

Pacific migration futures: ancient solutions to contemporary and prospective challenges?

Richard Bedford

[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-7](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-7)

ABSTRACT

*Scholarship published by staff and students at the University of the South Pacific has had a profound impact on understandings by researchers of both historical and contemporary transformations in Oceania. This paper contains some reflections by a geographer who has been researching population movement in the region since the mid-1960s. It begins by drawing attention to seminal writing by the late Epeli Hau'ofa in the 1980s and 1990s, and traces the impact of some of Hau'ofa's messages about regional integration and identity in Oceania in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Reference is made to another very significant collection of essays by scholars, students, politicians and government officials linked with the USP in 2015 which explores what is being called 'the new Pacific diplomacy'. Like the discourse generated by Waddell, Naidu and Hau'ofa's (1993) *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, ideas reported in Fry and Tarte's (2015) *The New Pacific Diplomacy* have the potential to shift thinking about identities, regional co-operation and migration in Oceania.*

Keywords: *Hau'ofa; sea of islands; Pacific integration; borders; international migration; futures*

INTRODUCTION

In 1993, on the occasion of the University of the South Pacific's (USP) 25th anniversary, the late Epeli Hau'ofa reminded us that Pacific peoples used to range widely across their ocean in search of resources and opportunities for a better livelihood. In his celebrated essay entitled "Our sea of islands", he cautioned that the requirement to request permission to enter a neighbouring country, even for a short visit, and the need for visas and passports, are very recent innovations in a region that was home to many of the world's best sailors and navigators. This 'sea of islands' was transformed in the 19th century by European resource extraction, the creation of colonies and, from the 1960s, the emergence of more than 20 independent nation states and dependent territories. Some of the major contemporary and prospective challenges facing the mobility futures of Pacific peoples are associated with this modern 'sea of small island states' that have fixed boundaries encompassing reasonably well defined land areas and exclusive maritime economic zones.

What are the prospects of Pacific peoples regaining some of their ancient freedom to roam and seek opportunity away from their places of birth, in much the same way that New Zealand and Australian citizens can with their privileged passports and visa-waiver agreements? In the past, Pacific peoples often found that an option for resolving social, economic, political and environmental challenges was to move to another island in the ocean. Is this an option for Pacific peoples in the 21st century or will limited access to visas and increasing regulation of boundary crossing continue to reduce opportunities for seeking new lives outside the perimeters of their nation's exclusive economic zones? This paper reflects on some challenges that are likely to require greater freedom for movement, both between island countries in the region as well as into and out of countries on the Pacific rim.

RECALLING HAU'OFA'S ARGUMENT AND VISION

When the USP's School of Social and Economic Development published "Our Sea of Islands", along with a series of responses by Hau'ofa's colleagues at the University, in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, (edited by Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu and Epeli Hau'ofa), they produced a book that changed for ever the way many researchers, including me, conceived of the Pacific and its islands. The various contributors introduced some very challenging ideas about a world of islands and small countries that Hau'ofa had been reflecting on for some time – ideas that gained much wider circulation amongst the academic community when his essay was re-printed a year later in the top-ranked Pacific journal, *The Contemporary Pacific* (Hau'ofa, 1994). A second paper, elaborating on a concept of an Oceanian regional identity that includes Australia and New Zealand, followed soon after (Hau'ofa, 1998).

An important collection of Hau'ofa's writings, published by the University of Hawai'i Press (2008) under the title *We are the Ocean. Selected Works*, appeared shortly before his untimely death. It contains an invaluable record of the thinking of one of the Pacific's most influential scholars, and I want to acknowledge at the outset that many of the things I say in this paper about Pacific migration futures have their roots in Epeli's evocative conception of Oceania as a 'sea of islands', inhabited by a very diverse population that includes "anyone who has lived in our

region and is committed to Oceania” (Hau’ofa, 1998 reproduced in Hau’ofa, 2008, p.51).

The following observation by Hau’ofa has particular relevance for the central argument I develop in this paper:

The resources of Samoans, Cook Islanders, Niueans, Tokelauans, Tuvaluans, I-Kiribatis (sic), Fijians, Indo-Fijians and Tongans, are no longer confined to their national boundaries; they are located wherever these people are living permanently or otherwise. This is as it was before the age of Western imperialism. One can see this any day at seaports and airports throughout the central Pacific where consignments of goods from homes-abroad are unloaded, as those of the homelands are loaded. Construction materials, agricultural machinery, motor vehicles, other heavy goods and a myriad of other things are sent from relatives abroad, while handicrafts, tropical fruits and root crops, dried marine creatures, kava and other delectables are despatched from the homelands. Although this flow of goods is generally not included in official statistics, yet so much of the welfare of ordinary people of Oceania depends on an informal movement along ancient routes drawn in bloodlines invisible to the enforcers of the laws of confinement and regulated mobility (Hau’ofa, 1993, p.11)

Hau’ofa reminded us that the current confinement of peoples in Oceania to a patchwork of 24 nation states and dependent territories, encompassing the 22 island countries as well as Australia and New Zealand, is a very recent phenomenon. It is a product of less than 100 years of colonial domination in most parts of a region that has been inhabited for over 60,000 years going by estimates of the earliest Aboriginal societies in Australia. As Hau’ofa notes, before the colonial irruption from the late eighteenth century:

The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. ... Theirs was a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers. From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby expanding social networks for greater flow of wealth. They travelled to visit relatives in a wide variety of natural and cultural surroundings, to quench their thirst for adventure and even to fight and dominate (Hau’ofa, 1993, p. 8).

In his later extension of the idea of an over-arching Oceanian identity to encompass Pacific Island peoples, as well as the peoples of Australia and New Zealand, Hau’ofa (1997, reproduced in Hau’ofa, 2008, p.54) noted that “as far as ordinary people of Oceania are concerned, there are no national boundaries across the sea between our countries”. He drew attention to the Pacific people who did not reach their intended destinations while out fishing or visiting friends and relations; ‘drifters’ who were always taken good care of by the communities in which they ended up.

Whether negotiating the oceans of the northern and eastern Pacific, or traversing the hills, valleys and plains of Papua New Guinea and the large islands of the western Pacific (Melanesia), Pacific peoples were not constrained by externally imposed boundaries or by the requirement to have a visa to enter another country. There were constraints on movement, but these owed their origins to local cultural, environmental and psychological factors and forces – not the decisions of rulers

and regulators who lived thousands of kilometres away and who never set foot in the islands.

Two hundred years after the initiation of sustained contact with Europeans, Pacific peoples are, in Hau'ofa's words, "once again enlarging their world, establishing new resource bases and expanded networks for circulation" through what he termed a process of 'world enlargement'. He acknowledged that this process is not evenly experienced across the island states, especially when the 'enlargement' refers to opportunities for work and residence outside the boundaries of their nation states.

There are some island peoples that have much more access to 'world enlargement' spanning several countries than others. In general, the peoples of western Melanesia (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) currently have far fewer opportunities in this regard than the much smaller populations of the northern and eastern Pacific (Bedford and Hugo, 2012; Burson and Bedford, 2013). On the positive side, however, these large continental islands have much richer resource endowments to support the sorts of development that are valued in contemporary societies than the coral reef islands and atolls or the much smaller volcanic islands to the east and north. In the pre-colonial world there were boundaries both between groups of islands as well as between groups living in the larger islands, but these boundaries were fluid and functional. Crossing these boundaries depended more on long-standing relationships with neighbours and mutually beneficial economic exchanges than the rules and regulations of some central authority administering a particular state from within or afar, or the existence on maps of lines demarcating the territories of colonies and later independent states in the region.

Most of the independent Pacific states and territories have given citizens of other Pacific states the right to enter for a short-term visit without a visa (Burson and Bedford, 2013; Bedford et al., 2014). These rights of visa-free entry for Pacific citizens are also extended to citizens of Australia and New Zealand in most of the Pacific's independent states, as well as the citizens of many other more developed nations. Papua New Guinea is one notable exception in this regard: citizens of Australia and New Zealand, as well as most Pacific Island states (except those that comprise the Melanesian Spearhead Group, see below) are required to purchase visas as visitors at the border.

Few of the more developed nations extend the same privilege to citizens of independent Pacific countries. The visa-waiver privileges for short-term visits by New Zealand and Australian tourists to most Pacific countries, for example, are not extended to the island-based inhabitants of Oceania when they visit Australia and New Zealand. New Zealand did have a very short-lived experiment with visa-waiver for the citizens of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga in 1986 and early 1987, and a somewhat longer one with the citizens of Kiribati and Tuvalu between 1986 and 2002 (Bedford and Bedford, 2010). However, in 2015 the citizens of the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau are the only Pacific people to have visa-free access to New Zealand unless they also happen to be citizens of countries like Australia, the United States of America, Canada or the United Kingdom.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE FROM THE EARLY 1990S

Before discussing further the links between boundaries and mobility, it is appropriate to go back to 1993 and the challenges that were issued in that year to our thinking about mobility and development in Oceania. In the same year that the USP published “Our sea of islands”, another slim volume, containing a series of essays that also caused considerable debate, was published by the National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University – *Pacific 2010 – Challenging the Future* – edited by Rodney Cole (1993). The opening essay by Rowan Callick carried the title “A doomsday scenario”, a title that challenged Hau’ofa’s optimism over being able to re-centre the debate about Pacific development around hope and empowerment of people living in a sea of islands rather than the conventional approach towards people living on small islands in a far sea.

Callick’s (1993) deliberately provocative scenario of an increasingly impoverished and marginalised Pacific by 2010 had the same fundamental objective of challenging prevailing mindsets about prospects for the region as did Hau’ofa’s plea for recognition of the ancient bloodlines and resource flows that linked people and places across the Pacific ocean and provided a basis for a much more empowering and inclusive concept of ‘the region’ than had been achieved to date. While Hau’ofa talked of a ‘sea of islands’ in an ocean that was hospitable and generous, Callick, one of Australia’s most prominent and best informed Pacific journalists, evoked the imagery Hau’ofa wanted to challenge – small islands scattered over a vast ocean; a region of few centres and much remoteness that was prone to increasing social, economic, environmental and political distress and dysfunction.

Callick’s primary focus was the impacts of two demographic processes, especially in the western Pacific: rapid population growth (some of the world’s fastest growing populations continue to be in Melanesia) and rapid urbanisation. He did not comment much on overseas migration; the regulatory regimes that restricted the sort of free movement Hau’ofa had at the centre of his argument were seen, implicitly if not explicitly in his argument, as persisting rather than changing and becoming less restrictive.

Looking ahead in the early 1990s Callick (1993, p.2) observed:

By 2010, population growth in the Pacific islands is careering beyond control. It has doubled to 9 million. Malnutrition is spreading. Levels of unemployment are high. Deaths from AIDS, heart disease and cancers have greatly increased.

Government services have been privatised or in many cases have lapsed. Crime has increased. Pollution and land degradation has spiralled. Much of the surviving rain forest has been logged. Coastal fisheries have been placed under threat from overfishing. Skill shortages in the labour market yawn wide.

Hau’ofa did not make any specific forecasts for 2010 but he did conclude his 1993 essay with the following challenge to Pacific peoples:

We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom (Hau'ofa, 1993, p.16).

. How do things look with regard to these challenges in 2015?

TAKING STOCK: SOME CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS ON THE 1993 PERSPECTIVES

Callick's deliberately exaggerated estimates in 1993 had, in his own words, 'sadly become a reality in 2010'. In a media release at the time of the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Vila in August 2010, entitled 'Peering into Pacific's perilous future', he challenged the leaders to begin the long haul back from doomsday. In his view "the Pacific has failed to live up to its people's reasonable -- and mostly modest -- expectations. The blame must largely be sheeted home to its political elites" (Callick, 2010, p.2).

WORLD ENLARGEMENT?

Population estimates prepared by demographers based at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in Noumea suggest that the 9 million mark that Callick's scenario for 2010 referred to was passed sometime in 2006. By 2010 there were just under 10 million people resident on the thousands of islands, excluding Australia and New Zealand, that comprise Oceania, and by 2015 the Secretariat of the Pacific Community estimates this had increased to just under 11 million (SPC, 2014). Over two-thirds (68 percent) of these residents were living in one country -- Papua New Guinea (PNG). A further 19 percent were living in the other four countries that comprise the region of Melanesia with PNG: Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomons and Vanuatu. In the three countries of western Melanesia (PNG, Solomons and Vanuatu) the indigenous inhabitants have very limited opportunities for migration to other countries. They had not regained the freedom of movement across the ocean that they once had, despite over 30 years of 'independence'.

The remainder of the region's population (around 1.2 million, or 11 percent of the estimated total of 10.9 million in 2015) was living in the myriad of oceanic island societies that comprise Polynesia and Micronesia. The indigenous inhabitants of most of these countries have, as a result of their colonial histories, some outlets for migration to countries on the Pacific rim (Burson and Bedford, 2013). By 2010 it was estimated almost 500,000 people born in Pacific island countries -- roughly the equivalent of the total population of Micronesia -- were living in towns and cities on the Pacific rim, mainly in Auckland, Wellington, Sydney, Brisbane, Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Vancouver (Bedford and Hugo, 2012). The elites in Polynesia and Micronesia were the ones who were no longer confined in Hau'ofa's (1993, p.16) words "physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves".

During the intervening years since Hau'ofa's and Callick's 1993 provocations there has been some movement towards 'enlargement' in the mobility worlds of some ordinary Pacific peoples. The visa waiver privileges that I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans had in New Zealand were complemented by work permit schemes through to 2002, and those citizens who could afford the expensive airfares from Tarawa and Funafuti to Fiji and on to New Zealand could make the long journey south without the need for visas if they were just visiting the country. These visa-waiver privileges and temporary work schemes ceased in 2002 when the New Zealand government introduced the Pacific Access Category (PAC) and allocated small quotas to Tonga, Fiji, Kiribati and Tuvalu for permanent residence in New Zealand, subject to some quite stringent conditions relating to employment (Bedford, 2008). Access to the PAC is via a ballot, and the numbers selected each year are small (75 each in the case of Kiribati and Tuvalu; 250 for Tonga and, since the lifting of a 2010 embargo in 2015, 250 for Fiji).

Since 2007 the seasonal work schemes introduced by New Zealand and Australia have provided opportunities with limits for some "to fly back and forth across national boundaries ... cultivating their ever growing universe in their own ways" (Hau'ofa, 1993, p.15; C. Bedford, 2013). But these schemes do not allow participants to transition to other types of visas either for temporary work or residence. They are highly regulated and by 2015 were providing around 12,000 Pacific Islanders with several months of work in Australia and New Zealand (C. Bedford and Bedford, 2014). While some commentators have viewed these schemes as nothing more than a "band aid" in the wider context of employment opportunities for Pacific people in Australia and New Zealand (Connell, 2009), others have viewed them more positively, especially with regard to the remittances they generate in rural communities where there are limited opportunities to earn cash incomes (C. Bedford, 2013; Bailey, 2015).

Protracted negotiations around a labour mobility chapter in the regional free trade agreement, PACER-Plus, are nearing conclusion and it is likely there will be concessions over access for Pacific Islanders to more employment opportunities, if not long-term residence, in Australia and New Zealand. Within the region, sub-regional groupings, like the Melanesian Spearhead Group (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and the FLNKS, the pro-independence Kanak party in New Caledonia), are opening up opportunities for greater movement of skills as well as goods and capital between member countries (Somare, 2015; Cain, 2015).

There has also been a substantial increase in mobility of skilled Pacific Islanders between countries in the region, especially of health and education professionals, and small numbers of Pacific business managers and employees (Voigt-Graf, 2003; Connell, 2009; Iredale et al. 2015). But these are members of Hau'ofa's elites; they are not the village residents who comprise the great majority of Pacific peoples, especially in Melanesia. For those with skills as subsistence farmers, fishermen, hunters, and small-scale commercial producers of crops and livestock there are few opportunities to move across international borders unless they live close to national boundaries and have customary access to land through long-term use, inheritance or marriage in a neighbouring country. Mobility beyond the local territory for most Pacific peoples remains restricted to internal migration, and the most popular destinations are, as Callick recognised, towns and cities within their countries.

URBAN FUTURES?

Internal migration in Pacific countries since the early 1990s has been dominated by a debate about on-going urbanisation of Pacific populations (Connell and Lea, 2002; Connell, 2011). There is enormous variability in the extent to which Pacific populations are urbanised, ranging from 100 percent in the cases of Nauru and Guam to zero in the case of the Tokelau Islands unless one counts Tokelauans living overseas as part of the country's population. By 2010, when the United Nations estimated that 50 percent of the global population was urban-resident, half of the 22 Pacific island states and territories had this share or more of their resident populations living in towns and cities in their countries. Seven had more than sixty percent in such places.

The regional 'average' for urbanisation in the Pacific Islands is only 23 percent, or 2.5 million out of the total 10.9 million that the SPC (2014) estimates for the island countries, because of the low percentages of the population in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu living in towns and cities. The persistence of high proportions living in rural areas has been seen to be due in part to strong and enduring ties with village-based livelihoods as well as being due to limited opportunities for employment in the small Pacific towns and a long-standing anti-urbanisation rhetoric amongst Pacific politicians and planners (Hau'ofa, 1993; Connell and Lea, 2002; Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 2011).

Notwithstanding the persistence of a dominant rural share in national populations in the three western Melanesian countries, over the next 50 years it is inevitable that much higher shares of their populations will be living in towns, either in their own countries, or in neighbouring countries. If we assume that by 2030 around 30 percent of the Pacific's total population might be living in urban places in the islands, then the urban population would rise to around 4.3 million (30 percent of the 14.3 million that the SPC projects might be living in the islands in 2030). Regional averages are not very helpful, however, because most of the future urban population growth in the region is going to be in Melanesia, not across the Pacific as a whole.

Using similar assumptions about levels of urbanisation, and data contained in the most recent population projections produced by the SPC, it can be shown that by 2030 Papua New Guinea, with 30 percent of its population in urban places, could have an urban population of 3 million compared with around 1.5 million in 2015. If Papua New Guinea was to reach the 2010 global average of 50 percent of people living in towns and cities by 2050, then the population in towns and cities would be close to the country's current total population of around 7.7 million. – i.e. around 7 million urban residents in a population of over 14 million. When similar sorts of speculative exercises are done for the populations of Solomons and Vanuatu we end up with a combined urban population for western Melanesia in 2050 of around 8 million -- or the equivalent of the Pacific region's total population around 2001. The United Nations Population Division does not forecast such dramatic growth in urban populations in Melanesia in the 2014 revision of its *World Urbanization Prospects* (UN, 2014) but there is some evidence that levels of urbanisation in Melanesia especially have been understated, especially in recent censuses, partly because of the challenges of enumerating populations in squatter settlements (Connell, 2011; Pacific Institute for Public Policy, 2011; Jones, 2012).

Whatever the statistical outcome for levels of urbanisation in Melanesia by 2050, it has been made abundantly clear by many researchers for quite some time now that there is going to be accelerating expansion of the populations living in towns and cities in Papua New Guinea, Solomons and Vanuatu. The populations in these three countries are not going to defy the global trend towards urbanisation of the majority of their people, despite the arguments about the persistence of more sustainable rural livelihoods for Pacific peoples long-term compared with living in squatter settlements and slums in and around towns.

In a remarkable book entitled *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping our World*, journalist Doug Saunders (2010) has done for slums what Hau'ofa (1993) did for small islands. He has used the lives of ordinary people -- their hopes, dreams and triumphs -- to tell stories about urban places that tend to be belittled and demonised as fetid social sinks, drowning in people and their excretions (David, 2006). In a sense, Saunders' (2010) *Arrival City* is the antithesis of Mike Davis's (2006) *Planet of Slums*, in the same way Hau'ofa's (1993) 'Our sea of islands' might be read as the antithesis of Callick's (1993) 'A doomsday scenario'.

Saunders argues that this is the final century of global urbanisation, and that by the end of the 21st century over 80 percent of the world's population will be living in or around towns and cities. He believes we can harness the optimism and drive of the new urban arrivals to make this last great migration "a force of lasting progress, an end to poverty, a more sustainable economy and a less brutal existence" (Saunders, 2010, cited by Pearce in his review of the book for the *Guardian*). In reality, we have little choice but to anticipate and facilitate such an eventuality.

The progressive urbanisation of Melanesian populations will need to be accompanied by improved access to employment opportunities beyond their national boundaries, as has been the case in most parts of Polynesia and Micronesia. The great majority of the new urban residents will have to be absorbed into informal and formal economies in the countries concerned, and this in itself will be a major challenge. However, the transition will be greatly facilitated by increased opportunities for Melanesians to work overseas to gain skills and income that will be needed when developing the economic base for the future urban societies of Melanesia.

There will be much more intensive mobility of elites between the different countries in Melanesia as this urban economy and society develops and the process of world enlargement that Hau'ofa describes for Polynesia and Micronesia will increasingly become part of the lives of a burgeoning Melanesian middle class. It is essential that Australia and New Zealand anticipate these sorts of changes in Melanesia and adopt policies that facilitate movement of larger numbers of Melanesians in and out of their countries for work as well as study and as visitors. As Vijay Naidu (2008) stated in a lecture on regional integration in the Pacific at Victoria University of Wellington some years ago, a critical issue associated with enhanced co-operation at the regional level would be the scope for Melanesian labour migration to Australia and New Zealand. He saw such migration acting as a safety-valve for the sending countries in the short-term, while at the same time building capacity amongst Melanesians by enhancing skills and entrepreneurship that will be essential for the development of their future urban societies.

A SINGLE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY?

Hau'ofa's vision for a regional identity that unifies the various states and territories that comprise Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand), and that is rooted in the sea as a unifying metaphor, has been facing some serious challenges in the 21st century. The legitimacy of the Pacific Islands Forum, the longest-established regional organisation that meets annually to establish and promote consensus perspectives on major economic, social and environmental issues, has been challenged by a Fiji-led initiative, the Pacific Islands Development Forum, since 2013 (Tarte, 2013).

The expulsion of Fiji from the Pacific Forum in 2009, and the decision to exclude Fiji from the PACER-Plus negotiations soon after, created significant tensions within the region that have contributed to the emergence of sub-regional groupings of states that provide some exclusive privileges with regard to mobility for citizens of member countries (Burson and Bedford, 2013; Tarte, 2013). These are: the Melanesian Spearhead Group (which has existed since the early 1980s but which gained much more profile and prominence under Fiji's chairpersonship between 2011 and 2013), the Polynesian Leaders Group (which emerged after the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in the Cook Islands in 2012) and the Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit (an annual meeting, since 2003, of leaders of the northern Micronesian states which have special arrangements for mobility within the sub-region as well as with the United States of America) (Burson and Bedford, 2013; Somare, 2015; Gallen, 2015).

A major concern that the current Prime Minister of Fiji has about the Pacific Islands Forum is the continued participation of Australia and New Zealand as full members rather than as aid donors with observer status. His aim is to have a regional forum of Pacific *Island* states which is not unduly influenced by or dominated by the two southern Pacific metropolitan countries. This challenges Hau'ofa's conceptualisation of Oceania that includes Australia and New Zealand as part of what he termed "a single regional society and economy" in the first of his seminal papers that are included in the University of Hawai'i Press' collection *We are the Ocean. Selected Works* (Hau'ofa 1987, reprinted 2008).

The Pacific Islands Forum, and its Plan for Strengthening Regional Co-operation and Integration (the Pacific Plan), was reviewed extensively in 2013 (Pacific Plan Review, 2013). At the annual meeting of the Forum in 2014 members adopted the Framework for Pacific Regionalism which "aims to change the development paradigm to ensure that Pacific Island Leaders are determining and driving the regional development agenda in order to deliver the kinds of public goods and services that ensure that we as a region are living healthy and fulfilling lives" (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2016).

The Framework articulates the vision, values and objectives of an enhanced Pacific regionalism which, in Greg Fry's (2015, p.13) words "keeps Australia and New Zealand within the PIF and at the same time meets the concerns of the Pacific island states about 'charting their own course'". Fry and Tarte (2015) have captured the essence of this 'new Pacific diplomacy' in a very useful collection of essays by Pacific scholars and leaders which has the potential to impact significantly on the way researchers understand the region in the 21st century in much the same

way Hau'ofa's writing in the 1980s and 1990s reshaped thinking about the region in the late 20th century. As Fry and Tarte (2015, p.3) state in their introduction: "It is not, in our view, too dramatic to see this as a time of transformation of the regional diplomatic culture equivalent to the move from the colonial to the postcolonial era, a time that represents a transformation of regional order".

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AND THE 'NEW PACIFIC DIPLOMACY'

The 'new Pacific diplomacy' has been very visible recently in addressing one of the greatest challenges that all countries in Oceania will face in the coming decades: how they cope with changes in the climate and sea levels if the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) forecasts of global warming become reality. It is worth recalling that in Hau'ofa's (1993) view it was issues to do with the environment, especially the sea, that tended to bring forth more creative, coherent, collective responses from the region's leaders. The Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Papua New Guinea in September 2015 brought tested this tendency when the leaders of the island states parted company with New Zealand and Australia in terms of the substance of their respective declarations on climate change for the Paris Climate Change Conference (COP21) later in the year.

The leaders of the Pacific island states were very disappointed with the weak commitments that the New Zealand and Australian governments were making to strategies to reduce carbon emissions. The Pacific leaders agreed unanimously to adopt a very challenging target of containing global temperature change to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above what it was in the early 19th century – a target that was more ambitious than the frequently cited 2 degrees Celsius that features prominently in the literature about climate change (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015). Their collective stand on this issue at the Paris Climate Change Conference, and their strong lobbying of delegations from all the major countries with high carbon emissions, saw their target adopted as an aspirational one for the end of the 21st century in the final declaration of COP21. This was a remarkable achievement and one that reflects an interesting history of Pacific diplomacy on the issue of climate change as Carter (2015) has shown in his useful review of a Pacific voice in climate change negotiations.

The only country in Oceania to date that I am aware of that has made specific reference at a major international meeting on climate change to providing a new home for people in the region who are forced to leave their island homes if they become uninhabitable as a result of climate change, is Fiji. As early as the Copenhagen Climate Summit (COP15) in December 2009 Fiji's interim Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, announced that Fiji would consider taking "climate change refugees (sic) from Tuvalu and Kiribati in the future" (Radio New Zealand, 2009; Bedford and Bedford, 2010).

While acknowledging that Fiji did not yet have an official policy on admission of migrants displaced by progressively worsening environmental conditions due to climate change, Ratu Kubuabola went on to say in Copenhagen that: "Because we have historical ties with both these two countries, and also Fiji is the gateway to these two countries ... you can understand we have a number of ties. A number of Tuvaluans live in Fiji and also Kiribati people" (Campbell and

Bedford, 2014). This assurance was given again soon after Fiji's elected government, led by Prime Minister Bainimarama, took office in 2014 (Campbell and Bedford, 2015).

There are strong historical ties between Kiribati and Tuvalu on the one hand and Australia and New Zealand on the other but to date neither of the governments in these countries has stated officially that they will provide new homes for I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans in the event of destruction of the fragile fresh water lenses that are essential for the survival of their societies and economies. This remains an unresolved policy issue in both countries, shelved for future governments to address in a reactive way when people are forced to leave their island homes because they cannot derive livelihoods there any longer. Promotion of voluntary migration as a strategy of adapting to changing environmental conditions in Kiribati and Tuvalu is something that has been advocated by researchers for some time now using, where possible, existing policies which have been adjusted to allow for larger numbers from atoll territories to enter for temporary as well as long-term residence (Bedford and Bedford, 2010, Bedford and Hugo, 2012, Burson and Bedford, 2013, Campbell and Bedford, 2014 and 2015).

In the early 1960s, when I was studying resettlement as a solution to economic and social problems in Kiribati and Tuvalu (then the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony), the Resident Commissioner of the day, a New Zealander, was approaching governments through out the region, including New Zealand and Australia, about the possibility of resettling I-Kiribati from drought-prone islands in the southern part of the Gilbert Islands archipelago (Bedford, 1967; Bedford and Bedford, 2010). There were concerns at the time about the rapid growth of Polynesian and Micronesian populations, and the pressure this growth was placing on limited fresh water supplies as well as limited land for cultivation in what were still essentially rural societies. At the time the New Zealand government was involved in the resettlement of several hundred Tokelauans, and there was no response to the Resident Commissioner's request. This example is one amongst several that could be cited to illustrate that some sort of regional response to migration in the face of changing environmental conditions in the Pacific is not a new one.

CONCLUSION

Are there ancient solutions to contemporary challenges and problems associated with the mobility of Pacific peoples? In Hau'ofa's (1993, 1998) view, there are and the key solution is to allow for greater freedom of movement across those invisible lines that demarcate boundaries between countries that never existed until 150 years ago. In a contemporary world setting, Hau'ofa is not asking for much more than what the privileged passports for those from Australia, New Zealand, North America and most European countries currently allow. It is hardly a major ask, especially of those who are part of his inclusive definition of Oceania; it is what many of the Pacific people who have managed to acquire an Australian or New Zealand passport actually have.

In the interests of promoting a regional identity to complement the range of other identities Pacific people have in a world where small places will need to present a much more united front to protect their essential heritages in the future, opening up options for greater circulation of all of his Oceanians would be a very constructive move that would go a long way towards easing current tensions and anxieties in the region. Notwithstanding the challenges of negotiating

regional approaches towards futures for a very diverse group of small island states and their southern neighbours in Oceania, there remains a very strong commitment to strengthening the ancient bloodlines that Hau'ofa considered were still critical for defining personal as much as regional identities in this part of the world. A commitment to regional integration remains a defining feature of 21st century Oceania, albeit with quite different links to a wider world than those that defined the colonial era, coupled with a realigned balance of power between participating partners in the Pacific Islands Forum, as articulated in the new Pacific diplomacy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a revised and updated version of a keynote address delivered at the University of the South Pacific's International Conference "Future Challenges, Ancient Solutions: What can we Learn from the Past about Managing the Future in the Pacific", Laucala Bay, Suva, 29 November – 3 December 2010. I am grateful for the constructive feedback on the original paper received from several participants at the conference and for the encouragement Greg Fry and the editors of this special issue gave me to update the paper. I have not tried to review comprehensively the literature relating to the themes discussed in the paper – rather it contains some personal reflections on the impact of the writings of the late Epeli Hau'ofa on a geographer's perspectives on migration in the region that he defined as "Oceania".

REFERENCES

Bailey, R. (2015). Working the Vines: Seasonal Migration, Money and Development in New Zealand and Ambrym, Vanuatu. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Otago.

<http://otago.ourarchive.ac.nz/handle/10523/5063>

Bedford, C.E. (2013). Picking Winners? New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Policy and its Impacts on Employers, Pacific Workers and their Island Communities. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Adelaide.

<http://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/82552>

Bedford, C.E. and Bedford, R.D. (2013). Managed seasonal migration schemes for Pacific workers: just a 'band aid'? Paper presented at the Inaugural State of the Pacific Conference (SOTP), 25-26 June 2013, Australian National University, Canberra.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Richard_Bedford2/publications?pubType=inProceedings DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.2045.7045

Bedford, R.D. (1967) Resettlement: Solution to Economic and Social Problems in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. Unpublished MZ thesis, University of Auckland.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Richard_Bedford2/publications?pubType=thesis DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.2356.4881

Bedford, R.D. (2008). Pasifika Mobility: Pathways, Circuits and Challenges in the 21st Century In A.

Bisley (Ed.) Pasifika Interactions. Pasifika in New Zealand, New Zealand in Pasifika, pp. 85-134. Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington: Wellington (on line publication: <http://ips.ac.nz>).

Bedford, R.D. and Bedford, C.E. (2010). International Migration and Climate Change: A Post-Copenhagen Perspective on Options for Kiribati and Tuvalu. In B. Burson (Ed.) *Climate Change and Migration in the South Pacific Region: Policy Perspectives*, pp. 89-134. Institute for Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington: Wellington.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Richard_Bedford2/publications?pubType=inCollection DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.2910.2166

Bedford, R.D., Burson, B. and Bedford C.E. (2014). *Compendium of Legislation and Institutional Arrangements for Labour Migration in Pacific Island Countries*. ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries: Suva.

<http://www.unescap.org/resources/compendium-legislation-and-institutional-arrangements-labour-migration-pacific-island>

Bedford, R.D. and Hugo, G. (2012). *Population Movement in the Pacific: A Perspective on Future Prospects*. New Zealand Department of Labour: Wellington.

<http://www.mbie.govt.nz/publications-research/research/research-index?topic=Migration&type=Report>

Burson, B. and Bedford, R.D. (2013). *Clusters and Hubs: Towards a Regional Architecture for Voluntary Adaptive Migration in the Pacific*. Technical Paper. The Nansen Initiative: Disaster Induced Cross-Border Displacement: Geneva.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274254810_Clusters_and_Hubs_Towards_a_Regional_Architecture_for_Voluntary_Adaptive_Migration_in_the_Pacific

Cain, T.N. (2015). The Renaissance of the Melanesian Spearhead Group. In G. Fry and S. Tarte (Eds.) *The New Pacific Diplomacy*, pp. 151-160. Canberra: ANU E-Press.

Callick, R. (1993) A doomsday scenario? In R.V. Cole (Ed.) *Pacific 2010: Challenging the Future*, pp. 1-11. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, The Australian National University.

Callick, R. (2010) Peering into Pacific's perilous future. *The Australian*, 4 August 2010. www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/peering-into-pacifics-perilous-future/story-e6.

Campbell, J.R. and Bedford, R.D. (2014). Migration and Climate Change in Oceania. In E. Piguet and F. Laczko (Eds) *People on the Move in a Changing Climate: The Regional Impact of Environmental Change on Migration*, pp. 177-204. Springer: Dordrecht.

Campbell, J.C. and Bedford, R.D. (2015). Climate Change and Migration: Lessons from Oceania. In A. Triandafyllidou (Ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Immigration and Refugee Studies*, pp. 304-311. Routledge: London.

Carter, G. (2015). Establishing a Pacific Voice in the Climate Change Negotiations. In G. Fry and S. Tarte (Eds.) *The New Pacific Diplomacy*, pp. 205-220. ANU E-Press: Canberra.

- Cole, R.V. (ed.) (1993). *Pacific 2010: Challenging the Future*. National Centre for Development Studies, The Australian National University: Canberra.
- Connell, J.C. (2009). *The Global Health Care Chain. From the Pacific to the World*. Routledge: London
- Connell, J.C. (2011). Elephants in the Pacific? Pacific urbanisation and its discontents. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 52(2), 121-135.
- Connell, J.C. and Lea, J. (2002). *Urbanisation in the Island Pacific: Towards Sustainable Development*. Routledge: London.
- Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of Slums*. Verso: UK.
- Fry, G. (2015). Capturing the spirit of 1971: towards a new regional political settlement in the Pacific. SSGM Discussion Papers, 2015/13, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Programme, Australian National University: Canberra.
- Fry, G. and Tarte, S. (2015.) The ‘New Pacific Diplomacy’: an introduction. In G. Fry and S. Tarte (Eds.) *The New Pacific Diplomacy*, pp. 3-20. ANU E-Press: Canberra.
- Fry, G. and Tarte, S. (Eds.) (2015) *The New Pacific Diplomacy*. ANU E-Press: Canberra.
- Gallen, S.L. (2015). Micronesian Sub-Regional Diplomacy. In G. Fry and S. Tarte (Eds.) *The New Pacific Diplomacy*, pp. 175-187. ANU E-Press: Canberra.
- Hau’ofa, E. (1987). *The New South Pacific Society: Integration and Independence*. In A. Hooper et al. (Eds.) *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*, pp. 1-22. Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific: Suva.
- Hau’ofa, E. (1993). Our Sea of Islands. In E. Waddell, V. Naidu and E. Hau’ofa (Eds.) *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, pp. 2-16. School of Social and Economic Development, the University of the South Pacific: Suva.
- Hau’ofa, E (1994). Our sea of islands, *The Contemporary Pacific* 6(2), 142–162 (reprint of 1993 paper).
- Hau’ofa, E. (1998). The ocean in us, *The Contemporary Pacific* 10(2), 391-410.
- Hau’ofa, E. (2008). *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works*. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu.
- Iredale, R.R., Voigt-Graf, C. and Khoo, S-E (2015). Trends in international and internal teacher mobility in three Pacific Island countries. *International Migration* 53(1), 97-114.
- Jones, P. (2012). *The State of Pacific Towns and Cities. Urbanisation in the ADB’s Pacific Developing Member Countries*. Pacific Series, Asian Development Bank: Manila.
- Naidu, V. (2008). Migration and development in the Pacific: reflections and responses. Keynote address to the Pathways, Circuits and Crossroads Conference “New Research on Population, Migration and Community Dynamics”, 9-11 June 2008, Wellington.
- Pacific Institute for Public Policy (2011). *Urban Hymns: managing urban growth*. PIPP Discussion Paper

No. 18, Pacific Institute of Public Policy: Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2015). Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Declaration on Climate Change Action. Annex 1, 46th Pacific Islands Forum Communique, 10 September 2015. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat: Suva.

<http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2015/September/pif-comm.htm> (accessed 16 September 2015).

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2016). The Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

<http://www.forumsec.org.fj/pages.cfm/strategic-partnerships-coordination/framework-for-pacific-regionalism/> (accessed 7 February 2016).

Pacific Plan Review (2013). Report to Pacific Islands Leaders. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat: Suva.

Radio New Zealand (2009). Fiji considers accepting climate change refugees. www.rnzi.com (personal communication, Geraldine Grantham-Harvey, Department of Labour, Wellington, 14 December 2009).

Saunders, D. (2010). *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Shaping our World*. Pantheon: USA.

Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) (2014). Pacific Island Populations – Estimates and projections of demographic indicators for selected years. <http://www.spc.int/sdd/>

Somare, M. (2015). The Melanesian Spearhead Group: The last 25 Years. In G. Fry and S. Tarte (Eds.) *The New Pacific Diplomacy*, pp. 291-298. ANU E-Press: Canberra.

Tarte, S. (2013). A new regional voice? An observer's perspective on the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), Inaugural Summit, Denarau, Fiji 5-7 August 2013. Pacific Islands Brief No. 4. Pacific Islands Development Program, University of Hawaii: Honolulu.

United Nations (2014). *World Urbanisation Prospects: the 2014 Revision. POP/DB/WUP/Rev 2014/F03*. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: New York.

Waddell, E., Naidu, V. and Hau'ofa, E. (1993). *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*. School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific: Suva.

Voigt-Graf, C. (2003). Fijian teachers on the move: causes, implications and policies. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 44(2), 163-174.