Island Logic and the Decolonization of the Pacific

Otto Heim (The University of Hong Kong, oheim@hku.hk)

Abstract

This essay addresses the conditions of decolonization in the contemporary Pacific in the context of renewed investment in and competition over the regional construct of the Asia Pacific as a sphere of global prosperity. Considering the apparent idiosyncrasy of political arrangements across the region and the ongoing reproduction of states of precariousness due to militarization, depletion of resources and environmental damage, it asks what conceptual and discursive coherence the postcolonial Pacific can lend to movements of decolonization constrained by the progress of globalization. I borrow the idea of "island logic" from Roland Greene in order to outline the capacity of seemingly isolated and abandoned locations to challenge the unimpeded operation of what David Harvey has described as the capitalist and territorial logics of contemporary imperialism. The paper ends by highlighting examples of recent cultural initiatives and projects that demonstrate such island logic at work in the formation of emergent political alliances, or publics, committed to exposing states of precariousness and thereby working toward conditions of flourishing and sustainability.

Keywords: Oceania, decolonization, Pacific century, island logic, precarity

The Decolonizing Pacific

Decolonization in the Pacific is an ongoing concern. This was evident at the 12th Festival of

Pacific Arts held in Guam in May and June 2016, during which the University of Guam

hosted a series of panel discussions on decolonization, debating realities, advantages,

struggles and lessons of different forms of decolonization in the twenty-first-century Pacific:

integration (or statehood), free association and political independence. The festival thus

presented an opportunity for the oldest colony in the Pacific to consider its options in the

context of the larger process of decolonization across the Pacific. A single island, cut out from

the rest of Micronesia, Guam today represents the limit of decolonization in the Pacific.

Having seen their aspirations for self-determination thwarted time and again since the USA

took over the Spanish colonial empire in 1898, the people of Guam continue to resist the

colonial reduction of their island to a military hub in the global balance of power. Around the

time of the festival, Eddie Calvo, the current governor of Guam, was floating the idea of

adding a plebiscite on decolonization to elections in November 2016, which would ask voters to state their preferred option: the possibility of becoming the fifty-first state of the USA, free association with the US, or full independence. The plan has since been suspended because more time will be needed for adequate education on the three options as well as to determine who will be eligible to vote (see "Chamorro" 2016; Tupaz 2016). Even so, one might well ask what difference the choice between isolation and incorporation might make, given how deeply embedded in the surrounding framework of globalization Guam's coloniality is. As Michael Bevacqua provocatively put it some years ago, "[i]f a brave new world of cosmopolitanism and global democracy arrived tomorrow, it is more than likely that Guam's status as a distantly imagined appendage to the American empire will remain untouched and unquestioned" (2010, 33).

Guam's limited prospects of decolonization, reduced to a choice between national independence in isolation and emancipation in association or integration with the colonizing power, raises the larger question of the decolonization of the Pacific region itself. In what ways would the decolonization of Guam contribute to, or depend upon, the decolonization of this region? To what extent indeed has the gradual decolonization of the Pacific Islands over the past fifty years enabled the larger decolonization of the oceanic space that connects them? And to what extent has it been hindered precisely by the persistence of the very coloniality of the Pacific region instead? How indeed might the decolonization of the Pacific alter the dominant order that continues to define it as a region?

In a sense, it is precisely in its apparent exceptionality that Guam's "liberated" coloniality can be considered representative of the process and progress of decolonization in the Pacific, which seems characterized by idiosyncrasy, arbitrariness and incompleteness. The decolonization of the Pacific Islands has occurred piecemeal, on a case by case basis, when and as it suited the colonial power. Accordingly, as Stewart Firth observed some years ago,

the "map of Pacific Island sovereignty has been drawn largely according to the strategic needs of external states" (1989, 75—6). In other words, as Terrence Wesley-Smith further explains, "the process [of decolonization] occurred largely within colonial entities whose boundaries were established with scant regard to the traditional cultural and political features of Oceania" (2007, 34). The decolonization of the Pacific Islands thus replicated and rendered permanent the arbitrary division and fragmentation of the region that was earlier enforced by the systematic suppression of islanders' mobility (Denoon 1997, 249). At the same time, the postcolonial Pacific displays an astonishing diversity of constitutional arrangements, in part likewise reflecting the continuing interests of former colonial powers in the region, but also highlighting the need to decolonize the very framework of decolonization itself, relying as it does on western-style political institutions as the norm. The diversity of arrangements makes it difficult to agree on a list of who or what counts as a Pacific Island state or country. The Pacific Island Forum (PIF) includes the nine sovereign states of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, as well as the five independent states whose sovereignty is more or less compromised by a compact of free association with the former colonial power: the Cook Islands and Niue (in association with New Zealand) and the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau (in association with the US).[1] It also includes Australia and New Zealand but leaves their status as Pacific countries somewhat ambiguous.[2] The Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006—2015 was issued by the PIF in 2005 on behalf of Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), including all Forum members except Australia and New Zealand, as well as the territories of American Samoa, French Polynesia, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, New Caledonia, Tokelau, and Wallis and Futuna, most of which remain on the UN list of non-self-governing territories. A recent compendium on political arrangements and institutions in the Pacific region, the second edition of Stephen

Levine's <u>Pacific Ways</u> (2016), attempts to be comprehensive, including all of the twenty-one PICTs plus Australia and New Zealand, and adding also Pitcairn (a British colony), Rapa Nui (Easter Island, a province of Valparaiso Region of Chile), Timor-Leste (East Timor, independent since 2002) and West Papua (occupied by Indonesia since 1963). Curiously absent is Hawai'i, as if its incorporation into the USA had removed it from the Pacific.

From a formal point of view, this diversity can be seen to represent a spectrum from least decolonized (ongoing colonial dependence) to most decolonized (sovereign nation state), and as such evokes the incompleteness of the process in the region. Looking more closely at the specific conditions in the various territories, however, it is also possible to see in the diversity of constitutional arrangements and political situations in the contemporary Pacific a reminder that decolonization cannot be reduced to a moment of constitutional transition when one flag is lowered and another raised, but represents a process of ongoing negotiation within western-style institutional frameworks. From this point of view, the question is not where decolonization has been accomplished and where it is as yet incomplete, but where it is ongoing and where it appears to have stopped. And considered thus, the diversity of constitutional and political situations one finds across the Pacific defies arrangement on a spectrum because decolonization happens to be going on, in different ways, everywhere. This is obviously the case in the so-called compact nations, where treaties must be renegotiated periodically, but no less apparent in the relative success of sovereign Pacific Island states, which continues to depend on finding and practicing specific, if not unique, constitutional arrangements that provide for ongoing negotiation between indigenous and western forms as well as local and foreign interests. As Wesley-Smith (2007) has observed:

> Perhaps the most important factor impacting the success or failure of state-building
> efforts in Oceania is the indigenous basis for statehood. […] In Samoa and Tonga,
> modern political institutions have been grafted on to traditional ones and, although

certainly not without their problems, these states have been relatively stable for decades. (37)

Promising developments underway in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji also show the importance of local initiative supported by regional involvement, as well as hybrid institutional processes, to successful conflict resolution in decolonizing states. To outsiders, the insistence on federalism in micro-nations may seem strange, but in Palau and Tuvalu a federal organization has made the articulation of traditional institutional structures with a modern government viable. Similarly, the lack of party politics in most Pacific Island states may look like a lack of democracy but can also be seen as an expression of a preference for more flexible negotiations of positions within parliamentary processes. In Vanuatu, conversely, it is the sheer number of parties represented in parliament that necessitates constant negotiation of positions and relationships. The solutions being worked out in these countries are examples of successful decolonization as sustainable negotiation and as such part of a wealth of experience and experimentation that connects them conceptually, albeit informally, to less well recognized movements underway in territories where decolonization may appear to have stalled and remains difficult to envision, such as Easter Island, French Polynesia, Guam and Hawai'i.

A comparison of constitutional and political conditions across Oceania thus reveals their irreducibility to formal institutional frameworks of a western mold, both locally at the level of individual political entities and regionally, where it is difficult to imagine a forum that could contain all. If this diversity of ongoing negotiation is more readily perceived as a weakness than strength, in terms of messiness, instability and fragmentation, and tends to render the Pacific Islands peripheral and insignificant in international affairs, this is due to the dominance of discourses of political and economic development by leading Pacific Rim powers like Australia and the USA, which continue to frame the Pacific Islands as subordinate

client states. In "Framing the Islands: Knowledge and Power in Changing Australian Images of 'the South Pacific'," Greg Fry (2000) has analyzed the "doomsdayism" that characterized Australian discourses of development in the 1990s, which

> assert[ed] that the Pacific Island countries [we]re on a path to a future nightmare of overcrowding, poverty, mass unemployment, serious environmental degradation, and a decline in health standards. The only hope to avoid this future, it [wa]s contended, [wa]s to open the island economies to the global market, effect structural change, jettison where necessary customary land tenure and inappropriate traditions, and connect with the dynamism of Asia. (26).

According to Fry, this view continued "a long-standing Australian practice of 'framing' Pacific Island peoples in three senses: first, drawing geographical boundaries around them for purposes of making generalizations; second, intending to shape the lives of the people so bounded; and third, in the colloquial sense, setting them up for outcomes not of their making" (26-27). Indeed, where the doomsday scenarios predicted for 2010 have materialized, they are due to the accelerated opening of Pacific Island economies to the global market.[3] Similar acts of discursive framing have been criticized by David Hanlon (1998) in his analysis of the compacts of free association between the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau, and the United States, which he reads as "preface[s] to the eventual subsumption of the islands into a global economic order dominated by the United States" (222). Like Fry, Hanlon questions the bias of experts turned doomsdayists, who generalize about the region based on selectively identified worst cases while ignoring evidence that contradicts this representation. Both Hanlon and Fry point out that the framing effect of these developmentalist discourses maintains and reproduces relationships of exclusion, where those framed (Pacific Island people) are excluded from

decision-making (or agenda-setting) processes, while the actions of the framers themselves are excluded from critical scrutiny.

The persistence of this discursive domination may indeed inspire doomsdayism even among those who oppose it passionately like André Vltchek in his recent book Oceania: Neocolonialism, Nukes & Bones. Intent on alerting the world to the plight of Oceania in the twenty-first century, Vltchek risks reproducing the framing gesture Fry criticizes as generalization based on worst cases only, referring to Oceania as "a microcosm of almost all major problems faced by our planet" (2013, 19) and to individual island nations (like Kiribati) in turn as "a microcosm of all the problems faced by Oceania" (237). Claiming that he "witnessed entire nations in an unmistakable state of deep depression, hopelessness and frustration" (20), Vltchek laments the "hopelessly divided" state of Oceania (37) and sees

> an acute need for Pacific Island nations to construct a strong and unified bloc able to negotiate with the rest of the world as an equal partner. Only such a bloc can effectively address the political, economic, social, cultural and educational problems confronting the entire region. […] The alternative can only be to continue the present dependent and humiliating order. Unfortunately, there is very little chance that such a block can be constructed in the near future. (53)

Yet even if it could be constructed, would bloc formation, effectively assimilating Oceania to the dominant geopolitical order, really represent a genuine decolonization of the Pacific region? Indeed, considering that the formation of a single bloc (speaking with a single voice) is made difficult, in part at least, by the very diversity of local arrangements that is also a source of success in decolonizing Pacific Islands, might there not be alternative pathways to greater empowerment? Might the dispositions and circumstances that currently tend to exclude the Pacific Islands from larger regional and global frameworks not also mark the limit, rather than merely obstacles, that the decolonization of the island world poses to the

unimpeded progress of globalization embodied by the Asia-Pacific region and its institutions? Whether this is indeed so depends on the capability of this relative exteriority to become politically effective in breaking the dominant frame and countering its logic. Resisting as it does the formation of (and incorporation into) a geo-political bloc, then, what conceptual and discursive coherence can the postcolonial Pacific lend to movements of decolonization constrained by the progress of globalization?

<u>The Persistence of Colonial Frames</u>

The Australian and American discourses framing the Pacific Islands that Fry and Hanlon have criticized are part of the larger discursive construction of the institutional framework of neoliberal globalization that continues to be built and fortified around and across the Pacific and in the midst of which the island world of Oceania finds itself, as the late Epeli Hauʻofa jokingly put it, like "the hole in the doughnut" (2008, 37). Commonly referred to as the Asia-Pacific region and captured in the last decades of the twentieth century by the circular image of the Pacific Rim, this construct, as Arif Dirlik (1992) was one of the first to note, expresses a regional ideology with a "geographical bias" that seeks "to bring into alignment economic and political forces that in and of themselves do not point to a common regional structure" (56-57). Originating in the nineteenth century in western imperial efforts to open Asia to international trade, increasing capital and military investment in Asia in the twentieth century, especially after the War in the Pacific and during the Cold War, brought the countries on the western rim of the Pacific into the capitalist fold. Considering this transformation, Alexander Woodside (1993) has said that the "myth [of the Asia-Pacific region] rationalizes and gives optimistic coloring to a formidable historical event: the de-Westernization and cultural diversification of capitalism, and the shift of its center of gravity" (24). The regional construct of the Asia Pacific thus ideologically coordinates the two logics of power that according to David Harvey (2003) structure contemporary globalization: the capitalist logic of the global

economy and the territorial logic of the nation state political system, the former emphasizing trade, flow, openness and competition, and the latter security, balance, boundaries and coercion (27-33). While the "relation between these two logics [is always] problematic and often contradictory", as Harvey says, they are "intertwined" and their intersection shapes what he calls capitalist imperialism, in which the "capitalist logic […] typically dominates" (30, 33). In the Asia-Pacific we can see the discursive and institutional consolidation of this intersection in overlapping organizations such as the twenty-one member Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and the Rim of the Pacific (military) Exercise (RIMPAC), in which twenty-two nations participated in 2014. APEC with its rotating Economic Leaders Meetings emphasizes capitalist free trade, while RIMPAC, hosted biannually around Hawai'i, emphasizes the territorial balance of power under US leadership. Competing negotiations over the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership now highlight the precarious relation between the two logics and the need for rebalancing in what Rob Nixon has recently identified as the "Chimerican age" (2011, 43).

The mythical roundness of the Pacific Rim, connoting prosperity and fulfilment, has a temporal or historical dimension as well as a geographical one, which more clearly marks its hegemonic limit, the incommensurability of its particular interests with the totality it purports to represent. This limit can be seen in the seeming obliviousness with which the Pacific continues to be associated with the idea of a better world, reaching back to US secretary of state John Hay's designation of the Pacific as "the ocean of the future" after the Spanish-American war (Naisbitt and Aburdene 1990, 179). Hay's view continues to be echoed by his successors, most recently by Hillary Clinton, who in 2011 famously announced the Obama administration's pivot to Asia as ushering in "America's Pacific Century", as if unaware that the phrase had previously been used (in connection with a ten-part PBS television series

entitled "Pacific Century") to designate the century following the US take-over of the Philippines in 1898 (Borthwick 1992, 1).[4] In its latest revival, however, the limit of Pacific Rim discourse is also perceptible in the mixed feelings it appears to elicit even among its proponents, not just a confidence in the imminent fulfilment of aspirations but also a sense of resignation at a lack of options. Thus, while for Clinton the US investment in the Pacific is intended "to accelerate the arrival of the Participation Age, where every individual, regardless of gender or other characteristics, is a contributing and valued member of the global marketplace", for the US Trade Representative Michael Froman, promoting the Trans-Pacific Partnership in 2014, it seems intended to contain the catching-up effect of global development and to prevent the convergence of levels of wealth and influence between developing and rich countries. Claiming that it is in every American's interest for the US to "shape the global trading system and promote a race to the top", Froman expresses concern that the leader will fall behind: "If the United States wants to strengthen its economic power and extend its strategic influence during uncertain times, Washington must make a decision: either lead on global trade or be left on the sidelines." Free trade, it is intimated, will at most redistribute patterns of political and economic unevenness, and to lead is to win the race. "There really is no choice", as Froman concludes.

The ambivalence, if not contradiction, discernible in Clinton's and Froman's appeals to a "Participation Age" and a "race to the top" respectively, indicates how in its latest incarnation Pacific Rim discourse strives to normalize, by economizing, what Judith Butler (2010) and other critics of neoliberalism have recently described as conditions of precarity, referring to the "differential distribution" of socially and politically induced vulnerability and exposure to risks such as unemployment, poverty, illness, homelessness, legal disenfranchisement, and environmental degradation. As Butler notes "precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of

support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (25). Under neoliberalism, Isabell Lorey (2015) points out, governments no longer attempt to selectively alleviate precarity so much as to normalize it: "precarization is transformed […] into a normalized political-economic instrument" (39). In the Participation Age, those who struggle are thus called to compete against each other for fear of losing out and to accept that those who end up at the bottom deserve their fate. In other words, those starting from conditions of heightened precarity will end up being framed.[5]

But is participation in the neoliberal global order on these terms the only option? Is there really no other choice, as Froman claims? Is the way out of precarity really to outcompete those similarly or worse off than oneself? Or can precarity, "cut[ting] across identity categories as well as multicultural maps, […] form[…] the basis for an alliance focused on opposition to state violence and its capacity to produce, exploit and distribute precarity for the purposes of profit and territorial defense", as Butler suggests (32)? What form might such alliances take, given the dispersed and differentially conditioned character of precarious populations, which precisely makes them more susceptible to exploitation than the formation of a unitary bloc? Following Arturo Escobar (2004), who writes about the decolonization of globality, we can consider the circumstances of heightened precarity that characterize global coloniality as conditions of relative exteriority, conditions that, as Escobar emphasizes, are not to be conceived "as a pure outside, untouched by the modern [but that represent] an outside that is precisely constituted as difference by hegemonic discourse" (218). An effective challenge to this hegemony, Escobar argues, therefore needs "to take seriously the epistemic force of local histories" that occupy such conditions of exteriority and to "envision alternatives to the totality imputed to [global] modernity, […] not a different totality leading to different global designs, but networks of local/global histories constructed from the perspective of a politically enriched alterity" (217). What Escobar refers to as the epistemic

force of local histories may be understood as their capacity to imagine and sustain new forms of alliance and collaboration beyond conventional blocs and frames.

Island Logic and the Decolonization of Globality

Seen in this larger context of neoliberal globalization, the decolonization of the Pacific is inseparable from democratic movements and struggles worldwide and the decolonization of globality itself. The postcolonial Pacific is critical to these movements not only because Pacific Island people are disproportionately represented among the world's most precarious populations, but also because their relative exteriority in relation to the globalizing norm embodied in the regional construct of the Asia-Pacific region can challenge this norm's claims to universality.

Part of the epistemic force that Pacific Islands can bring to the opposition to neocolonial globalization consists in exposing the absurdity, as well as injustice, of the regimes and policies that normalize conditions of vulnerability and suffering by economizing them. There is no shortage of situations that illustrate this, but I will cite just three examples: one is the exacerbation of the impact of climate change in atoll countries like Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu caused by developments in line with neoliberal policies. As a result of abandoning subsistence economies (of fishing and farming), for instance, "the majority [of people in Kiribati have] become overdependent on cash as a means of survival (Uakeia 2016, 128) and over 50,000 people, half the population of Kiribati, now live in South Tarawa, an area of barely 15 km^2, enduring not only frequent floods but also a high rate of youth unemployment, illness and pollution. Similar conditions exist in urban centers of the Marshall Islands like Ebeye, the main labor pool serving the US base at Kwajalein, and Majuro, the country's capital, whose coral reefs have been "paved over by development projects […] and are therefore much more vulnerable to changes in sea level than are outer islands in the RMI" (Kupferman 2016, 148).[6] Another example: the US military has long been looking to

Micronesia as a "recruiter's paradise", exploiting the precariousness of Micronesian livelihoods to attract young men to enlist, resulting in one of "the highest per capita killed-in-action rate of the United States" for Micronesian soldiers in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq" (Bevacqua 2010, 50). Yet while Micronesians, though not US citizens, are welcome in the US military, when they legally travel to the US territories of Guam and Hawai'i for work, education, or medical treatment, they notoriously find themselves not only in competition with already displaced Hawaiians and Chamorros but also exposed to racist discrimination and barred from access to social services like healthcare, even though they pay taxes in the US (Lyons and Tengan 2015, 668-9). Or consider, as just one more example of the absurdity (and injustice) caused by neoliberal globalization in the Pacific, the Australian government's infamous (and recently revived) "Pacific Solution" to the problem of refugees seeking asylum in the country, taking advantage of Nauru's apparent lack of economic options to establish an offshore processing center for refugees there, run by a private company, *Transfield Services*. The conditions of the arrangement, under which asylum seekers are denied access to Australia even if their refugee status is verified, have led to accusations of inhumane treatment as well as a deterioration of democratic institutions in Nauru.[7]

A certain epistemic force is realized by simply making known such practices, which inevitably produces public outrage, as when it was revealed in 2014 that HESTA, Australia's superannuation fund for health and community service workers, had invested employees' payments in Transfield Services, resulting in calls for divestment and eventually forcing HESTA to divest (New Matilda 2015). Yet in a different way, and perhaps more importantly than in the absurdities of neoliberal development, the epistemic force of Pacific histories emerges in islanders' continuation of practices and traditions that fly in the face of mainstream development models, rejecting the binary opposition of dependence vs. independence by actively embracing interdependence: their reluctance, if not resistance, to

buy into free trade agreements (like the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER Plus) that Australia and New Zealand are currently trying to complete with the PIF countries), their protection of seemingly pre-modern subsistence economies and traditional land tenure arrangements, as well as their unashamed reliance on foreign aid and a sustainable flow of remittances from overseas relatives.[8] On the one hand, then, the islands' relative exteriority in relation to the globalizing norm represented by the Asia Pacific region, manifest in partly imposed and partly chosen forms of precarity, exposes the exclusionary effects of the ideological integration of the two logics of Harvey's capitalist imperialism, their inability to operate free from contradiction. On the other hand, however, this incomplete inclusion, or participation, of the island societies and economies can also be seen, in Escobar's words, as evidence of "practices of difference that remain in the exteriority (again not outside) of the modern/colonial world system, incompletely conquered and transformed [and] produced partly through long-standing place based logics that are irreducible to capital and imperial globality" (2004, 221). We can perhaps call this an "island logic" whose epistemic force partly derives from a lived experience of globally induced precarity (or hardship), for, as Bevacqua notes, it is those who are forced to live the lack of others that know those lacks best (2010, 47). Yet as Vicente Diaz (1993) has in turn emphasized, these conditions also give rise to tactics of survival that "make a home within intrusive, foreign systems" (334) and in this sense it is also possible to conceive of island logic as a knowledge and practice that is capable of countering, if not altering, the operation of these systems, making them livable.

I use the term "island logic" here in order to make a connection, conceptually, between what I see as the epistemic force of Pacific Islands' historical experience of colonial globality and what Roland Greene (2000), in an essay entitled "Island Logic", describes as "an early modern outlook […] in which insularity comes to stand for a kind of knowledge, a distinctively partial knowledge that counters the totalities of institutions and regimes".

Writing about Shakespeare's The Tempest, Greene is interested in the moment, at the beginning of the colonial era, when this outlook "becomes totalizing itself" (138) and gives way to a view of the world as a whole, represented in the emergence of the atlas in the late sixteenth century, which supersedes, or rather incorporates earlier more modular representations of a world of islands that still dominates in the age of discovery. In making this connection, I do not intend to draw a direct parallel between a contemporary Pacific and an early modern European outlook but rather suggest that just as the epistemic resistance of Pacific Island societies to contemporary globalization is based on histories of alternative practices, there exist within Western colonial modernity itself residues of apparently overcome practices and attitudes that, in the right connection, may be turned into emergent forms of alternative sociality. In this sense, island logic may be considered as an almost forgotten epistemic (or imaginative) resource embedded within colonial modernity itself that in the right connection may be capable of challenging its centuries-old developmentalist teleology. As Greene suggests, "islands often undermine some of the mystifications of capital and power" (140) and in this light we can contrast island logic with the two logics that according to Harvey structure capitalist imperialism: in contrast to capitalist logic, island logic emphasizes articulation and interdependence rather than flows, and in contrast to territorial logic it emphasizes networks and links rather than boundaries. This makes it workable in re-politicizing globalized spaces that the rhetoric of the market seems to naturalize and in forging alliances across cultural, political and economic boundaries that the developmentalism of modernity deems non-negotiable (such as those between ostensibly pre-modern and modern forms of social and economic organization). Island logic dissolves a fixation on "modernity as a horizon [or a rim] but not necessarily […] the particular objectives and demands that have conformed to its contents", a conceptual step that is important to the

foundation of alliances between differently lived and endured modernities, as Laclau has noted (1993, 294).[9]

The most influential counter-hegemonic vision of this kind of alternative modernity in the Pacific remains Epeli Hauʻofa's theorization of Oceania as a "sea of islands" against their belittling representation as "islands in a far sea", emphasizing linkages across vast distances based on ordinary histories of mobility and migration that bring modernity within the horizon of tradition and negotiate the Pacific Rim in the same way as they approach neighboring islands (which may indeed be hundreds of miles away). The political significance of Hauʻofa's vision is its placing of confidence and strength not in overcoming precarity but in its liberating susceptibility to mobilization, drawing on histories of braving the precariousness of living and thriving in an oceanic environment, which, as Joakim Peter (2000), following Hauʻofa, has observed, requires not just navigational art but also persistent negotiation of boundaries and maintenance of "strong clan connections and trade partnerships […] for basic life support" (263).

Hauʻofa led the way in building spaces that nurture the emergence of alternative social and economic relations and alliances within globalized structures, especially through the foundation of the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific in 1997, which he has described in "Our Place Within" as an effort to safeguard "autonomy within a homogenizing global system":

> Our social, economic, and political institutions are woven into the larger world
> system, any free space within will have to be established through creative cultural
> production. And this is what the present and rising generation of Oceania's growing
> and widely dispersed intelligentsia are furiously involved in today. From their far-
> flung bases in Guam, California, Hawaiʻi, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa,
> Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Australia, and increasingly elsewhere

within and beyond the Pacific Basin, they are connecting through the Internet and face-to-face encounters to discuss and work towards a culturally creative and free Oceania. (2008, 81)

Committed to the "flourishing of contemporary […] arts that are firmly rooted in [the] histories, traditions, and adaptations to the changing international environment that is affecting every facet of [Pacific] existence" (85), Hauʻofa deliberately recruited "trainee visual and performing artists […] from the ranks of the unemployed, part-timers, and casuals" (90) and resisted the pressure of fundraising, "finding it exciting and challenging to produce as much as we can from what appears to be so little" (91).

Hauʻofa's vision for the Oceania Centre recognized the importance of culture and the arts, in practice and in education, to the development of an island logic that can challenge the logic of neoliberal globalization and decolonize institutional spaces and frames by opening them to as yet untried alliances and collaborations. As Chantal Mouffe reminds us, this remains an important responsibility for those working in arts and humanities institutions and I would therefore like to end by briefly pointing to some current initiatives that I think extend Hauʻofa's vision of a culturally creative and free Oceania. The first is in fact a production by the Oceania Centre itself, entitled Moana: The Rising of the Sea, a stage production by the Oceania Dance Theatre and the Pasifika Voices Choir of the University of the South Pacific, which dramatizes the impact of climate change on island societies in Oceania through dance, song, music and film. Written and directed by Vilsoni Hereniko and sponsored by the European Consortium for Pacific Studies, the show toured Europe in May and June 2015, ending with a performance at the European Parliament in Brussels. Incorporating two poems by Marshall Island poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, "Tell Them" and "Dear Matafele Peinam", the show also paralleled and amplified the poet's celebrated performances at the UN Climate

Leaders summit in New York City in 2014 and at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015.

The second example is an initiative launched by Greg Dvorak, who teaches at Hitotsubashi University in Japan and who in a recent article entitled "Oceanizing American Studies", called for projects "fusing critical theory and indigenous cosmologies with community-based practices of art, scholarship and activism that embrace diversity and indigeneity by default and revolve around cohesive but archipelagic visions of fluidity and connectivity" (2015, 616). Dvorak's "Project SanGo: Creative collaborations across Oceania" (www.project35.org) seeks to promote such work "based on the cultural, social, historical, and environmental analogy of the coral that continues to build islands, atolls, and archipelagoes throughout the world. Like the coral polyps that navigate the vast ocean and build links between places, we humans connect with each other, leave behind contradictory layers of history, and establish our own metaphorical reefs, islands, archipelagoes, and oceans". Focusing on "themes of climate change/environment, nuclear issues, decolonization, demilitarization, gender, and education", the project "aim[s] to help amplify the voices of indigenous people throughout the region, while working together to create new partnerships that transcend nationalism and state borders."

A third example of exciting collaborative work that demonstrates the capability of island logic to occupy and transform globalized institutional spaces was the twenty-first conference organized by Performance Studies international in 2015, entitled "Fluid States: Performances of Unknowing." This was a decentralized year-long conference, staging fifteen research clusters in different locations around the world and involving, according to its website, collaborations between universities, cultural centers, museums and other state or local institutions, NGOs and companies. One of the fifteen clusters was staged in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, where the PSi event coincided with the second Oceanic Performance Biennial,

entitled "Sea-change: Performing a fluid continent", itself a multi-sited and transdisciplinary event bringing together artists, scholars, activists and holders of indigenous knowledge (see Werry 2016).

And finally, it was also in the spirit of island logic that the University of Hong Kong hosted the second conference on "Island Cities and Urban Archipelagos" in March 2016, bringing scholars and professionals from twenty-three countries to present, compare and discuss problems faced and solutions created by island cities worldwide from disciplines including architecture and urban planning and design, geography and environmental studies, anthropology and sociology, law and public policy, engineering and economics, and art and literature. The conference highlighted Oceanic perspectives, featuring a keynote by Sean Mallon on urban art in Oceania and Vilsoni Hereniko, who presented Moana Rua, the film version of Moana: The Rising of the Sea, in the context of a panel discussion on "Sinking Islands, Forced Migration, and Urban Spaces". The conference also included a collaborative pop-up installation and performance by students of creative writing and landscape architecture focusing on thresholds of urban islands and exploring the relations between infrastructure, institution, and imagination.

Like the Festival of Pacific Arts, projects such as these help make evident the epistemic force that attention to island conditions and histories can bring to the critique of dominant frames of globalization. They also highlight the role that the arts and humanities can play in the effort to transform institutional spaces increasingly circumscribed by neoliberal demands, by enacting an island logic that redraws boundaries of knowledge, discourse and practice, in ways that expose naturalized political structures and hierarchies and lay them open to contestation and rearticulation. Nurturing flat spaces where protest, critique, celebration and creativity can come together, they help point the way from normalized precarity to livable forms of interdependence.

Notes

[1] For a discussion of the difference between the compacts of free association entered by New Zealand and the US, see Firth 1989, 77-83. Although being in a de facto less intrusive relationship of free association with New Zealand than Palau, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia maintain with the US, the Cook Islands and Niue are not members of the United Nations on account of their restricted sovereignty.

[2] Australia's and New Zealand's status is ambiguous because they are key members of Pacific Rim organizations like APEC as well as (usually separately identified) members of the Pacific Island Forum. Papua New Guinea is the only (other) Pacific Island member of APEC, while the PIF has observer status.

[3] The poorest countries in the region in terms of per capita GDP are those with the greatest export sectors that have seen their natural resources depleted by logging, mining and fishing ventures controlled by foreign businesses (Hezel 2012; 12, Tisdell 2006, 5, 14; Wesley-Smith 2007, 37-39).

[4] Recall also George Shultz, who told participants at a Pacific Rim conference in 1985, "We are all members of the community of nations surrounding the Pacific. The Pacific has become the twentieth century's economic fountain of youth" (Connery 1995, 47).

[5] "From everyone, regardless of gender or origins, an individualized capacity for risk management is now required, with which a precariousness that cannot be assured can be actualized in different ways and which materializes differently depending on the social positioning of precarity" (Lorey 2015, 89).

[6] For the expansion of the international airport in Majuro, "the last healthy coral in Majuro Lagoon was dredged to be used as aggregate for the airstrip" (Kupferman 2016, 143).

[7] "According to a 23 November [2012] report by Amnesty International, researchers on a recent three-day inspection of the facility in Nauru found a 'toxic mix of uncertainty, unlawful detention and inhumane conditions creating an increasingly volatile situation on Nauru, with the Australian Government spectacularly failing in its duty of care to asylum seekers'" ("Australia's" 2012). See also Karlsen 2016.

[8] See Hezel 2012 for a recent assessment of the viability of Pacific Island states' economies and the limited success of conventional pathways for economic development. Auckland University legal scholar Jane Kelsey has described PACER Plus as "a form of 'contemporary colonization'" (Cordemans 2009).

[9] Similarly, island logic makes it possible to conceive, following Escobar, that "practices of difference that remain in the exteriority […] of the modern/colonial world system [can] enact a politics of place that contrasts with the grandiose politics of 'the Revolution' and with conceptions of anti-imperialist politics that require that empire be confronted in its totality" (2004, 221).

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