

CONNECTING THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL: DO THEY TALK BUT NOT REACH?



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ABSTRACT¹

This research seeks to contribute to the debate on Global Environmental Governance through the case of Small Island Developing States. It is said that Global Environmental Governance creates the opportunity for a variety of actors to participate because the environmental crisis affects everyone on this planet. This argumentation hides two assumptions, namely that everyone on the planet is affected equally and that everyone has the same opportunity to participate in the governing the problem. However, as this study will show, there are barriers inherent to the way the crisis has been governed that prevent parts of the world from participating equally, such as the authority on scientific knowledge. Moreover, as the focus on the Pacific Islands will demonstrate, the climate crisis is experienced in very different ways that have led to different perceptions of what is happening and what should be done. By not taking these various perceptions into account, Global Environmental Governance cannot be seen as truly global. At the same time, Pacific Islanders have managed to make themselves heard on the international stage and through storytelling they have influenced the social reality of the global leaders and thereby contributing to a different course of governance.

¹ The picture on the front page shows members of the Pacific Climate Warriors on the island of Kiribati form the number of 350, a number representing the safe maximum level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The banner showing 'Not drowning-fighting' represents their slogan. Accessed via: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/pacific-climate-warriors-win-pax-christi-peace-prize> (consulted 13/05/2022).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
AR	Assessment Report
COP	Conference of Parties
DIC	Developing Island Countries
GEG	Global Environmental Governance
GHG	Global Greenhouse Gas
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IR	International Relations
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PCW	Pacific Climate Warriors
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SLR	Sea Level Rise
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

INTRODUCTION

‘It is interesting that in this day and age, we have had to have the scientists validate what we indigenous people have been talking about for years. [...] Indigenous people have been sounding their alarm for years, and it has only taken a few scientists together within the IPCC to see for the whole world to be up and arms about it.’ – George Nacewa.²

During the interview conducted as part of this research, George Nacewa, the Fiji organizer of the Pacific Climate Warriors (PCW), touched upon one of the current shortcomings of environmental governance: those most affected by the consequences of climate change are the ones least listened to. The PCW are among those most affected and have been demonstrating their current experience with the consequences of climate change in the form of poems, dance, spoken word and activist performances since their foundation in 2011. The PCW consist of young people from the Pacific Islands who are committed to ensuring that global leaders take climate action. In 2014 for instance, they canoed into the sea in traditional canoes to block Australia’s biggest coal port. Most prevalent in their narrative is the resilience of the Pacific people. In addition, they want to show that their knowledge enables them to be navigators through the global climate crisis. They actively push for this narrative, not just because of a sense of urgency in solving the crisis but also because globally, the people from the Pacific are perceived as vulnerable, helpless people living on small islands with no choice but to accept the consequences of climate change. Their rallying cry, ‘we are not drowning, we are fighting’, exemplifies how the PCW counter the global narrative.

In the 1980s, a global environmental storyline came into play that depicted climate change as a global problem.³ For this global problem, there needed to be a global solution. Within the field of International Relations (IR), this led to the emergence of the subfield Global Environmental Governance (GEG). Whereas within classical IR theory, the nation-state is assumed as the primary actor, GEG has created a shift in this perception and has shown that various actors influence the politics around the environment. As Kate O’Neill argues, traditional political science and IR approaches have limits when applied to problems as such political, scientific, and social complexity as those associated with global environmental

² George Nacewa, interview on 23/05/2022, see Appendix 1.

³ Mike Hulme, ‘Problems with making and governing global kinds of knowledge ☆’, *Global Environmental Change* 20 (2010) 558–564, 560.

change.⁴ In her book, *The environment and international relations*, she shows that an essential dimension of globalization is the increasing influence of civil society actors worldwide. Actors can ally with each other, exchange information and engage the public in their activities in ways that make environmentally damaging corporate practices more visible, and make the agents behind them more accountable to a broader audience.⁵ Both Keck and Sikkink in *Activists Beyond Borders*, and Tarrow in *The New Transnational Activism*, display how actors use this alliance to influence what is being put on the environmental agenda.⁶ O'Neill states that non-state actors have become increasingly important within environmental governance. Climate change is a global problem: thus, different actors worldwide should be participating in finding solutions. The problem is that not everyone has the opportunity to equally participate in the global governance of environmental problems. While climate change affects everyone on this planet, some are more affected than others. At the same time, those affected most often have the least influence on policy related to preventing climate change.

Among the most affected by climate change are Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Ashe et al. show how different non-state actors united in the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to influence the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).⁷ The goal was to ensure that their needs as small island states were being addressed. In line with the global narrative that depicts small island states as vulnerable, the article mainly focuses on the liability of small island states. John Campbell and Jon Barnett oppose to the global narrative in their book *Climate Change and Small Island States: Power, Knowledge and the South Pacific*. They argue that groups within politically and scientifically powerful countries appropriate the issue of island vulnerability in ways that do not do justice to the lives of island people. They show that the vulnerability framework does not lead to meaningful responses to assist them in adapting to climate change.⁸ Together with Elisa Waters, Barnett furthermore opts for an 'island centered' approach.⁹ This approach emphasizes the adaptive capacity of small island states and is based on the essay *Our Sea of Islands* by Epeli

⁴ Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations* (Cambridge 2009) 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶ M Keck and C Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*. (Ithaca, NY 1998), and Sidney Tarrow, *The new transnational activism* (Cambridge 2010).

⁷ John W. Ashe, Robert Lierop and Anilla Cherian, 'The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in the negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)', *Natural Resources Forum* 23 (1999) 209–220.

⁸ John Campbell and Jon Barnett, *Climate Change and Small Island States Power, Knowledge and the South Pacific* (London 2012).

⁹ Jon Barnett and Elissa Waters, 'Rethinking the Vulnerability of Small Island States: Climate Change and Development in the Pacific Islands', in: Jean Grugel and Daniel Hammett ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of International Development* (London 2016) 731–748.

Hau’Ofa.¹⁰ The adaptive capacity of the Pacific people, as demonstrated by Hau’Ofa, is also prevalent in the narrative of the Pacific Climate Warriors. Both Karen McNamara and Carol Farbotko in *Resisting a ‘Doomed’ Fate: an analysis of the Pacific Climate Warriors*, and Hannah Fair in *Their Sea of Islands? Pacific Climate Warriors, Oceanic Identities, and World Enlargement*, have demonstrated how the PCW resisted the global vulnerability framework by focusing on their strengths and adaptability.¹¹

This research builds on the works above and provides a valuable addition to the literature on Global Environmental Governance. While it is argued that a growing variety of actors can participate within GEG, the body of literature on SIDS and the Pacific Climate Warriors shows a discrepancy between how the people on the islands see themselves and the way they are depicted on an international decision-making level. This study bridges this discrepancy by answering the following question:

How does the global vulnerability framework prevent the Pacific Climate Warriors, as people from small island states, from equally participating within Global Environmental Governance on Small Island Developing States?

To answer this question, this thesis looks at the global narrative on SIDS and compares this to the case study of the Pacific Climate Warriors (PCW). Through the concepts of ‘storyline’ and ‘discourse coalition’, introduced by Maarten Hajer, this research demonstrates how narratives create global environmental governance and how foundational barriers in the global narrative exclude certain actors from participating in Global Environmental Governance. By narrowing both the global and the local discourse down to storylines, this study clarifies what both parties talk about when they discuss SIDS. The case of the PCW is used because they represent the narrative of people on the Pacific Islands and to a further extent, people living on SIDS. By comparing the storylines on both sides, the thesis provides a thorough comprehension of the structures and dynamics that influence the debate on climate change and the blockades that these structures may form for groups generally not included in policy making on a high level. The research question is unpacked in three chapters.

¹⁰ Epeli Hau’Ofa, ‘Our Sea of Islands’, in: D’arcy, Paul, *Peoples of the Pacific: the history of Oceania to 1870* (Mānoa 2020) 148-161.

¹¹ Karen E. McNamara and Carol Farbotko, ‘Resisting a ‘Doomed’ Fate: an analysis of the Pacific Climate Warriors’, *Australian Geographer* 48 (2017) 17–26., and Hannah Fair, ‘Their Sea of Islands? Pacific Climate Warriors, Oceanic Identities, and World Enlargement’, *The Contemporary Pacific* 32 (2020) 341–369.

Chapter I looks at Global Environmental Governance as a political program and answers the question *How is Global Environmental Governance discursive?* This research departs from the constructivist point of view that we create the social reality around us and builds upon the work of Maarten Hajer. Hajer has developed a method to study environmental problems in global politics.¹² He argues that how the environment is governed is based on who wins the ‘environmental conflict’. It is not about what is happening with the environment, but how we define it. In the struggle for discursive hegemony, coalitions are formed among actors attracted to a specific storyline for various reasons. These so-called ‘discourse coalitions’ are united because they adhere to a storyline consisting of a problem and a solution. First, this chapter will provide a short overview of the changing discourse around SIDS throughout the thirty-year leading up to the 2000s. Second, this chapter will explain the analytical framework and show how the environmental conflict is discursive, using Hajer’s theory. The analytical framework also clarifies the importance of equal representation at a global level. The historical overview and the analytical framework function as the basis for the second chapter.

Chapter II centers around the question *How global is the global vulnerability framework on SIDS?* The global narrative is analyzed through the concepts of discourse coalition and storyline explained in the first chapter. In doing this, the second chapter presents the problem and solution created in the global narrative. First, the discourse coalition is discussed, consisting of the international global community. This part addresses the tensions inherent to global knowledge-making and shows how the global narrative favors an economic, rational emphasis based on hard science. The so-called storyline is extracted from four assessment reports from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) throughout the last twenty-two years. The IPCC is the leading authority on climate change knowledge and is the basis of global climate policy. By analyzing what is perceived and depicted as the problem and solution, this research aims to understand what the global community means when talking about SIDS as ‘vulnerable’. Furthermore, in analyzing the context in which this storyline is produced, this chapter outlines the foundational barriers through which certain perspectives are included while others are excluded.

Chapter III focuses the Pacific Climate Warriors’ storyline and asks: *how does the local narrative of the PCW differ from the global narrative on SIDS?* The chapter shows what the PCW see as the problem and solution and how they have used their own methods to show how climate change affects their current social reality. This chapter also looks at how knowledge is

¹² Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*.

created and shared on the Pacific Islands within the discourse coalition. The analysis of both the discourse coalition and the storyline is done via sources from social media. As the PCW is a transnational organization, its main form of communication has been social media. They have shared poems, stories, short movies, and statements on different platforms, which are the base of the analysis. To add a deeper layer to this analysis, I have also interviewed George Nacewa, an organizer from the Fiji 350Pacific organization. The interview contextualizes and supports the arguments made in the third chapter. The questions asked in the interview were based on the analysis conducted of the social media and functioned to broaden the understanding of the PCW's narrative. This last chapter also synthesizes both narratives and shows what the PCW do to break through the barriers described in the second chapter.

There are certain limits to analyzing the role of a transnational activist group at the international level. To measure to what extent the PCW have influenced the hegemonic discourse would fall outside the scope of this research. Instead, the goal is to thoroughly comprehend the structures and dynamics that influence the debate on climate change and the blockades that these structures may form for groups generally not included in policy making on a high level. The focus on SIDS will function as a case study in which these structures will be made visible. This research contributes to the debate on Global Environmental Governance and pushes the environmentalist strand in a more inclusive direction.

1 SURVIVING VULNERABILITY

INTRODUCTION

‘We are not drowning, we are fighting!’¹³ The first part of the PCW’s slogan refers to the international narrative, in which Small Island Developing States are depicted as most vulnerable to climate change. The second part presents a counternarrative. The slogan shows that PCW are aware of the international perception of the Pacific as a group of drowning islands. They disagree, and instead, they present themselves as warriors and leading examples against climate change. On the international stage, the Pacific Islands fall into the Small Island Developing States category. The SIDS are a separate category within many international environmental reports, of which the IPCC is the leading example.¹⁴ This demonstrates a consciousness within the international community about the distinguished exposure of climate change to SIDS. Nonetheless, as inhabitants of the SIDS, the Pacific Climate Warriors, do not feel their perspective is included on the international stage. At the same time, climate action is taken based on a global narrative.

Due to its widely affecting nature, the environmental crisis is seen as inherently a global issue.¹⁵ Frank Biermann and Philipp Pattberg argue that Global Governance can be seen as a normative understanding that starts from a perceived inadequacy of political responses.¹⁶ In this sense, Global Governance is a political program to ‘regain the necessary steering capacity for problem-solving in the postmodern age.’¹⁷ If we take this to Global *Environmental* Governance (GEG), it can be said that GEG is a political program created around environmental problems that the international community tries to solve. As Kate O’Neill states, Global Environmental Governance consists of efforts by the international community to manage and solve shared

¹³ <https://world.350.org/pacificwarriors/>, (consulted 26/05/2022).

¹⁴ See IPCC reports 1992-2022.

¹⁵ Calling this problem ‘global’ has some implications, as explained by Pettenger, but for the clarity and focus on GEG, I still decided on the word global. For more on this, see: Pettenger, Mary E., ed., *The social construction of climate change: power, knowledge, norms, discourses*. Global environmental governance (Aldershot, Hampshire Farnham, Surrey Burlington, Vt 2007).

¹⁶ Frank Biermann, ed., *Global environmental governance reconsidered*. Earth system governance: a core research project of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (Cambridge, Mass 2012) 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

environmental problems.¹⁸ What is being governed then are the environmental problems, but it is not always clear what the problem precisely consists of. In the case of SIDS, while attention is given to the islands specifically, the international community seems to have a different focus than the people living on the islands.

This chapter focuses on the analytical framework used in this research and asks: *How is Global Environmental Governance discursive?* Everyone within environmental governance seems to understand that climate change threatens the SIDS, but how do different parties perceive and define this problem? How these environmental problems are defined determines how policy is made. Thus, this chapter makes clear that it is essential to not just talk with each other but to really understand what the problem consists of for the people who inhabit the islands. The first part of this chapter outlines the narrative on SIDS up until 2000, which serves as the background and framework for analyzing and comparing the storylines in the second and third chapters. The second part explains the analytical framework and demonstrates why the concepts of discourse coalitions and storylines are useful in this research. The framework shows more in-depth how discourse plays an important role within, and essentially creates, Global Environmental Governance.

FROM SOCIAL-ECONOMICALLY VULNERABLE TO VICTIMS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change discourse around SIDS already has a thirty-year history before the millennium change, which is the starting point of this research. This first section provides a short overview of the emergence of this discourse and the several changes it has undergone. There have been three distinct periods in which a specific discourse around SIDS was prevalent. The first was from 1972 until 1982, when the SIDS came to be a problem related to the North-South division. The second period was from 1983 until 1992, during which the then called Island Developing Countries (IDCs) called for support from developed countries. The third and last period was from the 1990s onwards, and in this period the concept of Small Island Developing States came into practice. This brief historical overview functions as a basis and context to create a better understanding in preparation for the second and third chapters.

¹⁸ O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations*, 4.

FIRST PERIOD

The concept of SIDS came into practice from 1992 onwards. Before that, there was no separate category for small island developing states. However, the seed for a separate category was planted during the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964.¹⁹ At this conference, island states as a particular category received international attention. As Jenny Grote points out, the UNCTAD functioned as the voice of the countries from the ‘Global South’.²⁰ Most of these countries had just become independent states after being colonized. The UNCTAD was founded on the need for collective international decisions on issues affecting developing countries.²¹ On the one hand, the idea prevailed that there was an asymmetrical relationship between the center and periphery, in which the developing countries were structurally disadvantaged. On the other, around the 1970s, people saw hope for more influence on the side of the island states.

The storyline of the island states being the disadvantaged periphery and the perception that the international economic system had bypassed these countries created unity with other state groupings.²² During this period, four subgroups of developing states were distinguished, one of which was that of developing island countries (DICs). This subcategory received some recognition from the UN. In 1972, UNCTAD III was held, and the extra disadvantages of the DICs were pointed out during this conference. The disadvantages were primarily focused on economic problems, stating that the DICs were ‘seriously hampered in their economic development.’²³ A special panel was created to analyze these disadvantages. The panel concluded that the DICs suffered from specific problems such as specialization and dependence; population, unemployment, and migration; and the viability of tiny islands.

This report was the first in line of many reports analyzing common characteristics of, and problems in developing island states.²⁴ These unique characteristics caught the attention of development policy institutions in the 1970s, which since then focused on SIDS as

¹⁹ Jenny Grote, ‘The Changing Tides of Small Island States Discourse - A Historical Overview of the Appearance of Small Island States in the International Arena.’, *Verfassung Und Recht in Übersee / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 2 164–191, 166.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ UNCTAD, Setting the scene: 50 years of the LCD category, 4, accessed through: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldcr2021_ch1_en.pdf (consulted 26/05/2022).

²² Grote, ‘The Changing Tides of Small Island States Discourse’, 167.

²³ UNCTAD, proceedings of the united nations conference on trade and development, third session, 1972. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/td180vol1_en.pdf (consulted 08/06/2022) 74.

²⁴ Ibid., 172.

‘vulnerable’.²⁵ Thus, the discourse on DICs in this period was centered around the center-periphery logic of international relations. Particularly their size, dependence on foreign trade, and economies were prevalent within this discourse. However, at some point, there came a reluctance to consider *all* DICs as a category apart because there seemed to be no socio-economical disadvantages apart from the geographical problems. Thus, the help was directed to developing countries that ‘happened to be islands’.²⁶

SECOND PERIOD

The hope that the developing countries could have more influence on the international stage that was present at the beginning of the 1970s vanished by the late 1970s. As Grote argues, several dynamics culminated in the 1980s, which led to the ‘reassertion of dominance by the developed world over the developing world’.²⁷ Firstly, many developing countries had significant financial debts. Secondly, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPECs) relied on Northern banks, which created an economic divide between North and South and did not strengthen the bargaining position of the Global South. Lastly, the rise of the so-called Asian Tigers weakened the solidarity between the developing states. This power shift weakened UNCTAD as the main forum for articulating developing countries’ claims.²⁸ The small island developing states were redesignated in Island Developing Countries (IDCs), but it was not specified which countries got this label. Moreover, UNCTAD started to align more with neoliberal ideas and moved away from its earlier role as the voice of the global South.²⁹

The division of small islands did not extend to all islands. Around this period, the notion came into play that small island states, particularly Pacific Small Island States, were vulnerable to climate change. This consciousness was strengthened because of a series of flooding from storm surges, inundation, and sea-level rises in the Maldives in the late 1980s. This resulted in the first meeting of small island states to initiate a global campaign to combat climate change.³⁰ Around the time that the IPCC came up, the Pacific Islands united in the trans-regional coalition of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).³¹ According to George Carter, the AOSIS

²⁵ Jon Barnett and Elissa Waters, ‘Rethinking the Vulnerability of Small Island States: Climate Change and Development in the Pacific Islands’, in: Jean Grugel and Daniel Hammett ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of International Development* (London 2016) 731–748, 732.

²⁶ Grote, ‘The Changing Tides of Small Island States Discourse’, 176.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ George Carter, ‘Pacific Island States and 30 Years of Global Climate Change Negotiations’ in: Carola Klöck e.a., ed., *Coalitions in the climate change negotiations*. Routledge research in global environmental governance (Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY 2021) 74.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

needed to build a narrative of the Pacific Islands as ‘vulnerable frontline states’ to safeguard the interest of island states in the climate change regime.³² This vulnerability to climate change narrative easily fitted into the already existing view of island states, in which they were already seen as socio-economically.

THIRD PERIOD

The focus on environmentally sustainable development also guided the discourse in the period from the 1990s onwards. Not only was it clear that the small island states, which then became known as the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), were vulnerable to natural disasters, but it was also found out that humans had an impact on the climate and that the small islands were considerably more affected by this.³³ Because of this, the AOSIS became a vital actor in international climate negotiations, and the SIDS successfully positioned themselves as active actors against climate change.³⁴ Although they had increased political weight in international negotiations, this did not result in tangible improvements in the situation of small island states. As Grote argues, even since the creation of AOSIS and the SIDS category, the SIDS are mainly referred to as a group of islands that need more research, planning and documentation with little supported actions on the ground. She recalls that this can be seen ‘as a very visible symptom of the deeper malaise afflicting current North-South relations.’³⁵ The small island states’ discourse has always been intertwined with the development discourse, as they are part of the broader group of developing countries. The understanding of the vulnerability discourse, which is intimately linked to the international development discourse, serves as an essential background of the current discourse on SIDS, which is analyzed in the following two chapters.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

HOW IS GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE DISCURSIVE?

How environmental problems are understood creates the basis for how policy is made. In addition, the perception of the severity level may also accelerate the implementation process. Maarten Hajer, who researched global environmental politics, has argued that within GEG, different parties often talk a lot to each other about certain problems when they, in practice,

³² Ibid., 76.

³³ Grote, ‘The Changing Tides of Small Island States Discourse’, 182.

³⁴ Godfrey Baldacchino, ‘Seizing history: development and non-climate change in Small Island Developing States’, *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management* 10 (2018) 217–228, 219.

³⁵ Grote, ‘The Changing Tides of Small Island States Discourse’, 188.

do not mean the same. For Hajer, this means that the environmental conflict is about the way in which problems are framed and defined.³⁶ Since it is mainly accepted that climate change is a problem, Hajer argues that the ‘conflict’ has become discursive; it is not about a predefined unambiguous problem with competing actors’ pro and con, but rather a continuous struggle over the definition and meaning of the environmental problem itself.³⁷ While a more realist approach would argue that the environment ‘out there’ is the same as the environment discussed in politics, the strand of constructivist authors contends that the perception and reality of the environment differ.³⁸ Hajer states that the realist approach fails to acknowledge that we act upon our images of reality.³⁹ The big question about the environment is no longer *if* there is a problem but how we *interpret* the problem. How the problem is interpreted is determined by our image of reality.

GEG is unique in that it provides actors with ‘agency beyond the state’.⁴⁰ As Biermann et al. point out, non-state actors take part in influencing the political system.⁴¹ Thus, different actors participate in global governance around environmental problems, but the question is to what extent this is attainable for certain groups of people. There is a consensus on the idea that environmental conferences function as an avenue where environmental norms are made.⁴² Moreover, there is the conviction that we as a community on earth can solve this problem if we work together hard enough.⁴³ The point Hajer makes is that if the international community wants to solve a global problem like climate change together, there needs to be a storyline that everyone agrees on. There needs to be a shared problem and, more importantly, a shared solution on which policy can be based. Under the umbrella of ‘climate change’ fall all kinds of smaller problems, of which SIDS are one. Governing the global environment thus means finding a storyline that fits and acting on that problem.

Let us take on the premise that environmental politics has become a conflict of interpretation in which a complex set of actors can be seen to participate in a debate. It is essential then to not only analyze the discourse of a certain problem but also to place it in its context. The context provides the framework for creating a discourse and shows who can

³⁶ Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*, 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁸ For an overview of constructivist authors on this topic, see: Pettenger, Mary E., ed., *The social construction of climate change: power, knowledge, norms, discourses*. Global environmental governance (Aldershot, Hampshire Farnham, Surrey Burlington, Vt 2007).

³⁹ Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*, 15.

⁴⁰ Biermann, ed., *Global environmental governance reconsidered.*, 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Peter M. Haas, "UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment," *Global Governance* 8, no. 1 (2002): 73-92.

⁴³ Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*, 14.

participate. The essence of Hajer's argument is that the dynamics of environmental politics cannot be understood without taking apart the discursive practices that guide our perception of reality.⁴⁴ Global Environmental Governance, then, is essentially about finding solutions for problems created within a global narrative.

Different groups create and are driven by narratives that Hajer calls storylines. Hajer introduced the concept of storylines in his book *The Politics of Environmental Discourse* and defines it as the following:

A story-line [...] is a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena. The key function of story-lines is that they suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive component parts of a problem⁴⁵

Actors use storylines to make sense of and define a certain event, problem, or phenomenon. A discourse exists within a given context and determines the interplay between physical and social realities. Within this complex discursive field, actors produce storylines: stories in which a problem is defined and a solution is given. The concepts of storylines and discourse coalitions help to show how discursive orders are maintained or transformed. The environmental conflict over a particular issue, such as sea rise levels and SIDS, does not appear as primarily a conflict over which sorts of action should be taken but as a conflict over the meaning of physical and social phenomena.⁴⁶ The main question, in this case, is: what is the problem regarding SIDS and climate change, and how can we solve this?

By analyzing the storylines of the international community and the PCW, this research looks at the global narrative and a counter-hegemonic narrative. As Heather Smith points out, in the case of climate change, certain people, regions and states are more present within international negotiations. At the same time, indigenous people are masked and marginalized. The indigenous narrative questions institutions and social orders and are thus a threat to power.⁴⁷ By analyzing the counternarrative and looking at how knowledge is created in both narratives it becomes clear how this marginalization process works. More explicitly, by perceiving the global narrative as something created, this research questions the concept of

⁴⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Heather A. Smith, 'Disrupting the Global Discourse of Climate Change: The Case of Indigenous Voices', in: *The Social Construction of Climate Change* (Aldershot, Hampshire Farnham, Surrey Burlington, Vt 2007) 197–215, 200.

‘global’ regarding the environment. Seeing climate change as a global problem universalizes environmental threats.⁴⁸ This universalization is problematic for GEG when the global storyline is narrated by people who do not yet experience severe threats and thus have a different social reality.

The concept of discourse coalitions guides the second part of the analysis. Hajer argues that in the struggle for the discursive hegemony, coalitions are formed among actors that, for various reasons, are attracted to a specific storyline.⁴⁹ These coalitions are not necessarily homogenous groups but can consist of actors such as policymakers, NGOs and journalists. Hajer calls groups that adhere to the same storyline ‘discourse coalitions’. Discourse coalitions comprise of three parts, (1) a set of storylines; (2) the actors who utter these storylines; and (3) the practices in which this discursive activity is based.⁵⁰ Comparing two discourse coalitions will elucidate how the two interact with each other and what inherent barriers can be found in the global discourse on SIDS. The concept of discourse coalition resembles the concept of ‘epistemic communities’, as coined by Peter Haas.⁵¹ Following Haas’s perception, the IPCC scientists can be seen as an ‘epistemic community’, namely a group of knowledge-based experts with a shared set of normative and principled beliefs. However, the concept of discourse coalition is more suitable for this research as its composition is not determined by its subjects, as with the concept of epistemic communities, but defined by the narrative the subjects adhere to. Moreover, a discourse coalition is not just created through the storyline but also shaped by a discursive context.⁵² The context is built on certain knowledge and the way this knowledge is being produced. As Hajer argues, the adherence to a storyline is essentially based on whether it sounds right. However, this is not just influenced by the strength of an argument but also by ‘the trust that people have in the author that utters the argument and the practice in which it is produced’.⁵³ The kind of knowledge that an argument is based on, thus to a certain extent determines how much the argument is trusted. The concept of discourse coalition is more comprehensive than Haas its concept of epistemic communities and lends itself better to understand the context of a specific narrative.

This methodology helps explain the political dynamics in the environmental domain and understand how the seemingly same issues are perceived differently. As Hajer mentions, ‘the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Hajer, *The politics of environmental discourse*, 53.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁵¹ Peter M. Haas, ‘Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination’, *International Organization* 46 (1992) 1–35, 2.

⁵² Hajer, *The politics of environmental discourse*, 53.

⁵³ Ibid., 63.

communicative miracle of environmental politics is that, despite the great variety of modes of speech, they somehow seem to understand each other'.⁵⁴ This suggests an overarching idea of a problem under which different discourses can be placed. A discourse analytical perspective like this can illuminate how specific meanings have emerged and have been framed while others have been obscured.⁵⁵ By comparing the international discourse around SIDS with the storyline of the PCW, this research aims to see how the latter has been obscured. The concept of storylines is useful because it shows how a narrative is built up through a problem and a solution. The differences provide insights into what both the international community and the people from the islands perceive as reality. More importantly, analyzing the storylines of both the international institutions and the Pacific islanders shows how the foundations of an environmental narrative create barriers for certain groups to participate internationally. However, this study also demonstrates how the PCW have retained their agency.

WHO PARTICIPATES AND WHO DOES NOT?

The problem with the environment becoming a discursive conflict is that not everyone is equally represented within the global discourse. The global discourse on SIDS is represented by actors in rich, mainly developed countries.⁵⁶ Although the North-South division has been a prevalent topic within postcolonial academic research, this has not necessarily resulted in a better position for the Global South. As Saskia Vermeulen argues in *The social construction of climate change*, even though colonialism ended with the political independence of countries in the Global South, according to decolonial thought, colonality persists through the project of modernity and the expansion of a Eurocentric cultural imaginary. This has been institutionalized and disseminated through education, the media and state-sanctioned languages and behavioral norms.⁵⁷ Vermeulen furthers that colonality is a form of power that creates structural oppression over marginalized sectors of society, such as indigenous people, whose alternative worldviews become devalued and stigmatized in Eurocentric modernity discourses and practices.⁵⁸ When this context is not taken into account within GEG, pre-existing

⁵⁴ Hajer, *The politics of environmental discourse*, 46.

⁵⁵ Mary E. Pettenger, ed., *The social construction of climate change: power, knowledge, norms, discourses*. Global environmental governance (Aldershot, Hampshire Farnham, Surrey Burlington, Vt 2007) 11.

⁵⁶ Pettenger, ed., *The social construction of climate change*, 199.

⁵⁷ Saskia Vermeulen, 'Special issue: environmental justice and epistemic violence', *Local Environment* 24 (2019) 89–93, 90.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

inequalities are being ignored. At the same time, these inequalities highly influence the available options that countries and actors have when they take part in global solutions.

One way this coloniality is prevalent is how certain kinds of knowledge are not included in official environmental documents. Most environmental documents rely on environmental models as their primary source of knowledge.⁵⁹ This model approach focuses mainly on the natural impacts of climate change and tries to foresee how certain areas can adapt. However, little empirical research is done on how climate change affects social groups in small island states. Moreover, it leaves little room for other kinds of knowledge, such as indigenous knowledge or social sciences, that focus more on the context in which climate change happens. This notion becomes apparent through the example of Integrated Assessment Models (IAMs), which are given a high confidence rate within climate research.⁶⁰ The problem with IAMs is that they are funded whenever possible instead of when there is a fundamental need to do so. Moreover, their advocates typically come from, or have been trained in, developed countries and are more advanced in negotiating fundings than their colleagues on the Pacific Islands.⁶¹ This shows there is an obvious problem, which Jon Barnett best describes:

Thus, the model of science in the region remains the same: ‘experts’ and their top-down generic models set the norms for knowledge and its production. In doing so, they marginalize the value of endogenous knowledge and approach to knowledge generation, and crowd-out the intellectual and resource space for local approaches and knowledge to emerge.⁶²

Within the dominant discourse on climate change, the idea prevails that climate change is an environmental problem with a separable human dimension. The models predict ways we, as humanity, can solve this problem.⁶³ However, within indigenous knowledge, nature and its inhabitants are more connected. The model approach thus produces an understanding of the Pacific Islands that is alien to the people from the islands but still has the authority within climate change discourse.⁶⁴ This exclusion of other forms of knowledge can be seen as a form of ‘epistemic violence’.⁶⁵ This ‘epistemic side of colonialism’ has resulted in the dismissal of

⁵⁹ Jon Barnett, ‘Climate change science and policy, as if people mattered’ in: Karen L O’Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen, *Climate change, ethics and human security* (Cambridge, UK; New York 2010) 53.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Karen L O’Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen, *Climate change, ethics and human security* (Cambridge, UK; New York 2010) 52.

⁶² Barnett, ‘Climate change science and policy, as if people mattered’, 53.

⁶³ Ibid., 47.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁶⁵ Kristie Dotson, ‘Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing’, *Hypatia* 26 (2011) 236–257, 236.

local or provincial knowledge because of privileging epistemic practices, mostly Western scientific knowledge. One way of executing epistemic violence is to damage a group's ability to speak or be heard.⁶⁶ Thus, epistemic violence is executed when indigenous or local knowledge is not properly included within the global leading documents and reports on climate change within the Pacific Island region.

The second and third chapters will demonstrate how this is done by analyzing how climate change is perceived both globally and locally and in which context this happens. By comparing the global discourse with the PCW's storyline, we can first try to see some of the underlying premises and assumptions carried in the process of knowledge production in Pacific Island States. Second, the third chapter shows how the PCW maintain their agency in the global context.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Governing the global environment essentially is about finding a broad narrative everyone can adhere to. The global narrative can be seen as the 'premier league' of the discourse. The storylines produced within the global discourse will eventually function as a framework for creating policy. Thus, the global storylines decide what action is taken and how the environment is being governed internationally. Environmental change influences the whole world, but some groups and places are far more impacted than others. At the same time, not everyone can equally participate in high-level decision-making. This chapter showed that discourse coalitions are formed by the adherence to a specific storyline and shaped by a discursive context. Thus, it is essential to also analyze the discursive context and understand when an argument 'sounds right'. Through the concepts of 'discourse coalitions' and 'storylines', this research shows what intrinsic obstacles the global discourse has created for groups such as the PCW.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

2 ISLANDS IN THE SEA

INTRODUCTION

In February 2022, the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) came out. Scientists from different parts of the world participated in creating the report. For the first time, the report stated in its introduction that it ‘recognizes the value of diverse forms of knowledge, such as scientific, as well as Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge in understanding and evaluating climate adaptation processes and actions to reduce risks from human-induced climate change.’⁶⁷ While indigenous knowledge had been mentioned in previous reports, the introduction in 2022 seems to imply the report is partly based on indigenous knowledge. The call for implementing various kinds of knowledge has been prevalent for the last twenty years because the variety contributes to the inclusivity of international policy. However, the question is if the aim to include indigenous knowledge has also led to equal participation in Global Environmental Governance from people worldwide.

This chapter focuses on the international discourse around Small Island Developing States and the extent to which this discourse can be seen as truly global. The earlier mentioned author Jon Barnett is a prominent scholar on the topic of SIDS. He has argued that since the 1970s, there has been a formation of a particular development discourse of SIDS in which they are talked of as ‘vulnerable’.⁶⁸ This vulnerability discourse is widely present in the literature, but it remains unclear what these states are vulnerable to. This chapter shows how this vulnerability is perceived through the concepts of ‘discourse coalition’ and ‘storyline’ and answers the question *How global is the global discourse on Small Island Developing States?* To get an understanding of the international discourse around SIDS, this chapter analyzes four different assessment reports from the last twenty years. The IPCC is seen as the authority on

⁶⁷ IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, M. Tignor, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem (eds.)]. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. (Cambridge 2022) 9.

⁶⁸ Jon Barnett and Elissa Waters, ‘Rethinking the Vulnerability of Small Island States: Climate Change and Development in the Pacific Islands’, in: Jean Grugel and Daniel Hammett ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of International Development* (London 2016) 731–748, 732.

climate change knowledge, which is why the international policy is based on the findings from the IPCC assessments.

The scope of this thesis allows for an analysis of four IPCC reports on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability and their respective summaries for policymakers, all published in the last twenty-two years. Within every report, there is a chapter devoted to Small Island States, which will be the center of the analysis. As discussed in the previous chapter, the discourse coalition will be outlined first. This part will look at the context in which knowledge is created and the storyline it subsequently produces. The second part of the chapter will analyze the international storyline on SIDS and distil a narrative in which a problem is formulated, and a solution proposed.

DISCOURSE COALITION: WHO PARTICIPATES AND WHO CREATES KNOWLEDGE?

As discussed in the previous chapter, discourse coalitions are created through their adherence to a specific storyline, but also determined by the practices in which the discursive activity is based. A discourse coalition both adheres to and reproduces a storyline in a context in which specific kinds of knowledge-production are most trusted. The global storyline arises out of, and is produced by different institutions, of which the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the most important. The UNFCCC is the guiding institution on climate change knowledge and policy and is tasked with ‘supporting the global response to the threat of climate change.’⁶⁹ This entity of the United Nations was established in 1992 and focuses on facilitating intergovernmental climate change negotiations. At the same time, it supports a complex architecture of bodies that advance the implementation of negotiations such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.⁷⁰ The aim of the UNFCCC is thus, to provide a *global* response to the threat of climate change. Hajer argues that discourse coalitions produce storylines.⁷¹ Thus, this global response is not just a result from the UNFCCC but is actively produced by the institution.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) functions as the UNFCCC its main source of scientific information. The IPCC draws on existing information and involves nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and governments in its

⁶⁹ UNFCCC, ‘About Us’, see: <https://unfccc.int/about-us/about-the-secretariat> (consulted 27/04/2022).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Hajer, *The politics of environmental discourse*, 5.

assessment process.⁷² The panel already existed before the establishment of the UNFCCC; it was created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). At the time of creation, a substantial part of the assessment structure was already in place. Since its creation, there have been some adjustments. After the millennial change, the United States wielded considerable influence through its scientists and bureaucrats who were part of the panel. Influential individuals such as Bert Bolin emerged, and the IPCC was shaped by pressures from outsiders, including the, at the time, Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). Moreover, many oil-exporting countries and special interest groups started to put more surveillance on the IPCC process.⁷³ While the IPCC does not have the power to create policy, its role in providing the ‘epistemological foundation’ for policy discussion means it dramatically influences how climate change is globally perceived and acted on.⁷⁴ In this way, the IPCC bridges policy with the scientific, social world and produces ‘hybrid’ knowledge.⁷⁵ Findings from the IPCC greatly influence people that adhere to the global storyline. Thus, if the global discourse aims to be truly global, this needs to be reflected in an IPCC that represents different people, areas, and perspectives, which would automatically lead to a more inclusive storyline.

However, the panel does not reflect a global representation and includes little variety in perspectives. The reports consist of different components; for every report within an Assessment, there is a summary for policymakers. The chapter on Small Island States in the full report showed a decent representation of people from Small Islands, with twelve of the twenty-two authors being islanders. The summary of the *Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* report from the 6th Assessment, however, included four authors from Small Island Developing States out of a total of 92 authors.⁷⁶ The IPCC member governments approve the summary line by line.⁷⁷ In addition to the fact that a small number of people from the Small Islands is represented within the panels, the IPCC reports favor a narrative based mainly on scientific findings and one influenced by political motives. The IPCC states that its objective is

⁷² Dagmar Lohan, ‘Assessing the Mechanisms for the Input of Scientific Information into the UNFCCC’, *Colorado Journal of International Environmental Law and Policy* 17 (2006) 249–308, 249.

⁷³ Shardul Agrawala, ‘Structural and Process History of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’, *Climatic Change* 39 (1998) 621–642, 623.

⁷⁴ Karl Dudman and Sara de Wit, ‘An IPCC that listens: introducing reciprocity to climate change communication’, *Climatic Change* 168 (2021) 1–12, 2.

⁷⁵ Cathleen Fogel, ‘Biotic Carbon Sequestration and the Kyoto Protocol: The Construction of Global Knowledge by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’, *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 5 (2005) 191–210, 192.

⁷⁶ IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers.

⁷⁷ See general page on the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/> (consulted 27/04/2022)

to provide governments at all levels with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies.⁷⁸ The statement shows the authority of science as the foundation of climate-related knowledge and implies that the reports are free from political input.

This is not the case as the political influence of the IPCC proved to be a point of discussion early on. For example, in the case of the Kyoto Protocol's policies on biotic carbon sequestration, previous Chairman Bob Watson had to preserve the neutrality of the report actively.⁷⁹ This case was somewhat controversial, and different states had widely different opinions, which resulted in attacks on the IPCC its authors. For instance, the U.S. argued that the report should only use neutral language and avoid characterizing particular outcomes or policy options, such as 'good' or 'undesirable'.⁸⁰ An IPCC assessment goes through different phases and, in order to be fully published, it needs to be accepted by the whole working group. All reports also must be accepted by a plenary session. Governmental representatives, who are political actors, provide one part of the plenary. The other part is formed by scientists whom their respective governments have nominated.⁸¹ The representatives of national governments have two functions: they must pursue the political interest of their country while at the same time being part of a scientific process.⁸² The requirement of unanimity has the advantage that the reports conclude with a final answer that all members agree on. However, this can also lead to the ignorance and exclusion of scientific findings and views that differ from the mainstream findings.⁸³ In this phase, politics and science become intertwined and affect each other. As author Beck contends, although the IPCC claims to be neutral, its findings are received in a highly sensitive geopolitical context in which almost every scientific finding can have far-reaching implications for the stakeholders concerned.⁸⁴ The final report is thus a result of, on the one hand, the perspective that science offers and, on the other hand, the narrative that the strongest country pushes for. The 'global' discourse coalition is based in a discursive practice that is political and highly institutionalized. This has the consequence that the produced storyline is narrowed down to what everyone agrees to be the problem after several rounds of discussion.

⁷⁸ UNFCCC, 'About Us', see: <https://unfccc.int/about-us/about-the-secretariat> (consulted 27/04/2022).

⁷⁹ Fogel, 'Biotic Carbon Sequestration and the Kyoto Protocol', 198.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁸¹ Sarina Keller, 'Scientization: putting global climate change on the scientific agenda and the role of the IPCC', *Poiesis & Praxis* 7 (2010) 197–209, 201.

⁸² Bernd Siebenhüner, 'The changing role of nation states in international environmental assessments—the case of the IPCC', *Global Environmental Change* 13 (2003) 113–123, 114

⁸³ Silke Beck e.a., 'Towards a Reflexive Turn in the Governance of Global Environmental Expertise. The Cases of the IPCC and the IPBES', *GAIA - Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society* 23 (2014) 80–87, 82.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

By heavily relying on the IPCC as the source of knowledge for the global storyline, scientific knowledge gets a monopoly on climate change knowledge. In their article *An IPCC that listens*, Karl Dudman and Sara de Wit focus on climate change communication and clearly phrase the connection between the UNFCCC and the IPCC: ‘As the epistemic hand in the UNFCCC’s political glove, the IPCC is charged with furnishing the global dialogues with ‘reliable knowledge’ on climate change.’⁸⁵ In this process emerged a hierarchy in the status of knowledge, in which scientific knowledge has gotten ‘epistemic authority’. While this is not the same as ‘scientific authority’, the two have almost become synonymous within the IPCC and the global context.⁸⁶ A hierarchy can also be found within science as the social sciences are mostly excluded from the assessments. This results in the downplaying of cultural differences and the ignorance of spatial relationships of power.⁸⁷ The epistemic authority of scientific knowledge also results in the exclusion of local knowledge, as this is not considered ‘reliable knowledge’. Thus, following Hajer, the global discourse coalition is based in a practice that favors scientific knowledge. The arguments that ‘sounds right’ do so only when relied on this scientific knowledge. This leads to the exclusion of diverging forms of knowledge in the global storyline.

Although local knowledge is mentioned within several IPCC reports, such knowledge is not used to draw conclusions on.⁸⁸ Mike Hulme argues that the modes of knowledge-making in the IPCC pay little attention to the multiple ways of knowing environments. This can lead to epistemic violence, as local people and places become part of a broader environmental storyline but are excluded in making it.⁸⁹ The main problem here is that by favoring scientific knowledge for a problem that is perceived as global, other perspectives and forms are excluded from the start. Hajer argues that if institutions allow for the creation of new conceptual combinations, this can lead to new institutional practices.⁹⁰ However, if indigenous knowledge is only recognized by the IPCC as ‘valuable’, instead of being relied on, this will not lead to new institutional practices.

⁸⁵ Dudman and de Wit, ‘An IPCC that listens’, 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁷ Mike Hulme, ‘Problems with making and governing global kinds of knowledge’, *Global Environmental Change* 20 (2010) 558–564, 559.

⁸⁸ For example, see: IPCC 2022, ‘Chapter 15 Small Island States’, in: Mycoo, M., M. Wairiu, D. Campbell, V. Duvat, Y. Golbuu, S. Maharaj, J. Nalau, P. Nunn, J. Pinnegar, O. Warrick, 2022: Small Island States, in: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Accessed via: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FinalDraft_Chapter15.pdf.

⁸⁹ Hulme, ‘Problems with making and governing global kinds of knowledge’, 560.

⁹⁰ Hajer, *The politics of environmental discourse*, 40.

GLOBAL DISCOURSE ON SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES: A STORYLINE

THE PROBLEM

The perception of problems around the Small Island States has developed over the past twenty years. The increased attention to small islands resulted in numerous changes. While these changes occurred, several trends can be observed as well. This part will analyze the developments and continuances of the last four assessments. The development framework demonstrated in the previous chapter has greatly influenced the perception of Small Island States regarding climate change.

DEVELOPMENTS

The 2001 Assessment marked the first time an entire chapter was devoted to Small Island States. This report mentioned that the small island states accounted for less than 1% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions but are among the most vulnerable to the potential adverse effects of climate change and sea-level rise (SLR).⁹¹ As noted in the Fifth Assessment, until the AR4 in 2007, SLR had ‘dominated vulnerability and impact studies of small island states.’⁹² Although the main focus of the literature on Small Island States was on SLR, the report also noted that it was difficult to establish clear trends of sea-level change because of the limitations of observational records.⁹³ The increased attention to SIDS resulted in a slight shift in focus away from just SLR.

The vulnerability framework of the SIDS was particularly prevalent in the reports in 2001 and 2007. Both reports acknowledged the diversity of the islands but also noted that small island states ‘share many similarities that enhance their vulnerability and reduce their resilience to climate variability and change.’⁹⁴ In both the reports, a whole section was devoted to the

⁹¹ IPCC 2001, ‘Chapter 17, Small Island States’, in: Nurse, L., G. Sem, J.E. Hay, A.G. Suarez, Poh Poh Wong, L. Briguglio, S. Ragoonaden, 2001: Small Island States, *Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 843 – 876.

Accessed via: <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/wg2TARchap17.pdf>.

⁹² IPCC 2014, ‘Chapter 29, Small Islands’ in: Nurse, L.A., R.F. McLean, J. Agard, L.P. Briguglio, V. Duvat-Magnan, N. Pelesikoti, E. Tompkins, and A. Webb, 2014: Small islands. In: *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Barros, V.R., C.B. Field, D.J. Dokken, M.D. Mastrandrea, K.J. Mach, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1613-1654.

⁹³ IPCC 2001, ‘Chapter 17, Small Island States’.

⁹⁴ IPCC 2007, ‘Chapter 16, Small Islands’, in: Mimura, N., L. Nurse, R.F. McLean, J. Agard, L. Briguglio, P. Lefale, R. Payet and G. Sem, 2007: Small islands. *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*.

vulnerabilities of the small islands. The vulnerability was said to be rooted in their shared characteristics, such as limited size, proneness to natural hazards and external shocks. Part of what will later be discussed as the solution also plays a role in their vulnerability, namely their adaptive capacity.

After the Fourth Assessment (2007), there was critique on the vulnerability frame imposed on the SIDS.⁹⁵ This might be why from the Fifth Assessment (2014) onwards, there has been a shift in talking about the ‘impacts’ and ‘risks’ instead of solely focusing on vulnerability. Moreover, the risks in 2014 also included tropical and extratropical cyclones, increasing air and sea surface temperatures and rainfall patterns. Where this assessment reconfirmed the high level of vulnerability due to the inherent natural characteristics of small islands, the Sixth Assessment in 2022 does not mention the intrinsic vulnerability of the states. Instead, the report mentions how ‘the observed impacts of climate change differ between urban and rural contexts, island types, and tropical and non-tropical islands’.⁹⁶ The vulnerability frame that came out of the development frame before 2000, thus has shifted to a risk-and-impact framework. In this framework, the focus is more on the external impacts than on the intrinsic assumed vulnerabilities of the Small Island States. However, this does not mean that the small islands are not seen as vulnerable throughout the reports. As Barnett argues, the vulnerability frame of small island states is linked to their economic vulnerability, which is prevalent throughout all the reports.⁹⁷

CONTINUANCES

Throughout the four reports, the main problem is described in terms of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘risks and impacts’. Their vulnerability is either caused by their intrinsic characteristics or their incapability to adapt to the risks of climate change. The content of the vulnerabilities and risks can be divided into two sections: the physical loss and risks and the economic consequences. The first one is projected as the ‘natural systems’. In the Third Assessment (2001), the report talks about the ‘effects on and vulnerability of natural and human systems’. The report from 2022 refers to this as the ‘observed impacts and projected risks on natural and human systems’.⁹⁸ The physical vulnerability consists of water-level changes, beach and coastal

Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 687-716.

⁹⁵ Barnett and Waters, ‘Rethinking the Vulnerability of Small Island States’.

⁹⁶ IPCC 2022, ‘Chapter 15 Small Island States’.

⁹⁷ Barnett and Waters, ‘Rethinking the Vulnerability of Small Island States’ 734.

⁹⁸ IPCC 2001, ‘Chapter 17, Small Island States’.

changes, danger to coral reefs, mangroves and seagrasses, and biodiversity.⁹⁹ In 2014, the report also mentioned inundation and shoreline change. In 2022, the report notes that ‘freshwater systems on small islands are exposed to dynamic climate impacts and are considered to be among the most threatened on the planet.’¹⁰⁰

The other part of the vulnerability and risks of the small islands is rooted in their economic vulnerability. This part is framed as the ‘vulnerability and risks to human systems’ and focuses on infrastructure, tourism, human health and wellbeing, water security fisheries, agriculture, migration and economies. In the first three reports, there is no mention of cultural but only socio-cultural impacts. In 2022 however, ‘culture’ forms a subsection underneath the observed impacts and projected risks to human systems.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, as the report mentions, ‘the unquantifiable and highly localized cultural losses resulting from climate drivers are less researched and less acknowledged in policy than physical and economic losses.’¹⁰²

In the global storyline, the problem is thus centered around both the natural and the economic vulnerability of the SIDS. The international perceived problem focuses on loss of land and natural resources. While there has been from shift framing SIDS as vulnerable to talking about ‘risk and impact’, the core of the problem remained the same.

THE SOLUTION

In the past twenty years, the overarching solution framework has been that of ‘adaptation’. Throughout the assessments, adaptation to the risks of climate change is seen as the solution to the vulnerability of Small Island States. The concepts of vulnerability and adaptation are thus intertwined, as they both relate to the future risks of climate change. Whereas the degree of vulnerability depends on the potential to adapt, adaptation is based on the vulnerabilities of a specific area. As the 2001 report states, ‘given their high vulnerability, it is generally accepted that a proactive approach to adaptation planning would be especially beneficial to small islands’.¹⁰³ The adaptation part of the reports refers more frequently to the so-called ‘traditional’ ways and knowledge as part of resilience and adaptive capacity. In 2007, it was already mentioned that the traditional resilience might be undermined as the small states become

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ IPCC 2022, ‘Chapter 15 Small Island States’.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 107.

¹⁰³ IPCC 2001, ‘Chapter 17, Small Island States’, 867.

increasingly integrated into the world economy.¹⁰⁴ However, this knowledge is not used to provide solutions in the IPCC.

In the last assessment report, there have been some experiences with adaptation, ‘which has increased the lessons learnt from on-the-ground practices in these settings’.¹⁰⁵ Among adaptation options are: hard protection, land reclamation, migration, ecosystem-based measures, community-based adaptation, livelihood responses and disaster risk management. There seems to be a development within the adaptation narrative that gives more agency to the people living on the islands. For example, the report opts for a community-based adaptation, which is described as a ‘community-led process based on meaningful engagement and proactive involvement of local individuals and organizations’. The focus also shifts from the natural consequences of climate change to the current vulnerabilities, priorities and needs in the Pacific, which might work as a better entry point for climate adaptation than framing projects solely around climate change.¹⁰⁶ However, the reports do not contextualize or historicize their findings, as most are based on physical and economic science. The Fourth Assessment (2007) states that:

Globalization is also a major stress though it has been argued that it is nothing new for many small islands, since most have had a long history of colonialism and, more latterly, experience of some of the rounds of transformation of global capitalism.¹⁰⁷

This notion, however, is not reflected in the rest of the chapter. Both the problems and the solutions of the global storyline are not held against the historical background that has influenced the current situation. The lack of contextualization also clarifies why the adaptation framework only focuses on natural adaptation. All the proposed solutions focus on strengthening the physical land, while the storyline showed that a big part of the problem for SIDS also consists of economic issues. So, on the one hand the global storyline focuses of problems related to the natural and economic state of SIDS and on the other hand the solutions concentrate on solely the natural aspects.

¹⁰⁴ IPCC 2007, ‘Chapter 16, Small Islands’, 707.

¹⁰⁵ IPCC 2022, ‘Chapter 15 Small Island States’, 107.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ IPCC 2007, ‘Small Islands’, 693.

THE GLOBAL MISSES THE LOCAL

There are two implications related to the global storyline on SIDS. Firstly, due to the scale of the assessment, there has been restricted scientific research on local environments. The data of the IPCC is not always disaggregated by country. Because of the small size of the islands, reported trends and analyses might not reflect what is truly happening on different SIDS. The big scope of the climate models and the construction of global indices of human vulnerability to climate changes are de-contextualized and top-down views.¹⁰⁸ If resolutions are based on this data, these might not meet the actual needs of the islands.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the models do not talk about the current state of the different islands. Even though indigenous knowledge is referred to as an option to investigate, the reports do not base their findings on the experiences of the people on the islands. Due to the earlier mentioned ‘global’ perspective on climate change, the reports do not consider the local context and history of the people living in the places and thus argue that low adaptive economic capacity equals low adaptive environmental capacity. The calls for a more specific focus were heard in the period leading up to the Sixth Assessment. In this assessment, the risks for small islands have been linked to the type of island, such as continental islands, composite islands and volcanic islands. The global perspective also implies a universal division between nature and culture, and this Eurocentric division erases non-European ontologies. From a postcolonial perspective, there have been calls for ‘planetary’ thinking and for thinking about a ‘pluriverse’, a world in which many worlds fit.¹¹⁰ In such a pluriverse, multiple forms of knowledge could coincide.

Secondly, as mentioned before, the scientific research that has been done is roughly divided between physical scientists on the one hand and economists on the other. Less than one-third of the sixty-four coordinating lead authors of the Working Group II report for the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report (2014) were social scientists, of which half were economists. In the report on climate-change mitigation and policy, nearly two-thirds of the coordinating lead authors were economics. This is reflected in the references to ‘efficiencies, economics and technology’ that are far more used than words such as ‘norms, ethics, and values’. The high proportion of economists in the reports has the consequence that other domains of thought are

¹⁰⁸ Hulme, ‘Problems with making and governing global kinds of knowledge’, 560.

¹⁰⁹ Kelman, Ilan, and Jennifer J. West. ‘Climate change and small island developing states: a critical review.’ *Ecological and Environmental Anthropology* 5 (2009) 1-16, 9.

¹¹⁰ Cheryl McEwan, ‘Decolonizing the Anthropocene’, in: David Chandler, Franziska Müller and Delf Rothe, ed., *International Relations in the Anthropocene: New Agendas, New Agencies and New Approaches* (Cham 2021) 77-94, 85.

rendered irrelevant to understanding human contributions and responses to climate change.¹¹¹ This results in a framework in which the economically vulnerable are also environmentally vulnerable. However, people on the Pacific islands have had a long history in which they have proven to be resilient and able to cope with complex external change. The Pacific Island people have experienced occupation by colonial powers, nuclear testing and forced migration.¹¹² By not taking these histories into account, the solutions to climate change are dominated by a search for technocratic and economic development solutions instead of an understanding of the inequalities that have been a consequence of a colonial history and are still very present today.¹¹³

The authority of scientific knowledge is reflected in the global storyline. Both the problem and solution are framed in terms of levels of vulnerability and adaptation and focus mainly on the natural consequences of SIDS. Moreover, the storyline is mainly focused on the future while, as demonstrated in the next chapter, the Pacific already experiences the consequences of climate change. Rooted in a discursive context that favors scientific knowledge, the global storyline leaves little room for diverging perspectives.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The global storyline on SIDS primarily focuses on natural consequences of climate change. When related to the human aspect, the narrative concentrates on the economic vulnerability of SIDS. This storyline disconnects climate change from the human experience; it is presented as an undeniable truth about what is happening in small island states based on scientific knowledge. However, it does consider the social reality of the people inhabiting the islands. A contradiction can be found within the IPCC assessments as leading global documents on climate change. The assessments are global in the sense that they are made by scientists worldwide, and they deal with countries all over the globe. The global perspective leads to a storyline that homogenizes certain areas. Thus, although the heterogeneity of the Small Island States is mentioned at the beginning of all the reports from 2001 to 2022, this awareness is not reflected throughout the analyses in which all SIDS are seen as vulnerable and unable to adapt to the risks of climate change adequately. This conclusion fails to consider the islands' current context and historical background. The islands' vulnerability is connected to the economic system in

¹¹¹ Paul Roscoe, 'Method, Measurement, and Management in IPCC Climate Modeling', *Human Ecology* 44 (2016) 655–664, 655.

¹¹² Barnett and Waters, 'Rethinking the Vulnerability of Small Island States', 740.

¹¹³ McEwan, 'Decolonizing the Anthropocene', 80.

which they are entangled. The analysis of the discourse coalition demonstrates that the global storyline is rooted in a practice that favors scientific knowledge over other forms of knowledge. This creates barriers for actors that do not perceive scientific knowledge as the only form of valuable knowledge. Essentially, because of the IPCC's international nature, the assessments have become less global, as they do not reflect local experiences and knowledge.

3 A SEA OF ISLANDS

INTRODUCTION

‘We, as Pacific Climate Warriors, are fighting not just to protect our future but to protect our past.’¹¹⁴

The poem and short movie *Matagi Mālohi: Strong Winds* tells the story of the Pacific Climate Warriors. It shapes a narrative that uplifts their people and portrays them not as victims of, but as leaders through the climate crisis. The people from the Pacific region have been drastically affected by the consequences of climate change in the past years. While they contribute less than 1% of the global greenhouse emissions, they have been experiencing climate change the most. Nevertheless, the warriors do not want to adhere to a narrative in which they are depicted as vulnerable and helpless people but as navigators through the climate crisis. However, the previous chapter showed that the global discourse around SIDS remains focused on their vulnerability, which is intimately linked to economic vulnerability.

From the global perspective, this chapter shifts its focus to a regional perspective and answers the question: *how does the local narrative of the PCW differ from the global narrative on SIDS?* It does so by analyzing the narrative produced by the PCW. The PCW is a transnational NGO and part of the overarching organization 350.org. Composed of members from most of the Pacific Islands, they represent the people from the Pacific and interact both regionally and on an international level. They have managed to speak at Conferences of Parties (COPs), such as the COP23 and COP26. Thus, the PCW participated in the global debate while at the same time maintaining their local story.¹¹⁵ This chapter first analyzes the discourse coalition and how the PCW perceive knowledge. Secondly, the storyline produced by the PCW is compared to this globally depicted narrative. This comparison shows how the global narrative has inherent barriers for other narratives and types of knowledge, thereby performing epistemic violence. At the same time, it demonstrates how the PCW have countered this narrative.

¹¹⁴ Fenton Lutunatabua, *Matagi Mālohi: Strong Winds*,
via: <https://350.org/matagimalohifilm/> (consulted 13/05/2022).

¹¹⁵ Local here refers to the opposite of global.

The PCW mainly communicate via social media, especially since the start of the Covid-crisis. Most of their activities, speeches, interviews, and statements can be found on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and website. These sources are used to extract the narrative that the PCW create about themselves as people from the Pacific Islands. As mentioned in the introduction, the interview with George Nacewa enhances the analysis and contextualize the primary sources. This chapter aims to show the process of in- and excluding certain narratives and people from the international stage and the implicit consequences of that for Global Environmental Governance. It also shows the earlier mentioned discrepancy between groups speaking about the same topic but meaning something vastly different.

DISCOURSE COALITION: THE CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRESENTATION OF A NARRATIVE

Pacific Climate Warriors is a transnational grassroots network that operates internationally. The organization mainly consists of young men and women hailing from the Pacific Island region, an archipelago located in the Pacific Ocean¹¹⁶. The warriors feel inclined to act because of the current impacts that climate change has on their livelihood.¹¹⁷ Although the countries and territories are heterogeneous in population size, political constitutions and culture, members of the PCW are united in their goal of fighting against climate change and presenting a counter-narrative against the global one that depicts them as vulnerable. This message is most prevalent in their earlier mentioned rallying cry, ‘we are not drowning, we are fighting’. While members of the PCW have different backgrounds, their adherence to the same storyline is what unites them in a discourse coalition.¹¹⁸

As explained in the first chapter, the adherence to a specific storyline is partly determined by the trust people have in an argument and in the author presenting it. Significant for this is the kind of knowledge an argument is based on and whether this form of knowledge is familiar and trusted. The previous chapter concluded that the dominant global discourse on SIDS heavily relies on scientific knowledge, as summarized in the IPCC reports. By contrast, for people from the Pacific, knowledge focuses on the human experience and is created and shared through the tradition of dance, poems, and oral stories.¹¹⁹ In addition, the second chapter

¹¹⁶ <https://350.org/pacific/> (consulted 23/05/2022).

¹¹⁷ Karen E. McNamara and Carol Farbotko, ‘Resisting a ‘Doomed’ Fate: an analysis of the Pacific Climate Warriors’, *Australian Geographer* 48 (2017) 17–26, 17.

¹¹⁸ Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*. 57.

¹¹⁹ McNamara et. al., ‘Resisting a ‘Doomed’, 17.

showed that the global narrative favored a positivist view in which knowledge is informed by a reality ‘out there’. However, people from the Pacific Islands turn this around and argue that knowledge creates the social reality around us. This can be considered a form of social constructivism. This world view is exemplified in a speech from one of the warriors, Brianna Fruean. In her speech at the 26th Conference of Parties (COP) in Glasgow, she quoted an ancient Samoan proverb: ‘E pala le ma’a a e le pala lē upu’, which means ‘even stones decay, but words remain’. She continued to say how it should be a lesson in knowing how words can be wielded, how text can change everything and how each word you use is weighed.¹²⁰ Essentially, Fruean confronted world leaders and told them to be careful with the narrative they create, considering that a global narrative has global consequences. Thus, the foundations of knowledge building for the PCW differ entirely from those on which the global narrative is built

The PCW are positioned in a discursive practice that favors oral word over written text. Myths, oral traditions, dances, and poems are not just a way to express the experiences of people from the Pacific Islands; they function as a way of knowledge transmission. According to the indigenous scholar Hereniko, these forms of knowledge-sharing should be regarded in the same way as written literature in the West.¹²¹ An example of this is the poem *Midnight*, in which parts of the history of the Pacific Islanders can be found. The history presented is not about what happened on a specific date but instead about how these events have been experienced. A quote from the poem *Midnight* elucidates this notion:

We have survived worse, just ask your elders. Lift their shirts. Show their bunker scars, typhoon ten towns, atomic nightmares, lost eradiated islands. So this (climate change ed.) is just another tide to shore up against.¹²²

For the PCW, knowledge is thus not about factual truths and causality. The essence is again found in the human experience of a particular event. Therefore, the storyline of the PCW is also much informed by their own experiences. A good illustration of this is the earlier mentioned poem *Matagi Mālohi*, which tells the Pacific people’s lived experience while at the same time strengthening the community.¹²³ Moreover, the PCW actively turn against the global storyline,

¹²⁰ Brianna Fruean speaking at COP26, Glasgow, 1/01/2021, via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ahG5gur7m0> (consulted 23/05/2022).

¹²¹ Vilsoni Hereniko, ‘Indigenous knowledge and academic imperialism’ in: *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts*, Honolulu (2020) 78-91, 82.

¹²² Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, *Midnight*, via: <https://ourclimateimpact.org/fighting-for-our-survival/>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpNTe4zfBgs&feature=emb_logo, (consulted 13/05/2022).

¹²³ Fenton Lutunatabua, *Matagi Mālohi: Strong Winds*,

arguing that although the IPCC reports are based on all the relevant science, they fail to include the human aspect.¹²⁴ It is not that the PCW do not accept scientific knowledge as an explanation for what is happening, rather they feel like it fails to include a social reality. Consequently, they cannot adhere to a storyline that does not include the social reality and human perspective, like the global storyline on SIDS.

One misconception about indigenous knowledge is that it is timeless and does not change.¹²⁵ This is revoked by using the word ‘traditional’ to describe indigenous knowledge, which implies that it is consistent over time.¹²⁶ However, as the indigenous author Vilsoni Hereniko emphasizes, the oral tradition creates an ongoing debate in which stories and narratives are fluid and change over time. The different poems, stories and dances can be seen as a conversation with one another, much in the same way as there are historical debates around specific topics. Knowledge in this way is dynamic and has the inherent capacity to adapt to changes. Moreover, the narrative of the PCW is, to a great extent, influenced by their elders and ancestors. On the one hand, the elders function as an authority regarding knowledge disputes; younger people rely on their elders because they have lived the longest, and the respect for the elders is ingrained in the culture of most of the Pacific Islands.¹²⁷ On the other hand, the experiences of the ancestors and elders through colonial times, nuclear testing, and a changing climate reinforce the resilience and the adaptive capacity of the Pacific People. In the context of their elders’ experience, the storyline of resilience is created.

By attending the COPs, telling their stories, and performing in dances, the PCW took their way of sharing knowledge to the global level, thereby challenging the social reality of world leaders. As mentioned before, storytelling has been an essential way for the PCW to influence the global leaders and their policies.¹²⁸ Although the center of gravity in final policy making still lies in the West, the COP can be a place of empowerment to groups such as the PCW. However, knowledge production by the PCW differs from how the international community built up their narrative through the IPCC. If the IPCC authorizes scientific

via: <https://350.org/matagimalohifilm/> (consulted 23/05/2022).

¹²⁴ https://ourclimateimpact.org/?fbclid=IwAR2chp5oT8c_rChWdvWog0_Hb_wf0zGhNgS0DbxGTuRbGCuw25bW4litxrY, (consulted 16/05/2022).

¹²⁵ Douglas Nakashima, Igor Krupnik and Jennifer T. Rubis, ed., *Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation* (Cambridge 2018) 11.

¹²⁶ Paul Sillitoe, Alan Bicker and Johan Pottier, *Participating in development: approaches to indigenous knowledge* (London; New York 2002) 109.

¹²⁷ Vilsoni Hereniko, ‘Indigenous knowledge and academic imperialism’ in: *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts*, (Honolulu 2020) 78-9, 81.

¹²⁸ Interview with Brianna Fruean, accessed via Pacific Climate Warriors Instagram 16/09//2021 <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CT3290UIZSF/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> (consulted 23/05/2022).

knowledge instead of properly including indigenous knowledge, there can be no question of discursive closure in which everyone can participate.

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES DISCOURSE IN THE PACIFIC: A STORYLINE

THE PROBLEM

For the PCW, their identity is intertwined with the land they live on. According to Tony deBrum, the true meaning of this is complex to understand, as the English language does not have the right vocabulary to fully convey the true meaning of the land as the identity of the Pacific people.¹²⁹ Their identity is confined to their place and matters as both a metaphor, a source of material, and as a cultural and spiritual sustenance.¹³⁰ In the interview, George Nacewa also explained this idea. As an indigenous person from the Pacific, he does not just identify as ‘George from Fiji’, but also as being from a particular place within Fiji, and with that identity comes the connection to nature. The whole community is built through the islands, and people derive their functions and meaning from specific parts of land they live on.

The problem with climate change is that it changes their natural lands drastically and thus threatens that what their identity is built upon. Throughout all communication, the PCW show the importance of preserving their memories, their ancestors, and their identity, all of which is threatened by climate change. One of the warriors mentioned, ‘our histories, cultures and spirituality are interwoven with creation, which is why climate change is a threat not only to our lands, but to our very identity.’¹³¹ Steiner argues that climate change affects a community’s environmental identity and heritage because it threatens the physical features and resources that sustain them.¹³² If someone is taken away from their land, they also lose their function.¹³³ This is why for instance, migration is not seen as a simple solution, because then the people from the islands would have to leave the lands through which they maintain their identity.¹³⁴ The link

¹²⁹ Stuart Kirsch, ‘Why Pacific Islanders Stopped Worrying about the Apocalypse and Started Fighting Climate Change’, *American Anthropologist* 122 (2020) 827–839, 830. Note: Tony deBrum was a Marshallese politician and helped organize the Marshall Islands’ independence from the U.S. He was also particularly outspoken on climate change.

¹³⁰ Candice Elanna Steiner, ‘A Sea of Warriors: Performing an Identity of Resilience and Empowerment in the Face of Climate Change in the Pacific’, *The Contemporary Pacific* 27 (2015) 147–180, 154.

¹³¹ Barbara Fraser, ‘Pacific Climate Warriors win Pax Christi peace prize’, *NCR online* (2020), <https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/pacific-climate-warriors-win-pax-christi-peace-prize>, (consulted 16/05/2022).

¹³² *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³³ SkyNews Interview with Brianna Fruean and Joseph Sikulu 27/05/2021, accessed via Instagram https://www.instagram.com/tv/CPW1q-NnYw4/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link (consulted 23/05/2022).

¹³⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPW1q-NnYw4/>

with climate change becomes clearest in the interview, when Nacewa says that, ‘one of the things we base our identity on in connection with the land and ocean is that most of these things we identify ourselves to, have been drastically impacted by climate change’.¹³⁵ For example, his ancestors were pottery makers, and due to climate change, it has become hard to find the specific clay they have always used. Thus, climate change is not ‘just’ about natural consequences but about a changing social reality to which they have no choice but to adapt.

The problem of their threatened identity is reinforced by climate change already being very present in the Pacific region. While in the IPCC and the West there is a tendency to talk about climate change as something that will happen in the future, the PCW are already facing the problems.¹³⁶ The PCW are aware that climate change is not experienced in the same way by everyone:

‘Dear global west, you have mentioned that climate change is coming, but I am here to tell you that climate change is already here and has been here for decades. Dear global west, while climate change is a mere nightmare that you have the privilege of waking up from, it is our lived reality.’¹³⁷

Nacewa outlined this lived reality and mentioned how the islands face category five cyclones, which their infrastructure does not withstand. He also pointed out sea-level rise, floodings, and droughts as examples of which have been experienced because of climate change.¹³⁸ Thus, while most of the countries in the western part of the world have the privilege to talk about future climate problems, the PCW work hard so that they have ‘a fighting chance to live on a land that was similar to our ancestors and have the same type of privilege as them’.¹³⁹ At the end of the interview, Nacewa summarized the work of the PCW: ‘it is fighting for our right to live and not just survive, but also thrive in the place that we call home’.

How the PCW perceive the problem shows the importance of their own reality. Moreover, it displays the connection between the people and nature. Whereas the global

¹³⁵ George Nacewa, interview on 23/05/2022, see Appendix 1, See also how one of the warriors says how losing two meters of land means losing two meters of culture: <https://www.instagram.com/tv/B53vMmnH2IW/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> (consulted 29/05/2022).

¹³⁶ 350Pacific via Twitter 22/03/2021 <https://twitter.com/350Pacific/status/1374111885302190080>, (consulted 16/05/2022), and Pasifika News via Twitter 06/04/2022 <https://twitter.com/PasifikaNews/status/1511569525900451840> (consulted 23/05/2022)..

¹³⁷ Daniel Gagau, Sieni Faafuata and Pacific Climate Warriors, *Dear Global West*, via Instagram 30/09/2019 <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4OSVAan98I/> (consulted 20/05/2022).

¹³⁸ George Nacewa, see Appendix 1.

¹³⁹ George Nacewa, interview on 23/05/2022, see Appendix 1.

narrative disconnects climate change from the people affected by it, in the PCW's storyline these two are inextricably linked.

THE SOLUTION

Keeping fossil fuels in the ground is the foremost solution in the storyline of the PCW. Their vision of achieving this can be divided into local solutions and a global one. Whereas the global solution is more focused on ideas and the bigger picture, locally, they have opted for and created practical, community-driven solutions. It was only in the IPCC report in 2022 that keeping fossil fuels in the ground was named one of the most significant factors in reducing climate warming, but the PCW have protested the use of fossil fuels since their foundation.¹⁴⁰ While the international community often talks about new technological inventions, the solutions from the PCW are more focused on what is the root cause that changes the earth its climate.

Political will and climate justice are essential for keeping fossil fuels in the ground, according to the PCW.¹⁴¹ To the organization, the extraction of fossil fuels is the root cause of climate change. Therefore, the solution is to stop extracting fossil fuels from the ground and recreate a balance with the earth. As long as this is not completed, there will be no justice to the PCW.¹⁴² The way the climate crisis has played out, and is still playing out, is seen as a re-enactment of historical structures in which the profiting part from the world has the power to stop the crisis, while the other part is experiencing the actual consequences of the changing climate. The call for climate justice arises from their past, in which the global West profited from the Global South. To the PCW, the problem of climate change is again a way in which the West profits while the Global South must live through the consequences. As one of the warriors' mentions, 'our backyards still burn from the mess you created three generations ago.'¹⁴³ This feeling is also exemplified in a demonstration against banks that fund fossil fuels. Here, one of the warriors mentions how they 'used to be colonized by this very country and our ancestors fought to have our cultures preserved. We continue their fight. We are not climate victims, we are climate leaders.'¹⁴⁴ The PCW have put effort into decolonizing the climate space, but as Nacewa mentioned, 'the climate issue will not go away unless we dismantle these

¹⁴⁰ 350.org via Twitter 13/09/2021 <https://twitter.com/350/status/1459595724211953664> (consulted 20/50/2022).

¹⁴¹ For examples see: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BqQPs0yHnWY/>, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B3dYUe7HNhT/>, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B3IH5o-nmUr/> (consulted 23/05/2022).

¹⁴² 350Pacific via Facebook 12/11/2021 <https://fb.watch/dbxolivGhb/> (consulted 23/05/2022).

¹⁴³ Daniel Gagau, Sieni Faafuata and Pacific Climate Warriors, *Dear Global West*, via Instagram 30/09/2019 <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4OSVAan98I/> (consulted 20/05/2022).

¹⁴⁴ Brianna Fruean at a demonstration in London 31/09/2021, via Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CVqkmFzqz1m/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> (consulted 20/05/2022).

(colonial) structures that hold power'.¹⁴⁵ An example he gives is the Pacific Development Forum, which Australia and New Zealand very much influence. While half of the Pacific Islands fight against fossil fuels and ask to reduce carbon emissions, they receive much opposition from the bigger countries.

Built on the experiences of their ancestors, the PCW explicitly see themselves as part of the solution. They see themselves as climate leaders, partly because they have experienced their colonial past.¹⁴⁶ As described in the first part of this chapter, the PCW's storyline is strongly shaped by their past. Through their experiences, they have become resilient. Moreover, they have lived with the sea for centuries and know how to work with it based on their history. Lastly, as they are currently experiencing climate change's effects, they had already had to adapt years ago. Their experiences have made them knowledgeable about what is happening, and their current reality has reinforced the urgency for the PCW to act.

Regionally and locally, the PCW have demonstrated their knowledge of keeping fossil fuels in the ground. As part of decolonizing the climate space, their central conviction is that the transition to renewable energy must be a 'just' one. A just transition looks at ways and mechanisms that easily shift people from working within a dirty energy industry to working in more renewable energy and looks at compensation.¹⁴⁷ They teach people how to use local solar power and 'build resilience through innovation, leadership at high-level climate negotiations and centuries of Indigenous knowledge.'¹⁴⁸ The focus is thus not only on the goal but also on the road to achieving that goal and making sure that it will be just and fair to the people affected by it.

The second chapter showed that the IPCC documents depict people from Pacific Islands as vulnerable, partly due to their incapability to adapt. However, the PCW have demonstrated the opposite. The PCW have focused on practical, community-driven actions. An example of this is the building of seawalls that has been going on for years. This community-led adaptation is also mentioned in the IPCC report, as seen in the previous chapter. For some atoll islands, relocation has already been necessary. For those that have been able to stay, part of their adaptation includes preparing the young people for the possibility of relocating or even migration.¹⁴⁹ The intrinsic connection to the living space is again exemplified when Nacewa

¹⁴⁵ George Nacewa, interview on 23/05/2022, see Appendix 1.

¹⁴⁶ Pacific Climate Warriors on Instagram 01/12/2020 <https://www.instagram.com/p/CIPxpmxnSeA/> (consulted 20/05/2022) and <https://www.instagram.com/p/B0HTmSFH1n4/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> (19/07/2019),

¹⁴⁷ George Nacewa, interview on 23/05/2022, see Appendix 1.

¹⁴⁸ <https://350.org/earth-month-spotlight-building-solidarity-across-oceans-with-the-pacific-climate-warriors/>, consulted (20/05/2022).

¹⁴⁹ George Nacewa, interview on 23/05/2022, see Appendix 1.

talks about adaptation: ‘The only adaptation they (people on atoll islands ed.) have, is to leave their island homes, their tradition, cultures, where their ancestors are buried’.¹⁵⁰ It also shows that if needed, they will divert to modes of adaptation that are least attractive in terms of living experience. Thus, whereas the IPCC focuses on cost-effective modes of adaptation, the PCW also consider their reality. While working on local adaptation, the also PCW committed to actively carrying out the importance of stopping fossil fuels globally.

THE LOCAL REACHES THE GLOBAL

The PCW produce a counternarrative that reframes how the people from the Pacific are perceived. The warriors show how they have been resourceful in their local practices and how they have been persistent on the global stage. The ways of knowledge production and the storylines of the Pacific show not only what they see as experiencing climate change, but also shows the unseen: the emotional, the loss of culture. By not including this kind of knowledge globally, the IPCC has preferred a mechanistic and reductionist worldview that denies nature’s complex harmony and the lived experience.¹⁵¹ The models and scientific research of the IPCC focus mainly on the physical aspects of the land, but this land has a deeper layer and connection to the PCW. Because of this connection, the people from the Pacific Islands know their land and are experienced in understanding its nature. At the same time, the previous chapter showed that the IPCC lacks research on local environments. While valuable local knowledge is available via the indigenous people living on the islands, this is not used by the IPCC. As mentioned before, the IPCC acknowledges that indigenous knowledge exists and can be helpful. Still, they do not implement it in the reports the same way they rely on scientific knowledge.

The storyline of the PCW also shows the complexity of the climate crisis. It is not ‘just’ about sea-level rise and drought; it is about identity and includes the connection to a colonial past. The global narrative, in which the islands are seen as vulnerable, pays little attention to the colonial background in which the narrative of the PCW is rooted. When it does mention the past, it does so from a Western standpoint. However, as Epeli Hau’ofa argues, as long as we rely on mainly written documents and as long as Europeans and Americans dominate the Pacific pasts, their histories will remain imperial histories and narratives of passive submission to

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Sillitoe, et al., *Participating in development: approaches to indigenous knowledge*, 114.

transformations, of victimizations and fatal impacts.¹⁵² Because the global narrative is based on reports that do not include the history of the world and the social context in which the climate crisis is taking place, it maintains a one-dimensional projection focused on the natural consequences instead of an analysis of the reality that people live in. In this one-dimensional narrative, there is an underlying assumption that everyone in the world starts at the same point in the climate crisis. However, the narrative of the PCW shows that the colonial past influences the way the climate crisis is playing out and the effect this has on the islands. In ignoring this past and its connection to the climate crisis, the global narrative excludes essential elements of the PCW and its adherents.

However, the PCW have used their experience to influence the global narrative. Instead of diverting to proving their point through a western way of knowledge production, they have used storytelling as their way to impact the social reality of policymakers and, by that, influencing written words.¹⁵³ Warrior Brianna Fruean mentioned in an interview how she believed that showing her side of the story impacted global leaders. By attending the COPs and telling their story and performing in dances, the PCW take their way of sharing knowledge to the global level. This can be seen as a ‘coming together’ of discourse coalitions. If this leads to a combined storyline that both parties adhere to, then this is what Hajer calls ‘discourse closure’.¹⁵⁴ The COPs provide a stage in which different people can voice their concerns, in ways that suit them. Although the center of gravity in final policy making still lies in the West, the COP can be a place of empowerment to groups such as the PCW. An example of Nacewa clarifies this idea from the perspective of the PCW:

This is the example I like to use in a traditional set up in the village. We have like... they say young people cannot speak up in a meeting, but there sit avenues where young people within a traditional setting can get their voice up into where decisions are made. While indigenous people have been sounding their alarm, talking about this, I think the IPCC reports and the scientists have created that avenue as well.¹⁵⁵

So while the IPCC’s way of knowledge-production is inherently different from the PCW’s oral traditions, the COPS have provided an international stage in which they have been able to show

¹⁵² Epeli Hau’Ofa, ‘Pasts to Remember’, in: Robert Borofsky, ed., *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts* (Mānoa 2020) 453-472, 458.

¹⁵³ Interview with Brianna Fruean, accessed via Pacific Climate Warriors Instagram 16/09//2021 <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CT3290UIZSF/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> (consulted 23/05/2022).

¹⁵⁴ Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*, 23.

¹⁵⁵ George Nacewa, interview on 23/05/2022, see Appendix 1.

their story and do what is 'in their DNA', namely story-telling.¹⁵⁶ This way, they have been able also to include the human aspect and recreate the global narrative, as the latest IPCC report has focused more on the lived experiences of indigenous people as well. When parts of other storylines are taken over, then according to Hajer, this can be seen as a reproduction of the 'rival' discourse coalition.¹⁵⁷ However, this view portrays the issues rather black-and-white. The reality seems to be more nuanced as the different coalitions take over parts of other narratives. This way, both narratives become more diverse and, at the same time, more blended into each other. In this sense, the COPs provide a place for a fusion between different storylines and thus can bring discourse coalitions closer to each other.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter showed how the foundations of knowledge for the PCW differ from the context in which the global narrative exists. Whereas the latter focuses on factual truth and a climate separate from the human dimension, to the PCW those cannot be seen independent from each other. This results in a different storyline on the effects of climate change to the islands. The problem of a changing climate is that it affects the identity of the people from the Pacific. Furthermore, climate change is not something that happens on itself. The storyline focuses on the context in which climate change is happening; it is seen as a pattern in a global context in which the islands are being oppressed. In focusing on the islands' vulnerability, the global storyline reproduces this narrative of oppression and fails to recognize how the islands are made vulnerable in a global context. However, the PCW's storyline also shows their resilience and adaptive capacity. They do not fear to be radical in their goal of keeping fossil fuels in the ground as climate change will not affect them in the future, but is already affecting their past.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*, 23.

CONCLUSION

The quote at the start of this thesis encompasses the frustration among many frontline communities. While groups such as the Pacific Climate Warriors sounded their alarm for years, a group of IPCC scientists had to express their concerns before the whole world finally saw the severity of the climate crisis and began acting accordingly. The climate crisis is now seen as a global crisis, but, as this study has shown, not everyone is equally affected by the consequences of a changing climate. The strand of Global Environmental Governance within the field of International Relations argues that a growing variety of actors can participate in solving the crisis. The concept itself, *Global* Environmental Governance, already implies that there is something such as a global governance of environmental problems in which everyone participates. However, using the case study of the PCW and SIDS, this research has shown that the foundations upon which a global storyline of vulnerability is built exclude diverging narratives of the most affected people.

The first chapter focused on the role of discourse in GEG. First, it displayed how the vulnerability framework of small islands is historically rooted in a narrative that perceived SIDS as economically vulnerable. This economic vulnerability made that small island states have a low adaptive capacity to the consequences of climate change, or so it was said. Combining the works of O'Neill and Hajer, the chapter showed that GEG consists of the efforts made by the international community to manage and solve shared environmental problems. This is done by creating a storyline consisting of a problem and a solution. A global shared storyline ensures that everyone talks about the same problem, which allows solutions for that problem to be made. However, for this storyline to be truly global, it is essential that everyone can participate.

The following chapter showed that the global storyline on SIDS is created out of and based on the reports of the IPCC. While the UNFCCC aims to provide a *global* response to the threat of climate change, the epistemic authority of the IPCC results in the exclusion of other types of knowledge, such as indigenous knowledge. Out of this discourse coalition emerges a storyline that primarily focuses on the natural risks and consequences of climate change, such as sea-level rise and natural hazards. This storyline fails to include the human perspective necessary for understanding how people on the islands can adapt. This has two consequences: First, the proposed solutions are not adapted to the needs of the people on the islands. The global storyline homogenizes both the problems and their solutions and misses a local perspective that is better obtained by including the human experience. Second, because the

global perspective focuses on natural problems and consequences, it fails to see the adaptive capacity of the people living in vulnerable areas. By starting from their vulnerability, the global narrative reinforces the idea that the inhabitants of SIDS are passive and remain helpless while facing climate threats. While there may be small islands threatened by climate change, people on the islands themselves have shown to be resilient and to find solutions on their own. Moreover, by not putting scientific findings in a social and historical context, the global storyline makes it appear as if everyone has the same starting point from which they can start to implement adaptations. The storyline of the PCW centers the context, which helps to articulate solutions that are indeed applicable to their needs.

The final chapter illustrated the conclusions from the second chapter and synthesized the local and the global narratives. The storyline of the PCW emerges out of a completely different context than the global storyline does: in contrast to the scientific authority within the global narrative, the knowledge-production within the PCW's discourse coalition is done through spoken words, dance, and performances. Knowledge is shared through storytelling, and the elders play an essential role in knowledge disputes. This context nurtures a storyline that centralizes the human experience and depicts the people from the islands not as vulnerable victims but as resilient warriors. This storyline shows the complexity of climate change and the different layers of the problem. Yes, sea-level rise can be a problem for atoll islands, but it also forces people to leave the land on which they have built their identities. The chapter confirmed earlier studies that showed that the Pacific people are not just victims of climate change; this study demonstrated that the PCW's counternarrative of resilience emerged from their past. In this narrative they lived through colonialism and have had a tradition of living with the sea and the way it changes. The chapter finally showed how the COPs can be seen as stages where discourse coalitions come together and where a path is paved towards discursive closure. By sticking to storytelling as their way of sharing knowledge, the PCW impact that of the policymakers.

This research shows how the global establishment of knowledge on SIDS has been grounded in scientific models and predictions, rather than local experience. The foundations on which the global storyline is based are one-dimensional and politically shaped. This leads to a storyline that does not reflect on how the perceived vulnerability is developed over time and how this narrative frustrates the road towards solutions that meet the needs of the people it concerns. The environmental debate is shaped by westernized practices that focus on rationality and hard science; it misses a bottom-up local human voice that shows the reality that is already

happening on the ground and the knowledge from those who have proven to be resilient. The global narrative thus reinforces the vulnerability of the small islands on forehand.

The first chapter argued that to shape a genuinely global storyline, there needs to be a shared one. However, as seen in the current global storyline, the creation of a global narrative inherently homogenizes the environmental problems. For global governance to become more inclusive, the leading institutions must base their narrative not just on scientific knowledge but also on indigenous knowledge and current experiences. The use of ‘discourse coalition’ as an analytical concept showed in what context a narrative emerges. Because the global narrative emerges out of a discourse coalition that favors scientific knowledge, the storyline of the PCW is automatically disregarded. The foundations on which this narrative is based are not considered to be reliant enough. The comparison between the two storylines showed that while both parties see climate change as a threat to small island developing states, the perceived dangers differ. By not taking storylines such as that of the PCW into account, the global storyline excludes actors from participating in creating a social reality in which environmental problems can be solved.

This study aimed to analyze the foundational elements of GEG through the concepts of storylines and discourse coalitions. This was based on the constructivist assumption that global narratives create and reproduce social reality. Thus, it is essential that the entire world is included in a global narrative. While the PCW’s narrative was central to this research, its primary purpose was to elucidate differences and structures that prevent actors from participating within GEG. A deeper analysis into the extent to which the PCW, as an NGO, influenced global policy fell outside of the scope of this research. Building on the works of Keck and Sikkink mentioned in the introduction, future research could look at how NGOs influence policy in a way that focuses more on the agency of the NGO.

The comparison of the narratives and the context in which they are produced leads to the conclusion that the global fails to meet the local. However, this is not to say that the Pacific Climate Warriors cannot reach the global, rather that the global narrative raises barriers for them to do so. Be that as it may, this does not prevent the PCW for actively reaching out to the international community. As the warriors say: they are not drowning, they are fighting.

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APPENDIX-I

Transcript interview with George Nacewa, Fiji Organizer from the Pacific Climate Warriors. Date & Time: 23/05/2022 10:30-11:30 (GMT+1)

Meryem van Gelder: Nice to see you and thank you for your time and helping me. Maybe I can tell a little bit about what I am doing? And then I will just ask you the questions. So now I am writing a master thesis and I am doing International Relations and I am looking at how the IPCC reports look at Small Island States. Because it is a different section in the IPCC reports and on the COPS they talk a lot about it. And then I came upon the PCW and I saw you/they have a different narrative, I think. So, I am interested in, I saw a lot of your videos and communication on social media and Instagram and the website and twitter and stuff. And I felt like I couldn't really... it felt like it would be better to have a conversation so I can better understand how you think about certain things and what certain words mean to you, I guess. And I have written down these questions that I send you, it is more like, I do not need a specific answer on these questions, but they are just for me to better understand things, so that is how these questions are built up. And the idea is that I look at on the one hand what the IPCC and on the other hand you as the PCW see as a problem and a solution see in the climate crisis and the first question then is... And I use words like small island states and stuff, so if you have a different view on that, you can of course let me know. So, in the IPCC they talk a lot about sea level rise as a problem and that this will affect the Pacific, or Small Island States and I am wondering how you would describe the problem, for you as Pacific Climate Warriors and what is the problem that is created by climate change?

George Nacewa: Yeah, thanks for picking out the PCW. I will try to answer the questions as best as I can. I think climate change in the Pacific is this, various factors that contribute to climate change. One is the anthropogenic climate change that is man-made, right? And that is the one we target as PCW. Specifically looking at keeping fossil fuels in the ground, because we know that the science is clear, the climate change is real. For us in the Pacific, frontline communities affected by climate change in terms of SLR, flooding, droughts, you name it. We have come across it in the Pacific. Just recently we have found to be facing category 5 cyclones, our infrastructure does not allow us to withstand these types of category cyclones, right? And that is only one aspect of climate change that I am speaking about. We know that one contributing factor to that is the continues extraction of fossil fuels. Particularly coal, so as PCW, one of the things we do, within the Pacific network is, is fighting climate change from the Pacific, right? If that is through sharing our stories of resilience, of impact, then so be it. As I imagine, we try to target massive corporations and financial institutions to stop financing fossil project. And the other is to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Just let me know if you want some of the threads that is spoke of that I need to elaborate on more.

Meryem van Gelder: Yes. And then, do you see... This is just to start it and later on it will be more specific. Is then keeping fossil fuels in the ground the big solution, or do you think it is about political will, or how would you see this solution? Of course there are more solutions of course.

George Nacewa: Yeah definitely one of the solutions we are looking at is how we can transition from dirty energy to renewable energy, to have a just transition in that as solution. Many Pacific Islands are leading in this transition, in this solution. We have countries like Tokulau, being

100% renewable. But then again you have bigger countries saying that oh, consider the population of Tokulau, or compare the pacific islands to large compared to large islands, countries such as the US, India and stuff like that. So, there is a massive difference in the population and energy consumption, but still, you have the will of the people to lead and show what true climate leadership is about. And there is definitely an element of political will in this.

Meryem van Gelder: Yes, thank you. I think that is very important also. I was wondering, as also part of the problems, in what I have seen in your movies and poems, that there is a lot about identity as well. So, the identity of people from the Pacific, could you elaborate on that or tell me how the identity of the people living on the island and climate change is connected?

George Nacewa: Yeah definitely, I will try my best to answer this. Have you heard of, have you ever seen this during campaigns or climate marches where there is a sign with ‘there is no Planet B’, there is only Planet A.? So, like while we all belong to this earth, this beautiful earth, us as Pacific Island communities, or Islanders. we identify ourselves to the land. To the ocean. It stems from our ancestry. How can I best explain this... I as an indigenous person from the Pacific, as Fiji, I do not just identify myself as my name, or my country. I also identify myself as being from a particular place within Fiji. With that identity comes connection to nature, in terms of traditions and cultures that I hold. I think one of the things we base our identity on in connection with the land and ocean is that most of these things we identify ourselves to, have been drastically impacted by climate change. For example, where I come from in Fiji, my ancestry is that we are pot makers. Clay pottery. Because of the shift in dynamics within the climate and the landscape and such, is has been kind of difficult to find particular clay that we use. Within different places in Fiji, we would find meds, I am not sure if you are familiar with tapa, it’s a kind of cloth that is made from a tree, and these are, the particular methods in which we weave these meds and design this tapa, they design the history, and these have also been affected, you know? So that is one way how we hold dear to our identity. And it is basically tied to how we as indigenous people throughout the Pacific. And as I share this story of Fiji, this story is replicated throughout the Pacific within the identities as indigenous people of the Pacific.

Meryem van Gelder: And when you say throughout the whole pacific, do you see people from the Pacific Islands as one community, are they tied to their islands? How do you see that? Is everyone connected by living on the Pacific, is this felt throughout the different islands?

George Nacewa: Yes there is definitely a connection throughout the Pacific. Geographically speaking within the South Pacific, we are very well connected through our history, through our travels, in time and place. But yeh there is definitely the connection there, being more familiar and sharing some of this traditional and cultural identities. Not so much with those from the North Pacific. There is a slight difference. But when I talk about Pacific, I also do link with Northern Pacific islanders. Because we do have a linkage with our people from Cerebes. Some of their ancestors come over to Fiji and live on all the small islands up north.

Meryem van Gelder: So, I have also read about how it is not just the islands, but also the sea that people on the Pacific feel connection to, and I think the IPCC science tend to focus more on just the island and the ground that is not the sea and there is this distinction. Do you see this distinction as well or is it more interconnected?

George Nacewa: That is a good question. We are large ocean states. Like our EEZ ocean covers like a biggest capital landmass around the whole world so to speak. So there is definitely an

interconnection within that. And connection is... that is a very technical way to speak about that.

Meryem van Gelder: Yes if you see it in another way.

George Nacewa: Let me come back to that.

Meryem van Gelder: Alright, yes so all these questions are really from my perspective, how I would see everything. Another point I think that you make very clear throughout the communication, and also Brianna Fruean, at her speech at the 26th COP, she was talking about how climate action can be different from climate justice. How to the PCW, or how do you see the connection between climate justice action and do you think there is already done enough about climate justice, or do you think it is mainly climate action that is being done right now. Also, because you mentioned that the PCW focus on a just transition. Is that being done in the world now do you think?

George Nacewa: It is a good question. Brianna Fruean right? She is one of our top warriors, not top but one of our warriors, that has led the way for young Pacific women. Definitely, there is a lot of climate action that is being done over the past few years leading up to the COP space, but definitely less climate justice being taken up. Yeah. When we talk about climate justice within the solution space, we are really looking at one that caters to the needs of those involved. For example, if we are talking about keeping fossil fuels in the ground, we are also talking about livelihoods rights? People that work within the industry. Those livelihoods are impacted by the decisions by those making noise outside of the realm and trying to keep fossil fuels in the ground. A just transition looks at ways and means and mechanisms that easily transition them from working within dirty energy to work in more renewable energy and look at compensation and stuff. I know that it is very far-fetched now, especially with 1.5 being unattainable. So, that is why there is a lot of climate action within different spaces, but yeah.

Meryem van Gelder: Do you, there is in the IPCC but also the PCW talk about indigenous knowledge. Do you use that term as well and do you think this is used enough? Or is there a big contrast between scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge. Like do you see a distinction between indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge? And is one more used than the other? On the IPCC they focus a lot on scientific knowledge and I read that they do not use the human aspect enough, which I read in a statement of the PCW. Could you maybe say something about that?

George Nacewa: It is interesting that in this day and age we have had to have the scientists validate what we indigenous people have been talking about for years. Indigenous people have been sounding their alarm for years. But it is just because of science and their linkage towards the corporate... how do I say this... yeah maybe I will stick to that, indigenous people have been sounding their alarm for years and it has only taken a few scientists together within the IPCC to see for the whole world to be up and arms about it. But you know like, in saying that, there is this example I like to use within a traditional set up in the village. We have like, they say young people cannot speak up in a meeting, but their sit in avenues that young people within the village in a traditional setting can use, where young people can get their voice up into where decisions are made. So, like, while indigenous people have been sounding their alarm, talking about this, I think the IPCC reports and the scientist have created that avenue as well. And that link for indigenous people to be heard. And that is why when the IPCC came out, the PCW

jumped on that opportunity to use that platform and sciences to amplify what indigenous people have been talking about. And not just in the Pacific, but in the world you know.

Meryem van Gelder: yes, and do you think that that is... how do I say this, that the knowledge is well included? Because, so for instance, I read from a scholar named Hereniko, I do not know if you know the scholar, but he was talking about history and how in the west there is, we talk about certain dates and events that happened and this is how history is perceived and it is written and there the written word gets the authority when it comes to knowledge. And then he was talking about Pacific tradition that is more like stories and dances and poems and well, you know this better than I do, and that indigenous knowledge is often misunderstood and that these sources should be used as sources the way we use written sources for instance in the west, if you want to make that distinction. Do you think then that this knowledge (indigenous knowledge) then is included in the right way in the IPCC? Or is it more that now these voices can be heard and that is also like something good that is happening?

George Nacewa: I might misinterpret this question and answer it, but definitely our history is oral and passed on orally through dance as you mentioned, I don't know. I don't think we in the Pacific have come up with a way to document or validate our history through written text to persuade the west and the world. But we within the Pacific we know this to be through. That our oral history has been passed down through generations from our ancestors, is linked to time and place and I think that goes back to our identity as Pacific Islanders and how we connect with each other. But within the IPCC report and that knowledge not being captured, for a western audience, it is critical for them, for us to find a way to document these, eh?

Meryem van Gelder: Yes, I don't know if that is what needed. Maybe there should be like an interconnectedness, I don't know. Let me see, so then the IPCC is also talking about adaptation to, this is one of these frames, this is how to solve, what does adaptation mean to the Pacific Islanders and how do you see that the PCW and people on the islands already adapt to climate change at this moment?

George Nacewa: Adaptation. You know I think the work of the PCW for yours is trying to stop fossil fuels and keep it in the ground, so we have a fighting chance to live on a land that was similar to our ancestors and same type of privilege as them. To be able to go out to the sea, to catch food for our families, to live off the land, to plant our root crops and thrive. But that is not the reality we live in now. So, adaptation has come at such a time when we have been threatened by multiple, we have been hit by multiple threats. For example, Covid and other financial things. I think we had to continually adapt to change in the climate. One is through the way we have lived, one has been relocation. Some of the communities that live close to the sea front having to move further inland. And when we talk about adaptation and relocation for moving inland, that is no such thing as moving inland for atoll islands such as Cerebes and Tuvalu you know. There is ocean, lagoon, where else can you move? The only adaptation, option, they would have is to leave their island homes and the birthplace of their tradition, cultures, where their ancestors are buried. Adaptation within the Pacific has taken various forms, and I think one of the many forms that it has taken to prepare our young people for this move. We are people that have migrated for centuries, we are navigators, we have sailed on massive canoes to get to where we live now. But when the time comes when we have to our way out of our islands again, it is going to be very different. It is going to need a lot of work to mentally prepare our young people to move out of their island homes. So yes, while talking about adaptation, it is heartbreaking you know. You are giving hope to the people, building sea walls so that the

hospital near the sea side can last another day, but it also brings a bit of sadness to me when I speak about it. I hope I answered that question. Let me know if you need more.

Meryem van Gelder: No yeah, thank you. I cannot imagine how hard it is, but I might understand. To better understand, what I find interesting, on the one hand you talk about being navigators and I read that people from the Pacific indeed traveled a lot on the sea and on the other hand you say that you are tied to where you live, and that identity comes from the ground you live on. So how does that work and how can I better understand that? Is the travelling part from longer ago or is it connected?

George Nacewa: That is a great question because history tells us how we first came to our lands, but history tells us also how we used to trade with other island nations, within the Pacific hence our, that is why our spoke about our connectivity within the South Pacific. Because like, in parts of the Pacific you will find the same type of pottery that we make here, similar patterns to the way we weave our mats, similar customs. So, when we talk about being navigators, it is not that one time when our ancestors came from far away to the Pacific. It is also navigating within the Pacific and trading.

Meryem van Gelder: Thank you. I think in the IPCC report there is, the story that is being told, there is this vulnerability frame. This is really connected to an economic vulnerability, that has started maybe 50 years ago. I was wondering what vulnerability means to you and the PCW and if you think economic vulnerability equals climate change vulnerability? When states are perceived as economically vulnerable, they 'must be' vulnerable to climate change?

George Nacewa: I hope I understand this question correctly. But I will try and attempt it. Climate change does put the economy in a state of vulnerability. Yeah. I try attempt this. Maybe through the various climate impacts, we have been affected by, we've had the economy hit really bad whereby this been damaged the infrastructure. Give me a second... And it has come through, right? But while that is happening on an economic level, I believe that the vulnerability state of the impacted community is different. They are not waiting for handouts, they are not waiting for the state to take action. But really, they are taking action themselves, by repairing and working through the aftermath of a post disaster. I hope answer that question, which I know I didn't.

Meryem van Gelder: Yeah, that is also OK. I was also wondering, if you want to answer the question, I saw that the PCW talk a lot about the link between climate change and colonialism. And could you elaborate on that, how do you perceive the link? Do you think that what is happening now with climate change, and certain people having more to say about climate change, do you see a continuance or is it not like that? Could you say more about how you think climate change and colonialism is linked? Does how climate change is being governed right now, does it have its roots in colonialism?

George Nacewa: I think that there is definitely a link with colonialism. That is something that we try to work with, we try to decolonize the space. Imperial voices as affected communities to the fore front of the climate crisis. I understand that some of the social and political constructs the way things work within the world is definitely, how do I say this, influenced by colonial constructs. One within the climate space is, it is definitely predominant within the climate space I mean. I think that this climate issue will not go away unless we dismantle these structures that hold power. There is one that is prevalent within the Pacific, it is the Pacific development forum, right? Where a big part of that influence within the island states is influenced by New

Zealand and Australia. While we at one end of the Pacific say no to fossil fuels, promoting the Paris agreement and asking for to reduce carbon emission and 1.5, we have pushback from New Zealand and Australia within the Pacific forum itself.

Meryem van Gelder: Is sharing the stories the way for the PCW a way to decolonize the space or are there other ways that can be done?

George Nacewa: There is definitely many other ways but one we have known to be true within the PCW is that storytelling is true to our DNA. It is part of our DNA and identity as PCW. So that is something that we try to leverage and use.

Meryem van Gelder: Yes that is powerful indeed. Then, this is the last question I think: so there is this... it is maybe a bit big. So on the one hand there is this global stage, such as the IPCC and the COP, where the climate crisis is being politicized, I guess, or policy is being made here, and that is really global. And on the other hand you have these local experiences and how do you see the connection between the global story where policy is being made and then your own local story and experiences. Do you use your local experiences, or I guess you do that to show that you are already experiencing it (climate change). Do you think it is even helpful to have like a global story, or global stage. Or is it experienced so different for everyone locally that is it hard to have like one global policy?

George Nacewa: That is a big question. And a good question at that. You know, before the PCW got involved within the COP spaces, we used to just work within the national and regional frameworks, right? But you know like, I believe that it is very important, that while things happen on the ground, and people, it is very important that it is taken into the international ring and that it is an agreement, or a push, for policy, take for example the Paris agreement, it has to happen on a global scale, a global stage. Because that way, other massive and big countries that continue to destroy the environment are held accountable. We can... it is very important for us to work within our communities and within our nations to change policies and take climate action and climate justice. But we cannot be doing the work and being the least contributing to this climate crisis. Hence the reason why it is very important to take it to the world stage. COP23 was an opportunity for the Pacific to lead and show what true climate leadership looked like. But you know, it is sad that we are going to these massive world negotiations and into the world arena, we are always drowned out, just because we come from small island nations. But what they don't realize is that we have the most to lose, you know. So, I think it is very important that we use those opportunities to continue the work.

Meryem van Gelder: Thank you, these were the questions that I had, but is there anything else that you would like to say or know? If not, that is also fine of course.

George Nacewa: You know, this work, I have been part of this work for 10 years now. Sometimes you have your down days, you have your time to celebrate, but it is not easy work you know. But it is the people we represent that have so much to lose. That is why we continue the work as PCW. In the negotiation spaces or in climate marches and other arenas we try our best to represent our people where we can and I just like to thank you for picking up on the work of the Pacific Climate Warriors. Sometimes we think the work that we do falls on deaf ears but there are definitely people out there wanting the same things as us, fighting for the same things as us. When I narrow it down, it is fighting for our right to live and not just survive but also thrive in the place that we call home.

Meryem van Gelder: Well, thank you for your time and for the work that you do.

PLAGIARISM RULES AWARENESS STATEMENT

Fraud and Plagiarism

Scientific integrity is the foundation of academic life. Utrecht University considers any form of scientific deception to be an extremely serious infraction. Utrecht University therefore expects every student to be aware of, and to abide by, the norms and values regarding scientific integrity.

The most important forms of deception that affect this integrity are fraud and plagiarism. Plagiarism is the copying of another person's work without proper acknowledgement, and it is a form of fraud. The following is a detailed explanation of what is considered to be fraud and plagiarism, with a few concrete examples. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list!

If fraud or plagiarism is detected, the study programme's Examination Committee may decide to impose sanctions. The most serious sanction that the committee can impose is to submit a request to the Executive Board of the University to expel the student from the study programme.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the copying of another person's documents, ideas or lines of thought and presenting it as one's own work. You must always accurately indicate from whom you obtained ideas and insights, and you must constantly be aware of the difference between citing, paraphrasing and plagiarising. Students and staff must be very careful in citing sources; this concerns not only printed sources, but also information obtained from the Internet.

The following issues will always be considered to be plagiarism:

- cutting and pasting text from digital sources, such as an encyclopaedia or digital periodicals, without quotation marks and footnotes;
- cutting and pasting text from the Internet without quotation marks and footnotes;
- copying printed materials, such as books, magazines or encyclopaedias, without quotation marks or footnotes;
- including a translation of one of the sources named above without quotation marks or footnotes;
- paraphrasing (parts of) the texts listed above without proper references: paraphrasing must be marked as such, by expressly mentioning the original author in the text or in a footnote, so that you do not give the impression that it is your own idea;
- copying sound, video or test materials from others without references, and presenting it as one's own work;
- submitting work done previously by the student without reference to the original paper, and presenting it as original work done in the context of the course, without the express permission of the course lecturer;
- copying the work of another student and presenting it as one's own work. If this is done with the consent of the other student, then he or she is also complicit in the plagiarism;
- when one of the authors of a group paper commits plagiarism, then the other co-authors are also complicit in plagiarism if they could or should have known that the person was committing plagiarism;
- submitting papers acquired from a commercial institution, such as an Internet site with summaries or papers, that were written by another person, whether or not that other person received payment for the work.

The rules for plagiarism also apply to rough drafts of papers or (parts of) theses sent to a lecturer for feedback, to the extent that submitting rough drafts for feedback is mentioned in the course handbook or the thesis regulations.

The Education and Examination Regulations (Article 5.15) describe the formal procedure in case of suspicion of fraud and/or plagiarism, and the sanctions that can be imposed.

Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. Each individual is responsible for their own behaviour. Utrecht University assumes that each student or staff member knows what fraud and plagiarism



entail. For its part, Utrecht University works to ensure that students are informed of the principles of scientific practice, which are taught as early as possible in the curriculum, and that students are informed of the institution's criteria for fraud and plagiarism, so that every student knows which norms they must abide by.

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.	
Name:	Meryem van Gelder
Student number:	5943485
Date and signature:	13 - 05 - 2022 

Submit this form to your supervisor when you begin writing your Bachelor's final paper or your Master's thesis.

Failure to submit or sign this form does not mean that no sanctions can be imposed if it appears that plagiarism has been committed in the paper.