

The Pacific and its Peoples in a Changing Climate: Pasifika Wisdom and Relational Security

Workshop Report

Volker Boege

Introduction

From 6 to 8 September 2023, the Toda Peace Institute and the Australian National University Pacific Institute hosted a workshop under the title of ‘The Pacific and its Peoples in a Changing Climate: Pasifika Wisdom and Relational Security’. It was held in Canberra and attended by around 50 researchers, practitioners and policymakers from Pacific Island Countries (PICs), Australia and New Zealand with expertise on climate change, its environmental, social and cultural effects, climate security and environmental peacebuilding. In line with previous workshops that the Toda Peace Institute (co-)organised on climate change, conflict and peace in the Pacific in [Auckland in 2018](#), in [Tokyo in 2019](#), [in Suva/online in 2020](#) and in [Wellington in 2022](#), the workshop provided the space to come together for a dialogue across cultural, epistemological, conceptual and political differences, in search of solutions to the pressing problems that the “climate emergency”¹ in the Pacific pose to the people(s) of the region.

¹ At the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) meeting in 2022, leaders of the PICs declared a ‘climate emergency’ for the region (see <https://www.forumsec.org/2022/07/09/pacific-foreign-ministers-declare-a-climate-emergency-set-priorities-at-ffmm-2022/#:~:text=PIF%20Suva%2C%2010%20July%202022,of%20its%20people%20and%20ecosystems>). This follows the PIF’s Regional Security Declaration of 2018 (the Boe Declaration) which stated that “climate

The specific intention of the Canberra workshop was to present genuinely Pasifika ways of approaching these problems and engaging them in dialogue with the more mainstream ('Western', 'Northern' or 'international') hegemonic discourse. The starting points for this endeavour were, on the one hand, the observation that the mainstream hegemonic discourse increasingly acknowledges the need to take into account localised, indigenous and traditional approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to climate security, and, on the other hand, the assumption that Pasifika concepts have a lot to contribute to the mainstream discourse. Accordingly, the workshop aimed to advance dialogue between Pasifika and mainstream international thought about climate change and its conflict-prone and security-relevant effects, explore options for bringing together and perhaps integrating the different strands of thought.

The workshop commenced with the presentation of Pasifika indigenous ways of knowing and approaching climate change, focusing on Pasifika relationality, and addressing the climate emergency challenges through the lens of relationality. This also included the experiences and knowledges of indigenous people(s) in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand – Aboriginal people, Torres Straits Islanders and Māori.

This was followed by the exploration of several thematic areas of relevance for the climate–conflict–security–peace nexus: climate change induced human mobility in its various forms, addressing topics such as (un)inhabitability of islands and (im)mobility of communities, labour mobility, planned community relocation, migration and diaspora experiences, loss and damage, and climate security more specifically, again in its various forms and under varying aspects, e.g., national security, cultural security and relational security.

The workshop succeeded in its aim to advance a better mutual understanding of concerns and approaches of stakeholders who come from different epistemological traditions and different fields of practice – Pacific and 'Western', academia and government, regional organisation and community peacebuilding, churches and think tanks, Pasifika youth and old white male researchers. The success was not least grounded in the culturally sensitive way of conducting workshops like this as pursued by the Toda Peace Institute and its partners: a smoking ceremony, poems and songs, emotions and tears, personal stories and oral history were integral parts of the workshop; and this opened avenues for knowing, understanding, learning and communicating well beyond the constraints of conventional academic–political gatherings.

This Summary Report cannot capture these non-academic, non-rational dimensions of the workshop dynamics and the associated exchanges and learning experiences. It also does not intend to give a detailed report of the workshop proceedings. Rather, based on the presentations and discussions in the various workshop sessions, it addresses the key issue areas, summarises core arguments made and focuses on selected findings with particular relevance for research as well as for policy and practice.

change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific" (Boe Declaration 2018).

Two poles: Australian Policy and Pasifika Relationality

After a welcome to country and a smoking ceremony carried out by the traditional Aboriginal custodians of the land on which the workshop was held, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, and after a long initial session in which the workshop participants had the opportunity to introduce themselves, sharing their personal, family and professional stories and highlighting the issues close to their heart related to the workshop themes, the first thematic session of the workshop was opened by Mathew Fox from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). He is First Assistant Secretary for Climate Diplomacy and Development Finance. In his Opening Remarks he focused on the connections between Australia and the Pacific, and in particular the deep connections between the First Nations in Australia (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups) and the peoples of the Pacific, grounded in their shared understanding of the linkages between land, sea and people. He said that the wisdom of Australian First Nations people has to be tapped into when addressing climate change and environmental degradation. In this context, he stressed the importance of the establishment of the position of an Australian Ambassador for First Nations People. He stated that this Ambassador will play a significant role in developing a First Nations approach to foreign policy, including climate change diplomacy. This also means incorporating traditional knowledge into climate change activities. Australian First Nations are not only particularly severely affected by climate change, “but also have the knowledge and practices to uniquely contribute to climate action”.

He acknowledged that there is “no larger challenge for the Pacific family than climate change”, and that “climate action begins at home”. With regard to the latter, he pointed to—in his view—ambitious goals of the current Australian government (e.g., net zero by 2050), certain specific policies (e.g., the Safeguard Mechanism), and newly established institutions (e.g., the Net Zero Authority and the First Nations Sustainable Ocean Reference Group). He acknowledged the particular importance of the topic of loss and damage for PICs and welcomed the decision taken at COP27 in 2022 to establish new funding arrangements for loss and damage. He did not, however, mention any plans for specific Australian commitments in this regard; he merely said that Australia is involved in discussions about financing loss and damage, and he pointed to the fact that considerable sums of Australian Official Development Assistance is geared towards climate change adaptation (2 billion AUD in the period 2020-2025). Finally, he stressed the significance of culture in climate policy and diplomacy, the potential of traditional knowledge and wisdom of First Nations peoples, and he highlighted the Australian government’s commitment to close collaboration with PICs. In this context, he drew attention to Australia’s efforts to co-host COP31 in 2026 together with PICs. He stated that the bid to host COP31 is not an Australian bid, but a joint endeavour, and he was hopeful that COP31 will amplify the voices of the peoples in the Pacific.

After this thoroughly political governmental perspective, the following speaker presented approaches to these issues that are at the opposite pole of the spectrum. Upolu Luma Vaai, Principal of the Pacific Theological College (PTC) in Suva, Fiji, talked about Pasifika relationality and spirituality as a genuinely indigenous way of understanding and addressing the challenges of the climate emergency. Mathew Fox in his presentation had acknowledged the importance of First Nations peoples, of culture, of traditional wisdom and

knowledge, of the need to utilize that knowledge and to combine it with climate science. In contrast, this presentation provided philosophical depth to those aspects, unhindered by political considerations and constraints (which is not to say that his deliberations don't have major political implications and effects).

Pasifika relationality was presented as a “whole of life’ consciousness”, a “philosophy of life”, and as a “decolonial tool” in contrast to Western philosophies, and he elaborated on what this means—or can mean—for addressing the climate emergency. He made clear that Pasifika relationality is cosmo-centric, which demarcates a fundamental difference to anthropocentric Western philosophies, and this has radical consequences for addressing the nature/environment-human connection, for how to position humans in the world – namely not as separated from other beings, as exceptional, as crown of creation, but as entangled in all sorts of relationships with other-than-human beings, with ‘nature’ (rocks, rivers, mountains...) and the spiritual world. And this again has fundamental consequences for addressing the climate emergency, and the climate-conflict-security-peace nexus. From the standpoint of cosmo-centricity, even such a ‘progressive’ concept as ‘human security’ is found wanting: it separates human society from ‘nature’ and posits that the needs of humans can be fulfilled without acknowledgement of the needs of ‘the rest’ of creation, and that there can be security for humans in separation from security for ‘the rest’.

Upolu Luma Vaai elaborated on other core principles of relationality, such as: multidimensionality, fluidity, difference, slowness, and co-inherence. Co-inherence challenges the Western thinking of compartmentalisation and of exclusionary, “competing” contradictions. Co-inherence means that one (thing, person, concept...) exists within the other, that one can only have meaning in relation to the other (distinction within unity, self within connection, conflict within peace, world within God,...). Accordingly, it is necessary to think in ‘mutual contradictions’ (instead of ‘competing contradictions’). This ‘both-and’ way of thinking—in contrast to the Western ‘either-or’—leads to fluidity and negotiability: nothing is fixed, things constantly flow into each other, and, accordingly, differences are not absolute. Difference is realised in relatedness. Multidimensionality challenges the Western thinking of ‘oneness’, which posits that there is only one reality, one absolute truth, one way of knowing – which always implicitly sets the Western way of knowing as the only truthful way. Instead, there are multiple (fluid, contradictory, different, co-inherent) sides to multi-dimensional reality and, accordingly, multiple ways of knowing and multiple truths. Importantly, reason is not the only method of accumulating knowledge. Finally, slowness as a principle of relationality points to the need to slow down activities so as to be able to pay attention to the interconnectedness of life, for the sake of the earth, of people and land, of creation – which contrasts with the modern Western fascination with speed, the notion of urgency, the desire to move fast and get things done as quickly as possible within tight timeframes.

To illustrate the principles of relationality, he gave the example of a climate change adaptation activity in a Fijian village which struggled with flooding – an activity that is far away from donor-funded adaptation (or relocation) projects that follow Western technical logics. In this activity, a special type of tree, mud crabs and people collaborated – a multidimensional, fluid, relational exercise in which different actors (who are intrinsically connected) come together to slowly change the environment in a way that benefits all of

them: trees, crabs and people (with the latter benefiting through land extension which prevents flooding).

Katerina Teaiwa, a Canberra-based 'Western' academic with Banaban roots (or a Banaban who is a researcher in Western academia), then demonstrated what Pasifika relationality means in real life, and in understanding and explaining real life, and how it can change the perception and interpretation of the world. She did this by demonstrating how the fate of a small island 'in the middle of nowhere' (as seen from a Western metropolitan perspective) is connected to the whole earth and embedded in a network of relations that span the entire globe.² She talked about the land/people/ancestors connection in her Banaban home, and how this plays out over multiple sites and across multiple scales. The term 'te aba' comprises the body of the land, the body of the people and the body of the ancestors, all in relation. Her entry point was her interconnectedness with certain rocks of her home island, thus giving a practical example of what the land/people connection and a non-anthropocentric understanding of this connection means. In doing so, she indirectly challenged the Western notion of 'the local' (which, by the way, also informs critical peace and conflict studies): the 'local' is not just the 'local community' of humans (a village, a city, a neighbourhood...), but includes other-than-human living and 'non-living' beings, such as rocks. Similar to the previous speaker's—implicit—challenge to 'human security', this presenter challenged Western notions of 'the local'. And she demonstrated that the local is not isolated, but is in multi-sited and multi-scalar relation: the phosphate extracted from the soil of Banaba was dispersed as fertiliser over the lands in all corners of the globe; rocks on Banaba, the island of Banaba, the Pacific region, the world are in relation and can only be understood in relation; people and stories and images flow from Banaba across the region. Katerina Teaiwa herself is in relation with a multi-sited family, one element in a network of kinship ties across multiple sites, including certain rocks on Banaba. A long history of phosphate mining destroyed the environment of Banaba and forced the people off their island. In the course of this history, multiple forms of remix took place: remix of land, of culture, of spirituality, of identity and of ways of knowing. The notion of re-mixing challenges the Western compartmentalised, exclusionary contradictory either-or way of thinking about culture, identity, ways of knowing, instead foregrounding fluidity, co-inherence, the mutual contradiction of difference in unity/unity in difference, thus bringing the principles of Pasifika relationality to life with regard to Banaba.

Finally, she applied these principles to the academic realm, advocating for trans-disciplinarity in research and teaching. At the same time, she pointed out that such research, and rational approaches in general, written and spoken words, are only one way of knowing – there are also the visual arts, spirituality, song and dance. She herself incorporates these different ways of knowing and teaching – she is not only an academic, but also an artist,

² In the current era of nation states, the island of Banaba which is only six square kilometres in size is today part of the Republic of Kiribati. Starting in 1900, the island was destroyed by foreign mining companies which for decades extracted phosphate that was used all over the world in agriculture. Banabans were forcibly relocated to Rabi Island in Fiji by the British colonial administration at the end of World War II. Today only around 300 people live on the island, under dire conditions, while around 6,000 people of Banaban descent live on Rabi Island and in other parts of the world. Only recently, the Australian mining company Centrex has announced that it is planning to conduct exploration on Banaba with the intention of mining the remaining phosphate, which has met with fierce Banaban resistance.

remixing 'Western' and Banaban ways of knowing and expression. Using a recent example of her artwork, she demonstrated how one can bring land/people/ancestors together in an art exhibition in various spaces – even 'far away' from Banaba.

While relationality was brought alive by telling the story of Banaba, which is also her story, George Carter³ talked about new Pacific Diplomacy as an expression of Pasifika relationality, using his experiences at COP gatherings as an example. Referencing Farhana Sultana (2022), he situated the current climate emergency in the context of colonialism, with climate coloniality being expressed in various forms: fossil fuel capitalism, neoliberal growth and development models, hyper-consumptive wasteful lifestyles in the Global North. He acknowledged that the COPs can be seen as a theatre of climate colonialism. They can, however, also be(come) sites of de-colonial, anti-colonial, anti-racist and feminist policies. He argued that the new Pacific Diplomacy approach which had been introduced by Pacific leaders such as Tony de Brum from the Marshall Islands, Anote Tong from Kiribati and Enele Sopoanga from Tuvalu after they had recognised that traditional diplomacy had failed, allowed PICs to exert considerable influence at COPs (punching well above their weight), by bringing in local and grassroots communities, the voices of women and youth, (street) activism geared towards climate justice, and Pasifika culture. He stressed the importance of relationships and agency in the COP context, and he pleaded for engaging with COP, even if COP outcomes will never be sufficient. Pacific Islanders should not leave the COP forum to others; they can use COPs to feed Pasifika knowledge, culture and approaches into the global agenda. He saw the smallness of PICs as an advantage: there are direct links between the communities, the people on the ground, and the political leaders. Those leaders are also embedded in kinship connections and therefore easier to approach.

With his focus on an explicitly political sphere, George Carter linked relationality back to Mathew Fox's remarks at the beginning of the workshop. The tension between pragmatic politics and Pasifika relationality raised a number of issues for discussion, first and foremost the issue of power. The hegemonic 'Western' understanding of political power seems to be alien to Pasifika thinking in which power is connected to the land and the ancestors, and in which power equals responsibility. Such an understanding of power is far from the concept of power of the actors who destroyed Banaba through phosphate mining, or the fossil fuel industry responsible for GHG emissions. How to challenge those power holders from a Pasifika relationality perspective (of power) is an open question of major political significance. Closely related to this question, or another way of putting it, is the challenge of how to actually bring about a paradigm shift along the lines of Pasifika relationality, how to balance the need for political pragmatism on the one hand and the need to reframe the climate change issues according to the principles of Pasifika relationality on the other, given, for example, the different time frames. Political pragmatism demands to operate under time pressure (with COPs as an extreme example), while reframing is slow. Pasifika relationality which demands slowing down, has slowness as a principle. And the climate emergency as such generates time pressure: the science tells us that there is not much time left to save the

³ For a full list of affiliations and positions of speakers please see the appendix: List of workshop participants.

planet, that action is needed now – a major challenge is how to align this reality with the need for slowing down for a Pasifika relationality paradigm shift?

The role of faith and the churches is another issue. The churches are highly influential actors in the Pacific—by far the most influential civil society actors, and in many places more influential than state institutions—and hence have major responsibilities and opportunities in framing climate change discourses. Climate change messages will only get through to the people, and climate change activities will only succeed, if they are aligned to peoples' faith, and supported by the churches. A faith-based Pasifika relationality approach to climate change, however, necessitates the de-construction of the forms of Christianity that were imported to the Pacific from the outside. And this leads to the broader issue of de-colonisation of not only institutions, economics and politics, but de-colonisation of mindsets and habits (the impersonated colonialism). In this context it was argued that the current climate change impacts that the people(s) in the Pacific suffer from have their roots in the colonial extractive industries, for example mining in Banaba, and that the climate emergency is a continuation and intensification of historical colonialism, now in the shape of climate colonialism.

(Un)inhabitability and (Im)mobility

Expressions of such climate change colonialism can be found in the debate about (un)inhabitability of islands and (im)mobility of people in the Pacific in the face of the effects of climate change. In the mainstream Western climate change discourse, it has become a trend to declare certain islands as being uninhabitable, or at least doomed to become uninhabitable in the near future, due to the effects of climate change; people will have to (prepare to) move. This narrative of uninhabitability was challenged by Carol Farbotko, asking: who defines (un)inhabitability, according to which criteria, and with which political interests? She demonstrated that the scientific data which underpin this narrative are contested, and that there are also narratives of future habitability, mainly coming from the islands themselves which are, according to outsiders' accounts, becoming uninhabitable. Using the example of Tuvalu, which in the hegemonic discourse is always mentioned, together with Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, as among the first island states to become uninhabitable, she focused on the commitment of its government and its people to stay where they are and to carry out in situ adaptation measures that will make this possible. Tuvaluans are highly critical of relocation as a 'quick fix' solution to the climate crisis, promoted by outside actors who at the same time are failing to address its root causes. She provided examples of in situ adaptation projects and presented the government of Tuvalu's Long-Term Adaptation Plan and its Future Now Project which make it clear that Tuvaluans will do everything possible to stay on their home islands. She made the point that, interestingly, international attention is not acknowledging this aim and the in situ adaptation measures, but has instead focused on Tuvalu's 'Plan B', namely to maintain Tuvalu's statehood and maritime boundaries and to maintain Tuvalu as a 'digital nation' in case of future uninhabitability or inundation (for more on this see Boege 2022b). This 'digital nation' talk seems to be more exciting for an international audience and fits better into the uninhabitability narrative than the more 'ordinary' adaptation plans and projects.

The conclusion was that these days not only climate change impacts, but also the ‘future uninhabitability narrative’ poses a risk to people on the atoll islands – who themselves follow the ‘future habitability narrative’. It is for the affected people to decide about (un)inhabitability of their homes, not for outsiders with vested interests – interests such as to avoid contributions to the financing of in situ adaptation and to avoid addressing the root causes of the climate emergency, namely the GHG emissions of the countries of the Global North (Campbell and Farbotko 2022). So, we do not only have to deal with the effects of climate change, but also with the effects of the climate change-related uninhabitability narrative, which can have traumatic negative effects for the people, and which has gained considerable power. She asked: How can this power be challenged and diminished?

These deliberations were taken up by Merewalesi Yee when she talked about climate change (im)mobilities. Similar to, and in line with, the uninhabitability narrative, the narrative of climate mobility has become hegemonic in recent years. Much research is focused on climate change-induced migration, displacement and planned relocation, while climate immobility has raised considerably less interest. And if immobility is addressed at all, it is mostly involuntary immobility: the ‘trapped populations’ who would like to move, but cannot move due to various (financial, political...) reasons. By contrast, so far, few empirical studies have investigated the reasons for communities to (want to) stay put, even if their homes have been declared to be(come) uninhabitable due to the effects of climate change and they have been offered the option to relocate to environmentally safer spaces. Talking about the case of Serua Island in Fiji, she elaborated on the motives of people to stay in the face of dire effects of climate change. She pointed to the *vanua*, the land/people connection at the epicentre of *iTaukei* (indigenous Fijian) culture. Land and people are one, people are an extension of the land, and the land is an extension of the people. With the notion of *vanua* comes relations with the natural environment, social bonds and kinship ties, ways of being, spirituality and obligations of stewardship with regard to nature, other-than-human beings, and ancestors. Because of these factors, the people of Serua decided to stay. For them, the links to their ancestors, the customary obligations to their chiefs, the stewardship of place, the need to look after the burial sites of their kin, the connection to the ocean (which is an indispensable part of their identity) are more important than the challenges that come with the impacts of climate change. This amply demonstrates that (un)inhabitability cannot be assessed by mere reference to scientific data; it has other immaterial aspects to it. So, although relocation was proposed to the people of Serua as the adequate adaptive response to climate risks, they chose to stay, a decision grounded in the relational understanding of *vanua* and the importance of stewardship of place that comes with it.

This presentation pointed to the significance of the spiritual connection to the land, and how this necessitates the physical presence of people on the land. The Banabans were able to maintain this connection, because they have a continuous presence of caretakers on Banaba, even after the vast majority of people was forced off the island. By contrast, the Gilbertese people who were relocated to the Solomon Islands lost that connection (for more on this, see Tabe 2020). How to maintain continuity in the face of climate change therefore will be a crucial question for the survival of the culture and identity of the people(s) of the Pacific.

Indigenous Views from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand on the Climate Emergency

The spiritual connection to land also figured prominently in the presentations of indigenous workshop participants from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Indigenous peoples in these countries are particularly severely affected by the climate emergency (as acknowledged by Mathew Fox from DFAT in his presentation), they have special links to the peoples of the Pacific, and they share with them indigenous non-Western understandings of and approaches to the climate change challenges.

This became perfectly clear in the presentation by Yessie Mosby, a leader of his people from Zenadh Kes (the Torres Strait Islands), a group of islands in the very north of Australia, between the northern shores of the continent and the island of New Guinea. He and his people are Australian citizens, but at the same time Melanesians, distinct both from the Aboriginal groups on mainland Australia and the people(s) of adjacent Papua New Guinea, with whom they are connected through traditional relations of kinship, trade, exchange – despite the artificial state boundary between Australia and PNG. The Torres Straits Islands are affected by climate change in ways similar to other Pacific islands: sea level rise, storm surges, flooding, cyclones etc.

Yessie Mosby is a Kulkalgal man and traditional owner on Masig Island. He is a member of the Torres Strait Group of Eight – eight islanders who, with the support of 350.org Australia, Client Earth Environmental Lawyers and the Torres Strait Land and Sea Council (GBK – Gur A Baradharaw Kod), in 2019 filed a complaint with the United Nations Human Rights Committee, arguing that the Australian government is violating its human rights obligations to the islanders through climate change inaction, which leads to harmful consequences for livelihoods, culture and traditional ways of life. In a landmark decision, the UN Committee on 23 September 2022 agreed with the complaint, stating that Australia through its inadequate climate change policy is in violation of the islanders' right to family life and home and right to culture, obliging the government to pay adequate compensation and to do whatever it takes to ensure the safe existence of the islands.

He sees this decision as a victory also for his ancestors and his children and future generations, linking it to 'Ailan Kastom' which, similar to te aba on Banaba and vanua in Fiji, has the people/land/ocean/ancestors interconnectedness at its heart. Culture and identity of the people(s) of Zenath Kes are closely connected to the land, and this is why, similar to the people of Serua village in Fiji or the people of Tuvalu, they refuse to be relocated from their islands (although this had been the recommendation of scientists sent by the Australian government). They have a responsibility to care for country, and they feel a deep obligation to the stewardship of their burial grounds and sacred sites. The destruction of family graves and ancestral graveyards caused by severe flooding has devastating effects on the wellbeing and mental state of islanders. The moving story was shared of how, after a flooding event in 2018, he and his children had to collect the human remains of their deceased relatives that had been scattered across their island. They had to pick up bones from the beach as though they were seashells. This event changed his life and made him join the Torres Strait Eight, because "we have a responsibility to look after the remains of our ancestors".

Moreover, climate change challenges food security which depends on traditional fishing and farming, e.g., salt water intrusion kills coconut trees. The Australian government is still to follow up on the decision of the UN Human Rights Committee. The complaint had been supported by a public campaign, 'Our Island Our Home', led by the Torres Strait Eight. The campaign continues, demanding from the Australian government, inter alia, to fund in situ adaptation on the Torres Strait islands (in particular seawalls)⁴, to commit to 100% renewables in Australia in the next ten years, to stop approving new fossil fuel projects and to transition away from fossil fuels.

In her presentation of Māori perspectives on climate change, Sandy Morrison made clear that Māori ways of knowing about climate change are in sync with what Yessie Mosby had said about Zenath Kes ways and what had been said by Pacific Islanders. She started by talking about the 'houses' she belongs to and about her family, making the connections to the climate change topic by explaining how she and family members use the performing arts to bring across the climate change message to Māori communities. For her, the acknowledgement of climate change as a continuation of colonisation has to be the starting point for addressing the topic. In line with Pasifika relationality, she presented the Māori values of relationships, responsibilities, reciprocity and respect as the sources of spiritual, ecological, kinship and also economic wellbeing. She criticised academic (climate) research that merely treats Māori as objects and exploits their experiences and wisdom without giving anything back. Instead, she advocated kaupapa Māori research, led by, conducted together with, and benefitting, Māori communities. Māori have to be included in national climate policies, planning and decision-making. The Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi, provides the basis and framework for such an approach.⁵ The fact that over the last years certain mountains and rivers in Aotearoa New Zealand have gained legal personhood signifies an important shift – Māori relational understandings of 'nature' as in kinship with humans and with a 'right to rights' have made it into the mainstream, and this can have major implications for climate change policies. Māori institutions such as the marae⁶ can become the 'resilience' hubs for locally-led climate adaptation activities, including climate change education. Such education by Māori guardians of knowledge is essential for 'people change', following the principles of relationality: reciprocity, generosity, diversity, inclusivity, equity.

These two presentations once more triggered a discussion about the legacies of colonialism, and in particular the legacies of colonial boundaries which have limited and continue to limit indigenous mobilities. Deep connection to land for Pacific peoples traditionally goes together with high mobility. They are not mutually exclusive (the Western 'either-or' thinking), but are mutually supportive (Pasifika relational 'both-and' thinking). Yessie Mosby explained that his people moved around freely before the colonisers divided people by boundaries, in the case of his people, the boundary between Australia and Papua New

⁴ So far, the Australian national government and the Queensland government (Zenadh Kes is part of the Australian state of Queensland) have only allocated 40 million AUD for seawall construction - a sum which will have to be split across 18 islands. This is by far not enough money, and therefore the Torres Strait group are demanding more funding.

⁵ The Treaty of Waitangi is an agreement (in English and Māori) between the British Crown and about 540 Māori chiefs which was signed on 6 February 1840. It is seen as New Zealand's founding document.

⁶ Marae (meeting grounds) are the focal points of Māori communities.

Guinea. The government forced his people to give up their mobile lifestyle and stay in one place. Now with the challenges of climate change this colonial legacy of artificial boundaries adds to the problems of the most affected people on the islands. The conclusion: one cannot talk about the climate emergency without talking about colonialism

Community Relocation

Climate change-induced human mobility is a prominent topic in the discussions about the effects of climate change, including in discussions about the climate–conflict–security nexus. As Carol Farbotko and Merewalesi Yee demonstrated in their presentations, these discussions have to be put into perspective and warrant critical interrogation. Climate change-induced mobility, however, in its various forms of migration, displacement and relocation, is a reality in the Pacific region today. It will probably become a more pressing issue in the future, even if scenarios of millions of ‘climate refugees’ who try to cross the borders into the safe havens of the ‘developed’ countries of the Global North are exaggerated and serve dubious purposes (reinforcing borders, strengthening national security).

Planned relocation of climate change-affected communities is a major issue in several PICs today, with actual relocations already finalised, currently being carried out, or planned for the future. Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have developed displacement and relocation guidelines. Fiji recently has also elaborated ‘Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation’ (Office of the Prime Minister 2023). Here planned relocation is defined as a “state-led” process, and the Fiji Government has identified 48 communities which will need to relocate in the near future, and more than 800 communities in the long-term. Communities have been fully or partially relocated over the last years; some are currently in the process of relocating, and others are preparing for relocation.

Three representatives of Fijian NGOs who are working with relocating communities talked about their experiences, focusing on specific cases.

Paulo Baleinakorodawa from Transcend Oceania (TO) reiterated the point made by Sandy Morrison: people in affected communities are tired of outsiders coming in, exploiting the peoples’ stories and telling them to the outside world, without any benefits for the communities. By contrast, TO’s JustPeace Vanua Methodology is careful to follow traditional protocol, to provide time and space for talanoa⁷, to walk slowly together with the communities (Transcend Oceania 2022). He confirmed what Merewalesi Yee had said earlier about communities that do not want to move. TO worked with the community of Vunisavisavi, where people refuse to move because of their obligation to protect the original site of the paramount chief of Cakaudrove Province in northeastern Fiji. They say: “We are prepared to drown here”. Another case is Naro village, situated between two rivers, and

⁷ Talanoa is a Fijian term that derives from the word tala (talking or telling stories) and the word noa (without concealment). [Talanoa “refers to a respectful way to conduct dialogue](#) in Fijian (and other identity) communities. It is group-based and processual. Talanoa aims to promote relational development and is key to how negotiations take place.”

severely affected by flooding. The German donor agency Bread for the World is funding relocation, and the Fijian NGO Fiji Council of Social Services is organising the relocation, supported by TO. However, TO found that people feel they are being pushed to relocate. The new site is prepared, but people are not ready yet.

While TO works with indigenous Fijian (iTaukei) communities, the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding (PCP) also works with Indo-Fijian and ethnic minority communities. Florence Swamy from PCP explained that there are Indo-Fijian communities affected by climate change that are not on the relocation list of the Fijian government and hence cannot expect government support. Support is also lacking for people who move from their rural communities to the informal settlements at the periphery of the urban centres. PCP has a focus on work in those settlements, using a storytelling methodology and taking the stories back to the communities. She described PCP's approach as people-centred, human rights-based, and livelihoods-focussed. She stressed the importance of building trust between communities, civil society organisations and state institutions, and the importance of inclusivity, in particular including traditional leaders and the women who play major roles in the informal settlements where formal governance structures are non-existent. In fact, the only state presence in these settlements is often the police. Building trust between police and the communities is therefore important, and this also applies to the military in the context of disasters. PCP sees its role as organising dialogue between communities, police, the military and other state institutions which focus too narrowly on issues of infrastructure and do not have social structures in sight. Florence Swamy said that much more research and practical work has to be done regarding the informal settlements, which already are and will continue to be severely affected by climate change, given that they are often situated in particularly vulnerable areas (riverbeds, coastlines, slopes). And she is convinced that more effort has to be put into comparative learning across ethnic divides (Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding 2023).

Frances Namoumou from the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) stressed that traditional spirituality and the Christian faith play a major role in relocation. People say: we need the approval of our ancestors to relocate, and they ask: As God blessed us with our land, are we disobeying God when we relocate? Given that the vast majority of Pacific Islanders are devout Christians, the churches are a major influence in the communities, not only with regard to matters of faith, but also in governance, including climate change adaptation and relocation. One has to find traditional ways to say farewell to a place people have to leave behind in order to address the trauma that comes with relocation. She talked about the case of Narikoso village to illustrate the problems of relocation. Here issues were, among others: only part of the community relocated, which caused divisions, with discrimination against the (elderly) who stayed behind; the relocation site was environmentally not sound (soil erosion etc), so that people said: we ran away from one problem, and now we have another problem (see also Anisi 20...). These problems were traced back to a lack of meaningful consultation and a rushed approach, following outsiders' (state institutions) plans and decisions.

The Fijian experiences were supplemented by presentations addressing relocation in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati.

Rebecca Monson talked about relationality and relocation in the Solomon Islands, differentiating between the relationality of relocation itself, the relationality of policy (how relocation is governed), and the relationality of the ways policies (and associated laws and guidelines) are talked about. She made the point that people in the Solomon Islands have always moved and relocated so that there are traditional ways of negotiating relocation. She gave the example of Walande, an artificial island off the coast of Malaita. The 'saltwater people' of Walande negotiated access to land on Malaita by way of traditional arrangements with the 'bush people' of mainland Malaita, to whom they were connected through intermarriages, kinship ties, church affiliations and trade. In the 1940s, they secured rights to land on mainland Malaita through the exchange of shell money, dolphin teeth and cash – these arrangements were also documented in writing. Initially, this land was used for gardening only, but then people also moved to the mainland when life on Walande became more difficult due to the effects of climate change (starting after a cyclone in the 1980s). Walande is generally seen as a success story of relocation, demonstrating that traditional ways of organising relocation can work. This has major political implications. At the beginning of the debate about climate relocation, e.g., in its 2008 National Adaptation Programme of Action, the government of the Solomon Islands talked about the need to resettle people from low-lying atolls and artificial islands and framed this as an endeavour entirely for the national and provincial governments to carry through. However, the government's new Planned Relocation Guidelines of 2022 (Solomon Island Government 2022), follow a more flexible approach, acknowledging the role also of non-state actors and traditional ways that are already in place. In fact, space has to be made for fluidity of approaches, allowing time for consultation and consensus-building, funding and implementing what already exists. Like other presenters before, Rebecca Monson pointed to the role of the churches and the role of women in informal spaces. While acknowledging the strength and the capacities of communities, she highlighted the power differences within communities: communities are not flat, they are often sites of inequality and contestation.

Vanessa Organo from IOM reported on a project in Vanuatu with which she is involved. This 'Wokbaot Wetem Kalja' (Moving with Culture) project is a joint endeavour with the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VKS) and the NGO Further Arts, supported by the Vanuatu Government. It aims to follow through on the government's commitment to include tradition and culture in displacement and relocation policies. Its National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement mentions the importance of traditional knowledge and culture and the need to protect the cultural identity and spiritual resources of communities (Government of the Republic of Vanuatu et al. 2018). The challenge is to translate this commitment into practice. The project tries to support this by undertaking research and developing tools for the planning and management of displacement, drawing on culture and traditional knowledge, and linking them to formal government structures and procedures, taking into account that people in Vanuatu have traditions of mobility along kinship and trade lines (as also reported for the Solomon Islands by Rebecca Monson). The project serves as a connector between government, civil society organisations and traditional leadership. Vanessa Organo referred

to the case of the displacement of communities from the island of Ambae after a volcanic eruption in 2017, which was a very harmful experience for the affected people. The government enforced relocation, while the people did not want to go. In order to be better prepared in the future, it is necessary to include traditional practices, kinship relations, cultural networks and community-based relational approaches into formal state-led displacement and relocation planning and implementation.

In contrast to Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands, options for internal community relocation are severely limited in the case of Kiribati, as Tearinaki Tanielu pointed out in his presentation. There is simply not enough land area for relocation. The focus therefore has to be on strengthening community resilience and in situ adaptation, based on indigenous knowledge and indigenous solutions. Traditional housing, for example, accommodates seawater washing through the houses, and, if need be, food security can also be provided by eating mud. What is needed is further research built on traditional knowledge so as to strengthen resilience and become independent from international consultants who come in and lecture communities about how to adapt. Given the restrictions of internal community relocation, international labour mobility can complement local resilience building and adaptation, but this mobility is circular. People will come home. I-Kiribati, the people of Kiribati, have the right to self-determination in the place where they are today.

The relocation presentations triggered a discussion about resilience. The danger is that a focus on the resilience of the people(s) in the Pacific might let the culprits, those actors who have the main responsibility for the climate emergency—that is, states and companies in the Global North—off the hook. They might take the resilience narrative as an excuse to do nothing – or just a little bit to support strengthening resilience (Australia was mentioned in this context: financing adaptation and relocation in the Pacific, but subsidising the fossil fuel industry at home). For effective policies it will be necessary to balance and align the resilience—and the vulnerability—narrative.

Another issue raised was the performance of international consultants and external researchers. Not only do they often not understand and follow cultural protocols; often they misinterpret peoples' responses. Out of respect and following obligations of hospitality, people give the answers they think the consultants would like to hear.

The Diaspora Experience

Relatively large communities of Pacific Islanders can be found in the Pacific Rim countries of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the USA. Against the background of the climate emergency, questions related to these communities emerge: Do people move to these countries—inter alia—because of the impact of climate change on their home countries? How are they themselves affected by climate change in their new places? What do they know and hear about how the people they left behind cope with climate change? In which ways do they support climate affected people at home, and how do they maintain connections to home?

Taukiei Kitara, a Tuvaluan who lives in Queensland in Australia, defined the diaspora people as those who decided to move to a new land, taking their homes with them to those new lands. Tuvaluans outside of Tuvalu maintain the Tuvalu principle of *fale pili* – looking after your neighbour. Even far away, they remain the good neighbours of their people at home, helping them in times of need, and they are the neighbours for those who come after them to the new places, for example in the context of labour migration schemes. The ‘old’ diaspora people serve as guardians, helping the newcomers to find their way in the new environment. Diaspora people have a duty of care. Diaspora organisations are the bridge to other diaspora communities and to the governments and state institutions of the host country. And the Tuvalu diaspora sees itself as part of the bigger Pasifika diaspora.

Manuila Tausi, illustrated what *fale pili* looks like in practice in the New Zealand Tuvalu diaspora. He is from the island of Nanumaga in Tuvalu which, like other Tuvaluan islands, was hit hard by various cyclones over the last years. He decided to leave home and move to Aotearoa New Zealand so that others could stay home. In his new home country, he has been working for fellow Tuvaluans in various ways: helping ‘illegal’ Tuvaluans to get permanent residency, working on domestic violence based on Tuvaluan culture, cooperating with doctors and dentists for the health and wellbeing of Tuvaluans, organising Tuvalu language weeks and a Tuvalu kindergarten. The main aim is to preserve Tuvalu language and culture so that people can maintain their identity and their links to their home islands.

While these two speakers presented the ‘bright side’ of the diaspora experience, Bedi Racule shared her challenges as a young migrant struggling to reclaim her Pasifika identity in a Western society. She was born in the Marshall Islands, but her family moved to Hawaii when she was a child. Raised in Hawaii, not only was she confronted with the difficulty of maintaining her Pasifika identity, she had to navigate multiple identities in the process of acculturation and integration into the host society. While dealing with an identity crisis and losing her sense of belonging, she and other Marshallese youth had to deal with discrimination, microaggressions, and constant stereotyping. Rephrasing Kathy Jetnil Kijiner, she says, “I learned to hate me, because so many others hated me”. Her story revealed that subtle microaggressions are a form of ‘othering’ that reinforce the notion that Pacific Islanders are perpetually foreign and ‘different’ from the dominant culture of the host societies. Some Pacific migrants, including herself, decide to abandon their own identity and strive to speak English in order to ‘fit in’ and be accepted. She said, “I always felt like a ‘token brown person.’ I felt like an imposter that didn’t fit in, so I had to adjust myself to fit in – and that made me feel more insecure.” In Hawaii she was excluded as a Micronesian, and when visiting her family in the Marshall Islands, she was criticised as “not Micronesian enough”.

However, as a young adult, Bedi Racule overcame her wounded sense of dignity as a Pacific migrant living in the diaspora, by actively engaging in civil society activities to address nuclear and climate injustice in the Pacific region. Working together with other young Pacific Islanders to advocate for rights to her homeland has enabled her to rediscover and reclaim her cultural identity. This personal journey is a reminder that Pacific climate emergency is intricately associated with dark legacies with which Micronesians have been confronted: colonialism, militarism, cancers and waste from nuclear tests. Her presentation closed with three lessons: firstly, to consider the role of the churches in the diaspora context

when it comes to building resilience and to respond to the challenges of climate change. Secondly, states that experience climate-induced migration need to dedicate resources and develop policies that ensure the relational security of the people,⁸ and thirdly: “The Micronesian diaspora must begin to engage in the process of critically analysing the relationality of their experiences”.

In the discussion that followed the presentations, it was questioned whether ‘diaspora’ is the adequate term for the groups of Pacific Islanders living outside of their home countries; it would be good to find a better term that captures the connectedness of the people and the relationality of their lives.

Labour Mobility

In the context of the climate emergency, labour migration from PICs to ‘developed’ Pacific Rim countries, in particular Australia and New Zealand, gets new significance and is framed in new ways. Such migration is presented as a climate adaptation strategy in its own right, as a risk management strategy through enabling livelihood diversification, knowledge and skills transfer, and economic benefits via remittances. Labour migration is said to unburden the communities at home, at the same time contributing to their climate resilience. Remittances can be used to finance in situ adaptation measures at home (in fact, remittance flows often far outstrip official development assistance these days), and people will come back home with new skills and innovative ideas. Moreover, labour pathways today are the most realistic means of international climate change mobility (in fact, there are hardly any other options). Labour pathways, however, are wholly demand driven – the labour mobility schemes of New Zealand and Australia are informed by the needs of the economies of those countries, not by climate emergency considerations.

In the labour mobility session of the workshop, three speakers discussed the problematique of labour mobility and climate change on the basis of their respective research and work experience. While Sandy Morrison told the story of Māori-owned businesses that employed Pasifika labour migrants in the context of New Zealand’s Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme and which showed an understanding of the cultural background and the family conditions of their workers, Kirstie Petrou criticised wage theft, poor accommodation, racism and the undermining of traditional leadership structures in Australia where there is only poor understanding of the cultural context the Pacific workers come from. Only recently ‘cultural training’ for employers was introduced; while still rather inefficient, it is a start. The power imbalances between employers and workers remain and make the workers vulnerable to (over-)exploitation. The Australian economy makes billions of dollars out of the Pasifika workers who in comparison can take only a little money back home. The current labour schemes benefit the Australian economy, not so much the PICs and their people, as officially claimed.

⁸ This applies to home states in the case of internal migration, and both home and receiving states in case of international migration.

The third speaker in this group, Akka Rimon, was involved in the ‘Migration with Dignity’ policy of the former Kiribati President, Anote Tong. This policy was born out of the fact that there was high youth unemployment in Kiribati; young people who had gone through the formal education system could not find jobs in Kiribati. Labour mobility was seen as an economic opportunity, but also as a way of climate change adaptation; I-Kiribati going overseas would acquire skills and earn money which would serve the people at home. I-Kiribati who moved for work to Australia, however, had to learn that they were treated as workers, not as family, and when they were treated badly, they suffered silently – it is not their culture to speak up.

In the discussion, the ‘extractive logic’ behind the labour schemes was criticised: people are extracted from their home countries, with dire consequences: broken marriages, drug and alcohol abuse due to the culture shock. Labour mobility was compared to mining—mining people—and as such it was deemed to be racist and colonial. Even if these days people go ‘voluntarily’ (they are not blackbirded as in the olden days), they go because they need jobs; they know well that they are exploited, but they go regardless. Hence the notion of ‘voluntary labour migration’ has to be challenged: the neocolonial structures force people to go. And this is true not only for Kiribati, but also increasingly for other PICs, e.g., Samoa, where unemployment is on the rise and people see no choice other than to leave. The climate emergency and labour migration are two dimensions of the current global capitalist system.

Such fundamental criticism aside, a reformist approach to the climate–labour migration nexus would as a minimum necessitate starting from the needs of the PICs that emerge from the effects of climate change and associated natural disasters. The labour mobility schemes will have to be made more responsive to climate change. And that will require meaningful consultations with PICs leaders. Currently, Australia is taking decisions without such consultations.

Climate, Conflict and Security

Over recent years, or even the last decade, research and policies have become increasingly interested in the climate–conflict–peace and security nexus, both at the global level and with regard to certain regions and countries. The Pacific came into this discourse only relatively late, but currently there is a lively debate about how this nexus plays out in the region, not least because of the Boe Declaration’s statement that “climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific” (Boe Declaration 2018). There are, however, very different understandings of ‘security’, particularly in the Pacific. A variety of different concepts of security were explored in the workshop.

Jon Barnett started this exploration by cautioning against certain implications of certain understandings of security. Talking up the dangers to national security that come with climate change can, for example, help the military-industrial complex. Against talking up dangers, one has to acknowledge from the outset that the Pacific is a comparatively peaceful region, free from major violent conflict. The actual dangers of large-scale violent conflict

come from outside of the Pacific region (think of the China–US geostrategic rivalry). Actual contemporary conflicts in PICS are of a different character, and the links to climate change are complex and indirect. There are no inter-state violent conflicts linked to climate change in the region, and the prospects of such conflicts in the future are minimal, and so are the prospects of climate change-induced large-scale internal violent conflict. Climate change can, however, impede the capacities of governments to govern efficiently and thus can undermine their legitimacy, and this can lead to conflicts within countries. Climate change also undermines human security and the societal position of women, and this can increase domestic violence against women. This is one reason why it is so important to plan and implement climate adaptation measures that support women. Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that armed conflicts can enhance the negative effects of climate change, and that measures of climate change mitigation and adaptation in themselves can cause conflicts, if not carried out with sensitivity to the local context. Hence, there is a need for the screening of climate change projects for their conflict potential and for conflict-sensitive implementation of climate projects.

So, rather than being a hotspot of climate conflicts, the Pacific is a region from which to learn how to deal with the climate emergency peacefully. There are options for climate-resilient peacebuilding. What is necessary is the close monitoring of the effects of climate change so as to be able to warn early about and act early upon potentially conflict-prone effects. Also needed is a scaling up of—conflict-sensitive—adaptation. But first and foremost, deep cuts in GHG emissions are needed to address the root cause of the climate emergency. Such deep cuts are essential for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Following Jon Barnett's overview, Rory Medcalf presented an Australian national security perspective on climate change and security. He started by stating that security is not just the absence of armed conflict; rather, it is a state of mind of a society. Australian society over the last years has come to think of security in a more holistic and comprehensive way. Bushfires and floods and other climate change-linked disasters changed the mindset in the Australian security community. There was a shift of focus to 'resilience', and an acknowledgement of the need for closer cooperation with international partners, including PICs. In fact, Australia has to prove itself as the 'partner of choice' for PICs. Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong, when visiting the PICs, constantly explains that Australia has integrated climate-security issues into its foreign policy. The PIF's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (PIFS 2022) is an excellent approach to the issues at hand, and Australia has to support it. The focus should be on collaboration. For example, Australia alone cannot provide the climate adaptation support that is needed in the region, hence its efforts to collaborate with the US, China, New Zealand France, the European Union or South Korea in that field. At the end of the day, strengthening the resilience of the communities in PICs is essential for the security not only of the PICs, but also for the security of Australia.

Following up on Rory Medcalf, Anna Naupa also made a case for an expanded concept of security, but veered in another direction. She also referred to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (as well as the Boe Declaration) and explained that the Strategy links security to Pacific heritage, cultural values and traditional knowledge "to ensure peaceful, safe, and stable communities and countries". Using this as a starting point, she sketched the main elements of cultural security, understood as "maintenance of social cohesion and

cultural identity in the face of societal change.” These elements are: customary governance and conflict resolution, traditional knowledge and its inter-generational transfer, people–place relationships, social inclusion and protection, and cultural innovation and adaptation. She used the case of her home island in Vanuatu, Erromango, to illustrate the need for a paradigm shift towards a concept of cultural security. Erromango has a traumatic history of European colonial contact in the course of which the island lost more than 90% of its population. The climate emergency is a continuation of this traumatic colonial legacy. Culture is threatened due to the effects of climate change. Vanuatu was hit by two cyclones in a row earlier in 2023. The people of Erromango were on their own in coping with the disasters and securing food as state institutions are hardly present and state services do not reach the island. Under these conditions, people depend on their traditional governance structures, customary economy and culture. But these are in danger due to the legacies of the colonial past and the present onslaught of the climate emergency.

While Anna Naupa provided an insider Pasifika perspective on the climate-security nexus, Natalie McLean from the Australian Civil-Military Centre presented the outsider perspective of institutions which are in charge of supporting people(s) in the Pacific in the face of climate change-induced—and other—disasters. She talked about civil-military interaction and Australian disaster response in the Pacific. Her starting point was the need for a host of different actors to collaborate – actors who all have their own histories, legal frameworks, mandates and priorities. These differences can lead to tensions when they have to work together in a shared space. In order to overcome tensions and avoid conflicts, it is necessary to build shared understanding and mutual trust, in particular between civilian actors, including the police, and militaries, and between actors from the international humanitarian system and local actors. In general, all sorts of relationships and a complex network of interconnected processes emerge. Australia is increasingly asked to respond to disasters in the Pacific, and the military has to play an increasing role in the response, mostly to fill gaps as a last resort if there are no civilian alternatives. Responses follow a multi-stakeholder integrated approach, and operations remain under civilian/humanitarian control, with the overall responsibility for relief actions firmly in the hands of the state institutions of the affected country. The focus has to be on local leadership. It is important not to duplicate efforts, but to build on what already exists. Preparedness is essential, and so is building relationships.

In the discussion, it was reiterated that the military are not, and should not be, the prime responders in disaster situations, and it should not be the task of the military to engage in climate change adaptation projects (as is the case e.g., in Kiribati), as this is an inappropriate use of the military. Also raised in the discussion was the problematique of the narrative of victimhood/vulnerability on the one side (the Pacific communities) and agency/control on the other side (the outsiders coming in to ‘help’). Rather, all sides have agency, and all sides are vulnerable. Finally, there was agreement that a narrow focus on material security misses the point; the non-material aspects have to be included in security deliberations.

The panel that followed these four presentations added reflections to the different aspects of the climate–security nexus. Henry Ivarature gave the example of the development of the National Security Strategy of the Cook Islands, which is based on the extended security concept of the Boe Declaration. Michael Copage stressed the point that PICs’ security is

massively affected by developments outside of the region. Food security, for example, these days is also dependent on global supply chains. Hence global supply chains have to be addressed in policies that deal with the impact of climate change on Pacific (food) security. Furthermore, Australia's willingness and ability to support PICs in the future can be diminished because Australia is also vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Yoshiko Capelle talked about the resilient women and their Aeroponics Gardens project on Mejjatto Island in the Republic of Marshall Islands which is carried out in the context of the UNDP–IOM Climate Security in the Pacific Programme. Climate change threatens food and water security on the island, and the aeroponics gardens project is an adaptation exercise that helps to overcome food scarcity and thus also prevent conflicts linked to food scarcity, including domestic violence. The project's framing as a 'climate security' endeavour (instead of a development project) is due to the expectations of donors and government – which is another example of the power of narratives.

John Campbell sketched the development of his thinking about the climate–security nexus in the Pacific. His journey took him from human security through ontological security to relational security. A human security framing encompasses the material dimensions of peoples' security and addresses the threat of the loss of the material necessities of life. It captures land security, livelihood security and habitat security. But it leaves out the non-material dimensions of security that are of importance for Pacific islanders. This is why he explored the potential of the concept of ontological security as developed in the context of Western social psychology and sociology (R.D. Laing, A. Giddens). As occupied with the 'security of being', ontological security allows for the inclusion of non-material, mental and psychological aspects. For the Pacific societal–cultural context, however, the concept is wanting: it is very Western with its focus on the individual and individual security (see also Farbotko 2019; Boege 2022a). As others before him at the workshop, John Campbell referred back to the importance of **banua*—or *vanua*, *fonua*, *whenua* etc—; that is, the land/people connection which includes ocean, animals, plants, ancestors, land as intimately related. Hence it is preferable to talk about 'relational security'. It takes account of the material and non-material, the communal and personal bonds, grounded in the **banua*, as indispensable for security in a Pacific context (see also Campbell and Farbotko 2022). This understanding of security can explain why mobility may make sense to overcome the loss of material security in a place affected by climate change, but may not provide relational security. The ties to the **banua* are cut and this makes people refuse to move (see Merewalesi Yee and others above).

Loss and Damage

Ian Fry gave a brief overview of the massive climate change-induced loss and damage suffered by Pacific people(s) already today, from cyclones through ocean acidification to ocean warming that leads to tuna migration away from warmer waters. And he sketched the history of the debate about Loss and Damage (L&D) at the international level. He identified the USA as a major obstacle to L&D financing, refusing any kind of compensation or reparation; and he made it clear that PICs do not want short-term piecemeal funding. What is needed is a new source of funding, and, according to the 'polluter pays' principle, big international corporations should be liable to contribute to such a L&D fund. A big

problem is how to deal with non-economic loss and damage (NELD) – the mental effects, the anxiety etc. that come with climate change.

Tina Newport in her comments elaborated further on the immaterial intangible NELD, also referring back to what other presenters had said about loss of connection to land, loss of identity, climate anxiety and solastalgia – when one's place of belonging becomes fundamentally changed environmentally. She reminded us that places in the Pacific had been damaged by outsiders before, that people had been forcibly displaced before, and that in this regard climate change is not something new, but continues and adds to the damage already done.

In the discussion it became clear that, for PICs representatives, it is tricky to talk about NELD in the international arena; as it cannot be monetised, it is a strategy of main GHG emitting countries to dwell on NELD so as to deflect from economic L&D. The question is how to deal with cultural NELD, without neglecting the economic losses. Another difficult question is how to get L&D funds to the grassroots, the directly affected communities. Experience with climate financing so far shows that huge bureaucracies were created which put massive obstacles in the way of getting money to the communities. The same can easily happen to a new L&D finance mechanism because the main GHG emitters will put the most money in (rightly so) and therefore will demand control of the mechanism. There is the danger of weaponization of L&D financing by the great powers/major GHG emitters.

Now that it has been agreed at COP27 in 2022 to set up a global L&D fund, an assurance is needed that major GHG emitters will actually provide new and additional resources to the fund and that the most affected people, including grassroots communities in the Pacific (who might not have internet connectivity and expertise in dealing with clumsy bureaucracies), will have easy access to financial support.

Finally, there are no legal obligations regarding payment for L&D; there are no enforcement mechanisms. The only option is moral and political pressure, following Pacific ideas of restorative justice. This is not enough – legal international mechanisms are needed that are enforceable, in the area of L&D and beyond (e.g., with regard to climate change-induced international migration).

Facing the Future – Pasifika Youth

When talking about NELD, Tina Newport made the point that it is the young people, particularly those in the diaspora, who suffer most from forms of NELD like anxiety and identity loss. The final session of the workshop learned from young Pasifika researchers and activists as to how they cope and how they work on ways forward.

Iemaima Vaai reported on Toda Peace Institute's research project about climate change, loss of land and identity experienced by Pasifika youth in the diaspora. The first phase of the project addressed the experiences of youth migrants in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and Hawaii/USA. It found a broad spectrum of expressions of wounded dignity and loss of identity (similar to Bedi Racule's diaspora experience, see above). The second phase of the

project explored the experiences of Banaban youth migrants in Rabi Island and Tuvaluan youth in Kioa Island, both in Fiji. In comparison to the findings from the first phase, youth on Rabi and Kioa did not experience the trauma of loss of dignity and cultural identity, nor were they exposed to discrimination from the Fijian hosts. Banabans on Rabi have made the island their new home, they have kept their Banaba culture alive, they still identify as Banabans (although they are citizens of Fiji). The same holds true for Kioa where people identify as Tuvaluans and where the chiefly governance system and Tuvalu customs are still in place. Living as a community is still possible on both islands, and so is the maintenance of connections to the old homes. People, including the young, can still stay connected to land, ocean, ancestors. There are problems though: Young people from Kioa, for example, when visiting Tuvalu are the 'Fiji Tuvaluans', and they would not be willing to go back to Tuvalu permanently.

Bedi Racule demonstrated how she and her fellow students were able to re-connect to their roots as Marshallese through political activism. They started with addressing the nuclear legacies in the Marshalls, developing a movement for the establishment of a trust fund for the victims of nuclear tests. They deliberately put themselves in the tradition of the movement for an independent and nuclear-free Pacific which has its roots in the 1970s, and they made the connection between the nuclear issue and climate change as expressions of colonialism. She said that her experience of working in the movement, in solidarity with others, gives her a lot of hope, despite the numerous challenges. The youth activists revealed that the struggle for climate justice can be emotional and onerous work that can lead to 'burn-out.' Young activists are confronted with lack of resources and capacities, fear of speaking up, and tokenism at international conferences. They complained that they are often tokenized and given symbolic roles without any genuine engagement with decision makers. They also stressed the difficulty of sustaining these activities while faced with economic challenges ("we have bills to pay"). Nonetheless, Bedi Racule said that her activism has been healing as it helped her to reconnect with her community, Pacific identity and her roots.

Rae Bainteiti confirmed Bedi's assessment of the challenges; engagement in the climate justice movement does not come without a cost. In particular, it can be difficult to call out one's elders, one's uncles and aunties. He told his personal story of community work and political engagement in Kiribati, where he used music, arts and dance when campaigning (e.g., against corruption). After he moved to Aotearoa New Zealand, he worked in and with the I-Kiribati diaspora community, to maintain Kiribati language and culture. From there he moved to Rabi Island to work with his Banaba community there. He is critical of donors and external 'partners' who often expect comprehensive engagement with them, which absorbs a lot of time and energy – time and energy that should be better used working for the communities. For him it is a challenge to combine different identities: I-Kiribati, Rabi, Fijian.

A major point of discussion was the relationship between elders and youth in Pasifika communities. Respect for the elders is of utmost importance. This makes it difficult for the young to speak up. They have to tread very carefully; you have to know when to speak, and when to keep quiet. But things are changing, as elders are becoming more open to dialogue.

Another point that was made is that the Rabi and Kioa cases show how important it is to relocate as an entire community if relocation becomes necessary. Maintenance of culture and identity are easier then.

All three presenters pointed to the problem of tokenism: others use them for their own purposes (e.g., at international climate conferences). They also pointed to the dangers of burn-out and the need for mental support and counselling, and the need to reconnect to family and community at home in order to be able to keep going. All three agreed that Pasifika youth do not have the option to give up, saying: We have to take up the space, otherwise outsiders will occupy the space and speak for us.

Conclusions

In the final workshop session, there was agreement that the Pasifika youth have to be given all the support they need, in the interest of the entire Pacific region and all the communities in the region. It was suggested to establish a mentoring programme for Pasifika youth as the future leaders. There was also consensus on the need to challenge narrow framings of the 'climate emergency' or 'climate security' from the standpoint of Pasifika relationality. This also means that the links between the ideology, politics and economics of neoliberal capitalism, with its fetish for 'economic growth', and climate change and colonialism have to be laid open. In this context it was said that 'capitalism is the elephant in the room'. In particular, extractivism (in various forms, e.g., mining, logging, labour migration) and climate change cannot be dealt with separately: they are interconnected.

There is a need to criticise and de-colonise the climate change discourse, which includes the need to challenge the colonialism 'within us' that has led people(s) in the Pacific to imitate the 'developed' world. Colonialism as a 'digestive system' (Upolu Luma Vaai) does not only swallow land and resources and people, but also ways of being, thinking and knowing. To overcome one-dimensional thinking and one-dimensional approaches to policies and practice, to think and act holistically and relationally instead, opens avenues for addressing the climate emergency. This means 'both-and' instead of 'either-or' thinking, and work with 'mutual contradictions', such as:

- *Climate change is not a new challenge/it is a new challenge:* For the people(s) in the Pacific, the effects of climate change just continue and intensify the harmful effects that colonialism has had on them for a long time already: destruction of their lands, forced displacement, eradication of traditional knowledge. Seen in this perspective, climate change is just a new stage of colonialism. At the same time, climate change is of a new quality – with global and ubiquitous impacts, irreversible, and destructive at scales not seen before.
- *Pacific people(s) are (not) vulnerable/Pacific people(s) are (not) resilient.* Both are true at the same time. Which narratives are foregrounded depends on context, and foregrounding one or the other is highly political. Of course, people on low-lying islands are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and they are victims of the deeds of the major GHG emitters. This narrative makes political sense, e.g., in the international climate diplomacy agenda so as to not let the main perpetrators off the hook (who are

inclined to foreground the 'resilience' narrative as it fits with their neoliberal agenda). Of course, people have agency of their own and are not just victims. They are able to build resilience grounded in their traditional environmental knowledge and are able to adapt, combining this knowledge with 'outside' science and technologies, provided that they get the financial and other support to do so.

- *Relocation is not an option/relocation is an option.* Immobility and mobility are not mutually exclusive, they go together. Pacific people(s) are closely connected to place, their ontological or relational security is fundamentally em-placed; people/land/ancestors are one. Hence people do not want to relocate. For them, displacement is the most fundamental form of loss and damage. However, people(s) also have a long history of mobility. They have traditional ways of making new homes away from home and to maintain connections to places of origin, thus sustaining ontological/relational security. Again, foregrounding one (connection to place) or the other (capabilities to move) depends on context and is highly political. There are no objective criteria for (un)inhabitability, no objective criteria for when it is time to relocate. The people themselves know best and have to decide. The Plan A will always be to stay, and there will be a Plan B for when it is time to move. Migration is not problematic as long as there is a place to return to and as long as some people stay behind – migration and connection to land are not mutually exclusive. The tree (roots) and the canoe (routes) go together. The big question is: what happens when/if there is no place to return to?
- *Time is running out/slowing down is required.* Impacts of climate change are cascading and accelerating. The time to prevent catastrophic climate change is now. Rapid action is required. There is no time to waste. Yet Pasifika thinking and acting is grounded in slowness. Only then it is possible to pay close attention to what is going on and to negotiate consensus about how to proceed. The tight timeframes of climate diplomacy and donor-funded climate adaptation projects do not align with the rhythms of village life on Pacific Islands. Nor do they align with the need to solve the challenges of the climate emergency that have the support of a vast majority and are sufficiently radical to actually alter the course of the trajectory towards catastrophe. Again, both have to come together: the need to act urgently, and the need to slow down.

The question is how to translate these insights into policies at various scales. A precondition is to bring together the different spheres of policy, faith, education, social movements/climate activism. Climate policies and practices without spirituality will not and cannot work in the Pacific. De-colonised education can lay the grounds for genuinely Pasifika climate policies and climate activism that do not just follow alien 'Western' concepts, but are cosmo-centric, multifaceted, fluid and relational.

All this comes down to the need for a paradigm shift grounded in Pasifika relationality, not least challenging the neoliberal capitalist myth of eternal economic growth on a limited planet. The alternative is the 'wisdom of restraint' (as it is called in Samoa and as it is held by indigenous peoples all over the world). This also requires us to develop a new language and vocabulary, or to use language with great care. For example, loss and damage: it is not that Pasifika people 'lost' something – it was stolen from them. Another example: the terminology used at the COP level does not mean anything in the Pacific community context.

Framing the narratives is of utmost political importance as narratives develop a power of their own, e.g., the narrative of uninhabitability or the narrative of inevitable economic growth.

Pacific narratives have to be fed into the international climate change (and peace and security) discourse. Bridges have to be built between mainstream policies and academia, between pragmatic political thought and Pasifika philosophy, between local experiences and projects and national and international/ regional strategizing and planning. People from these different spheres were present at the workshop, and they engaged in dialogue across cultural differences (to a certain extent) – thanks to a workshop atmosphere that was conducive to talanoa, to deep listening and to sharing stories (and also to singing, reciting poems, shedding tears...). This was important not only for the dialogue between Pacific Islanders and ‘outsiders’ (‘Western’ academics, policymakers, ‘experts’ and advisers), but also for dialogue between Pacific Islanders themselves, because, as it was said: “We as Pasifika people(s) do not know much about each other, we have to learn more about each other”. And: “We need more success stories”.

That bridges can be built was demonstrated, for example, by the presentations and discussions about the climate-security nexus. National security, e.g., in Australia, these days is conceptualised in a much more comprehensive and holistic way than in the past, and it is acknowledged that the national security of Pacific Rim countries, international and regional security and the security of PICs, and communities in PICs, are closely linked. There are common security interests which encompass also the food security of women on an island in the Marshall Islands, the cultural security of the inhabitants of an island in Vanuatu, or the ontological security of communities who have to relocate. It is not so much climate change-induced direct violent conflict—or even war—between states or between communities within states that is the problem in the Pacific, but ‘low-level’ everyday localised violence (e.g., gender-based and domestic violence) and various forms of structural, cultural and epistemological violence that are not only linked to the impacts of climate change, but also have deep roots in colonial power relations. The concept of relational security (Farbotko and Campbell 2022) provides a promising approach to capture these multifaceted interlinked aspects of climate change, conflict and security. It might guide thinking and practice that makes peace (again, understood in a holistic way, well beyond the absence of war) possible even in times of the climate emergency.

Following from these—necessarily selective and subjective—insights drawn from the deliberations of the workshop, I’d like to conclude by making two connected and more practical political suggestions.

Firstly: When it comes to practical political considerations at the government level, we should explore the potential of the newly inaugurated Australian First Nations foreign policy, which is supposed to include climate diplomacy. We should not let the Australian government off the hook; we should hold them to their words and promises. There might be overlap with or connections to Pasifika relational approaches here that would allow for substantial policy shifts which would benefit Australia, the PICs and the communities in the Pacific.

Secondly, and connected to the first point: Given that Australia seems to be seriously interested in organising a joint Australia-Pacific COP31 in 2026, there is potential to bring Pacific interests and Pacific ways of addressing climate change to the fore, both in relations with Australia and at the international scene more generally. Putting imagination and energy into preparations of COP31 along the lines of a Pasifika relationality approach in combination with a First Nations foreign policy and climate diplomacy might be imagination and energy well spent.

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Acronyms

DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
GHG	Greenhouse gases
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
L&D	Loss and Damage
NELD	Non-economic loss and damage
PCC	Pacific Conference of Churches
PCP	Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
TO	Transcend Oceania
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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Appendix: List of Workshop Participants

Afeeya Akhand	Research Intern, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Australia
Alex Azarov	Conciliation Resources, Australia
Itinterunga Rae Bainteiti	Pacific Youth Focal Point for Climate Mobility, Consultant to Kiribati and Banaban CSOs, Fiji
Paulo Baleinakorodawa	Director Programs and co-Founder of Transcend Oceania, Fiji
Jon Barnett	Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow in the School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at Melbourne University, Australia
Volker Boege	Senior Research Fellow, Toda Peace Institute, Australia
John Campbell	University of Waikato, New Zealand
Yoshiko Yamaguchi Capelle	University of Waikato, New Zealand
George Carter	Director, Pacific Institute, Australian National University, Australia
Kevin Clements	Director, Toda Peace Institute, New Zealand
Mike Copage	Project Manager, Climate and Security Policy Centre, Canberra, Australia
Kirsten Davies	Adjunct Professor, UNE, and Macquarie University, Australia
Carol Farbotko	Australian Research Council Future Fellow, Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, Griffith University, Australia
Mathew Fox	First Assistant Secretary for Climate Diplomacy and Development Finance, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
Ian Fry	Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Australia
Kate Higgins	Independent consultant in the areas of peacebuilding, governance, community development and gender, Australia
Henry Ivarature	Deputy Director, Strategic Engagements, Australia Pacific Security College, Australian National University, Australia
Taukiei Kitara	Adjunct Research Fellow at the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, Griffith University, Australia
Virginia Marshall	Research Fellow Australian National University and Principal Solicitor/Director in her law firm Triple BL Legal, Australia
Matt McDonald	Associate Professor in International Relations, School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland, Australia
Natalie McLean	Assistant Director Research, Australian Civil-Military Centre, Australia
Celia McMichael	School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Science at The University of Melbourne, Australia

Rory Medcalf	Head of the National Security College (NSC), Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
Lillian Mika	Senior Policy Officer, Climate Negotiations, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian
Rebecca Monson	Australian National University Law School, Canberra, Australia
Sandy Morrison	Acting Dean, Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies, University of Waikato, New Zealand
Yessie Mosby	Torres Strait 8 claimant, Masig, Australia
Frances Namoumou	Ecumenical Coordinator for the Ecological Stewardship and Climate Justice Programme, Pacific Conference of Churches, Fiji
Anna Naupa	ni-Vanuatu PhD candidate at the Australian National University's School of Culture, History and Language, Australia
Tina Newport	Akairo Consulting, Cook Islands
Vanessa Organo	International Organization for Migration (IOM), Vanuatu
Kirstie Petrou	Research Fellow, Griffith University's Policy Innovation Hub, Australia
Gonzaga (Zag) Puas	Director of the Micronesian Institute for Research and Development (MIRAD), Canberra, Australia
Bedi Racule	Pacific Conference of Churches, Fiji
Rebekah Ramsay	Social Development Specialist, The World Bank, Australia
Akka Rimon	PhD candidate and Kiribati scholar at the ANU, Australia
Ria Shibata	New Zealand Centre for Global Studies and University of Auckland, New Zealand
Florence Swamy	Executive Director, Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding (PCP), Fiji
Tammy Tabe	Oceania Research Fellow, East-West Center, Hawaii
Manuila Tausi	Ministry for Pacific Peoples, New Zealand
Tearinaki Tanielu	University of Melbourne, Australia
Katerina Teaiwa	Professor of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Australia
Iemaima Vaai	Environmental climate justice activist for the Pacific, Samoa
Upolu Luma Vaai	Principal and Professor of Theology and Ethics at Pacific Theological College, Fiji
Ema Vueti	President of the Pacific Islands Council of Queensland (PICQ), Australia
Merewalesi Yee	University of Queensland, Australia

The Author

Volker Boege is Toda Peace Institute's Senior Research Fellow for Climate Change and Conflict. Dr. Boege has worked extensively in the areas of peacebuilding and resilience in the Pacific region. He is also Honorary Research Fellow, School of Political Science and International Studies, The University of Queensland; Research Associate, Bonn International Centre for Conversion; Research Associate, Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen; Research Associate, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg. He works on post-conflict peacebuilding, hybrid political orders and state formation, non-Western approaches to conflict transformation, environmental degradation and conflict, with a regional focus on Oceania. Dr Volker was the Director of the Peace and Conflict Studies Institute, Australia.

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Contact Us

Toda Peace Institute
Samon Eleven Bldg. 5th Floor
3-1 Samon-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0017, Japan
Email: contact@toda.org

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