts the near-origins of one organisation, we ought only to see it as the mouth of a funnel. The story writ large is not about SPREP in and of itself, but rather about whether Pacific people found realisation for their own environmental ethic.

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Tabu and a Truer Pacific Science

> Maintenance of equilibrium of the ecological system did not prevail in all Pacific societies… the bird and sea-mammal population could not adjust to man's exploitation. The turtle and chiton however did… Man's actions here resulted in environmental change in as far as the system lost the effects of sea mammals and birds, but with time a new equilibrium point was reached…
>
> With the impact of systems of economic development aided by sophisticated technology, today's Pacific societies can no longer remain static… How far the environment can stand these forces, and what conscious and planned modifications need to be made [to] maintain a balance, is the concern of this conference, whether we can learn from traditional practices, is the concern of this paper...
>
> For man to control changes in environmental factors so the ecological system of which he is a part maintains an equilibrium, is an ideal difficult to achieve but worth striving for. For the achievement of this objective, it would be necessary to set up an extensive environmental monitoring system, coupled with the allocation of greater priority to environmental issues in planning and conducting economic development.

Suliana Siwatibau, 'Traditional Conservation Practices for Modern Pacific Societies', 1976.[177]

'Busy with lectures and laboratories to design', Suliana Siwatibau (née Kaloumaira) rushed off a paper to deliver at the upcoming symposium.[178] She might have been forgiven for being short on time. As a talented scientist at the dawn of Fiji's independence, she was in high demand. In the decade since studying botany at the University of Auckland, and thus becoming Fiji's first female Bachelor and Master of Science graduate, Siwatibau had quickly covered a full spectrum of science and environment roles.[179] After teaching biology and chemistry to the girls at her own Adi Cakobau School, she accompanied fellow Auckland alum and newlywed

[177] Suliana Siwatibau, 'Traditional Conservation Practices for Modern Pacific Societies', Box 14, ADC.
[178] Suliana Siwatibau, personal correspondence, April 11, 2021.
[179] *Pacific Islands Monthly* 33, no. 8 (1963), 11.

husband, Savenaca Siwatibau, to the United Kingdom for his further study.[180] Upon returning from abroad Suliana joined her father at the Fiji Department of Agriculture where she bred acclimatised varieties of rice, before assuming roles on the National Trust, at the Fiji Herbarium, and at the newly formed University of the South Pacific (USP). At USP she lectured on plant genetics and gained prominence as a voice for anti-nuclearism as part of the Against Testing on Mururoa Committee. Savenaca, meanwhile, became Fiji's first iTaukei Director of Economic Planning alongside a role on the University's governing council. By 1975, the Siwatibaus had firmly established themselves as one of Fiji's most prominent academic and civic families.

Activities like Suliana Siwatibau's were at the heart of newly independent Fiji's environmental commitment. Siwatibau served as a councillor and executive-secretary of the National Trust, a government-funded conservation and heritage council formed in 1970. Five years into its operations, the Trust had amassed a formal membership of 72 (including 30 students) and a modest list of accomplishments.[181] A national parks and conservation survey resulted in the reservation of several sites, including Wailoutua Falls, the Koroutari swimming area, and the old 2500-acre mahogany plantation at Colo i Suva and nearby Kalobo, for recreation and the study of rainforest regeneration. A similar endeavour on water produced marine park proposals for Malamala Islet (Nadi), Mabualau (or 'Bird Island', Bau) and the North Astrolabe Reef (Kadavu), as well as for ex-leper colony Makogai Island and government owned Wailagilala atoll. In addition, the Trust acquired Borron House at Rairaiwaqa, the former residence of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, and advised on the restoration of Nailili's Catholic Mission, which had been constructed of coral (and was susceptible to becoming waterlogged at high tide).[182] International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) funding supported early environmental

[180] Suliana Siwatibau, interview with the author, December 2, 2019.
[181] *The National Trust for Fiji Newsletter*, no. 1 (1975), Fiji Museum Library.
[182] *The National Trust for Fiji Newsletter*, no. 2 (1974), Fiji Museum Library.

education initiatives meaning Fijian primary schools were visited by speakers and furnished with material courtesy of the Trust, as they worked on secondary school offerings in consultation with Nasinu Teacher's College and the United Nations Development Programme curriculum unit *(Fig. 11)*. Personally, Siwatibau contributed extensively to a 1974 paper and slide collection cataloguing Fiji's endangered flora and fauna, where she debuted research on the endangered vilaito/vuleito (Neoveitchia storckii), a stocky endemic palm largely confined to the banks of the Rewa river and considered notoriously difficult to propagate.[183] This work aligned closely with another of Siwatibau's part-time jobs as a botanist and curator at the Fiji Government Herbarium (now the South Pacific Regional Herbarium and Biodiversity Centre), where her specimen collection resides to this day.

The University of the South Pacific sat alongside the National Trust as a ready source of environmental science expertise. The University's location in Suva afforded easy collaboration with Fijian government agencies and civil society groups, and despite only having opened some six years earlier it boasted a growing cadre of specialists—lecturers such as Bill Clarke, Randy Thaman, Graham Baines, and John Morrison.[184] Another of USP's first Pacific Islands staff, Konai Helu-Thaman, who although famed as a poet and educator, was first trained in geography which she appreciated for its Pacific-style study of interrelationships.[185] USP began teaching environmental science at tertiary level in 1974 with an undergraduate paper entitled 'Conservation of Natural Resources'.[186] Soon USP would produce staff for every Pacific environment department. Indeed, in that same year five third-year USP students assisted the

[183] *The National Trust for Fiji Newsletter*, no. 2 (1974); Martyn L. Gorman and Suliana Siwatibau, 'The Status of Neoveitchia Storckii (Wendl): A Species of Palm Tree Endemic to the Fijian Island of Viti Levu', *Biological Conservation* 8, no. 1 (1975), 73–76.
[184] Randy Thaman, interview with the author, November 29, 2019.
[185] 'When I went to Auckland University, I really struggled, not just with the language but with the way people looked at the world. And that's why I liked geography, because geography at the time, was the one subject that linked everything to everything else… really the key concept in geography is interrelationships of phenomena.' Konai Helu-Thaman, interview with the author, December 6, 2019.
[186] Randy Thaman, interview with the author, November 29, 2019.

Trust with a baseline flora, fauna, and soil survey in the Kalobo reserve, prior to the visit of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Dr Holloway.[187] Holloway in turn recommended that Kalobo be made a mini-national park and that Siwatibau be formally hired by the Department of Town and Country Planning as an environmental advisor with IUCN sponsorship. However, as Suliana was 'not at all liked by the head [of Planning], who worshipped Ratu Mara' and disapproved of her 'involvement in the YWCA, Student Christian Movement [and] anti-nuclear movement', she instead convinced her husband Savenaca, to hire USP and ATOM colleague, Dr Graham Baines, in her place while she stayed volunteering for the Trust.[188] Suliana would have to wait two years to get the recognition she was due.



Figure 11—Dudley High School students on the nature trail designed by Suliana Siwatibau at Colo i Suva. 'Science Classes Move Outdoors'. *Fiji Times, July 25, 1975*.

Following Holloway came Arthur Dahl, the SPC Regional Ecological Advisor, with a sprawling, truly oceanic assignment. In early 1975, the First South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves had approved a joint SPC/IUCN project that aimed to catalogue

[187] *The National Trust for Fiji Newsletter*, no. 2 (1974).
[188] Suliana says this was true of 'many [other] men in important positions in the Fiji government'; Suliana Siwatibau, personal correspondence, April 15, 2021.

all of the different classes of ecosystem across the entire Pacific Islands region. As the only ecologist at the Commission, the 'South Pacific Regional Ecosystems Survey' had become Dahl's task, and he was to pair an extensive tour with all relevant literature, consolidating them as an early form of "state of the environment report" for the Pacific.[189] Of course, on many island groups this "relevant literature" was non-existent, so in most cases Dahl turned to personal connections and the expertise residing in people.

When Dahl visited Fiji in late February of 1976, he met with Suliana Siwatibau and Graham Baines and other staff from USP and the National Trust. Given these bodies had already launched their own environmental surveys and outlined potential national parks, it made sense that they lead the Fijian portion of the survey. Thus, Siwatibau and Baines compiled the Fiji Ecosystems Survey on Dahl's behalf.[190] It catalogued 42 distinct ecosystems, giving exemplars for each—including for instance: Cakaulevu (the Great Sea Barrier Reef), the Rewa River delta's estuarine mangroves and Deuba's swamp forest. These aligned with broader 'marine', 'coastal', 'grassland', 'swamp', 'rainforest', 'freshwater' and 'cave' categories for comparison across the region. In addition, Siwatibau and Baines gave descriptions of each ecosystem's structure, status, and suitability for protection.

The handwritten survey notes, brief and to the point, hint at why certain areas were included. They are also quietly magical. The slopes of Mount Uluiqalau, Baines writes, is clothed in 'cloud forest': 'very damp with heavy growth of epiphytes; moss [is] extremely abundant, trees [are] stunted and low'.[191] The mountain's 'elevated crater lake', Siwatibau continues, is adrift

[189] The Regional Ecosystems Survey was funded by a UNEP project through IUCN, which provided travel and secretarial support. Arthur Dahl, interview with the author, August 5, 2019; Arthur Lyon Dahl, *Regional Ecosystems Survey of the South Pacific Area*: *South Pacific Commission Technical Paper 179* (Noumea: SPC, 1980).
[190] Graham Baines and Suliana Siwatibau, 'Fiji Ecosystem Survey Draft 2 – 16.3.76', Regional Ecosystems Survey Folder 26 'Fiji', Box 14, ADC.
[191] Baines and Siwatibau, 'Fiji Ecosystem Survey', 5.

in 'floating meadows', 'vegetative mats' of sedge thick enough to hold a person.[192] The ecosystem seemingly finds inclusion for its rich biodiversity, scenic value, and endangered species. Only here, high on the garden island Taveuni, grows Fiji's national flower, the crimson and cream flowering liana, *Medinilla waterhousei,* named tagimoucia for the teardrops of a young woman who fled to the forested interior rather than succumbing to marry someone she did not love.[193]

Full of tables and Latin names, the Fiji Ecosystems Survey does not appear a cultured document, at least in a Fijian sense. But tucked away at the bottom of its last page, sits a final category: 'Areas of Special Interest'.[194] These are the tabu places. All are deeply sacred; some are otherwise undocumented. The first refers to an area of Vatulele, where, at the bottom of a cavern lies Tobu ni Ura Buta, the pool of the red prawns.[195] Found nowhere else in Fiji, the prawns came to be when the strong-willed and beautiful Lewa ni Cagi Bula scorned a gift-giving suitor, ordering he be thrown off the nearby cliffs. As the suitor fell, his gift of ura buta, cooked freshwater prawns from Viti Levu, fell into a pool below. Here they reanimated and now remain. Even today, the red prawns are tabu and anyone caught taking them will suffer a shipwreck.

The second listed tabu area, Koro's 'Red Turtle Cave Pool', remains a mystery to the author. The pair that follow, however, were made deeply familiar when they arose in conversation some 40 years after their documentation.[196] Suliana Siwatibau finished the Fiji Ecosystems

[192] Baines and Siwatibau, 'Fiji Ecosystem Survey', 6.
[193] For a retelling of tagimoucia's origins and the cultural importance of flowers and adornment see Tarisi Vundilo, 'Na noqu salusalu: Garlands in Fiji', *Garland magazine*, December 6, 2017. Tagimoucia's story varies as captured in Serena Solomon, 'A Rare Pacific Islander Captivates Its Neighbourhood', *New York Times*, February 1, 2017. It is suggested that tagimoucia has also been found on Mount Seatura on Vanua Levu. *National Trust for Fiji Newsletter*, no. 2 (1974).
[194] Baines and Siwatibau, 'Fiji Ecosystem Survey', 6.
[195] Tobu ni ura buta is anchialine pool, meaning it is brackish on top (i.e. saltier than fresh water but not true seawater) but saline beneath as it has a subterranean connection to the ocean. For more see, John Mitchell, 'Discovering Fiji: Vatulele's Fair Maiden and Strange Red Prawns', *The Fiji Times*, September 13, 2020.
[196] Though Siwatibau did not recall whether the tabu areas were her inclusion, we can confidently assume this as they appear in the second draft Fiji Ecosystems Survey in her handwriting and the first draft (authored by Baines

Survey by including two areas special to her. One is a point on Ovalau known for the rising of balolo, the slender coral worm, *Palola viridis*, which surfaces to spawn in its millions with unfailing regularity as the full moons of late spring and early summer wane. A delicacy, the balolo harvest is hotly anticipated by most all in Fiji (and the adjacent islands of Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu) where it is a time to make salusalu (garlands) and wear one's best clothes in a celebration of nature's bounty. *We get all dressed up, new clothes, salusalu, blahblahblah.* The other is a secluded area of Suliana's home island, Moturiki, where lairo, the yellow-brown land crabs, burrow before making their own yearly procession to the ocean to breed.[197] During this time it is not uncommon to see thousands of crabs marching determinedly along roads or through bure, they are even known to crawl over those sleeping! *Ours lives inland and every year it comes down.*

Tabu areas were not necessarily typical examples of given ecosystems, nor did they require "protection" (which would continue independent of any such inquiry). Instead, their inclusion in the survey recognised a different kind of environmental or cultural significance. This in turn demonstrates how the priorities and place-based understandings of Pacific people such as Siwatibau filtered into science in the Pacific, where they were clearly appreciated by expatriate colleagues like Baines. Intersections like this abound and were part of a broader coming together of sciences from within and without of the region. Common philosophies and similar approaches brought together practitioners in places like the University of the South Pacific and united their research as with the Fiji Ecosystems Survey. This was happening at the level of the village and the nation, as in Fiji, but also at the level of the region, as efforts like Siwatibau's grew outwards or were mirrored by similar endeavours elsewhere.

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alone) does not include them. Graham Baines, 'Fiji Ecosystems Survey – Preliminary Draft', Regional Ecosystems Survey Folder 26 'Fiji', Box 14, ADC.

[197] S. Lee, A. Lewis, R. Gillett, M. Fox, N. Tuqiri, Y. Sadovy, A. Batibasaga, W. Lalavanua, and E. Lovell, *Fiji Fishery Resource Profiles. Information for Management on 44 of the Most Important Species Groups* (Suva: Gillett, Preston and Associates and the Wildlife Conservation Society, 2018), 38–42.

In mid-1976, with the overarching Regional Ecosystems Survey nearing completion, another chance for intersection and collaboration arose as the Commission scheduled a 'Second Regional Symposium on the Conservation of Nature'. Arthur Dahl took the opportunity to invite Suliana Siwatibau to give a paper as a special consultant, beginning a new chapter for her and the start of decades of work abroad in the Pacific region.[198]

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Samoa and the Second Symposium

In June 1976, environmental scientists gathered in Apia, Samoa, for the Second Regional Symposium on the Conservation of Nature. A pre-conference outing had the group trekking up the slippery slopes to Lanoto'o, the pea green crater lake and famous home of the rare tooth-billed pigeon manumea (and a few thousand introduced goldfish). But returning from high in Upolu's upland swamp forest the mood no doubt sunk as delegates contemplated, and now confronted, the events of the week prior. During the plenipotentiary session to conclude the '[Apia] Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific', French diplomats had prevented one of the region's most enthusiastic conservationists, Cook Islands' Tupui Henry, from signing for his nation. France would not suffer a precedent where a country without full control of its affairs signed an international treaty, especially one concerning conservation (which had been a hook for anti-nuclear protests in the past). In response, Henry had refused to sign under the New Zealand umbrella, walking out in disgust. Now, the slighted Cook Islander was to chair a scientific symposium that given this impasse, threatened to be purely academic.

[198] In Dahl's notebook a box reads 'Suliana Siwatibau… invite as consultant-speaker to Apia', this was later ticked in red. 'Regional Ecosystems Survey: Nauru, Gilbert Islands, Fiji – 16–28 February 1976', Box 17, ADC.

But while political cooperation had faltered through metropolitan interference, another regional consensus was developing. Scientifically, Apia promised to be an agenda-setting moment. It saw the debut of several Pacific scientists onto a regional stage, and the presence of ministerial, conservation and environmental education delegates was testament to the importance the Pacific afforded environmental issues. These national representatives met intergovernmental and non-governmental counterparts from IUCN and the United Nations Environment Programme, heralding a more amicable (though still unequal) coming together of international and regional interests than in the plenipotentiary meeting. So, despite the politics, the Second Symposium progressed environmental regionalism through its personnel and content. A landmark Regional Ecosystems Survey, burgeoning Pacific science, and a focus on how developmental processes met Indigenous knowledge gave environmental management a broader theoretical foundation and provided baseline data on which to build a regional programme.

This section explores the key themes of the Apia Symposium, setting them beside local perspectives for context. This articulates another layer of interactions between Pacific environmentalism and Western science (i.e., moving up from the national to the regional level), revealing the priorities of both sides. The section also addresses the question of thought leadership. This study is the first to ask where the impetus for the regional environmental movement in the Pacific originated. Apia is the ideal site for such an investigation. A skim over the symposium's minutes—with its lists of consultants, the ubiquity of UNEP's 'ecodevelopment' concept, and IUCN's financial backing—could suggest such environmentalism was seeded from elsewhere, or that the Pacific simply followed global(ised) trends in protecting its natural heritage. However, while the presence of international agencies with big plans and deep pockets, savvy Pacific politicians, and outside "experts" complicate the story of a neat homegrown movement, ultimately it was the filtering up of Pacific expertise

and an environmental ethic that gave justification for a regional environmental programme. As became clear in Apia and the meetings that followed, international interest in the Pacific was often self-interested. As SPREP took shape, just who it would serve or what environmentalism it would represent was disputed, sometimes bitterly.

The Second Symposium opened with the Commission's milestone 'Regional Ecosystems Survey', giving the Pacific the fullest picture of its shared environment to date. By cataloguing the geography, climate and biological characteristics of each island group, the survey provided baseline data for conservation and development activity. Originally envisaged as a 'survey of existing and potential protected areas', its purpose had expanded to 'provide an indication of the environmental framework within which sound development must take place'.[199] However, what stands out over the 100-page document (and what sets it apart from say, Gina Douglas' earlier IUCN inventory for Islands for Science) was the people power behind the undertaking.[200] We have already heard how Dahl drew on local expertise, in Fiji for example, with Suliana Siwatibau contributing the list of endemic plants in need of protection she had written for the National Trust, as well as the 'Fiji Ecosystems Survey' she had conducted with the ecologist Dr Graham Baines. This process was duly repeated throughout the region. In the United States Trust Territory, Margie Falanruw of the Yap Institute of Natural Science detailed many of the Territory's island groups and now attended the Apia Symposium as the SPC Consultant on Environmental Education.[201] In Papua New Guinea, Dahl spoke with a well-established environmental management team, including Sylvanus Gorio and M.A. Hill of the National Parks Board; Navu Kwapena in the Department of Agriculture; Karol Kisakau and Lance Hill and the Office of Environment and Conservation; as well as experts on fauna such

[199] Dahl, *Regional Ecosystems Survey*, 1.
[200] Gina Douglas, 'Draft Check List of Pacific Oceanic Islands', *Micronesica* 5, no. 2 (1969).
[201] Notebook entitled 'Regional Ecosystems Survey: Micronesia – August-September 1975', Box 17, ADC.

as Lindsay Gressitt at the Wau Ecology Institute and ornithologist Jared Diamond.[202] Gorio and Kwapena now attended Apia with their Minister for Environment, Stephen Tago. As such, the Regional Ecosystems Survey not only modelled a shared Pacific environment, but a collaborative Pacific environmentalism.

Building on the survey's call for 'sound development' within 'an environmental framework', the symposium reconvened the next day to contemplate the possibility of 'ecodevelopment'. 'Islands for Science', the uninhabited outdoor laboratories that preoccupied the First Regional Symposium in 1971 had been forgotten. Instead, a string of IUCN and UNEP representatives gave sermons on this new gospel. 'Ecodevelopment' was defined as 'development which takes cognisance of the ecological, environmental, economic, social and cultural realities of a country, [taking] a holistic view of nature and development'.[203] IUCN's Robert Allen added that 'perhaps the only surprising feature of ecodevelopment is that its practice is so recent'. He then promptly cited papers on Cook Islands' Pukapukans whose 'traditional controls [have] continued to be effective even when applied to cash crops such as copra' and Fijian vaka vanua or 'officers who acted as ecological decision-makers'. In doing so, Allen acknowledged that the Pacific faced the 'curious paradox of receiving ecological advice from [those peoples] who were instrumental in persuading or obliging the peoples of the South Pacific to abandon offices and customs that were impeccably ecological!' He finished with an honest reflection, saying it 'would be nice to pretend that it is only now that international science has assembled the ecological data necessary to prove that South Pacific peoples have, or had, the basic institutions necessary to make the best use of their natural resources'. In fact, this was known for 'more than a quarter-century, during which many valuable institutions and customs have continued

[202] Notebook entitled 'Regional Ecosystems Survey: Papua New Guinea; Solomon Islands – 1–20 November 1975', Box 17, ADC.
[203] An alternative working definition was 'the development of the locality taking the fullest sustainable advantage of the that locality's physical, biological and cultural resources', Robert Allen, 'Ecodevelopment and Traditional Natural Resource Management in the South Pacific', *SPC and IUCN: Convention and Symposium*, Box 14, ADC.

to decline'. Thus, the Pacific ought to 're-evaluate their traditional and contemporary institutions from a position of confidence and pride', drawing from the Western world only where there were no precedents or traditional solutions.

Jimoh Omo-Fadaka, an IUCN environmental economist, assistant editor of *The Ecologist* and former UNEP ecodevelopment consultant, followed Allen with 'A Framework for Ecodevelopment in South Pacific Island Countries'.[204] A stinging rebuke of industrialisation, he advocated rural small holding as a route to eliminating poverty and fostering self-determination. Like Allen and Raymond Dasmann (also present), Omo-Fadaka was a key ecodevelopment thinker and similarly drew inspiration from the Pacific.[205] He spoke at length on the example of Papua New Guinea, where he had spent nine months as an UN advisor. PNG impressed him in its 'rejection of Western or Russian models of industrialisation', the 'insistence that priority should be given to the rural areas', and through its 'policies to ensure the creation of a genuinely Papua New Guinea society with its own identity'.[206] It was indeed an inspiring example, with the difficulty being that Omo-Fadaka was speaking to (and likely for) Stephen Tago, Papua New Guinea's Minister for the Environment; Sylvanus Gorio, Executive Director of the National Parks Board; and Navu Kwapena, an ecologist with the Wildlife Branch of the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries, all of whom attended the Apia Symposium. These people knew about rural small holding and certainly knew 'ecodevelopment'. Such Papuans were at the forefront of Pacific environmentalism, present at

[204] Jimoh Omo-Fadaka, 'A Framework for Ecodevelopment in South Pacific Island Countries', *SPC and IUCN: Convention and Symposium*, Box 14, ADC.
[205] When Dasmann was asked by Larry Ford in 1999, 'How [did] you came up with these new ideas about ecodevelopment and sustainable development?' He replied, 'I didn't do this on my own… Jimoh Omo-Fadaka from Nigeria became a good friend of mine and had ideas which influenced me... I worked with Robert Allen, a writer for The Ecologist magazine in England. I was able to pull together some of their ideas and present them in a way that was perhaps more understandable to the world in general. But I didn't come up with ecodevelopment on my own. Someone suggested the term to Maurice Strong, who was head of the United Nations Environment Program at the time. He used it in his introductory speech as head of that program. Then he realized he didn't quite know what it meant and asked to put together a group to consider what ecodevelopment was all about. We worked on it for quite a time and then I began writing about it.' Randall Jarrell, *Raymond F. Dasmann: A Life in Conservation Biology* (Santa Cruz: Regional History Project: University of California, 2000), 128.
[206] Jimoh Omo-Fadaka, 'A Framework for Ecodevelopment', 34.

all the major conservation conferences and pioneering, for example, in a homegrown system of leasehold national parks where traditional use was encouraged.[207] At Apia, outside expertise turned an opportunity to share into a sell, with the product being a framework and the customers the very people who had in part inspired it.

Lessons from Fiji and Tonga

Following the two ecodevelopmentalists, Suliana Siwatibau presented 'Traditional Conservation Practices for Modern Pacific Societies'. Her contribution, the first by a Pacific woman to an international conservation conference, raises further questions about expertise and provides a Pacific take on 'ecodevelopment'.[208] It is not that Allen or Omo-Fadaka's conclusions were necessarily wrong—indeed ecodevelopment's successor 'sustainable development' would become the principal global development paradigm—rather it is that their approach was neither new or helpful, nor were the assumptions informing it up-to-date or relevant, in the Pacific context.

This is because, and as with the Papuan delegation, Pacific environmentalists like Siwatibau or her colleague Konai Helu-Thaman already and intuitively took 'cognisance' of Pacific 'realities', and 'took a holistic view of nature and development':

> You know Tonga, my little country, went through a whole era of pumpkin growing, where they decimated the biodiversity… That was part of 'development'… This came from overseas, we didn't have people here who woke up one morning and said, "hey we need to do something about development"… some of them went to some meetings overseas and they came back and

[207] Navu Kwapena attended the Vancouver Science Congress and presented a paper on rural development and conservation. Arthur Dahl was in the audience and noted down 'conservation must include traditional uses, quantitative data needed for wise management, general education programmes needed'. Notebook entitled 'Regional Ecosystem Survey – Micronesia – august–September 1975', ADC. See also, Navu Kwapena, 'Report on the 13th Pacific Science Congress, 15th August – 1st September', *Papua New Guinea Wildlife Leaflet* 75, no. 22 (1975).

[208] Suliana Siwatibau, 'Traditional Conservation Practices'; Siwatibau called the paper 'rather bad and rushed' telling the author 'I am sorry it has been recorded and [that] you put such importance on it!'. Suliana Siwatibau, personal correspondence, April 11, 2021. In 1976, Kazimierz Wodzicki disagreed calling it 'thoughtful and useful', with 'the merit of being written by a person residing in the Pacific and not being many thousands of miles away like the previous authors'. Kazimierz Wodzicki, 'Report on… Second Symposium…', 'Pacific Islands: Social Affairs – South Pacific Conference on National Parks' ABHS 950 W4627 4200, 301/6/9 Part 2, R20765457, ANZ.

> then [came], *the consultant*. And then the aid came and then the whole process was repeated… It was consultant-driven, aid-driven, our people that were involved in that were the civil servants in the appropriate ministry, talking about development of the ordinary people in the villages... They had no voice whatsoever…
>
> Then another person woke up at the UN or somewhere and thought, hey these 'developing', so-called developing countries, [the] kind of development that's happening there is not sustainable!… What's the Tongan word for sustainable development? There's no equivalent, there's development, that's 'life'. Okay if development is life, then sustainable development is making sure you have a life, like for a while, okay?[209]

Helu-Thaman reminds us that even if ecodevelopment rightly questioned colonial developmental patterns the Pacific had adopted, this process was already happening at a high level, reflecting the cultured ethic of islands. Allen and Omo-Fadaka had incorporated 'traditional knowledge' or Pacific subsistence regimes as the 'eco' in ecodevelopment, without understanding that Pacific environmentalism could be, or was already, broader and more 'modern' than that. And although the environmental cultures the two celebrated were essential and deserved maintenance, their focus was squarely on 'traditional' groups like the Pukapukans as evidence of 'basic institutions' that the region (once) 'had', or subsistence regimes that were environmentally sound by default (and thus unthinkingly). This obscures the fact that an existing environmental ethic learnt in the village had percolated upwards into these 'contemporary institutions'—into research like the Regional Ecosystems Survey and personified by the practitioners present at Apia. Vaka vanua still existed. Siwatibau's paper advocated 'an extensive environmental monitoring system, coupled with the allocation of greater priority to environmental issues in planning and conducting economic development'.[210] The foundation for this was a childhood in Bau and a wide appreciation of custom, to which Siwatibau added formal botanical training.

The enduring ('traditional') ethic that supported ('modern') Pacific science and environmental management necessarily interacted with development at all levels, creating a particularly

[209] Konai Helu-Thaman, interview with author, December 6, 2019.
[210] Suliana Siwatibau, 'Traditional Conservation Practices'.

Pacific synthesis and a challenge to the assumptions of ecodevelopment. In Fiji, for example, the growing environmental expertise epitomised by Siwatibau was mirrored by a commitment in government, where Graham Baines served as the newly-appointed Environmental Advisor and ecological objectives featured in its Seventh Development Plan.[211] Over the three years prior, an interdepartmental committee had drafted a comprehensive report entitled 'Pollution and the Environment in Fiji'.[212] The report followed international best practice in advocating environmental impact statements, but also gave a rebuke to 'developed' nations who now enforced principles they had long forgotten,

> There is no reason why the developing countries should permit foreign investment in pollutive industries in order to escape more stringent environmental standards, [but equally], the growing environmental concern of some developed countries should not interfere [with] continued development; result in a reduction of resource transfers; distort aid priorities… or result in an insistence of unrealistic environmental standards… However, [the] rationale in which it is presupposed that a country which is developing may take unfair advantage by not insisting on environmental standards is fallacious… if a country reduces its pollution to an optimum level [its] economic welfare is increased not reduced, even though its national product as conventionally measured may fall.[213]

Fiji reminds us that 'ecodevelopment' came about as a developmental critique of environmentalism as much as vice versa.[214] Like many across the Global South, Fiji took exception to the way Westerners preached environmental temperance (or prohibition) with all the misplaced self-righteousness of recovering addicts. Environmentally destructive "development" had occurred first at the behest of colonial powers, and later with their encouragement and guidance. Now, Pacific leaders would not unthinkingly discard what they

[211] Graham Baines was also present at Apia. His tripartite paper on 'Ecodevelopment in a Pacific Islands Context' focused on mangroves and like Siwatibau explored the extant environmental ethic, re-instilling plants' usefulness and tensions within colonial development. He explained that 'from the continuing use being made of mangroves by South Pacific village and peri-urban communities, it is obvious that traditional views of those ecosystems reflected greater ecological understanding. The 'unhealthy wasteland' concept was introduced by colonial administrations. Development of more enlightened mangrove resource utilisation policies, consistent with traditional concepts of their usefulness, is now taking place in some South Pacific countries'. Graham Baines, 'Ecodevelopment in a Pacific Islands Context', *SPC and IUCN: Convention and Symposium*, Box 14, ADC.
[212] Department of Town and Country Planning, 'Pollution and the Environment in Fiji', 'Fiji' file, Box 9, ADC.
[213] Department of Town and Country Planning, 'Pollution and the Environment in Fiji', Box 9, ADC.
[214] See Stephen Macekura, 'Of Limits and Growth: Global Environmentalism and the Rise of "Sustainable Development" in the Twentieth Century' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Dartmouth College, 2013), 290.

had adopted earnestly, in the name of self-determination and higher living standards, simply because a green few had changed their tune.[215]

But as the Pollution Report points out, another mistake of that green few was to assume that "developing" nations were looking at things in the same way as themselves. The fallacy that pitted development against environment, *in opposition,* presumed that development sought wealth over welfare. To expand, 'ecodevelopment' responded to the paradigms of capitalistic development and preservationist environmentalism common in the West, but could not see that in the Pacific, priorities were different and institutions rested on alternative values. In the same way that the foundation for Pacific environmentalism was a proximity to the resource base, structured by cultured appreciations of islands learnt over centuries, 'development' was conceived of primarily as family and village betterment, and had been tempered by colonial domination to prioritise social development and self-determination.[216] Thought together and quite simply, the village has always been a welfare state resting on a Pacific environmentalism.

To look at Pacific people as once-impeccably-ecological or as proto-conservationists misses a broader lesson, a truer sustainability.[217] 'Ecodevelopment' was a constant in the Pacific, but holistically and basically, not through the swings of opposing social forces, synthesised only now as a "new" concept.[218] Helu-Thaman tells us the Tongan word for development is that of life, both to say 'sustainable development' does not translate, and, that it need not.

[215] Contrasting views would argue for compulsion rather than adoption, that of concerted 'underdevelopment' and the creation of markets foisting consumerism onto the Pacific. The role of 'Indigenous elites' further complicates the matter. 'Atu Emberson-Bain, ed., *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth: Perspectives of Pacific Island Women* (Suva, Fiji: Marama Publications, 1994), x.
[216] Suliana Siwatibau 'Who Controls Development in the South Pacific?', in *Environment and Development in the Pacific Islands*, eds., Ben Burt and Christian Clerk (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1997), 35.
[217] William C. Clarke, 'Learning from the Past: Traditional Knowledge and Sustainable Development', *The Contemporary Pacific* 2, no. 2 (1990). See also, Asesela Ravuvu, *Vaka i Taukei: The Fijian Way of Life* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1983).
[218] 'Atu Emberson-Bain, *Sustainable Development, i-iv.*

Re-commending the Second Symposium

The Second Regional Symposium's legacy is coloured by the failed Convention that preceded it and its immediate impact was ambivalent. Despite this, I want to stress that Apia also demonstrated Pacific capacity. Though Siwatibau was the only Pacific presenter, a Regional Ecosystems Survey and the growing Pacific personnel in attendance built upon a collaborative Pacific environmentalism. The examples of Fiji and Papua New Guinea show how local roots can have national fruits, as attendees brought experiences from home with them. Siwatibau's paper embodies both the spirit and knowledge vital to the moment; a traditioned conservation practice updated for the modern Pacific. This would be the foundation for future regionalism.

Equally, in Apia a regional ethic ran up against an international agenda. The IUCN participants who led the discussion did so in the formal proceedings, so while the Second Symposium's sixteen recommendations are worthy as goals, they are worth less as real-time assessments of Pacific initiative.[219] The first recommendation, '[commended] ecodevelopment to the island governments of the South Pacific as a development policy that is responsive to the needs and conditions of the diverse cultures and environments of the region…'[220] Couched in the language of international environmental management, and speaking *to* rather than *from* the region (however sympathetically), the Pacific had been here before. At the First Symposium, held in Noumea in 1971, an international consensus did not align with the environmental priorities of most Pacific people. Five years on, some progress is clear. Developmental needs featured and 'traditional environmental knowledge and conservation practices' got their own recommendation. Nevertheless, an international rethink that the Pacific partly inspired had now

[219] Wodzicki states that several committees were formed to prepare resolutions. His own on 'Conservation-Science' spent six hours preparing resolutions, so there was 'some astonishment' when all but one of his committee's resolutions 'disappeared', with those that survived 'watered down' or 'difficult to find amongst the verbiage'. Kazimierz Wodzicki, 'Report on… Second Symposium…'

[220] Others including 'Offices of the Environment', 'Public Participation at the Village Level' and 'Environmental Education' show both a recognition of the importance of village-level activities and government-level management orthodoxy. *SPC and IUCN: Convention and Symposium*, ADC.

circled back, its relevance assumed. I dare say that 'ecodevelopment' was always going to be the first recommendation.

Ecodevelopment was the right answer with the wrong working. Its disciples failed to truly understand how a like concept might already exist in the Pacific or how 'ecodevelopment principles' might have a broad, holistic foundation. Instead of supporting what the Pacific already had, any local equivalence was located in a timeless past and the decisive expertise remained with the consultants. While undoubtedly a better paradigm than prior conservation centred on national parks, its patchy uptake meant outside actors could perpetuate the older modes (see Chapter IV). And so, because Pacific people were not meaningfully involved in adopting or adapting 'ecodevelopment', the term gained little currency beyond upper echelons where it proved malleable and politically useful. Today you will not hear it spoken in the village, where it has limited novelty or utility.

Pacific capacity or expertise lacked recognition at Apia in a way that became problematic. The symposium set a scientific agenda, showing the full breadth of Pacific environments and suggesting how they should be managed. But instead of reflecting the Pacific knowledge available, its pre-ordained recommendations joined the laundry list and were forgotten. Worse still, because the symposium obscured the nascent environmental regionalism, it reinforced the expertise and mandate of international agencies and cleared the way for their future involvement. As the next section points out, this quickly became neo-colonial.

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> Last month, in Apia, many of our countries gathered to sign the first multi-lateral regional Convention on Nature Conservation. Behind this convention was more than two years of work… Now after that sure but small first step, we must make a bigger and bolder one. It is the South Pacific Forum where we should, together, make this step.
>
> We are all becoming aware that development can be a very mixed blessing. Until quite recently all development was regarded as good; not any more. Many countries are now paying a big

> price for thoughtless development… Fishery resources are depleted, land is eroded by thoughtless clearing, crops are attacked by pests because of bad planning in plantings, or the soil is depleted… Different plans, different development objectives, ones which emphasised conservation, could have meant that the systems that were adopted avoided all these illnesses of our present world situation… If we lack wisdom we will make our unborn generations the victims of our irresponsibility…
>
> Those of us who want development, will want "eco-development", that is ecologically sound development, development which supports our cultures and our societies and which does not destroy them. This will require careful planning, the use of appropriate technologies AND strong common purpose and cohesion between us.
>
> We should together, not individually, seek to build a relationship to the various UN and other agencies who seek to help us in the region. Our economic power might be modest. However, we are custodians of a very large portion of the earth's surface. We must be worthy custodians and as independent countries we must assume this responsibility ourselves...
>
> This new program should bring new emphasis to the work of the South Pacific Forum. In the past the Forum has mainly played the role of sorting over international regional problems. It has also been the place where we have focused our attention on those major threats to the Pacific and global environment, such as nuclear testing. Now is the time to replace the negative with the positive, to build a collective consensus to show the rest of the world.[221]

Michael Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Seventh South Pacific Forum, Nauru, July 26, 1976.

Few words have been as emblematic or as consequential for the movement for the Pacific environment as Somare's at Nauru. The themes of ocean stewardship, of sustaining life for future generations, of learning from others' mistakes, feature in many of the debates, working papers and speeches throughout this period, but scarcely with the same resonance or ramifications. Placing environmental concerns at the core of the region's foremost political body, the South Pacific Forum, would fundamentally change the course of Pacific environmentalism, and indeed regionalism. What had previously been the preserve of technical organisations or left to rest at village level as underlying cultural knowledge, became an explicit political priority. Environmentally conscious development, traditional knowledge, and Pacific science promised to join anti-nuclearism as expressions of a dynamic, independently

[221] 'Economic Development and the Environment', Working Paper 11, Appendix I, Paper presented to by the Government of Papua New Guinea to the Sixteenth South Pacific Conference, Noumea, October 4, 1976.

minded region. The newly proposed 'Comprehensive Environmental Management Programme'—which would become the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme—arose as the vehicle for this new 'collective consensus'. But indeed, it was the notion of regional self-determination that seemed both to drive it and pose the most issues. Truly, this was the 'Pacific way' for the environment.[222]

This section explores the diplomatic negotiations that established SPREP, with a focus on the extended deliberations over its form and function that took place over the three years from 1976. It addresses the challenge residing at the heart of Somare's intervention. Fundamentally, if the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme was to be effective and relevant, succeeding on the terms of Pacific people, it would need to represent and implement the environmentalism present in the Pacific. Not only would its content have to be determinedly Pacific, solving shared problems collectively, but its governance would need to facilitate this.

The Comprehensive Environmental Management Programme

Arising out of a working party comprised of member governments, the Commission, and the Forum Secretariat, the Comprehensive Environmental Management Programme (CEMP) was a joint proposal for a regional environment programme. This was SPREP's "rough draft". It would solidify a scientific consensus about the characteristics of the Pacific environment, justifying a *regional* approach to its management. A closer look reveals the impact of Pacific environmentalism in shaping the document, and subsequent debates over its provisions.

Compiled by SPC's Arthur Dahl from working party documents, the CEMP was broadly-based and inclusive, indeed 'comprehensive'. It included both natural and human environments,

[222] Greg Fry outlines the key propositions informing the Pacific way ideology: 'that regional decision-making structures should be controlled by Pacific states representing Pacific peoples and societies; that remaining colonial intrusion should be opposed; that neocolonial exploitation should be controlled; that Pacific cultural values should be asserted or at least defended in the face of Western cultural values; and that a Pacific cultural affinity had always existed and had been interrupted.' Fry, *Framing the Islands*, 138.

coordinating activities across almost thirty governments, regional organisations, UN agencies, universities, and non-governmental organisations. To organise the sprawling programme, the CEMP proposed priority areas and suggested working procedures over a series of phases.[223] Phase I would consist of Pacific nations assembling their own environment reports, to be presented at a 'Regional Conference on the Human Environment'. Phase II would involve strengthening governments' capacity to deal with the compiled environmental problems, establishing information and monitoring systems and trialling ecodevelopment projects. During Phase III, all of the major projects Phases I and II had identified would begin.[224] The difficult job of co-ordination would happen through two units with oversight from both the Commission and the Forum and subject to review by technical meetings of country representatives every two years.[225]

Although the draft CEMP intended to make environmental regionalism operational, it was also aspirational. It represented a marked scaling-up of interest and would require serious commitment, both financial and political. To give some perspective, at the time the South Pacific Commission had only one permanent environmental expert on its staff, while the Forum Secretariat had none. The Pacific was truly finding its own way, as no similar arrangement existed worldwide. The document recognised the gravity of the task, stating that if the programme went ahead, it would 'represent a significant precedent in international relations' and that 'it is appropriate that it is the South Pacific region… [which] has long fostered an awareness of the value of regional co-operative action, that proposes to set this example for humankind'.[226]

[223] Priority areas were grouped between 'human settlements', 'marine ecosystems' and 'land-based ecosystems' including, for example, 'marine conservation', 'forestry management' and 'the delivery of ecodevelopment to subsistence [communities]' 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, 8–16.
[224] 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, 36–39
[225] 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, 24.
[226] 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, 52.

It was the strength of regionalism that made such an ambitious environmental programme conceivable, but Pacific affinity and shared environmental interests went beyond politics. The principles at the heart of the CEMP, printed on its first page, suggest a broader, more fundamental base for environmental regionalism:

> While the Pacific Islands environment is distinctive from all other world environments, the countries and territories of the region share many common characteristics that justify a co-ordinated regional approach to many environmental problems...
>
> The principal objective of the [CEMP] is to provide for the sound management of the Pacific Islands environment so that it will be capable of providing a present and future resource base able to support the needs and maintain the quality of life of the people of the Pacific.
>
> Environmental management is thus not seen as blocking development but as encouraging it and directing it along those lines most compatible with human requirements, cultural traditions, and ecological and resource limits, an approach now referred to as ecodevelopment.[227]

The draft paper recognised the shared distinctiveness of the Pacific environment, making common characteristics the basis for collective solutions. This was thoughtful programme design. Putting human needs and Pacific ecologies at the centre of development planning balanced local concerns with regional ones. This ensured the programme would remain responsive despite its scope. Moreover, because the draft was attuned to the nature of islands, it was also a breakthrough for Pacific environmentalism. The draft CEMP built on previous efforts towards regionalism that acknowledged commonality between Pacific environments and cultures, adding technical justification and managerial apparatus. And so, although it referenced UNEP's 'ecodevelopment' to encourage 'locally-defined, environmentally appropriate development', the CEMP was intellectually closer to the Commission's first major environmental project, the Regional Ecosystems Survey.[228] It drew on the survey, which had collaboratively catalogued islands. 'The particular characteristics of island environments', the

[227] 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, i.
[228] Ecodevelopment is the subject of a supplementary paper in Appendix III, which quotes a Canadian government publication by Dr George Francis, who in turn found inspiration from Prof. Ignacy Sachs. 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, 59.

CEMP argued, made 'a re-examination of the types of development that are appropriate to natural and cultural conditions… even more critical [than] for other parts of the developing world'.[229] It actioned the spirit of the survey by organising environmental management not only around government agencies or universities, but also around villages. The CEMP paper noted that a degree of decentralisation was 'inherent in [Pacific] societies', mirroring the islands themselves, and so 'it is at the village level that much environmental management responsibility rests'. Further, 'special effort should go into the support of indigenous initiatives and problem-solving through approaches which make maximum use of local cultural traditions and experience, combined where necessary with more creative or imaginative uses of new technologies'.[230] The draft CEMP was an action plan, but one that centred on updated Pacific institutions and explicitly on 'the people themselves'.[231] In other words, this was traditioned conservation for a modern Pacific.

The CEMP both laid the groundwork for SPREP and stimulated debates about what form it should take. While few Pacific people disputed the value of, and need for, environmental management, the draft entered a fractious political climate. International influence, institutional infighting, and individual countries' priorities threatened to splinter any 'collective consensus'. Three schisms deepened over a series of meetings between October 1976 and October 1978. In examining them, my focus is on ideas of representation and service, which became key to resolving the schisms and settling SPREP.

Schisms over SPREP: International Influence

The first schism arose over the influence of international organisations on the proposed programme. The United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Economic

[229] 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, 3–7.
[230] 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, 63.
[231] 'SPC and SPEC CEMP', ADC, 7.

and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), took Pacific peoples' enthusiasm for conservation as an opportunity to extend their own systems into the region. UNEP especially saw the Pacific as vital to global conservation and its plans for ecodevelopment in the Global South, pledging support for an environment programme hosted by the SPC in late 1974. UNEP Executive Director Maurice Strong declared at the Vancouver Pacific Science Congress the following year that, 'the Pacific Region has a unique and special importance in relation to the concerns of [UNEP] to preserve and enhance the environment for human life on Planet Earth as a whole', and that, 'the struggle [for] our "Only One Earth" may be won or lost in the Pacific'.[232] Given that the region was largely absent from the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, Strong also announced that UNEP would facilitate a dedicated 'mini-Stockholm' conference for the Pacific.[233]

In expanding its Pacific presence, UNEP had the support of Papua New Guinea, whose representatives acted as another conduit into regional fora. Strong visited Somare personally, encouraging him to make environmental management Papua New Guinea's major foreign affairs activity.[234] Barney Rongap and the Australian consultant Peter Ellyard then played a prominent role on the joint working party towards the CEMP. They seeded references to ecodevelopment and the high-level conference in the programme proposal (as well as in Somare's Nauru speech, which Ellyard boasted he had drafted). Some metropolitans grew suspicious of this link, questioning Papuan enthusiasm and whether it came from within.[235]

[232] Maurice Strong, UNEP Executive Director, Address to the Thirteenth Pacific Science Congress, Vancouver, August 28, 1975.
[233] Briefing for the NZ Delegation to the Ninth South Pacific Forum, September 4, 1978, 'International Affairs: South Pacific Commission – Work Programme – General Projects: Conservation of Nature', ABHS 950 W4627/2833, 116/10/7/28 Part 2, R20753434, ANZ; 'Detailed Background on the Development of the Programme', 'International Affairs: South Pacific Commission – Work Programme – General Projects: Conservation of Nature', ABHS 950 W4627/2833, 116/10/7/28 Part 2, R20753434, ANZ.
[234] 'CEMP Report, March 21, 1977', 'International Affairs: South Pacific Commission - Work Programme - General Projects: Conservation of Nature', ABHS 950 W4627/2833, 116/10/7/28 Part 1, R20753433, ANZ.
[235] 'Martin Ward, CEMP Report', March 21, 1977, R20753433, ANZ.

But even if consultants and donors hovered in the background, there is no doubt that Pacific leaders such as Somare readily identified the opportunity that international involvement and its environmentalism provided. Concepts like 'ecodevelopment' were malleable, their proponents in international organisations like UNEP were sympathetic and funding was available. Moreover, and as Omo-Fadaka had noted, the ecodevelopment concept could allow for deviation from industrial, capitalistic development in a promising way. Ecodevelopment stressed the primacy of the local and cultural, allowing Pacific environmentalists and their allies to treat it as an approximation of, or vehicle for, their own ethic. Environmentalism, whether ostensibly 'Pacific' or otherwise, might then embody or defend Pacific ways of living and thinking.

Ultimately, the promise of international environmental management had to be weighed against its co-opting function. Similar dynamics characterised earlier IUCN involvement in the region. Despite strong rhetoric the patronage of certain nations and preferential projects diverted or limited regional action. There was a growing feeling that dominant personalities and outside concepts could override Pacific initiative on the CEMP as well. Supposedly, it was 'not possible to impose ecodevelopment from outside', and such programmes '[stimulated] local decision making'.[236] Yet, with international organisations framing the issues and planning for a 'mini-Stockholm' (a 'grandiose', 'large-scale jamboree' in the disapproving words of some), the programme took shape in ways that would exclude certain member countries and impinge on the Commission and the Forum as executing agencies.[237]

Schisms over SPREP: Institutional Infighting

The second and deepest schism over SPREP arose between the Commission and the Forum over which regional organisation should have executive control over the programme. At the

[236] 'SPC CEMP Planning Meeting, Background Paper', R20753433, ANZ.
[237] Briefing for the NZ Delegation to the Ninth South Pacific Forum, September 4, 1978, R20753434, ANZ.

heart of the dispute were issues of appropriate Pacific representation and adequate regional service. Each questioned the other's mandate and capability to represent the Pacific and its environmentalism. Both needed the programme to appease their supporters. Between 1976 and 1978, a recurring argument played out across the regional gatherings, with opposing factions struggling in session over the texts of communiques and conference resolutions.

The South Pacific Forum, as the voice of the region's independent nations, believed that environmental matters were a growing responsibility and that it possessed the requisite political power to address them.[238] Somare gave his landmark address at the Eighth Forum (Nauru, July 1976), placing environmental management alongside the Forum's active positions on trade, nuclear matters, and the law of the sea. The leaders' communique then directed its Secretariat, led by Mahe Tupouniua, to 'consult with the SPC with a view to preparing proposals for a co-ordinated regional approach to the problem of environmental management'.[239]

The South Pacific Commission, as a technical organisation with Pacific-wide membership and thirty years of resource management experience, doubted the Forum's capability. Commission staff cited their own directives dating back to 1971, and existing plans for an environmental programme with UNEP. Many felt the Commission should have oversight, given its broader scope and political representation.[240] SPC used its Sixteenth Conference (Noumea, October 1976) to resolve that, for inclusiveness and to avoid duplication, the organisations should be 'joint executing agencies'.[241]

Initially, this compromise appeared to have been accepted. However, during the first CEMP working group meeting (Noumea, March 1977), non-attendance by key Forum members (Fiji,

[238] 'South Pacific Forum - Nauru', 'International Affairs: Social Affairs—General—Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources', ABHS 950 W4627 2470, 108/1/9 Part 6, R22484296, ANZ.
[239] Leaders' Communique, Seventh South Pacific Forum, Nauru, July 26–28, 1976.
[240] John Carter, 'The SPC: A Renewal or the Last Convulsion', *Pacific Islands Monthly* 47, no. 12 (1976), 10.
[241] Sixteenth Resolution, Sixteenth South Pacific Conference, Noumea, November 20–29, 1976.

Samoa, and Cook Islands) was interpreted as a protest against Commission control. Delegates passed around a "personal" letter from Fiji's environment officer Graham Baines (not present) to Arthur Dahl, which hinted at misgivings,

> I suspect that some of the apparent loss of interest here in the programme (in spite of an appreciation of the importance of environmental management) results from an assumption that the unit would inevitably be located in Noumea.
>
> The effectiveness of a complicated multidisciplinary, multi-institutional and multi-agency exercise such as this would be seriously compromised if it were to be based in politically and geographically isolated Noumea. Further it is most unsuitable for an island occupied by one which shows such contempt for the welfare of indigenous people and for the preservation of a renewable natural resource base for them – to be the site for coordination of a programme with such intimate implications for the development of free island nations.[242]

Non-attendance here was not apathy or tribalism, instead reflecting concern that environmental management was being stage-managed, seemingly from abroad and by UNEP and SPC in ways that bore outcomes like the failed Apia Convention. Forum supporters felt the Commission was irredeemably colonial, that their interests, truly Pacific interests, could not be reflected or advanced by a body with an apolitical purview and dual masters.

Accordingly, the Eighth South Pacific Forum (Port Moresby, August 1977), made a declaration of independent intent. The Port Moresby Declaration took aim at distant water fishing countries, with member countries resolving to establish 200-mile exclusive economic zones and coordinate action through a 'South Pacific Regional Fisheries Agency'.[243] In time this would transform tuna diplomacy and ocean governance, with exclusive economic zones now integral to Pacific regional politics.[244] But, once again, as the Forum stressed its primacy, it was doing so in fisheries, an industry traditionally serviced by the Commission.[245] This threatened to further divide or duplicate the work of the two organisations.

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[242] 'Martin Ward, CEMP Report', R20753433, ANZ.
[243] Leaders' Communique, Eighth South Pacific Forum, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, August 29–31, 1977.
[244] Fry, *Framing the Islands*, 209.
[245] The Commission had run a variety of nearshore and deep-sea fisheries programmes for 20 years, with dedicated staff and a recently commenced US$3million Skipjack Programme aimed at tagging an estimated 30,000 tuna for information on stock size and migratory patterns. South Pacific Commission, *Meeting House of the Pacific: The*

With the CEMP on the agenda at the Eighth Forum there was a chance that environmental management would follow fisheries. While in this instance the Forum stopped short of proposing its own programme and instead reiterated support for a joint-agency CEMP, it also clearly restated its desire for executive control.[246] The Forum considered the SPC-authored CEMP paper lacking in detail and found its recommendations tantamount to an entirely separate regional organisation. New Zealand Prime Minister Robert Muldoon was especially harsh, calling it 'one of the more impractical and least relevant documents I have seen for some time', referring it for 'heavy pruning'.[247] The Forum directed its Secretariat to approach the Commission again, to discuss how the CEMP document might be 'modified to meet the needs of the countries of the region'.[248]

When it came time for the Commission to respond to the Port Moresby Declaration at the Seventeenth South Pacific Conference (Pago Pago, September 1977), hostility was thinly veiled. Secretary General Dr E. Macu Salato spoke darkly about 'what [was] becoming, [not] duplication or overlapping in our work, but erosion, or [perhaps] takeover'.[249] This forced Mahe Tupouniua, who attended as an observer, to the floor to defend the Forum's actions and its consultative process. Salato took issue with Tupouniua's reply, stating that while he had agreed to the Forum Secretariat preparing proposals for a regional fisheries agency, that did not mean overall responsibility for fisheries should fall to it. Nor should environmental

Story of SPC (Noumea: SPC, 2007), 56. See also 'SPC commences Skipjack programme', *South Pacific Bulletin* 27, no. 4 (1977).

[246] 'Forum Declaration on Environmental Management' R20753434, ANZ.

[247] It is likely that this response was as much a reflection of proposed cost and the focus on environment (as opposed to development) as it was the relative merit or over-ambition of the plan. Muldoon outlined his 'rather reluctance' at the project, hoping it was 'economical to administer'. 'Extract from Prime Minister's Report to Cabinet from the 1977 Forum Meeting', R20753434, ANZ.

[248] Leaders' Communique, Eighth South Pacific Forum, Port Moresby.

[249] John Carter, 'Horrid Niggling or Happy Nuptials, for Commission and Forum?', *Pacific Islands Monthly* 48, no. 11 (1977); Seventeenth South Pacific Conference, Special Press Release, Pago Pago, American Samoa, September 24–30, 1977.

management for that matter, which was closely linked to rural development 'on which SPC had been instructed to concentrate'.[250]

Schisms over SPREP: Between Nations

Organisational disputes and differences of opinion would overflow into acrimony between Pacific nations, threatening the basis of consensus politics. Non-self-governing territories felt at times that they were collateral in independent nations' anti-colonialism. Territories were excluded in Forum activities by virtue of its membership and so relied on the South Pacific Conference and Commission to be heard and served. This was especially true for smaller nations whose development assistance needs were relatively small and otherwise hard to access. Regionalism was considered their Pacific lifeline and deepest form of internationalism.

Factionalism led to heated exchanges in the South Pacific Conference when all were assembled. For instance, when Salato and Tupouniua faced off in Pago Pago, Papua New Guinea's Ebia Olewale intervened on behalf of the Forum, objecting strongly to a draft resolution he believed 'implied that SPC was giving "directions" to [the Forum Secretariat]' and was thus 'a "direct" insult to the sovereign states represented in the South Pacific Forum'.[251] This in turn caused Basile Tui, the representative of Wallis and Futuna, to wonder aloud whether the programme 'was designed to benefit only those countries which are Forum members' and if so, '[why] had the topic been raised at the present Conference'.[252] Sensing a conflict simmering between large and small, independent and non-independent nations, French Polynesia's Maco Tevane had stressed the need for concord given how important the

[250] Seventeenth South Pacific Conference, Special Press Release.
[251] The resolution '[noted] that the Sixteenth South Pacific Conference directed that a proposal for a Comprehensive Environmental Management Programme be the jointly prepared by SPEC and/South Pacific Conference'. 'Ad Hoc Committee on Environment Programme/Resolution 1', Seventeenth South Pacific Conference, Pago Pago, American Samoa, September 24–30, 1977.
[252] Seventeenth South Pacific Conference, Special Press Release.

programme was for the region. In this case parties got no closer to resolving the standoff when the revised wording '"commended", "endorsed" and "recognised", but did not "direct"'.[253]

These issues were not unique to environment or fisheries, but it took areas where division of responsibility was not clear cut to produce such a reckoning. As Somare's speech suggested, owning what would become SPREP was central to the development of the Forum. Equally, the Commission would have no future if it lost both the fisheries and environment portfolios. Given the growing animosity between the organisations, an existential crisis had the very real potential to become a fight to the death.

CEMP to SPREP

Because Port Moresby and Pago Pago were inconclusive, it remained to be seen which organisation would win out, and what effect this would have on SPREP's governance and its ability to service a Pacific environmentalism. The negotiations for an environmental programme recommenced in October 1977 when the Forum Secretariat (Mahe Tupouniua and Rod Gates) convened a small working group comprising representatives from the Commission (Arthur Dahl), USP (Derek Medford) and the Papua New Guinea Government (Barney Rongap) in advance of the Second Joint CEMP Meeting scheduled for June 1978.[254] Given the Forum's verdict that the draft CEMP was too unwieldly, the parties agreed that the Forum Secretariat should produce its own working paper. Graham Baines was hired as a consultant from the Fiji Government, producing a short working paper that ultimately reiterated support for a regional approach to environmental management, albeit on a smaller scale to that envisaged by the CEMP document. [255]

[253] John Carter, 'Horrid Niggling…'
[254] 'SPEC Directors Annual Report 1977/1978', R20753434, ANZ.
[255] New Zealand reports that initially, 'according to Gates, Baines came up with a substantial programme involving the setting up of a separate organisation which would have stood little chance of receiving wide regional backing'. This suggests Baines and Dahl were of similar mind. Telegram from NZ High Commission Suva to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Wellington, May 3, 1978, R20753434, ANZ; 'SPC-SPEC/CEMP/WP.2', R20753434, ANZ.

As the Commission and the Forum wrangled over control, regional consensus on environmental issues appeared to break down entirely. Frantic telegrams out of Samoa warned that the Apia Convention's window for signature was soon expiring, but with the Cook Islands and France holding their lines, it passed unsigned.[256] While this was not terminal, it did nothing for morale and was politically embarrassing for Samoa.[257] The environment issue was truly bogged down. The upcoming meeting was thought to be 'the final chance to get a regional programme underway'. A month out, however, 'preliminary soundings [gave] no grounds for optimism'. A New Zealand diplomatic survey found many of the Pacific nations unenthusiastic about regional environmental initiatives.[258] Whilst Cook Islands was 'expected to see merit in a modest regional programme and [viewed] the CEMP as a possible training ground', Tonga's 'lack of enthusiasm has produced inaction, even indifference' and it '[regarded] environmental control as a matter for individual governments'. Fiji '[echoed] these sentiments and still [believed] that an existing organisation (such as the [United Nations Development Advisory Team]) could handle it'. 'Samoa, although concerned with its local environment questions, [showed] a similar lack of interest in a coordinated regional approach.' Only 'Papua New Guinea [had] lost none of its enthusiasm and [looked] set to pursue the concept of a CEMP keenly'.[259] To make matters worse, NZ reported that '[the Forum Secretariat] had apparently also made its soundings of regional governments, [receiving] many differing answers with no clear thread running through them... [concluding] that there was no clear consensus in the

[256] Letter from Prime Minister's Department, Apia to Foreign Affairs, Wellington, January 23, 1978, R20753434, ANZ.
[257] 'Convention on Conservation of Nature in South Pacific', R20753434, ANZ.
[258] The survey took place in April/May 1978 and is summarised in 'P&E Agenda Item 7: CEMP', R20753434, ANZ.
[259] Although the status report from the NZ post in Fiji appears to be an accurate summary, the author does not put the same stead in the corresponding telegram out of Apia which refers to Samoa as the repository for the CEMP (rather than the Apia Convention) or Nuku'alofa which carries this mistake forward. Telegram from Rarotonga to Wellington, May 12, 1978, R20753434, ANZ; Telegram from Nuku'alofa to Wellington, May 9, 1978, R20753434, ANZ; Telegram from Port Moresby to Wellington, April 28, 1978, R20753434, ANZ; Telegram from Suva to Wellington, May 3, 1978, R20753434, ANZ; Telegram from Apia to Wellington, April 28, 1978, R20753434, ANZ.

region about a programme'.[260] The return to Noumea was imminent and while stakes were high, expectations remained low.

Early signs at the Second Joint CEMP meeting (Noumea, June 1978) gave room for optimism. Turnout was high and alongside representatives from the Forum Secretariat, the Commission, UNEP and ESCAP were those from fourteen nations—only Nauru, Niue, Kiribati, and Solomon Islands were absent.[261] Moreover, it seemed delegates possessed a quiet determination to get a practical plan actioned. After opening statements, the meeting proceeded on the assumption that there *should* be a regional programme, but a modest one without provision for a separate organisation.

When it came to presenting the national statements, pleasant surprise redoubled on the part of some metropolitans. New Zealand considered them 'interesting, chiefly for their revelation of the considerable efforts—existing or planned—which most island governments were making in areas of environment protection'.[262] Cook Islands had implemented controls on earthworks; Papua New Guinea had been elected to the UN Commission on Human Settlements; American Samoa, disillusioned with empty standards handed down from Washington, looked for regional solutions to balance its increasingly Americanised living standards with environmental damage. Even Fiji, whose Prime Minister Ratu Kamisese Mara was known to be standoffish about environmental matters publicly, was undertaking a wide range of activities in conservation and pollution control (although, Fiji representative and Conservator of Forests, Konisi Yabaki, asked that the statements did not appear in the meeting report). It was clear that momentum was building and that metropolitans had underestimated the nature of Pacific commitment once again.

[260] 'Report of the NZ Delegation to the Joint SPC/SPEC Meeting', R20753434, ANZ.
[261] SPC & SPEC, *Second Technical Meeting on the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Agreed report* (Noumea: SPC/SPEC, 1978).
[262] 'Report of the NZ Delegation to the Joint SPC/SPEC Meeting', R20753434, ANZ.

Taking a lead from the (updated) original CEMP document and its Forum equivalent, discussion turned to institutional and financial arrangements. In the spirit of the new consensus, the two working documents were submitted as joint Commission/Forum products. Between them, Gates suggested, there was a 'common appreciation of the similar features of the Pacific ecological systems' and recognition that governments needed access to environmental information and suitable consultants.[263] Such activities would form the core of the programme, to be financed by external donors (UNEP) rather than Pacific governmental contributions. This pragmatic approach was accepted by all present, except perhaps 'a particularly vociferous Australian, [Peter Ellyard], serving his last few months as a consultant to Papua New Guinea, [who] tended to ignore the need for political acceptance'.[264] And while Ellyard's interventions 'led to some disarray' that morning, compromise had won out by day's end.

The meeting looked to be heading for an early and successful conclusion, when midway through the second day, UNEP and ESCAP representatives unexpectedly tabled their own project documents. Coming without prior notice or consultation, the UN plan seemingly superseded the prior arrangements.[265] UNEP would now divide the US$310,000 of funds between the region *and ESCAP*. The Pacific regional organisations would still prepare country reports, but these were now effectively only a 'proposal', analysed by ESCAP to implement as their own action plan with a 'high-level' conference for the *Asia*-Pacific in March 1980. This was a clear imposition, an attempt to have the 'sub-region' fall within the UN framework and Pacific environmental priorities merge with international ones. In doing so, the UN plan showed blatant disregard for Pacific decision making, the regional environmental movement

[263] 'Report of the NZ Delegation to the Joint SPC/SPEC Meeting', R20753434, ANZ.
[264] 'Report of the NZ Delegation to the Joint SPC/SPEC Meeting', R20753434, ANZ.
[265] UNEP and ESCAP were acting on the resolutions of the 34th session of ESCAP (March 1978) which had 'endorsed the idea of convening a [conference] in coordination with SPEC and SPC', this in turn referred back to Strong's initiative at Vancouver. 'Detailed Background on the Development of the Programme', R20753434, ANZ.

and years of negotiations. Astounded, Cook Islands' Nikau Tangaroa pointed out the ESCAP conference would be in the cyclone season.

The following two days were spent clearing up the disruption caused by the UN scheme. The collective injury was as much cultural as it was political. By tabling poorly drafted plans over the top of the regional organisations, the UN bodies had revealed an 'ignorance of Pacific countries and insensitivity to their ways'.[266] The Forum Secretariat's Rod Gates questioned whether the now-Asia-Pacific-mini-Stockholm conference idea had achieved consensus, adding that Forum leaders would feel 'pre-empted' if asked to consent to decisions already made. There was, he opined, a way of going about things in the Pacific and this was not it. After an extended discussion on proper process, organisational responsibilities, and the merits of the conference, Jalal, the ESCAP representative, conceded his approach was wrong but maintained that he came with a mandate. Hadi from UNEP, who was considered 'unbelievably insensitive, inept and the subject of general obloquy', was more forthright, stating that in the Pacific he had 'been through the fires of hell'.[267]

At meeting's end, compromise had achieved consensus and resolutions detailed the freshly named 'South Pacific Regional Environment Programme'.[268] This was a significant milestone for the Pacific, its environment, and its environmentalism. Pacific nations had consolidated despite their differences, defying the low estimations of metropolitans and resisting UN overreaching. Crucially, the meeting's resolutions respected Pacific desires while not dissuading the funders, UNEP. Country reports would form the basis of an action plan jointly drafted by the Forum and the Commission (in consultation with UNEP and ESCAP). The programme would come into being proper at a regional conference, where the implementation

[266] 'Report of the NZ Delegation to the Joint SPC/SPEC Meeting', R20753434, ANZ.
[267] 'Report of the NZ Delegation to the Joint SPC/SPEC Meeting', R20753434, ANZ.
[268] SPC & SPEC, *Second Technical Meeting… Agreed Report*.

of the action plan and related administrative and financial arrangement would be finalised. There was still the crucial decision about executive control to be made between the Forum Secretariat and SPC, however, and this risked souring the mood as the Forum and Conference met again in late 1978.

Final Claims

The independent nations of the Pacific reviewed the progress towards SPREP in Alofi at the Forum Secretariat Committee Meeting and the Ninth South Pacific Forum (Niue, September 1978). While Forum sessions are closed, reports from the earlier committee meeting and pre-Forum briefings make clear that this was a crossroads for SPREP. In choosing which organisation should have overall responsibility, members remained split on their relative merits. The Forum Secretariat had the political primacy to make environmental decisions effective but would require increases in staff and funding, meanwhile SPC was answerable to metropolitans yet '[had] an environmentalist familiar with the region's needs on its staff, [the] widest geographical spread and the necessary technical background'.[269] Some Forum nations were open to a Commission-lead programme, as was Secretariat Director Mahe Tupouniua. The sticking point was the Port Moresby Declaration. Tupouniua explained how it directed him 'very firmly… and until there was a contrary decision [he] would insist that this responsibility be respected by the Commission'. However, he added graciously, because 'it seemed [that] friction and divisiveness would continue', he would consider '[asking] the Committee to recommend to the Forum that it reverse the Port Moresby decision and remove the problem'.[270] However, this was not Tupouniua's decision to make alone and as Papua New Guinea's representative pointed out, 'the decision of the Forum had not been lightly taken—once made, it was there to stay'. Ultimately, the committee decided that the Declaration must be

[269] Briefing for the NZ Delegation to the Ninth South Pacific Forum, R20753434, ANZ.
[270] Letter from New Zealand Secretary of Foreign Affairs to Commissioner for the Environment, September 29, 1978, R20753434, ANZ.

implemented and that if secretariats could not arrange this, then governments would, *even if this meant working through the Conference itself*.[271] And so, while the Alofi Forum supported the continued development of SPREP it remained firm in its mandate over it. Ever dutiful, Mahe Tupouniua would once more attend the Conference with a job to do.

The South Pacific Conference was dubbed the 'meeting house of the Pacific', but its eighteenth iteration would turn courthouse.[272] The values of regionalism, the relationship between the Forum and the Commission, and each organisations' ability to serve were put to a series of tacit verdicts or unspoken votes. Some "passed" pleasingly. All felt the warmth when the Conference elected Toalipi Lauti, Prime Minister of newly independent Tuvalu as Chairman. Next, members voted to remove one of the SPC's last barriers to equal participation for Pacific nations.[273] Other verdicts were clear fails, as when Forum supporters Fiji and Papua New Guinea froze their contributions for the three years following 1979 in an act of polite protest (or sabotage). This would force the organisation to cut back on future activities. But the supreme test came with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Years of negotiations culminated as ownership of SPREP took a central and symbolic place in the struggle between the Forum and the Commission. In a tense five-day exchange, the regional organisations and their supporting countries would stake final claims to the programme. Both stressed a mandate and the ability to best execute its environmental aims, both *needed* the programme to serve their people and stay relevant. And while no record of the sessions or backroom negotiations exists, piecing together interviews, restricted reports, and news articles allows a look into a dramatic and truly consequential South Pacific Conference. Not since 1970,

[271] Leaders' Communique, Ninth South Pacific Forum, Alofi, Niue, September 16–20, 1978.
[272] The Eighteenth South Pacific Conference was held in Noumea from October 9–13, 1978. SPC, *Meeting House of the Pacific*, i.
[273] Caroline Nalo, 'Eighteenth South Pacific Conference', *South Pacific Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (1978); SPC, *Meeting House of the Pacific*, 106.

when the French representative had walked out over Fiji's challenge to nuclear testing, was there such open conflict and so much at stake.

Deliberations began early and on a discordant note. Papua New Guinea—or rather Father Momis' offsider, Peter Ellyard—privately circulated a draft resolution which controversially made no mention of the Forum's primacy, as per the Port Moresby and Alofi Forums, instead reviving the idea that SPREP would have its own office and secretariat.[274] As the draft contradicted most all prior agreements and meant SPREP would effectively be a separate organisation, this brought SPC Secretary-General Macu Salato and Forum Secretariat Director Mahe Tupouniua into backroom negotiations. Here the discussion stayed for three days.

While declassified reports and a sole *Pacific Islands Monthly* article speculate at the content of the deadlocked backroom talks, a crucial separate incident has gone unreported until now.[275] The discussions were not only between the Commission and Forum Secretariat, but also involved the UN agencies which had quietly redoubled their efforts to take SPREP away from the region. The UNEP Regional Director, Dr R.M. Lesaca, and ESCAP representative, Rudy Gontha, each took SPC Regional Ecological Advisor Arthur Dahl aside, quietly suggesting his organisation drop the Forum and move the programme into the UN ambit instead. Surreptitiously, this was repeated with Forum Secretariat Director Mahe Tupouniua, thus playing the regional organisations off against each other. The UN plan backfired. Dahl remembers instead how he and Tupouniua took the representatives aside in turn, 'telling them that this was not the way things were done in the region'. 'If they did not like it, they could go home'.[276]

[274] '18th South Pacific Conference… New Zealand Delegation Report', R20753434, ANZ; Bob Hawkins, 'Mahe: Forum Before Self', *Pacific Islands Monthly* 49, no. 12 (1978).
[275] Hawkins, 'Mahe: Forum Before Self'; Arthur Dahl, interview with the author, March 27, 2019.
[276] Arthur Dahl, personal correspondence, 15 June 2021.

On the fifth and final morning, negotiations emerged into the open. Father Momis emphasised the need to avoid further delays in launching the programme, explaining how his amended PNG resolution would 'provide a way of making the Port Moresby Declaration effective, as well as… a brief for co-operation between SPC and SPEC'.[277] Though it technically still contained elements that contradicted the Alofi decision, the motion was quickly endorsed by a slew of non-Forum representatives, including the United States and France. The chairman looked set to declare the motion passed, when Mahe Tupouniua stepped up for his organisation.

In an 'amazing' and 'totally dedicated' display, Tupouniua drew attention to the 'far-reaching and quite serious implications' of what the Conference proposed.[278] While he appreciated the need for haste, purpose was paramount. One should not run blindly; it was clear to see that the draft resolution flouted the decisions of the Forum. The Forum Secretariat, not the Commission, must lead the programme. Tupouniua sympathised with the Australian representative, who had been conferring with Canberra on such matters. The metropolitans, he chided, 'never [knew] quite what to say until checking with Paris, London or Washington'.[279] He humbly requested that *all* Forum countries should come to such meetings with the appropriate authority to make imminent decisions. Such decisions made in the Forum and by its members, he explained, were quite different to those of the Conference: they were final decisions made by the heads of government. And while only 12 countries of the 22 at the table were independent and thus able to be Forum members, *applications from other prospective members would be given sympathetic consideration*.[280] This was bold. These were two independent intergovernmental organisations but Tupouniua, as an observer, had

[277] Hawkins, 'Mahe: Forum Before Self'.
[278] '18th South Pacific Conference… New Zealand Delegation Report', R20753434, ANZ; Hawkins, 'Mahe: Forum Before Self'.
[279] Hawkins, 'Mahe: Forum Before Self'.
[280] '18th South Pacific Conference… New Zealand Delegation Report', R20753434, ANZ.

commandeered SPC proceedings, effectively vetoed decisions, and was now going so far as to recruit members within session!

The Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission, Macu Salato, 'virtually exploded'.[281] He threw down his pen in disgust. Tupouniua paused, asking, 'Mr Chairman, am I out of order?' 'Yes', came the hissed reply from Salato's vicinity. Silence fell and Tupouniua awaited judgement. In answer, American Samoa's representative, Palauni Tuiasosopo, whose territory had voted for the motion, rose slowly. He uttered most memorably, 'my native sense of respect has been put to the supreme test. Perhaps at this time the distinguished representative of [the Forum Secretariat] may be out of order'.[282] Tupouniua apologised as he returned to his seat. Duty had meant a cultural slight and taken a personal toll. But his job was done.

The atmosphere remained tense. The heads of the two regional organisations had clashed, publicly and acrimoniously, and yet the issue remained unsettled. A question directed to Papua New Guinea for clarification broke the standoff—which organisation was to have executive control and did the motion entail establishing a separate organisation? Father Momis explained how the intention was to ensure the programme be answerable to both the Forum and the Conference. But because the current proposal was clearly unworkable, compromise was clearly necessary. The solution put forward was to have the Forum Secretariat chair a coordinating group that involved UNEP and ESCAP, with SPC serving as its secretary, thus dividing responsibility but removing the need for a separate secretariat.[283] When Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands endorsed the amended motion, it passed with acclamation and more than one sigh of relief.

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[281] '18th South Pacific Conference… New Zealand Delegation Report', R20753434, ANZ.
[282] Hawkins, 'Mahe: Forum Before Self'.
[283] This idea had been floated earlier in the year and formed part of Momis' initial speech before being redacted inexplicably. The implication is that Ellyard removed it, as he was a passionate supporter of the separate organisation at the June meeting. In any case Jim Bolger, the NZ delegate, took full credit for coming up with the solution, despite its unoriginality. '18th South Pacific Conference… New Zealand Delegation Report', R20753434, ANZ.

After four years of negotiations, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme was confirmed. UNEP approved the project proposal the following year, allocating responsibility for SPREP to the Oceans and Coastal Areas programme as one of its 'Regional Seas'. SPEC, SPC, ESCAP, and UNEP met again in September 1979, before convening SPREP's first Coordinating Group meeting in January 1980. Attention then shifted to in-country preparation and thematic reviews, to which Suliana Siwatibau, Graham Baines, and Arthur Dahl contributed with technical assistance. SPREP was launched officially at the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific in Rarotonga in March of 1982.

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> <u>The common environmental heritage of the South Pacific</u>
>
> …While the Pacific Ocean divides the South Pacific countries, it also unites them in a single environmental system. The waves, currents and weather do not respect national boundaries, and any major alteration could have widespread effects. The resources of this regional ecosystem are shared by all the countries… co-ordinated approaches to ocean resource management are therefore essential.
>
> Environmental management is not a new concept for Pacific peoples. Wherever natural resource management was needed, the traditional cultures of the region developed practices which protected their essential interests. These included land and reef tenure systems, permanent and temporary taboos on species or places, refined and selective fishing techniques, agroforesty, terracing and irrigation, windbreaks, bush fallow, and other agricultural and soil management practices, etc. The cultural heritage of the Pacific is full of examples of sound environmental management equivalent or superior to modern methods. One of the great tragedies of the region is that this heritage is rapidly being lost just as the need for it is increasingly apparent.[284]

Arthur Dahl and Ian Baumgart, 'The State of the Environment in the South Pacific', paper presented to the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific, March 8–11, 1982, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

[284] Arthur Lyon Dahl, and Ian Baumgart, 'The State of the Environment in the South Pacific', *Report of the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 8–11 March 1982.* (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1982), 47–71.

'The concept of stewardship for future generations is deeply ingrained in our culture', began the Honourable Young Vivian, Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission, addressing those gathered in Rarotonga. The State of the Environment Report, he continued, distilled the region's collective problems but offered all there an opportunity: 'Principles can be recognised, policies developed, and a new ethic created, based on the traditional ethic common to all peoples of the Pacific [while] seeking to incorporate appropriate features of the more economically developed countries'.[285] SPREP, he hoped, would facilitate just this, safeguarding the common environmental heritage of the Pacific for the future.

This chapter has sought to establish what it meant to create a *South Pacific* and *regional*, environment programme. For Young Vivian, like Suliana Siwatibau and Arthur Dahl, it meant creating a structure for a new ethic. One that embedded Pacific knowledge about the shared physical characteristics of island and ocean ecosystems, using them as the basis for Indigenous, decentralised, and collaborative approaches to the management of changing islands. It meant traditioned conservation for a modern Pacific. For Michael Somare, it meant actioning regional politics, thinking genealogically and as worthy custodians. For Mahe Tupouniua and Macu Salato, it meant servicing the region, genuinely and before others. It meant a collective consensus for the environment, one that was Pacific-led and world-leading.

This chapter grounds the history of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme in that of Pacific environmentalism. It works through screeds of scientific notebooks and conference proceedings, showing how SPREP was the product of a bottom-up, village-to-region consensus building process. Pacific environmentalists met at the intersections of local and global networks, trading frames of reference and advancing a Pacific science. They conducted

[285] Young Vivian's speech was written by Arthur Dahl, who coordinated it with other statements delivered by officials at Rarotonga. Vivian had shown his own affinity for these topics at Wellington in 1975 and likely agreed with the sentiment. Arthur Dahl, interview with the author, March 18, 2019.

landmark research on Pacific terms, justifying regional approaches. Crucially, they empowered a political movement to challenge donor agencies and outside experts that sought to bring the region under external influence. They were the underlying inspiration but also advocates in vital moments, ensuring SPREP was Pacific and regional not simply in name.

Of course, this process was not neat nor easy, and it inflected the top-down or the outside-in at multiple moments. In a tumultuous time of decolonisation and amid urgent efforts to develop regional institutions and relations, Pacific environmentalists repeatedly came up against barriers and competing visions that threatened an authentic SPREP. This was both conscious and unconscious, occurring both from within and without of the region. Institutional sexism inhibited Suliana. Outside consultants took space from her colleagues. Global environmentalism and ecodevelopment worked to assert itself despite the rhetoric. Infighting between regional organisations was matched only by UN bureaucratic imperialism in obstructing negotiation. And yet, the struggle to define SPREP gave it a resolute quality and produced beneficial compromise, making it different from earlier efforts at environmental management. Its distributed governance structure meant the Forum and the Commission could both contribute, while its dedication to integrating politics and Indigenous knowledge with science became unshakeable through outside interference.

Five decades on, this environmental commitment is manifest. The following chapters show the potential of environmental regionalism through SPREP. Chapter III shows how SPREP further validated knowledge about an interconnected ocean and the place of Pacific Indigeneity in the Noumea Convention. Its preamble would '[recognise] the special hydrological, geological and ecological characteristics of the region, which require special care and responsible management' and '[take] into account the traditions and cultures of the Pacific people as

expressed in accepted customs and practices'.[286] These clauses provided a mandate for Pacific ocean governance and opposition to metropolitan dumping of nuclear waste in the region. Chapter IV describes how SPREP worked to reform itself to better serve Pacific governments and mediate renewed international influence. Chapter V explores SPREP as a framework for cooperation, showing how it provided the conduit for further, inter-regional island associations that would reshape UN approaches to climate change. Ultimately, a South Pacific and Regional Environment Programme enabled Pacific understandings born from a genealogy of island life to become globally conversant, gaining adherents and another life in the process.

[286] Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region and Related Protocols, 24 November 1986.

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III

Kotahi te Moana:

Pacific Ocean Governance and the Noumea Convention, 1982–1986

> I believe that this question of cultural heritage is of the greatest importance when we come to consider the substance of the Regional Programme… The great strength of SPREP, as it is now taking shape, is that it recognises the essential link between care for the environment and the commitment of Pacific peoples to certain values and to the retention of their cultural integrity. Reference has been made to traditional knowledge about the sustainable management of natural resources. It will not have escaped the notice of those who have travelled here from outside the region that this is a unique element [of SPREP]…
>
> Already at this Conference, we have had some important suggestions put forward – and I refer in particular to the contribution of my distinguished colleague from Guam [on the dumping of nuclear waste]. Such topics require collective effort and collective wisdom… We were reminded yesterday of the theme of the Stockholm Conference. Ten years later it is significant to see this new canoe being launched from Rarotonga. I offer you three words in Māori to provide our own theme;
>
> Kotahi te moana – only one ocean.[287]

Ken Piddington, Delegate from New Zealand to the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific, Rarotonga, March 1982.

The Rarotonga Conference launched the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme with a region-wide blessing. After nearly a decade of diplomatic and scientific negotiations between over twenty Pacific nations and four intergovernmental bodies, this was a milestone for regionalism and the environmental movement in the Pacific. But while many metropolitans envisaged Rarotonga as the beginning of a largely technical environmental management

[287] 'South Pacific Conference on the Human Environment… Report of the New Zealand Delegation', 'National Parks - International Relations - South Pacific Conference On NP's', AANS 7613 W5491 Box 490, 1/14/9 Part 3, R16131255, ANZ.

programme, Guam's initiative to unite the Pacific against the threat of nuclear waste dumping would propel Pacific nations into years of heated diplomacy.

This chapter explores debates over dumping and ocean governance in negotiations towards the Noumea Convention.[288] Its focus is on Pacific conceptions of the ocean and how they formed an undercurrent in the talks. This emphasis challenges conventional understandings of Noumea, which detail a four-year impasse between opposing metropolitan 'scientific' and Pacific 'political' justifications 'for' and 'against' dumping respectively. Such a focus has led to the implication that the Noumea Convention is somehow a technical complement to, or compromise against, the more ambitious Treaty of Rarotonga, which was pursued in the Forum once the negotiations stalled and bans nuclear testing.[289] By using participant interviews and declassified material we can see that this is a mischaracterisation and that Noumea is more significant than is widely appreciated. Confidential telegrams and backroom meetings saw New Zealand and Australia recognise the legitimacy of *Pacific* Ocean knowledge, convincing the United States to revise its position on the intractable issues of territory and the total prohibition of nuclear dumping. Given that Pacific nations succeeded in mobilising Indigenous understandings as the basis of a regime of ocean governance, this work makes the case for rehabilitating Noumea.

This chapter builds from the previous two, showing that the Noumea Convention was conceived of, and concluded through, a distinctive Pacific environmentalism. Specifically, I mean that the cultural, scientific, legal, and moral justifications that convinced Pacific nations to work collectively and metropolitan nations to either co-operate or yield, emerged from the

[288] In full, the Convention for the Protection of Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region (1986), also known colloquially as the SPREP Convention.
[289] See for example, Lori Osmundsen, 'Paradise Preserved? The Contribution of the SPREP Convention to the Environmental Welfare of the South Pacific', *Ecology Law Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1992); Jeremy Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism in the South Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1989); Greg Fry, *Framing the Islands: Power and Diplomatic Agency in Pacific Regionalism* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019).

movement I have begun to describe. A commitment to environmental justice in the face of insistent nuclear colonialism ensured regional political unity. A consensus establishing the unified nature of the Pacific Ocean and its shared place in cultural heritage became the basis for a mandate. But Noumea represents more than neat diplomacy. By projecting and protecting this vision of regional self-determination over great swathes of the oceanic environment, Pacific Islanders demonstrated the fullest expression of the one ocean spirit that drives Pacific environmental regionalism to this day.

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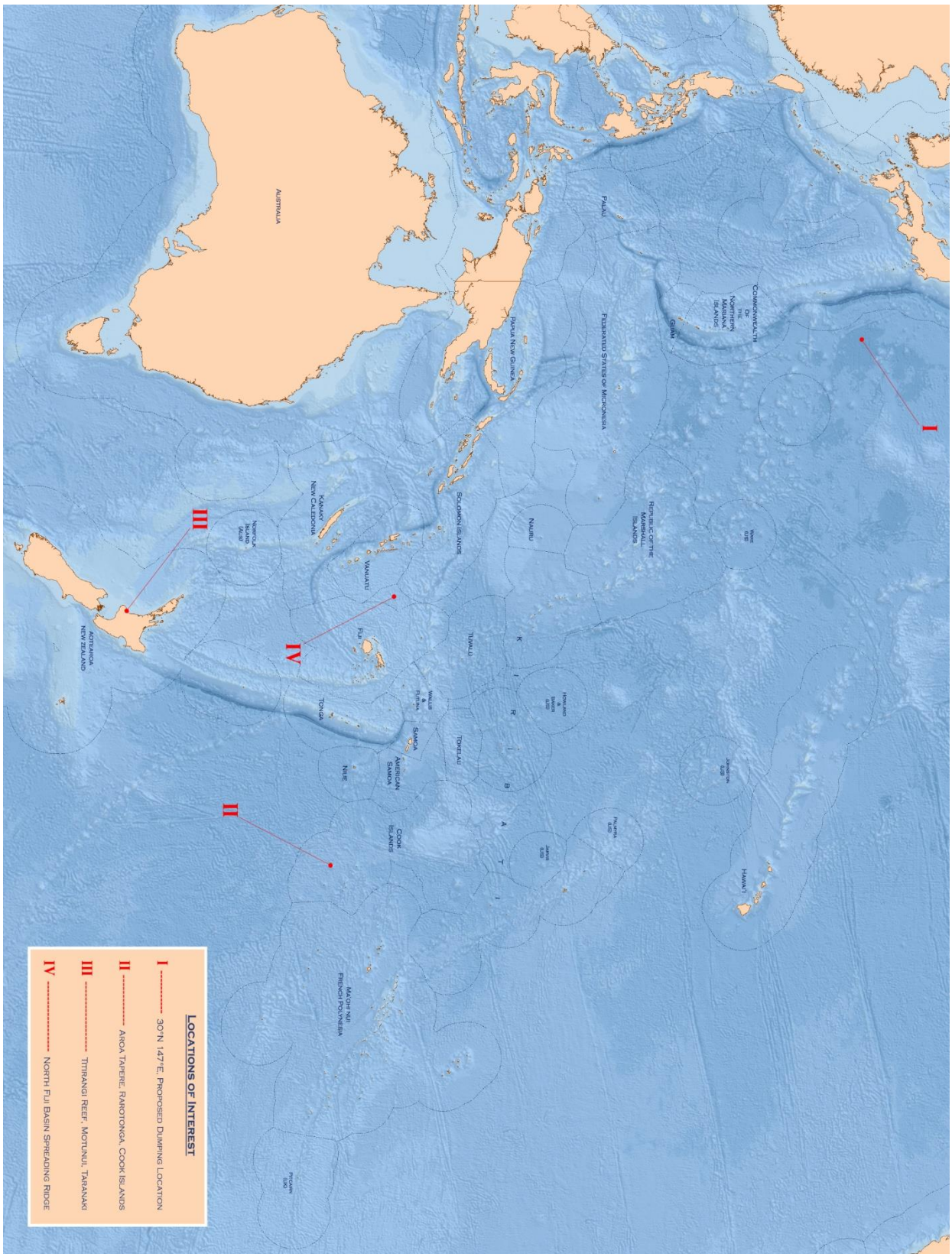


Figure 12—Map showing Pacific countries and territories, exclusive economic zones, ocean features and locations of interest. *Base map generated by ArcGIS.*

The Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific.

> It is evident from a reading of the Country reports and [the] "State of the Environment in the South Pacific" [Report], that there are considerable differences among our countries… [But] regardless of the degree of sophistication in dealing with environmental matters, all the island countries share a common environmental heritage and are united into a single environmental system by the Pacific Ocean. For this reason, a threat to one island's environment is a threat to all. The people of the Territory of Guam believe that a significant threat to the Pacific Basin now exists…
>
> The threat I speak of [deals] with the release of nuclear waste into the South Pacific regional environment… The Japanese Government, citing the London Dumping Convention as its legal and moral basis, proposes to dump one million barrels of waste by 1990 in an area of the Pacific north of the Mariana Islands… Also at this moment, the United States government, which has had a moratorium on ocean disposal of nuclear waste since 1970, is reviewing proposed regulations which once again would allow waste disposal [under] the LDC… Finally, [the] United States and Japan are conducting a joint feasibility study on the storage of high-level nuclear waste on an island in the Pacific. A suggested location is Palmyra atoll just north of Kiribati…
>
> The countries and territories of the South Pacific region have not benefitted from the atomic age but are to be the recipients of nuclear waste… We on Guam are convinced that the storage and ocean disposal of both low and high level nuclear waste in the South Pacific could indeed become a reality and very soon. We also believe that through a unified effort of all the island countries, the South Pacific Region can be kept free of this burden.[290]

James B. Branch, Delegate from Guam to the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific, Rarotonga, March 1982.

The Rarotonga Conference had given SPREP political endorsement. Now, Guam demanded that SPREP demonstrate Pacific priorities. Nuclear waste dumping threatened the ocean and the basis of collective welfare, it would need a united response.

To understand the significance of Guam's initiative, we must grasp the purpose and process of the Rarotonga Conference, how it differed from prior regional environmental gatherings, and thus how Pacific principles found expression in its outcomes. Briefly, Rarotonga concluded SPREP's agenda-setting phase and gave political endorsement to its work proper. Prior to the Conference, member countries had produced 18 'country reports' and 13 'topic reviews', which through preparatory meetings coalesced into a 'State of the Environment' Report and

[290] 'Remarks of the Delegate from Guam', 'National Parks - International Relations - South Pacific Conference On NP's', AANS 7613 W5491 490, 1/14/9 Part 3, R16131255, ANZ.

working papers for Rarotonga. During the conference, member countries set down shared principles for the new environment programme, followed by a framework and financials for its operation. It was these resulting documents, known as the Rarotonga Declaration and SPREP Action Plan respectively, that preoccupied the negotiators in the Cook Islands (so much so that the New Zealanders complained they had no time to explore the coral out from the beachfront Rarotongan Hotel!)[291] In any case, it is in the space between the principles and their practice where the Guamanian speech must be located, and where it prompted substantial discussion.

Guam's James Branch acted as part of a Pacific-wide upsurge opposing the renewed dumping of low-level nuclear waste at sea. In 1979, Japan had announced plans to dump a trial of 10,000 drums (out of roughly half million stockpiled) due north of the Northern Mariana Islands at 30°N, 147°E *(Fig. 12, I)*. Since then, Pacific Islanders had made political and civil representations at all levels, in and outside of Japan. Highlighting the contradiction of former nuclear victims becoming would-be 'atomic aggressors', and under the NFIP catch cry of 'if it is safe, dump it in Tokyo', civil society groups, political leaders and representative governments across the Federated States of Micronesia, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Palau, Hawai'i, and (Western) Samoa prompted postponement while Japan sought regional 'understanding' and scientific clearance.[292] Rarotonga offered a chance to take these protests to another level, regionally and politically, as Pacific nations and metropolitan counterparts gathered to dictate the terms of the new environmental programme. Crucially, and unlike the

[291] This is tongue and cheek but the NZ delegation did indeed forgo plans for a coral reef assessment due to drafting committee commitments. Drafts of the Declaration and Action Plan were worked up as part of the SPREP co-ordinating group meetings (January 1980, November 1980, March 1981, June 1981) from country reports, topic reviews, working papers (such as the draft CEMP of 1976), and Conference/Forum resolutions. The documents' full titles are: 'South Pacific Declaration on Natural Resources and the Environment', and 'Action Plan for Managing the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region'. 'SPREP Progress Report to Forum and Conference', 'National Parks - International Relations - South Pacific Conference On NP's', AANS 7613 W5491 490, NP 1/14/9 Part 2, R16130875, ANZ.

[292] For a summary of Pacific anti-dumping actions from the Pacific and Japanese standpoints, see: James B Branch, 'The Waste Bin: Nuclear Waste Dumping and Storage in the Pacific', *Ambio* 13, no. 5/6 (1984); Simon Avenell, 'Pacific Solidarity and Atomic Aggression', *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017).

gathering to conclude the stalled Apia Convention, Rarotonga took place under the joint auspices of the Commission and the Forum. As it sought political expression in its Declaration—which drove the Action Plan without requiring the legalities of a formal convention—it was both representative and comparatively free to reach a Pacific consensus.[293] Or equally, craft a bold plan.

To counter the imminent nuclear dumping threat, Guam suggested Pacific nations launch a two-pronged attack. First, they must ensure SPREP was responsive, functioning beyond its technical work programme as a forum and legal avenue through which to enforce Pacific principles. This might occur immediately, by placing strategic clauses in the Rarotonga Declaration and SPREP Action Plan, to be followed up by a future regional convention that would legally enshrine the Pacific anti-dumping stance.[294] Further, Pacific nations should work internationally in agreements such as the London Dumping Convention to shift the global consensus on dumping whether directly or through allies.[295] It was hoped that the two prongs would be complementary: a prospective regional convention might take precedence over the London Dumping Convention and thus be legally binding internationally. Such measures, coupled with domestic legislation banning dumping in member countries and formal petitions (or diplomatic warnings) to Japan and the United States should have the effect of completely prohibiting nuclear waste dumping in Oceania.

The plan was actioned immediately. On the motion of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the Rarotonga Declaration emphatically stated that ‘the storage and release of nuclear wastes in the Pacific regional environment shall be prevented’ and that, additionally, ‘the testing of

[293] Micronesian countries and/or American territories had been largely absent from Apia, with only American Samoa present.
[294] This would take place in line with similar UNEP efforts elsewhere and under Article VIII of the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other matters, commonly the London Dumping Convention, which made provision for more stringent regional agreements.
[295] The immediate strategy was to assent to and modify to the LDC via bylaw to shift the burden of proof regarding safety onto the dumping nation, known as the precautionary principle or “no dumping unless...” approach.

nuclear devices against the wishes of the majority of the people in the region will not be permitted'.[296] This language carried through to the SPREP Action Plan wholesale, accompanied by a further conference resolution prompted by Guam that requested Pacific governments to accede to the London Dumping Convention and pursue a regional convention, while calling on Japan and the United States to 'abandon their [plans] to store or dispose of nuclear waste' and research alternative means outside of the Pacific.[297]

So began some of the most significant and successful bloc diplomacy in Pacific history. Anti-nuclear protest and diplomatic representation in regional and international fora has ensured neither Japan nor the United States have dumped nuclear waste in the Pacific since.[298] Of course this monumental victory came by way of a mass movement much broader than SPREP and the Rarotonga Conference and involved, for example, a decade of activism in the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement, culminating in the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (of Rarotonga) in 1985. But while acknowledging this breadth, I want to emphasise an unfamiliar and yet powerful aspect of the dumping negotiations. In the same way the story of nuclear testing is also that of independence, the story of nuclear waste dumping is that of Pacific environmentalism. I say this to preface the following discussion of the Noumea Convention, the Treaty of Rarotonga's neglected cousin, because while its thrust was anti-dumping and aimed at Japan, both its justifications and ramifications went far further. Convincing France

[296] The language concerning nuclear dumping was drafted at a technical meeting prior to Rarotonga, while the testing provision was added at the Conference itself. SPC/SPEC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Report of the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific* (Noumea: SPC, 1982).
[297] SPEC/SPC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Action Plan for Managing the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region*: *UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies 29* (Geneva: UNEP, 1983), 7–10.
[298] In the case of Japan and the US, neither nation has dumped nuclear waste since 1969 and 1970 respectively. At least to date and not intentionally. In 2011, an earthquake-induced tsunami inundated the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant leading to the release of radionuclides into the atmosphere and the surrounding ocean. Efforts to cool down the reactors have led to the stockpiling of over 1.28 million tonnes of radioactive wastewater. In April 2021, the Japanese Government and Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) announced plans to dump this wastewater into the Pacific Ocean, leading to widespread condemnation from Pacific leaders. International Atomic Energy Agency, *The Fukushima Daiichi Accident* (Vienna: IAEA, 2015); Pacific Collective on Nuclear Issues, 'The Pacific Ocean is not a Dumping Ground for Japan's Radioactive Waste', public submission to the TEPCO Radiological Impact Assessment Report, December 17, 2021.

and the United States to accede to the Noumea Convention would require no less than four years of negotiations, during which Pacific nations necessarily constructed and defended a scientific, cultural, and legal mandate over the ocean. Not only were these efforts based in Pacific environmentalism, but they created much of the legal framework and diplomatic strategies that the Pacific has utilised for environmental regionalism ever since.

The Impasse in Noumea

The year after Rarotonga, in January 1983, Pacific nations and nuclear powers alike met to consider a 'Convention for the Protection and Development of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region'.[299] The intervening period had solidified Pacific resolve over dumping, with the Twenty Second South Pacific Conference and Thirteenth Forum meetings committing Pacific nations to a regional convention under SPREP and the London Dumping Convention's Article VIII. This 'First Expert Meeting' in Noumea was tasked with finding agreement on a draft text within the week. This would allow signature within the year and establish a Pacific consensus before the LDC meeting the following fortnight, where Nauru and Kiribati were set to propose an amendment prohibiting the dumping of all nuclear waste at sea.[300]

With high-level representation and many experienced hands, early progress on the Noumea Convention was promising despite the ambitious agenda.[301] In considering the draft text and associated protocols on nuclear dumping and oil pollution (prepared by the eminent Pacific

[299] After revisions between meetings the Noumea Convention's agreed full title became the 'Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region'. SPC/SPEC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Report of the High Level Conference to Adopt a Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region* (Noumea: SPC, 1987).

[300] It is important to note that not all Pacific nations supported action within the London Dumping Convention itself, considering (perhaps rightly) that the body was skewed towards the interests of dumpers. Acceding was thus considered by some as tacit acceptance of *some* dumping.

[301] For example, Navu Kwapena represented Papua New Guinea and Graham Baines represented Solomon Islands. SPEC/SPC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Report of the Expert Meeting on a Convention for the Protection and Development of the Natural Resources and Environment of the Pacific Region* (Noumea: SPC, 1983). [Following the initial citation, reports will subsequently be cited as '*First Expert Meeting*', '*Second Expert Meeting*' etc.]

lawyers Mere Pulea and Sale'imoa Va'ai) delegates first gave legal backing to SPREP and its Action Plan.[302] Although the Pacific focus had thus far been on prohibiting dumping, the convention would also need to serve as a framework for co-operation, complement the environmental legislation planned domestically, and function as one of seven similar UNEP Regional Seas Conventions worldwide.[303]

With formalities out of the way and most of the text agreed in principle, negotiations hit an impasse. At first, some speculated that it was simply the major powers (led by the United Kingdom) stalling the talks cynically to avoid pre-empting the upcoming dumping meeting. But the divisions were truly deep, oceanic even. The Noumea Convention, and by extension SPREP, became engulfed by disagreement over the articles concerning nuclear testing, nuclear waste dumping and the size of the convention area. Far from being sorted within the week, it would take no fewer than five such expert meetings spread over three years to find agreement and sign the Convention.

If the Noumea Convention is mentioned today, usually it is because of this impasse. Politically and popularly, Noumea has been overshadowed by its cousin text, the Treaty of Rarotonga, which passed through the South Pacific Forum partly because Noumea had stalled.[304] And although Noumea was instrumental in halting planned dumping and provided a legal framework for the SPREP Action Plan, its broader usefulness is seldom recognised. Like the Apia Convention before it, which dealt with protected areas, Noumea is often interpreted as

[302] Having a convention support an 'action plan' was standard across UNEP Regional Seas, however the dumping issue gave the Pacific plan a particular thrust other conventions lacked.
[303] The UNEP Regional Seas Conventions concluded in this period include (with places of signature and date): Mediterranean Region (Barcelona, February 1976); Kuwait Action Plan Region (Kuwait, April 1978); South-East Pacific Region (Lima, February 1981); West and Central Africa Region (Abidjan, March 1981); Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Region (Jeddah, February 1982); Caribbean Region (Cartagena, March 1983); East African Region (Nairobi, June 1985). Jean-Yves Faberon, 'Les conventions d'Apia (1976) et de Nouméa (1986)', *Revue Juridique de l'Environnement*, special edition (1993).
[304] This is despite Rarotonga's shortcomings, insofar as it does not completely ban nuclearism within the 'South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone' and has not been signed by France or the United States, leading many to suggest it was a paper victory or 'Clayton's Tonic'. Greg Fry, 'The South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone: Significance and Implications', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 18, no. 2 (1986).

being narrowly focused on pollution and/or now-superseded, especially given that by the time it entered into force in 1990, climate change, drift-net fishing and non-nuclear hazardous waste disposal had emerged as major threats not covered by its provisions.[305] The rejoinder to this is that the text is less important than its function, which was to facilitate co-operation between Pacific nations through SPREP. This was both achieved through the convention, and enhanced by its negotiation, as Pacific nations and their environmental departments built region-wide capacity, contacts and camaraderie.[306] In this sense, both holistically and in relation to SPREP, the Noumea Convention was instrumental for Pacific environmentalism.

Though lacking Rarotonga's fame and fanfare, Noumea retains particular relevance in scholarship. The extended negotiations had implications for legal agreements and scientific guidelines in other forums—notably the London Dumping Convention and the recently concluded Third UN Conference on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III)—making Noumea a readymade case study for international law.[307] In international relations, Noumea is seen as a diplomatic test for the first Forum-Commission co-operative programme and plays a part in the proving of Pacific regionalism and ocean governance.[308] Further, because the convention dealt with a whole array of non-nuclear issues—including mining, oil spillages, erosion, pesticides, and conservation initiatives—there is ongoing environmental relevance in its provisions.[309] Lastly, participant narratives fill out the literature, often from the disciplinary background of the practitioner.[310] But despite the interest from other disciplines, there appears

[305] This opinion has been expressed to the author by diplomats, lawyers and former SPREP staff alike.
[306] Jeremy Carew-Reid, personal correspondence, March 26, 2022.
[307] See for example, Osmundsen, 'Paradise Preserved?' or Faberon, 'Les conventions d'Apia (1976) et de Nouméa (1986)'.
[308] Fry, *Framing the Islands*; Biliana Cicin-Sain and Robert W. Knecht, 'The Emergence of a Regional Ocean Regime in the South Pacific', *Ecology Law Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1989).
[309] Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism in the South Pacific.*
[310] Branch, 'The Waste Bin'; See also Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism in the South Pacific.*

to be no comprehensive historical treatment of the Noumea Convention. Here, I sketch out a way in which that gap might be filled.

What follows is a summary of the three major issues underlying the impasse in Noumea—nuclear testing, the convention area, and nuclear waste dumping—and how they became apparent over the course of the first two meetings. The focus thereafter is on the logic *behind* the opposing metropolitan and Pacific positions, which classified material and participant interviews make clearer. My contention is that the impasse is poorly understood, for several reasons. First, a fixation on the convention's articles has not translated into establishing motivation or causation within the negotiations. Put plainly, we do not know how the impasse was resolved and consequently how Noumea came to be signed. Second, there is a tendency to recapitulate the negotiations assuming the "real issues" can be found in, or are limited to, the text of the articles. But bones of contention do not a skeleton make. Third, then, is the issue of historicity. The discourse surrounding Noumea is dominated by metropolitan perspectives, these being the most likely to make it out of the backroom whether by press or official reporting. Among other things, this has carried forward prejudiced assumptions about why there was an impasse in the first place. By understanding the negotiations from the Pacific side, and the impasse as the result of injustice and a fundamental clash of worldviews rather than the sum of disagreements over text, we can better account for the actions of delegates in Noumea as well as the convention itself.

The first issue was predictable and concerned certain nations' unwillingness to sign a convention that expressly forbade nuclear testing. The Rarotonga Declaration's emphatic language gave clear direction but French diplomats were clearer still. They gave Pacific nations an ultimatum between a nuclear-free Noumea Convention and one that involved France *and*

the territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia.[311] Understandably, this put Pacific nations in a bind. Opinions differed on whether or how to proceed. At the First Expert Meeting, for example, Vanuatu wanted to go further than a ban on testing, with a de facto nuclear-free zone that '[prohibited] the storage, [testing], carriage and dumping' of nuclear weapons and waste.[312] If the French took their territories outside the zone, so be it their shame but it was not worth weakening the text (and thus implicitly condoning their actions).[313] This hard-line approach conflicted with a milder attempt by Solomon Islands and Samoa to find a workaround whereby nuclear powers would 'take all appropriate measures [to] prevent, reduce and control *pollution*' from both testing and dumping.[314] France would presumably accept the latter wording (as it professed its tests to be clean). The Solomons' argument was that Pacific nations should not preclude French territories from the Noumea Convention's other environmental benefits, for the sake of what would become just another political statement (without the testing power itself involved).[315]

The second issue concerned the area to which the Noumea Convention would apply. The obvious starting point was the combined territorial waters of contracting Pacific nations. This area would broadly align with that of the South Pacific Commission and was supported by the recently concluded law of the sea negotiations *(Fig. 13)*.[316] However, it left open the questions of including New Zealand and Australian waters and/or any high seas pockets either within or surrounding the area *(Fig. 14)*.[317] The Pacific nations were united in pushing for the largest

[311] 'SPREP Delegation Report, 24 to 28 January 1983', 'Noumea - The Pacific - South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', AAEG W3172 4, 301/1/8 Part 1, R22865234, ANZ.
[312] *First Expert Meeting*, 31.
[313] This argument was elaborated during the Second Expert Meeting. 'SPREP Delegation Report 7—16 November 1983', 'South Pacific Regional Environment, AAUM W4043 189, INT 7/3 Part 5, R1283023, ANZ.
[314] Emphasis added, 'SPREP Delegation Report, 24 to 28 January 1983', R1283023, ANZ.
[315] *First Expert Meeting*, 31.
[316] Paul D'Arcy, 'Variable Rights and Diminishing Control: The Evolution of Indigenous Maritime Sovereignty in Oceania', in *Water, Sovereignty and Borders in Asia and Oceania*, eds., D. Ghosh, H. Goodall, and S. H. Donald (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[317] A side issue was that of internal waters, which was not insignificant for atolls with lagoons or islands with large fringing reefs.

area possible, stretching to the north and south of Pacific exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in a so-called 'picture frame'. This caused minor headaches for Australia, which had to liaise with its state governments about their inclusion, and major ones for the United States, which was hypersensitive to any agreement curtailing its conduct in international waters (or around territorial military bases for that matter) *(Fig. 15).*

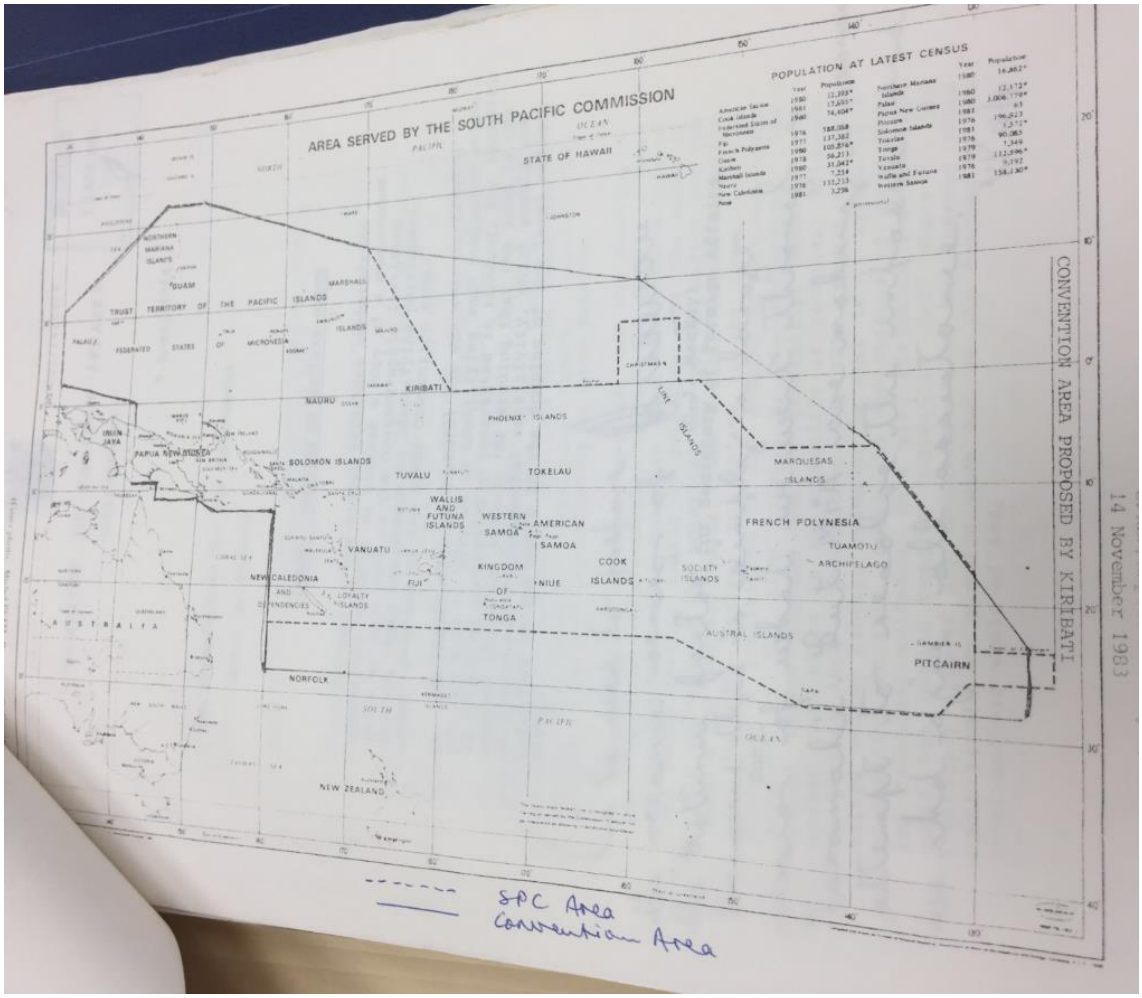


Figure 13— "Picture frame" concept advanced by Kiribati at the Second Expert Meeting based on the South Pacific Commission area. November 14, 1983. *R1283024, ANZ.*

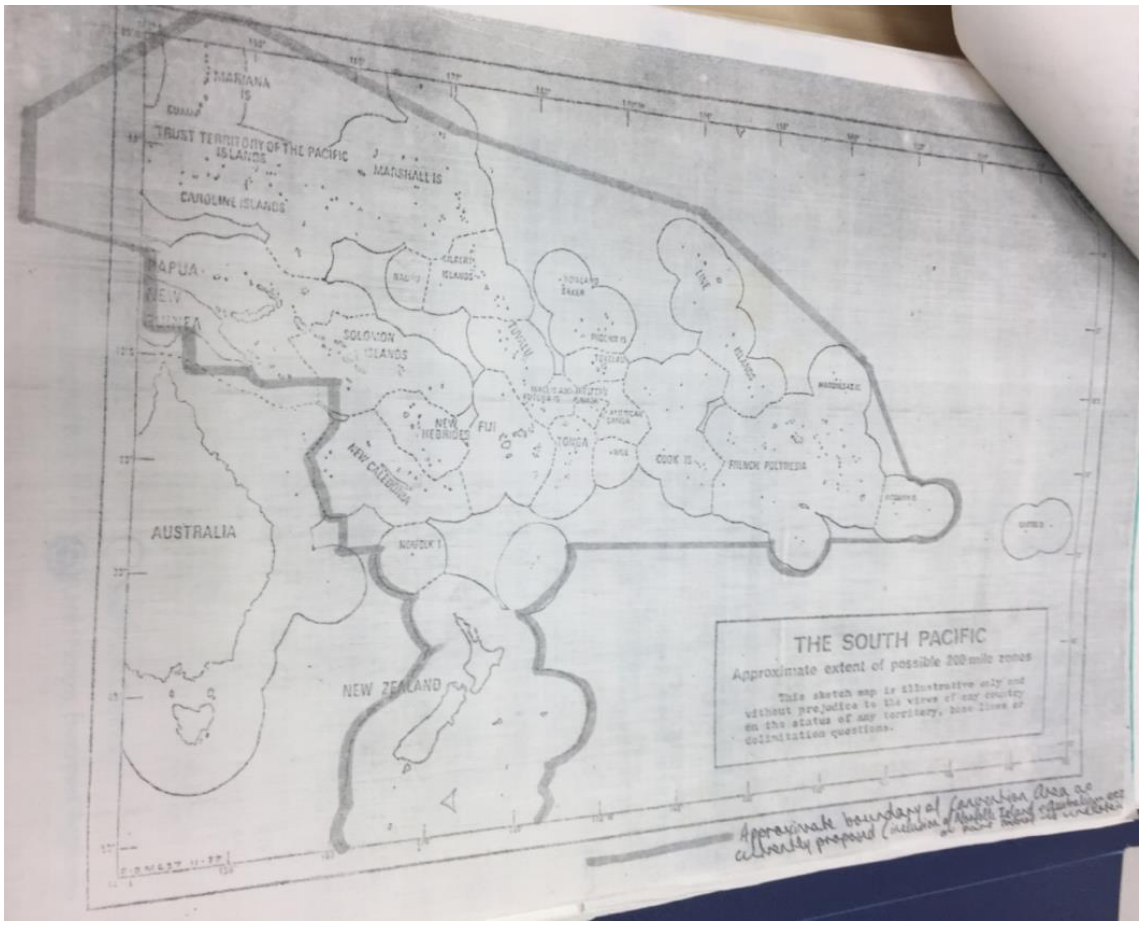


Figure 14—Developed "picture frame" concept circulated by New Zealand prior to the Third Expert Meeting and before Australia's committed its EEZ. Note the high seas pockets. *R1283024*, *ANZ.*

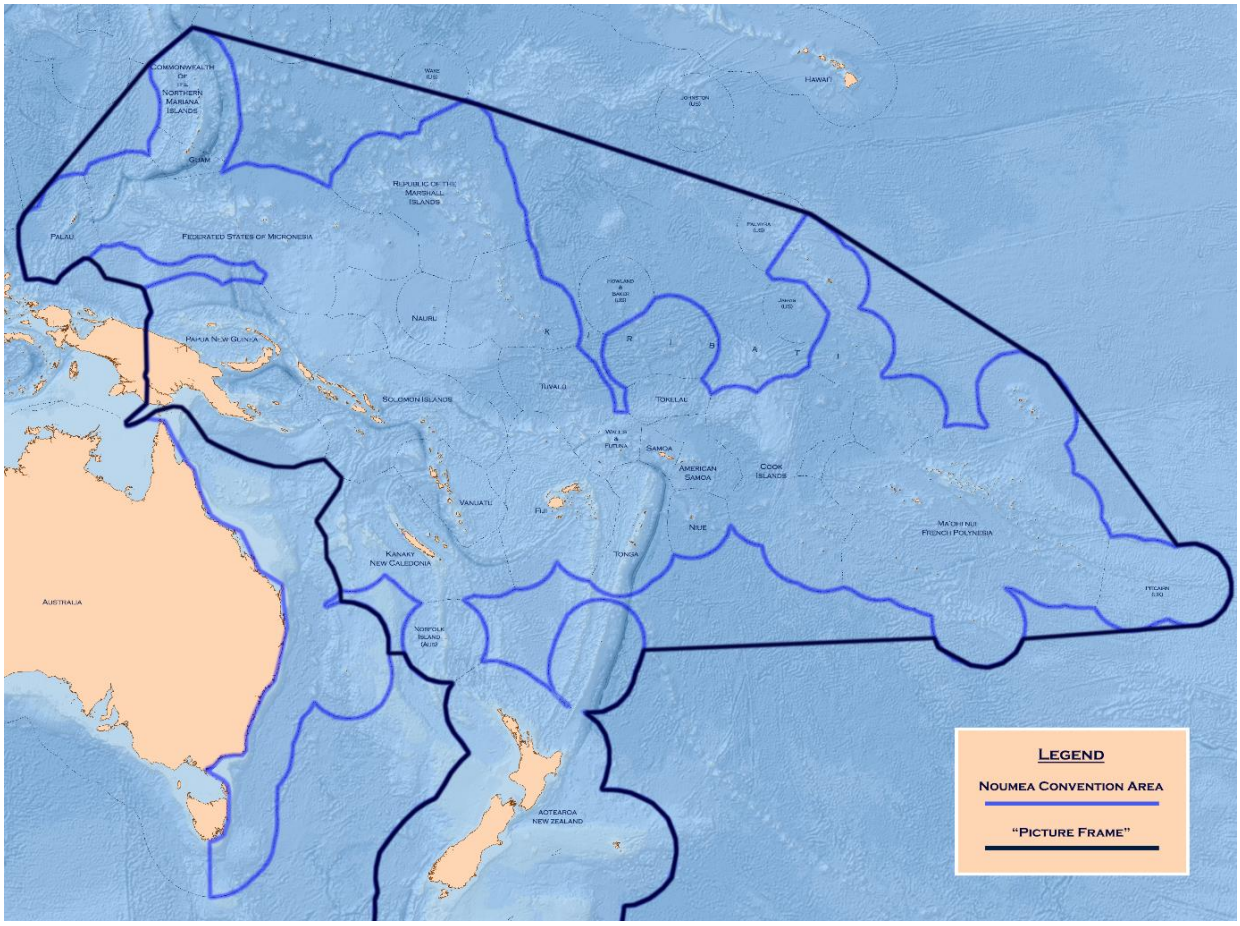


Figure 15—Map showing the Exclusive Economic Zones comprising the final Noumea Convention area, as currently understood, surrounded by the "picture frame" concept initially proposed and favoured by Pacific nations. *Base map generated by ArcGIS.*

Following closely and finally, was the issue of nuclear waste dumping. Although the convention's dumping clauses and associated protocol were "aimed at" Japan, they proved equally controversial with the United States.[318] Despite having ceased all ocean dumping in 1970, the US now worked quietly to keep the option open. At the First Expert Meeting, American diplomats had made a forceful entrance, stating they would not accept any attempt to undermine the standards set down in the LDC, nor any impingement on their high seas

[318] Although the Convention would only directly affect signatories (i.e. nations within SPC and the Forum, of which only USA and France were nuclear powers that might conceivably dump in the convention area) it had implications through Article VIII of the LDC for global regimes (and thus Japan and the UK who attended the First Expert Meeting in observer capacity).

freedoms (consistent with their approach to the convention area issue). Things turned awkward at the February 1983 LDC Meeting when Nauru and Kiribati proposed their amendment to ban worldwide dumping outright.[319] A subsequent vote on a two-year moratorium which passed by a three-quarters majority revealed that the US was siding with the UK and France in strong opposition, despite the US Congress having already passed a similar domestic moratorium.[320] By the end of the Second Expert Meeting previous appeals to principle rang increasingly hollow with Pacific nations who recognised the expedience behind them. The Americans changed tack aggressively, reportedly 'quietening their territories down both in private and in the open meeting' and 'lecturing' other delegations—repeating that they had no plans to dump and were amidst a two-year moratorium that would need to be overturned by Washington even if they did.[321] Now the US diplomats stressed there 'was no scientific or technical justification to warrant the total [prohibitions] in the draft text' and thus they could not agree to them.[322] France quickly followed suit, citing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) criteria that informed the LDC standards, stating there was 'no scientific proof that low-level radioactive waste dumped in [accordance] was harmful to man or the environment', and that negotiations ought to wait on the radiation studies currently underway in the LDC and as part of SPREP.[323] In adopting this new position, the metropolitans exposed what really concerned them about Noumea: a possible precedent, wherein stricter standards were set for a particular area of open ocean in the supposed absence of "scientific" justification, thus potentially leading to similar "political" initiatives elsewhere.[324]

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[319] Nauru and Kiribati were supported in this endeavour by the science of Dr W. Jackson Davis on ocean currents and bioaccumulation within food chains. I have chosen not to include substantial discussion of this here, as Davis' science was largely unaccepted by the international community at the time and featured in the LDC rather than the Noumea Convention. Branch, 'The Waste Bin', 329.
[320] Branch, 'The Waste Bin', 330.
[321] 'SPREP Delegation Report 7—16 November 1983', R1283023, ANZ.
[322] SPEC/SPC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Report of the Second Expert Meeting on a Draft Convention for the Protection and Development of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region* (Noumea: SPC, 1983), 15.
[323] *Second Expert Meeting*, 15.
[324] 'SPREP Delegation Report 7—16 November 1983', R1283023, ANZ.

Seemingly, the impasse rested with the scepticism of metropolitan nations, who believed, or found it convenient to assert, that low level nuclear waste dumping was either safe or at least scientifically justified. As such, they presumed Pacific nations were acting irrationally and on political rather than technical (and by extension "environmental") grounds. This view was not limited to the USA and France, although there were subtleties to the Australian and New Zealand approach, which are discussed below.

The contradiction was that although the metropolitan position was consistent with the scientific orthodoxy, it was not motivated by it. This was largely a matter of international convenience for imperial powers with their minds elsewhere. SPREP was not the first or only UNEP Regional Seas agreement USA or France were negotiating, and they acted accordingly. Their delegations touched down in Noumea, larger than most Pacific nations combined, and conducted affairs impatiently and as a matter of routine. The irony was that these powers had time and technical capacity the Pacific nations did not, and their diplomatic teams often faced down lone delegates representing a government scientific agency or legal office. The language of foreign affairs speaks sanitarily of representing "interests" through "positions", but there was something deeply unequal about the terms on which Pacific nations were being asked to enter this global environmental management regime. It was cynical politics from the metropolitans. They knew the LDC made explicit provision for stricter regional agreements on dumping under its Article VIII, as was the case with Antarctica. France had already signed similar for itself in the Mediterranean. Pacific nations were working towards the Noumea Convention on the mandate of UNEP and the Rarotonga Declaration, being the genuine and unanimous expression of Pacific nations' environmental priorities. This was not respected. Instead, Pacific delegates found themselves stonewalled by Britain, blackmailed by France, and gaslighted by the United States. These powers accused the Pacific of demonstrating a 'lack

of understanding' or playing politics while refusing to acknowledge the same for themselves.[325] Meanwhile, the impasse stretched on, to the detriment of the Pacific environment. A New Zealand telegram makes clear the double standard and hints at a role as mediator, stating that,

> In arguing flexibility to the United States we have been suggesting that the accommodation of the region's political needs is as valid a policy consideration [as] the maintenance of its global position on the LDC, more so in fact. United States' reservations about accepting a legal prohibition on dumping are political. [326]

Whether it was metropolitan flexibility or stiff Pacific resistance, negotiations finally turned a corner between mid-1984 and late-1985. At the Third and Fourth Expert Meetings, a united Pacific position was on full show. Island leaders were buoyed by recent movements in the Forum towards a nuclear free zone, with the support of Australia and New Zealand which had recommitted to anti-nuclearism under new Labour governments. Restless energy characterised the meetings from the outset with Francis Bugotu, SPC Secretary-General, reversing his previous position of 'refraining from becoming involved in environmental politics'.[327] Instead, Bugotu spoke candidly as a Pacific Islander and urged both metropolitans and Pacific nations away from 'dogmatism and intransigence',

> In my memory, there have been no other issues which have so galvanised our island communities into a collective response and which have caused such widespread and animated debate as those addressed in this Convention before us. The two [nuclear] issues are interwoven in complex ways with our aspirations for genuine political independence and social well-being. On these issues and the third, that of geographic coverage of the Convention, our opinions are well known… Let us accept [we] are polarised in our positions… [but] we are not here to waste our time. We are not here merely to repeat views which are common knowledge and go home… Let me suggest simply that our objective is to settle an agreement [which] will help us maintain and improve the quality of our environment and consequently the life of South Pacific people.[328]

[325] Telegram from Canberra to Washington, January 4, 1985, 'International Affairs: South Pacific Commission - Work Programme – SPREP', ABHS 950 W4627 2833, 116/10/8 Part 1, R20753435, ANZ.
[326] Telegram from Canberra to Wellington, January 16, 1985, R20753435, ANZ.
[327] '22nd South Pacific Conference… Report of the NZ Delegation', 'South Pacific Regional Environment', AAUM W4043 189, INT 7/3 Part 3, R1283021, ANZ.
[328] SPEC/SPC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Report of the Third Meeting of Experts on a Convention for the Protection and Development of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region* (Noumea: SPC, 1984), 48.

Although Bugotu's speech is the more memorable, the Forum Secretariat Director Mahe Tupouniua's effort on behalf of the independent Pacific nations was indispensable diplomacy, placing the talks on a revised footing. After recounting resolutions from the Fifteenth South Pacific Forum in Tuvalu that denounced nuclear testing and dumping as 'intolerable', he relayed the Forum verdict on the joint NZ/Australia/PNG scientific mission to Moruroa undertaken in October 1983. While the mission allayed some concerns about the short-term effects of the French nuclear tests, Tupouniua stated, 'it [provided] no reassurance about long-term consequences nor in any sense diminished Forum opposition to testing in any environment'.[329] The implication here was that the science was settled, *insofar as the effects of such radiation were uncertain and could not be discounted*. This allowed Tupouniua to erode the technical/political dichotomy that had hampered negotiations and finish with a flourish,[330]

> I think the task in which you are engaged is not a "political" task as such. In broad terms, the object of the draft Convention is to protect and develop the natural resources, and environment, of the South Pacific Region. The thrust of its provisions is therefore environmental and, as such, has [pertinent] social and economic implications…
>
> The Convention being negotiated is for environmental protection in this region [and] on behalf of the peoples of [the South Pacific]. We all know that when we visit a friend's home, we respect the way things are done by our friend—his traditions, his values and his problems… This region belongs to the people of the South Pacific. Is it not too much to ask, therefore, that their concerns deserve respect when the future of their beautiful, but fragile, environment is at stake?[331]

The way the regional organisations challenged France and the United States' mandate and approach necessarily prompts a rethink. Bugotu and Tupouniua were clearly frustrated, trying new approaches and appeals to break the deadlock. But finding Pacific values or motivation requires looking further than the constraints that dictated their strategy. Put differently, the question for the historian must not simply be whether Pacific positions were more

[329] *Third Expert Meeting,* 52.
[330] This debate was reminiscent of the 'permissibility' arguments regarding nuclear testing in the early 1970s and related to attempts in the LDC to set 'de minimis' levels for radioactive waste dumping.
[331] *Third Expert Meeting,* 54.

"environmental" than appreciated, or whether metropolitan stances were more "political" than they let on. They were, of course, but having established that the negotiations were only framed like this because of metropolitan expedience, recapitulation only obscures the real basis of the Pacific position. Instead, the task is to follow Tupouniua and Bugotu deeper, teasing out Pacific aspirations for 'genuine political independence and social well-being' in the nuclear issue and querying what 'traditions, values and concerns' were being overlooked.

The confluence of these threads, as well as the key to the deadlock, resided in the ocean—its properties and Pacific appreciations of them. The negotiations had a hidden undercurrent. Quite simply, Pacific people saw the ocean differently, as the foundation of their collective welfare, culture, and sovereignty.

Descriptions of a *Pacific* Ocean at the Third and Fourth Expert Meetings, although hard to find in meeting minutes and imprecise in participants' memory, were mentioned in one form or another at the start of (almost) every Pacific delegate's opening address. For Fiji, the ocean was 'our one overwhelming and common link… our shared interest'.[332] For the Northern Marianas it was the source of 'health and security' they were 'dramatically dependent on'.[333] It was the basis of livelihood and development—'marine resources [that] Tuvalu depends solely on'.[334] A place of 'delicate ecological balance' for Kiribati.[335] The source of 'culture and heritage' for Guam, 'evolved from a dependency and respect'.[336] Ira Akapito from the Federated States of Micronesia summed up what this Pacific appreciation of the Ocean meant for the articles under consideration:

> FSM would like to see an extensive Convention area [enclosing the high sea pockets and the areas to the north], the delegate finding it ironic to talk about borders/boundaries when it is

[332] SPEC/SPC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Report of the Fourth Meeting of Experts on a Convention for the Protection and Development of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region* (Noumea: SPC, 1985), 7.
[333] *Fourth Expert Meeting*, 10.
[334] *Fourth Expert Meeting*, 12.
[335] *Fourth Expert Meeting*, 8.
[336] *Fourth Expert Meeting*, 8.

> known that atmospheric and oceanic pollution see no such boundaries... If delegates are serious about combating and preventing pollution, they should consider declaring the whole Pacific Ocean as a protected zone.
>
> [Akapito] referred to the report on the Conference on the Human Environment, Rarotonga 1982, which stressed the importance of preserving the traditional care for the environment inherent in the cultures and local customs of the Pacific. He stated that whilst respecting science, people of the Pacific interpret it in a different way. He said that because of the importance his country gave to the ocean and its resources and because there are some unanswered questions relating to the effects on the marine environment, there was no choice but to say no to dumping of radioactive waste [and] an end to the testing of nuclear devices.[337]

Micronesia made clear that the impasse in Noumea was not born of misunderstanding or of politicking but of Pacific people's shared and inviolate view of the ocean. Taking freedom of the seas as an example, Akapito refused flatly the idea that a boundless open ocean is without obligation. Drawing on a deep oceanography and different conception of oceanic space, he implied the territoriality of the 200-mile zone was an impoverished frame through which to advance sovereignty or conservation, and that Indigenous understandings truthfully describe and would faithfully protect the ocean as a single, indivisible entity. To Akapito, and most Pacific people, the ocean is the source of all life, purposefully polluting it is a profane, unconscionable act. Testing and dumping, then, represented a fundamental threat to Pacific Ocean stewardship. This belief is the product of both spiritual and science-like knowledge with obvious political ramifications, but ultimately this was a worldview at play. [338] Here is the hidden or overlooked axis on which the negotiations turned. Nuclearism and territory had been the focus of proceedings, but only because the parties were talking about different oceans.

[337] *Fourth Expert Meeting*, 6.

[338] There is a lengthy discourse comparing Indigenous knowledge with (Western) science. Positive arguments that reinforce veracity or usefulness tend to highlight the empirical, comprehensive, peer-reviewed, and durational nature of much traditional knowledge production, while negative ones highlight examples of misunderstanding or false correlation, often dwelling on the role of supernatural phenomena within the broader epistemology. Recently there has been a move away from comparison to a focus on traditional knowledge as often 'scientific' or 'science-like' but not 'science' insofar as its context and function are consistent with a broader Indigenous worldview. See Mason Durie, 'Understanding Health and Illness: Research at the Interface Between Science and Indigenous Knowledge', *International Journal of Epidemiology* 33, no. 5 (2004); Daniel Hikuroa, 'Mātauranga Māori—The Ūkaipō of Knowledge in New Zealand', *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 47, no. 1 (2016).

Returning to Rarotonga and 1982, we can see that this *Pacific* Ocean was there from the start. In the very speech that occasioned the anti-dumping movement within SPREP, Guam's delegate began by citing the 'State of the Environment' and Country reports. This is both significant, and only natural. At Rarotonga, Pacific nations had established, definitively, that they 'shared an environmental heritage and were united into a single environmental system by the Pacific Ocean'. The last chapter showed how a cultural and scientific consensus developed around these precise themes, suggesting that SPREP embodied them in conception. My argument so far, after Guam and Micronesia, is that the same knowledge drove Pacific bloc diplomacy, forming the undercurrent of the SPREP negotiations.

The argument from here, is that this undercurrent turned the tide in Noumea. For likely the first time, using restricted files and participant interviews, we can properly establish causation within the negotiations. More specifically, we can see the influence that Pacific environmentalism had on New Zealand, and that New Zealand had on the impasse. Convinced of the righteousness of the Pacific position, New Zealand diplomats and scientists prompted the United States to amend its position on the dumping and convention area issues, clearing the way for the Noumea Convention's eventual signature.

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The Undercurrent

The ocean, in its physicality, can be a conduit for Pacific ways of thinking. This next subsection dives down to the seabed in three locations where a small group of Pākehā New Zealanders caught the undercurrent. Through learning about the ocean itself, these men came to appreciate the basis for the Pacific position and thus realised the overlooked dimension of the negotiations. Off Aroa Tapere in the Cook Islands, Motunui in Aotearoa, and in the seas adjoining Vanuatu and Fiji, they saw the holism and dynamism of island and ocean systems. They then aligned

their science with the Pacific frame and argued for the unsuitability of the region for nuclear waste dumping. In a neat piece of diplomacy, this commitment was translated to the United States prior to the Third Expert Meeting in mid-1984.

Coastline and fringing reef, off Aroa Tapere, Rarotonga, Cook Islands (Fig. 12, II). A diverted stream has altered coastal processes and now erodes the sandy peninsula on which The Rarotongan Hotel sits. Coral and associated coastal fisheries are under pressure from pesticide runoff (Dieldrin), dynamiting, siltation, and outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish (Acanthaster planci).[339]*Declining reef productivity threatens to create a feedback loop as fisher people turn landward and agriculture intensifies.*

The Rarotonga Conference left a strong impression on New Zealand's Ken Piddington. Proceedings aside, the conference chair, Hon. Iaveta Short, emphasised the precariousness of Cook Islands' environmental position and how livelihoods were multiply threatened. He mentioned his fears for the degraded reefs and for the future of the conference venue, *The Rarotongan Hotel*. At the centre of government plans for tourism, its foundations needed shoring up.[340] As a private aside, Short speculated that any conservation action would need to wait until next election. Perhaps he was liberal with this viewpoint, as when Piddington returned to Wellington, the Australian delegation's report hit his desk expressing bewilderment at the conference's (read: Pacific's) misplaced priorities,

> The Cook Islands represents in microcosm the larger issues… The reef and the lagoon are dead… development of the coastal zone by housing is continuing unchecked… areas of serious erosion are clearly evident... The extent to which matters such as these were canvassed within the conference [was] disappointing, [but, admittedly] the [dumping] threats are very real in their minds and have thereby been given an exaggerated priority. To some extent this

[339] Field notebook, 'Cook Islands, 15–30 November 1976', ADC.
[340] The Cook Islands government took over a 60% ownership stake in the Rarotongan Hotel in 1982, a forced move despite its underperformance. In 1984 the hotel captured 35% of tourist revenue, almost breaking even. The tourism sector (accommodation, tours, handicrafts) was dominated by overseas firms (NZ) at the time. Simon Milne, 'The Cook Islands Tourist Industry: Ownership and Planning', *Pacific Viewpoint* 28, no. 2 (1987), 124.

> attitude is based on uncertainty and ignorance of the details and implications of dumping proposals.[341]

Piddington was too busy on the drafting committee to see the coral but saw the situation differently and told the Australians as much. As the former Deputy Director of the Forum Secretariat and current New Zealand Commissioner for the Environment, he knew that Pacific people had all the technical information they needed. It was simply being weighed differently and in line with other principles. In what is likely the most important and revealing report written about Rarotonga, SPREP, and the dumping issue, Piddington explained what this would mean for New Zealand (and Australia, whose diplomats called the report 'most useful' and came to refer to their own above as 'much less impressive'),

> It would be very unfortunate if we mis-read the purpose of anti-nuclear politics in the Pacific.... The problem for friendly nations around the Pacific rim is going to be how to respect the region's right to manage its own environment (and ultimately make its own mistakes). On the nuclear question, it is not for us to advance the technical criteria which might or might not support a given position. We do however have to accept the possibility that they are right in seeking a nuclear-free future…
>
> The future dilemmas are therefore as much political as they are environmental. New Zealand and Australia will find these aspects of SPREP very difficult at times. We will want to stress practical counter-measures to everyday environmental problems… Why give priority to concerns about risks which are more remote (and in our book more manageable)? Our endeavours at this Conference to do just that…tend to suggest that it is futile to seek this emphasis if it means discarding political stridency.
>
> The essential conclusion is that the quality of the Pacific environment will be materially enhanced and protected within the political momentum which has now been generated by nuclear issues. If that momentum is opposed, the SPREP itself will run out of steam. The international agencies and outside consultants may want to keep it afloat, but it will be remote from the concerns of Pacific leaders.
>
> Perhaps the only option for NZ (and Australia) is to see environmental quality, along with economic development, health and political stability, as central to our broader strategic interests in the region…[342]

Piddington was both remarkably perceptive and sympathetic to Pacific desires. That did not mean, however, that he always agreed with the Pacific's environmental priorities or strategies.

[341] 'Report of the Australian Delegation', 'South Pacific Regional Environment', AAUM W4043 189, INT 7/3 Part 2, R1283020, ANZ.
[342] 'Rarotonga… Report of the New Zealand Delegation', R1283020, ANZ.

In the Rarotonga negotiations themselves, New Zealand had worked with the Australians to convince Pacific nations that they ought to 'place the emphasis on assessing the environmental impact of nuclear testing' in the SPREP Action Plan in case France pulled out of SPREP entirely.[343] Piddington had ultimately reneged when Solomon Islands and Vanuatu preferred to reiterate the categorical language of the Declaration, giving NZ support to the Pacific stance but noting that 'this element of the Action Plan will be political, not technical… It also means little practical progress will be made on collective monitoring, which would have made a lot of sense'.[344] As France ultimately gave support to SPREP with a formal reservation, Piddington's frustration seemingly gave way to acceptance, even admiration. In the weeks following Rarotonga, Piddington wrote candidly to an *Auckland Star* reporter that,

> The most significant feature of the Conference from New Zealand's point of view was how the Nations of the South Pacific, because of their dependence on their environment for their existence, the minimal impact of industrialisation, and the close link between culture and conservation, see the environment as the land, the sea, its life forms and man itself…It is perhaps inevitable that a reluctance to appreciate the basis of the South Pacific concept of the environment will lead to some level of conflict...
>
> It is not surprising, given the South Pacific concept of the environment, the utter dependence upon the sea and a wide understanding of its natural processes, that the storage and dumping of nuclear wastes is being met with solid opposition… The Pacific Ocean is seen as a shared resource, and a fundamental part of everyone's environment in the South Pacific. To give one example, the movement of nuclear pollutants with the ocean's currents and in migratory fish is of much concern… The response of the South Pacific Nations to this challenge demonstrates how the environment will increasingly be a factor in joint political action…[345]

The New Zealand report and Piddington's reflections are so important because they identify and delineate 'technical' and 'political' considerations in line with metropolitan appreciations, but also seek to reconcile them through *acknowledging the basis for the Pacific position*. Piddington had spent years working alongside Pacific leaders and clearly understood both the importance and utility of culture and self-determination in the Pacific environment. He

[343] 'Rarotonga… Report of the New Zealand Delegation', R1283020, ANZ.
[344] 'Rarotonga… Report of the New Zealand Delegation', R1283020, ANZ.
[345] Letter from Ken Piddington to Ms Glasgow, March 17, 1982, R1283020, ANZ.

appreciated how specific Pacific knowledge was also technical (i.e., in the movement of fish and ocean currents) and fit within a broader worldview (that establishes obligations within a unified ocean), and that both were consistent with the anti-dumping stance. Thus, he saw, in the 'South Pacific concept of the environment', how political and environmental outcomes joined, and the resulting 'essential conclusion' and 'inevitable conflict' he describes were precisely that. SPREP found its critical momentum through the dumping issue while being completely misinterpreted by most metropolitans.

After a decade of work at the regional level, Pacific environmentalism had been explicitly mentioned in metropolitan foreign affairs circles. It had a life of its own. [346] Further, it was acknowledged as the philosophy legitimating anti-nuclearism and underpinning 'environmental quality', a key pillar of New Zealand's 'strategic interests in the region'. And further still, because elements within New Zealand, and by extension Australia, understood both the validity and utility of Pacific environmentalism, they had identified a supporting role for themselves in advancing its aims. Potentially, this was the beginning of a paradigm shift.

It was only a beginning, because at this stage the views of Piddington and the broader Commission for the Environment (CfE) held only partial sway. To clarify, Piddington had represented NZ at Rarotonga as Commissioner for the Environment, given CfE contributed to the SPREP work programme. On the matter of the Noumea Convention, however, the Commission served only as an advisory body to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Nevertheless, this was active advice and because Foreign Affairs held a characteristically

[346] Piddington forwarded his report to the heads of Lands & Survey, Health, Works, Forestry and Defence explicitly citing its last paragraph. The Australian delegation called it 'most useful' and their own report 'much less impressive'. Soon Piddington would go further or revise his thinking on Pacific environmental policy, showing colleagues how 'the Pacific Way' manifested in environmental concerns and arguing that 'environmental policy is inseparable from the view which Pacific Islanders take of their stewardship role and their responsibility for the welfare of future generations'. Ken Piddington, 'Development Theories in the Pacific Island Context' in *Environment and Resources in the Pacific: A Regional Approach*, eds., A. L. Dahl and J. Carew-Reid (Geneva: United Nations Environment Programme, 1985), 7–13. Letter from the Commissioner for the Environment, April 15, 1982, R1283020, ANZ.

pragmatic outlook on SPREP, advice soon turned to argument. In late 1982, while formulating New Zealand's position on nuclear waste dumping, the Commission and Foreign Affairs clashed over the latter's attitude and the relevant science. Piddington took exception to a Forum briefing which suggested pejoratively that Pacific nations had a 'general anti-nuclear phobia', 'chiding' the Secretary of Foreign Affairs over the briefing's 'insensitivity' and 'unkindness'.[347] More substantively, Foreign Affairs forwarded advice it had received on the draft convention from NZ's National Radiation Laboratory and the Institute of Nuclear Sciences, both of which strongly opposed the Pacific position in the Rarotonga Declaration.[348] These bodies believed the London Convention '[offered] sufficient protection', that there was 'no scientific basis' for a total dumping prohibition, and that NZ would lose scientific credibility if it supported as much under Noumea.[349] The Commission disagreed, believing that a 'cautious approach should be taken [given] the nature of the oceanic environment and the divergent scientific views'—privately noting the Laboratory espoused the 'permissive thought patterns of technocrats' that 'do not accept the right of Pacific Nations to express their own point of view'.[350] The influence of Rarotonga is clear here, as CfE began carving out a space for its own principles between the internationalist realpolitik of MFA and the scientific doctrine of the domestic laboratories.

But I say a paradigm shift was only potential, because although New Zealand ultimately opted to support the Pacific stance at the First Expert Meeting, it did so pragmatically at the behest of Foreign Affairs, not out of any Pacific science or Commission for the Environment advice. Given there was a 'divergence of view' in the NZ scientific community, the 'importance

[347] Details of the exchange can be found in 'Background Notes on SPREP [and] related matters to be discussed with MFAT', R1283020, ANZ. The original Forum briefing is in 'Thirteenth South Pacific Forum: Rotorua, Nuclear Issues', 'South Pacific Regional Environment', R1283021, ANZ.
[348] Of the Health Department and Department of Scientific and Industrial Research respectively.
[349] Letter from H.C. Sutton to D. MacKay, January 11, 1983, 'South Pacific Regional Environment', AAUM W4043 189, INT 7/3 Part 4, R1283022, ANZ.
[350] 'Memorandum, June 8, 1982', R1283021, ANZ.

attached to the nuclear dumping issue' in the Pacific, and that 'there [was] no direct New Zealand interest at stake', this was the path of least resistance.[351] Foreign Affairs Secretary Norrish made the lack of commitment to the Pacific position clear, explaining to Piddington personally that 'our concern… is basically political'—although 'there can never be 100% certainty that such dumping will not have adverse environmental effects', NZ supported a prohibition because 'island governments are unlikely to accept assurances, however well founded' and therefore dumping would cause 'friction [with] several industrialised countries with which New Zealand has important strategic and commercial relations'.[352] The important point here is that Norrish believed New Zealand's position *necessarily* differed from that of the Pacific, because it had 'scientific resources which permit [an] independent assessment of the risks… if and when it seems politically desirable to do so…' Support was a means to an end, *because Foreign Affairs did not believe the Pacific*. Of course, Norrish finally assured Piddington, 'there was no question at the [Rotorua] Forum… of New Zealand's casting doubt on the apprehensions of the island governments about nuclear dumping… [but] if you feel that we in the Ministry [are] rather simple minded about environmental issues, we would be very glad to talk things over [at] the familiar ground of a Division Heads meeting…'

For Foreign Affairs, the public association with Pacific "politics" (while privately rubbishing them and accepting metropolitan "science") was explicitly aimed at 'political advantage'.[353] For the Commission the matter is less clear. Internally, although it agreed with the political calculus it felt it was the agency 'best positioned to determine the relative doses of "science" and "heart" appropriate [in] future'.[354] Given Piddington's earlier involvement, their actions approached solidarity. Accordingly, CfE funded its own marine biologist, Dr Philip Tortell, to

[351] 'SPREP: Dumping of Nuclear Waste', R1283022, ANZ.
[352] Letter from Norrish to Piddington, September 10, 1982, R1283022, ANZ.
[353] Letter from Norrish to Piddington, September 10, 1982, R1283022, ANZ.
[354] 'Correspondence with MFA on Radioactive Waste Dumping', R1283022, ANZ.

attend relevant meetings. Tortell had recently returned from an UN International Atomic Energy Agency/International Maritime Organisation meeting in Vienna regarding oceanic waste dumping. This meeting was dominated by nuclear scientists who saw themselves as facilitating safe and efficient disposal ('with very little input from oceanography, marine ecology [and] meteorology'), but Tortell also mentioned 'a very strong undercurrent' created by the anti-dumping Scandinavians, Iberians, and Pacific Islanders. New Zealand's 'credibility', Tortell thought, might 'serve it in good stead [to] mediate' at the LDC or in Noumea.[355] This considered, Tortell would attend the First Expert Meeting alongside Foreign Affairs in early 1983, ensuring the Commission had a continuing say, as, Piddington noted privately to him, 'we open this can of worms further'.[356]

Titirangi reef, mussel, kina and paua beds, 1982. Customary kāwa of the Ngati Rahiri hapu, Te Āti Awa. Off Owae Waitara, north Taranaki bight (Fig. 12, III). Down the coast at Manukorihi, a marine outfall takes effluent from septic tanks, a methanol plant, and an abattoir onto the Orapapa and Taioma seafood beds, with plans for another outfall from the synthetic fuels plant at Motunui up the coast. [357]

In March 1982, iwi spokesperson and local freezing worker, Aila Taylor, submitted evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal as part of claim contesting the ongoing pollution of Taranaki's coastline.[358] Several deficiencies with current and proposed outfalls had left Māori wary or unable to gather kaimoana, a cultural necessity and right under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Waitangi Tribunal would investigate from July to November of that same year, visiting the

[355] Tortell mentions this credibility was 'based on both sound scientific judgement as well as deep political sensitivity', 'Correspondence with MFA on Radioactive Waste Dumping', R1283022, ANZ.
[356] 'Correspondence with MFA on Radioactive Waste Dumping', R1283022, ANZ.
[357] Waitangi Tribunal, *Report of the Waitangi Tribunal on the Motunui-Waitara Claim (Wai 6)* (Wellington: Waitangi Tribunal, 1983); Paul James and Eric Pawson, 'Contested Places: The Significance of the Motunui-Waitara Claim to the Waitangi Tribunal', *Aboriginal History* 19, no. 1–2 (1995), 111–125; 'Taranaki Under Threat', *Kaea* 5, no. 1 (1981), 4.
[358] The Waitangi Tribunal, established in 1975, is a permanent commission of inquiry that investigates claims brought by Māori relating to Crown breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi.

reefs, factories, and local marae, as well as relevant government and local bodies. The Tribunal's findings and recommendations—published as *Wai 6*, the Motunui-Waitara Report, in March 1983—upheld Te Āti Awa's concerns, finding the pollution and proposed outfall 'not only threatened seafood but also diminished the people's capacity to dispense their obligations of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga'.[359]

As part of the Tribunal inquiry, members of the Commission for the Environment gave evidence and called expert witnesses. This proved decisive in the case of the microbiologist Professor Margaret Loutit, who discussed the heightened and unqualifiable presence of chrome in industrial waste, and Ken Piddington, who submitted that many similar projects surveyed during the past two years threatened extensive pollution.[360] Piddington, who spoke te reo Māori and was inspired by his good friend and fellow former diplomat Witi Ihimaera, also gave an interpretation of the legal differences between 'rangatiratanga' and 'full exclusive and undisturbed possession' in the Māori and English texts of Te Tiriti's Article Two. He drew attention to the terms' different cultural contexts: that the latter would imply exclusivity and the right to buy and sell, whereas the former, 'would relate [to] the mores of a society which treated resources as collective, [paralleling] that which is reflected in the earlier English concept of 'stewardship', [meaning] the emphasis of the English version on 'possession' is misleading'.[361] This analysis is attributed to Piddington in the final *Wai 6* report, informing the Tribunal's interpretation on 'exclusivity' that, principally, 'the mana of the Māori people to be able to control their own fishing grounds ought to be upheld'.[362] Excellent analysis notwithstanding, by seeming to 'side' with Māori, Piddington, personally progressive and

[359] Aroha Harris and Melissa Matutina Williams, 'Rights and Revitalisation', in *Tangata Whenua: A History*, eds., Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney and Aroha Harris (Wellington: Bridget Williams, 2014), 362.
[360] Paul James, 'Occurrence and Resolution of the Motunui-Waitara Resource Conflict (Wai-6)' (unpublished Masters thesis, University of Canterbury, 1993).
[361] Waitangi Tribunal, *Wai 6*, 53.
[362] This includes a power to regulate and restrict both the use and the class of persons who may use, Waitangi Tribunal, *Wai 6*, 54.

principled, would lead the Commission headlong into a sitting government and indifferent majority.

The Motunui Report was widely publicised and generated a moment of cultural reckoning in New Zealand. On a personal level, the geography of the claim was unfamiliar to many Pākehā—Māori were expressing grievance about reefs they did not know had names and seafood they would never venture to try. Moreover, few Pākehā had contemplated their cultural assumptions about the environment; that their attitudes to water and pollution might run counter to Māori and lead to such callous environmental harm.[363] At a national and governmental level, *Wai 6* not only recognised such difference, it gave it standing. In the era of "Think Big" industrial boosterism, having a statutory body and government department come from relative obscurity to now reinforce tikanga and place Māori principles of environmental stewardship, kaitiakitanga, on an equal footing to Pākehā was a significant development and major precedent.[364] At the time, Prime Minister Robert Muldoon dismissed the Tribunal's findings outright, implying they were unscientific and announcing the Motunui outfall would proceed. However, public opposition had grown sufficiently to postpone the plans.[365] After several stopgap measures the protracted fight ended in 2014 with land-based alternatives and a pipeline from Waitara to New Plymouth. Neither Aila Taylor, Robert Muldoon or Ken Piddington lived to see the conflict resolved.

Motunui reaffirmed Māori self-determination and communal rights under Te Tiriti and is hailed as a turning point in the life of the Waitangi Tribunal. The substory, is that Motunui was

[363] As outlined by James and Pawson, most significant was that the idea that, 'rather than water being a convenient carriageway for the passage of wastes… it was shown that the traditional Māori view is that water is tapu (sacred), and once polluted by effluent it remains culturally polluted even if treated to standards set down by Pakeha science', James and Pawson, 'Contested Places', 120.
[364] M.P.K. Sorrenson, 'Towards a Radical Reinterpretation of New Zealand History: The Role of the Waitangi Tribunal', in *Waitangi: Maori and Pakeha Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, ed. I.H. Kawharu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 158–178.
[365] Jim Tucker mentions the economics of upgrading the existing outfall may also have played a role. Jim Tucker, *Clearing the Water the Saving of Taranaki's Most Precious Asset* (New Plymouth: Puke Ariki Research Centre, 2014).

important for the Commission for the Environment, demonstrating its allegiance to the environment and diverse appreciations of it, even in the face of vested political interests and unhelpful majority viewpoints. How this would feed into its other major work, as a focal point for SPREP and part of the Noumea negotiations (which by this stage had passed the Second Expert Meeting), remained to be seen.

The Upwelling

North Fiji Basin, high seas enclave (Fig. 12, IV). An area of biological diversity and tectonic activity, centred between the exclusive economic zones of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. In the far north, 400km west of Rotuma, sits the Horizon Bank, a drowned atoll, less than 50m below sea level at summit but dropping abruptly to several kilometres deep. This shallow seamount hosts an abundance of tuna (albacore, yellowfin, bigeye) and sharks (oceanic whitetip, shortfin mako, bigeye thresher) and is a likely stopover for migratory leatherback and loggerhead turtles.[366] *Due south, towards the bottom third of the enclave, lies the basin's central spreading ridge, stretching ~700km north-south, at the triple junction of the New Hebrides, Balmoral, and Conway tectonic microplates. Here, fresh oceanic crust pushes outwards towards Fiji and Vanuatu at a rate of ~7cm per year.* [367] *Tucked within the Fijian EEZ is the 'White Lady' hydrothermal field, where anhydrite chimneys expel shimmering water at temperatures approaching 300°C. At their feet gather Bathymodiolins, deep sea mussels that survive by farming bacteria able to process the dissolved compounds released by the vents. The North Fiji Basin was partially mapped for the first time during the French R/V Jean Charcot (SEAPSO III) expedition in December 1985.*[368]

[366] Eleanor Partridge, *High Seas Pacific Marine Reserves: A Case Study for the High Seas Enclaves* (Ottawa: Greenpeace International, 2009).
[367] Y. Nojiri, Ji Ishibashi, T. Kawai et al., 'Hydrothermal Plumes Along the North Fiji Basin Spreading Axis', *Nature* 342 (1989).
[368] Jean-Marie Auzende, Yves Lafoy, and Bruno Marsset, 'Recent Geodynamic Evolution of the North Fiji Basin (Southwest Pacific)', *Geology* 16, no. 10 (1988).

Upwelling is the process by which cool, nutrient rich water from the deep ocean pushes upwards, replacing warmer, depleted water. Upwelling zones are highly productive and occur most frequently where strong winds run along continents—as with the Humboldt current off Chile or in the Southern Ocean around Antarctica—but they likely also occur in the open ocean at the base of seamounts like the Horizon Bank.[369] In this admittedly metaphorical but undoubtedly more human case, upwelling inspired by the geographies above occurred in Wellington, February 1984. Here, the Pacific undercurrent rose, roiling to the surface at last.

To recap, this was both a turbulent and generative time for SPREP. With the Second Expert Meeting leaving the convention unsettled, regional exasperation grew steadily. And while Bugotu and Tupouniua prepared their oratory for the Third Expert Meeting, SPREP itself was well underway. The programme's work under the Action Plan spread across member countries, including for example: assessing the effect of introduced Caribbean pines in Viti Levu, Fiji; monitoring heavy metals downstream from the Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea; and measuring the water quality on the Tuamotu archipelago in French Polynesia.[370] SPREP's early work is detailed in the following chapter, but we might recognise here that an important corollary to this was the growing role of the programme's secretariat.

A small body of four led by SPREP Co-ordinator, Jeremy Carew-Reid, the SPREP Secretariat worked out of the SPC headquarters in Noumea. It co-ordinated the programme set out by Rarotonga and organised further Expert Meetings, but it should not be mistaken for a purely technical or administrative body.[371] Like SPC under Bugotu, because the SPREP Secretariat actively represented the interests of island nations, throughout the convention negotiations it

[369] M. Silva, M. Araujo, F. Geber et. al., 'Ocean Dynamics and Topographic Upwelling Around the Aracati Seamount - North Brazilian Chain From in situ Observations and Modelling Results', *Frontiers in Marine Science* 8 (2021).
[370] Jeremy Carew-Reid, 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Program', *Ambio* 13, no. 5/6 (1984), 377.
[371] The author would like to acknowledge the guidance of Jeremy Carew-Reid on this point, who described the active role of SPREP and SPC staff, emphasising how they were 'very concerned to help level the playing field at all times'. Jeremy Carew-Reid, personal correspondence, March 26, 2022.

fostered awareness, built consensus, and provided backroom political support. In the words of Carew-Reid, granted that the Secretariat 'stood for the rights and views of the island countries' and 'given the capacity issues [amongst] delegations', the SPREP Secretariat had an 'unusually and necessarily assertive role to play' in Noumea.[372]

It was within this churning context that Carew-Reid arrived in Wellington. This was the Australian ecologist's first official visit to Aotearoa, but it was no meet-and-greet. Instead, Carew-Reid was looking for New Zealand help in working through the impasse. On the morning of February 8th ideas flowed as he met Ken Piddington and Philip Tortell for a Commission for the Environment briefing. This was immediately followed by a Foreign Affairs meeting on Noumea, which Tortell also attended alongside Don MacKay, New Zealand's legal counsel on the convention. Across these meetings, Carew-Reid requested New Zealand support for a secretarial working paper on potential solutions to the impasse, to be circulated prior to the Third Expert Meeting. This set people thinking.

That morning, New Zealand's approach to Noumea and SPREP went through a quiet transformation. Encouraged by the Commission for the Environment and the SPREP Co-ordinator, Foreign Affairs moved from passenger towards intermediary, from "support" to solidarity. Central to this shift, was a new position consisting of three grouped ideas or breakthroughs in thinking.

The first breakthrough came in response to Carew-Reid's question over the convention area: would New Zealand be included? Piddington responded affirmatively, stating that for 'ecological, strategic, [and] political reasons' it must be. The 'CfE philosophy' was that because '[NZ] spans a wide segment of the South Pacific', 'our boundaries [must] mean

[372] Jeremy Carew-Reid, personal correspondence, March 26, 2022.

nothing' if the 'environmental integrity of whole quadrant is to be safeguarded'.[373] This echoed Micronesia's knowledge that 'atmospheric and oceanic pollution see no boundaries' and had related implications for the outstanding issue of the convention area's high seas pockets. Piddington built on his observations to Don MacKay prior to the first meeting (anticipating friction), that because the 'EEZs of island nations coalesce into one contiguous zone' New Zealand might 'favour a compromise which *recognised that [high seas] gaps are part of the ocean ecology*'.[374] Clearly, Piddington had carried forward his 'one ocean' thinking from Rarotonga, placing Pacific environmentalism at the heart of New Zealand's strategic commitment and thus a unified ocean as the basis of its position on the convention area.

The second breakthrough appears to be the initiative of Don MacKay, who identified America's real posture on dumping following the second meeting: that it feared Noumea might be a precedent leading to other "un-scientific" initiatives elsewhere.[375] A proposed solution in the meeting notes—formal (MFA) and informal (CfE)—came with MacKay suggesting that 'it would be helpful in allaying [metropolitan] fears, for Pacific Island countries to distinguish their efforts at a regional level from the broader global treatment', or transcribed differently, 'if a clear message was given that the *region was identified as separate* and that perhaps LDC initiatives by Kiribati could be dropped, US etc., [might] have [less of an] ideological problem "accepting thin end of the wedge"'.[376] MacKay was now thinking regionally too.

In early April, the position came together at the bottom of a letter. To strain the metaphor, here the undercurrent welled up, replacing the depleted water. Tortell and MacKay had shared phone calls between February and the end of March, where they discussed the possibility of '*identifying particular characteristics of the SPREP Convention area', establishing it as 'one*

[373] 'Briefing with Jeremy Carew-Reid, KP, PT.', 'South Pacific Regional Environment', AAUM W4043 189, INT 7/3 Part 5, R1283023, ANZ.
[374] Letter from Piddington to MacKay, January 14, 1983, R1283023, ANZ.
[375] 'Note on Meeting with SPREP Coordinator', R22865234, ANZ.
[376] 'Meeting with MFA', R1283023, ANZ.

of particular environmental sensitivity, [unsuited] to the dumping of low-level nuclear waste'.[377] A note from Ken Piddington added one final breakthrough. 'We need to prepare the oceanic version of the "Motunui [Report]"', he wrote, 'because this is simply a larger version of what we went through in Taranaki'.[378]

Pacific environmentalism had inspired a revolutionary approach and its understandings were central to the proposed position. Rarotonga had shown the necessity of thinking Pacific, Motunui reinforced its righteousness—soon the Fiji Basin would reinforce its empiricism. But moreover, the Commission proved that advocating these ideas—bringing up the undercurrent—was not simply a means to an end. In fact, the means they had adopted were the only way to get to the end. The realpolitik of Foreign Affairs and the scientism of the nuclear laboratories were unlikely to have found such a position alone, given similar attitudes already predominated through the stalled negotiations. And the position was ingenious. It linked two of the three outstanding issues and solved them together. The United States would not accept an agreement that curtailed its freedoms on the high seas, nor an "unscientific" total prohibition on dumping. By scientifically proving that the expanded convention area (Pacific EEZ's and any high seas pockets) was unsuitable for dumping the US might sign a regional agreement without prejudicing their positions elsewhere.

New Zealand scientists obligingly built the case. The oceanographer D. E. Hurley identified 'the presence of strong abyssal currents, [which] erode and redistribute the bottom sediments and could spread contamination'.[379] Dr Athol Rafter, who had recently served on the SPREP Technical Group on Radioactivity, added that the convention area 'is characterised by volcanic activity, strong earthquake and subduction zones… [marking] it as one of the most geologically

[377] Letter from MacKay to Piddington, April 9, 1984, 'South Pacific Regional Environment', AAUM W4043 189, INT 7/3 Part 6, R1283024, ANZ.
[378] Letter from MacKay to Piddington, April 9, 1984, R1283024, ANZ.
[379] Letter from Hurley to MacKay, May 17, 1984, R1283024, ANZ.

active in the world'.[380] The Australian Atomic Energy Commission forwarded a draft being prepared by Amelia Hagen of the International Atomic Energy Association, the body responsible for setting down the 'site selection criteria' for low-level nuclear waste dumping under the LDC. With the criteria coming up for review in June, Hagen had coincidentally written a report that corroborated and expanded on the NZ scientists' findings: on currents and sediments, volcanic activity, proximity to oceanic islands and average water depth (over 4000m). To this, she added economic considerations in the form of potentially lucrative manganese nodules and 'high biological productivity' (i.e., tuna).[381] Others had their doubts. The National Radiation Laboratory was not asked for comment, while one marine scientist from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research stated, 'the region is not worthy of special treatment in the way that the Baltic or Mediterranean area [are, under the LDC as 'enclosed' seas]'.[382]

The Commission for the Environment's submission to Foreign Affairs is notable for including Pacific 'cultural appreciations' alongside Philip Tortell's knowledge of IAEA criteria and experience of UN scientific working groups.[383] While acknowledging the region was different from the enclosed Baltic or Mediterranean, Tortell argued that 'this difference appears to strengthen the case for a stricter regime'.[384] The Pacific was a 'special case', he argued, with a 'special relationship of its people with the ocean brought about the distinctive juxtaposition of land and water'. The cultural relationship was manifest in socio-economic realities insofar as 'Pacific nations are surrounded by the ocean, often relying upon it for their only source of protein, communication, and other needs'. This insularity meant that while 'the inhabitants of

[380] Letter from Rafter to MacKay, May 3, 1984, R1283024, ANZ.
[381] Letter from Wright to DFA, May 31, 1984, R1283024, ANZ.
[382] Letter from Hurley to MacKay, May 17, 1984, R1283024, ANZ.
[383] Notably Tortell was part of the UN Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP). There was an apparent attempt made by Tortell and Piddington to include more cultural appreciations in the final submission, likely because of the Motunui experience, as there are pages of handwritten notes about cultural issues in the files.
[384] Letter from Tortell to MacKay, July 27, 1984, R1283024, ANZ.

Mediterranean countries can retreat inland, no such course is available to the great majority of Pacific people'.[385]

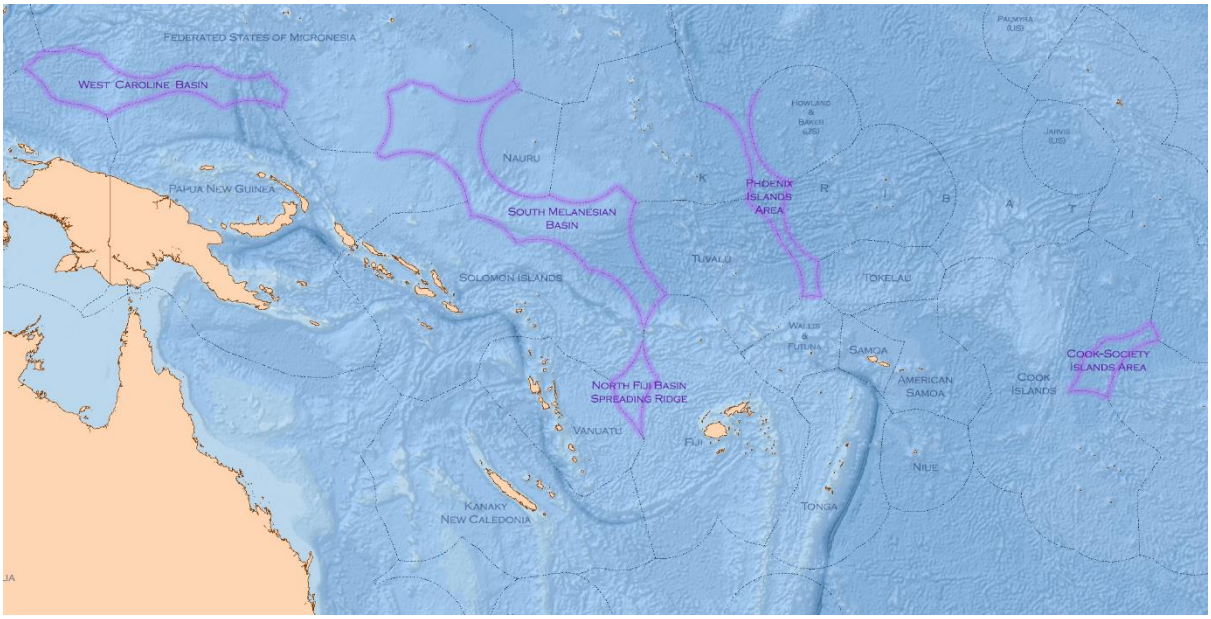


Figure 16—Map highlighting the high seas pockets at issue, noting the bathymetric features referenced in Telegram 1881. *Base map generated by ArcGIS.*

Shallow Appreciation

The case was put to the United States on June 12th, 1984.[386] 'Telegram 1881' outlined the general characteristics of the area, quoting the testimony of the scientists above, before making specific reference to the five high seas pockets at issue *(Fig. 16)*, outlining how:

> The high seas portions of the convention area [have] oceanographic, geological, vulcanological, and seismological characteristics which would be difficult to replicate in other high seas areas of the globe…
>
> i) West Caroline Basin: This area is surrounded on three sides by active subduction zones i.e. the Mariana Trench to the west and north and the New Guinea Trench to the south… The activity is likely to come up in volcanic eruptions.

[385] Letter from Tortell to MacKay, July 27, 1984, R1283024, ANZ.
[386] The case was expanded in 'Telegram 2388' of July 20, 1984, which made similar arguments for the high sea pockets above and below the SPC area (notably the area between the Kermadec Islands and Tonga). It was ultimately consolidated in the 'New Zealand Report on the Special Conditions Affecting Nuclear Dumping in the South Pacific Region'. While the latter has not been located, the former is in file 'The Pacific - General - South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', ABHS 6964 W4628 4, NOU 301/1/8 Part 2, R18229897, ANZ.

ii) South Melanesian Basin: This basin is deep to the north but becomes shallower over the plateau to the south as it approaches the Solomon trench and the Cape Johnson trough… Ocean currents [could] take material into the Solomon Islands subduction zone.
iii) Phoenix Islands area: This area has an earthquake fault running north to south.
iv) Cook – Society Islands area: [Has] the Marquesas hot spot within it. These hot spots can develop into volcanoes, as happened in Hawaii.
v) *[North] Fiji Basin spreading ridge. New oceanic crust moves both towards Fiji and Vanuatu making this a particularly unsuitable area for dumping.*[387]

The United States received Telegram 1881 with great interest. First, the United States Geological Survey evaluated its scientific claims, finding them credible. Of 15 potential areas within the high seas pockets listed above, 11 were agreed to be unsuitable for dumping and four were found to be 'iffy', depending on the assumed strength of currents.[388] This is hardly surprising, given how little was known about the seafloor and its processes (see the reference to SEAPSO III at section's opening), but also extraordinary given that active, volatile areas such as the North Fiji Basin were hypothetically eligible for dumping.

It was left to the State Department and the Pentagon to mull the ramifications for the Noumea Convention. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter one might have expected this process to remain a black box in our historical understanding for some time, perhaps indefinitely. However, extraordinarily, at the end of 2021 the Australian Government declassified a series of foreign affairs files on Noumea that contain leaked American memorandums. Coupling these with participant interviews reveals the charged discussions that resulted.[389]

[387] Telegram from Wellington to Washington, June 12, 1984, R22865234, ANZ.
[388] Telegram from Washington to Wellington, July 24, 1984, R22865234, ANZ.
[389] Participant interviewees involved in this aspect of the Noumea negotiations include Don MacKay, Jeremy Carew-Reid, Stephen Henningham and Scott Hajost. Hajost, who was the main legal advisor to the US delegation, was able to corroborate the divisions within Washington, stating, 'I'd say there was a political win, if you want to describe it that way, on the radioactive waste disposal issue and what's contained in the treaty. And you can argue it's an environmental win for the islanders. It's a win for the United States too, because we felt that it didn't set any precedent that we'd have to worry about elsewhere. But it ultimately led to a treaty.' Scott Hajost, personal correspondence, April 26, 2022.

Telegram 1881, it happens, arose at a time when there was already significant disagreement across the State Department and the Pentagon over the US position on Noumea. The Second Expert Meeting had failed the previous November with no clear way through the impasse. Americans were singled-out for their 'heavy-handed attitude' and rumours swirled in the region that the US might even prevent its territories from representing themselves at future meetings.[390] With the announcement of a Third Expert Meeting, America weighed the political cost of holding its line. As early as March 1984, splits formed between so-called 'hard-liners', who stuck to the belief that the United States must not suffer any "unscientific" precedent in Noumea for fear of international ramifications in London, and 'moderates', who warned of a potentially greater threat to American interests.[391]

Moderates feared reprisals. That if the United States did not noticeably approach the Noumea negotiations with a more constructive and conciliatory attitude, Pacific nations would sign a strictly anti-nuclear and extensive convention without them and retaliate elsewhere. The major threat was that Pacific nations would refuse future port visits of US nuclear-powered ships. In other words, moderates worried that by taking a dogmatic and dictatorial approach to the issue of high seas freedoms, the US risked a catastrophic backfire and the irony of being far less "free" in the Pacific.

Interestingly, the moderates were aided in this understanding by New Zealand and Australia. Leveraging its ambivalent position in the Pacific, New Zealand raised the issue in a January 1984 meeting between MFA Assistant Secretary Chris Beeby and the State Department's Paul Wolfowitz (at that time Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs) and again at the ANZUS officials' talks in mid-March. The New Zealanders, while acknowledging their

[390] Telegram from Wellington to Canberra, February 1, 1984, 'South Pacific – SPREP – Nuclear Waste Dumping', A4535 225/250/8 Part 1, 24535307, NAA.
[391] Telegram from Wellington to Canberra, March 8, 1984, 24535307, NAA.

'[sympathy] to [Pacific Island Countries'] environmental concerns' believed the US position was working counter to their other, shared 'ANZUS security interests in the region', namely 'US Port calls', and was so serious in fact, that it 'had the capacity to spill over into other areas and could affect ANZUS efforts to keep the region pro-Western'.[392]

Australia's ambivalence went further still. Declassified documents reveal a deep contradiction between Australia committing to anti-nuclearism domestically while undercutting it in the region. Thus far, Australia had taken a back seat in the Noumea negotiations, avoiding difficult questions surrounding the depth of its support for a dumping prohibition and the inclusion of its territorial waters.[393] However, pressure on the Australian Labor Party (ALP) to deliver a nuclear-free Pacific had forced Prime Minister Hawke's hand outside of the stalled SPREP process. At the 1983 South Pacific Forum in Canberra, Hawke had re-tabled proposals for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone shelved in the 1970s, but crucially, in a way that balanced alliance interests and pre-empted the treaty negotiations at the upcoming 1984 Tuvalu Forum. It has long been suspected that Australia formulated the drafts for what would become the Treaty of Rarotonga with American interests in mind. The true depth of this collusion is startling. A freshly declassified Australian briefing reveals unappreciated links between metropolitans' approach to Rarotonga and Noumea, and the underlying, pre-emptive reason for taking the anti-nuclear initiative,

> Australia is committed to advancing the concept of a S.P. nuclear-free zone. Australia cannot retreat from this commitment. [It] is a reflection, not only of the ALP's policy towards a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific, or of the Government's desire to be seen to respond to the genuine concerns of the countries of the region, but of a growing awareness amongst a concerned electorate within Australia of important disarmament, arms control and nuclear matters.
>
> At the same time, nuclear issues are live issues in the South Pacific for a variety of reasons not all of which are necessarily linked to French nuclear testing programme at Moruroa Atoll.

[392] Telegram from Wellington to Canberra, February 1, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[393] M. Hamel-Green, *The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone: A Critical Assessment* (Canberra: Peace Research Centre, ANU, 1990); Andrew O'Neil, 'Australia and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty: A Reinterpretation', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 3 (2004).

> Pacific Island nuclear concerns are linked with the role of the oceans in their traditions and cultures, and as a resource. Pacific Islanders in principle draw no real distinctions between Japanese proposals to dump waste material in the northern Pacific, U.S. proposals to sink obsolete nuclear submarines off California and the testing of nuclear weapons at Moruroa Atoll. It is all the Pacific Ocean—"our ocean!"
>
> Most, however, are realistic enough to appreciate the principles of deterrence and the security provided by the ANZUS umbrella (although the majority would not want this to be publicly affirmed). But there are one or two ideologues—and one or two, because of their colonial experiences, lacking sophistication—who could develop proposals related to a nuclear-free South Pacific which could pose real problems for ANZUS partners.
>
> One important objective of Australia is to pre-empt such proposals of a more radical or impractical nature, by drafting proposals that take into account the defence requirements of the region and of our allies.
>
> Ours is a process of a damage containment.[394]

Australian pragmatism reassured the Americans of Hawke's support, but we might note the references to Pacific culture, anti-colonialism, and environmentalism here. In no uncertain terms the threat being communicated, the 'damage' being 'contained', was that of a self-determined Pacific Ocean. Here was a mandate, "Our Ocean", however snidely. These were terms that were understood. Recognising the depth of regional sentiment and thus the gravity of the situation, elements within the State Department and Department of Defence began arguing for flexibility on the issues of nuclear waste dumping and the convention area. Staff under the US Navy's Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPAC) told Australian diplomats in confidence that,

> …the US' overriding interest in the South Pacific was to secure regular facilities for port visits [and] that it was not worth jeopardising this interest in order to pursue a so-called global policy on nuclear dumping which was not of the same order of importance and which was unnecessary in practical terms.[395]

This view, the diplomats noted, was consistent with that shared by some prominent members of the State Department, specifically those beneath Wolfowitz in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) as well as others within the Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs, Bureau

[394] 'Discussions on Nuclear Issues with Mr James Malone…Monday 5 March', in file 'Nuclear – United Nations Disarmament – South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', A1838 919/18/5 Part 3, 1373802, NAA.
[395] Telegram from Honolulu to Canberra, March 29, 1984, 24535307, NAA.

of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES/OPA).[396] In particular, the head of OES/OPA, Tucker Scully, was considered a 'very vocal ally to Australia and New Zealand' on the matter, and '[someone] who moderates hard-liners'. [397] A leaked memorandum shows that Scully wrote to his superior, James Malone (Wolfowitz' equivalent in OES), urging reconsideration and saying that,

> In my view, maintaining our present position will result in a convention that contains a complete ban on nuclear dumping throughout a convention defined to include large areas of high seas. In other words, the Pacific Island countries will simply deal us out and we will not become party to the resulting convention. This would be an unfortunate result in view of our other marine pollution interests in the convention and important political interests in the South Pacific region. I also believe such an outcome could endanger certain strategic interests such as port access for U.S. nuclear powered vessels.[398]

James Malone, as the 'principal architect of the US policy of opposing any restrictions', remained unconvinced.[399] He dismissed 'Island sensitivities [as] irrelevant to Washington's broader interests' and advocated 'expertise to enable [Pacific nations] to make their own scientific assessments' of nuclear dumping (despite Australian hints that any 'US attempts to "educate" the PICs would not bear fruit').[400] This was, until Malone visited the region himself in March, becoming 'somewhat surprised by the implications for United States' bilateral relations' and initiating an internal review on his return.[401] The result was an 'attempt to find a formula whereby the United States could sign a [convention] without giving in on its position that low level nuclear waste dumping is not harmful per se'. It was no coincidence that during his visit Malone had also spoken with New Zealand's Don MacKay, who mentioned early work towards Telegram 1881. Malone clearly saw promise because two unnamed State Department sources conveyed privately to Australian diplomats that 'one approach being considered is to

[396] Among whom were William Brown (Deputy Assistant Secretary, East Asia Bureau) and Richard Dols (Director, Office of Pacific Island Affairs, East Asia Bureau).
[397] Telegram from Wellington to Canberra, March 8, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[398] Telegram from Washington to Canberra, February 2, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[399] Telegram from Honolulu to Canberra, March 29, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[400] Telegram from Washington to Canberra, March 1, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[401] Telegram from Washington to Canberra, March 26, 1984, 24535307, NAA.

declare the South Pacific a zone of particular environmental sensitivity in which no dumping of any kind should take place'.[402]

From April 1984, with moderate sentiment in the State Department growing, New Zealand and Australian lobbying focused on the Department of Defence (DoD). In June, Australian diplomats met with a senior DoD staffer in Brussels during the G9 Summit, who mentioned that Admiral Crowe, Commander-in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, had 'taken to heart' that 'a stand off [on] SPREP [could] possibly lead to damage to United States defence interests in the region'.[403] Taking into account 'the strength of feeling on the issue amongst Pacific Island states', Admiral Crowe was now 'looking positively for compromise solutions which he could recommend to Washington', and so identifying 'characteristic regional features' would 'certainly be most helpful'. Word found its way back to Australia through State that due to this outreach 'there would now be renewed input from the Defence side'.[404] Telegram 1881 had arrived earlier that same week and Washington now awaited the Geological Survey's assessment.

In July, one week before the assessment was due, relevant divisions from the State Department and Pentagon gathered in an 'ocean policy inter-agency group' to finalise the US position on Noumea. Optimistic Australians used to cheery leaks from moderates were likely surprised by what followed. Down the line came meeting notes, accompanied by two very different briefs for Secretary of State of George Shultz to the forthcoming ANZUS Council meeting. These showed how hard-liners within the Pentagon walked back any compromise. Reacting to the idea that the US would agree to a dumping prohibition within 200-mile zones and explore similar for high seas pockets, they 'accused State of "Chamberlain-style appeasement" to the

[402] Telegram from Washington to Canberra, March 26, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[403] Telegram from London to Canberra, June 18, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[404] Telegram from Washington to Canberra, June 20, 1984, 24535307, NAA.

Pacific Island countries at the expense of United States global interests'.[405] Shultz was instructed instead to ask New Zealand and Australia whether Pacific nations would agree to bans within EEZs *only*, but it was clear Defence wanted only a non-binding 'best efforts not to dump' clause so as to keep the option open of dumping within their territories. Moderates grew 'increasingly despondent', believing that the US would not have a more forthcoming position come September.[406]

The confirmed findings of Telegram 1881 folded into a further month of departmental disagreements. Finally, in late August, one month before the Third Expert Meeting and as Forum leaders gathered in Tuvalu to announce plans for a nuclear free zone outside of SPREP, the inter-agency group came to a final position. New Zealand had approached the Department of Defence for further lobbying and was instead invited as a sounding board.[407] There, Commander John Henriksen, a key player in US positions on the law of the sea and Noumea, candidly spoke of the US judgment,

> New Zealand's scientific input has been very welcome in that it has done far more to shift the Pentagon than what [Henriksen] said were "unproveable" assertions about the likely impact on FIC attitudes… A new US position had been achieved because it had become possible, on the basis of NZ data, to claim that there was indeed a scientific justification for a moratorium, or at least every indication that the high seas enclaves generally were not likely to meet IAEA standards of site selection for low level waste dumping. [Henriksen] said this cause and effect linkage was the key to the US position because, for reasons of precedent domestically and internationally, the US could not concede as a starting point the assumption that until it was proven otherwise [that] low-level waste should be regarded as hazardous. Once that was "given away", he said, the pressure could build up domestically (e.g. in states particularly reliant on nuclear power) for prohibition on existing land-based disposal methods…[408]

Henriksen's testimony is revelatory on two counts. The first is that, although he downplays its significance, the one ocean spirit of Pacific nations had moved the State Department and

[405] Telegram from Wellington to Canberra, July 18, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[406] Telegram from Wellington to Canberra, July 18, 1984, 24535307, NAA.
[407] Incidentally, Australia had indicated its enthusiasm for joining New Zealand in this meeting but had faltered over its own EEZ position and 'a very negative reaction from CSIRO to the scientific arguments which NZ had put forward', Telegram from Canberra to Wellington, August 29, 1984, 'The Pacific - General - South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', R18229897, ANZ.
[408] Telegram from Washington to Wellington, August 29, 1984, R18229897, ANZ.

elements within the Pentagon so much that not only was the threat of reprisal an issue, but it had prompted the need to look for flexibility on Noumea. The second is that Telegram 1881 had proved the crucial intervention. Although the United States did not immediately accept an expanded convention area and a prohibition on dumping, Pacific science and sprinklings of metropolitan solidarity had prompted a connection between the two issues and a path forward.

US diplomats drip-fed further "concessions" over Expert Meetings Three and Four—principal among which was a possible moratorium on dumping in the high seas pockets 'pending further studies', with a subsequent addition of a Pacific "veto" over any annulment—but this was opportunism.[409] Because the Pacific nations would not budge on a total and formal prohibition, with the acceptance of Telegram 1881 the US' political calculus had already shifted from "upholding science" and international precedents to whether, 'the subject matter of the draft convention and the implications of not participating in it, are sufficiently important for the US to give up a right which it would otherwise have… but which it says it would not exercise in any event'.[410] In other words, at this point the Pacific was not asking much, but then again, this was hegemony.

At last, prior to the Fourth Meeting in November 1985, the United States conceded.[411] It would accept a total prohibition on dumping as a 'package' with a convention area that included Pacific nations' EEZs and the high seas pockets, but not the area to the north or south (i.e., not the 'picture frame'). Because by this stage movements in the South Pacific Forum towards a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone had overtaken Noumea on nuclear testing, this concession cleared the way for signature.

[409] Telegram from Wellington to Washington, October 10, 1984, R18229897, ANZ.
[410] Telegram from Wellington to Washington, July 20, 1984, R22865234, ANZ.
[411] Telegram from Wellington to Washington, November 14, 1985, R20753435, ANZ.

The Noumea Convention opened for signature in November 1986 and entered into force in August 1990. It gave legal expression to the SPREP work programme, recognised Pacific stewardship in its preamble and facilitated co-operation on the region's shared environmental issues. As envisaged, it prohibited the oceanic dumping of nuclear waste over a vast area of the Pacific Ocean. For Oceania, it was an incomplete but nonetheless monumental victory, the significance of which is described below. But, while emphasising this truth, we might also dwell on another. The United States (and France) were able to conduct and conclude the negotiations almost entirely on their own terms. With a shallow appreciation for the nature of a *Pacific* ocean, what ultimately convinced the United States to sign was selfish validation. It may have been a win for the Pacific, but it was certainly no loss for America. Similarly, New Zealand has been described here as acting at times in solidarity, engaged in an exercise of translation. However, because this role went unexplained and offered a convenient solution for ANZUS partners, one might also see it differently, as appeasement or the actions of a sheriff's deputy.

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Kotahi te Moana is a story of Pacific peoples' shared and inviolate view of the ocean. It charts Pacific environmentalism's crowning achievement and ultimate justification. That by mobilising cultural understandings, science and international law, Pacific nations developed and defended a mandate over the ocean that had been denied to them for centuries. That by organising regional environment management around principles of self-determination, Pacific nations collectively forced metropolitan nations to recognise their demands for environmental justice. Pacific knowledge made the difference in Noumea. Pacific actions created an Indigenous regime of ocean stewardship.

Others have stressed that the unity of the Pacific on the issues of nuclear waste dumping and nuclear testing cannot be explained by traditional ideas of national interest or pragmatism. It was commitment despite the sheer diplomatic effort of negotiation over years and in multiple regional and international forums. It was solidarity irrespective of the remoteness of the issue for many Pacific people who would never see Moruroa or the bottom of the Mariana Trench. Arguing against nuclearism in the farthest corners of the Pacific required a united effort to define and defend the bounds of Pacific political authority. The point is that because the vision was territorially so broad, and politically so inclusive, this was the purest example of governance conducted along principles of *regional* self-determination.[412]

The Noumea negotiations were thus at the very heart of Pacific regionalism, but this history lacked the ocean. My contribution is to show how the undercurrent turned upwelling—or, put differently, how self-determination turned sovereignty.

Over the previous decade, Pacific people had developed a scientific and cultural consensus surrounding a unified, Indigenous ocean and the place of Pacific people within it. Nations had gathered in Rarotonga, enshrined these understandings politically in a declaration, operated them in a work programme, and agreed to legally enforce them in a convention. The United States and France, harbouring political imperatives and convinced of their scientific backing, refused to see how their view of the ocean, as a vast and dispersed testing and dumping ground, ran counter to Pacific Islanders' collective welfare, culture, and livelihood. But because this was recognised by (some) metropolitans, namely New Zealand, the negotiations progressed by other means. When it came to signing, the United States was forced to compromise and ceded its rights over areas of the high seas. This fact would be remarkable on its own, but the real significance is in the *how*.

[412] Fry, *Framing the Islands*, 152.

The story of nuclear waste dumping in Oceania is the story of Pacific environmentalism because not only was a *Pacific* ocean the basis of collective action, it was gradually accepted as the legitimate basis for regional environmental governance. The true victory here is in the title, as said by an outsider. Kotahi te Moana—a united, self-determined and sovereign ocean.

IV

Island Limits and Pacific Ways:

Samoan Forestry, Conservation, and Regional Environmental Management, 1976–1986

> I remember there was a case, when this guy Kalati [Poai, Chief Park Ranger] was alive. [Kalati] caught a person with a shotgun and a pigeon; he was shooting pigeon within [O le Pupu-Pu'e] National Park. So [Kalati] confiscated the pigeon and brought the pigeon to me and said, 'This is evidence in the case against this guy'. And I was looking at the pigeon and I was thinking, 'That would be nice in a supo!' In any case, I said, 'Okay, just put it in the freezer and we will go through the process.'
>
> So, we tried to prepare a case against this man. I went to the attorney-general's office. And after like six years, this poor pigeon was still in the freezer! And [the attorney-general] said to me, 'I am sorry Joe, but I don't think we have a case… the National Park has not been officially declared, so you can't prosecute this person'. And then he said… 'Unless you want to prosecute him for shooting the pigeon outside of season!' And I replied, 'look I don't want to have to wait another five years!

Tusanilefaia'ao Muliagatele Iosefatu Reti, interviewed by the author at his home in Sāvaia i Lefaga, Samoa, February 15th, 2020.

Tusani told jokes I could only receive as allegories. A giant clam shell completed the effect. As I loaded each of the halves into the tray of the ute, Tusani told my uncle, Faumuinā Siaosi, about the shell and Sāvaia's efforts at village development.

Since 1998, Sāvaia has held an annual Talomua, literally 'first taro' festival. The event is held at year's end to celebrate and recognise the labour of the village. It is an opportunity to showcase local agriculture or handicrafts; high-ranking guests watch as prizes are awarded, say, for the largest taro or an especially fine 'ie tōga. To coincide with the Talomua in Sāvaia there is a selective harvest of the lagoon's several hundred giant clams, which otherwise provide year-long ecotourism revenue and have made the village famous. The shell I was

grappling with came from a Talomua a few years prior, the most recent having been cancelled due to the tragic measles epidemic. Beginning in 2021, the Samoan Government has supported Talomua nation-wide on a village or district basis, as part of attempts to improve agricultural productivity, thus fostering rural development and long-term food security.[413]

The shells clattered around as we continued eastward around the south coast of Upolu, village land giving way to the remnants of a government eucalyptus plantation, and then into the national park. As Tusani alluded to, O le Pupu-Pu'e was never gazetted and offers no legal protection. Claimants have objected to its establishment since the beginning in 1978, both from the Siumu and Falealili sides. Today, a church and several fale encroach the eastern boundary. As it so happened, we were visiting Faumuinā's in-laws, some of whom were born within the national park.

Reflecting on Tusani's experience, I sought to tell a story about the messy realities of environmental management in the Pacific. I was moved by how other Pacific people met the challenges of the island environment and tired of treatments that glossed this hard work by suggesting that Indigenous environmentalism is somehow effortless or guaranteed by our cultural existence. I wanted to bring out the humour and ingenuity which is so characteristic of Pacific approaches. Ultimately, I wanted to show that as much as the story of Pacific environmentalism is that of a regional political movement and a shared ethic, it is also that of locality, of issues being worked through at community levels. For every Noumea Convention there is also a Talomua.

But by seeing the 'messy realities' and 'issues', however sympathetically, as inherent to island circumstance I had internalised a damaging discourse. The idea that Pacific Islands are

[413] Talomua have replaced previous nation or island-wide agricultural showcases. In the month of December 2021 at least four were held while Savaia's was held in March 2022. 'Stay Strong and Never Give Up – Savaia Lefaga Talomua Market Day Theme', *Samoa Global News*, March 20, 2022.

somehow unable to pursue self-determination or develop sustainably because of socio-economic constraints or ecological bounds is a falsehood, belying the fact that the region has been systematically underdeveloped by colonialisms. Islands have special characteristics and Indigenous systems that must be accounted for, but these are not limits to Pacific progress. They are its precondition.

This chapter explores conservation and forestry in Samoa as an entry point into broader discussions about Pacific environmental management and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. It looks at New Zealand aid to forestry and national parks in Samoa during the 1970s, showing how outside finance advanced notions of island limits or 'Samoan conditions' as a pretext for intervention. It moves to evaluate the failure of the project, showing how it did not promote economic self-sufficiency or environmental sustainability due to its disregard of Samoan institutions. As a result, I show how aid advanced a regime of replacement, characterised by extremity, incompatibility, and dependency.

Iosefatu Reti became a conduit for the hard lessons learnt during this period. The Samoan experience foreshadowed and inflected the governance debates that occurred in SPREP from 1984, and the move to make SPREP advance a 'Pacific way' for the environment. This meant questioning orthodoxies developed elsewhere and developing blended regional approaches. The chapter concludes with a discussion of reform within SPREP following the Third South Pacific National Parks and Reserves Conference of 1985. By virtue of it being held in Apia where Reti made the case for 'truly South Pacific' approaches to conservation, it stands out as a milestone for Pacific environmentalism.

My argument is that the Pacific demanded certain forms of environmental management, attuned to island ecologies and Pacific lifeways. But the key point, historically, is that there were different journeys to this understanding, a bifurcation that Pacific environmentalism has

come to reflect. Expatriates learnt to appreciate the futility of working against 'island limits', but often only after implementing a damaging regime that deepened dependency. Pacific people advanced their own 'ways', not only as the endogenous furthering of culture or politics, but as a direct response to participating in these unsuitable regimes. Both would highlight the particularity of Pacific environments and the incompatibility of imposed systems. They would frequently differ on solutions. The first section shows how New Zealand foresters and parks officials would adapt their models only slightly, trying instead to circumvent or override Samoan land tenure or climate. The last shows how academics strove to build scientific 'capacity' such that the region could undertake its own highly technical research in keeping with the UN approach to environmental management. These attempts roundly failed and provided further justification for 'Pacific' approaches. My suggestion, after Epeli Hau'ofa, is that the incompatibility posed by islands in a far sea shielded Pacific people from being absorbed into uncharitable and inflexible world systems long enough for them to adapt and challenge conditions, to maintain a sea of islands.[414] In my words, the limits others found in islands ensured Pacific ways.

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There were few better introductions to the imperatives of Pacific environmental management than Iosefatu Reti's time in Samoan forestry. In a field dominated by expatriates, Reti was the only graduate in his cohort to progress to a senior level.[415] He was therefore unusual amongst Samoans, and Pacific people, for his technical expertise and executive say during a period of industrial and environmental upheaval. In 1976, Samoan forestry was rocked by the announced departure of the American multinational, Potlatch Forests Inc., due to a declining resource. New Zealand aid offered a way forward with a homegrown industry, in tandem with initiatives

[414] Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994).
[415] The first graduate through the Philippines, Walter Treviranus, left for other opportunities in agriculture.

spurred by the previous year's South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves. Reti's role, tasked with implementing a programme of plantation forestry and national parks, was not only nationally significant but gave him unparalleled insight. He learnt the diverse value of the forestry resource to people, whether logged as a source of national export earnings and village income or maintained for traditional use and/or as a protected area. Moreover, as both aspects of the programme required the extensive leasing of land, work brought him to the people. By spending time working in his own village and others, Reti was able to see the shortcomings of conventional Western approaches to 'development' and 'conservation' when applied to the Samoan context. When Tusanilefaia'ao became the first Pacific person appointed as SPREP Coordinator in 1985, it was these lessons he drew on.

Others have pointed out that aid has played an outsized role in determining the nature of Pacific resource regimes.[416] Ties with Pacific development and purchasing power relative to Pacific nations' domestic earnings has meant that dependence on aid, especially bilateral aid, has brought infrastructure and any associated ethos on the terms of donors. Of course, this can be overstated, especially in respect to the village context and subsistence agriculture or fishery sectors. (Note the term 'primitive affluence' used to characterise many, especially Polynesian, economies is itself an acknowledgement of the limited ability of developmentalism to make meaningful impacts on the lives and minds of many Pacific people).[417] But in regards Samoa and industrial forestry, the above is certainly true.

[416] Jeremy Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism in the South Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1989).

[417] This was rephrased as 'affluent subsistence' by a World Bank mission to Samoa in 1978 and subsequently quoted in a New Zealand External Intelligence Bureau report of 1983. Townsend Swayze and Laurie Effron, *Western Samoa: Development Issues and Prospects* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1978); 'EIB – The Economy of Western Samoa, 31 May 1983', ABHS 6971 W4630/24, R17585832, ANZ; Donald Denoon, 'Pacific Edens? Myths and Realities of Primitive Affluence', in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, eds., D. Denoon, M. Meleisea, S. Firth, J. Linnekin, and K. Nero (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Between archives and academia, there is a solid body of literature concerning conservation and forestry, both in Samoa and the broader region, dating from this period. Written primarily by practitioners and anthropologists, these works deal extensively with issues of land tenure and deforestation.[418] Because most are practical or policy-oriented (some were written as part of SPREP's programme design phase) seldom are they archival and only recently have scholars faithfully described what exactly the "land" in land tenure or the "forest" in deforestation might mean to Samoans.[419] There is room for a modest historical contribution here, especially as regards the inner workings of the Potlatch withdrawal and the NZ bilateral aid programme and how these 'developments' were worked through by people like Reti. But beyond this, what the bigger picture afforded by history allows is the ability to see these regimes—national parks and forestry—together, as justifying and offsetting each other.

[418] On conservation, see for example: J.W. Fox and K. B. Cumberland, eds., *Western Samoa: Land, Life and Agriculture in Tropical Polynesia* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1962); C.W. Holloway and C.H. Floyd, *A National Parks System for Western Samoa* (Suva: UNDAT, 1975); C. D. Ollier, W.A. Whistler and A. B. Amerson, *O le Pupu-Pu'e National Park, Volume I, Main Report* (Suva: UNDAT, 1979); Ian Trotman, 'Western Samoa Launches a National Park Program', *Parks* 3, no. 4 (1979); Ned Hardie-Boys, 'The Rhetoric and Reality of Conservation Aid in Western Samoa' (unpublished Masters thesis, University of Canterbury, 1994). On forestry, see: Paul Shankman, 'Development, Sustainability, and the Deforestation of Samoa', *Pacific Studies* 22, no. 3 (1999); Paul Shankman, ''Notes on a Corporate 'Potlatch': The Lumber Industry in Samoa', in *The World as a Company Town: Multinational Corporations and Social Change*, eds., Ahamed and Elizabeth Idris-Soven, and Mary K. Vaughan (New York: Mouton, 1978); R. Gerard Ward, 'Deforestation in Western Samoa', *Pacific Viewpoint* 36, no. 1 (1995); D. Paulson, 'Forest Depletion, Village Agriculture and Social Change in Rural Western Samoa' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1992); Peter McKelvey, 'Samoan interlude – 36 years ago', *New Zealand Journal of Forestry* 47, no. 1 (2002); B. Everts, 'The Ministry of External Relations and Trade and Overseas Development Assistance in the Forestry Sector', *New Zealand Journal of Forestry* 33, no. 4 (1989); Iosefatu Reti, 'Forestry Development in Western Samoa', *New Zealand Journal of Forestry* 28, no. 3 (1983); Ian Trotman, 'Forest Management in Developing Countries – Experiences of a New Zealand Forester in Western Samoa', *New Zealand Journal of Forestry* 24, no. 2 (1979); On land tenure and environmentalism see: Eudene Luther, 'Development and Resistance: Rural Resistance to Economic Development Practices in Western Samoa' (unpublished PhD dissertation, McMaster University, 1995); Cluny Macpherson, 'The Road to Power is a Chainsaw: Village and Innovation in Western Samoa', *Pacific Studies* 11, no. 2 (1988); M.D. Olson, 'The Spirits of Vaoto: Changing Political Authority, Ideology, and Environmental Practice in Samoa' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1995); Paul Alan Cox and Tom Elmqvist, 'Ecocolonialism and Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Village Controlled Rainforest Preserves on Samoa', *Pacific Conservation Biology* 1, no. 1 (1994).

[419] See Sailiemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor, 'Oral Traditions, Cultural Significance of Storytelling and Samoan Understandings of Place or Fanua', *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 7, no. 1 (2020); Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni et al., eds., *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference* (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008).

Aso o le La'au, Arbor Day

In September 1978, twenty years before Savaia's first Talomua, a different village competition was planned for Samoa. Word came down from government that the pulenu'u, the village mayors, should prepare the people. On the first Friday of November, a public holiday, they would compete in Samoa's very first tree-planting contest.[420]

The prizes were fixed at WS$1500, $1000, and $750 for the top finishers, but one gets the sense that Ian Trotman met the rest of Aiolupo Palemene's words with disbelief. Cabinet had agreed to three weeks of wide-ranging conservation activities: the campaign team had planned a broadcast programme, public displays, songs, as well as a series of skits. There was even word that the Head of State, Malietoa Tanumafili II, might be prepared to offer the grounds behind his residence as a botanical garden.[421] But now, 'the pulenu'us had been exhorted to plant trees', Trotman wrote in the minutes of the campaign meeting, 'there had been no discussion of the broader conservation topics'.[422] The New Zealand forester reeled at the implications for his department. 'Planting material would be limited' and 'a competition based on tree planting could be unfair'. Trotman added that he, 'the Chief Forest Officer, will be away'. The pulenu'u would need to be re-briefed, perhaps some other form of competition, 'most conservation-minded village' maybe. 'The whole Conservation Campaign should be emphasised rather than Arbor Day', Trotman wrote, variously, a further three times.

As the meeting turned to strategies for 'balancing' the 'over predominant [focus on] trees and Arbor Day', Arthur Dahl, the SPC Regional Ecological Advisor, offered some suggestions from the region. In the Cook Islands, he pointed out, the focus was on involvement for the coming generations. Children would clean public areas and create gardens in schools. As part

[420] 'Minutes of Conservation Campaign Meeting', September 12, 1978, FD.94/3, ADC.
[421] 'Cabinet Submission – Botanical Garden Vailima', September 14, 1978, ADC.
[422] 'Minutes of Conservation Campaign Meeting', ADC.

of his current visit, which was the second of three to advise on the establishment of a parks and reserves programme, he would be happy to meet with school inspectors and prepare similar lesson plans. These would include class projects: the writing of essays; 'planting of useful or beautiful trees… [in public] or on land [villages] want to go back to forest'; the 'cleaning up [of] litter [in] the village stream, or along the beach or road'; as well as the collecting of 'traditional knowledge about the plants, animals, land and sea of Samoa'.[423] As well, Dahl suggested, he would contribute to the broadcast programme, letting Samoans know what had happened at the regional level since the Apia Convention meeting in 1976, and of the movements towards SPREP.

There is much more that could be said about the conservation campaign, especially given how unusual it is for (two) documentary accounts of such a meeting to survive. One could dwell on the differences in the remedies to the Arbor Day dilemma suggested by the Samoans and expatriates present. Indeed, another refocusing, perhaps prompted by Palemene and two other Samoans, Ugapo Ulale (Education) and Tuli Taogaga (Forestry), saw the suggested inclusion of the rural sector, women's committees, and churches.[424] Dahl, on the other hand, focussed on schools and would meet with the 'underwater club' and 'cub scouts' groups in the lead up to conservation week *(Fig. 17)*. Yet, while it is true that many expatriates operated in networks familiar to them or struggled to know Pacific people beyond their assigned 'counterparts', any focus on individuals must be placed within the (complex and shifting) ideas or structures they represented. Dahl, for his part was also at the time filming as part of an SPC environmental education project aimed at villages. He wrote that Samoa 'need[ed] a better word for Arbor Day', implying the concept ought to be indigenised.[425]

[423] 'Conservation Campaign Committee Meeting', ADC.
[424] During the meeting the expatriates either contributed more or had their thoughts recorded more completely.
[425] 'Teaching Conservation in Developing Nations… 12 Sept 1978', ADC.

I want to tease out the deep irony in Trotman's despair at Samoa's apparent misinterpretation of Arbor Day. It took place on November 3rd, 1978, under the theme 'tatou te mana'omia laupapa; fa'asao mo taeao' ('our need for wood; safeguard for tomorrow'), and so aptly reflected a regime of conservation and forestry as advanced by outside finance. To understand why, one must first grasp why Trotman was so worried about planting material. As head of the reafforestation programme, the logistics of growing and distributing trees had been his preoccupation since arriving in 1976. This was an urgent assignment given the stark reality facing Samoa's forests in the wake of Potlatch's departure.



Figure 17—Cub Scouts Field Trip to O le Pupu-Pu'e National Park, Samoa, September 1978. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*

Tatou te mana'omia laupapa: Our need for wood

When large scale forestry began at Asau in 1971, it did so despite conflicting wisdoms. Others have described how two studies, one completed under UN auspices and another by the University of Auckland, came to the same conclusion about the difficult topography and irregular density of the Samoan forest, except that the former recommended sustained-yield plantation forestry (to replenish an initial cut of the indigenous forest).[426] When a departing UNDP head, Harry Spence Jr, introduced the Samoan Prime Minister Hon. Fiamē Mata'afa Mulinu'u II to a Potlatch shareholding friend, he cited the study which outlined Samoa's excellent forestry potential (that he had commissioned). Spence ignored the warnings of the other, which stated that Samoan forests were 'inherently poor' and that 'unless rapid and coordinated preventative and remedial measures are taken', would likely 'disappear within two generations because of the ever-increasing demand for timber and cropland'.[427]

What followed was as short-lived as it was disastrous. Potlatch's entry to Samoa was beset by well-documented land tenure, infrastructure, and marketing issues. The firm struggled to lease the vast amounts of customary land they required, the harbour at Asau was delayed by shoddy foreign surveys, and Potlatch struggled to sell the timber it did cut.[428] When Potlatch announced its intention to withdraw in May of 1976, it cited unprofitability and losses of nearly US$3 million to date.

Now, New Zealand government archives reveal another scandal that doomed both the industry and Samoa's forests before the first tree fell. The scandal concerns a series of surveys the Samoan Government commissioned from FAO from 1968 to 1970, to use as the basis for its

[426] Shankman, 'Notes on a Corporate Potlatch'.
[427] V.D. Stace and A. Lauterbach, 'Economic Survey and Proposed Development Measures for Western Samoa'. *Legislative Assembly of Western Samoa, Sessional Paper* 24 (1963); Fox and Cumberland, eds., *Western Samoa: Land, Life and Agriculture.*
[428] E. M. Read and T.R. Cutler, 'Report on the Sawmilling Operations of Potlatch/Samoa Inc… April 1976', 'Economic Development and Technical Assistance – New Zealand Aid to Western Samoa – Forestry', ABHS 6942 W5399 75, 52/7/30 Part 1, R17731679, ANZ.

agreement with Potlatch. These gave similarly exaggerated accounts of Samoa's forests as that which recommended forestry in the first place. By relying on old and poorly executed aerial photographs, combined with inventories of only a small percentage of forest, the studies estimated the merchantable volume of timber on Savai'i at between 134–146 million cubic feet.[429] This led Potlatch to commission a sawmill capable of taking in 10 million cubic feet of logs per year.[430] Designed for conifers on the west coast of the United States, the US$5–7 million plant proved to be catastrophically oversized.

That is because, in reality, the resource was only one-fifth of that estimated. It is not clear precisely when this realisation dawned but Potlatch reported low yields as early as 1974 and by March 1975 a New Zealand consultant assessing the potential for New Zealand aid in reafforestation reported that 'it seems almost certain that the volume of wood available for cutting is considerably lower than was estimated originally and additional material will have to be found in 12–15 years'.[431] As concerns grew about the timber resource more scrutiny was placed on the economics of the Potlatch operation. An internal inventory completed by the company estimated the total resource at around 15–20% of the original figures. This was met with widespread and understandable shock.[432] Samoa approached the New Zealand aid programme for a more detailed forestry survey to corroborate the findings.

The sheer scale of the fault was confirmed by the later New Zealand survey which found that there was only 25 million cubic feet of saw logs economically available, with a further 9.7

[429] The 1968 survey used photography taken in 1954, while the 1970 survey used photography taken by the Australian firm Quasco which '[adopted] a poor flying pattern… resulting in insufficient overlap between flight lines'. Both used inventories of only 1–5% of the forest to ascertain typings, densities etc. 'Report on Western Samoa Forestry Aid Projects, A.K. Familton', R17731679, ANZ; 'Annual Report 1974 Forestry Division', R17731679, ANZ.
[430] Read and Cutler, 'Report on the Sawmilling Operations of Potlatch/Samoa Inc.', R17731679, ANZ.
[431] Dr A J McQuire, 'Reafforestation Project at Asau, Savai'i, Western Samoa', R17731679, ANZ.
[432] Letter from Familton to McDowell, August 8, 1975, R17731679, ANZ.

economically marginal.[433] This meant that even with Potlatch's hampered rate of 2 million cubic feet (or around 2,000 acres of forest felled) the cut was grossly unsustainable.[434] This is especially given that Potlatch were not the only forest users and an estimated further 2,000–3,000 acres per year was being converted by villages for agriculture—a process itself accelerated by new roads, land commodification, chainsaws and the proliferation of forestry techniques *(Fig. 18).*[435] It became clear that the reafforestation programme, designed for the old inventory, was not keeping up. In short, it is likely that when Potlatch made the final decision in May 1976 to withdraw by the middle of 1977, it was partly because there was a disincentive in making the firm profitable if it simply meant exceeding supply in the short term.[436] The undredged harbour passage and year's worth of timber lying unsold in the yard marked an economic and logistical disaster, while the 7000 acres of logged over land in the hills of Savai'i left "currently unproductive" hinted at the social and ecological tragedy *(Fig. 19).*[437]

Samoa was committed to forestry and would buy the sawmill off Potlatch 'for a song', but the knowledge that the entirety of the indigenous forest could be logged out within a decade required extreme action.[438] New Zealand, which had only been involved tangentially—through bilateral aid for a wood treatment plant, coconut stem utilisation and reafforestation feasibility—saw a chance to reorient the industry. In a meeting with the new Prime Minister

[433] 'Proposal for Grant Assistance… Part payment for Western Samoa Government shares in Samoan forest Products Limited', 'Economic Development and Technical Assistance – New Zealand Aid to Western Samoa – Forestry', ABHS6942 W5399 75, 52/7/30, Part 2, R17731680, ANZ.
[434] 'Annual Report 1974 Forestry Division', R17731680, ANZ.
[435] 'New Zealand Aid Mission 19 February 1975', R17731679, ANZ; 'K.C. Tolley… 1st-One-Monthly-Report', R17731679, ANZ.
[436] A fuller summary is presented in 'Proposal for Grant Assistance… Part Payment for Western Samoa Government Shares in Samoan Forest Products Limited', R17731680, ANZ. Potlatch had made initial soundings in October of 1975, but these were not final and some speculated it was a move to renegotiate their position. First serious consideration of a Samoan takeover of the operation began in December 1975. 'K.C. Tolley 2nd-One-Monthly-Report', R17731679, ANZ; Telegram from Apia to Wellington, December 4th, 1975, R17731679, ANZ.
[437] 'BAP Forestry Assistance to Western Samoa Visit by A.K. Familton, 17–21 May 1976', R17731680, ANZ.
[438] Alistair Hutchison, personal correspondence, September 2019; The figure was US$1.75 million, payable over 5 years. Samoa entered into partnership with an Australian company Standard Sawmilling, with the government holding an 80% stake. 'Govt. Buts Potlatch Mill', *Samoa Times,* April 1, 1977.

Hon. Tupuola Efi in May 1976 a New Zealand delegation of Foreign Affairs and Forestry proposed a 'crash afforestation programme', or the rapid scaling of plantation forests of fast-growing exotic hardwoods.[439] This would ensure break-even supply to Samoa's new venture if (or when) the indigenous resource was extinguished. Importantly, the expanded programme was 'regarded as an all-or-nothing affair' by the New Zealand Forestry Service and Foreign Affairs, who deemed that 'unless there is what amounts to a New Zealand take-over of the Western Samoa Forest Service for a limited period', the decline of forestry in Samoa would be 'virtually irrevocable'.[440]

The New Zealand intervention began in November 1976 with a goal to replant at least 1000 acres of forest per annum. This was an ambitious target, given that from 1972–1976, the *total area* planted was approximately 1,937 acres, not accounting for that lost to fire or weeds.

Sure enough, the new-look Samoan Forestry Service ran headlong into three major and longstanding challenges, the first of which was organisation. Led by Ian Trotman, three New Zealand foresters took over a department comprising two dozen permanent Samoan foresters and a further one hundred and fifty casual staff, replacing the UNDP/FAO team that had operated for the prior decade. Judging themselves practical men (or at least more so than those they replaced), a preliminary study spoke boldly of '[engendering] a sense of direction', '[improving] morale' and addressing difficulties '[resulting] from a complete lack of appreciation of administrative controls' in those senior staff 'taking life easy and supervising the supervisors without increasing mental activity'.[441] After three months on the job, however, the New Zealanders' early experience shows they were either unprepared for, or

[439] 'Western Samoa Bilateral Aid Programme Forestry, Notes of a Discussion Held 20 May 1976', R17731679, ANZ.
[440] Telegram from Wellington to Apia, April 23, 1976, R17731679, ANZ.
[441] 'Confidential Annex to Report… Trotman October 1976', R17731680, ANZ.

underestimated, what they referred to euphemistically as 'Samoan conditions'.[442] Trotman's first report refers to 'much time spent on…[x,y,z]'—quite deliberately, the reader is told—because 'everything takes many times longer and much more effort'.[443] This is not to dismiss the challenge of adjusting to tropical weather and unfamiliar living arrangements, or contending with the frequent breakdowns, staffing shortages and supply delays that fill the quarterly reports. Rather it is to point out that the New Zealanders' *own targets*, set by an apparent necessity, may have been unrealistic given their inability to influence things Samoan. This was especially pronounced when it came to the second and third issues, which related directly to the Samoa's fa'amatai system and environment.

Scaling forestry was impossible without the participation of matai, the village chiefs. Bluntly, without land and labour for reafforestation, forestry would have no future irrespective of personnel and the remaining resource. The government understood this and had negotiated with matai around Asau since before Potlatch's arrival. Talks had stalled for economic and interpersonal reasons.[444] Under the original agreement the Samoan government had taken responsibility for reafforesting cut-over land. But while Potlatch could pay villages relatively high timber royalties and fees to log customary lands, the Samoan government struggled to match those rates in the long-term leases required for reafforestation. Many villages chose instead to convert logged land to agriculture or leave it fallow *(Fig. 20)*. As a result, planting had proceeded on government-owned land, but this was in short supply with only enough available for a further two years' work. New, more enticing terms were required and approaching matai around Asau with them became the preoccupation from late 1976. If anything, the addition of the New Zealanders into these negotiations confused matters. Trotman

[442] 'Quarterly Report: I G Trotman, 31 March 1977', 'Economic Development and Technical Assistance – New Zealand Aid to Western Samoa – Forestry', ABHS6942 W5399 75, 52/7/30 Part 3, R17731681, ANZ.
[443] 'Quarterly Report: I G Trotman, 31 March 1977', R17731681, ANZ.
[444] There was a general distrust of central government on the question of land, aggravated by interpersonal disputes between the new Prime Minister, Tupuola Efi and a key matai and former cabinet minister, Polataivao Fosi Schmidt. 'Report on Western Samoa Forestry Aid Projects, A.K. Famillton', R17731679, ANZ.

personally believed the new terms were too generous (at least upfront) and that better explanation of forestry's benefits might be convincing enough. Most pointedly, in a case of good intentions meeting cultural incompetency, when a deal appeared to be struck by verbal agreement between the Prime Minister, his cabinet, and the matai of A'opo, Trotman caused a major diplomatic fracas. He wrote directly to New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs implying the deal was improper under Samoa's own laws, was no longer accepted by the village, and that he would not proceed with replanting until a written contract was signed (lest New Zealand aid be implicated). Having already raised the issue with the Director of Agriculture, Tau'ili'ili Uili Meredith, he now copied his superior into correspondence that ended with the suggestion that Trotman may be 'placed in the position of having to recommend the withdrawal of one or both of the [seconded NZ] officers'.[445] This was a serious escalation, resulting in Trotman being publicly rebuffed by both of his masters and ordered to replant. Tau'ili'ili, for his part, '[chose] to ignore the partial threat in [the] last paragraph'.[446] Whether Trotman believed he was doing his job or doing right, it was clear that authority—whether governmental, customary, or through expertise—was flowing along lines he saw very differently.

The last issue was the trees themselves, or rather the species being selected. Samoa needed a crop that would supply both domestic and export markets in just over a decade. The preference prior had been for the slow(er) growing, high value exotics known to expatriate advisors; in 1974, the 560 acres reafforested at Asau were done so with mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*), teak (*Tectona grandis*), and toona (*Toona ciliata*) *(Fig. 21)*.[447] But as supply became the major issue the following year, and with mahogany and toona suffering from ambrosia beetle and fungal disease, FAO silviculturist Robert Fenton 'recommended that fast-

[445] Letter from Chief Forest Officer to NZ High Commissioner, May 9, 1977, R17731681, ANZ.
[446] Letter from Director of Agriculture to Chief Forest Officer, May 13, 1977, R17731681, ANZ.
[447] 'Annual Report 1974 Forestry Division', R17731679, ANZ.

growing utility hardwoods comprise 60–80% of the future plantations'.[448] Eucalyptus' rapid growth was second to none, letting it compete against the fue saina or mile-a-minute (*Mikania micrantha*), and giving returns to villages who would not wait the twenty-plus-years required elsewise.[449] A variety, *Eucalyptus deglupta*, was suggested as an all-purpose wood suitable for the domestic market, with mahogany for export to make up the balance. Ian Trotman's visit to Australia, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands in mid-1977 confirmed *Eucalyptus deglupta* as 'the major, if not exclusive, species for reafforestation', with the rough estimate that to sustain the mill's minimum requirements, 15,000–20,000 acres ought to be planted.[450]

By the end of 1977, conditions, Samoan or otherwise, worsened when the year's total planting reached only 600 acres, well short of 1000-acre target (and even the 1975 high of 670 acres prior to New Zealand involvement). [451] A lack of experienced staff, vehicle breakdowns, chainsaw shortages, and land scarcity were blamed. Optimistically, Trotman suggested the trajectory was clear,

> After a year's experience we now have a much better appreciation of the requirements for this major project on which the future of the major forest industry depends… The main features of which are that planting targets over the last three years have only been 50–60% achieved, hence there is a backlog to catch up… it is also necessary to revise the targets upwards… the net result of all this is that many tens of thousands more trees are required than any time in the past which creates compounding logistic problems from seed supply, nursery, management to establishment and tending. Essentially there appears a need for an increase in scale over past years of about five-fold. [452]

This is to say that when Iosefatu Reti returned from the University of the Philippines in late 1976 as Samoa's new Silvicultural Research Officer, he rejoined a department somewhere between disarray, desperation, and delusion. As a senior Samoan forester he would prove an

[448] Robert Fenton, *Forest Economics in Western Samoa* (Rome: FAO, 1975).
[449] Letter to Trotman from Versteeg, February 20, 1978, 'Economic Development and Technical Assistance – New Zealand Aid to Western Samoa – Forestry', ABHS6942 W5399 75, 52/7/30 Part 6, R17731727, ANZ.
[450] Ian Trotman, 'Report on an Overseas Study Tour… April 1977', R17731681, ANZ.
[451] 'Preliminary Proposals for NZ Aid to the Forestry Project for 1978–1979', 'Economic Development and Technical Assistance – New Zealand Aid to Western Samoa – Forestry', ABHS6942 W5399 75, 52/7/30 Part 5, R17731726, ANZ.
[452] 'Preliminary Proposals for NZ Aid to the Forestry Project for 1978–1979', R17731726, ANZ.

indispensable intermediary, going between expatriate supervisors and junior field staff, and doing the vital cultural work of translation and liaison during village negotiations. If there were grounds for Trotman's optimism, they lay in A'opo where a breakthrough with matai in mid-1977 secured land to expand the planting programme.



Figure 18– New logging roads and unfelled trees deemed uneconomic or dangerous, "Savai'i, including logging damage", 1974. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*



Figure 19—Stills from 'Story of an Island: Managing your Island Environment', showing logging and sawmill at Asau, with potentially unsold timber in foreground. *SPC, 1980, dir. Arthur Dahl.*



Figure 20— "Savaii deforestation and cultivation" – cutover land planted with crops or left to fallow, rather than reafforested, 1974. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*



Figure 21—"Tree nursery for reforestation on Savaii, Samoa" – plantation trials of exotic species, 1974. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*

Fa'asao mo taeao: Safeguard for tomorrow

As the forestry division struggled with planting, restructure brought an outlet. In mid-1977, Forestry assumed responsibility for Samoa's fledgling national parks programme. This move, which might appear counterintuitive given forestry is the practice of felling trees, made sense given the department was now in effect a reafforestation service engaged at the village level with land leasing.[453] It was also consistent with New Zealand's aid philosophy and the developmental beliefs of Ian Trotman, who was instrumental in the move and reported back that,

> Most countries as they develop follow a cycle of clearing land for agriculture. As the forest becomes short reserves are made including large national parks often largely forested, and then there are moves to artificially re-establish indigenous species. The same cycle is occurring in Samoa with proposals to reserve substantial areas for national park.[454]

[453] 'Quarterly Report: I G Trotman, 31 March 1977', R17731681, ANZ.
[454] 'Report on Forestry in Western Samoa, October 1978', R17731680, ANZ.

In fact, national parks and reserves had germinated in Samoa from 1958 at least, but with renewed interest since 1972.[455] Chapters I and II describe how Samoa took up the parks concept enthusiastically with IUCN backing: surveying potential sites, passing supporting legislation and playing host to the 1976 Apia Convention meeting and Second Symposium. The impulse was not only to offset the effects of a development trajectory, as Trotman supposed, but rather in accordance with IUCN's older preservationist and scientific values. When it came time to declare Samoa's first national park, O le Pupu-Pu'e in 1978, these competing contexts became important, determining the way the parks system would develop and was justified.

Stretching from forested mountains to the sheer sea cliffs on the south coast of Upolu, O le Pupu-Pu'e National Park was the pride of Samoa's new conservation estate. It was lauded internationally for encompassing a sweeping range of representative ecosystems and native habitats, with striking vistas over a churning ocean. In their jubilation, many labelled it the Pacific's first national park (some still and incorrectly do). It joined the nearby Togitogiga Recreational Reserve centred on the waterfalls of the Mataloa river and the Stevenson Memorial Reserve–Mt Vaea Scenic Reserve on the slopes surrounding Robert Louis Stevenson's tomb *(Figs. 22 & 23)*. From this base, Trotman devised an expansion plan. Speaking of the 'sheer inertia' of a 'population not long out of the shifting cultivation stage and consequently with little interest in conservation issues', Trotman's strategy was to first 'improve the maintenance of a few existing reserves'.[456] He would then propose new 'historical and cultural reserves which are likely to arouse more emotional accord', while establishing 'ecological' and 'tourist' reserves on government land as demonstrations.[457] For example, the Fale o le Mau in Vaimoso, the distinctive octagonal headquarters of Samoa's independence

[455] Holloway and Floyd, *A National Parks System for Western Samoa.*
[456] Letter from Trotman to Lucas, June 28, 1977, 'South Pacific Conference National Parks 1974', AAUM W4043 59, ENV 7/1/2 Part 1, R1281792, ANZ.
[457] Trotman to Lucas, June 28, 1977, R1281792, ANZ.

movement, could be a historic reserve. Palolo Deep, a lagoon sunk into coral reef flats near Apia might be a marine reserve and tourist destination *(Fig. 24)*. Similarly, the Pulemelei star mound in Palauli would become an archaeological reserve, while Lake Lanoto'o, an upland crater lake and wetland on Upolu, another ecological reserve or national park.

The new parks authority started modestly in their management. Superintendent Tuli Taogaga travelled to New Zealand for a training course, leaving Kalati Poai to upgrade the track to Mt Vaea while Iosefatu Reti met with adjoining villages aiming 'to prevent further clearance of the reserve for gardens'.[458] An office-bound Trotman tussled with paperwork to fund the proposed parks network. Outreach to international donors resulted in what were jokingly called 'look-and-see' assignments. The UNDAT office sent a team to catalogue O le Pupu-Pu'e. SPC's Arthur Dahl scheduled three trips as part of the regional programme and to advise on Palolo Deep in line with his coral expertise. New Zealand's Bing Lucas, Deputy Director General of Lands and a friend of Trotman, facilitated a visit to help with applications to NZ's aid programme and IUCN. A second series of reports followed.

'The major stumbling block', as Trotman understood it, was land tenure and money. [459] He wrote to Bing Lucas that even if his staffing issues and the 'inertia' could be overcome, the National Parks and Reserves Act 1974 drafted by IUCN required reserves to be in public (i.e., government) ownership. In Samoa, government land was in short supply, accounting for only a fifth of the total land area and subject to competing uses. This was something Trotman understood only too well through forestry. It meant that of the proposals above, only Palolo Deep could be added to the network, seeing as the area below the high tide line was technically government land. Discussions took place between Trotman and the Attorney General about altering the law to allow private or customary land to be designated as protected areas, but legal

[458] 'Forestry Division Quarterly Report, 26 April 1978', R17731727, ANZ.
[459] Trotman to Lucas, June 28, 1977, R1281792, ANZ.

delays meant negotiations with Vaimoso to reserve the Fale o le Mau came to nothing.[460] A persistent Trotman asked Lucas if he had any philanthropic contacts for the purchase or long-term leasing of customary land.

This was necessary because while IUCN and SPC were advocates of the reserves concept, they considered themselves 'catalytic' and 'advisory' bodies.[461] They could not fund large-scale technical assistance or the purchase of national parks and referred such requests to UN agencies or private foundations. Underlying this approach was a belief, itself shifting, about the purpose of protected areas. Generally, there was a move away from scenery preservation, endangered species, and scientific research as embodied by the 'national parks ideal' to the notion of 'conservation-as-development'. By 1980, this view was enshrined in the 'World Conservation Strategy' as adopted by IUCN, UNEP, WWF, FAO, and UNESCO, which popularised the notion of 'sustainable development'.[462] These bodies still advocated protected areas' value but would increasingly highlight their tourist potential or place within a broader system of rational resource use. The implication was that if additional funds could not be found, then nations like Samoa might be educated to "invest" themselves. Until then, money would be allocated for training and consultancies.

New Zealand was more circumspect still. 'The main objective of the New Zealand aid programme in the Pacific', a foreign affairs memo stated bluntly, 'is to assist the process of economic growth and development'. Specifically, this entailed 'developing the limited resources (agriculture, fisheries, forestry) with a view to long term exports and import

[460] 'Forestry Division Quarterly Report, 26 April 1978', R17731727, ANZ.
[461] Frank G Nicholls, 'International Cooperation and Involvement', in *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves, 24–27 February* (Wellington: Department of Lands and Survey, 1975).
[462] P.H.C Lucas, Sylvanus Gorio, and Kalati Poai, *Parks and Reserves in the South Pacific, SPREP Topic Review No.2* (Noumea: SPC, 1981).

substitution'.[463] Development in this sense was narrowly conceived, economic, and implicitly aimed at 'fostering political stability' and a 'generally favourable outlook towards the Western Alliance'. It manifested as policy insofar as 'domestic harmony [was] directly dependent on local job creation and improved quality of life for [Pacific] people'.[464] At times these closeted motivations were incongruent with the other, publicised principles of the aid programme, namely that 'priorities should be determined by recipient governments', which allowed for "non-productive" cultural or sporting initiatives for example.[465] In this vein, New Zealand had encouraged Pacific nations to apply for conservation funding at the 1975 National Parks Conference in Wellington.[466] However, with a global recession and change of government, green ambivalence was on the rise. When Trotman approached Foreign Affairs for an expansion of forestry funding into national parks he was 'told NZ was only interested in supporting more productive enterprises'.[467]

[463] 'ANZUS Council… Aid to the South Pacific', 'South Pacific Regional Environment', AAUM W4043 189, INT 7/3 Part 1, R1283019, ANZ.
[464] 'ANZUS Council… Aid to the South Pacific', R1283019, ANZ.
[465] 'Statement by Hon. Matiu Rata… Aid Funds for Conservation', 'Pacific Islands: Social Affairs – South Pacific Conference on National Parks', ABHS W4627 950 4200, 301/6/9 Part 1, R20765455, ANZ.
[466] In a speech written by Ken Piddington, then in Foreign Affairs, Hon. Matiu Rata affirmed that 'as far as conservation is concerned, New Zealand is ready to assist to the extent that governments feel that this should be given urgent attention', 'Statement by Hon. Matiu Rata… Aid Funds for Conservation', R20765455, ANZ; Letter from Coad to Secretary of Foreign Affairs, February 20, 1979, 'National Parks – International Relations – South Pacific Conference On NP's', AANS 7613 W5491 490, NP 1/14/9 Part 2, R16130875, ANZ.
[467] Lucas shared Trotman's frustration with the apportioning of aid, championing the issue for years and probing the logic of overseas development assistance. He wrote to Trotman in 1977 that 'for some strange reason there seems to be no recognition in the Pacific Aid Section [that] conservation is an integral part of development and can itself lead to employment and economic benefits quite apart from its contribution to society's well-being'. Letter from Lucas to Trotman, July 12, 1977, 'South Pacific Conference National Parks 1974', AAUM W4043 59, ENV 7/1/2 Part 1, R1281792, ANZ. After Lucas had his own regional national parks training programme cancelled prior to the Second National Parks Conference, he followed up with Foreign Affairs in 1979, asking for clarification and citing Rata's 1975 address. The response was that although the 'policy had not changed, [owing to] severe financial restraints… that more requests for assistance in the South Pacific had been declined than had been approved'. 'Conservation Assistance South Pacific', 'National Parks – International Relations – South Pacific Conference On NP's', AANS 7613 W5491 490, NP 1/14/9 Part 2, R16130875, ANZ. Two years later, when it came to the Conference's third iteration and as if to rub salt in the wound, MFA correspondence opened with, 'Pacific Island governments are having to make hard choices about how to use the limited funds available. For my part I would not encourage them to channel aid funds in this direction. However, it will be up to them to decide whether or not they attach sufficient priority...' Letter from Talboys to Lucas, November 6, 1981, R16130875, ANZ.

The culmination of the New Zealand resource regime came in 1979. While Trotman was unable to secure funding to expand Samoa's parks network, Bing Lucas organised joint IUCN and NZ Lands and Survey funding for a parks official, Rex Mossman, who would advise on a management plan for O le Pupu-Pu'e and provide counterpart training. His tenure through till 1981 marked the high point of NZ involvement in Samoan conservation, with the unit operating a budget as high as WS$66,000 and employing 30 staff.[468]

Returning to Arbor Day, the shortcomings of forestry and conservation as determined by outside finance become clear. When Malietoa Tanumafili II stood up to declare the Vailima Botanical Garden the newest addition to the conservation estate, there was a reason the land surrounded the Head of State's residence. There was a reason Trotman was so concerned about who was planting the trees. The irony of Arbor Day was that expatriates criticised Samoans for missing the point, for taking it too literally, while they applied incredibly rigid conservation initiatives themselves. The deeper note is that the New Zealanders misunderstood how both environmental problems and responses had been conditioned by outside interference, and that conservation based solely on planting trees was not only grimly fitting but increasingly necessary. Arbor Day and national parks had bypassed Samoan institutions and were ineffective as a result, but because they did not stop undesired change they became more relevant in a perverse self-fulfilling prophecy.

What I want to make clear, is that this was a bipolar and extreme resource regime, the recurring result of past aid constraining present options. Forestry had developed as a hybrid of Samoan ownership, New Zealand expertise, Australian management, and American infrastructure. To cater for a grossly oversized mill, native forests were replaced with exotic plantations.

[468] 'Western Samoa Country Review', *Proceedings of the Third South Pacific National Parks and Reserves Conference and Ministerial Meeting* (Noumea: SPC, 1985).

Meanwhile, to offset the damage, areas were designated as reserves but in ways consistent with preservationist modes that locked up land and catered for alien sensibilities.

But as much as the regime was a hangover, outmoded and harsh, the problem was not extremity alone. Rather, it was the incompatibility that asserting such extremity caused. The regime simply did not work, or work sustainably, in a Samoan context. With gum trees in the ground and parks declared, the New Zealand takeover turned hand-over and the scale of the regime's inefficiencies became clear. Iosefatu Reti took over as Chief Forestry Officer in 1980. The following passages showcase his testimony, which speaks both to the realities of *Pacific* environmental management and to its imperative. The only effective regime was that which worked through Samoan institutions and with the island environment, rather than seeing them as problems to circumvent or overcome.

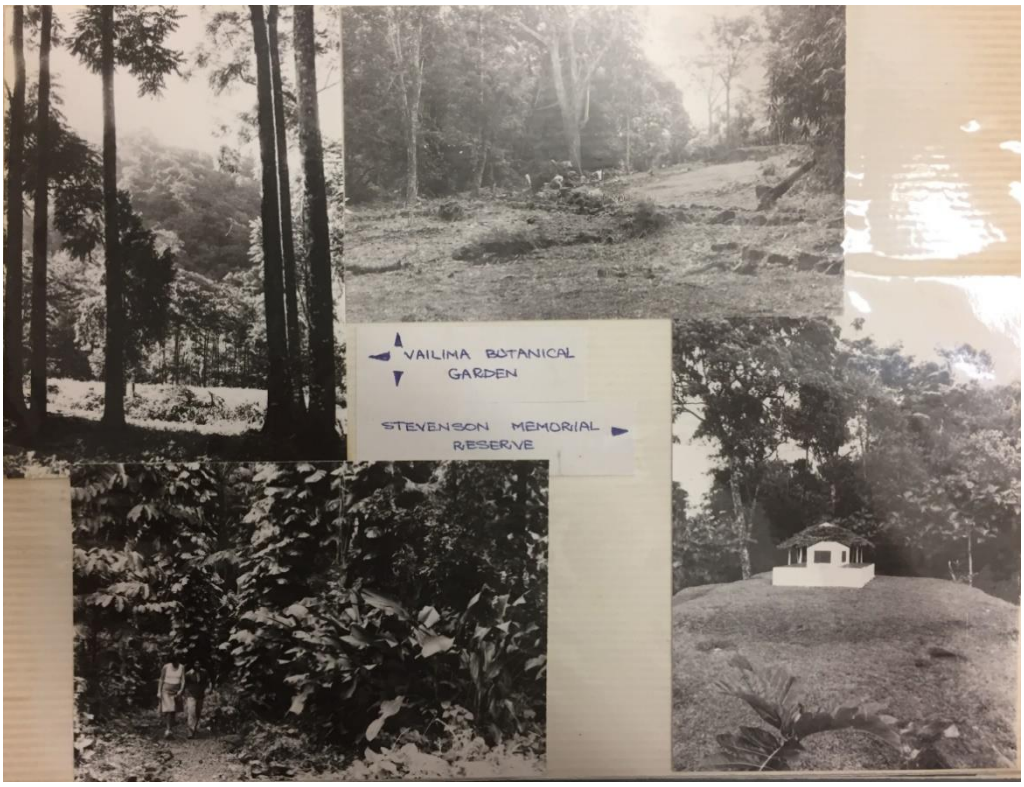


Figure 22—Vailima Botanical Garden and Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial Reserve showing amenities and track upgrades. Rex Mossman, *'Management plan for the O le Pupu-Pu'e National Park'* (Apia: Western Samoa Department of Agriculture and Forest, 1981).



Figure 23—O le Pupu-Pu'e visitor fale construction and Togitogiga Recreation Reserve showing signage, c.1980. Rex Mossman, *Management plan*.



Figure 24—Palolo Deep Marine Reserve showing signage, coral and view over Apia. Rex Mossman, *Management plan*.



Figure 25— 'Samoa Forestry - Checking grade out-turn on the first milling of Eucalyptus deglupta at Vailima are timber utilisation advisor Tony Haslett and research assistant Samuelu Sesega', 1981. *R23578755, ANZ.*



Figure 26—'Samoa Forestry - Labourers - men and women - heading out for a day's work on the Asau reforestation scheme', c.1981–1985. *R23578767, ANZ.*



Figure 27—'Women working in the Salelologa nursery among eucalypt and mahogany seedlings', c.1984. *R23578758, ANZ.*

A Regime of Replacement

The milling of the first trials of *Eucalyptus deglupta* in 1981 should have ushered in a new era for forestry in Samoa *(Fig. 25)*. A partnership between the governments of Samoa and New Zealand with the Asian Development Bank saw plans to expand reafforestation once more, and while the planting programme had not reached Trotman's hopeful goal, over 7000 acres of plantation forest now clothed cut-over land.[469] In 1983, Reti wrote enthusiastically of forestry's impact, suggesting it had met domestic demand for timber and thus partially alleviated deforestation and balanced import payments.[470] The change was especially evident in areas of Western Savai'i, with local employment halting urban drift *(Figs. 26 & 27)*. The best was yet to come, Reti suggested, with full benefits to flow over the next decade.

Instead, within two years forestry toppled into a dual economic and ecological crisis from which it would never recover. The government mill, Samoa Forest Products, rusted into unprofitability as equipment aged. By 1989 losses would total WS$2.5 million as SFP's market share plummeted from monopoly to less than half of sawn timber sales.[471] Five private sector mills sprung up to meet demand but relied on lower quality products with unmonitored standards sourced from native forests. As prices fell 10% consumer satisfaction belied an industry with an uncertain future.

That is because underwriting the red ink was an even more fundamental threat. Reti describes the early portents and nadir of Samoan forestry matter-of-factly,

[469] Reti, 'Forestry Development in Western Samoa'.
[470] While most plantation forests had not yet reached maturity, the fuller utilisation of the indigenous resource was a net positive and contrasted with agricultural clearing which was deemed haphazard and had less value added. Reti, 'Forestry Development in Western Samoa'.
[471] A. J. Ogle, *Forestry Development in Western Samoa: Identification of Sectoral Issues and Development* (Auckland: Groome Poyry, 1989).

> We had a big reafforestation programme going at that time. Our target was to replant 1000 acres of land per year, funded by New Zealand. So, we entered into agreement with six or seven different villages…
>
> We were selecting species based on [them being] fast-growing because the weeds grow a lot faster. Mile-a-minute [Mikania micrantha] in those days… So that's why we selected eucalyptus, [but] some years later we found out that although eucalyptus can grow very fast it also has this decay inside. The wood is not good for much except some furniture making and so forth.
>
> After I left, the government decided to hand back the leases to the villages for them to manage. And then cyclones [Ofa (1990) and Val (1991)] came and a lot of the forest was destroyed and damaged. But I see when I drive around Savai'i, I can still see some remnants of the forest that was planted: like at Puapua; Asau right up at Masamasa, on the Cornwall Estate; there's some at Togitogiga; Gataivai; there was some planting at Lefaga, on the way down to Matareva, you can still see some mahogany and eucalyptus…[472]

After two decades, plantation forestry had met the hard limits of the Samoan environment. Ofa and Val destroyed three quarters of a eucalyptus forest already beset by the fungal disease known as 'heart rot' *(Fig. 28)*.[473]

Even salvage efforts were stymied, Reti's colleague Samuelu Sesega wrote, '[as] such was the extent of the devastation that many salvageable logs were destroyed by termites and other pests before processing could be organized'.[474] It was a devastating blow, made bitter by the fact that mature native forest suffered a comparatively low tree mortality of around thirty percent after each of the cyclones.[475] New Zealand phased out its reafforestation assistance shortly after, citing the ongoing risk of cyclones. At the turn of the century, all but two of Samoa's sawmills ground to a halt as the merchantable indigenous forest dwindled further, leading to a chronic reliance on timber imports. Total sawn timber production dipped from an estimated 6,358 m^3 in 2002 to less than 1000m^3 in 2007, while imports from New Zealand rose nearly fourfold over this period to 20,665 m^3 (NZ$8.8 million).[476]

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[472] Iosefatu Reti, interview with the author, February 15, 2020.
[473] Sam Sesega, *Samoa Forestry Outlook Study* (Bangkok: FAO, 2009).
[474] Sesega, *Samoa Forestry*, 13.
[475] Thomas Elmqvist, William E. Rainey, Elizabeth D. Pierson, and Paul A. Cox. 'Effects of Tropical Cyclones Ofa and Val on the Structure of a Samoan Lowland Rain Forest', *Biotropica* 26, no. 4 (1994), 384–91.
[476] This accounted for 95% of imported timber. Sesega, *Samoa Forestry*, 17–21. To give some perspective, at its peak Potlatch produced between 23,000–28,000 m^3 per year. Before the cyclones, in 1988, production was

However, and to peddle the obvious metaphors, if the industry had rot at its heart, some saw the storm coming. In 1985, Reti told New Zealand conservationists privately his concern at the ecological damage their nation's development assistance had caused, reiterating the ongoing frustration at the lack of environmental impact assessment and the 'productive development' criteria for aid.[477] (Reti never heard the somewhat cynical response from Foreign Affairs that Pacific Islanders 'selected their own aid projects' and that environmental impact assessments would be 'moral imperialism').[478] Further entreaties by Reti and other Pacific environmentalists meant that by 1989, a former diplomat and head of New Zealand's Department of Conservation, David McDowell, wrote a damning reflection on the matter,

> We are sitting on a number of timebombs around the region. Probably the closest to detonation is our aid involvement over nearly two decades in the forest industries of Western Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. I am only too well aware personally of our involvement: much of it was initiated during the time of the Third Labour Government in the first half of the seventies when I was running our fast expanding aid programme. We went into this work with the best of motives… and much of what we did was good: the success of the exotic Pinus caribbea forests in Fiji is probably why there remains much indigenous forest at all in that group.
>
> But the fact remains that the single greatest ecological disaster in the Pacific at this time is the large scale exploitation of its forest resources by outside countries. The rate of extraction is not sustainable: reforestation programmes are minimal… Because New Zealand has been so heavily involved in giving forestry advice over the years we will often be blamed: the palagis are an easy target.
>
> The backlash has already begun… there [are] some consistent themes. Our people understand temperate plantation forests, not tropical indigenous forests. They rely too much on introducing known exotic species rather than researching indigenous species. They are brought up in a commercial forestry atmosphere, where the non-commercial Pacific cultural and economic values of forests—sources of non-wood house-building materials, fuel, food, herbs, medicines—are not taken into account. They do not understand Pacific landholding systems. And so on… There is a need for MERT [Ministry of External Relations and Trade], DoC [Department of Conservation] and Ministry of Forests to have a hard look…[479]

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estimated at 11,620 m^3, with imports accounting for only 5% of domestic demand. Trotman, 'Experiences of a New Zealander Forester in Western Samoa', 254; Ogle, *Forestry Development*, 10.

[477] 'NZ/IUCN Meeting Notes', August 21, 1985, 'International Affairs: South Pacific Commission – Work Programme – SPREP', ABHS950 W4627 2833, 116/10/8 Part 1, R20753435, ANZ.

[478] 'NZ/IUCN Meeting Notes', R20753435, ANZ.

[479] Letter from CEO Department of Conservation to Minister of Conservation, September 20, 1989, 'South Pacific Commission: 2nd Meeting of SPREP Steering Committee Port Vila 13–14 September 1989', ABHS6971 W4630 80, R17586792, ANZ; David McDowell, personal correspondence, October 13, 2022.

An environmental impact assessment of New Zealand's forestry project in Samoa in the same year bore out McDowell's criticisms. While acknowledging the project's role in (potentially and partially) alleviating deforestation by shoring up domestic timber supply, the assessment concluded that aid had '[done] nothing for the sustainability of an *indigenous resource*'.[480] Expatriates' reliance on eucalyptus monoculture hastened, or in some cases initiated, the destruction of tropical lowland rainforest, an ecosystem prized culturally and internationally significant for biodiversity. This is not to be nativist, nor to exaggerate the remedial effect of intensive plantation forestry had it focused on Samoan trees. Rather it is to point out that New Zealand aid facilitated a regime of replacement, one that saw vestigial populations of Samoan forest as an inevitability.

Early archival material supplements these later findings, showing how profit motives overrode the risk and damage plantations presented. Both the original UNDP/FAO team and their NZ successors were aware of the disease potential amongst eucalyptus and had at times trialled endemic species like ifilele (*Intsia bijuga*, coveted for kava bowls) and malili (*Terminalia richii*, an all-purpose timber also used for canoes), as well as naturalised trees such as poumuli (*Fluegga flexuosa*, widely used for fale poles).[481] Under urgency and in deference to international expertise, any initial findings fell by the way.

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[480] G. N. Park, *Report of a Visit to Evaluate the Environmental Impact of the Forestry Development Project* (Wellington: MERT, 1990), 1–3.

[481] FAO's 1973 trials of indigenous species were (somewhat ironically) destroyed by a fire carried by teak leaves and logging slash. Tolley 2nd Monthly Report', R17731679, ANZ; Upon arrival in 1976, Trotman recommended 'a study particularly on the ecology of indigenous species to assess their ability to regenerate and grow successfully.' In 1978, an update added that 'I must record a strong disappointment at the failure by the Forest Research Institute to continue their work on deriving the properties of local species.' 'Report on Forestry in Western Samoa', R17731679, ANZ; 'Quarterly Report: 1/4/78–30/6/78', 'Economic Development and Technical Assistance – New Zealand Aid to Western Samoa – Forestry', ABHS6942 W5399 75, API 52/7/30 Part 7 R17731685. Disease is subsequently mentioned in G.R. Watt, 'Report on Sivicultural Aspects of the Forestry Development Programme', 'Forestry', R17731726, ANZ, as well as in R. Fenton's report, which is notable for containing evidence against the efficacy of eucalyptus alone against weeds and an early mention of fue lautetele, a vigorous creeper that replaced fue saina as the preeminent pest plant in the 1990s, 'A number of the larger trees of Eucalyptus deglupta have been felled in the species trials and a proportion show hollow and/or central decay in the butts'…'Even the moderately fast growth rate of Swientia Macrophylla is sufficient to outgrow mile-a-minute creeper if release-cutting is done frequently…. The most unwelcome appearance of Merremia creeper—which has the ability to climb stems of at least 20 cm diameter and persist in tree crowns 18m tall in the Solomon

Meanwhile, New Zealand relied on national parks and Arbor Days to promote native trees and project a sustainability message, even as forestry development produced otherwise. This was to the detectable discomfort of Trotman's successor, Peter Berg, who made the case for reformation and increased NZ assistance to environmental projects when it became clear that New Zealand was scaling back non-productive aid,

> The National Parks and Reserves project has contributed greatly to our public relations programme, and overall the linking of parks and reserves with forestry has been of great value. In fact a major reason for our success has been the widespread acceptance of the environmental/conservation value of the programme; the average villager does not look at a tree and see 1000 bd. feet of framing timber, but he does appreciate the shade, shelter, fruits and possibly also the bird life it may harbour. The widespread drying up of streams in the cleared areas in 1979 (and the consequent problems of water cartage) was also a lesson easily understood…
>
> It is therefore a little disconcerting to find that when aid is considered both the donor and the recipient tend to overlook aspects that are not directly productive [or constitute] poor environmental practice, often to a degree far in excess of that which would be tolerated in [the donor's] own country. The recent bulldozing of a clearing in the National Park and pushing of huge volumes of spoil into the sea to accommodate a NZ Broadcasting Department project is a fine example… [Fig. 29]
>
> New Zealand has a large investment in development in W. Samoa. It also has a moral responsibility to ensure this work is carried out in an environmentally sound manner… Perhaps is time for New Zealand to take a positive stand on this issue and insist that a proportion of its aid be ascribed to environmental protection and enhancement.[482]

This is to say that New Zealand aid to conservation, although comparatively small in financial terms, remained important in this regime of replacement. The notion of the 1970s that national parks would preserve areas of the Samoan forest intact as the country 'developed' justified intensive forestry while being completely untenable. As elsewhere in the Pacific, national parks (as envisaged by consultants and thus required by legislation) proved too big, too strict, or too expensive to implement at the scale required to substantially offset or slow degradation.

Islands—will need to be carefully watched'. Robert Fenton, 'Report on Research Requirements for the Forestry Reafforestation project', R17731726, ANZ.

[482] Letter from Peter Berg to Michael McBryde, October 23, 1980, 'Economic Development and Technical Assistance – New Zealand Aid to Western Samoa – Forestry', ABHS 6942 W5399 75, API 52/7/30, Part 10, R17731747; Peter Berg, interview with the author, September 19, 2022.

But it was not simply the premise but the practice of national parks that did not work sustainably in Samoa. In the absence of justification and as Samoans continued their lifeways, parks were beset by management issues resulting from the concept's incompatibility. By excluding communities and their input, national parks had placed Samoans outside of 'nature', as subjects for education or enforcement, thus advancing a certain environmentality or green governmentality.[483] Iosefatu Reti's recollections are full of instances of boundary disputes, encroaching and staffing issues. Like the epigraph that started this chapter some are funny and told so deliberately, highlighting the reality of Pacific environmental management while conveying the futility of policing paper parks when one shares poachers' appetite for pigeon soup. Reti explains,

> [Encroaching and gardening] happens everywhere, not even in national parks, but in the water catchment areas, like this one at Faleata. There was this guy who was appointed by the water authority to look after the catchment area, and that area there when we went to check the water was hardly flowing, it was just dribbling, it was almost dead. And there were two streams that sort of flowed together into the dam area. And between the two streams this guy had built his fale and cleared everything within that piece of land, and had his chickens, his pigs, everything you know roaming around! And I looked at it and I said, 'this is the water I am drinking at my home!' [The Water Division of the Public Works Department] just put the person there, forgot about it, nobody goes and checks. It happens also in [O le Pupu-Pu'e], cause the national park shared a boundary with the Ministry of Agriculture's cattle farm. But up on the top there was no fence to protect the cows from going into the national park… And that was on one side, and on the top people were encroaching with their taro plantations, and from the Falealili side as well. So the national park was sort of squeezed from all sides, and then on the roadside you have the village themselves having cleared a lot of the land and now they have houses and churches and all kinds of things in the national park.[484]

Iosefatu Reti's experience shows the disconnect between the logic of national parks and their assumed value, with the way they were understood by communities and those managing them. Consequently, it also reveals the tremendous opportunity cost of national parks. By ignoring Pacific land tenure and the environmentalisms already present, by failing to engage the public

[483] Arun Agrawal, 'Environmentality: Community, Intimate Government, and the Making of Environmental Subjects in Kumaon, India', *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 2 (2005).
[484] Iosefatu Reti, interview with the author, February 15, 2020.

effectively, the national park ideal functioned without most Samoans to the detriment of a Pacific environment(alsim) over time.

Put differently, considerable effort and resource was spent on overcoming 'problems' that were the result of outside systems meeting the 'Samoan conditions' that gave Samoa (its own) conservation potential, things like attachment to land, a presence in vulnerable ecosystems, or strong communal values. To put this failure in perspective, when asked where public awareness for environmental causes began in Samoa, Reti does not mention national parks but rather rubbish collection,

> The conservation movement started from the rubbish collection, you know Apia was a very dirty town at the time, there was rubbish everywhere. So we looked at how we can get people to be more conscious of what they are doing, and we thought a good place to do that would be in the schools… With the teachers help, suddenly people started to see the kids who were supposed to be in classrooms picking up rubbish in Apia. They asked, 'why aren't you in school, why are you picking up rubbish?' Kids were sort of saying 'That's your rubbish, if you don't pick it up, I'll come and pick it up for you.' That was something that we were very moved by, that the kids can actually pass the message on. So that's how it started, and we thought okay let's do some rubbish bins so people can put their rubbish in there.
>
> Unfortunately for us, I think it's because the way we live in the open fales, and you know you eat and when you have the bone you just throw it out the dog will pick it up, I think that's the way, it's the same with the rubbish, drink a Coca Cola, you just throw it outside the window, just let somebody else pick it up for you. So it takes a long, long time for that kind of mentality to change…
>
> The kids would pick up the rubbish but they didn't know where to take it to, so they would throw it in the sea. So, it creates another problem, so let's put some rubbish stands around town and start a rubbish collection programme. And that creates another problem because you know they were dumping the rubbish at Mulinu'u, in the mangrove area there [Fig. 30]. And it was awful, even Vaitoloa, the place was so disgusting… and you can smell it from miles away. And yet people were fishing for the kugage and the pipi, you know at the bay over there. And we did some testing with some people from New Zealand, Ministry of Health, and they actually recommended we try to stop people consuming seashells from the area because there were traces of lead and other toxic stuff. But what can you do, some people that's all they rely on, to go with their banana and their taro. So it took a lot of time.[485]

For Reti, there was an absolute grassroots commitment to working through the issues of community involvement and the run-on effects of island systems. A belief in the promise of

[485] Iosefatu Reti, interview with the author, February 15, 2020.

both forestry and conservation, meant working to connect them with Samoan structures and sensibilities. In the case of Palolo Deep, after a decade of disputes Reti made the decision to do away with executive control,

> Palolo Deep was a tricky one, because the law is that anything below the high-water mark is government. But to get to the Palolo Deep you have to cross land, the —— land. That's the family that's managing the Palolo Deep now. And they were very obstructive of any developments that we tried to do. We tried to put the walking track through and they didn't like it. They were always complaining, always threatening to take us to court and that sort of thing. So, it took a lot of effort. Eventually, I thought the best thing we can do is give it to them, let them manage the area and we still keep some kind of oversight, making sure they don't destroy the Deep. So, I think that worked a little bit.[486]

These lessons were learnt the hard way. Aid for national parks had perpetuated ill-suited and extreme modes of resource management, meaning Samoa's enthusiasm for conservation perversely resulted in a false start. Regional meetings had identified parks' problems as early as 1971, as part of a broad (Pacific-inflected) shift in international best practice as evidenced by the World Conservation Strategy. Despite this, key members in the New Zealand bureaucracy and outdated IUCN legislation (in the 1974 Parks act and the 1976 Apia Convention) had worked against this movement, locking in a preservationist regime that itself propped up plantation forestry. To be clear, this is not to absolve Samoans for the part they played in establishing the regime. Nor is it to suggest that expatriates were not entirely aware of its failings, far from it. Blame is neither useful, nor easy to locate. The story is one of dependency, where most all were working earnestly within constraints. Foresters like Ian Trotman and Peter Berg certainly did not commission the Potlatch mill, and given the subsequent need for wood, operated as best they could to safeguard remaining stocks for tomorrow. Conservationists like Bing Lucas and Arthur Dahl were pioneering in the attempt to reform protected areas as more flexible tools, while still recognising their international

[486] Iosefatu Reti, interview with the author, March 3, 2020.

cachet and place within aid flows. Often, they saw themselves as "making do", achieving new ends with old means.

The other reality, however, is that Samoans were left to work through a mounting environmental crisis. As the New Zealand and IUCN project ended, staff numbers and operating funds halved. Having assumed responsibility for Samoa's national park and five reserves in 1980, Iosefatu Reti faced a swelling list of management obligations with a shrinking budget. At the same time, environmental management in Samoa needed to shift, to catch up to the regional consensus and learn from others' mistakes. It was clear that conservation focused on conventional national parks had neglected activities occurring outside of park bounds, say in urban areas, the crucial coastal zone or on Savai'i where government land was sparse, and throughout Samoan society broadly, as with the shotguns threatening birdlife or chainsaws accelerating land clearing. It had also overlooked the work traditional conservation was or could be doing in service of the Samoan environment at all levels. These shortcomings were recognised by Samoa's Country Report to SPREP, compiled by Suliana Siwatibau and Robert Riddell in 1980. It noted the need for environmental impact assessments, urban planning, sewerage systems for pollution control, records of traditional knowledge about resource use, and coastal management plans.[487] Samoa's Fourth Five Year Development Plan (1980–1984) recommended the establishment of a dedicated environmental unit to address these issues.[488] Reti would establish this a decade later.

Iosefatu Reti's experience then, and what he articulated at the time, was that effective and sustainable management of protected areas was possible, but only through Pacific institutions

[487] SPEC/SPC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Country Report No. 16, Western Samoa* (Noumea: SPC, 1980).
[488] *Western Samoa's Fourth Five Year Development Plan, 1980–1984* (Apia: Economic Development Department, Government of Western Samoa, 1980).

in accordance with island ecologies. This understanding and its effect on environmental regionalism through SPREP's governance is the subject of this chapter's final section.



Figure 28—'Log Stockpile at sawmill—note high percentage of hollow sections [heart rot]'. *R17731726, ANZ.*

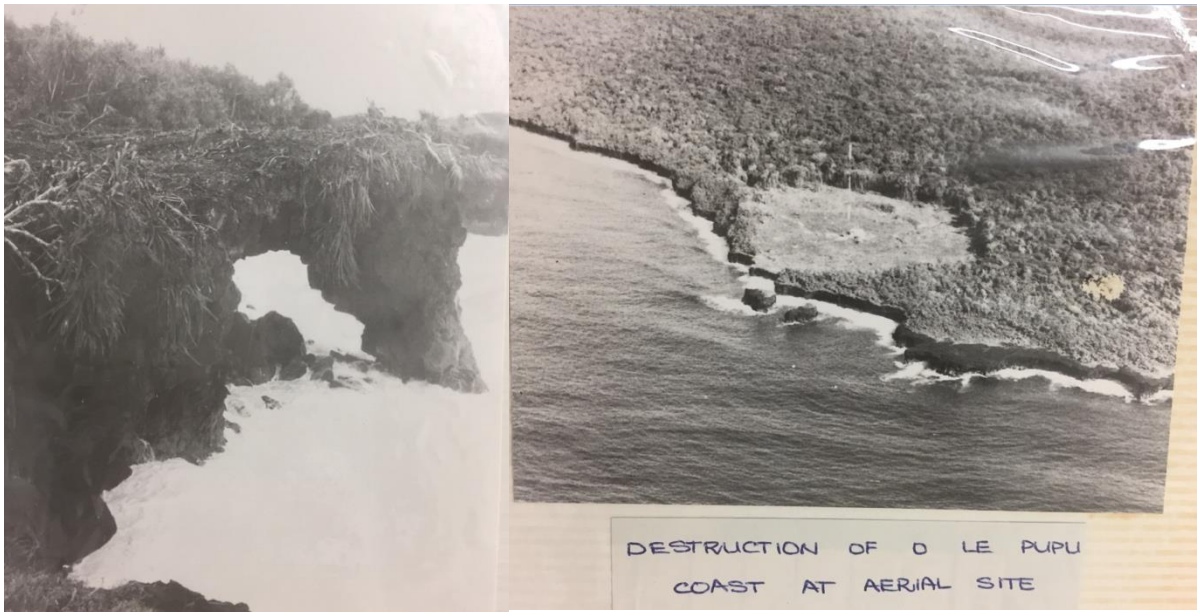


Figure 29—'Destruction of o le Pupu Coast at Aerial Site'. Rex Mossman, *Management plan.*



Figure 30—'Wastes dumped in coastal mangroves, Upolu, Samoa', 1974. *Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.*

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What Future for SPREP?

> I started to have an interest in the environment and SPREP because at that time, the Chief Forestry Officer had a mandate for national parks and reserves. I was implementing the National Parks and Reserves Act [1974], the Animals Ordinance [1960]. So we started setting up all these places around town, like Palolo Deep, Mt Vaea Reserve, the Botanical Garden, Togitogiga, O le Pupu-Pu'e [National Park]… I think forestry people had the nearest kind of training to conservation work…
>
> I wrote a paper based on our own experience. I think the problem that I saw at the time was the national park concept of IUCN did not match what we thought national parks should be. There were very strict guidelines for setting it up… keep people away… I think what I was suggesting was this idea of a conservation area, where some kind of use is allowed, as long as it does not sort of cause damage to the area. And I think a lot of the Pacific Island people saw that as more appropriate idea than the national park...
>
> When I went to SPREP, it was regarded as one of the Regional Seas programmes of UNEP. Most of the funding came from UNEP. It was very small contribution by member countries.

> So a lot of the countries didn't know about SPREP, there was no mechanism in there for countries to participate in the work of SPREP. And when I went there, because I was a technical focal point in Samoa, the government's contribution from SPREP came from my budget, so that's how I knew about SPREP.
>
> Iosefatu Reti, Interview with the author, February 2020

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme was born of a collective consensus on Pacific environmentalism and validated as a forum for oceanic sovereignty.[489] It was also fraught with governance issues. Institutional infighting and ambiguous guidelines would hamper its operation through the mid-1980s, with SPREP becoming the subject of several reviews. Iosefatu Reti was appointed as the SPREP Coordinator in 1985, amidst institutional change. The first Pacific Islander to hold this role, his contribution to SPREP's reform was significant as he acted on a push to make SPREP more 'Pacific'. Crucially, and why it is necessary to understand the case of Samoa, is that Reti's approach to these issues, and to environmental management broadly, was a product of work experience. To date, the limited literature on SPREP has only looked to institutions for impetus, so tracking Reti's motivations from the grassroots adds texture, context, and vital causation. A focus on Pacific people and community centred approaches gained in Samoa translated into empowering Pacific environment departments rather than donor agencies or research institutions in SPREP. In this sense, SPREP's reform through Reti represented a further political inflection and regional refocusing, and a renewed commitment to Pacific environmentalism. Bluntly, without being Indigenous-led, SPREP had little chance of staying engaged with the daily concerns of Pacific citizens. Reti's hire would give the programme the best chance of actually working.

With the commencement of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme in 1980, environmental management took on a regional dimension and new urgency. Country reports and topic reviews produced as part of SPREP's preparatory phase showed common problems:

[489] See Chapters II and III.

in each case over half of the 22 Pacific countries contributing reported issues with soil erosion, population pressure, water pollution, deforestation, endangered species, sewerage, and land use conflicts.[490] SPREP was to provide shared solutions. The Action Plan adopted at the Rarotonga Conference identified sixty areas where SPREP might contribute. From this list it specified priorities, to which a secretariat of four set to work out of SPC in Noumea in 1982 with a budget of US$291,000. Some action items would require political cooperation, for example Chapter III describes the progress towards the Noumea Convention and its focus on issues of transboundary harm in nuclear waste dumping and oil spills. Other issues benefited from economies of scale or information sharing. A research and monitoring network undertook baseline studies and environmental assessments, with a focus on erosion and watershed management, measuring toxic chemicals in groundwater (around mines, nuclear laboratories, or from pesticides), checking the health of mangroves and coral reefs, and studying ocean conditions. Another education, information and training network complemented these technical activities with public outreach, support for traditional knowledge, and community initiatives. [491]

SPREP was a milestone for regional collaboration, but also a marker of the growth of international involvement in the Pacific. Funding from the United Nations Environment Programme reflected a fear prevalent in the international community that the region had thus far largely escaped over-development and resource extraction but now risked walking into its problems headlong as populations grew, technology scaled-up, and decolonisation brought a

[490] Participating countries and territories included: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Island, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, and Western Samoa. Arthur Lyon Dahl and Ian Baumgart, 'The State of the Environment in the South Pacific', *Report of the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific*, *Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 8–11 March 1982* (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1982), 47–71.
[491] Jeremy Carew-Reid, 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Program', *Ambio* 13, no. 5/6 (1984), 377.

growth mindset.[492] With the 1982 State of the Environment report, Arthur Dahl impressed that 'the South Pacific was no longer the carefree paradise of the tourist posters, nor was it yet the polluted Mediterranean'.[493] SPREP's first Coordinator, Jeremy Carew-Reid, suggested that 'the notion of rapid change in modern terms of development is a recent one for Pacific Island countries', with 'resources and expertise [having been] insufficient for any individual country to ensure that development continued on a sustainable basis'.[494] UNEP Director Maurice Strong had advocated for Rarotonga being a 'mini-Stockholm' along these lines and SPREP's Action Plan reflected this, responding to the excesses of global commerce and industry as one of the UNEP Regional Seas programmes. The South Pacific became one of 10 such 'seas', folding the islands into the UN system and under its models for scientific governance.

Running alongside SPREP's international outlook was the knowledge that the Pacific was distinct and required particular forms of environmental management tailored to geography, culture, and socio-economic conditions. SPREP's preparatory phase had emphasised certain 'island limits' that made regional cooperation essential. [495] The dynamism of the ocean and the holism, high endemism, and vulnerability of its islands meant taking a comprehensive approach to ecological management.[496] Economic constraints meant SPREP's activities should be cost-effective and multi-purpose without an over-reliance on the highly technical apparatus used elsewhere.[497] Distance had to be factored into operations, as would the difficulty of regular and reliable communication. Politically, SPREP would need to operate equitably across member

[492] 42% of SPREPs budget came from UNEP during the first two years of implementation. Carew-Reid, 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Program', 377.
[493] Arthur Lyon Dahl, 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', in *Environment and Resources in the Pacific: A Regional Approach,* eds., A. L. Dahl and J. Carew-Reid (Geneva: United Nations Environment Programme, 1985), 3–6.
[494] See also, Graham Baines, 'Environment and Resources: Managing the South Pacific's Future' *Ambio* 13, no. 5/6 (1984), 355–58; Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism in the South Pacific*, v.
[495] Arthur Lyon Dahl, 'The Potential for Management of Island Ecosystems', *Environment and Resources in the Pacific: A Regional Approach,* 13–16.
[496] See also, Edward Towle, *The Island Microcosm* (Columbia: Research Planning Institute, 1985).
[497] Arthur Lyon Dahl, 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', *Environment and Resources in the* Pacific, 3–6.

countries, while balancing the priorities of its co-ordinating group of intergovernmental organisations (SPEC, SPC, ESCAP and UNEP). Lastly, SPREP would need to be culturally sensitive, safeguarding Pacific lifeways and working to support the local management structures and Indigenous knowledge already present.

'Island limits' were to be met with 'Pacific ways'. SPREP garnered political support for nature conservation's potential in halting nuclearism and maintaining Pacific ways of being. The nature of this support was often (and necessarily) oppositional, recognising the environmental harm that Pacific people had suffered at the hands of outsiders. But it was also constructive, realising that solutions could come from inside, from culture or community. Over the previous decade, Pacific environmentalists had drawn on and refashioned the ubiquitous 'Pacific way' political discourse to express this duality across the range of environmental activities. Chapter II shows how Michael Somare mobilised a 'collective consensus' for the Pacific environment while Suliana Siwatibau outlined the continued relevance of traditional conservation for modern Pacific societies. Criticism built over the appropriateness or viability of imposed models, convincing allies of the need to think differently and look elsewhere. The challenge was taken up by expatriates like Bing Lucas who (in a jointly authored SPREP topic review on parks with Samoa's Kalati Po'ai and Papua New Guinea's Sylvanus Gorio) reflected that 'in so many areas of life there is a South Pacific Way', and that, 'the challenge in nature conservation is to find the South Pacific way (and marshal resources to establish a representative system of parks and reserves)'.[498] In 1975, Arthur Dahl had made a similar, more flexible point, that the 'harmonious development of natural resources for the continuing benefit

[498] Lucas wrote the paper in confidence. Po'ai had limited English and contributed quotes while Gorio made no edits but rang to give his and Papua New Guinea's complete support for Lucas' effort, mentioning he was busy as 'you know how it is in the black man's world'. Letter from Campbell to Lucas, March 11, 1981, 'Department Of Lands And Survey – National Parks – International Relations – NP's + Equivalent Reserves In Sth Pacific', AANS7613 W5942 92, NP/1/14/5, R24339014, ANZ.

of Pacific peoples' was 'a chance to demonstrate another dimension of the Pacific way'.[499] After a decade in the region he went further, stating,

> The region requires unique forms of development adapted to the limitations of the environment, and drawing as much from the traditional societies that successfully lived within those limits for generations as from the modern world… The region is thus a potential model for the future, facing now what must become the long-term preoccupation of the whole planet as resource degradation approaches its global limits.[500]

The Rarotonga Action Plan reflected these ideas, translating them into the language of global environmental governance. It tasked SPREP with its principal objective—'to help the countries of the South Pacific to maintain and improve their shared environment and to enhance their capacity to provide a present and future resource base to support the needs and maintain the quality of life of the people'. To do so it would 'provide a framework for environmentally sound planning and management, suited to the needs and conditions of the countries and people in the region'.[501]

But if SPREP sought Pacific ways of managing a changing environment, it was under-equipped to do so. In the first instance this issue was operational. Tight funding meant hard choices and compromise over the work programme. Early progress on technical and informational activities were balanced with the intense negotiations towards the Noumea Convention, stretching the small secretariat further. Neva Wendt, SPREP's Environmental Education and Information Officer, mentions the effect of extensive meetings and SPREP's ambivalent place within SPC on its secretarial duties and her portfolio of environmental education. The SPREP Secretariat was expected to produce bilingual working papers for Noumea alongside, say, educational posters and handbooks, but because SPREP was only 'hosted' by SPC, while the secretariat

[499] Arthur Dahl, 'The Challenge of Preserving the South Pacific Environment', *Proceedings of the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves, 24–27 February* (Wellington: Department of Lands and Survey, 1975).
[500] Arthur Lyon Dahl, 'Oceania's Most Pressing Environmental Concerns,' *Ambio* 13, no. 5/6 (1984): 296–301.
[501] SPREP, *Action Plan for Managing the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region* (Nairobi: UNEP, 1983), 2.

had access to its translation and travel services, publications had to be sent to a firm in Sydney rather than printed onsite. Such costs ate away at budgets, which in the case of environmental education was 'tiddlywinks' as it stood.[502]

As time wore on, capacity issues coalesced, revealing deeper structural problems in SPREP's governance. The SPREP Secretariat's primary task was to oversee the work programme on the authority of the co-ordinating group of intergovernmental organisations but undertaken by local institutions and government agencies. Disquiet arose around the specifics of these relationships, with some feeling checks and balances between the bodies had been overridden or circumvented. Specifically, there were questions over the respective roles of UNEP and the Commission, which as the major donor and host organisation had eclipsed ESCAP and the Forum Secretariat, as well as the appropriate function of the universities as independent institutions in implementing SPREP's activities. Over the period 1984–1988, governance debates were a major preoccupation and the subject of several working papers and reviews. In summarising such contours, Jeremy Carew-Reid wrote in 1989 that 'many of these issues are now matters of historical interest only, but each had an important impact on the shape and development of the Program'.[503] Thirty years on, this work is the first sustained historical inquiry into SPREP's origins and operation, but it need not relitigate the governance debates in their entirety. We must move past seeing them principally as institutional politics, instead exploring the motivations for change and the effect reforming SPREP had on environmental regionalism. Accordingly, aspects of the debates are evaluated and historicised within the challenge to make SPREP more 'Pacific'.

In 1984, SPC sought to bring SPREP fully under its ambit, citing the unworkability of hosting a 'separate entity' that drew on its resources yet was not directly accountable to the South

[502] Neva Wendt, interview with the author, July 15, 2022.
[503] Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism*, 79.

Pacific Conference and its decisions over SPC's work programme.[504] In a sense, this was to bring legalities up to the reality that SPC had treated SPREP as one of its programmes since Rarotonga. It would also claw back institutional relevance for the Commission and ward off UN overreach. However, it was seen by many as 'contrary to the spirit if not the letter' of the decisions that had balanced institutional infighting through the 1970s and led to SPREP's distributed structure.[505] Absorption by SPC would have serious implications for the other organisations involved in SPREP, and for its ability to meet ambitious goals which required interagency support and considerable expenditure unavailable under SPC.[506] The Twenty-Fourth South Pacific Conference called for an independent evaluation of SPREP. This was undertaken by New Zealand's Ken Piddington and Papua New Guinea's Barney Rongap, with their findings discussed alongside a Commission response and working papers by Arthur Dahl and Jeremy Carew-Reid in September 1985.[507] A strong pushback from key governments ensured that SPREP retained its separate identity within the Commission but stopped short of granting it significant extra funding or full independence.[508]

With secretarial independence affirmed, attention shifted to the role of UNEP and the regional universities. There was a creeping dissatisfaction amongst governments about the way projects were being selected, funded, and implemented. SPREP's work programme had always intended to make 'fullest use of government and independent institutions of the region', but some felt the universities and regional laboratories had developed 'high expectations and a

[504] Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism*, 79.
[505] Arthur Dahl, 'Comments on the Administrative Arrangements for SPREP', R20753435, ANZ.
[506] Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism*, 78.
[507] The papers presented a full spectrum of options, from SPC-absorption to full independence for SPREP with an associated South Pacific Environment Fund. Jeremy Carew-Reid, 'SPREP… issues which require definition', R20753435, ANZ; Arthur Dahl, 'Comments on the Administrative Arrangements for the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', R20753435, ANZ; Barney Rongap and Ken Piddington, 'An Evaluation of the South Pacific Environment Programme', R17587050, ANZ.
[508] Namely Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa, and Australia.

proprietary interest' in UNEP funding through SPREP.[509] The institutions had been integral to the monitoring and information networks, giving SPREP otherwise unachievable scale and cost-efficiency through in-kind contributions, which totalled some US$1.1 million between 1984–1986.[510] They were proactive, convening regularly since April 1983 to assess project proposals and formalising as the Association for South Pacific Environment Institutions (ASPEI) in 1986. But because the institutions were dominated by expatriates and could submit peer-reviewed proposals to the co-ordinating group to be favourably endorsed by UNEP (and aligned to its research purview), there was a suspicion that SPREP was functioning 'to the detriment of country-defined priorities' and producing 'research for research's sake'.[511] Neva Wendt recollected her unease at attending work programme meetings where the Secretariat was sidelined along with considerations of Pacific priorities and capacity, saying,

> When the meetings started we had the feeling UNEP had already talked to the universities… [approving] activities like "UPNG environmental science field work" or "Support to ASPEI"… we were working to their workplan, the money that was coming from UNEP was going to the things the universities saw as the priority… In most countries there was a good person, like Joe [Reti], of that calibre. And yet they weren't being utilised to undertake the work, the expats from the universities were.

By 1985, SPREP was riven by infighting and faced overhaul or irrelevancy. The resignation of Coordinator Jeremy Carew-Reid provided an opportunity to recentre.

Iosefatu Reti's first sustained involvement with SPREP came as Samoa hosted the 1985 Third South Pacific National Parks and Reserves Conference. As Samoa's technical focal point for SPREP, Reti worked alongside the Secretariat, heading the conference's local organising committee and chairing the meeting's technical session. The Third Parks Conference was significant as the first ministerial conservation meeting since Rarotonga and was treated as such, with some ninety participants from twenty-four countries taking part over three weeks.

[509] Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism*, 78; 'Action Plan for Managing the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific, 4.
[510] 'ASPEI', *SPREP Environment Newsletter* 7 (1986).
[511] 'Institutional Involvement in the Implementation of the SPREP Action Plan 1983–1987', Box 14, ADC.

The Conference reaffirmed a commitment to pursuing the Apia Convention; resulted in the 'Action Strategy for Protected Areas in the South Pacific' as part of new partnership between SPREP and IUCN; and marked a shift from previous conferences' Australasian national parks focus to that of Pacific nature conservation thought broadly.[512] Reti contributed heartily alongside Randy Thaman on 'microparks' and Graham Baines on coastal management with a paper entitled, 'Resolving Conflicts between Traditional Practices and Park Management'.[513] Reti had the honour of being plagiarised when his Minister Toī Aukuso paraphrased the paper's punchline during the opening address, calling for a 'genuinely South Pacific conservation concept to meet the respective needs of our island nations and other third world countries'.[514]

Reti, perhaps more than anyone before him, was able to realise this vision. His competence at the parks conference and experience in forest conservation marked him as an ideal candidate for the vacant SPREP Coordinator role. But it was almost not to be. Having accepted the position in September of 1985, Reti briefly reneged a week before moving to Noumea when he witnessed the extent of infighting between the SPREP Secretariat and SPC management. His appointment coincided with the furore over the independent review and he mentioned being 'rather disillusioned' about what would undoubtedly be 'a very difficult job'.[515] In reality, his ability to pacify the feud was a key reason for his appointment—SPC Deputy Director of Programmes Tamarii Tutangata encouraged Reti to apply and New Zealand intelligence reported that 'the appointment of a competent Pacific Island head of SPREP should

[512] The Action Strategy provided a workplan to implement the protected areas elements of the SPREP Action Plan and advance the goals of the Apia and Noumea Conventions (neither of which were concluded at the time). Jeremy Carew-Reid emphasises the importance of the Third National Parks Conference for discussing the 'premise that sustainable development of resources can be aided by the conservation of protected areas and ecosystems'. Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism*, 99.
[513] *Proceedings of the Third South Pacific National Parks and Reserves Conference* (Noumea: SPC, 1985).
[514] 'Opening Remarks – By Hon. Toi Aukuso…', Box 14, ADC.
[515] Telegram from Noumea to Wellington, October 16th 1985, R20753435, ANZ.

lead to better relations between SPREP and SPC, [meaning] SPREP should be able to get on with its real job'. [516]

Iosefatu Reti brought political support and a clear idea of what SPREP's 'real job' ought to be. Samoa's experience had shown nature conservation's shortcomings, and it was these understandings Reti drew on as Regional Coordinator. He felt passionately that SPREP needed to work for Pacific people. In the first place, this meant institutional reform. The motivations for establishing biennial intergovernmental meetings to give more direct feedback to SPREP's work programme speak for themselves,

> So, I went to Noumea and I said, well this is where my budget goes to, and yet I never had a say about how this money is spent… Everything was planned by UNEP. The [Action Plan] has been there right from Arthur Dahl's time, it has not changed during Jeremy [Carew-Reid]'s time, and I went there it was still there. A lot of that work plan was implemented by the universities, they set up this institution called ASPEI: it had the [University of the South Pacific, University of Papua New Guinea, Lae Technical College, University of Hawai'i, University of Guam]. And these guys meet every year to divide the SPREP budget. And governments were not involved. In fact, a lot of the governments did not know what was going on… I said you know this is not right! And a lot of the work they were doing was just research, the results never come to the countries, nobody is using it. It's just nice technical publications that they produce… there was a lot of issues in the countries that needed their expertise but they are not a priority for them… It was all to do with the Regional Seas programme, what they were doing in the Caribbean was what they were doing in SPREP, it's exactly the same…
>
> I met with these research institutions every year, sometimes twice a year, but I never got to talk to the countries. And so I thought, there must be a way that countries can have a say, this is after all a country programme, it's an intergovernmental organisation. As I said, the research institution people didn't quite like the idea, they wanted to have things on their own and you know, no hassle from the governments. And it's pretty much sort of following the regional seas programme operations of UNEP, that's how they operate in the other countries.[517]

Opening space for Pacific input meant questioning the orthodoxies of global environmental governance. The Rarotonga Action Plan had been SPREP's 'Bible' since inception.[518] It gave the programme its mandate and was an expression of Pacific countries' priorities, moulded to

[516] Telegram from Wellington to Canberra, September 18, 1985, R20753435, ANZ.
[517] Iosefatu Reti, interview with the author, March 3, 2020.
[518] Reti and Wendt both referred to it by this moniker, see also Carew-Reid, 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Program', 377.

an international template. But as a laundry-list with loose guidelines for implementation, governments believed they had been written out, that SPREP had fallen victim to academic interpretation, even scientific imperialism. The universities and regional laboratories would vigorously deny this characterisation, stressing instances of counterpart training and policy recommendations to governments, as well as the broad benefits of increased university activity to regional scientific capacity and the international profile of SPREP. ASPEI Chairman John Pernetta, of the University of Papua New Guinea, rejected criticism of the ASPEI/UNEP nexus at the Second Intergovernmental Meeting in 1988, stressing its cost-effective contributions to the Action Plan and continued regional perspective, elements which were of great value to countries. He added the associated but more contentious point that while SPREP was an intergovernmental programme it was also regional and multi-agency—neither UNEP nor the institutions were wholly obliged to work with or on behalf of governments. UNEP, which funded SPREP through the Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre (OCA/PAC) aimed to 'achieve global objectives through support of regional programmes of co-ordinated research and monitoring, of which SPREP [was] merely one'.[519] Likewise, the institutions could freely support these global activities on a sub-regional basis and were doing so prior to SPREP.

Reti proceeded from the assumption that increasing governmental input and capacity would make SPREP's work better but also easier by winning support and securing more funding. The lack of government participation in SPREP had seriously threatened its viability, to a degree the institutions likely did not appreciate. Member countries' budgets were overcommitted and their voluntary financial contributions were contingent on perceived value. So, even if governments misunderstood the subtleties of SPREP's operations (which many did, at least as it was envisaged), it paid not to dismiss their concerns. The 1988 Intergovernmental Meeting

[519] 'Institutional Involvement in the Implementation of the SPREP Action Plan 1983–1987', Box 14, ADC.

would phase out SPREP's Coordinating Group, replacing it with a Steering Committee comprising government representatives from sub-regional groups (Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia, Australasia, USA-UK-France). This body would meet annually, with the intergovernmental organisations (SPC, SPEC, ESCAP, UNEP) retained as observers in an advisory capacity.[520]

The movement to give governments greater say culminated in 1989 with the decision that SPREP should have full independence as a regional intergovernmental organisation. If SPREP was to remain effective and responsive to country needs, it would need an expanded secretariat and new, secure avenues for fundraising, conditions that were impossible with SPREP housed within SPC. The final act of Reti's tenure was to put forward the secretariat working paper 'What Future for SPREP?', which made the case for expansion and independence and received near unanimous support at the Second Meeting of the SPREP Steering Committee (Port Vila, September 1989).[521] With the relocation of SPREP to Apia, and the signing of the SPREP Agreement in June 1993 the process was complete, giving SPREP its current institutional structure.

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> I used to tell the people I work with, it's not so much the work that we do as conservationists or environmentalists or whatever. It's not so much about the corals, the fish, the trees, the water and all these things, it's about people. You know all these things, are good and safe if we let them be, if we put people in there, that's when things will become different. I tell people that our work is more to do with changing people, how *they* manage these things.
>
> Iosefatu Reti, Interview with the Author, February 2020.
>
> The hoped-for era of autonomy following political independence did not materialize. Our national leaders were in the vanguard of a rush to secure financial aid from every quarter; our economies were stagnating or declining; our environments were deteriorating… and we could do little about it…

[520] Carew-Reid, *Environment, Aid and Regionalism*, 79.
[521] SPREP, *Report of the Second Meeting of the SPREP Steering Committee* (Noumea: SPC, 1989).

> [But] what kind of teaching is it to stand in front of young people from your own region, people you claim as your own… and tell them that our countries are hopeless? Is this not what neocolonialism is all about? To make people believe that they have no choice but to depend?[522]
>
> Epeli Hau'ofa, *Our Sea of Islands*, 1994.

'Island limits' are not a natural state. They are revealed to us, only to become the very condition of intervention. Forestry brought underdevelopment to Samoa, identifying deficiencies in the use of its trees and exploiting them to the long-term detriment of local people. Potlatch's venture and the New Zealand takeover struggled against 'Samoan conditions', with the stated aim of overturning them. But instead of generating mutual profits or self-sufficiency, this capital created dependency, whereby Samoans became reliant on outside finance and services to first participate in world systems, and then simply to maintain their own.

Conservation was not immune to such evils. Samoans were not trusted as stewards of their land and told instead to commit it for a public good. National parks were misconceived, still born, but born still. Samoans became poachers, encroachers, superintendents, wardens, in various mixtures. Few would meaningfully participate in this Westernised conservation, there being limited justification or incentive to. As deforestation continued unabated, New Zealand played down concerns about its complicity. Eucalyptus plantations were presented as the only viable option. National parks were unproductive, but nevertheless provided under the guise of trying. Forestry and conservation that insisted on international strictures passed over local structures. This eroded local capacity, constituting a regime of replacement. The irony of Arbor Day was its initial inapplicability, its tragedy was that its motto soon fit. After two cyclones destroyed what remained of a sick crop, Samoa's need for wood is met by imports and its remnant forests need safeguarding for tomorrow.

[522] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', 150.

Pacific ways aimed to overcome dependency, by turning island limits to advantage. Regimes of replacement were damaging in their extremity and constituted a missed opportunity because they did not work in Pacific environments, but the point is that they did not *succeed*. Incompatibility meant that integration was incomplete. Samoans continued through and despite the gum trees and the national park. Pacific people did not lose their lifeways or knowledge. They retained enough difference to make a difference, to challenge their condition. Iosefatu Reti's story is remarkable because he learnt hard lessons through participating in Samoa's environmental reckoning while remaining fundamentally unaffected, and therefore able to advance a conservation concept that was 'truly South Pacific'.

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme had become fixated on the identification of island limits. In the process it reinforced them. Donor priorities, expatriate research, and institutional politicking failed to meet Pacific needs or build self-resilience. Instead of progressing environmental approaches that accounted for the region's particularity, it had folded the region into a globalised environmental management. SPREP became unviable and unable to meet its mandate.

Iosefatu Reti was part of a movement to make conservation and SPREP more 'Pacific'. But this would not happen without challenging dependency and reform was necessarily political. Motivation stemmed from a fundamental belief in the potential of Pacific people, itself a truer, very Pacific way to see environments that rejected the misanthropic elements of Western conservation. To do so was not simply to work within island limits but reject them as any way to see Pacific circumstance.

Galu le lupe i totonu o le pusaaisa—forget about the pigeon in the freezer.

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Mana Motu:

The Small Islands Movement and Climate Change, 1983–1995

> The Forum expressed concern about the possible effects on Island countries of rising sea levels resulting from global warming, and emphasised the importance of a regional approach to environmental matters. It agreed that Forum members should take decisive action to draw world attention to the way the environmental problem affected the South Pacific, and to represent regional views at appropriate international gatherings, possibly including by way of a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly.

Leaders' Communique, Twentieth South Pacific Forum, Tarawa, Kiribati, July 10–11, 1989.

> The fact that [industrialised] nations have strongly resisted a call for a stabilisation and eventual reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide indicates quite clearly that we have to be vigorously active in the highest fora of the world family of nations in the pursuit of the various outcomes of this [Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise]. We have more to lose than they have. Indeed our very existence is at stake… My Government, [Fiji], would very strongly support any initiatives arising out of this Conference that would lead to strengthened co-operation amongst the small island states from the Caribbean, Pacific, Mediterranean and Indian Ocean regions in the search for solutions to the devastating effects on the environment of global warming.

Fiji Country Statement to the Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise, Malé, Republic of Maldives, November 14–19, 1989.

The small islands movement arose as a collective response to the unthinkable. Storm surges and inundation across the Republic of Maldives in 1987 gave credibility to new scientific warnings of accelerating global warming, prompting consternation throughout the international system. For islands the outlook was stark. Forecasts varied with disclaimers aplenty, but even moderate projections from the newly formed Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicted increased cyclones and a one metre rise in sea levels by mid-century. Such

effects would be calamitous for life and livelihood.[523] This existential threat, largely outside of islands' making and control, necessitated cooperation and international engagement at an increased scale and urgency. A resolution in the UN General Assembly was joined by calls in the Commonwealth and in regional fora the following year.[524] Islands nations' continued political initiative produced the Malé Declaration on Sea Level Rise and the 'intent to work, collaborate, and seek international co-operation to protect the low-lying small coastal and island states of the world'. [525] The Second World Climate Conference in 1990 provided the occasion as parties gathered to review the IPCC science and make recommendations to the International Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC). Here, acting on the Malé Declaration, 24 nations from the Pacific, Atlantic, Mediterranean and Indian Oceans formalised as the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS).

Since 1990, AOSIS has functioned as an ad-hoc coalition of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), providing a shared voice on issues of climate change, ocean governance, and sustainable development within the UN system. It features centrally in discussions of Pacific responses to climate change for its vitality and effectiveness.[526] Historically, the prominent role of Vanuatu's Robert Van Lierop as the Alliance's first chair and its success in influencing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) over five sessions

[523] The IPCC was established in 1988 as a joint programme of the World Meteorological Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme, with the two thousand scientists involved producing its First Assessment Report of the impacts of climate change in 1990. W.J. McG. Tegart, G.W. Sheldon and D.C. Griffiths, eds., *Climate Change: The IPCC Impacts Assessment* (WMO/UNEP, 1990). For a discussion of how Pacific nations interpreted various climate change scenarios see, John Campbell and Jon Barnett, *Climate Change and Small Island States: Power, Knowledge and the South Pacific* (London: Earthscan, 2010), 70.

[524] United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/43/53. *Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations of Mankind: Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly* (1988). Climate change has featured in every South Pacific Forum Leaders' Communique starting with Nuku'alofa in 1988 while Commonwealth Heads of Government signed the Langkawi Declaration on the environment in 1989.

[525] Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise, *Malé Declaration on Global Warming and Sea Level Rise* (1989).

[526] For a discussion of AOSIS from a Pacific perspective, see: Espen Ronneberg, 'Small Islands and the Big Issue: Climate Change and the Role of the Alliance of Small Island States', in *The Oxford Handbook of International Climate Change Law,* eds., C. P. Carlarne, K. R. Gray, and R. Tarasofsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); George Carter, 'Pacific Island States and Thirty Years of Global Climate Negotiations', in *Coalitions in the Climate Change Negotiations,* eds., Carola Klöck, Paula Castro, Florian Weiler, and Lau Øfjord Blaxekjær (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

from 1990–1992 were triumphs for Pacific and small states' diplomacy.[527] Indeed, the climate agenda owes much of its shape to AOSIS activism in early meetings. The coalition advanced key tenets including: the 'precautionary principle' (to act decisively in reducing emissions despite scientific uncertainty) and 'polluter pays' (which although watered down to 'common but differentiated responsibilities' still acknowledges industrial countries' greater role in causing and thus addressing climate change).[528] Crucially for its members, AOSIS embedded the explicit recognition that 'small island countries [are] particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change', and thus had 'specific needs and special circumstances'.[529] Such achievements are remarkable. Even the issues that AOSIS tabled unsuccessfully—such as compensation for loss and damage, equitable carbon markets, and ambitious overall reductions in greenhouse gas emissions—are those intractables still under negotiation today. In the words of Van Lierop and two other key negotiators, 'for the first time in the history of the United Nations, a group of small states, hitherto relegated to the sidelines, was able to develop a specific negotiating agenda [and] succeeded in having those concerns incorporated in a legally binding convention of historic importance'.[530]

While acknowledging the vitality of political blocs like AOSIS, this chapter explains the intellectual and organisational apparatus that allowed for such wins, and precluded others. Prior to the recognition of the climate crisis, regional bodies in the Pacific were already mobilising

[527] For an evaluation of AOSIS and its evolving role in the climate negotiations see, W. J. Davis, 'The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS): The International Conscience', *Asia-Pacific Magazine* 2 (1996); Eric Shibuya, '"Roaring Mice Against the Tide": The South Pacific Islands and Agenda Building on Global Warming', *Pacific Affairs* 69, no. 4 (1996); Pamela S. Chasek, 'Margins of Power: Coalition Building and Coalition Maintenance of the South Pacific Island States and the Alliance of Small Island States', *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 14, no. 2 (2005); Carola Betzold, Paula Castro and Florian Weiler, 'AOSIS in the UNFCCC Negotiations: From Unity to Fragmentation?', *Climate Policy* 12 (2012).
[528] Leo Heileman, 'The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS): A Mechanism for Coordinated Representation of Small Island States on Issues of Common Concern', *Ambio* 22, no. 1 (1993), 55; John Ashe, Robert Van Lierop and Anilla Cherian, 'The Role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in the negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)', *National Resources Forum* 23 (1999), 215.
[529] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992, 30822, at 1–3, 5, 6.
[530] Ashe, Van Lierop, and Cherian, 'The role of AOSIS…', 209.

knowledge about islands to promote interregional cooperation on environment and development. A series of information sharing initiatives in the early-1980s identified areas of common concern, driving recognition for 'Small Island Developing States' as a condition or category. This would lead to SIDS' eventual recognition across the United Nations system as a 'special case' with a dedicated structure for international action established to address their 'unique and particular vulnerabilities'. [531] I show how these initiatives were Pacific-inflected, but equally informed by decades of 'islands' and 'small states' studies. This "technical" side to the story conditioned what could be said about islands. An emphasis on their vulnerability would have a profound effect, moulding subsequent efforts to address the effects of climate change in AOSIS and elsewhere.

Ultimately, this chapter shows that while climate change has given Pacific nations exposure on the global stage as never before, it is a narrow, under-powered, and compromised platform. In treating the perspectives of Pacific people through and beyond the climate moment, this work uncovers a vision for small islands' association that was much larger than that realised through climate change response. This implies that the small islands movement was constrained, with mana motu, the power of islands, lying latent or unrealised. I believe this notion has the potential to shift how the history of climate change is told in the Pacific.

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While climate change history is seemingly punctuated by world summits and wide-ranging studies, it is worth remembering how recent and decidedly un-global environmental governance was (and remains). The 1985 Villach Conference which laid out the science to

[531] UN General Assembly, A/RES/69/15, *SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway* (2014).

spark the contemporary climate movement occurred scarcely a decade after Stockholm established the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and first sought to globalise environmental management. One might generously reach back to Lake Success, the 1949 United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources, but beyond the presence there of a couple of soil scientists from the South Pacific Commission, the Pacific has hardly featured. Moreover, this thesis has shown that when Pacific people were involved it was rarely of their own making, often acting out of necessity to resist environmental imperialism, or own their own terms, with Pacific knowledge and priorities frequently disregarded by the personnel and perspectives of the Global North. The advent of climate change awareness and its heightened focus on islands and oceans did not immediately change the tendency of international science to neglect one third of the world's surface and the environmentalism of those most acquainted with it.

This is not to say that globalisation should necessarily be the goal of environmental governance. Sub-global or regional initiatives have long been a feature of the international system, evidenced by UN agencies like the Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific. One of the UNEP's key initiatives, the Regional Seas Programme, proceeded from the understanding that while oceans know no real boundaries, those who manage them do. Because ocean pollution concentrates inshore with people and because there exists 'different levels of ability, histories and experience in cooperative work, as well as different interests, problems and priorities in various areas of the world', a regional approach was deemed a more effective way of solving global issues.[532] One also thinks here of the London Dumping Convention's Article VIII, described in Chapter III, which called on parties 'with common interests to protect

[532] See 'Contributions of Regional Programmes to Global Activities', *Achievements and Planned Development of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme and Comparable Programmes Sponsored by Other Bodies* (Nairobi: UNEP, 1982), 2; P. M. Haas, 'Save the Seas: UNEP's Regional Seas Programme and the Coordination of Regional Pollution Control Efforts', *Ocean Yearbook Online* 9, no. 1 (1991), 188–212.

in the marine environment… taking into account characteristic regional features, to enter into regional agreements… for the prevention of pollution, especially by dumping'.[533] Similarly, many fisheries and conservation conventions, stretching back to the early twentieth century, tracked the trans-boundary migrations of various creatures, making them regional in their approach.[534]

So, bearing in mind the discrepancies between international integration and environmental governance, the first section shows how Pacific people contributed to a distinct, *interregional* configuration, based not on geographic proximity or statehood, but islandness and increasingly, *small* islandness. The impetus for this came both from within the region, as a strategy to amplify Pacific concerns, and from without, in order to promote technocratic efficiency. The question, then, is how far Pacific environmentalism found expression in what would become the small islands movement.

Extending Pacific Islandness

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme has a unique place within the history of global environmental management for the nature of its regionalism. Arising out of processes that predated UN organisation, SPREP embodied distinct priorities absent from other Regional Seas programmes, such as Indigenous knowledge and anti-nuclearism.[535] Moreover, its holistic approach, which saw islands as inseparable from oceanic concerns, meant SPREP was at once part of a global system of ocean governance and an intergovernmental network of island states and regional organisations. The island focus both set it apart, and gave it something to offer.

[533] Emphasis added. Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972, 15749, at 142.
[534] Kurkpatrick Dorsey describes the Inland Fisheries Treaty (1908), North Pacific Fur Seal Convention (1911), and the Migratory Bird Treaty (1916) as transboundary issues that spurred environmental diplomacy. Kurkpatrick Dorsey, *The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).
[535] Arthur Lyon Dahl, 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme', in *Environment and Resources in the Pacific: A Regional Approach,* eds., A. L. Dahl and J. Carew-Reid (Geneva: United Nations Environment Programme, 1985), 3–6.

For instance, when SPREP convened a session alongside the East Asian and South-East Pacific Regional Seas at the Fifteenth Pacific Science Congress (Dunedin, New Zealand, February 1983), virtually all SPREP presentations incorporated 'terrestrial' and 'coastal' problems distinct from generalised 'oceanographic assessments' and 'hydrocarbon pollution' concerns. Islandness, coupled with a lack of capacity or desire for highly technical approaches, focused inquiry on human issues and cooperative, community centred solutions. Suliana Siwatibau stressed the need to increase domestic efficiency to ease reliance on costly fossil fuel imports for energy.[536] Mere Pulea described how "population studies" could '[perpetuate] economic and political dependency'. 'Pacific customs and social systems were [not] obstacles to development' as was assumed by outside "carrying-capacity" experts but rather 'people potentials'.[537] Ken Piddington spoke of other Pacific development philosophies and New Zealand 'sharing the island situation', through which it might add 'breadth to its own [two-dimensional] view of development'.[538] Arthur Dahl presented on 'the potential for management of island ecosystems', before participating in a panel discussion on interregional cooperation with fellow Regional Seas Coordinators.[539] While noting their local emphases, the Coordinators proposed they share information between monitoring programs on marine pollution and align approaches on 'those special environments or ecosystems that occur commonly… such as mangroves, coral reefs, atolls and volcanic islands'.[540]

Largely absent from the official proceedings but contained in Dahl's handwritten notes of the meeting, is one especially notable Pacific Islands contribution. During the discussion on

[536] C. R. Lloyd and Suliana Siwatibau, 'Energy Potentials of Pacific Island nations', *Environment and Resources in the Pacific*, 143.
[537] Mere Pulea, 'People Potentials in the Pacific', *Environment and Resources in the Pacific*, 29.
[538] Ken W. Piddington, 'Development Theories in the Pacific Island Context', *Environment and Resources in the Pacific*, 7.
[539] Arthur Lyon Dahl, 'The Potential for Management of Island Ecosystems', *Environment and Resources in the Pacific*, 13.
[540] Arthur Lyon Dahl, 'Interregional Co-operation: Summary of Discussions', *Environment and Resources in the Pacific*, 288.

interregional approaches to oceans monitoring and pollution prevention, Tongan environmentalist Sione Tongilava asked what UNEP's role in the London Dumping Convention was, and 'what weight [would it give] in favour of SPREP concerns?'.[541] This was a cleverly framed question. It implied that the interregional gathering should unite through the Regional Seas infrastructure to promote the South Pacific's campaign to ban the dumping of nuclear waste. Five years before, Tongilava noted, an unnamed developed country had approached his country wanting to dump waste in the Tonga Trench. This advance was rebuffed, he added, Pacific nations were conscious of fish migrations and 'wanted to keep the Pacific unpolluted'—'Why don't industrial countries dump their wastes near their own homes?' 'A Convention will protect the South Pacific', Tongilava concluded, but 'the problem is the high seas' with 'world scale' solutions needed.[542] Dahl's formal report emphasised that 'inter-regional discussion on this subject might help to reach common positions on this issue in the interest of the whole Pacific'.[543]

The Dunedin Congress was the first UNEP Regional Seas gathering to promote interregional cooperation on environment, and its papers show the expansion of a Pacific agenda on oceans. They hint, however, at a wider theorising of islands across the international system. Chapter IV mentioned the prevailing discourse of "island limits": the socio-economic, ecological, and cultural factors that constrain industry and demand conservation. Behind this notion lay three literatures—scientific, political, and developmental—that joined 'small island' studies in constructing the concept of 'sustainable development'.[544] What follows is a summary of these

[541] 'UNEP Discussion, 8 Feb 83, Inter-regional Cooperation', ADPC.
[542] Given that Ken Piddington and Philip Tortell were both present at this meeting, it is possible that this was a contributing factor to the events of Chapter III.
[543] Dahl, 'Interregional Co-operation', 288.
[544] At this time small islands were commonly defined as those with less than 10,000 km^2 of land area and fewer than 500,000 residents. This included independent island states and archipelagos as well as islands associated with larger countries (i.e. Hawai'i). Alison Hess, 'Research Opportunities for Sustainable Development and Environmental Management on Small Islands', in *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop on Sustainable Development and Environmental Management of Small Islands: November 3–7, 1986*, ed. William Beller (Washington, DC: US Man and the Biosphere Programme, 1986), 71.

ideas, drawing on views expressed at the Interoceanic Workshop on Sustainable Development and Environmental Management of Small Islands, held in Puerto Rico from November 3–7, 1986.[545]

Island Vulnerability

Scientifically, small islands were considered 'closed systems' and thus natural, basic units for study.[546] Their 'remoteness', coupled with variable levels of biodiversity across 'high'(volcanic and continental) and 'low'(atoll and cay) islands, made them highly 'endemic', 'specialised' and 'fragile' environments prone to exponential modification and instability.[547] The introduction of exotic species or over-harvesting of resources threatened extinction or collapse.[548] Chapter I described the logical conclusion of this insularity. An ongoing conception of islands as laboratories or control cases, after Darwin and Wallace, motivated advocacy to preserve examples as national parks or 'islands for science'.[549] After Mead, islanders were approached with the same gaze, their islands becoming continental 'microcosms' or "models for the world".[550] A focus on addressing the interconnected, anthropocentric causes of environmental damage had produced 'eco-development' in an uneasy alliance, and now 'sustainable development' as economic language predominated.[551] Nauru and Aldabra in the

[545] Beller, 'Introduction', *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 1–8.
[546] Since the 1960s, a fuller, 'ecosystem' understanding has guided the natural sciences' approach to islands. See Edward Towle, *The Island Microcosm* (Columbia: Research Planning Institute, 1985), 5.
[547] In many cases islands were already much less 'closed' and more connected than appreciated by scientists. For instance, in the 1980s New Zealand scientists believed they had found extant 'Māori taro' surviving as 'remnants from pre-European times' on outer, abandoned islands. Genetic sequencing revealed it to be taro from China, introduced later to nineteenth century market gardens and onto an enduring Māori food network across islands that were neither uninhabited nor uncultivated, speaking to a long association with the crop and an unbroken genealogy of food. Peter Matthews, 'Nga Taro o Aotearoa', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 94, no. 3 (1985); Towle, *The Island Microcosm*, 21–23.
[548] Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 10–11.
[549] This was not limited to the physical sciences, with similar assumptions influencing Margaret Mead's use of Ta'ū in American Samoa as a control against Western modernity in a nature versus nurture debate. Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1928).
[550] Towle explores the social scientific interest in the island as 'microcosm' further. Towle, *The Island Microcosm*, 5–6.
[551] Although 'eco-development' features in the proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop, the choice of 'sustainable development' as the framing paradigm was tacitly accepted and reflected the construction's currency prior to the Brundtland Report in 1987. We might remember the challenges from Indigenous peoples and the

Seychelles were presented accordingly: as extremes of a sustainable development spectrum from 'paved-over' to 'wildlife sanctuary'. Between this a 'middle way' that accounted for islands 'special environmental problems' should be found.[552] 'Insular resources'—forests, energy, soil, water, and biodiversity (including fish and coastal ecosystems)—would determine the 'capacity of an island both to accept and sustain development'.[553] The basic tenets remained. Island management should proceed from an ecosystem standpoint with cautious additions, so as not to erode the resource bases of what are fundamentally 'very limited and often fragile' insular environments.

Economically, small islands were deemed peripheral with development dictated by diseconomies. Commentators focused on many islands' small land area and distance from major markets. Transport within archipelagos was difficult. Islands' general reliance on sporadically available and small-scale sea freight made trade expensive and irregular. Modest populations and a narrow resource base compounded these issues, forcing specialisation in a few goods or services. Reorientation towards tourism, tax havens, or transit hubs was entrepreneurial, but opportunism heightened exposure to market fluctuations. The Interoceanic Workshop discussed how such unfavourable material conditions resulted in skewed economies, out-migration, and the potential for external domination. With disincentives to engaging in free-market activity and generating export-led industry, many small islands displayed (and supposedly chose) a dependence on aid, favourable trading arrangements with former colonial powers, and remittances from migrants living abroad.[554] This 'distorted' or

Global South that conservation science must ensure self-determination and human development, as well as evolution within UNEP and IUCN, that strict preservationism had proved ineffective and ecologically unsound. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[552] Phillipe Hein, 'Between Aldabra and Nauru', in *Sustainable Development and Environmental Management of Small Islands*, eds., W. Beller, P. d'Ayala, and P. Hein (Paris: UNESCO, 1990), 57.

[553] Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 1, 11–18, 22–28.

[554] The recent work of Betram and Watters on 'MIRAB' economies (Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy) was discussed at length. Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 13.; I. G. Bertram and R. F. Watters, *New Zealand and Its Small Island Neighbours: a Review of New Zealand Policy toward the*

artificially inflated living standards that would otherwise be governed by surplus (or lack thereof).[555] Islanders were "price-takers" and now "rent-seekers" tied to the economic mainland.[556]

Politically, independent small islands struggled as 'microstates', while those which remained colonies had their interests marginalised. The focus of the workshop was not international relations, but the way in which small states' diplomatic disadvantages hindered their sustainable development.[557] Weak bureaucracies prone to complacency or corruption met a limited range of policy options (or apparent political will), reinforcing a status quo determined by larger states. [558] Pressure to accept projects on donor terms was deemed largely irresistible and contributed to exploitation or environmental degradation.[559] Small islands drifted on powerful currents.

Over the preceding paragraphs the reader will have noticed the technocratic language of a meeting dominated by prescriptions on small islands from metropolitan centres. While characteristic, this was also intentional. Practitioners and funding came from UNESCO, UNEP, UNCTAD, UNDP and OTA, all of which had programmes involving islands or their concerns.[560] UNESCO's 'Man and the Biosphere' programme had studied human-environment interactions under the heading 'Ecology and Rational Use of Island Ecosystems' in Fiji's Lau

Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Kiribati and Tuvalu (Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 1984).

[555] Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 13.

[556] Harold Brookfield, 'An Approach to Islands', *Sustainable Development and Environmental Management of Small Islands*, 24–25.

[557] Phillipe Hein suggests the implications of size have been widely appreciated in the international system and the topic of special interest since the 1950s, especially in the Commonwealth and later in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Hein, 'Small Island Developing States…', 5.

[558] Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 19.

[559] Options to subvert these relations were not given seriously. Somewhat insincerely in the suggestion that hosting foreign military garrisons might offer sustainable income and 'bargaining power to island governments in ocean locations where the navies of great powers are present in force'. Environmental and social costs were said to be comparable to tourism. Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 32.

[560] In full, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme, and the United States Office of Technical Assessment. Funding was also received from the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB).

group from 1973–1976.[561] UNCTAD's work since 1972 on 'island developing countries', considered them a subset of geographically-disadvantaged, Least Developed Countries alongside land-locked countries.[562] Because these island programmes had been instrumental in putting ecological concerns alongside development, conventional sustainable development paradigms were taken for granted. Given the international profile and policy ramifications for such work, 'the interest lay more in addressing concrete issues, and there was reluctance to take up questions that might consume too much time in philosophical discussions'. [563] For the Pacific, however, such pragmatism would be unpractical if it meant reluctance to consider alternatives.

The Interoceanic Workshop followed Dunedin in having regional and interregional components, with Pacific representation once again adding different perspectives and priorities. In a meeting dominated by conventional assumptions about the purpose and practice of both environmental management and development, SPREP Coordinator Iosefatu Reti, Pacific economist Te'o Ian Fairbairn, and developmental geographer Harold Brookfield offered critical takes. These were heavily relied upon in the workshop's outputs. For instance, although cultural preservation featured as an implicit goal of 'sustainable development', aspects of culture were not considered for their role in guiding or assisting the process. Discussions of tourism would mention cultural harms, but sustainable development 'fixes' were expected to proceed anyway. It was left to Iosefatu Reti to explain how,

> The traditional value systems of islanders, although eroded over the past several years, are in the process of development. These value systems are sufficiently strong in some places and

[561] The researchers describe the Fiji project's purpose was 'to provide scientific knowledge on how to manage natural ecosystems effectively while also conserving them'. Harold Brookfield, Richard Bedford, Marc Latham, Tim Bayliss-Smith and Muriel Brookfield, 'The MAB Project in the Eastern Islands of Fiji, 1974–76', *Island Vulnerability* (2012). See also T. Bayliss-Smith, R. Bedford, H. Brookfield, M. Latham and M. Brookfield, *Islands, Islanders and the World: the Colonial and Post-colonial Experience of Eastern Fiji* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[562] See Phillipe Hein, 'Small Island Developing States: Origin of the Category and Definition Issues' in UNCTAD, *Is a Special Treatment of Small Island Developing States Possible?* (UNCTAD, 2004), 4–5.

[563] Beller, 'Introduction', *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 4.

> could be usefully integrated [to] effect an appropriate management approach specifically geared toward meeting the needs of the island people. Customary laws and practices have been instrumental in conserving the natural resources of the Pacific countries over many centuries; this body of knowledge could be effectively linked into the nexus of modern development systems.[564]

Recommendations, citing Reti and examples from Inuit communities, suggested that 'traditional resource use and conservation practices' could 'play an important role in the sustainable use of island resources'.[565] Custom might 'provide the basis for environmental education and development of an environmental ethic', supplying 'principles or guidelines [to] modern resource uses'. This was an imperfect adaptation, but recognition nonetheless in a context where Indigenous ways of life were still typically dismissed as lost, irrelevant, or counterproductive.

Fairbairn's sensitive treatment of Pacific economic circumstance was simply mined for its description of development issues. Recommendations passed over his conclusion that 'the dangers of export-led growth strategies and over-dependence on international markets' in Pacific Islands called for 'alternative strategies [based on] more balanced growth, [the] revitalisation of subsistence production and a process of import displacement'.[566] Metropolitans chastised Pacific Islands' dependent economies but equally disparaged their ongoing subsistence orientation—citing the 'attendant results of deforestation, soil erosion and water pollution' from shifting agriculture, and belief that the 'growing populations and aspirations of island peoples' made subsistence unviable and undesirable.[567] An adherence to growth persisted, despite Phillipe Hein, Economic Affairs officer with the Least Developed Countries division of UNCTAD, suggesting that 'development in the usual [Rostovian] sense is not possible for some small islands [and] self-sustained growth may not be achievable [even

[564] Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop,* 87.
[565] Hess, 'Research Opportunities for Sustainable Development', 74.
[566] Te'o I. J. Fairbairn, 'The Environment and Development Planning in Small Pacific Island Countries', *Sustainable Development and Environmental Management of Small Islands*, 230.
[567] Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 41; Hess, 'Research Opportunities for Sustainable Development', 71.

with] direct investment'. The more 'realistic objective' was to 'maintain a "sustainable socio-economic system"' or be included in one.[568] Purposive 'philosophical discussion' may have reconciled this contradiction. Nevertheless, the key point is that Reti and Fairbairn, along with Siwatibau, Pulea, Piddington, Tongilava, and Dahl, did not disregard the materialism underpinning assessments of "island limits" but saw ways to sustainability and self-reliance despite it. These approaches leveraged the potential of islands but were only partially acknowledged. That is excepting Brookfield's 'Approach to Islands', which provided the crux of the conference.

The Interoceanic Workshop was a milestone for the recognition of small islands' commonality, noting the 'special characteristics of their natural resources, their economies and, in many cases, their cultures'.[569] Beyond this, however, it argued that small islands were a *category*, 'a special case in development'. With inter-agency participation and representation from major island regions, this was a significant international consensus. Interregional resolutions were to build recognition for the new category, with other international organisations 'encouraged to develop global programs of relevance to small islands' alongside an 'International Association for the Development of Small Islands', provisionally entitled 'INSULA'.[570]

Connecting islands interregionally had opened space for new associations and shared approaches, but we might ask what it meant discursively to group *small* islands in this way. The language is vitally important here and one should note the demarcations between the groupings of 'small states', 'island developing states' and 'small islands', as well as the different institutional discourses behind each of them. Crucially, in opting to emphasise the

[568] Hein, 'Between Aldabra and Nauru', 61.
[569] Hess, 'Research Opportunities for Sustainable Development', 70.
[570] INSULA came into being under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere programme as the 'International Scientific Council for Island Development' in 1989. 'International Scientific Council for Island Development (INSULA)' *Info MAB: Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme*, no. 13 (1990), 30; Beller, ed., *Proceedings of the Interoceanic Workshop*, 41.

sustainable development concerns particular to *small* islands, the Interoceanic Workshop drew on the arguments of Brookfield and others that larger islands were closer to continents in their environmental outlook and differed developmentally only in the matter of transport.[571] Smallness, then, was seen to accentuate islandness. But examination of the 'special characteristics' reveals that some justifications for prioritising smallness were stronger than others. For example, although culture was mentioned as being a distinct and strongly held feature of many islands, the degree to which 'insular peoples' commonly evolved cultures' were a function of smallness (as opposed to say isolation or timing of settlement) was less clear. Conversely, economic dependence and political marginalisation, although associated with smallness, were not peculiar to island circumstance and true of many provincial or colonial economies. The crucial distinction, it appears, was environmental. Brookfield made the case using a word that would come to define Pacific politics for decades to come,

> Environmentally, even more than economically, small islands are very exposed to external forces. In this respect, vulnerability is almost directly correlated to small size.
>
> There is, moreover, one class of islands that is particularly vulnerable to the effects of long-term climatic change now expected in consequence of the anthropogenic addition of carbon dioxide and other gases to the atmosphere. Coral atolls and sand cays, and the low-lying littorals of many other islands, are very vulnerable to a rise in sea-level.[572]

The distinctive feature of small islands was their vulnerability. "Island limits" were not simply obstacles to sustainable development but a measure of exposure to negative forces across ecology, economics, and politics. Language and research agendas sprung up to represent these ideas, euphemising them in the process. "Eco-development continua" or 'indices of

[571] Brookfield mentions Phillipe Hein and Edward Dommen's work for UNCTAD as identifying distinctive transport issues. Brookfield, 'An Approach to Islands', 26–27.
[572] Brookfield, 'An Approach to Islands', 28.

vulnerability' were suggested 'as a means of categorising islands' (or calling into question their very viability).[573]

Much has been written about 'vulnerability' and its counterpart concept 'resilience' in the context of climate change and international governance. Knowing that these ideas predated climate is important, just as is understanding what they came to mean. There are three main points relevant to this historic juncture in the island debates. The first is that 'vulnerability' would come to structure the climate negotiations.[574] Countries' vulnerability to the effects of climate change worked alongside their overall contribution to global emissions to determine what was argued, what coalitions were formed and so forth. Its logic would determine support, with finance for climate change adaptation (ideally) disbursed to those countries most vulnerable to foster their resilience. Small islands, because they risk much but emit little, have a strong moral case to demand reductions and recompense from larger, polluting nations. AOSIS was labelled the 'conscience' of the UNFCCC for this reason.[575]

The second key point is that vulnerability is a colonial process and a discourse of power rather than a natural state. Vulnerability, like the "island limits" on which it draws, is knowledge about islands and islanders from the perspective of the Global North, structured in ways that legitimate its interests. As the last chapter made clear, islands *do* have special characteristics and Indigenous systems, yet these were not limits to Pacific self-determination and rather its precondition. To extrapolate, there is little that is inherently 'vulnerable' about islands. Ecosystems know no ideal and their form in islands has sustained Pacific people for thousands of years. When left alone, the material basis of the island system is sound, with inbuilt adaptive capacity to withstand shocks, shift consumption patterns, and find new ecological equilibriums.

[573] Hess, 'Research Opportunities for Sustainable Development', 73.; Jerome McElroy and Klaus de Albuquerque, 'Managing Small Island Sustainability: Toward a Systems Design', *Sustainable Development and Environmental Management of Small Islands*, 23–33.
[574] Campbell and Barnett, *Climate Change and Small Island States*.
[575] Davis, 'The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS): The International Conscience'.

This suggests that islands are not susceptible to hazard so much as they have been rendered as locations in which disaster happens.[576] I mean this both discursively and procedurally. 'Vulnerability' serves to emphasise Northern 'resilience', while essentialising conditions that are both the product of imperialism and prompt further intervention. For instance, the notion that islands are fragile ignores the origins of phosphate strip mining, devastating species introductions, and cyclone-prone forests, naturalising invasive procedures.[577] Moreover, because vulnerability is a deemed a socio-ecological characteristic of islandness, the logic follows that those that inhabit 'small' islands are themselves diminished and equally stricken. The small islander is victimised, made passive, "lacking capacity" to deal with the effects of climate "change" or "natural" disasters (which are of course neither apolitical nor non-human in cause and effect).[578] Meanwhile, models for "adapting" and "building resilience" are found in the scientific, technocratic, developmentalist expertise of the North, ignoring the fact that islanders have had their economic and cultural systems eroded. The same can be said for most 'sustainable development' issues insofar as deficiency inevitably rests with the small island, obscuring processes of unsustainability and underdevelopment and urging remedy.

The third key point about the discourse of vulnerability is that it has also been strategically employed by island nations in the Pacific and elsewhere.[579] In the resolutions out of the South Pacific Forum or at Malé, in the speeches of diplomats like Van Lierop, frequent overtures were made to small islands' *particular* vulnerability.[580] This is legitimate of course, island

[576] Bankoff describes 'vulnerability' as a discourse related to 'orientalism', 'development' and 'tropicality'. Gregory Bankoff, 'Rendering the World Unsafe: 'Vulnerability' as Western Discourse', *Disasters* 25, no. 1 (2001), 19–35.
[577] Many that advocate 'vulnerability' for its material truth and utility acknowledge its shortcomings and emphasise that it is a process. I. Kelman, J.C. Gaillard, J. Lewis et al. 'Learning from the history of disaster vulnerability and resilience research and practice for climate change', *Natural Hazards* 82 (2016), 129–143.
[578] Erinn Cunniff Gilson, 'Vulnerability and Victimization: Rethinking Key Concepts in Feminist Discourses on Sexual Violence', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no. 1 (2016), 71–98; Campbell and Barnett, *Climate Change and Small Island States*, 162; P. O'Keefe, K. Westgate, and B. Wisner, 'Taking the Naturalness out of Natural Disasters', *Nature* 260 (1976), 566–567.
[579] Campbell and Barnett, *Climate Change and Small Island States*, 166.
[580] See also, Ronneberg, 'Small Islands and the Big Issue'; Carter, 'Pacific Island States and Thirty Years of Global Climate Negotiations'.

nations have suffered and will continue to suffer disproportionately from the effects of the climate crisis. The point made, however, is that because Pacific people do not think of themselves as 'vulnerable' per se, this 'appropriation' 'should be understood as both a reflection of what [Pacific Island Countries] understand of the serious risks they face… and as a strategy to use the language of the powerful'.[581] This is necessary in a crowded international arena and insofar as 'not using it would marginalise [Small Island Developing States]' both from funding and interacting with those most able to address climate breakdown. The task and difficulty, then, is to trade in the currency of vulnerability without paying for its logic.

My suggestion is that there is a contradiction at the heart of this literature whereby 'vulnerability' can be victimising and disavowed but nevertheless assumed as the basis for small islands' much-celebrated association. The notion that Pacific Islands 'appropriated' the discourse would seem to explain this, but we have already seen that small islands were present at the discussions in which vulnerability became their common denominator. Perhaps a focus on AOSIS and climate change has obscured an earlier, broader interregionalism for islands. This would suggest that the small islands movement did not appropriate vulnerability *but were fit to it*.

Instituting a Climate Response

A closer look at the moment climate change first appeared on the Pacific agenda supports this view. In 1986, two months before the Interoceanic Workshop, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme convened in full to review its work programme.[582] Given the totalising terms climate change is spoken about in today, one might expect the New Zealand statement to have caused a stir. It included a prediction that 'by 2030 there will be a surface

[581] Campbell and Barnett, *Climate Change and Small Island States*, 166.
[582] SPREP, *Report of the Regional Conference for Consideration and Review of the SPREP Work Programme for 1987–1988* (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1986).

temperature rises of between 1.5–4.5°C [and] a sea level rise of 20–140cm [with] significant implications for island states'.[583] One might also be forgiven for thinking this would have been the perfect opportunity to mobilise. There was, however, no Chicken Little moment. Climate was, and remains, simply one of many ecological crises taking place across the Pacific that called for an urgent response. What becomes significant, then, was the manner of the response rather than simply its scale or urgency.

Portents of an impending climate crisis entered a riven regional environment. Few of the representatives gathered in Noumea across governments, research institutions, and intergovernmental organisations were happy about SPREP's operation over the four years prior. Disputes between SPC and the Secretariat over the status of the programme had calmed, but ongoing dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Action Plan had prompted Iosefatu Reti to convene the current meeting. Member governments felt that SPREP was operating to the detriment of Pacific priorities and capacity, functioning through the research institutions to produce academic or highly technical research aligned with UNEP's international purview. With two years spent under review, SPREP was under immense pressure to give governments more direct input into the work programme. This was delivered in the form of a secretarial working paper adopted as a basic financial and institutional instrument to supplement the Action Plan. These guidelines empowered a biennial intergovernmental meeting to guide SPREP's work, establishing high-level focal points and stipulating that project financing should be contingent on 'meeting the priority needs of member countries for assistance with environmental management and conservation projects, particularly but not exclusively those which have regional implications'.[584]

[583] 'SPREP: New Zealand: Country Position Paper', 'South Pacific Regional Environment', AAUM W4043 189, INT 7/3 Part 8, R1283026, ANZ.
[584] SPREP, *Report of the Regional Conference for… the SPREP Work Programme*, 9–10, 39–40.

Pacific governments were monitoring international overreach closely, reaffirming their mandate across the breadth of environment matters. With a marathon fifth and final meeting towards the Noumea Convention scheduled for November, this was only fair. There could be little differentiation between territorial, anti-nuclear, and governance disputes if SPREP itself represented a conduit for others' agendas.

It was left to Stjepan Keckes, the magisterial director of UNEP's Ocean and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre, to respond to governments' pushback. Keckes had been a staunch advocate for SPREP since the late 1970s, but UNEP interests lay with the convenient status quo. He offered some carefully weighted words. After giving an overview of the 'regional approach to the protection of oceans' and a survey of the nine other Regional Seas Action Plans, Keckes made subtle mention of the US$300,000–$350,0000 that UNEP made available to SPREP annually.[585] This support would continue, he suggested, contingent on a review and 'with the understanding that UNEP is not a funding agency but a partner of SPREP in the implementation of activities which are of common interest'.[586] Consequently, 'the activities which may enjoy UNEP's support were to meet UNEP's criteria and fit into UNEP's general global goals and strategy for ocean-related activities'. This would include, for instance, 'the preparation of regional reports on the state of marine environment and on the implications of climatic changes', which were 'high priority subjects on which UNEP seeks active co-operation'.

Climate entered the Pacific as the epitome of global environmental governance during a time of regional resolve. As Pacific governments regained control over SPREP's operation, UNEP rear-guard action ensured the issue progressed on its terms, through the research institutions.

[585] SPREP, *Report of the Regional Conference for… the SPREP Work Programme*, 11.
[586] A UNEP review of support to SPREP was initiated in early 1986 and completed in early 1987.

The effect was to make climate response highly technical, with concomitant effects for Pacific capacity and notions of vulnerability.

In early 1987, UNEP's initiative led to the formation of a Task Team to study the 'potential impacts [of] climatic change and projected sea-level rise on Pacific Island States'.[587] Conducted through the freshly formalised Association of South Pacific Environmental Institutions (ASPEI), the Task Team was announced publicly through SPREP's environment newsletter.[588] The proposal read that while 'many countries have now established national programmes to examine and evaluate potential impacts on coastal systems and to plan accordingly', the association was 'cognisant of the inability through lack of trained manpower and facilities in most South Pacific island countries' 'to independently evaluate potential impacts [and] proposed [to] undertake a regional review'.[589] Though this was a reasonable division of labour, it enforced the separation between globalist expatriate research and Indigenous Pacific management. Instead of adjusting their priorities or building Pacific capacity, the institutions had reoriented to service UNEP's climate change and pollution monitoring priorities in the manner to which they were accustomed. One year into operations, this point was made obliquely at the SPREP Coordinating Group meeting. Having reviewed progress on what was an '[important] subject for the Pacific region' the Group 'expressed interest on the involvement of policy makers, administrators and experts from the SPREP region in meetings which will consider policy issues related to the impact of climatic changes'.[590] This was passed over. Governments would need to wait for published results.

[587] 'Sea-Level Rise: Impact on South Pacific Islands', *SPREP Environment Newsletter* 7 (1986), 3; ASPEI, *Interim Report on Potential Impacts of Greenhouse Gas Generated Sea-Level Rise on Pacific Island States of the SPREP Region* (Nairobi: UNEP, 1988).
[588] See also, SPREP, *Report of the Intergovernmental Meeting on the SPREP Action Plan* (Noumea: SPC, 1988), 15.
[589] 'Sea-Level Rise: Impact on South Pacific Islands', 4; ASPEI, *Interim Report on Potential Impacts*, 11.
[590] SPC, *Report of the Fourteenth Meeting of the SPREP Co-ordinating Group* (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1987), 15.

The Task Team produced an interim summary to SPREP's Second Intergovernmental Meeting in June of 1988. Such was the disconnect between ASPEI and governments that Fiji asked for budgetary clarification and Cook Islands queried whether the climate project was part of the SPREP Work Programme at all.[591] At this stage, arguably, it was not. ASPEI had pitched independently and received funding directly through UNEP. The work involved no in-line researchers or SPREP Secretariat staff. When the interim summary was presented in Split later that year to UNEP's Joint Meeting of the Task Teams from the Mediterranean, South and East Asian, Caribbean, South-East and South Pacific Regional Seas, the report featured no SPREP acknowledgement or letterhead.[592] ASPEI Chairman John Pernetta, of the University of Papua New Guinea, defended this process forcefully, tabling a report that suggested the institutions had no obligation to work with or on behalf of governments.[593] If a coup was brewing, it did not eventuate. The "second phase" of the project was agreed as a joint undertaking with UNEP funding through SPREP. ASPEI would conduct further research and report in full the following year. SPREP would assume the missing co-ordinating and clearinghouse role, equipping governments with up-to-date research and relevant policy options.[594] UNEP would support further baseline studies and participation in global activities. As the centrepiece of this effort, the three bodies would convene the Intergovernmental Meeting on Climatic Change and Sea Level Rise in the South Pacific, to take place in Majuro, Marshall Islands in July of 1989.

A Climate of Crisis

The Majuro Meeting stands as a testament to environmental regionalism and established the Pacific as a realm of climate ambition. As the Pacific's first dedicated climate conference, Majuro motivated scientists, diplomats, and policymakers towards a working consensus, a plan

[591] SPREP, *Report of the Intergovernmental Meeting*, 18–19.
[592] ASPEI, *Interim Report on Potential Impacts*.
[593] See Chapter IV; 'Institutional Involvement in the Implementation of the SPREP Action Plan 1983–1987', Box 14, ADC.
[594] SPREP, *Report of the First Meeting of the SPREP Steering Committee* (Noumea: SPC, 1989), 7.

for how island nations would approach an issue promising to define their times. The meeting was opportune, equipping Pacific governments with the latest science and ensuring they attended the upcoming international summits working as a bloc. It was high profile, ministerial, and involved international observers from Jamaica, Mauritius, and the Maldives. Outputs were political and scientific, with the issuing of joint statements calling on the international community and the commissioning of in-country impact-and-response studies. Majuro is considered the technical backstop to the Malé Conference and the heads of government meetings of the South Pacific Forum in Tarawa and Commonwealth at Langkawi. It set the agenda and made 1989 the vital year for Pacific climate response.

Drawing on the perspectives of those present, I want to reframe Majuro. We should think of it not only as a beginning in the story of Pacific climate action, but as one of a series of twists in the history of Pacific environmentalism and the small islands movement. Admittedly this is difficult, the climate crisis encourages one to think of such moments as unprecedented and a break with the past. Majuro is most often approached by non-historians from outside of the Pacific, asking what islanders knew, when, and how accurately. Accordingly, and given both the gravity and the novelty of the issue, testimony from Majuro assumes a seemingly visionary quality. Marshallese President Amata Kabua's opening address becomes classic for its appeals to power. I look instead to the way he also levelled with those present, saying,

> Your work is vitally important to the people of the Marshall Islands and other Pacific island nations. You will be considering the very existence of our islands… This was brought home to us all by a recent issue of *Pacific Islands Monthly*. The headline on the cover read: THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT. SAY GOODBYE TO KIRIBATI, THE MARSHALL ISLANDS, TOKELAU, TUVALU, AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF. When the regional press and the international news media give us this kind of introduction to the phenomenon of global warming, our interest is quite naturally aroused...
>
> [However], I ask that in all of your discussions, and especially in your public pronouncements, that the subject of a possible sea level rise be treated even-handedly. For those of us who live in the Marshall Islands, the refrain that 'The oceans are rising' sounds too much like a refrain we have been hearing for many years, that 'The sky is falling.' You will recall that, from 1946 to 1958, the United States tested nuclear weapons in the northern Marshall Islands.

> Marshallese people lost the use of their homelands and some were physically harmed by radioactive fallout… I am telling you this because, in addition to the physical harm caused by the programme, many people in the Marshall Islands were overly traumatised by the testing… and I think the question of sea level rise can all too easily be treated with a great deal of sensationalism. I am appealing to your responsibility as scientists. As you discuss the rising seas, please keep in mind those of us who will be impacted by the changes.
>
> It is truly frightening to think that our ocean will turn against us. We have been sustained by the ocean for two millennia. It has been bountiful and continues to yield to us its bounty. We have learned that this harmony may be interrupted by the actions of nations very distant from our shores. I hope that the appeal of the people of the Pacific can help convince the industrialized nations to discontinue their profligate contamination of the atmosphere…[595]

Kabua's touch points encourage one to think across regional and global scales and back into Pacific pasts. He understood hazard immediately and intimately in material terms but spoke also to the vulnerability being projected and potentially internalised. Three decades on, we find the perspectives of those present in Majuro are similarly tinged. For Iosefatu Reti, this was with a certain resentment. Speaking of the presentations that followed Kabua's address he recalls,

> In 1989 we had the first conference on climate change in the Pacific, up in Micronesia. And the presentations were done by lecturers from all the universities within this organisation [ASPEI]. All the presentations started with 'expected impact of climate change on… coral reefs, expected impact of climate change on… health, everything started with 'expected…'. It was just a different focus but same…. This was the first time that countries had come together to talk about an environmental issue apart from the 1985 conference [on national parks]. So they are making all these technical presentations to people who have had no prior idea about what they are talking about. [These were] very senior officials... 'The [Institutions] are way way ahead, and what they are talking about is just going up here *gestures* and nobody was picking up on what they are doing.
>
> And I can remember there was this old man from Tonga, I don't know if you've come across the name Sione Tongilava. He was the oldest person that we had in SPREP. A lot of the time he says things that people just laugh at. You know, it was just his nature. And after all these presentations this old man said, 'All I've been hearing is you know "expect this, expect this, expect this"', and he said, 'can anybody tell me if this is really going to happen?' And he said a joke that made the people from UNEP and the professors from the university really mad, they walked out of the room… I mean we appreciate what they are doing but, the countries are saying well why don't you do something about the issues that we are concerned about.
>
> There were issues like deforestation, soil erosion, pollution of the marine areas. I mean it would have been very useful and appropriate for them to at least do some things and provide

[595] SPREP, *Report of the SPC/UNEP/ASPEI Intergovernmental Meeting on Climatic Change and Sea Level Rise in the South Pacific* (Noumea: SPC, 1989).

> some real information to people who are actually dealing with these issues at a country level. At least do [climate change] work in the countries, get the people who work in the countries to be a part of that research, give them some training and information so they can… You know after these guys come in, they do their research one year, you don't see their results you don't hear from them. At least have people in the countries, in the governments who can carry the work on.[596]

In downscaling global projections to a regional level, the Task Team had advised without assisting, doing governments no favours. Sione Tongilava responded not in ignorance but to question. Uncertainty about the effects of climate change may have placed an emphasis on establishing scientific consensus, and rightly so. However, after two years of independent academic inquiry it was imperative to involve Pacific scientists and policymakers. Instead, the task of science communication was left to a now-notorious booklet, 'A Climate of Crisis', which contained illustrations aimed at a lay audience.[597] Patrick Nunn, the Task Team's University of the South Pacific representative, explains his own tinge of remonstration,

> At that time we were working with projections of climate change that were much greater than those that we have even today. So sea level rise was the principal concern, as it still is, although there are other concerns associated with climate change. [The upper] estimates were something like the sea level would be 4m higher by the end of the [21st] century… With those kind of estimates we drew maps showing areas of inundation that were greatly exaggerated compared with what came later… That was a major point of difference...
>
> [A Climate of Crisis] was trying to raise awareness of climate change. And you flip the pages and you saw this little black person and the black person went 'wahhh' and fell into the ocean… And that just made me furious… I said 'you know this is so insulting, this is going to send such the wrong message, who do you think you are? Can you really be so blind to culture?'… [That] group of thinkers, you know expatriates, let's screw the region for all we can, let's make as much money as we can and who gives a stuff about cultural sensitivity…
>
> It was absolutely dreadful and the people who conceived it, they stood up at the meeting and they were so proud of it. They deluded themselves to such an extent that they thought they had done a great thing by producing this cartoon full of demeaning characters… And I said this is absolutely appalling, I wouldn't let my students at USP see that. This was not helpful [and] it was not in isolation.[598]

[596] Iosefatu Reti, interview with the author, February 15, 2020.
[597] Campbell and Barnett criticise 'A Climate of Crisis' for presenting higher sea level rise estimates only, suggesting it set an alarmist precedent and created anxiety within a Pacific readership. Peter Hulm, 'A Climate of Crisis: Global Warming and the Island South Pacific' (Port Moresby: ASPEI, 1989).
[598] Patrick Nunn, interview with the author, December 6, 2021.

Constructing a climate of crisis would do nothing to help Pacific people prepare for one. Over the last three decades, conceptions of Pacific vulnerability have eroded Pacific peoples' own environmentalism and capacity. Having studied adaptation in Pacific communities since Majuro, Nunn believes a 'dichotomy was established, as early as the 1980s, between SPREP and Island governments, which both became focused on external/global solutions to the emerging challenges of climate change, and local communities which continued to privilege local knowledges and their long-standing cultural resilience'.[599] He suggests that key differences exist across this dichotomy in the control, financing, technology, and logic of climate adaptation. External solutions are typically centralised, spilt across policy initiatives like coastal management plans or cyclone early-warning systems, and infrastructural "hard-fixes" like seawalls.[600] Community solutions might be cashless, gradual, and based in Indigenous culture.[601] Nunn cites the adjustment of Fijian marriage practices to build new houses up slopes. The author has a friend who, after Cyclone Winston, has planted more dalo ni tana (a species of taro) because the tuber survives for months even if the leaves are killed in high winds. This is not to suggest that moving one's house and planting different taro will be sufficient, nor that finance and technological fixes are unnecessary. It is to draw the link between the discourse of vulnerability and the external interventions it prompted, with the dereliction of regional capacity and the creation of climate dependence.

The crucial elements here are money and (recognised) expertise. Divisions created by expatriate projections of 'vulnerability' have been deepened by an increasing reliance on the finance associated with it. Critics accuse a bureaucratic class of engaging with a climate system

[599] Patrick Nunn, interview with the author, December 6, 2021.
[600] Patrick D. Nunn, 'Responding to the Challenges of Climate Change in the Pacific Islands: Management and Technological Imperatives', *Climate Research* 40 (2009), 218–222.
[601] Patrick D. Nunn and Roselyn Kumar, 'Cashless Adaptation to Climate Change: Unwelcome yet Unavoidable?', *One Earth* 1 (2019); Patrick D. Nunn, 'The end of the Pacific? Effects of Sea Level rise on Pacific Island Livelihoods', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 34 (2013), 165.

predicated on victimhood in ways that erode autonomy and pull them from the village.[602] They point out that fundraising success at international climate summits is not felt equally, highlighting the disconnect between an outward face and the inward ways Pacific people cope. Regional organisations, as conduits for external solutions, are implicated in this process. Nunn described the SPREP Secretariat as 'out of touch, staffed largely by expatriates (many of whom knew nothing about the region before they joined) who unquestioningly privileged global agendas and western scientific worldviews to the manifest detriment of Pacific knowledges and cultural resilience'.[603] He suggests that bodies like SPREP were '[responsible] in large part for embedding the idea of climate change adaptation in the Pacific as achievable only through massive injections of cash'.[604]

The climate moment is tinged by misgivings. Participants acknowledge the success of Majuro in setting the agenda but cannot forget the shortcomings that have hindered Pacific climate response since. Global agencies, foreign scientists, Pacific governments, and regional organisations are all blamed or implicated in fostering a system of climate dependency. I do not disagree with these assessments. They are made by eminent people, clear in the knowledge that we have not come far enough. That unless things change, it will get continually harder to live on islands and as Pacific people. My suggestion, however, is to remember Majuro not as a divisive moment but a diverted movement.

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[602] Campbell and Barnett suggest that the 'dominant vulnerability discourses facilitate exchanges from which people in the region rarely benefit directly. They also too often have the effect of casting people in the region as passive and unable to act until their islands sink and they are forced to flee and become refugees. This view that the Pacific Islands and their communities are in such a parlous state enables scientists and policy makers to make decisions on their behalf, which includes predetermining adaptation responses independently of any understanding of local context... researchers, consultants, NGOs workers, lawyers and bureaucrats seem to circulate in a science-policy bubble that at times floats far above the places where impacts will be felt and adaptations are required', Campbell and Barnett, *Climate Change and Small Island States*, 178–180.The Fiji delegation at COP26 was accused domestically of 'begging-bowl' diplomacy and complicity with polluters. Luke Nacei, 'COP26 Climate Trip Branded 'Junket' – Prasad Slams 36-Strong Fiji Team', November 16, 2021, *Asia Pacific Report*.

[603] Patrick Nunn, interview with author, November 30, 2021.

[604] Patrick Nunn, interview with author, November 30, 2021. This was also true of the latter South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission.

Climate dependency is part of a broader constraining of the radical potential of the small islands movement. We should be clear that Pacific people recognised the trap of climate vulnerability from the outset. Moreover, they offered an alternative vision. Pacific people were present at interregional island gatherings that promised broad association, advocating for Indigenous knowledge, development alternatives, and anti-nuclearism. Climate was approached without totalising and exceptional framings, as one of multiple ecological and social crises. SPREP was engaged in a process of becoming more 'Pacific' and giving governments greater say. This movement, which produced key wins in the Noumea Convention and later Wellington Driftnet Convention, was based in a distinct and expansive regionalism that took Pacific environmentalism as its basis.[605] Its redefinition came as international agencies and experts prescribed an island condition and the terms of global engagement.

However, this constriction was incomplete and potential has been reached in other areas. Climate is not the totality of the small islands movement. The following section shows Pacific environmentalism realised on issues pertinent to small islands' sustainable development. Simultaneously, this happened technically and in ways that did not necessarily overturn dependency, and progressively to greatly expand the range of Pacific possibility.

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> I always say to the leaders, I love it when you go out there and thump the table. I love it because what it does is focus the attention on us. But when you go behind to the room at the back and negotiate on the document it becomes a technical matter.
>
> I went into SPREP at the beginning of 1990, Joe had gone back to Samoa… The [Rio] Earth Summit came in 1992 and leading up to it there were a lot of preparations: [the] Rio Declaration, negotiation for the climate and biodiversity conventions… And then we were tasked with co-ordinating the Pacific nations, [and] preparing the technical position for the negotiation. You can well imagine, the technical capacity of some of the small island countries are quite limited. Their capacity in general is quite limited… When you get into the negotiation

[605] See also the emerging 'Oceanian Sovereignty'. V.C. Tilot, B. Guilloux, K. Willaert, C.Y. Mulalap, T. Bambridge, P. D'Arcy, A. Mawyer, F. Gaulme, E. Kacenelenbogen, A. Jeudy de Grissac, J. Moreno Navas and A. Dahl, 'The Concept of Oceanian Sovereignty in the Context of Deep Sea Mining in the Pacific Region', *Frontiers in Marine Science* 8, 756072 (2021).

> of climate change and biodiversity you can go so far with the emotion, which is good to push to the forefront, but when you actually come down to the nitty gritty it's all based on data and wording. SPREP's task at the time was preparation of the technical briefing on the issues being negotiated as well as finding money to ensure the participation of the Pacific and doing the logistics. It was a huge undertaking.

Vili Fuavao, Former SPREP Coordinator/Director, interview with the author, Auckland, September 16, 2019.

This chapter started with a thump of the table but it will end in the backroom. If Pacific participation in AOSIS and the climate negotiations shows the vibrancy of the region's diplomacy, the technical equivalent would be SPREP's work towards formal recognition for the category of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the United Nations system. In short, this section shows how the political thump of AOSIS gained international standing through the technical backroom SIDS. My contention is that the while the radical potential of the small islands movement was largely constrained during this process, Pacific influence can be seen in key clauses and the way 'multilateral environmental agreements [were] captured for islands'.[606]

What follows is a brief description of the Pacific contribution "to SIDS" over two series of meetings from 1991–1994. Because the story is (unavoidably) replete with the names of meetings, organisational acronyms, and jargon, the key points are summarised here. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, June 3–14, 1992), commonly 'UNCED' or the Rio 'Earth Summit', would embed small islands as 'a special case both for environment and development' in a dedicated section of its action strategy, 'Agenda 21'.[607] This was advanced two years later by the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Bridgetown, April 25–May 6, 1994), in the

[606] Gerald Miles, interview with the author, August 26, 2022.
[607] United Nations, *Agenda 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development; Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; Statement of Forest Principles: The Final Text of Agreements Negotiated by Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), 3–14 June 1992, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil* (New York: United Nations Dept. of Public Information, 1993).

'Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS'.[608] Through "Rio" and "Barbados", small islands gained their own status and structure, their special characteristics and needs formally differentiating them from other Least Developed Countries and members of the Group of 77. 'Pacific Small Island Developing States' (PSIDS) would thus become a new framework to connect Pacific nations to each other and the international community.

Reorienting SPREP for Rio.

Preparations for the Earth Summit came at a heady time for SPREP. The decision to approach the conference as a region coincided with confirmation that SPREP would transition from an intergovernmental programme hosted by SPC to a separate regional organisation. Independence came with a new home in Apia and all the frustrations of relocating in early 1992. (Cyclones Ofa and Val over the preceding years had put the move in doubt but new Director Vili Fuavao felt it imperative to commit, showing Samoa that SPREP was 'not an organisation [full of] fat cat technocrats that only move if the air is conditioned'.)[609] It also brought a new international role, legal agreement, financing options, and an increase in staff.[610] In-country work continued with SPREP coordinating the development of National Environmental Management Strategies. SPREP's rationale was that a push to elevate the status of environmental issues, both internationally and within the region, would generate funds and garner domestic budgetary support to build national capacity.[611] This was considered a priority

[608] United Nations, *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (New York: United Nations Dept. of Public Information, 1994).
[609] Vili Fuavao, interview with the author, September 16, 2019.
[610] A reliance on UNEP and country contributions, as well as SPREP's position within SPC had served to keep staff numbers low. Independence allowed for grants from external donors. Grant aid and technical assistance for the National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS) and participation at Rio was secured from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as from New Zealand and Australia.
[611] Gerald Miles, interview with the author, August 26, 2022; David Sheppard, interview with the author, December 23, 2021.

given that only a handful of Pacific nations had 'environment' staff and fewer still had dedicated units.

A decade after Rarotonga, the Pacific carried out the work of consensus and environmental regionalism once more. For Rio, the strategy was to produce individual country reports from work towards the broader national strategies, consolidating them into a regional state of the environment report and a statement of priorities to inform Agenda 21. This would happen iteratively over eighteen months, with regional workshops and intergovernmental meetings interspersed between the four UNCED 'Preparatory Committee' sessions or "PrepCom(s) I–IV".[612]

Commentary on Pacific representation at Rio is sparse and typically focuses on the final conference and outcomes. In June 1992, UNCED was attended by over 100 Pacific representatives, including nine heads of government, one head of state, and two governors. They attended brandishing the exquisitely produced environment report in *Environment and Development: A Pacific Island Perspective*, and a common platform in *The Pacific way: Pacific island developing countries' report to UNCED*.[613] This was high profile work for SPREP, supported by other regional organisations—former President of Kiribati and South Pacific Forum Secretary General Ieremia Tabai even cameoed in a video linking development and environment to raise awareness. Most were pleased with what was achieved diplomatically at the conference, but there has been some disquiet about the means to this end. Considering *The Pacific Way*, for example, 'Atu Emberson-Bain and members of the civil society group

[612] The dates for the PrepComs are as follows: PrepCom I (Nairobi, August 1990); PrepCom II (Geneva, March 1991), PrepCom III (Geneva, August 1991), PrepCom IV (New York, March 1992). UNCED preparation begun at the SPREP Third Intergovernmental Meeting in September 1990. Workshops were held in Nadi (4–6 June, 1991), Port Vila (21–23, October 1991) and Sydney (February 2–3, 1992); SPREP, *Report of the Intergovernmental Meeting on the SPREP Action Plan* (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1990); Gerald Miles, 'UNCED: A Pacific Regional Perspective', *Review of the European Community and International Environment Law* 1, no. 3 (1992), 317.

[613] Robert Thistlethwaite and Greg Votaw, eds., *Environment and Development: a Pacific Island Perspective* (Apia: ADB/SPREP, 1992); SPREP, *The Pacific Way: Pacific Island Developing Countries' Report to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (Noumea: SPC, 1992).

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era suggested that promising rhetoric around nuclear testing, Indigenous knowledge, the role of women, and climate change laundered a report otherwise reluctant to confront the structural and hegemonic causes of underdevelopment and unsustainability and thus embodied the contradiction of "sustainably developing" Pacific Islands.[614] A lack of criticality was compounded by the report's 'unPacific' character, general apoliticism, and tendency to 'blame the victim'. The implication here, was that the Rio process had been unduly influenced by metropolitan ideologies through donor templates, diplomatic pressure in working groups, and the heavy use of expatriate consultants (including *The Pacific Way* editors Thistlethwaite and Votaw). In fact, notes Emberson-Bain, 'it would have been something of a miracle for a genuine Pacific consensus to have emerged and been freely articulated'.[615]

Pacific Preparation

A focus on the backroom, the PrepComs, does not diminish these critiques. Instead, it illuminates the role of expatriate allies, namely SPREP's Gerald Miles and UNEP's Arthur Dahl, in key manoeuvres during PrepComs III & IV. The question for Pacific environmentalism becomes whether SPREP's particular regionalism, energised by anti-nuclearism and informed by Indigenous knowledge and islandness, found expression in the way small islands achieved status and structure. Answering this requires one to trace key concepts or initiatives from the region through a thicket of text into conference outcomes. The trail starts with the first intersessional workshop held in Nadi during June of 1991, and Miles' drafting of a 'Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development' from the views of the

[614] 'Atu Emberson-Bain, 'Sanitising the Regional Environment Crisis: The Politics of *The Pacific Way* Report', in *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth: Perspectives of Pacific Island Women*, ed., 'Atu Emberson-Bain (Suva, Fiji: Marama Publications, 1994).
[615] 'Emberson-Bain, 'Sanitising the Regional Environment Crisis', 48.

50 officials and observers present.[616] The Declaration, referencing international precedents including Malé, Rarotonga, Wellington and Noumea, proceeded to:

> [Emphasise] the uniqueness of the South Pacific region, its small land masses dispersed over the largest marine area in the world; its high degree of ecosystem and species diversity and vulnerability to natural disasters; the high degree of economic and cultural dependence on the natural environment; its diversity of cultures and languages, traditional practices and customs which are integral to the close and special relationship of Pacific peoples with their environment;
>
> [Recognise] that actions taken in one country or region should not adversely affect the environment of other countries or regions;
>
> [Register deep concern] about the vulnerability of the South Pacific to serious environmental threats including climate change and sea level rise, threats to marine living resources, and pollution which might result from nuclear testing, and importing, transporting, storing or destroying toxic and hazardous wastes or weapons, and, in particular, such threats generated from outside the region…[617]

Going on to affirm SPREP's (newly independent) mandate and work programme, the declaration was a mixed success. Pacific notions of environment were retained alongside clauses describing outside threats that were severely watered down. The two do not easily coexist, however Vili Fuavao argues such compromises were a necessary evil, recalling that,

> Some of the Forum countries were of the opinion that the [South Pacific] Forum should have its own agency, then it can prepare its own environment decision without the input from metropolitans [excluding Australia and NZ]… [But] when you look at the environmental issues that we talk about with the world, [they] are actually issues that we depend on the world for action on. Climate change. The Forum, now they still issue [declarations] on climate change. It's okay! They can issue it based on their political appreciation. But at least you have one organisation that can provide technical assessments regardless.[618]

This technical ambivalence was echoed by Gerald Miles, SPREP Officer for Pacific Preparation for UNCED, remarking that 'because New Zealand, Australia, [France], and United States were members of SPREP we had to be careful to inform but not dilute'.[619] So, hydrated or not, the Ministerial Declaration passed through the SPREP Fourth

[616] Meli Laddpeter, 'Back in History: Environmental Issues', *The Fiji Times*, May 27, 2022.
[617] SPREP, *Fourth Intergovernmental Meeting: Report of the Meeting of Officials* (Noumea: SPREP, 1991).
[618] Vili Fuavao, interview with the author, September 16, 2019.
[619] Gerald Miles, interview with the author, August 26, 2022.

Intergovernmental Meeting (Noumea, July 1991) to be submitted alongside a broader' South Pacific Regional Statement' of priorities for Agenda 21 to PrepCom III.

At PrepComs, would-be SIDS had to walk a fine line. With AOSIS working as a political grouping in the climate negotiations there was speculation and a growing unease at what the Alliance might mean for established UN coalitions more broadly. Miles mentions the effect of SPREP's common platform and strong regionalism, recalling that,

> As the Pacific started to have a common voice in the preparatory meetings, we were told by the Group of 77 that we shouldn't be too noisy about the Alliance of Small Island States, we were not AOSIS on sustainable development… that might fracture the G77 globally… But in the margins of the PrepComs for the Earth Summit we weren't convening meetings of AOSIS, we were convening meetings of *islands*... And frankly this is where SPREP's role was important because there wasn't a regional organisation, there wasn't an AOSIS secretariat providing that sort of support. So we could, I could, literally organise a meeting room, get some food if we needed some food, prepare briefing materials, circulate them. So, in things that were intergovernmental—Vili was quite clear on this too—we should just do things to help all of these island countries, it didn't really matter once you're there and you are doing it for the 14 Pacific Island countries you might as well do it for the 40 [AOSIS members]. Whoever's there, we had common interest… Essentially you built camaraderie and a common understanding on the [sustainable] development side.[620]

Island camaraderie was key at PrepCom III. In the longest and most complex chapter of Agenda 21, concerning oceans, seas and coastal areas, cooperation through SPREP advanced key concepts surrounding the special characteristics of islands. For instance, Cook Islands and Fiji inserted textual references to islands as 'fragile, inter-related ecosystems', mentioning that 'for the small island state, the coastal zone and EEZ are the only areas available for social and economic activities'.[621] Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, *joined by the Maldives,* made further interventions: on distant water fishing and exclusive economic zones, as well as another concerning coastal zone management, acknowledging the role of 'local authorities, as well as customary and traditional groups' and their 'strong cultural

[620] Gerald Miles, interview with the author, August 26, 2022.
[621] 'Changes to A/CONF.151/PC/WG.II/L.18 Proposed by Cook Islands and Fiji', Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.

obligations and statutory functions on the management of coastal areas'.[622] Through such work islands attracted considerable attention and discussion, such that UNCED Secretary-General Maurice Strong opted to add a separate programme area within Agenda 21 on 'the sustainable development of islands' within the oceans and coastal areas theme.[623]

The case for islands was made but there was the outstanding question of text. In a coup for the Pacific, the person tasked with drafting the islands component was none other than Arthur Dahl, the architect of SPREP and now Deputy Director of UNEP's Ocean and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre. Strong brought Dahl into the UNCED Secretariat, remembering his work in the 1970s. Dahl completed a first iteration of the islands section in early November 1991. The preamble, which follows, embedded key references to islands as a category, the role of Indigenous stewardship, and climate vulnerability—in some cases with stronger language than that presented through SPREP. In what is a testament to Dahl's knowledge of the subject and feel for consensus, the text of Chapter 17 Section G went substantively unchanged through PrepCom IV:

> Islands are a special case both for environment and development. They tend to be ecologically fragile and vulnerable with frequently a unique flora and fauna, giving them a proportionally very high share of global biodiversity. Their small size, limited resources and isolation disadvantage them economically and prevent economies of scale. They have all the problems and challenges of the coastal zone concentrated in a limited land area. The indigenous island people have rich and diverse cultures with special adaptations to the island environment and knowledge of the sound management of its resources. Because island development options are limited, there are special challenges to planning for sustainable development. Many islands must depend for their economic development on marine resources shared between waters under their national jurisdiction and the high seas. With the threats of global climate change and sea-level rise, many islands may also be at increasing risk, and certain island States could in the long term be threatened by the loss of their entire national territory.[624]

[622] 'Protection of the Oceans…Countries: Maldives, Marshall, Kiribati, Solomons, Tonga, Vanuatu… 30/08/81 1140hrs', Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.
[623] See Note 23 within 'Protection of oceans, all kinds of seas including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their lining resources… Report of the Secretary-General of the Conference', Preparation Committee for [UNCED], Fourth Session, Working Group II, Item 2 of provisional agenda, Arthur Dahl Personal Collection, 33.
[624] 'ISLANDS… A21ISLAN.2 AD 13.11.91', Arthur Dahl Personal Collection.

Although it was weakened in the final text of Agenda 21, the reference to the special place of 'indigenous island people' was monumental. This was more than a nod to participatory development and has significant implications. Coming through Pacific nations and Dahl, it was a clear extension of the work that was advanced through the 1970s and 1980s—one thinks here to Piddington's observations at Rarotonga that cultural maintenance and the employment of traditional knowledge was a unique, world-leading feature of SPREP when compared to other Regional Seas. Here, in a small islands movement, we see how instrumental the Indigenous dimension of Pacific Islands in particular were in advancing the idea of a cultural islandness. Like the environmental characteristics laid out at Puerto Rico, such justifications for small islands' special case are vital because they are differences in kind rather than simply in scale. This has become important politically in key areas of the climate change debate, and for example, there is greater moral and legal force in stressing the rights of Indigenous peoples to remain on their islands. And while it is difficult identifying specific contributions of island regions to the movement, given the cooperation between would-be SIDS and the shared AOSIS negotiating platform, further work may establish more instances where a *Pacific* islandness drove negotiations, or alternatively, where it was stalled.

Having finished the islands section, Dahl was tasked with redrafting and reorganising the entire Oceans chapter for coherence and clarity. This was no small task with sensitive topics like whaling, deep sea mining, and law of the sea still locked within bracketed text. Dahl mentions the impossibility of '[putting] something together that has to be relatively short, that will be scientifically coherent and that everyone will agree to'.[625] That did not mean one could not be creative, however. 'Having wanted to do everything for islands', Dahl saw an opportunity in UNCED. 'In regional seas [we] already had connections between the programmes', he

[625] Arthur Dahl, interview with the author, July 4, 2022.

explains.[626] 'That was the basis for trying to bring them together on an even larger scale… [we] needed to, for the first time, get all the islands of the world together to see what they had in common as small islands'.[627] Gerald Miles stresses the utility of what would become the Barbados Conference for the Pacific, recalling,

> When it came to one of the final negotiations, this is where Arthur Dahl was really important. So he drafted this chapter on Oceans, Coasts and Islands and [SPREP] worked very closely with the island countries to split up the statements to get into that chapter the things we wanted, which included a conference on the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States… It was supposed that the first conference after the Earth Summit was going to focus on this "vulnerable" group… Anecdotally, [the breakthrough] was at a time when the lead negotiator for the US was actually out of the room. A Texan called Tucker Scully. Lovely guy but he had not desire for island states to have a separate meeting… That was an important outcome in that PrepCom.
>
> So, all of a sudden, the SIDS had a process.[628]

In April of 1994, the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States would solidify small islands as a 'special case' with respect to environment and development in the UN system. In this sense, Barbados built logically from work towards interregional islands cooperation begun in the 1970s and 1980s. The Barbados Declaration, and Programme of Action established ongoing association through international cooperation, information sharing and new structures for financing and technical assistance. Follow up conferences in Mauritius (2004) and Samoa (2014) have built on these achievements. But make no mistake, the key to the grouping's significance and continuing sense of purpose is not based in fundraising or identifying small islands 'unique and particular vulnerabilities'.[629] As the

[626] At the Sixteenth Pacific Science Congress in Seoul, 1987, Dahl coordinated a 'Symposium on Regional Co-operation on Environmental Protection of the marine and Coastal Areas of the Pacific'; in 1989 there was a third symposium in the series at which Dahl gave a keynote. See, UNEP, *Co-operation for Environmental Protection in the Pacific* (Nairobi: UNEP, 1988); UNEP, *Regional Co-operation on Environmental Protection of the Marine and Coastal Areas of the Pacific Basin* (Nairobi: UNEP, 1991).
[627] A smaller iteration of the Barbados Conference took place in 1992 following PrepCom IV under the auspices of FAO. FAO, *Inter-regional Conference of Small Island Countries on Sustainable Development and Environment in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Christ Church, Barbados, 7–10 April 1992* (Rome: FAO, 1992).
[628] Gerald Miles, interview with the author, August 26, 2022.
[629] UN, 'SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway'.

conclusion makes clear, it is because the SIDS process has brought a table out from the backroom for islands to thump.

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The small islands movement would have vital force. The association of more than forty island states would reshape internationalism. Its oceanic territory would encircle the globe, with control over marine resources, strategic centres, and shipping lanes. It would be supercontinental in scale, and more fluid. Islands' distinctive cultures and postcolonial circumstance would afford principled, critical difference. This would be a union for the oceans, with all the immensity it implies.

This vision has been constrained but we can appreciate it precisely because it exists as potentiality. *Mana Motu*, meaning the 'power' or 'status' of islands, is an alternative rendering of the history of climate change and sustainable development in the Pacific, paying attention to contingency, to the unrealised, the precluded. It asks what it means to denigrate those that know an ocean union, confining them to insularity and prescribing a limited condition. Climate change discourse has reinforced victimhood, monopolised expertise, and masked hegemony. But by taking a longer, wider view this chapter shows the hidden violence of vulnerability. It has diminished Pacific peoples' very history and confined our futures.

We are telling stories of Pacific resilience, bravery, and morality in the face of climate crisis. With current warming trends, the Pacific is set to lose its coral and low-lying islands by the end of this century. Storms and saltwater intrusion threaten the foundation of Pacific life and livelihood. Climate justice is rapidly being foreclosed by incrementalism, apathy, and vested interest. We know, deeply, that we are considered collateral, even expendable. So, we speak of being frontline states, the canaries in the coalmine, small island Davids versus carbon Goliaths.

We tell the world that we are not drowning, we are fighting. In doing so, we forget that there was a broader agenda.

Pacific people made global interventions through Pacific environmentalism. The evil of polluting an interconnected ocean and the success of the anti-nuclear campaign instilled confidence in Sione Tongilava. The inbuilt capacity of islands' people and productivity inspired Mere Pulea and Suliana Siwatibau. For Iosefatu Reti and Ian Fairbairn, it was the valid alternatives or useful complements presented through traditional ways. All understood the importance of keeping inquiry and environmental management close to culture, to communities, lest it lose its relevance.

Their allies did not believe these attempts to enact a Pacific environmental future were unrealistic, quite the opposite. Rather than addressing a small island condition that was limited or terminal as saviours, they contributed to a global intervention they saw as benefitting internationalism as supporters. Piddington brought the dumping issue to a Pacific conclusion. Brookfield crystalised the islands discourse, mobilising it. Nunn defected from institutional work to reveal hard climate truths from frontline communities. Dahl and Miles ushered Pacific priorities through technical backrooms to give them standing. Of the dozens of outside experts involved, those who could see the small islands movement for its potential also happened to be the most able.

Pacific environmentalists imbued regionalism, and then interregionalism, with distinctive qualities, allowing for the wins that are celebrated today. Islandness was a mere proxy for an ambitious agenda, an ocean union. Climate joined driftnet fishing, nuclear testing/waste dumping, mining, and forestry as urgent, imposed issues that Pacific people both protested on the world stage, *and used as a platform to overcome dependency*. Thus, Puerto Rico recognised small islands as a category in sustainable development drawing on Pacific research. Majuro

was a success not for expatriate expertise but for Pacific resolve. After Barbados, the Alliance of Small Island States functions because of technical work advanced interregionally through the Small Island Developing States process. Looking closely at the justifications ‘for islands’, we see that Pacific experience was often the difference.

Conclusion:

A Unified Ocean, An Ocean Union, Only One Ocean

> If we breach [the 1.5-degree threshold] many small islands will no longer exist, and those that do will no longer be a place we want to call home.
>
> [The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference] will not be a true victory if we roll back efforts to keep 1.5 degrees alive. For countries like Palau, it will mean that we've traded loss and damage—money we wish we didn't have to ask for—in exchange for the true ability to remain in our countries and homes. And we don't want that hollow victory.

Ilana Seid, Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations speaking at the 27th Session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, November 2022.

What can a history that we cannot yet see tell us about a future that has already happened?[630]

This conclusion began on the day history will likely remember as Pacific diplomacy's most bittersweet. November 20th, 2022 marked the climax of over thirty years of self-sacrifice as Pacific nations and the Alliance of Small Island States realised their long-time advocacy on the crucial issue of "addressing loss and damage"—i.e., compensation or financial assistance to account for the severe and unavoidable impacts of climate change. By securing funding for those in the Global South who contribute negligibly to environmental breakdown but stand to suffer its worst effects, these actions have benefited billions. For this win, however, Pacific nations have given everything. Progress on loss and damage has come at the expense of efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. In what was likely the last best chance to limit warming

[630] For Pacific futures that have "already happened", see Damon Salesa, *Island Time: New Zealand's Pacific Futures* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2017).

to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, the crucial threshold under which the worst effects of the climate crisis may be averted, the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference failed to deliver greater ambition. An energy crunch and heightened geopolitical tensions took hold, meaning that the summit narrowly avoided backsliding completely on assurances made the previous year in Glasgow regarding short term emissions reductions and the phasing down of fossil fuels. It is now a scientific and political near-certainty that the Pacific will lose all of its coral and face sea level rise and unprecedented storm systems that will render many low-lying islands uninhabitable by the end of this century.[631] Climate justice is now a contradiction in the Pacific; we face certain disaster despite contributing only one percent of global emissions.[632] Our region has become a sacrifice zone, again.[633]

In the context of multiple, overwhelming ecological crises, there is power in stories which demonstrate Pacific peoples' commitment to environmental stewardship in perpetuity. We cannot always see such tales in our present; often they are not told, many have been interrupted. But thinking genealogically, they are there. *Kotahi te Moana* is a reclamation of a Pacific past that permits a consciousness shift away from the acceptance of, or mere reaction to, what is undeniably an endgame within Pacific history. It shows there was a broader agenda. It describes environmental self-determination, work done at all levels for the retention of indigenous Pacific environmental cultures. It recalls transformational environmental justice achieved by Pacific people in principled ways. It demonstrates the true potential of regional assembly

[631] M. Mycoo, M. Wairiu, D. Campbell, V. Duvat, Y. Golbuu, S. Maharaj, J. Nalau, P. Nunn, J. Pinnegar, and O.Warrick, 'Small Islands', in *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, eds., H.O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, and B. Rama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
[632] Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* (Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022), 8.
[633] Here we might remember the histories of phosphate extraction which plundered Nauru and Banaba to provide fertiliser for the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, or nuclear testing, whereby Indigenous peoples were relocated or excluded from their homelands on atolls and the Australian outback, often using religious justification and appeals to the greater good.

outside of international systems that have provided only unfavourable deals, weaponised incrementalism, or palliative care. Quite simply, if Pacific people are to avoid functional demise, we must continue to tell these stories, using them as a basis for action that nurtures the life force of our islands and ocean.

Pacific environmentalism emerged in the 1970s as a regional ethic connecting Pacific people and protecting their ways of thinking and relating to the natural world. It consolidated a body of knowledge about Pacific ecologies based in situated experience, thought through cultural tradition, tempered by colonial imposition, and operated alongside international science. It informed a movement and new organisations, notably the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, which served as both a forum and a work programme to advance a new form of environmental regionalism. This became the key architecture for mediating international influence and staging global interventions.

Kotahi te Moana is a work of Pacific history that addresses the lack of critical environmental thought in discussions of Pacific regionalism, in ways relevant to global histories of Indigeneity and environmentalism. It has utilised a diverse source base comprising oral history, scientific fieldwork, declassified government files, and organisational grey literature to access Pacific environmental thought and action, showing that while it interacts with globalising Indigeneities, dominant international environmentalisms, and the "environmentalism of the poor", its particular oceanic, decolonial, syncretic and regional qualities mean it goes unexplained by their histories. Not only has this caused a misappreciation of the distinctive ways environmentalism directs Pacific actions, but also of how such regional or sub-global environmentalisms within the Global South or Fourth World contributed to many of the key canons and creeds claimed by a globalised Western environmentalism. In this sense, *Kotahi te Moana* describes both a homegrown movement and Pacific involvement in global discourses of "sustainable development" and the shape of the climate change negotiations. So, when

reflecting on the failure of climate conferences, we ought to remember that it was the actions of the Marshall Islands in the Paris Agreement that established the 1.5-degree threshold by which the world now measures the Pacific's plight in the first place.

This conclusion works through three sections, grouping themes around the different meanings of the thesis' title and its key historiographical contributions. *Kotahi te Moana,* literally "unite the ocean as one", speaks to Indigenous conceptions of oneness and relationality, was used as a guiding motto for unity and regionalism through SPREP, and reminds us of that which is unique and irreplaceable across the world's great ocean.

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A Unified Ocean: A Pacific Environmental Ethic

> I think there is a Pacific environmentalism, although Western people may have a hard time grasping it, because it's far more intimately linked with their culture, their origins, their yam gardens, and everything like this… [But] you are basically chronicling what I think has been the most important movement in the entire Pacific. That is, the environmental protection of the Pacific Islands, but over time moving from a Western conservationist perspective of national parks and protecting the one-eyed squeaking pip mouse, to protecting biodiversity as a basis for delivering cultural and ecosystem services. Because *that* is the foundation of [Pacific] culture.

Randolph Thaman, interview with the author, University of the South Pacific, Laucala, Fiji, November 29, 2019.

Randy Thaman, the Pacific's veteran environmental scientist, put it as only he could. Pacific environmental thought differs from Western conservation through its mutually reinforcing culture of use. Over generations, Pacific people have developed knowledge of islands and oceans that is empirical, practical, and spiritual, but always aimed at sustaining livelihood and culture. This section ties together these understandings in the thesis, asking where to next.

Kotahi te Moana demonstrates how Pacific environmental knowledge was consolidated in a regional ethic, a philosophical basis for the movement that Thaman describes. In doing so, it

identifies a broader scientific and political context that sets Pacific environmentalism apart historically as more than the extension of traditional knowledge or earlier (colonial) resource management. Pacific environmentalism was new and influential because it was at once decolonial, syncretic, and regional. When it rained in Suva, Pacific understandings of holism were placed alongside anti-nuclearism and radiation science; the solution was not national parks but regional solidarity. SPREP was traditioned conservation for a modern Pacific because scientists and leaders worked to counter international overreach and ensure indigenous structures were the basis of action. The thesis' first two chapters examined region-wide surveys and conferences, showing how they established a scientific and political consensus about the nature of the Pacific environment. This consensus had three key tenets. First, that Pacific people have the right to environmental self-determination and are an indivisible part of island systems. Second, that many changes taking place across the region correspond to one another, sharing common causes or exhibiting patterns. Third, that the ocean connects Pacific ecosystems in an interdependent regional environment. These understandings informed environmental management that was Indigenous led, collaborative, and had local and regional elements. Pacific environmentalism therefore provided the ethical foundation for structures like SPREP and the Noumea Convention, unifying the ocean on the terms of Pacific people and in ways that were conceptual, cultural, scientific, and governmental.

Practitioners and advocates, Pacific environmentalists, were a key part of this story. The thesis describes instances where Pacific people supplemented cultural understandings through studying overseas, working in extractive regimes, or facing up to colonial attitudes. It also shows a reverse transfer, cases where expatriates built deep associations, were sensitised to Pacific appreciations, and worked towards regional priorities. Criteria were not tightly defined, and questions remain as to whether non-Pacific people are best described as "Pacific environmentalists" or simply allies. My suggestion is that there is a coherence to their

experiences and that grouping them helps to locate regional structures like SPREP, SPC, or USP between knowledge systems. We ought to remember, however, that there can be no converts to Pacific ways of thinking without Pacific people themselves, and there are few examples (if any) of effective substitutes for Pacific systems in safeguarding the regional environment.

Pacific environmentalism enables us to see Pacific peoples' concern for the environment outside of ethnographic fascination, as more than opportunist rent-seeking, and not simply superseded by science. It unites a body of knowledge that already exists but is scattered throughout the region's archives and thought separate, allowing us to tell longer and broader stories about Pacific presents and pasts. But having made the case for Pacific environmentalism, work must now establish its gradations and limits. Principally, there is a risk here of homogenising Pacific people(s) at several levels. For example, although islands and oceans featured throughout the thesis as "regional" experiences, the contribution and different perspectives of those that live in highlands and know the forest is less clear. The role of urbanisation, migration, and diaspora may further complicate the story of "village" to "region" flows with cosmopolitan or hybrid environmentalisms.[634] As the climate crisis takes hold, history also shows that effects are not shared equally within and between Pacific communities. There is room for further, critical explorations of wealth inequality and class, as well as gendered and racial disparities, in the provision of environmental management both at local and regional levels.[635]

[634] Jenny Bryant-Tokalau, *Indigenous Pacific approaches to climate change: Pacific Island countries* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

[635] Luka Amber Bunnin explains that 'hegemonic notions of [Pacificness] are heavily gendered, abled, and raced, and that these have significant impacts on the kinds of performance that are used [in] climate activism'. See, Luka Amber Leleiga Ruth Lim-Cowley-Bunnin, 'The edge the centre: Some Pasifiqueeredisabled comments on tauiwi Pasifika climate activist music and performance in New Zealand' (Unpublished Masters Thesis: University of Auckland, 2021), i.; 'Atu Emberson-Bain, ed., *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?: Perspectives of Pacific Island Women* (Suva, Fiji: Marama Publications, 1994).

An Ocean Union: Environmental Regionalism in the Pacific

> I remember the days when the Noumea-based SPREP Secretariat was just a handful of people… I remember the impossible task of trying to make do with a US$0.5 million budget shared amongst the 21 Pacific Island governments, ten regional research and training institutions and the hundreds of national and regional projects they wanted SPREP to support…
>
> I believe SPREP has made enormous strides since it gained independence in 1993. [Secretariat] staffing has increased to close to a hundred (if not more) from four individuals during our time in New Caledonia… It has become a mature, healthy, independent, and respected leader in regional and international matters on the environment… That is what we are celebrating today—the collective efforts of our governments and people (past and present) that made SPREP the success it is 20 years from when it was granted independence.

Tusanilefaia'ao Iosefatu Reti, speech on the twentieth anniversary of the SPREP Agreement, Apia, June 12, 2013.

Environmental regionalism has operated for half a century in the Pacific Islands. Iosefatu Reti describes the emergence of SPREP as its vehicle. Building from his reflections, the thesis has asked if and how different institutions aimed to, came to, or claimed to, represent the Pacific and its environmentalism. This has revealed competing visions for institutional control over what became SPREP and its operation thereafter. Regionalism's ability to provide adequate and representative environmental management and address vexed issues like nuclearism and climate change has always been at issue. This section considers the thesis' contribution in identifying an interrelated set of tensions and whether SPREP has achieved its purpose, before contemplating what future research into environmental regionalism might look like.

Kotahi te Moana makes it clear that the political sphere of Pacific regionalism is much broader than decolonisation debates in the South Pacific Conference or Forum. Issues previously considered "technical" or "apolitical", such as the "conservation of nature", were highly contested. My argument has been that this was not simply politicking, however, and reflected genuine concern for Pacific ecologies and environmental justice. However, the thesis also shows that the distinction between political and technical issues was strategically utilised by

metropolitans to situate debate outside of Pacific influence. While hosting the First Regional Symposium conservation bodies saw nuclear testing and nickel mining as outside their purview, while the United States and France would not accept "non-scientific" concessions on high seas rights and nuclear waste dumping during the Noumea negotiations. Having built formal scientific and diplomatic capacity, however, Pacific nations also used "technicality" to their advantage, notably when achieving recognition for the "special case" of Small Island Developing States. My point across the thesis is not that "political" debate and "technical" justification are no different or simply means to ends, but rather that historians need to pay close attention to the ways debates were framed and what this enabled (or prevented). For Pacific people, agenda setting was often a process of couching mandates or grievance in ways deemed admissible to outside forces—adapting to, while subverting power asymmetries. A narrow conception of politics and diplomatic strategy led to overlooking or misunderstanding the environmentalism informing Pacific positions. *Kotahi te Moana* shows that the undercurrent throughout the Noumea negotiations and Pacific-led interregionalism on climate was appreciations of the ocean. I have argued that the expansive thought worlds of Pacific environmentalists and their recognition by metropolitan powers formed the platform for an ocean union. There is likely fruitful work in identifying other, alternative political avenues where Pacific nations could reframe debates and engage colonial powers laterally.

Kotahi te Moana, as the first historical inquiry into SPREP's origin and early work, has dedicated significant attention to detailing the competing interests of nations, regional organisations, and international agencies in the operation of environmental regionalism. This has been from the standpoint of Pacific environmentalism and the thesis is not an institutional history per se. Yet, in considering the debates over SPREP's governance that took place over a decade from 1976, three broadly complementary (but nonetheless competing) versions of SPREP emerge, each with its own capabilities. First, there is the politically astute coalition of

heads of government and regional directors, active in regional and international forums such as at the Rarotonga Conference or Malé Meeting and epitomised by figures such as Michael Somare or Mahe Tupouniua. In this version, Fiji and Cook Islands attacked nuclear testing through the "conservation of nature" agenda item, Papua New Guinea sought to give SPREP an independent voice, and the Solomon Islands pursued a complete ban on nuclear dumping. Colonial duress meant they risked disenfranchising territories like New Caledonia or American Samoa in doing so. Second, there is the grassroots network of environmental managers carrying out SPREP's work programme, exemplified by Suliana Siwatibau or Iosefatu Reti, with strong connections to villages, government departments, and universities. In this version, Indigenous values and techniques structure a Pacific approach to environmental management undertaken predominantly by governments and communities. During the 1980s, this was considered at odds with the research undertaken by universities and laboratories, which provided otherwise unattainable value on paper but was tailored to expatriate interest and did not build Pacific capacity. Lastly, there is the globalised environmental governance of secretariat figures like Vili Fuavao or Jeremy Carew-Reid. This version has produced the financial basis for SPREP and coordinated approaches to worldwide issues such as climate change but is criticised for technocracy and operating on the terms of donors. These versions of SPREP and the visions of environmental regionalism informing them, support and overlap each other, helping to explain SPREP's composite form, various functions, and the interests competing within each.

Future work might take forward these ideas, asking whether SPREP's historical forms have achieved their purpose, as defined in SPREP's mission statements or in regard to the broader ethic of Pacific environmentalism.[636] The thesis has already identified two disconnects. First,

[636] The SPREP Action Plan 1982 defined SPREP's principal objective as: 'to help the countries of the South Pacific to maintain and improve their shared environment and to enhance their capacity to provide a present and future resource base to support the needs and maintain the quality of life of the people'; The SPREP Agreement 1993 stipulates the purpose of SPREP is: 'to promote cooperation in the South Pacific region and to provide assistance in order to protect and improve its environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and

that between the commitment to anti-nuclearism, decolonisation, and Indigenous knowledge that brought SPREP into being, and the nexus between research institutions and global science that dominated its early operation. Second and similarly, the disconnect between a commitment to community management and Indigenous knowledge, against an increasing reliance on international advocacy and cash-based climate adaptation. Following on, historians might ask whether SPREP has stifled other environmental regionalisms, particularly by privileging intergovernmental and institutional action governed by (Pacific) science. For example, historians have yet to account for the historic role of the church and non-indigenous-origin spirituality, what has been dubbed Moana theology, beyond the issues of anti-nuclearism.[637] Similarly, the environmentalism of activist organisations and coalitions like the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement provided impetus and later critique to SPREP's work but only features in the margins of environmental histories.[638] In brief, while *Kotahi te Moana* has broached the issues of adequate and representative environmental regionalism within SPREP, identifying its absences requires as much again.

Only One Ocean: Global Interventions Towards the 'Blue Pacific'

It has become impossible to safeguard Pacific environments without engaging world systems. In a basic sense this is because Pacific self-sufficiency is threatened from without. Multinational corporations, development banks, and colonial powers have changed the Pacific environment irrevocably and the sinking island has replaced the coconut plantation, irradiated

future generations'. Today, these mandates are commonly recited in the motto: 'A resilient Pacific environment sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures', adopted in 2016 as part of SPREP's ten-year strategic plan. SPEC/SPC/ESCAP/UNEP, *Action Plan for Managing the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region* (Geneva: UNEP, 1983); Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia, June 16, 1993; SPREP, *Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme Annual Report 2016* (Apia: SPREP, 2017).

[637] Winston Halapua, *Waves of God's Embrace: Sacred Perspectives from the Ocean* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008).

[638] Recent work in the eco-critical arts is addressing this absence, see: Talei Luscia Mangioni, 'Art-Story of the Niuklia Fri Pasifik: On doing Creative Histories', paper presented to the 24th Pacific History Association Conference, 2021.

atoll, or tourist resort as the dominant symbol of ecological imperialism. Yet, Pacific people also choose to participate. This has meant confronting the ways Pacific people have hastened environmental degradation through technological adoption and social change, as well as conditions of coloniality, economic integration, and dependency. What *Kotahi te Moana* shows, however, is not passivity or victimhood. Pacific environmentalism evolved to mediate international influence and to counter imposition, aware that conservation bodies and UN agencies sought to integrate the region into globalised environmental governance that did not serve the region. But because the solutions to ecological problems came from within, and were decolonial, syncretic, and regional, Pacific environmentalism has always had a wider purpose. This section draws out some implications for Pacific and global environmental histories.

Kotahi te Moana uses the ideas of 'island limits' and 'Pacific ways' to show the complicated intersection of self-determination and Indigenous values with neo-colonialism, vulnerability, and dependency. In many cases, Pacific people welcomed Western conservation techniques and scientific management as a means to protect their ways of being. They saw harmonies with Pacific traditional controls and tapu systems, were conscious of colonial development and mistakes made elsewhere, and greeted tourism forecasts and grants for protected areas with enthusiasm as alternative development. Conversely, the conservation promotion of metropolitan nations and UN agencies often reflected a green anxiety, scientific supremacism, and desire to garner influence without upsetting power structures. Declassified documents and recollections from backroom negotiations have revealed startling expedience from those who sought to advance neo-colonial, technocratic, and preservationist purviews over the region. My suggestion is that they responded to the limits they saw in islands and acted on perceived weaknesses. Yet while orthodox approaches to environmental management were construed as apolitical and best practice, they would not work for Pacific ecologies, could facilitate extractive industry and nuclear colonialism, were technologically and socially ill-suited, and

did not build capacity. Unfortunately, understanding this came at a price for Pacific people. It cost Samoa its lowland tropical rainforest, for example, and deepened trauma in the Marshall Islands.

'Pacific ways' adapted management to respond to a changing environment in accordance with local and indigenous structures. This made initiatives both more effective and politically attractive. *Kotahi te Moana* has drawn on examples of community management, both independent and with governments or SPREP, that were much more successful and sustainable than preservationist "paper parks" based on prohibiting use. It stresses that environmental management had to foster self-determination or risk becoming detached from the concerns of Pacific people. But the thesis also suggests that the physical and social characteristics of islands *necessitated* Pacific approaches. The case of Samoa showed how a regime of replacement failed to produce either a viable timber industry or a network of national parks because of island ecology and land tenure, forcing a reversion to mixed-use agroforestry and community-based protected areas.

Pacific environmentalism, as an ethic, organisational logic, and situated approach to managing environments, meant that the region could not be easily integrated into globalised environmental management. But while *Kotahi te Moana* makes a case for difference, it also works to show how this provided a platform for global engagement. Pacific particularity meant SPREP evolved independently of UN organisation as a world-first comprehensive environmental management programme, but it also provided inspiration to globalists like Ray Dasmann, Robert Allen, and Jimoh Omo-Fadaka. The notion of Pacific particularity plus global engagement allows us to situate the regional both apart from, and in conversation with, histories of global environmentalism. This point becomes especially important when we consider what environmental regionalism has produced in the Pacific in the new century.

Kotahi te Moana may be seen by Pacific scholars as a history of the "Blue Pacific". In recent years, Pacific nations have framed their collective identity and commitment to regional cooperation around a common oceanic heritage, the "Blue Pacific Continent", as a proactive policy platform for addressing the climate crisis, geostrategic competition, and the sustainable development of ocean resources.[639] If the themes are familiar, it is because the Blue Pacific draws on past conceptions of regionalism, as embodied in legislation such as the Treaty of Rarotonga or the Nauru Agreement, and described in academia through the 'New Pacific Diplomacy', 'Large Ocean States', 'Towards a New Oceania' or 'Our Sea of Islands'.[640] Common to all of these visions is a rejection of notions of smallness, remoteness, poverty, and helplessness and the recognition that self-determination and Indigenous stewardship are the legitimate bases for regional governance. This is a powerful vision, owing much to the thought of Epeli Hau'ofa and Albert Wendt. But while scholars have attempted to locate this phenomenon, most persuasively in the concept of 'Oceanian Sovereignty', few recognise that regionalism has had more than one or two authors.[641] Indeed, some historic regional conceptions were even broader and more engaged than even our most visionary have described. While Hau'ofa finds self-contained autonomy outside of dependency and colonial estimation in 'Our Sea of Islands', *Kotahi te Moana* shows this self-determination turned into sovereignty; Pacific nations had a mandate recognised through Pacific environmentalism, creating an Indigenous regime of ocean governance. While Wendt interrogates the basis for an authentic,

[639] Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2050 Strategy*.
[640] Tim Bryar, former Senior Policy Advisor in the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat writes, 'Part of my [role] with PIFS was to help develop the concept of the Blue Pacific. One thing a colleague and I were doing was trying to show, through regional institutions at least, the lineage of the thinking of an ocean continent… In fact we had a neat little timeline which marked both academic conceptions… and institutional ones'. Tim Bryar, personal correspondence, August 4, 2022; Greg Fry and Sandra Tarte, eds., *The New Pacific Diplomacy* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015); Nicholas Chan, '"Large Ocean States": Sovereignty, Small Islands, and Marine Protected Areas in Global Oceans Governance', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 24, no. 4 (2018); Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994).
[641] V.C. Tilot, B. Guilloux, K. Willaert, C.Y. Mulalap, T. Bambridge, P. D'Arcy, A. Mawyer, F. Gaulme, E. Kacenelenbogen, A. Jeudy de Grissac, J. Moreno Navas and A. Dahl, 'The Concept of Oceanian Sovereignty in the Context of Deep Sea Mining in the Pacific Region', *Frontiers in Marine Science* 8, 756072 (2021).

adaptative, culture in 'Towards a New Oceania', *Kotahi te Moana* shows that similar Pacific commitments to decolonial collectivity and Indigenous environmental knowledge were reaching out and influencing other groups of islands interregionally, beyond the Pacific. So, when the recent *Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean* conceded that 'histories of a Blue Pacific are still being imagined', it did so unimaginatively and without grasping that the Blue Pacific is likely a compromise against something much larger.[642]

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> The Pacific Region is the largest natural area of the world… it follows that:
>
> - If we do not succeed in preventing increased pollution of the Pacific Ocean and contamination of the ocean's food chain, we cannot succeed in our global task of maintaining the health of the oceans and their life sustaining systems;
> - If we do not soon succeed in reducing the over-exploitation which now threatens populations of fish… we cannot succeed in our global task of assuring that the oceans will continue to provide scarce protein on a sustained yield basis to the growing population that depend on it;
> - If we do not succeed in controlling exploitation of the mineral resources of the seabeds of the Pacific… then surely we cannot succeed in establishing an effective regime for oceans management on a global basis;
> - If we are parties to the kinds of development of the island areas of the Pacific which destroy their unique human cultures as well as the natural environmental resources on which they depend, the world cannot hope to repair the loss of some of its most gifted and creative people and unique natural heritage.
>
> In short, the struggle to preserve and enhance the environment of our "Only One Earth" may be won or lost in the Pacific.

Maurice Strong, UNEP Executive Director, Address to the Thirteenth Pacific Science Congress, Vancouver, August 28, 1975.

What can a history that we cannot yet see, tell us about a future that has already happened? *Kotahi te Moana* opened with the idea that Oceania's past and present places it at the centre of the future. The history of Pacific environmentalism is far from complete but already it explains why this is so. The ultimate contribution of *Kotahi te Moana* is to show how Pacific

[642] I am indebted to Tim Bryar for making this point to me. Jane Samson, 'Blue Continent to Blue Pacific' in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, eds., Anne Perez Hattori and Jane Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

environmentalism unified the ocean, structuring environmental regionalism in ways that produced an ocean union, giving Pacific people the best chance to address existential threats to our one and only ocean. Though we may already have lost our islands, a Pacific future is necessary, and one worth saving.

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