<u>Concept Note</u>
Island Oceania Page: Possessing the Pacific City Working Group

Organisers.
Jennifer Day, Benedicta Rousseau, Monica Minnegal, Sergio Jarillo (The University of Melbourne)
Rebecca Monson, Michelle Nayahamui Rooney (Australian National University)
Glenn Finau (University of Tasmania)
Joe Foukona (University of Hawaii)
Poonam Devi (University of the South Pacific)
Takena Redfern (Kiribati Government)
Barbara Andersen (Massey University)
Lamont Lindstrom (University of Tulsa)

Working Group Motivation. For decades, Pacific people have persisted in possessing the city, despite colonial exclusion, the necessity of building lives on land owned by others, and disagreement about their belonging in the city. In recent years, horrific mass evictions have plagued the Pacific cityscape. At the same time, moral assertions of tenure, customary arrangements, and government institutions provide some tenure security for the large majority of city-dwellers. There are secure places to live in the city, it seems, until the mechanisms that support them break down.
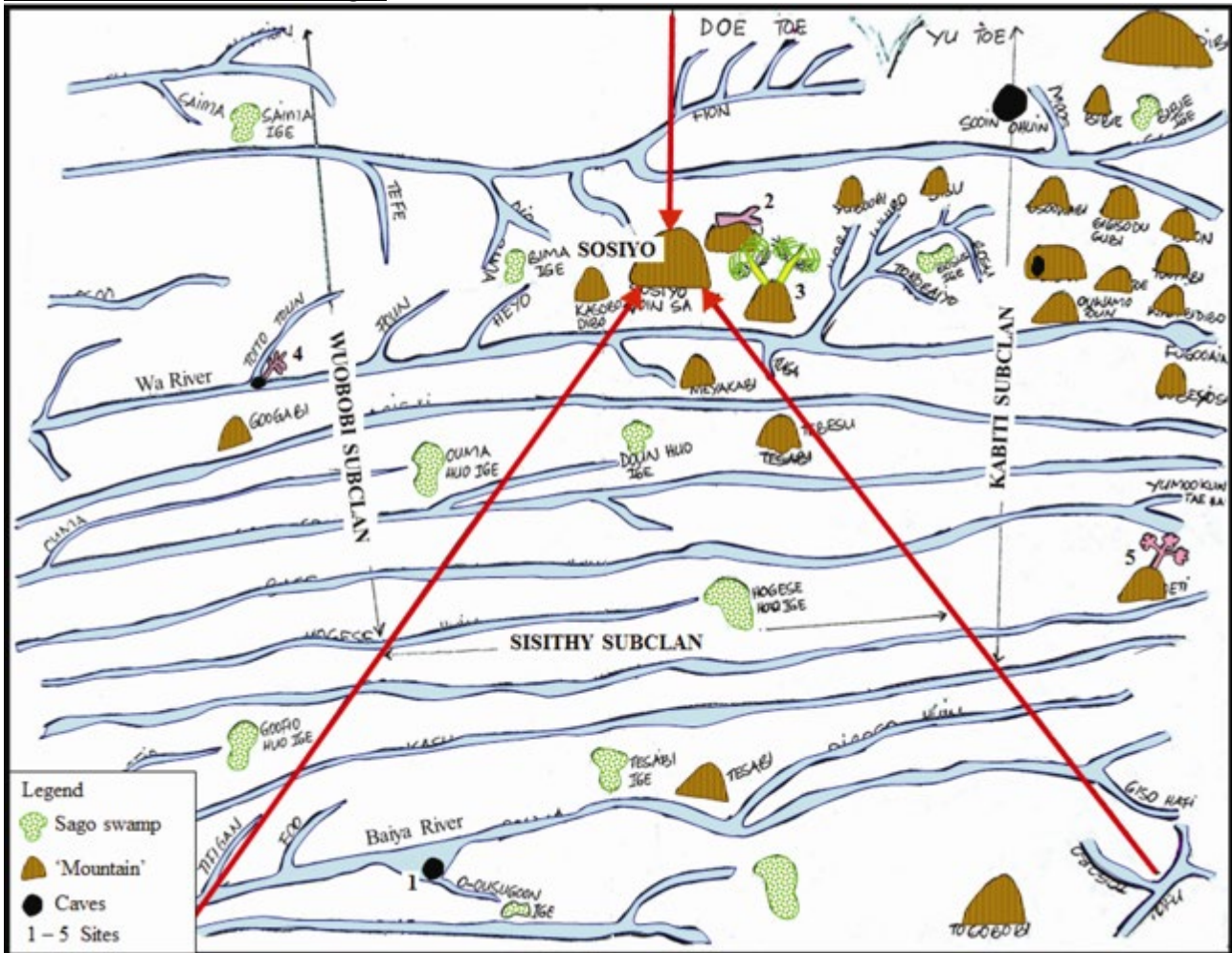
People have many strategies for securing their place in the city. There are also many technologies that have been effective in dispossessing people of those places. Across the Pacific, there is a fundamental tension between a sense of nationhood grounded in customary tenure, and a sense of the city as a place that to which everyone in the nation (or province) has a right. As urbanisation increases, these tensions may become increasingly difficult to manage.

We are assembling a team of Pacific scholars interested in understanding urban evictions: in how Pacific cities are possessed, and how people are dispossessed of their places there. Land management and insecure tenure are at the core of many conflicts over how to adapt cities for climate and disaster resilience, the need for which is central to current donor funding and aid programming for the Pacific. Public officials, landowners, and community members alike are distressed by the evictions happening in Pacific cities. We envision a project that will enable these *city-builders* to talk to each other about why tenure works and how it fails for some claimants. We seek to build a team with the deep contextual expertise required to understand individual Pacific cities. We imagine also comparative analysis conducted in collaboration with regional bodies.

About the Island Oceania Page. The Pacific Ocean covers a third of the Earth's surface, and Island Oceania is a vast area with many cities. The region is home to nine million people. We start our engagement with the Urban Displacement Project with this acknowledgement: that the cities of the Pacific Islands are diverse, each with an identity and the comprised of the many identities that live within it. We expect this page to grow as our network increases, and for the UDP to expand its representation of Pacific cities as we and our partners expand the page's offerings. Another note on mapping: mapping places is an inherently-political act – an affirmation of colonial processes and a reflection of a certain way of understanding the world. Our working group presents our header image as a challenge to this way of thinking. We appreciate data and maps, and we think that the Urban Displacement Project is a fantastic initiative that we are proud to be part of. At the same time, we are excited to present a different kind of map that provides another ontological view of the world as seen from a Pacific community. Welcome! On this page, you will find our work on the following cities:

1. Port Vila, Vanuatu
2. Kundiawa and Madang, Papua New Guinea
3. Honiara, The Solomon Islands
4. Suva, Fiji

Publications with Header Images

Header image from: Dwyer, Peter D., and Monica Minnegal. "Where all the rivers flow west: maps, abstraction and change in the Papua New Guinea lowlands." *The Australian journal of anthropology* 25.1 (2014): 37-53.

Day, J. (2020). *Ol Man Kam*: **Community Associations as part of inclusive urban governance in urban South Pacific. Forthcoming in** *Development Bulletin* **82.**

This paper is about a non-state governance structure that is emerging in the rapidly-urbanising communities in Port Vila, Vanuatu. As people organise in attempt to improve their tenure security and prevent their mass community evictions, they have developed community associations like the Elang Etas Community Association (EECA). These associations offer models that could be added to the existing state-led additions to help make urban governance more inclusive.

Day, J. (2020). Sister Communities: Rejecting Labels of Informality and Peripherality in Vanuatu. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* **44(6), 989-1005***.*

Some labels have dire consequences. This article takes issue with the labels commonly used to describe the physical and social location of communities living on the edge of Port Vila, Vanuatu—labels that position communities for eviction by entrenching tropes of informality and peripherality into how they are seen and represented. Such terms include *informal, settlement, informal settlement, squatter* and *peri-urban.* Based on interviews with around 100 people and two years of ethnographic engagement with urban communities in Port Vila, Vanuatu, I critique the language of policy against the lived experience of those at the urban edge. I use Bourdieu's articulation of power as an accumulation of *symbolic capital* that enables one to speak the world into being. I conclude that the language of policies and plans is reflective of a dominant discourse in urban studies and international aid, and non-reflective of the experience and identities of people living at the urban edge. My interviewees and interlocutors maintain their identities as *sister communities*—as places grounded in the formality of customary tenure, and as part of the city rather than outside it. (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1468-2427.12965)

Day, J., Wewerinke-Singh, M., & Price, S. (2019). Eviction is not a disaster. *Development Policy Review***. Published online on 30 July 2019. Print publication forthcoming.**

Should the process of forcibly evicting people from customary land be classified as a "disaster"? Some international organizations and governments are integrating processes on forced eviction of urban residents into policies that are primarily designed to manage displacements due to climate change and disasters—such as Vanuatu's 2018 National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement. This article contextualizes the classification of evictions as "disasters." We argue that evictions are not

disasters and should not be so classified. We make these arguments from an empirical position, based on community response to the declaration of eviction as disaster, and also from the perspective of international law. (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/dpr.12460)

Day, J., Bamforth, T. (2020). 'This is our garden now': disasters and belonging in an urban Pacific. In (eds) Sanderson, D. and Bruce, L. *Urban Disaster Resilience in the Asia-Pacific,* **Routledge: New York.**

Much humanitarian intervention seems to take belonging as a given. That is, humanitarians presume that people living in a city require no recognition in asserting their place in the city. This chapter argues that ideas about belonging – combined with the structure of governance and humanitarian bias – have created urban populations that have been excluded from receiving emergency assistance during crises in Pacific cities. The chapter centres the narrative on the aftermath of the Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Pam, which made landfall in Vanuatu in 2015. The chapter concludes with recommendations for humanitarians seeking to design better emergency response in Pacific cities. (https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780429290176/chapters/10.4324/9780429290176-8)

Day, J. (2020; forthcoming) One Road, No System: The Critical Need for Urban Planning around Port Vila's OBOR Projects. In S. Sintusingha, H. Wu and S.S. Han (eds.), *The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Infrastructure Investment, Regional Collaboration and Urban-Regional Dynamics in the Asia-Pacific***, Routledge, New York.**

This essay describes how China's international development aid program interfaces with other aid-funded road infrastructure programs in one South Pacific setting, the Republic of Vanuatu. I argue that the Chinese foreign-aid program, along with other infrastructure donors, are currently conducting *de facto* urban development in a Pacific capital city without the guidance of an urban strategic plan – an unnecessary omission given the capacity available in the capital, Port Vila. I further argue that emerging civil-society movements like the Elang Etas Community Association provide a good entry point for community inclusion in urban and infrastructure planning.

Day, J. and Wewerinke-Singh, M. (2019). Learning from the Urban Experience of Development-Induced Displacement: Toward More-Inclusive Displacement Policy in Vanuatu and the South Pacific. Prepared as a background paper for the Global Report on Internal Migration 2018. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva. (https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/downloads/background_papers/DayWewerinke_FinalPaper.pdf)

This paper documents some of the impacts of development-induced displacement inside the capital city of Vanuatu, South Pacific against the backdrop of a brand-new policy on displacement: *Vanuatu's National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement*. Vanuatu's new policy is an achievement. It is the first national policy on internal displacement for Vanuatu and the first such policy to be developed for any country in the Pacific. It has the potential to inform a regional framework for humane mobility in the context of Disaster Risk Reduction, climate change and urbanisation in the least-developed island nations, and to serve as a model for similar national policies elsewhere in the region.

In this paper, we contend that further work is necessary to make Vanuatu's policy inclusive for survivors of urban displacement, and that a first step in this regard is to initiate a national discussion on displacement that is more inclusive and consultative of the people living at the fringes of urban areas. We illustrate the future challenges for operationalizing the policy in Port Vila and other towns in Vanuatu, focusing particularly on recent urban dislocations and threats of dislocation in two peri-urban communities: Destination, which was forcibly evicted overnight in October 2014, and Elang Etas, where many of the displacees from Destination settled under the presumption of a permanent home. A new land conflict means that they are now again being threatened with eviction, but they are creating a civil-society response to challenge another displacement.

We present ten vignettes based on real people or amalgamations of people. Their experiences illustrate a variety of dilemmas that arise in an era of concurrent climate change and rapid urbanisation. Their experiences also highlight the problematic nature of the existing guidance for displacement in Vanuatu, both in the form of local policy and in the guidance provided by the international community. We argue that Vanuatu's policy would be strengthened by a critical engagement with the language of its policy and its implications for urban people – particularly the urban people whose lives have been torn apart by dislocation. We then analyse the policy language, illuminating the obligations that it creates for government, and pointing out the rights and responsibilities that are left unaddressed by the policy. We close by providing six recommendations that we hope the GoV will consider as it operationalizes the new policy for its capital city.

Finau, G., Jacobs, K., & Chand, S. (2019). Agents of alienation: accountants and the land grab of Papua New Guinea. Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal. Volume 32. Issue 5.

Employing a case study methodology, the paper draws on contemporary data sets of transcripts related to a Commission of Inquiry established in 2011 to investigate PNG's Special Agricultural Business Lease system. Analysis of other publicly available data and semi-structured interviews with PNG landowners and other stakeholders supplement and triangulate data from the inquiry transcripts. A Bourdieusian lens was adopted to conceptualise how accounting was used in the struggles for customary land between foreign developers and Indigenous landowners within the wider capitalist field and the traditional Melanesian field.

Devi, P.P., Lowry, J., & Weber, E. (2017). Global environmental impact of informal settlements and perceptions of local environmental threats: An empirical case study in Suva, Fiji. *Habitat International*, 69, 58-67.

It is commonly expected that informal settlements in developing countries have a smaller ecological footprint than more economically advantaged areas because they consume fewer resources and use less energy. In this paper, we examined this idea by comparing material consumption of two informal settlements to one moderate socioeconomic status (SES) neighborhood in Suva, Fiji.

Devi, P.P., & Nakamura, N. Chapter 42: Housing policies in the global south: a mixture of formality and informality. (Forthcoming in) *Handbook of Contemporary Global Development: Problems, Possibilities and Pedagogy*. London: Routledge

The book chapter examines the nature of informal housing, and the experiences of informal residents in three case studies (Chile, Fiji and Australia).

Lindstrom, Lamont (2017) Respek et autres mots-clés du Port-Vila urbain. Journal de la Société des Océanistes 144/145:23-36.

Telling urban migration stories, Tanna island residents of Port Vila's settlements commonly use a number of keywords to describe life in town. I follow the "keyword" method of cultural analysis to approach island appreciation of urban experience. In recorded interviews, respek (respect) was one notably frequent term. Sharpening ethnic and gender identity politicking nearly everywhere has signiicantly boosted the term's prominence, including in socially complex postcolonial Melanesian towns. Tanna migrants bemoan respect's absence but they evoke it constantly to explain conflict and disappointment. I also consider other common urban Bislama keywords that circulate in talk about urban reality including sekiuriti (security), mobael (both telephones and Vanuatu's military force), noes (noise), jalus (jealousy), and fri (free, freedom).

Lindstrom, Lamont (2011/12) Urban(e) Tannese: Local Perspectives on Settlement Life in Port Vila, Vanuatu. Journal de la Société des Océanistes 133:18-29.

Significant rural-urban migration has characterized the postcolonial Melanesian states including Vanuatu. Over the past 30 years, most people who once lived in Samaria village (Tanna Island)

have moved to squatter settlements that ring Port Vila, Vanuatu's capital town. Life history interviewing of migrants now living in Port Vila's Blacksands and Ohlen neighborhoods, and also of those remaining back on Tanna, document peoples' participation in urban migration, wage-labor, mobile telephony and other new media, religious organization, leadership and dispute settlement, and other aspects of urban life and how this participation is shaping a new urbanity in Vanuatu.

Lindstrom, Lamont (2011) Vanuatu Migrant Lives in Village and Town. Ethnology 50:1-15.

Life histories narrated by Tanna Island migrants who live in Port Vila's Blacksands and Ohlen neighborhoods, and by men and women who remained home on Tanna, reveal migrant agency and pride in their ability to navigate urban challenges including wage-labor, mobile telephony, religious organization, town conflict, gender transformations, and village nostalgia. Tanna migrants celebrate their powers to model their urban settlements after island homes as they also remake the island village with new urban experience and resources. Islander power to remake urban spaces draws on the "partibility" of place—one "distributed" site comprises elements of others so that places travel alongside their people.

Lindstrom, Lamont and Christine Jourdan (2017) Introduction: L'urbanisation en Mélanésie. *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* **144/145:5-22.**

Contributors to this special issue address urbanism in Melanesia, its cares and cautions and also its pleasures and amusements. We ask how Southwest Pacific cities have been "Melanesianized." The articles in this collection show that Melanesians share a particular appreciation of urbanity. This reflects the newness and metropolitan fundamentals of these cities, continued robust connections between town and village where people are doubly placed and doubly identified, and notable features of substrate Melanesian cultures including values of reciprocity and kinship. Town organization and generic urban arrangement are European imports, with deep colonial roots. These roots, however, are embedded within local sociocultural systems that have shaped Melanesian urbanity.

Working Papers

Andersen, B. (2018). Fencing, Cleaning, Straightening and Adorning: Spatializing Practices and Community Health in Papua New Guinea. Society of Medical Anthropology in Aotearoa Symposium 2018, Wellington, 05 Dec 2018 (Conference Paper)

Andersen, B. (2019). Laying the Graun Work: Becoming Landlords in Kundiawa's "Promised Land." Conference working paper, Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, Auckland, 13 Feb 2019 - 16 Feb 2019.

Finau, G. (2019. Accounting and Land Reform: The Case of Fiji's Land Bank. Conference working paper, 9th Asia-Pacific Interdisciplinary Research in Accounting, Auckland, July 1-3, 2019.

Working Group and Conference Outcomes

Projects

Women, Evictions, and Power in Port Vila. This project explores women's knowledge about urban evictions, how they prepare, and how they are excluded from participating in resolution of land conflict. [Jennifer Day, The University of Melbourne; Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh, Leiden University; Funded by the National Geographic Society, 2018-2021].

Government Capacity in Eviction Prevention. This study examines governments' and government implementers' perspectives on the tractability of the development-induced displacement (DID) problem in Vanuatu. Our approach will be to understand – from government's perspective – the barriers and opportunities that exist to prevent DID. To this end, we will attempt to learn from the experience of government around the six communities living in peri-urban areas of Port Vila, and under customary arrangements, that have been evicted since 2014. This started with the eviction of Destination, which occurred overnight on a Sunday evening. As far as we understand from human-rights activists in Port Vila, a further 70 settlements are slated for eviction, though the precise timelines for the executions of those eviction warrants are not known [Jennifer Day and Benedicta Rousseau, The University of Melbourne; Anne Pakoa, Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition; Leith Veremaito, Vanuatu Department of Local Authorities; Funded by the University of Melbourne, 2019-2021].

Housing and Everyday Security in Papua New Guinea. This research will explore how people in two of Papua New Guinea's growing towns try to create "ontological security" in the midst of change. This will be the first anthropological study based in PNG focusing on housing problems in the smaller but growing urban centres of Kundiawa and Madang. This research moves beyond studying a single community, settlement, or town to look at how people in different social and geographic locations within PNG manage the increasingly global problems of housing insecurity and urban enclosure. By bringing together theoretical frameworks from housing studies, the anthropology of security, and medical anthropology, this study will generate new insights on the cultural consequences of a rapidly changing housing landscape. [Barbara Andersen, Massey University Auckland. Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fund Fast-Start Grant 2020-2022]

Videos

Day, J. (2020). Keynote Address: Urban Regimes: Which Ideas Have Power in Your City? World Town Planning Day, Ministry of Local Government, Housing, and Community Development, Suva, Fiji (09 November).

Day, J. (2020). The Elang Etas Community Association: A Model of Resiliency in the Urban Pacific. Video featuring Elang Etas Community Association Chairman Executive Committee members Mr. Sam Tabawa, Chairman, Mr. Wycliff Tarilenga, Vice Chairman, Mr. John Yasur, Founding Chairman, Mr. Robert Korekore, Treasurer. World Urban Forum, Abu Dhabi, February 8-13. Side event organized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Geneva.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5yZ5CLDzI0&feature=youtu.be

Other published and ongoing work in the Pacific has a focus on rural displacements due to disaster and climate change. These ignore a third major source of displacement in the Pacific: urbanisation. This short talk and video presentation will highlight the conditions under which people face urban evictions in the Pacific – and will profile compelling civil-society responses that have made people more-resilient and less-vulnerable to displacement in urban areas. The Elang Etas Community Association formed to advocate for a community that is frequently and erroneously described as, "informal." In the first part of the talk, Jennifer Day will describe the community and its claim to the land where it is situated. We will then hear from the founding members of the EECA about their motivations and goals for the community and its Association, in the form of video footage.

Community Collaborators

Elang Etas Community Association: https://www.facebook.com/eecaAdmin

Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition

Organiser Bios and Pics

Jennifer Eve Day is a Senior Lecturer in Urban Planning at the University of Melbourne. She holds a PhD in City and Regional Planning from the University of California, Berkeley. She has worked on issues of forced displacement and eviction, economic development, and urbanization in Australia and across Asia and the Pacific, and she is expert in methods ranging from econometrics to qualitative storytelling. She is a lead organizer in the Regional Studies Association Research Network on Academic-Practitioner Collaboration for Urban Shelter, South Pacific (APCUS-SP), a network that aims to unite academic knowledge and practitioner expertise toward better shelter in disaster settings **(**https://www.facebook.com/groups/APCUS**)**. She is a National Geographic Explorer and is currently leading a project on forced displacement and urbanization in the peri-urban areas of South Pacific Poonam cities, funded by the National Geographic Society. She co-authored the book, *Development Perspectives on Urban Housing in BRICS Countries* (Palgrave 2016).

Barbara Andersen is a Lecturer in Social Anthropology at Massey University Auckland. She holds at PhD in Anthropology from New York University. Trained as a social and medical anthropologist, Barbara previously conducted research on gender, class, and ideologies of development in the Papua New Guinea nursing profession. Her current research, supported by a Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fast-Start Grant, explores how tenants and landowners in PNG's growing towns try to create safe homes. Her long term fieldwork focus is in the Papua New Guinea Highlands.

Glenn Finau is a lecturer in accounting at the University of Tasmania. Glenn completed his PhD from the University of New South Wales on the topic "Accounting, Customary Land and Indigenous Peoples: Case Studies from the Pacific". While a PhD in accounting, the thesis was qualitative in a nature as he examined the ways in which accounting numbers and language were constructed and deployed by transnational corporations and the state to alienate customary land from Indigenous peoples. Drawing on the work of French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, his thesis produced publications based on case studies in Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

Poonam Pritika Devi is a PhD Candidate at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. Her PhD thesis is titled 'A Critical Examination of the Effectiveness of Squatter Upgrading Plans in Fiji'. The PhD project looks at the effectiveness of upgrading and relocation plans for the squatter settlements in Suva (Nanuku and Nauluvatu settlements) and Lautoka (Tomuka, Nasoata and Field 40 settlements). The project is fundamentally interested in how the residents have been consulted in the process of upgrading plans and how the community responds to certain initiatives. In Fiji, while several upgrading plans have taken place, the effectiveness of such plans have not been critically examined. In particular, how the residents will benefit from each upgrading project has nearly been overlooked. This is partly due to the ineffective structure of the government or the tendency that decisions are usually made in a top-down style. The research aims to suggest some means to make upgrading plans more efficient, primarily for squatter residents. The research

also contributes to the academic literature on squatter settlements, which have missed to include the views of residents towards upgrading plans.

Lamont Lindstrom. Kendall Professor and Chair of Anthropology at the University of Tulsa, has long-term research interests in Vanuatu and other Melanesian countries focused on local knowledge systems and social movements, kava, urban migration, World War Two ethnohistory, contemporary chiefs and the politics of tradition, cultural policy development, sociolinguistics, urban migration and personhood, and early photography. *Tanna Times: Islanders in the World* is his latest book.