

**Reinventing Polynesia: The Cultural Politics of
Transnational Pacific Communities**

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One of the interesting dynamics of recent decades has been the evolution of identity in a New Zealand context for Pacific peoplesⁱ, especially against the backdrop of ongoing links of various sorts with a “homeland”. The Pacific diaspora has provided a platform for the further development of transnational communities with implications for both the origin society and the place of residence. The linkages that provide the essence of these transnational communities link New Zealand, and specifically Auckland, with the Pacific in fundamentally new ways. There is considerable investment in the strategic use of human and capital resources, food and fashion, with consequences for the re-imagining of community. Globalisation and new technologies have enhanced these linkages. At the same time, the deindustrialisation and suburbanisation of employment, the disinvestment in welfare and the disinterest and, at times, hostility of host institutions in New Zealand, has reinforced the marginalisation of Pacific peoples. The growth of these Pacific populations in New Zealand over coming decades means that the politics of place and identity will become more significant, and will add to the complexity of culturally diverse societies in a globalised world.

Transnational Communities

The interest in the significant migration flows that characterise the second half of the twentieth century has now been supplemented by the intensification of linkages amongst diasporic communities, and their contribution to the creation and maintenance of global networks. As Davis (1999) has demonstrated in the context of the United States, the Latinisation of major urban centres has altered the cultural dynamics of those urban centres, as well as linked some of the centres of capitalist development with an often impoverished periphery in Central and South America. The influence of what were once migrant populations on the cultural and economic life of major metropolitan centres and the strength of linkages back to “homelands” has reinvigorated debates about diasporas and encouraged a discussion of transnationalism.

What tells us that a population or community is transnational (Van Hear, 1998:242)? Put simply, it is the existence of links between a community in its current place of residence and its place of origin, however distant, and between the various communities of a diaspora. The concept of a diaspora emerged from a particular history, of expulsion or involuntary exile (see Levitt, 1998:928), although it has also been used to refer to the dispersal of populations as a result of various means, including as victims, for labour, trade or imperial reasons, or as part of a cultural diaspora (Cohen, 1997:x). It has gone from being associated specifically with Jews to being a term for dispersed communities in a period of migration. It has highlighted the “historical and experiential rift between the place of residence and place of belonging” (Gilroy, 1997:329) and disrupted the harmony of people and places as well as “the political forms and codes of modern citizenship” (Gilroy, 1997:329, 331). While the imagery of the diaspora is a powerful one, and will be used here, the notion of transnationalism shifts attention to the nature and content of **linkages** between the communities.

Essentially, transnationalism signals that significant networks exist and are maintained across borders, and, by virtue of their intensity and importance, these actually challenge the very nature of nation-states (cf. Schiller, 1997). The presence of culturally different communities contradict the assumption that the state is built on national unity, however defined. The notion of what constitutes a “nation” is problematised (Fleras and Spoonley, 1999). But more than that, resources and loyalties are divided for these transnational communities between the place of residence and their “homeland”.

The new logic of social reproduction under conditions of global reconstruction, compels traditional communities to strategically balance assets and population between two different place-rooted existences. Economic and cultural umbilical cords now permanently connect hundreds of Latin American and Caribbean localities with counterpart urban neighbourhoods in the United States (Davis, 1999:27).

Davis goes on to point out that this is not simply a metaphor. It represents radically new social and geographic lifelines born out of the need to survive (Davis, 1999:28). It has also been helped by the availability of new technologies and cheap travel. Globally dispersed communities are maintaining networks and exchanging goods and people on a regular basis. However, Americans have yet to register how significant this transformation of the US urban

landscape has become (Davis, 1999:7). The same might be said of New Zealand, and the transnational nature of Pacific communities.

The Transnational Nature of Pacific Communities

Hau'ofa (1993) reminds us that Pacific peoples have been involved in the networks and linkages that define transnational communities for some considerable time, from "homes abroad".

...so much of the welfare of ordinary people of Oceania depends on informal movement along ancient routes drawn in bloodlines invisible to the enforcers of the laws of confinement and regulated mobility... [Pacific peoples] are once again enlarging their world, establishing new resource bases and expanding networks for circulation (Hau'ofa, 1993:11).

It is estimated that there are in excess of 400,000 Pacific peoples living in Pacific rim countries (Bedford, 1997b), with more than 200,000 people of Pacific descent resident in New Zealand at the time of the 1996 census. For some groups such as Cook Islanders, Niueans and Tokelauans, the numbers resident in New Zealand exceed, often considerably, those still resident in the origin societies. In the case of Samoans, there were 85,743 resident in New Zealand in the early 1990s, with another 62,964 in the United States and 5,742 in Australia (Macpherson, 1997:79). For Tongans, in 1998, there were 91,789 in Tonga and 50,537 overseas, with 36% of those born in Tonga living overseas, and another 28,476 born to overseas Tongans (Philips, 1999:476). The point is an obvious one. Hau'ofa (1993) reminds us of the traditional migratory patterns of Pacific peoples but the numbers living outside the origin societies have grown substantially providing new reasons for the circulation of people, goods and capital.

The size of the communities in the "homes abroad" constitute important centres which, because of their size, have an influence on the strategic use of resources in both the location of residence as well as origin, and which are capable of developing new forms of identity and cultural practices. They also challenge many of the institutions and beliefs of the Pacific Rim societies in which they are located.

The traditional nation-state of western societies such as New Zealand was built around a number of assumptions, including the coincidence of the territory of the state with a particular and undivided nation. Loyalty was first and foremost to the country of location, that loyalty was presumed or demanded in various ways, citizenship was singular and universally applied, and nationhood and nationality was the prevailing and official expression of identity. Being a New Zealander was the only acceptable form of self-description and policy and practice was constructed around this singular descriptor. Ironically, if that was the rhetoric, especially of twentieth century politicians such as Muldoon, the reality was rather different. Maori had long been differentiated in terms of various official policies, and from separate representation in Parliament, to the activities of the Department of Maori Affairs, Maori citizenship had been articulated and implemented in ways that marked them as different from other New Zealanders. Public attitudes and behaviour also contributed to Maori as “other”, often with negative implications. Similar distinctions were apparent in relation to immigrants with groups such as Asians in general, and Chinese in particular, the focus of discriminatory policies and negative attitudes from the 1860s onwards (Fleras and Spoonley, 1999).

The project of constructing the nation of New Zealand was incomplete when the politics of indigeneity challenged the marginalisation of Maori from the 1970s, and sought to reinstate an alternative sense of identity and citizenship. The notion of the nation was problematised, and the opportunity for alternative renderings of citizenship and sovereignty made possible, even if these still struggle for acknowledgement and resources. The “reforms” of the 1980s and 1990s, combined with the impact of globalisation, have also made the sovereignty of states such as New Zealand suspect. Pressure on the validity of the nation-state has come from within as well as externally.

Transnational communities by their very nature further contribute to what some interpret as the destabilisation of the nation and the state. They transcend national boundaries by their activities, and their members typically have divided loyalties between their country of residence and their ethnic community, or between the countries of origin and current location. The movement of people and goods across borders, especially when those movements are undocumented and part of informal networks, confirm the increasing permeability of borders and emphasise the significance of multiple loyalties – to place of residence, place and culture of origin, to diasporic communities, and to evolving identities.

A distinguishing feature of the recent diaspora of Pacific Island peoples is the strength of linkages between the island and rim-based communities. These linkages, which are sustained by complex networks of communities, trade, and circulation of people and ideas, are constantly changing Pacific cultures... (Bedford, 1997b:21).

To this we can add that they also change the nature of the metropolitan societies in which they reside by virtue of their transnational activities. They are one further and important element in the subdivision of the nation and the declining sovereignty of the state.ⁱⁱ Pacific peoples are simply one example of the increasing significance of globalisation for a country such as New Zealand. What remains is to identify the nature of these linkages, and the implications for both Pacific communities and their neighbours, especially in Auckland where 60% of the Pacific peoples living in New Zealand are located.

Migration and the Maturation of Communities

The migration of Pacific peoples to New Zealand is a product of post-war labour migration as new sources of semi and unskilled labour were sought by the growing industrial sector. That recruitment and migration are well documented (see Macpherson, 1997), as are the characteristics of the migrants in the various periods. In the initial stages of migration, the point was to generate financial returns for the origin community, and the returns of wage labour in New Zealand were significantly better than that in island economies (Macpherson, 1997:89). But as Macpherson also goes on to point out, single females were seen as more likely to remit their wages and were therefore selected by communities to become migrants. By the 1960s and 1970s, however, migration was more likely to involve complete families or the reunification of families, and the community began to sustain a broader range of activities as the demographic profile of the community changed. Kinship, religious and village affiliation were still important, but activities were increasingly focused on a New Zealand location as an investment was made in the infrastructure required to sustain community life in a new location.

Most congregations have built their own churches and halls and have, in the process, often become very close, cohesive, social entities which have emerged out of the trials

of undertaking large, expensive projects with relatively small numbers of people and the pride of succeeding (Macpherson, 1997:83).

They are now communities that are socially and demographically mature as Macpherson (1997) notes. They are also communities that constitute a much greater proportion of the global diasporas of any given Pacific community. The numbers located in Auckland are often larger than the origin societies or they constitute one of the largest concentrations of that community anywhere. As part of the maturation process, they have established significant human and capital resources and with the advent of new generations who have been born and brought up in New Zealand, the nature of the relationship between members these Pacific communities and their origins have begun to change, at times dramatically.

Migration continues, both from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand, but also as return migration. The bulk of the New Zealand communities have now been born here, and their connections to countries of migrant origin is less. Nevertheless, there are still important circuits involving both short term and sometimes long term movements between New Zealand and the Pacific. Levitt (1998:936) talks of social remittances or the social exchanges which occur when a migrant or their descendants returns to a country of origin to live or visit, and when non-migrants visit their migrant family members and the exchanges that occur through calls, letters, videos and cassettes. Equally, important events in the life of communities, in either location, often require a presence and involvement. The opening of a new hall or church, a political event or cultural competitions will see Pacific peoples move temporarily and in so doing, re-establish and reconfirm linkages. Pacific peoples with tradeable skills, especially if they are tertiary qualified and professionally trained, will move between locations as they have the ability and resources to do so. Return migration is still an important statement, especially when Pacific peoples occupy jobs which might be low-paying in the Pacific-rim locations but which provide significant capital resources once they transfer what they have accumulated to the Pacific Islands.

This difference [between low-paying jobs in the Pacific rim and well paid in the Pacific] ensures that it is only in returning 'home' – in transnational visits, investment, retirement, and remittances – that the real promise of migration can be fulfilled (Small quoted in Philips, 1999:471).

The nature of the relationship between the now mature communities in New Zealand, with most now born in New Zealand, and their Pacific origin kin, villages and countries, has changed. However, there are still important cultural and economic reasons for migration, short and long term, between the different locations, especially as they reinforce other movements of capital and goods.

Migradollars and the Circulation of Capital

The transnational circuits of people have been supplemented by the circulation of capital. Transnational communities, especially when they have been under financial pressure, or have seen an opportunity to enhance their group's resources, have used their networks to strategically deploy human assets in different locations. But the strategic use of resources hardly stops there, and one of the most powerful and strategic use of resources has been the circulation of capital. An obvious example is provided by remittances.

One of the original reasons for migration from the Pacific to New Zealand was the opportunity it provided of increasing the income available to a kin group or community. That flow of capital continues and constitutes one of the most important sources in sustaining poor performing and disadvantaged island economies. The flow raises two different but equally interesting questions.

The first is the size of the remittance flows. There is little doubt that the remittance income is large in the context of island economies that have struggled in recent decades with declining commodity prices, limited income sources, environmental disasters and government policies which preserve the status quo. It is estimated, for example, that in 1989, remittances provided Tonga with four times the revenue earned through exports and this represented about 45% of GDP for the country (Philips, 1999:476). But the problem is knowing the exact remittance flows. It is possible to establish a figure for those remittances that are declared in one way or another as they exit one country or need to be cashed in another. But it is undeclared flows, which Australian research indicates represent 40% as much again as recorded remittances (Bedford, 1997a:53; see also Bedford, 2000). Whatever the actual amounts which flow from New Zealand, or other Pacific-rim countries, to the micro-states of the South Pacific, the totals are significant and often represent 30% to 50% of GDP, and sometimes more depending on the country concerned.

The second question is the sustainability of these remittance flows, and the possibility of remittance decay. There is an extensive literature (see Macpherson, 1992; Bedford, 1997b; Bedford, 2000) on this issue. The concern is that there might be decay in the size of the remittance flows over time, thus impacting on economies where they are a significant contribution to national income (Bedford, 1997b:15). The decay is a product of the fact that there are fewer migrants, and the populations born in Pacific-rim locations are going to be less willing to contribute financially to origin communities and economies. The question is the sustainability of these flows over time. For the moment, the flows are substantial and remain a significant source of revenue. Remittances sustain transnational linkages and are an important manifestation of the networks and linkages that exist. But the remittances also bolster fundamentally flawed economies and divert attention away from the growing disparities in wealth and power (Schiller, 1997:163-164). The paradox is that as communities continue to sustain their kin and villages by remitting income, they may also contribute to economic stagnation and the impoverishment of island communities. The income is important to basic economic survival, but it also perpetuates institutions and policies which might be making the economic future worse.

Globalisation and Transnational Communities

Transnational communities are an important expression of contemporary globalisation, as they have also been historically. However, the nature and especially the technology which is central to current global developments has provided the means for intensifying the networks that are at the core of transnational communities. These include the falling cost and increasing availability of new telecommunications technologies, especially when they are combined with computer-based technologies, global entertainment systems and travel.

The increased availability of travel, the fact that it is relatively cheap and that it has occurred with new patterns of travel, notably tourism, have all made contact for Pacific peoples easier. Sea travel is still important in the Pacific, either in terms of local economic and social networks, or in relation to cruise ships. But the arrival of air travel from the 1970s which accompanied the building of runways capable of taking international planes and the establishment of Pacific airlines in some cases increased the contact between islands within the Pacific and with the Pacific rim.

For some time now, it has been cheaper, and faster, for Tongans living in Tongatapu to send freight to New Zealand than to many of the outer islands in the Kingdom (Bedford, 1997b:27).

Increased tourist flows means that Pacific flights see international tourists mix with returning migrants or their descendants, and provides new sources of income along with traditional social remittances that reaffirm social obligations and cultural ties. It has been enhanced by the availability and cheapness of contemporary travel.

Alongside the movement of large numbers of people around the Pacific has been the use of new technologies. There has been a growing interest in virtual ethnicity, or the use of new technologies to link ethnic communities and keep cultural traditions and identities alive.

Instead of a localism oriented to an original, pure ethnicity, globalism impels us to conceive a new localism profoundly affected by the grace of the link with others (Poster, 1998:185).

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has provided new options for maintaining links and contributing to new forms of community, although access does not inherently make for community (Jones, 1998:5). Indeed, it has reinforced fundamental questions about what exactly constitutes a community.

The concept of “community”, always somewhat problematic, has increasingly been called into question, in large measure as a result of computer-mediated communication... The key question is whether the Internet will allow a measure of continuity to what were “real-world” (physical) communities that have dispersed over the globe. In this case bonds of kinship or friendship precede electronic communication (Howard, 1999:160,161).

As always, the use of CMC’s across the Pacific and amongst diasporic communities is uneven, but there have been interesting developments which suggest that the Internet is an important vehicle for globally-dispersed Pacific peoples. At times, the deployment of CMC’s is most obvious amongst those resident outside the Pacific Islands. Telephone densities in the

Pacific are low and range from 44.2 per 100 of the population in Niue to 5.4 in Samoa, with the Cook Islands (25.5), Fiji (9.3) and Tonga (8.0) in between (Ogden, 1999:452). Here is an important barrier to accessing the Internet. But Taholo Kami, based in New York, has been instrumental in establishing a number of web sites such as the Kava Bowl, Wantok Forum, Bula Forum and the Melanesian Forum while Al Aiono has been involved with the Polynesian Café. The Kava Bowl which caters for Tongans and those interested in Tongan culture and affairs has experienced up to 600,000 hits per month, but given that there were only 10 Internet users in Tonga in 1997, most have come from elsewhere in the world. Similarly, Alan Howard helped establish a web site for Rotumans (Rotumanet) which conveys news about Rotuma and Rotumans and keeps a diasporic community in touch (Howard, 1999). Howard goes on to argue that adequate communication is the key to maintaining a sense of community, and that the Internet “may provide the most effective vehicle in the long term” (1999:172).

Within the Pacific, a number of Pacific Island governments, news organisations and educational institutions have established web sites and effective Internet facilities. Moreover, there is income to be gained from two-letter Internet domain addresses, such as .tv (Tuvalu), .to (Tonga), .as (American Samoa), and .nu (Niue) (see Howard, 1999). Niue has used the income from the sale of this domain address to provide its residents with free e-mail from 1999, and is the first country in the world to provide free access and service for all its residents (Vui-Talitu, 1999:39). Here is one example of an isolated community that is being pro-active and using the Internet to access global information. But such developments raise as many questions as they answer.

There is little doubt that CMC's are an important new means for diasporic communities to keep in touch, and Taholo Kami has argued that the economic and social future of the Pacific is tied to the use of the Internet. However, it has implications which are varied in their impact on Pacific peoples. In an age which relies extensively on new technologies to gain and retain employment and income, participation is reliant on computer literacy, accessing relevant educational programmes and institutions and the growing service sectors that represent sunrise industries, and the ability to obtain the necessary technology. The Internet provides an opportunity for Pacific peoples to overcome the “tyranny of distance” but access also raises fundamental questions about education, training and local technology infrastructures. New technologies might simply reaffirm the inability of Pacific peoples in both Pacific states and

Pacific rim centres to afford the necessary training and technology, thereby aggravating existing inequalities (Howard, 1999:461). Howard goes on to note the possibility that information technology could “play a corrosive role in island societies” or it could be used to preserve culture (Howard, 1999:461-462). In the case of the Kava Bowl, Kami discusses the role of the Internet in challenging traditional institutions.

...it gives us an opportunity to discuss broader issues, and not be held back by society or cultural restrictions, and writers to the Kava Bowl do openly criticise politics in Tonga as there are no restrictions in cyberspace (Kame in Vui-Talitu, 1999:39).

There is a tension between using contemporary technology, and CMC’s in particular, to network diasporic communities, thereby reinforcing their transnational linkages, and the possibility that these same links might erode traditional institutions and beliefs. The future economic well-being of Pacific communities is dependent on accessing new technologies, but the “economic changes giving birth to the knowledge economy are also the main destroyers of communal bonds” (Bentley, 1999:xviii). The possibility of virtual ethnicity amongst transnational communities offers both positive and negative outcomes.

Multiple Centres, Multiple Identities

The size and maturation of the Pacific communities in Auckland represents the opportunity for alternative and multiple readings of ethnic identity, new forms of association and new personal and communal biographies. It also means that the Pacific is here – in Auckland and New Zealand – rather than a colonial other “out there” in either a geographical sense or as racialised problem within New Zealand civic society. New identity positions have begun to emerge in a New Zealand location, the fa’a Aukilani or fa’a Niu Sila as a variant on a “traditional” fa’a Samoa (Macpherson, 1997:93). Indeed, the notion of Samoanness is largely a product of colonialism and migration (Macpherson, 1998:5). It is now also a product of the emerging sense of location and politics of identity of its New Zealand context. The same process is apparent, with important variations, amongst other Pacific communities.

As Macpherson (1998) makes clear, it is important not to cast these emerging identities as singular for a particular Pacific community. They are internally differentiated by virtue of socialisation, intermarriage, fluency in language and cultural traditions, both domestic New

Zealand and Pacific in origin, and experience. With that acknowledgement, the 1980s and 1990s have seen the emergence of cultural identities which reflect multiple influences and which depart in significant ways from their migrant, colonial and island origins and traditions. These developments have impacted upon the internal dynamics of Pacific communities in New Zealand (see Pulotu-Endemann and Spoonley, 1992), but they have also fed back into the cultural and social developments in the Pacific and New Zealand more generally.

The influence of Pacific peoples has grown in significance in the 1990s, and is now obvious in the public domain in certain areas, and painfully absent in others. In the post-war period, Pacific peoples were involved in popular music of a traditional form (Bill Sevesi) or contemporary and global forms (Yandalls). More recently, that representation has been more substantial and widespread, with examples such as Annie Crummer, Ardijah, King Kapisi, Che Fu, Te Vaka representing a variety of musical forms. But there has also been a marked increase in the involvement of Pacific peoples in classical music, with Jonathon Lemalu, Iosefa Enari, Ben Makisi and Daphne Collins participating in mainstream musical events, but also as key players in Classical Polynesia, which draws upon Pacific traditions. Similar observations could be made about art, photography, literature, fashion and the theatre. Plays such as **Naked Samoans Talk About Their Knives** or **Fresh Off the Boat** written by Oscar Keightly and David Fane talk to an internal Pacific audience in a satirical way, but they also address – and challenge – other communities, noticeably Palagi. As Macpherson (1998:19) comments, “...New Zealand-born Samoans are taking elements of Samoan culture, filtering them through their own experiences and building them into a new and distinctive identity”.

Sport plays an important role in New Zealand as a major form of leisure activity and an expression of New Zealand national identity. As with artistic activities, Pacific peoples have had a long involvement in New Zealand sporting codes, including at a national level. But that participation has become a lot more obvious to non-Pacific New Zealanders, and has been a lot more obviously Pacific in style. By the 1990s, most national sports teams had Pacific peoples present, with some such as rugby, rugby league and netball involving a significant number rather than one or two. Moreover, Pacific peoples such as Michael Jones, Bernice Mene and Beatrice Faumuina playing an important leadership role. The 1998 ALAC Sports Awards saw Beatrice Faumuina win the top award, and the ceremony became a celebration involving Pacific peoples in an explicitly Pacific way. Other New Zealanders were made

aware that Pacific peoples were now a part of New Zealand's sporting culture and performance.

These developments confirm the transnational nature of Pacific peoples in a number of ways. It often involves a statement about the growing visibility and participation of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, including internationally where New Zealand is represented by Pacific peoples. National identity has not incorporated only a Maori presence, but also a Pacific one. Public discourse and shared symbols are being altered and renegotiated to make space for Pacific peoples, even if there are still limited opportunities to counter some historical stereotypes (Pearson, 1999:361). It also alters the relationship with the communities of the South Pacific. Those involved in national teams in sports such as rugby have become increasingly interchangeable, so that individuals might play for Samoa or Tonga as well as New Zealand. The national teams of the Pacific states are often constituted of New Zealand-based players, either those who were born and grew up in New Zealand or those who have been recruited from the islands to play sport in a professional capacity. Jonah Lomu is not simply an icon for New Zealand and global rugby; he is also a symbol and icon of Tongan rugby. Here is one example of a transnational community with an individual who represents, perhaps not equally but still in a significant way, two locations, two loyalties, two identities. Success in New Zealand and internationally for New Zealand also reflects upon and influences the origin Pacific states. The activities and perceptions of New Zealand-born and based Pacific peoples creates new identity positions and options for diasporic communities – wherever they are located. Not all of these developments, however, are positive.

The Impoverishment of Transnational Communities

The obverse of sporting or artistic success can also be true, especially when the economic and political futures of Pacific states are considered. The growing economic difficulties of Pacific microstates, mirrored to an extent in Pacific rim economies, or in those sections of the economy where Pacific peoples are most likely to be located, have been further exposed by political problems of various sorts. The colonially-constructed political institutions have reinforced the gerontocracy of traditional systems of leadership, which have been openly criticised by democratic movements. Economic vulnerability has been accompanied by political fragility and significant challenges to both political and cultural institutions, with outright conflict apparent in states such as Fiji, Bougainville and Kanaky. But these are less

and less domestic issues, and the effect of transnational communities is that the diaspora is involved. Often, those challenging the political and cultural systems and elites are return migrants who have gained qualifications and experience in Pacific-rim settings. Ideas and documents are easily communicated by transnational communities, as Kami noted with regard to Tonga above. And there is an investment in origin societies by those who trade in items that are sold into ethnic enclaves in Pacific-rim locations. Economic and political instability negatively affects trade. What has yet to be fully tested is the reaction of the diasporic communities to major economic or political upheaval. Fiji in 1987 was an early example, but the future might well involve a Pacific state which has a much more substantial overseas community who are prepared to be involved directly or to pressure a government into taking a particular stance. Pacific issues and conflict will become the concern of the diaspora given the nature of transnational Pacific communities and the relative size of the overseas population compared to that in the Pacific microstate.

Economic fragility is not confined to island states. One of the main reasons for migration in the post-war decades was to gain access to income, education and a future for new generations. But the post-industrial metropolis in Auckland, Sydney or Los Angeles has seen a transformation with the relocation of employment, deindustrialisation and suburbanisation (Waldinger, 1997). On the demand side, the jobs that brought Pacific peoples to these sites have largely disappeared and there is a spatial and employment mismatch between the location and skills of Pacific peoples and employment. These changes in the labour market and economic production, plus the disinvestment in welfare, have stripped the urban areas where Pacific peoples are located of their absorptive capacity (Waldinger, 1997:2). The new service-based urban economies have reinforced the ethnic segmentation that has long existed but which has now been intensified.

Much of what we narrate in the language of immigration and ethnicity I would argue is actually a series of processes having to do with a) the globalisation of economic activity, of cultural activity, of identity formation, and b) the increasingly marked racialisation of labour market segmentation... (Sassen, 1997:3).

As transnational communities, including Pacific peoples, seek to strategically deploy their human and social resources across various locations, the struggling economies of Pacific states and the transformation of the nature of production globally, has major implications.

The ethnic niches in the metropolitan sites which are sustained by ethnic recruitment and sponsorship become even more important. These enable those who might face discrimination or are lacking in qualifications, skills or experience to gain employment via ethnic networks and kin reciprocity obligations (Waldinger, 1997). These continue to operate whatever the economic circumstances, and become even more important to the strategic deployment of resources and in enhancing communal resources and income. They operate in New Zealand, but they are also increasingly used to gain access to other, bigger centres such as Sydney. To compensate for the skills and location mismatches which occur within urban centres such as Auckland, Pacific communities are using their ethnic networks to access other labour markets, notably in Australia. Not all have the ability or inclination to operate in this way, and there are growing pressures on communities which contain a significant proportion of work or education-poor, and benefit-dependent, households with the concomitant negative statistics that accompany such conditions. Moreover, this disadvantage is now intergenerational as the costs of accessing education, housing and health increase, and with a declining ability to pay, future generations are locked into a poverty cycle which even collective strategies are unable to reverse in any significant way. There is social mobility between migrant cohorts and subsequent generations, but it is very dependent on the ability to access education and training, especially at a tertiary level (cf. Waldinger, 1997:7). The growing pressure impacts particularly on the children and women of transnational communities. As Davis (1999:32) notes, there is evidence “that transnational social networks are frequently subsidized by the super-exploitation of women”.

This suggests that the activities and nature of transnational Pacific communities will change as the circumstances of economies – of Pacific states, of metropolitan states and globally – are transformed. The strategic use of human resources, notably labour and skills, will need to adjust to the changing skill requirements and nature of service economies in the information age. Investment, and disinvestment, decisions will reflect the capabilities and understanding of key brokers and leaders, and may depart significantly from traditional obligations and beliefs. Informal trading into the “flea markets” which service the requirements of ethnic groups will continue to expand in both directions – into the Pacific and into centres such as Auckland and Sydney. The question of remittance decay becomes even more important as financial pressure is placed on communities in Pacific-rim locations. And ethnic institutions, such as churches or political organisations, might well find that the flow of income from communities in what have been the more affluent centres will drop. Under an economic

rationalist regime, there are substantial pressures to invest in individual welfare or success, pressures which will compete with communal and kin obligations. The communities will also become more internally divided as those upwardly mobile constitute a more significant middle class in contrast to other members of the same community who represent the poor. This division will not be confined to a location such as Auckland, but mirror the transnational nature of these communities. Impoverished and wealthy will exist in both Auckland and Apia, Sydney and Nuku'alofa.

Conclusion

The transnational nature of the Pacific's "sea of islands" (Hau'ofa, 1993) has been intensified as the economic and cultural umbilical cords of the diaspora of Pacific peoples have developed new lifelines, courtesy of global electronic and transport systems. Moreover, the centres of this diaspora are multiplying, as the dynamics of culture, politics and trade change. An important demographic driver has been the growth of Pacific communities in the Pacific rim, especially Auckland, and the maturation of what were once, but are no more, migrant communities (Fleras and Spoonley, 1999). These communities, made up of New Zealand-born Pacific peoples, are developing new cultural forms and identities which are challenging both origin communities or "homelands", and cultural traditions, and the institutions and beliefs of the society of residence. They are renegotiating the rules of entitlement and belonging, coming as they do from a position of multiple loyalties and identities, and located in a community that maintains strong transnational networks. Maori identity politics have disrupted the colonially-inspired constructions of the New Zealand nation and state from a base of indigeneity. Pacific peoples now pose a new challenge from identities and networks of the Pacific diaspora.

Web Sites:

Rotumanet

<<http://www2.hawaii.edu/oceanic/rotuma/os/hanua.html>>

Kava Bowl

<<http://www.netstorage.com/kami/wwwboard/kavabowl.html>>

Pacific Islands Internet Resources

<<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~ogden/piir/>>

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ⁱ The traditional label, Pacific Islander, is a racialised box (cf. Davis, 1999) which does not adequately acknowledge the diversity amongst those from the Pacific or those descended from migrants from the Pacific. Furthermore, the term "Pacific Islander" has had, and continues to have, negative connotations. The preferred term, although it still has limitations, is Pacific peoples following the example set by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (1999).

ⁱⁱ This is not simply confined to Pacific communities. There has been increasing public concern at the mobility and divided loyalties of those Asian migrants who arrived in the 1990s. What escapes many is the reality of migration from Britain which saw a similar return migration, an abiding loyalty to British institutions and cultural practices, and an assumption that sovereignty and citizenship would be defined by an enduring relationship to Britain as the "mother country". Globalisation is hardly a recent phenomena, and empires have long demanded dual loyalties.