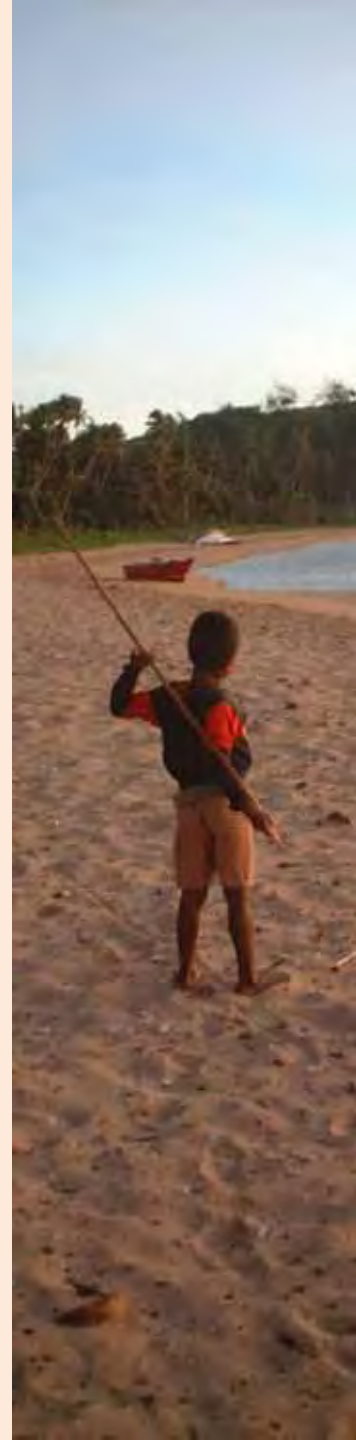


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Beyond the Core: Environmental Decision-Making for Climate Change among Peripheral Communities in Pacific Island Nations

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Premise #1

- In comparatively small “developing” countries such as those in the Pacific Islands region, top-down environmental governance is largely ineffective.



Premise #2

- Most effective environmental governance (currently and for the foreseeable future) is at community-level.
- It is commonly
 - short-term,
 - uninformed by either declared national priorities or by scientific understanding,
 - contextualised within traditional (hierarchical) governance structures.



Premise #3

- For future climate-change adaptation strategies to be successful, it is necessary to understand
 - community-level environmental governance,
 - its strengths and weaknesses,
 - the ways in which it can become better informed in order to result in effective and sustainable adaptation.



Structure of this Talk

1. Beyond the core: the massive peripheries of Pacific Islands national development.
2. Awareness about climate change among rural dwellers in the Pacific Islands.
3. Barriers to effective and sustainable adaptation in rural locations.
4. A way forward.



Part 1

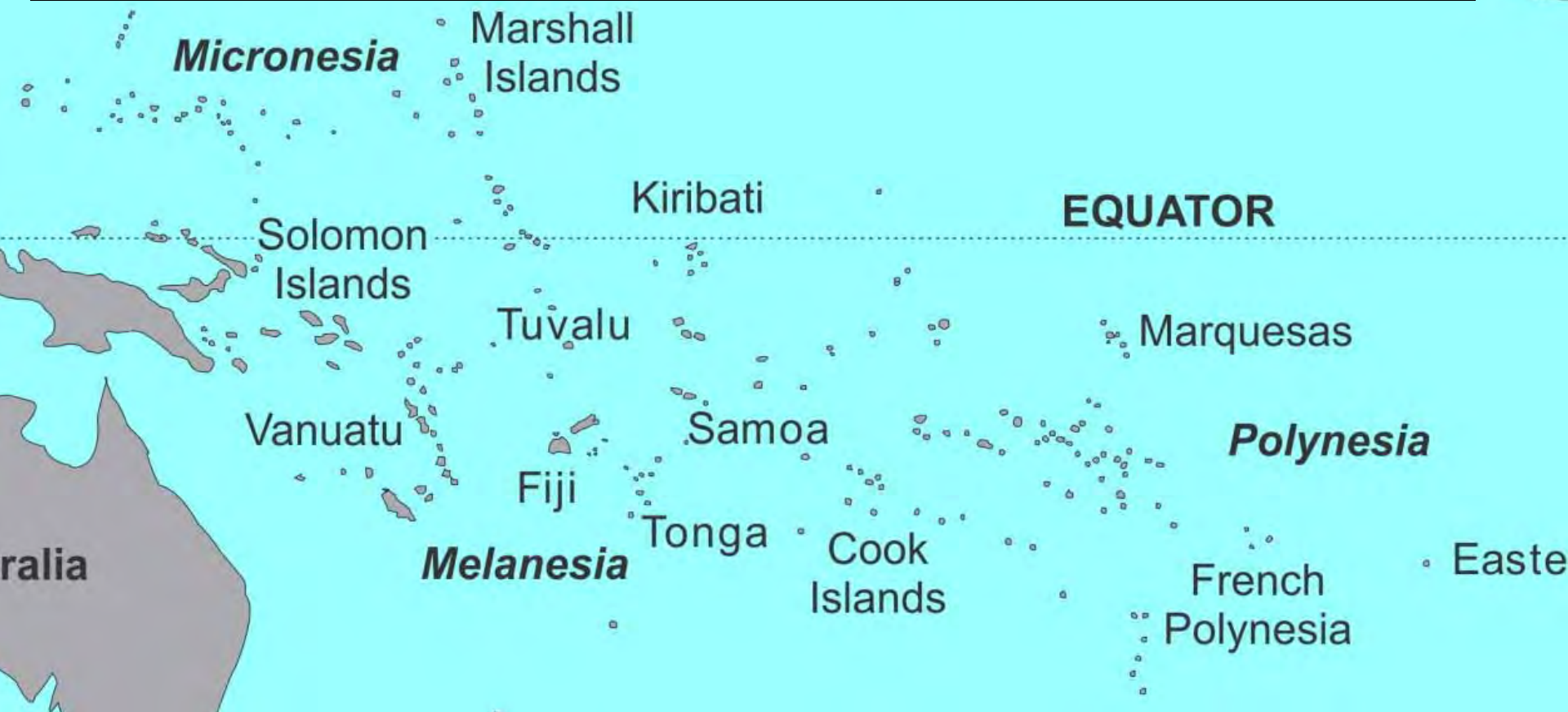
BEYOND THE CORE: THE MASSIVE PERIPHERIES OF PACIFIC ISLANDS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

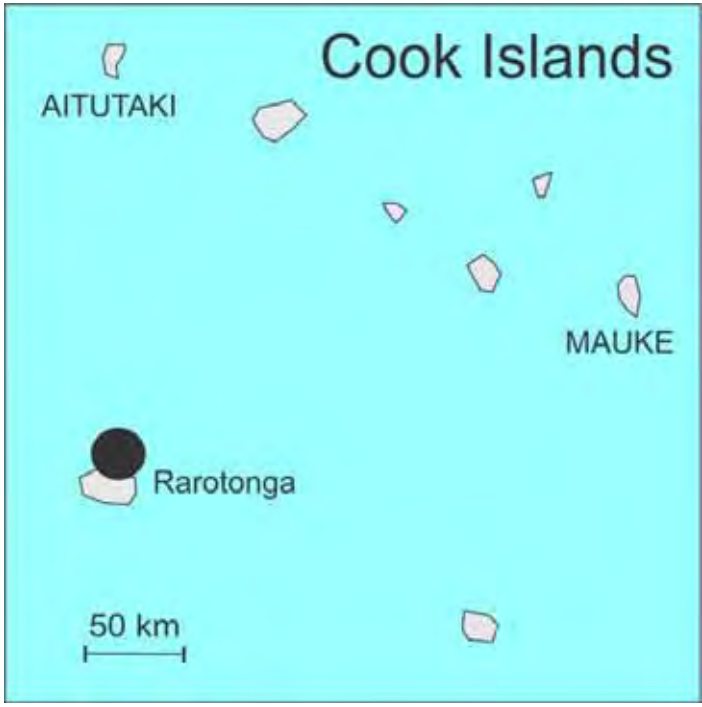




The Pacific Basin

	Number of Islands (inhabited)	Total land area (km ²)	Total ocean area (km ²)	Population (2010)	GDP per capita (US\$)
Cook Islands	15 (12)	237	1,830,000	15,529	4,998
Fiji	330 (110)	18,376	1,290,000	847,793	5,551
Kiribati	33 (27)	810	3,550,000	100,835	802
Vanuatu	80 (65)	12,200	690,000	245,036	2,823





Cook Islands:

core **(20% population)**

– Avarua (Rarotonga Island)

peripheral –

Araura Village (Aitutaki Island);

Akatokamanava Village (Mauke Island)

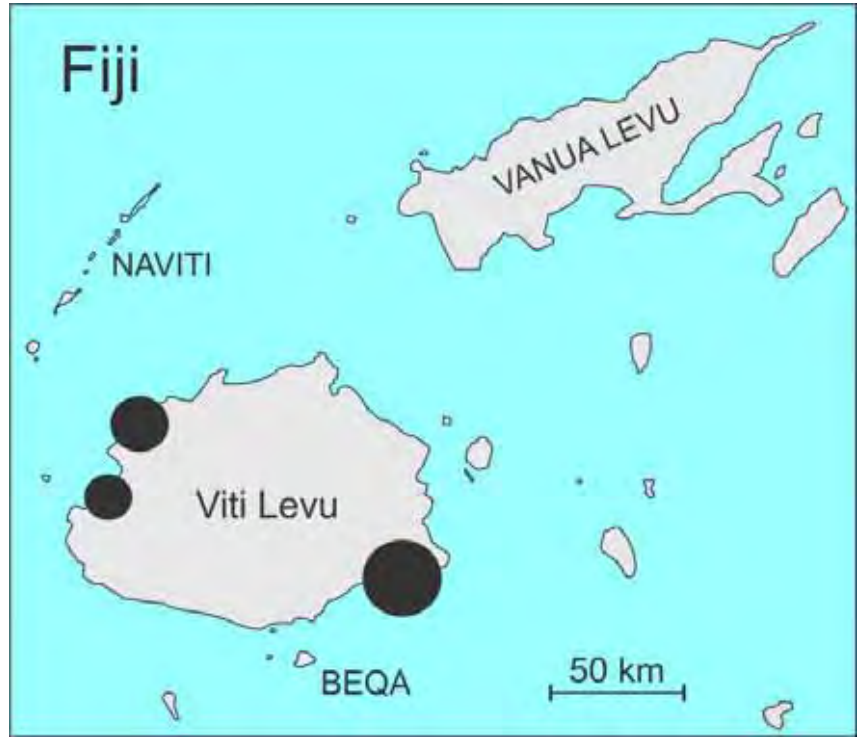
Fiji Islands:

cores **(65% population)** – Suva, Lautoka and Nadi (Viti Levu Island)

peripheral – Lalati, Nawaisomo and Rukua villages (Beqa Island);

Kese Village (Naviti Island);

Daria and Nakawakawa villages (Vanua Levu Island)



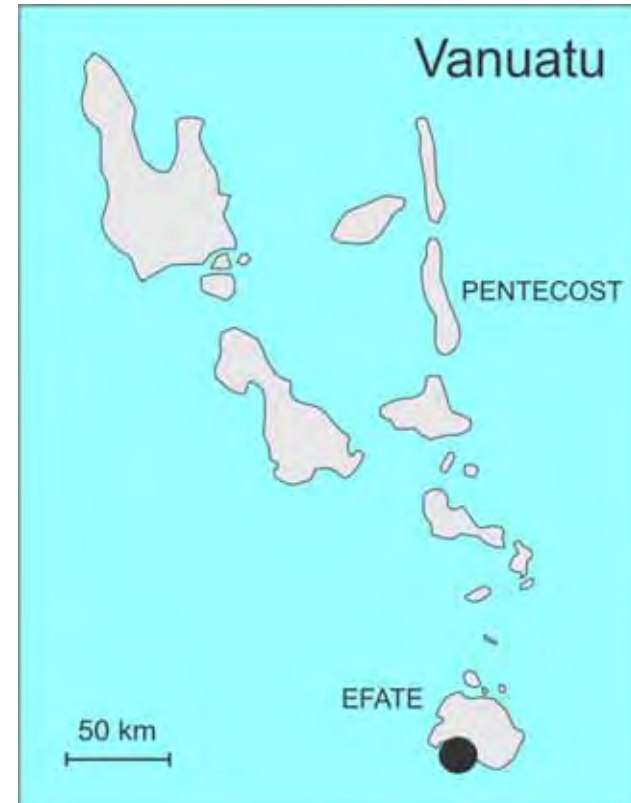


Kiribati:

core (65% population)

- Betio-Bairiki (Tarawa Atoll)

peripheral - Nuka, Tabiang, Taboiaki and Teteirio villages (Beru Island);
Tabonuea and Ukiangang villages (Butaritari Island)



Vanuatu:

core (10% population)

- Port Vila (Efate Island)

peripheral - Emua and Saama villages (Efate Island); Lolbualabwa and Antahi villages (Pentecost Island)

Part 2

AWARENESS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AMONG RURAL DWELLERS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.



Cook Islands

- Population density 65 persons per km²; strong ties with New Zealand.
- Moderately high awareness among some members of Island Councils.
- Little connection made at village (community) or household level between observed environmental changes and climate change BUT less dependence on subsistence agriculture and wild foods.



Traditional resource conservation (*raui*), Rarotonga, Cook Islands

Fiji Islands

- Population density 46 persons per km²; mostly coastal, highly dependent on nearshore marine foods and coastal-plain crops.
- Steep gradients of awareness about climate change and environmental management from cores to peripheries.
- Dominance of traditional decision-making in rural communities.



Naqaidamu Village
Koro Island, Fiji

Kiribati

- Population density 124 persons per km²; routinely dependent on nearshore marine and lagoonal foods and on atoll agriculture.
- Awareness moderate on urbanized Tarawa Atoll, very low elsewhere.
- Traditional decision-making dominant; being undermined in a few places by better-informed decision-making.



Eroding shoreline
and seawall,
Butaritari, Kiribati

Vanuatu

- Population density 20 persons per km²; lowest degree of urbanization (<10%); most people dependent on coastal (land and sea) foods.
- Awareness very low beyond capital (Port Vila).
- Traditional decision-making dominant.



Sand mining,
Lolbualabwa,
Pentecost, Vanuatu

Part 3

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ADAPTATION IN RURAL LOCATIONS.



Barriers to effective and sustainable adaptation in peripheral communities

- Lack of awareness of climate change and its causes
- Confusion of climate change and climate variability
- Short-term outlook and short-term responses
- Traditional decision-making
- Attribution of change to divine will



Part 4

A WAY FORWARD



A Way Forward

Targeting assistance towards “persons of influence” in peripheral communities is likeliest to result in effective and sustainable adaptation in all parts of Pacific Island nations.



Who are persons of influence in peripheral Pacific Island communities?

- Traditional leaders
 - Usually hereditary
 - Usually elderly males
 - Often lacking much formal education
 - Decision-making often non-consultative
 - Decisions often based on uninformed emulation, limited experience, and inferred best practice



Who are persons of influence in peripheral Pacific Island communities?

- Elected leaders
 - Often the same persons as traditional leaders (or from their family)
 - If not, often overruled by traditional leaders
 - Commonly little influence on unimportant or long-term decision-making



Who are persons of influence in peripheral Pacific Island communities?

- Religious leaders
 - Often highly-respected
 - Often very influential in terms of helping develop community world view
 - Often great influencers of opinion and particular courses of action
 - Excellent outreach
 - Pacific Conference of Churches – Moana Declaration 2009



www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/climate-change-water/pacific-church-leaders-statement.html

Who are persons of influence in peripheral Pacific Island communities?

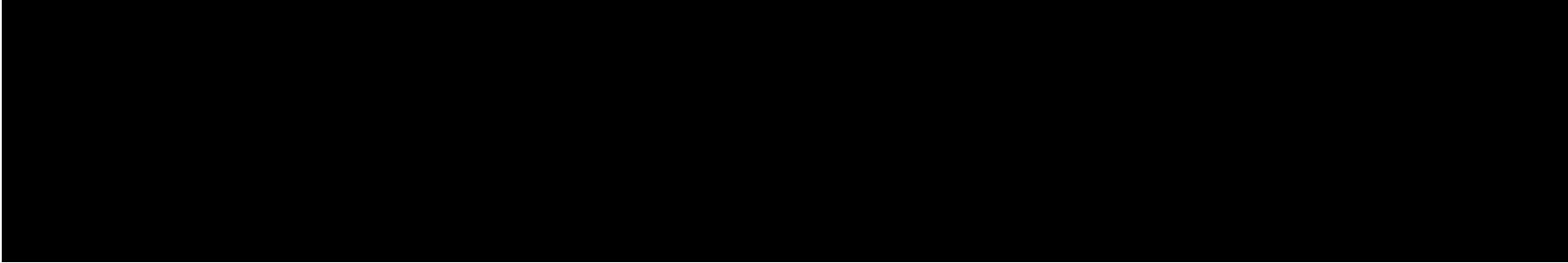
- School teachers
 - Often well-regarded within communities.
 - Often consulted as sources of “western” scientific knowledge.
 - Secular (sometimes lacking commitment to communities where they are posted)



Who are persons of influence in peripheral Pacific Island communities?

- Others (youth)



- 
- Direct targeting of community-level decision-makers by international donors and NGOs.
 - Participatory approaches
 - Emphasis on action (not money for future action); a lot of action is free and falls within community role of environmental stewardship.
 - Communicating climate-change imperatives in appropriate vernacular languages and appropriate cultural contexts.
 - Awareness raising by national bodies.

How can adaptation in (rural parts of) the Pacific Islands be EFFECTIVE and SUSTAINABLE?

- EFFECTIVE means that it will work with respect to a particular process (of environmental change), such as
 - Sea-level rise
 - Drop in nearshore marine-food supply



How can adaptation in (rural parts of) the Pacific Islands be EFFECTIVE and SUSTAINABLE?

- SUSTAINABLE means that it will continue to work successfully for the foreseeable future, particularly with regard to
 - Community buy-in and support
 - Adequate funding and labour assured



How can there be equity of adaptation in all parts of archipelagic countries?

- Community engagement
- Community empowerment through information flows
- Through
 - Word of mouth
 - Radio
 - Information sheets
 - Knowledge of precedents



Conclusions

- The challenges of climate change for people in the Pacific Islands are about survival.
- Time is short.
- The question about how to develop effective and sustainable adaptation in all parts of Pacific Island countries is still unresolved.
- Solutions need non-partisan cooperation between island governments, international donors, NGOs, and community leaders.



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