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Ontological Security, the Spatial Turn and Pacific Relationality:

A Framework for Understanding Climate Change, Human Mobility and Conflict/Peace in the Pacific

Part II

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Introduction

Part I of this study (Policy Brief No. 123, sections 1-3) presented the concept of ontological security as currently discussed in peace and conflict studies, and linked it to the spatial turn in the discipline. It was demonstrated that the spatial turn and the concept of ontological security allow the framing of issues of peace, conflict and security as fundamentally em-placed, as inextricably connected to place/space/scale. This framing offers a promising entry point to the understanding of the challenges to peace and security which come with climate change-induced human mobility. It became also clear, however, that both ontological security and the spatial turn are fundamentally Western academic concepts, bound and restricted by their own connection to specific ontic spaces (despite claims to placeless universality). Therefore, it was argued that it is necessary to combine these concepts with the genuinely Pacific approach of relationality if they are to be made useful for the understanding of the climate change – mobility – peace/conflict nexus in a Pacific socio-cultural context.

This Policy Brief (Part II, sections 4 and 5) explores how such a combination can contribute to theoretically explaining and practically addressing the challenges of climate change-induced mobility to peace and security in the Pacific region. The focus will be on the fundamental land/people connection and on its implications for ontological (in)security in the face of relocation and displacement. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn and some recommendations for further research, policy and practice will be given.

4. Land and Ontological Security in Pacific Societies

4.1. The vanua

Using the concept of relationality in combination with ontological security and the spatial turn, it is possible to comprehend the significance of the land/people connection in Pacific Island societies and the challenges to peace and security that come with migration, relocation and displacement. Land cannot be understood merely as the physical location where people live, or as an economic asset, but has to be understood in terms of its social, relational, cosmological and spiritual dimensions (Vaai 2019). "At the heart of Pacific peoples' identity is a sense of place and belonging. Fear and anxiety stemming from threats to this connection to place and to the places themselves are profound and tangible effects of climate change" (Tiatia-Seath, Tupou and Fookes 2020, 400). Ontological security for Pacific Islanders is inextricably linked to land as the place of origin and space of relational interconnectedness, imbued with meanings and relations – including spiritual meanings and relations. The spiritual dimension, which is notoriously underestimated by Western 'enlightened' approaches, is of major importance in a Pacific Islands societal environment. Here, "there is no security without spiritual security" (Vaai 2019, 7). Ontological security is impossible—and incomprehensible—without spirituality. [1] Ontological security as emplaced security is linked to space as imbued with spirituality. Space is never secular in the Pacific. The general observation that in "many parts of the world, the vernacular language for speaking about peace and conflict is infused with religious content…" (Funk 2012, 403) definitely holds true for the Pacific. Here, vernacular understandings of security transcend the rational, secular realm of conventional security provision, also reaching out into spiritual, other-worldly dimensions. Engaging with those dimensions, for example in rituals and ceremonies which establish and affirm relationships between the human and the non-human world (Schirch 2005; Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017, 20), is indispensable for the maintenance of ontological security. For example, Upolu Luma Vaai explains that in his Samoan communities the umbilical cords of the newborn babies are buried in a ritual in the soil of their place of birth as an expression of the connection of people, land and ancestors (Vaai 2019, 10). This practice of burying the umbilical cord is widespread in Pacific societies.

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[1] This resonates very much with the Lakota experience of ontological security. For Lakota life, wholeness, balance, interrelationships, interconnectedness, spirituality are fundamental. They provide a stable foundation for self and collective identity, see de Leon, 2018. Booth reports the same with regard to Native Americans generally (Booth 2003).

Of similar importance is the burial of the dead in home soil so that their spirits can reside there, providing the linkage between the living and the dead. In fact, for ontological security in a Pacific sociocultural context, the importance of proper burials cannot be overestimated. The dead/the ancestors play a fundamental part in securing the well-being of the living and therefore have to be looked after well. Ontological security in Pacific societies is inextricably linked to the realm of the dead/the ancestors.

For Timor Leste, Grenfell describes the importance of graves and cemeteries for the provision of 'emplaced security'. Graves as physical places and the dwellings of the living have to be in close proximity, as graves are also the spaces of the spirits of the dead. Such proximity means "that the spirits remain on their customary land (…) the related dead are buried together and therefore their spirits can provide care to one another", and the spirits can care and secure the living, and the living can look after the spirits (Grenfell 2020, 470). Graves as places "represent a form of emplaced security in that they provide a fixed, located, material and bounded place to mitigate the risk of retribution from ancestral spirits. This mitigation occurs via the act of grave-building itself and subsequent ritual at that site, and as such represents a form of place-making that enables forms of space in which the veneration of spirits can occur" (Grenfell 2020, 476). The living members of the community have "responsibilities as caretakers of the spirits of their ancestors" (Yates et al. 2021, 12) – responsibilities which can only be fulfilled through connection to the land.

Another expression of the land/people connection can be found in Pacific languages, in which the term for land and people is the same (Campbell 2019, 2-3). Hermann explains this relationship for people in Kiribati as follows:

> ... land is not so much matter as the material manifestation of divine power. As such, land is seen in relation to other non-human entities like ocean and waves, winds and clouds, rain and water, sun, lightning and thunder, but also the sky, moon, and stars. The existential importance of land derives from its also including those who live there, the people on the land. In fact, land and people are inseparably linked in the cultural logic of the I-Kiribati, a logic reflected in the Kiribati vernacular by there being a single term for both: te aba (land/people) (Hermann 2017, 55).

In Fijian, the term vanua incorporates "not only the land on which people live and its physical and natural resources but also the social and cultural elements of the people who are part of it" (Campbell 2019, 2). In Samoan, the "word for placenta (fanua) that holds the unborn baby in the womb of a mother is the same as the word for land and community", and "the word for soil (eleele) is the same as the word for human blood" (Vaai 2019, 10).[2] Land and people are one.[3] People and land dwell in each other, forming each other in a dense web

[2] Of course, there is a problem with translating terms like vanua or fanua or te aba into English or other European languages, given the fundamentally different worldviews and epistemologies in which these languages are embedded and of which they are expressions. Furthermore, potential differences between the terms might be glossed over by translating all of them in a generalising way as land/people. Even the title of this sub-section is problematic as it uses one term—the Fijian vanua—and not others.

[3] Vanessa Watts and Annie Booth make the same point with regard to Native Americans: "as Indigenous peoples, we are extensions of the very land we walk upon" (Watts 2013, 23), and: "we

of relations (Brown 2020, 431). "People's identities, cultures, genealogies and languages tend to be interwoven with customary lands" (Yates et al. 2021, 12). Consequently, disruptions of the land-people relationship "are associated with collective experiences of stress, anxiety, nostalgia, loss, sadness, heartbreak, or a sense of being 'robbed' of their identity" (Yates et al. 2021, 12).[4]

People exist in kin relations, kinship and place are inextricably interwoven, and local agency is grounded in kinship and place. Gordon Nanau explains these connections with regard to a certain area on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands:

> *Na vanuagu,* roughly translated in English as 'my home/place', is weightier than the contemporary meaning of an individual's home or place. Indeed, it is the foundation of personhood, identity, knowledge and relationships with one's surroundings. It is also the expression of relationships between individual persons, families, kin groups, clans, tribes, neighbouring communities and islands. *Na vanuagu* is a reality that determines whether an individual is a close relative, a distant relative, an associate, an adopted person, a co-opted person, an outsider, a foreigner, a host or a guest. (…) It defines and delineates aspects of personhood and includes notions of rights, privileges, duties, responsibilities and social status… (Nanau 2017, 177).

Translated into Western academic parlance, this exactly describes the social production of space, and the importance of place/space as the foundation of ontological security. This latter aspect becomes even clearer when Nanau describes the significance of na vanuagu for personhood:

> *Na vanuagu* is the totality of a person, encompassing land/place, society/culture and *kema/mamata* [the kin group associated with the land/place – VB]. A person without a clear indication of place (where they come from), with no tribal or clan affiliations and no cultural or societal values that dictate his or her behavior, is not complete at all in the *Tathimboko* [the area on Guadalcanal Nanau is referring to – VB] context and worldview. It is for this reason that those regarded as *seka* (people expelled from their original places and clans), or those who for some other reason have resettled in another place, are often adopted (*lavithage*) to make them complete and offer them an identity in their new place (Nanau 2017, 195).

This description gives an idea of how fundamental a challenge-forced displacement or relocation from one's customary land is for people embedded in such a sociocultural

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(humans) are made from the land; our flesh is literally an extension of soil" (Watts 2013, 27). Or: "Native American cultures and histories are based in the land, and their lives are inseparably intertwined with it. In a most real sense, it *is* their life" (Booth 2003, 331).

[4] This indicates a fundamental difference to the notion of connection to land in a Western/European/European settler context. Of course, people there can also have a 'sense of place', feel 'at home' in a certain place and 'away from home' in another; they can have sentimental linkages to certain places and 'love' them, but at the same time they can treat their place as a commodity and sell it and move on to another 'lovely'—or valuable (in monetary terms)—place. This is fundamentally different from the land-people unity of Pacific relationality. The vanua is more than emplaced ontological security.

context.[5] At the same time it hints at ways of dealing with the challenge, in this case via customary 'adoption'. Another frequently pursued way in the Solomon Islands and other Pacific Island countries (PIC) is to utilise kin and family linkages to get access to other people's customary land (Asugeni et al. 2015; Higgins and Maesua 2019).[6] It remains to be seen whether this would be an option in the case of climate change-forced relocation or displacement of entire communities. In any case, displacement and resettlement disrupt or destroy links to place, not least with regard to the transfer of traditional indigenous knowledge to younger generations. Traditional knowledge links people and land, with traditional knowledge emerging from the land, bounded to the land and allowing to care for the land.[7] "Traditional knowledge (…) refers to place-based knowledge rooted in the culture and traditions of a particular community" (Granderson 2017, 546). It is "… the knowledge that arises in living places with which the human participants have a relationship of respect and reciprocity" (Brigg and Walker 2016, 263). Such traditional indigenous knowledge grounded in place/space is essential for being ontologically secure.[8]

4.2. Ontological security, the vanua and displacement

Human mobility has been a key feature of Pacific life-worlds over the centuries.[9] Close connections to land and such mobility are not contradictory in Pacific ways of being in and understanding of the world. Rather, they are two complementary sides of Pacific identity. 'Roots' and 'routes' (Farbotko et al. 2018, 395), stasis and mobility, go together, "home and away, as well as departure and return, are produced and transformed dialectically through context and time" (Taylor 2017, 5). So, historically, "human mobility in the Pacific Islands is not a crisis nor even unusual; it is essential for the sustainability of most island communities. Nor is there anything unusual about human mobility being influenced by changes in environmental conditions" (Barnett and McMichael 2018, 342). Ontological security, rooted in the connections to place, also allows for mobility, and mobility does not challenge emplaced security – provided that movement is voluntary, on one's own terms, and that

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[5] By contrast, relocation "within customary land will allow villagers to sustain physical, socio-cultural, ancestral and spiritual ties to their land and resources" (Barnett and McMichael 2018, 345) and hence most probably poses less of a threat to ontological security.

[6] This means, on the other hand, that "if there are no family linkages then it is not possible to move" (Asugeni et a. 2015, 24). Hence, "for many, relocation was not an option because customary ownership precluded access to suitable land without familial and tribal linkages" (Asugeni et al. 2015, 25). See also Nunn and Campbell 2020.

[7] The categories of Western knowledge(s) and traditional knowledge(s) are of course heuristic fictions, they do not adequately capture the different and highly diverse ways of knowing in the West or the non-West. They nevertheless are useful and adequate ways of identifying key patterns of different ways of knowing. While Western knowledge presents itself as not linked to place, as universal and thus generally applicable across spaces and scales, traditional knowledge in the Pacific or in other indigenous contexts is emplaced and defies generalisation. Western knowledge neglects and negates its boundedness to place and space.

[8] For the significance of traditional indigenous knowledge in the context of climate change see the contributions in Nakashima, Krupnik and Rubis 2018.

[9] In pre-colonial times movement was not restricted by state boundaries. It should not be forgotten that it was colonialism which constrained indigenous peoples' mobility. Hence today's problems of 'vulnerability' and 'adaptive capacity', including the challenges of migration and relocation, have to be traced back also to the legacies of colonialism (Whyte, Talley and Gibson 2019).

there is a place one can return to, a 'home' to go back to; that is, provided that the vanua, the land/people connection is intact. Today "the prospect and practice of returning home, or of navigating returns between multiple homes, is a central rather than peripheral component of contemporary Pacific Islander mobilities and identities" (Taylor 2017, 2). Even Pacific Islanders born in the diaspora, 'go back home' when they travel to the places of origin of their parents or ancestors (McGavin 2017).[10]

The fundamentally new situation which comes with the multiple effects of climate change is that, for increasing numbers of Pacific Islanders, the option of returning home vanishes. You cannot go back home to a sunken island or a coastal area which has become uninhabitable. And this poses the ultimate challenge to emplaced ontological security. 'Fateful' or 'crisis' situations in Giddens' sense, and hence dread, anxiety, ontological insecurity emerge once mobility is forced upon people and there is no option of 'return', of 'going back' – when graves and the sites where the umbilical cords were buried in the ground are lost to the waves or have become inaccessible. The prospect of having to leave the space one belongs to in an all-encompassing relational way, without the option of going back, is the ultimate challenge to emplaced ontological security. In fact, "Pacific people feel that mobility is no longer available *on their terms"* (Suliman et al. 2019, italics in original) So far, connections to the place of origin, the place of one's ancestors, could be maintained also for those who had moved away, because there were people back home who preserved the place/space for all the members of the community, including those not currently present; this will not be possible in the future due to the effects of climate change. Jon Barnett and Celia McMichael therefore fear that "given the inseparable bond between Pacific peoples and their lands and seas – from which they derive not just their livelihoods but also their identity and cosmology – such forced movements would have catastrophic psycho-social consequences" (Barnett and McMichael 2018, 340); in other words, forced movement would fundamentally shatter their ontological security, with loss of meaning, loss of relationships, loss of socio-cultural context, loss of purpose in life. In particular, the

> loss and destruction of important cultural sites, shrines, and religious objects, and the interruption of important sacred and secular events and rituals, undermines the community's sense of itself. (…) Displacement for any group can be a crushing blow, but for indigenous peoples it can prove mortal, considering that land tenure is an essential element in the survival of indigenous societies and distinctive cultural identities" (Oliver-Smith 2009, 123).

For the case of the Native Americans, for example, Booth explains that "the displacement of Native Americans from their lands, and the subsequent damage to the land, was and is so socially and psychically devastating" (Booth 2003, 333).

Koubi and Nguyen found that, due to 'place attachment', displacement has severe effects on emotions – nostalgia, estrangement, undermining of sense of belonging all make adjustment to a new place extremely difficult (Koubi and Nguyen 2021). This is confirmed by an

[10] For Pacific Islanders living in the diaspora "'home' can be a *combination of belonging* to the diaspora *and* to the homeland" (McGavin 2017, 124; italics in original).

overview of the literature on the psychosocial effects of climate mobility which found that many studies revealed sadness, fear, despair, trauma and anxiety as consequences of (threat of) land loss (Yates et al. 2021, 11); land loss is seen as connected to cultural loss and loss of identity, loss of indigenous knowledge and practices, and this leads to distress and hopelessness (ibid.). In particular, the elderly fear that "climate change will forever disconnect their children from their cultural practices, identities and languages" (ibid.,11).

Affected people will have to go through "a process of reinvention" (Oliver-Smith 2009, 122). What is at stake is not only "the material reconstruction and the social reconstitution of communities" (Oliver-Smith 2009, 132), but also the re-establishment of ontological security – as emplaced security, as security of being and as security of becoming. Whether this can be done, and how, and what the consequences are if it cannot be done or is not done – these are fundamental questions for further research and practice in the field of climate change, mobility and conflict/peace. Such an orientation will have to transcend mainstream approaches to climate change adaptation and peacebuilding, aware of the fact that "… even when peace-building interventions succeed in providing physical security, they often fail miserably in the provision of ontological security because they are premised on the imposition of a particular, Western, ontology of peace and security" (Rumelili 2015b, 26). What is needed instead is "an ontological pluralism, which rejects the Northern mono-ontological conceptions of peace and security in favour of local dynamics of 'peace-formation'" (Rumelili 2015b, 26). Linking ontological security with Pacific relationality opens up new avenues for the support of peace formation in the context of climate change-induced relocation and displacement.

Finally, we have to come back to the issue of scale. Today and in the future, climate change generates and will increasingly generate "human mobility across a range of spatial scales (from village relocations over a short distance to moves to distant countries)" (Barnett and McMichael 2018, 351). The effects of climate change play out across scales, and peacebuilding/peace formation and climate change adaptations (have to) happen across scales. The linkages across scales, implications of challenges and activities at one scale for other scales, feedback loops across all scales (Mac Ginty's 'circuity' – see Part I) determine the climate change – peace(building/formation) nexus. What happens in the UN system or at COPs in Paris or Glasgow matters – but only so much. What happens in a village in Fiji also matters. There is a connection between the discussions on climate and security in the United Nations Security Council and the umbilical cord of a new-born child in a community on a 'remote' Pacific Island ('remote' only as seen from the perspective of UN Headquarters in New York, or a university in the Global North) (Boege 2020). We therefore have to consider impacts and decision-making across scales, and one has to focus on building and strengthening governance frameworks for climate change adaptation and peacebuilding across scales, working with both formal and informal institutions.[11] This multi-scalar

[11] Kupferberg rightly posits: "… agreement between governments is far from enough; the involvement of local communities in sending and receiving countries is paramount. (…) The discontent with newcomers in host communities observable in a wide range of Pacific resettlement schemes is thus something which arguably must be addressed whole-heartedly in future relocation policies and projects (…) too often climate change adaptation efforts use a top-down approach and standardised models, which leaves the people facing environmental degradation with little say in the actual

character of the problem is obvious when one looks beyond relocations over short distances: moving to other people's land within one country, migration to other islands or urban centres, or to distant foreign countries. But even relocation of a small community on its own customary land can only be comprehended as a multi-scalar endeavour (see as an example Anisi 2020).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The concept of ontological security, in combination with Pacific relationality, allows us to grasp the non-material dimensions of the climate – mobility – peace/conflict nexus. In a Pacific social-cultural context this is indispensable. What in Western compartmentalised epistemology and practice is put in the categorial box of 'culture'—and as such only recognised as of secondary political and practical importance—is in a fundamentally different way embedded in Pacific ontology and epistemology. It is at the heart of being in the world—and of ontological security—, not as a separate part of social life, but imbuing all life, in relation with all of 'society' and 'nature', with the human and non-human (both material and spiritual). Hence, it is an understatement to just posit that culture matters for coming to terms with the climate – mobility – peace/conflict nexus. It is, however, a good starting point. And it is laudable that not only PIC state institutions, but also Western governments and international organisations acknowledge the significance of culture in general and cultural connections to land in particular. To give just a few examples:

- The Vanuatu government, for example, lists "respect for custom" and "protection of traditional knowledge" among the guiding principles of its national displacement policy (Vanuatu National Policy 2018, 17).
- The World Bank has come to acknowledge the importance of "attachment to place" for Pacific Islanders and the "indivisibility of the person-community-land bond". It is aware of the "risk of the loss of customary land, an integral part of individual and community identity" that comes with climate mobility (World Bank 2021, 233). It sees "loss of cultural heritage and loss of local knowledge" as "non-economic losses" (World Bank 2021, 234) caused by climate mobility.
- The UN General Assembly's August 2020 report on the effects of climate change on culture sounds the alarm: "Small island States and low-lying areas face catastrophic climate-induced destruction of their natural and cultural heritage (…) The cultural identities and traces of entire nations may be at risk" (United Nations General Assembly 2020, 11). A prime challenge therefore is "… to prevent the cultural extinction of populations facing particular threats from the climate emergency, such as those (…) living in small island States" (ibid., 21). The General Assembly is concerned about the challenges to 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity', in particular with regard to "Indigenous peoples and others living in vulnerable environments, such as small islands" (ibid., 10). It lists the following losses due to climate change: "… the ability to live on ancestral lands; guardianship of sacred sites; folklore, song and dance;

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decision-making process" (Kupferberg 2021, 10).

traditional medicine; religious rites; and cultural knowledge (including indigenous knowledge and practice)" (ibid., 11). Displacement and relocation are identified as particular challenging: "Movement away from homelands results in removal from people's tangible cultural heritage (and often damage or disappearance of that heritage), but also threatens the maintenance of cultural practices that may be linked to certain sites or natural resources, such as the land, and the possibility of caring for heritage" (ibid., 12). As climate migrants may face "loss of identity", it is important to enable "farewell ceremonies and opportunities for visiting submerged sites (…) as well as creating new traditions aiming at maintaining memory, including in diasporas" (ibid., 12).

- Finally, even the most recent report of the US government on the impact of climate change on migration recommends: "Where relationships with land are complex, pay special attention to land rights during the move. Planned relocation should respect and maintain household, community, social cohesion, and kinship ties and should avoid separating families" (The White House 2021, 23).

In short: there is agreement that "… preservation of cultural links are paramount for the identity and spiritual well-being for Pacific Islanders" (Kupferberg 2021, 10).

Hence the **first recommendation**: policies and practice addressing the climate – mobility – peace/conflict nexus in the Pacific have to foreground the cultural-(spiritual) dimension of the issue; that is, first and foremost, the significance of the land/people connection for the ontological security of affected people.[12]

This is only possible on the terms of Pacific islanders themselves. Their indigenous ways of knowing have to guide policy and practice. Over the last years, it has become mainstream to pay tribute to the importance of indigenous or traditional knowledge. Not only the international academic discourse, but also core policy documents on climate change, climate change adaptation and climate and mobility nowadays frequently reference local/traditional/indigenous knowledge[13] (see, for example, United Nations General Assembly 2020, 21). This, again, is a good starting point. There is, however, the danger that this traditional, indigenous, local knowledge is—once again—expropriated and exploited by 'Western' outsiders. Pacific Islanders have hurtful experiences of their wisdom and stories being stolen by outsiders, or being forced to express their experiences and knowledge in alien —Western—formats.[14] Not to forget: "The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples" (Smith 1999, 1). Therefore, they suspect that acknowledgement of 'traditional knowledge' will only lead to another wave of quasi-

[12] In a similar vein Tiatia-Seath, Tupou and Fookes posit "… culture and identity must be considered in any future plans for climate change adaptation in the Pacific" (2020, 417).

[13] A discussion of the terminology can be found in Nalau et al. 2018.

[14] Morgan Brigg points to the tendency to just selectively incorporate indigenous knowledge into Western knowledge and formats according to the latter's terms and thus again subordinate indigenous knowledge. "The inclusion of Indigenous voices and perspectives frequently leads them to be processed in ways that meets the conventions of Western scholarship" (Brigg 2016, 156).

colonial exploitation of that knowledge and to more epistemological violence (Nalau et al. 2018, 860, 862). "Many existing models of integrating ITK [Indigenous Traditional Knowledge – VB] and scientific knowledge fail to challenge the status quo of Western thought, development, and climate adaptation options and do not navigate power asymmetries between groups effectively" (Nalau et al. 2018, 861).[15]

Hence the **second recommendation**: Make space for non-Western—in our case: Pacific—approaches to study and address the climate – mobility – peace/conflict nexus.

So far, Western or Eurocentric views and voices (which also include the voices of Pacific or other indigenous people who were mainly trained in Western academic environments and (feel obliged to) speak to Western audiences using Western research paradigms) have dominated the field (Yates et al. 2021). "Eurocentric research tends to construct reality from a predominantly (settler-)European worldview, and assumes associated values, such as anthropocentrism and individualism – the same values largely driving the climate crisis – to be the normative standard" (Yates et al. 2021, 2). The challenge is "to develop ways of decolonizing scientific frameworks and centering Pacific ways of knowing within research methodologies" (Tiatia-Seath, Tupou and Fookes 2020, 401). This means letting go of the attempt to subordinate and control 'Pacific ways of knowing' from an ostensibly 'universal' (in fact, Western) standpoint.[16]

The only acceptable form of engaging with Pacific/indigenous ways of knowing and being for outsiders is genuine cross-cultural dialogue – grounded in mutual respect and trust, open-ended, on mutually agreed upon terms, accepting, respecting, and reflecting on the positionality of the dialogue partners. This not least means to reflect on the emplacement of the knowing subject (Brigg 2020; Brigg and George 2020), including the Western academic (or politician or development worker). Cross-cultural dialogue needs deep self-reflection and immense effort to challenge one's own deeply ingrained convictions about the 'right' way to see the world and how to change it for the better. It necessitates self-reflexivity – reflecting on one's own constraints and boundedness of position and worldview, on one's own emplacement. Dialogue across cultural difference means to engage with alternative cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies. In the best case, it can lead to the co-production of knowledge, e.g., by way of bringing together holders of traditional indigenous knowledge and 'Western' social and climate scientists. Such co-production of knowledge can lead to hybrid or combined Pacific indigenous/Western scientific

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[15] In this context, at the minimum, it is important to "ensure that traditional knowledge is used with the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples" (United Nations General Assembly 2020, 22). This is necessary, but by far not sufficient.

[16] As the indigenous Māori anthropologist Linda Tuhiwai Smith observed more than 20 years ago: "The arguments of different indigenous peoples based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen, have been difficult arguments for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept. These arguments give a partial indication of the different world views and alternative ways of coming to know, and of being, which still endure within the indigenous world. (…) The values, attitudes, concepts, and language embedded in beliefs about spirituality represent, in many cases, the clearest contrast and mark of difference between indigenous peoples and the West. It is one of the few parts of ourselves which the West cannot decipher, cannot understand and cannot control… yet" (Smith 1999, 74).

knowledges, e.g., about the ontological (in)security of people in the context of climate change and mobility. 'Weaving the mat' is an excellent Pacific metaphor for such an approach.

Hence the **third recommendation**: organise and conduct dialogue, and co-produce knowledge, across cultural difference.

Cross-cultural dialogue is only possible on the basis of equity and equivalence, not seeing 'the locals' as victims and as objects of research and policies, but as agents of their own destiny. The fundamental challenges with which people who (are forced to) migrate or relocate are confronted have to be acknowledged, but at the same time also their strengths and agency. It is a difficult balancing act: to see affected people not just as 'victims', but as resilient agents, and at the same time not to forget who is responsible for their plight. This also means to acknowledge that even 'voluntary' climate related relocation and migration is caused by factors and actors beyond the influence of those who migrate or relocate 'voluntarily' (Yates et al. 2021, 14).[17] There is a tension between recognising agency and shifting responsibilities (e.g., via the fashionable 'resilience' discourse). In this context, we also have to re-assess 'successful' migration and relocation – what looks like 'success' from an outsider's (Western) perspective, because it ticks all the boxes (technical, political, economic…), might nevertheless come at enormous emotional, psychological and spiritual costs for the directly affected people and communities.

Flowing from the above, the **fourth recommendation is**: to build on the strengths of local people and their traditions, experiences and worldviews when conceptualising policies and projects in the field of climate – mobility – peace/conflict.

As has been said above, there are mobile aspects of the land/people connection. Pacific people(s) have a history of mobility, and they have customary ways of accommodating people who (have to) relocate. Kinship ties across places/spaces or traditional ways of adoption (see the Guadalcanal example above) provide options for access to land for people from other places and for integrating them into recipient communities. While this is mainly an avenue for migration and relocation within country (or, more precisely: within a shared social-cultural customary context), even migration across borders and into foreign countries and alien social-cultural context do not need to cause anxiety/dread and ontological insecurity – the mobile aspects of the vanua have proven powerful, for example, for Pacific diasporas in Pacific rim countries. Suliman et al. even go as far as to say that the land/people connection is also "lived in Pacific Island diasporas in places like New Zealand

[17] It is difficult to differentiate between 'voluntary' and 'forced' climate change-induced mobility. There is a sliding scale between the poles of 'forced' and 'voluntary'. "In contrast to displacement which is regarded as falling closer to the forced end of the forced-voluntary continuum, and migration which is regarded as falling closer to the voluntary end, planned relocation has been noted as a form of human mobility that could be forced or voluntary" (Bower, Erica and Sanjula Weerasinghe 2021, 44-45) depending on "preponderance of choice" or "the level of coercion" (ibid., 45).

and Australia, and is likely to survive even the worst-case scenario of complete loss of habitability of some islands" (Suliman et al. 2019, 313).

In this context it has also to be explored, for example, whether the history of pre-colonial mobility and settlement patterns (which gave preference to inland sites over coastal fringe settlement) and traditional knowledge about it can be utilised for contemporary debates about climate change adaptation and climate change-induced relocation (Nunn and Campbell 2020). People have a history of mobility which can become a reference point. Customary rituals and ceremonies of farewell and welcome can play a significant role for making migration and relocation less painful psychologically and spiritually; they can be a powerful means to cope with dread/anxiety and ontological insecurity. At the same time, however, wherever and whenever possible, "retaining a physical presence on land may be necessary to anchor deeper spiritual, cultural, identity or ancestral connections and to tie people together" (Yates et al. 2021, 13) and to maintain pathways for the sharing of traditional indigenous knowledge between relocated people and those who stay put. Finally, it will be necessary "… to achieve a balance between encouraging these relocated people to maintain their culture and fostering integration in their new homes" (Yamamoto 2020, 155).

Acknowledging the agency and resilience of local people should not let off the hook those actors, mainly in the Global North/West, who are responsible for the climate change-induced plight of Pacific Islanders. Their modes of production and consumption are the main cause of climate change, historically and today, whereas those people in the Pacific who are forced to relocate (or to adapt to climate change in other ways) have done almost nothing to cause the current climate catastrophe. It is a matter of climate justice to provide them with any support they need for adaptation, including migration and relocation. This not least means financial support.

Hence the **fifth recommendation:** to redirect external financial assistance to the grassroots community level.

This is a must if one takes seriously the need for localisation, empowering local actors and institutions. Currently only a small fraction of climate finance from global climate funds reaches local actors (Refugees International 2021, 17-18).[18] What is needed are contributions to smaller international funds "that focus explicitly on locally led adaptation" (ibid., 20). Such financial support

> as compensation for loss and damage is vital. Owing to the short-term funding cycles on which most contemporary funding operates, short-term easy fix solutions are

[18] "… less than 10 percent of climate finance from global climate funds between 2003 and 2016 were dedicated to local action. Barriers include prioritisation of large-scale results; limited appetite for small-scale projects (with higher transaction costs); risk averse funding strategies; limited support for building local capacity to manage funds: and stringent co-financing requirements that hinder local ownership" (Refugees International 2021, 17). To overcome these obstacles, it is recommended "that donors earmark flexible, grant-based funding; increase their willingness to take risks: and provide tailored capacity-building support to local institutions" (ibid., 18).

> popular, but this tendency should be challenged as (…) the need for long-term sustainable solutions becomes ever clearer (Nunn and Campbell 2020, 12).

For Pacific Islanders, the loss and damage issue is in fact at the heart of climate justice. This is why at the latest COP in Glasgow Pacific delegates were the leading force in the loss and damage debate. They struggled hard to initiate a Loss and Damage Finance Facility. That such a facility was not established in Glasgow was hugely disappointing for PIC delegations. As has been made clear in this Policy Brief, loss and damage for Pacific islanders goes far beyond physical, material, economic loss. The non-economic social, cultural and spiritual loss and damage which comes with the destruction of one's homes and ensuing forced displacement, relocation and migration is even more important, because it fundamentally challenges the ontological security of the affected people which, as has been argued in this Policy Brief, is closely connected to land as ontic space, imbued with cultural and spiritual meaning and relations. There can be no actual 'adequate' monetary compensation for this type of loss and damage. But this means that it is all the more important to at least provide the financial support necessary to alleviate the devastating effects of climate change and address the challenges to ontological security that come with it.

In conclusion, one can say that the concept of ontological security offers a valuable explanatory frame for understanding the climate change – mobility – peace/conflict nexus, because it encompasses dimensions of security beyond the non-material, non-physical realm and in particular stresses the significance of place/space. With its focus on the 'self' (as separate from others, from society and nature), however, it is a deeply Western concept. The same holds true for the spatial turn in peace and conflict studies. It allows a comprehension of the emplaced character of peace and security, focusing on the interconnectedness of place/space and peace. At the same time, it also remains in the confines of Western dualistic epistemological traditions. Pacific relationality, by contrast, presents a non-dualistic, non-substantialist alternative, foregrounding relations, including relations between humans and other life forms, and focusing on the unity of land and people; the 'self' or 'space' in isolation do not have a place in this way of being and thinking. Only in the light of Pacific relationality it becomes clear what is at stake for Pacific people who are affected by climate change and confronted with the need to migrate or relocate. Given the linkages between ontological security, the spatial turn and Pacific relationality, a combination of these approaches might be best suited for understanding and dealing with the challenges of the climate change – mobility – peace/conflict nexus in a Pacific societal-context.

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