

Vaka Moana as Policy Space
Navigating the Cook Islands Case of Climate Change Mobility

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Abstract

Climate change and human mobility are global concerns that pose multiple challenges with existential consequences, particularly for Pacific island states and territories. My research examines how the Cook Islands, with its sovereign relationship with New Zealand, is able to address cross-border issues such as climate change mobility. It focuses on how the continuities and contradictions in policy making and policy spaces are constructed and argues for approaches informed by oceanic island state centred contexts and perspectives to development challenges.

A key contribution of this research is its research framework, including using the *vaka moana* – the double-hulled voyaging canoe of the Cook Islands and other countries in the Pacific – as a cultural metaphor and analogy for the conceptual framework. In providing analytical and methodological guidance, the *vaka moana* brings together the constituted elements of policy space, sovereignty and actor agency to examine climate change mobility in the indigenous, oceanic, island state context of the Cook Islands.

As indigenous Pacific research, the adopted methodology is immersive in nature and makes use of ethnographic methods of inquiry. Contemporary documents, interviews and observations of policy-actor interactions are analysed to better understand this emerging Cook Islands policy space of climate change mobility. Fieldwork took place during 2014 and 2015, across multiple sites in the Cook Islands, Samoa, New Zealand and France.

In order for the Cook Islands government to attend to the implications of cross-border issues like climate change mobility, I argue for an approach that draws on a framework of relationality where Cook Islands policy spaces and sovereignty are fluid and dynamic concepts that allow for indigenous narratives to emerge. In so doing, it is possible to disrupt the status quo, conventional discourses and taken-for-granted approaches to oceanic island state economies, development and climate change mobility. For the Cook Islands, this means recognising the power, persistence and limitations of the depopulation and New Zealand-dependency narratives. Instead, transformative narratives of mobility and interdependency can guide institutional arrangements as well as the way actors mediate policy debates on the critical future concerns around climate change, including its implications for human mobility. Overall this thesis concludes that the policy space of climate change mobility in the Cook Islands is at best an emerging one requiring further attention.

Keywords: Cook Islands, policy space, sovereignty, climate change, human mobility

Dedication

Marina Diane Newport

7 April 1965 - 18 June 2017

Kia koe, taku teina, my dear sister.

In the spirit of love, this thesis is dedicated to you.

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To being with and most especially I wish to acknowledge those who participated in the research directly as participants, key informants, I am humbled and indebted to you all for your generosity and sharing of time, experiences, ideas and spirit. Because of you all, I'm convinced that our islands and peoples are as great and powerful as our ocean that embraces us.

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Meitaki maata e kia manuia. Na te atua e tiaki.

Preface

In May 2013 at the Edgewater Resort in Rarotonga, I attended the first regional consultation of the Nansen Initiative – a state-led consultative process that was established in 2012 to pursue a protection agenda to address cross-border displacement due to disasters and climate change. Attending this workshop was a defining moment for this research. Several country representatives from around the region attended this meeting, along with a number of experts who provided advice on the range of issues and understandings about the issue of displacement due to climate change and disasters. The academics were mostly highly regarded experts from New Zealand and Australia. They came with their connections, relationships and experiences. They were all *papaa*. Where were the brown faces? This was no criticism of those presenting their analyses. Rather, it was a questioning of where were we? Aren't we capable of doing this kind of work ourselves and speaking for ourselves? Aren't we obligated to take some responsibility for doing this work ourselves?

An I-Kiribati female government official spoke during the workshop, presenting her people's experiences of displacement due to development and phosphate mining that had led to the permanent relocation of a whole island population. During her visit to Rarotonga, she called on an elderly aunt who had left Banaba, eventually relocating to Rarotonga. The next day, this beautiful mama came with her niece to the workshop. As her niece retold her story, she wept. We wept.

In a small-group discussion, which included Special Envoy Walter Katlin and Waikato University Professor John Campbell, I shared the disquiet I felt. This was not a criticism of the research others were undertaking to understand the effects of climate change

resulting in migration. Rather it was the challenge I felt. That we – Cook Islanders, and others from the Pacific islands region – needed to take responsibility for telling our own stories, alongside those who also carry out research about us and for us. We were obligated to do this for our communities and generations. For those of us who occupy positions of authority and power in our societies as bureaucrats, politicians, traditional leaders, we have a particular responsibility to act as conduits between our families and villages, and those beyond our shores, to make sure the wept tears of our people matter, count for something and are not in vain.

The workshop reminded me of the five cyclones within five weeks of early 2005. As a locally employed staff member of the New Zealand High Commission, and part of the team coordinating New Zealand's delivery of aid to the Cook Islands, I put myself forward without question to be present in these times of crisis and recovery.

At the time, we lived on the northern coast of Rarotonga in Panama, in between the airport and across the road from the lagoon and ocean. Category five Cyclone Mena was predicted to pass directly over our island. In the build up to that first cyclone, preparations were made as people, businesses and communities tied down their roofs, boarded shop fronts and moved vessels out of the harbour. Government agencies were on alert, the disaster management committee was activated, and outside agencies were on standby ... waiting.

With five children and two grandchildren, we moved up the hill inland to a house. All the while, the papa next door refused to move. Through the gaps in the boarded windows, coconuts and debris flew past horizontally. As night came, the wind gusts became screaming long-lasting shrills. Children slept. National radio announcers gave the

coordinates for plotting the cyclone's path. Local pastors rallied us as prayer warriors with national calls for God's favour upon us.

As light came, along with news that the cyclone had veered away, from up on the hill we could see huge waves breaking onto the elevated height of the runway below. The ocean was huge, and so was the damage. Lives were not lost, but they were certainly tested then, and for four more times during that season. I returned to my job and took part in the humanitarian response that unfolded and the longer-term recovery and reconstruction programme. There were all kinds of challenges in this. Having previously worked as a social worker with families and family violence, these experiences resonated with what I knew to expect in times of crisis, intervention, recovery and justice. But also, it was important to pay attention to the people and intangibility of loss and security as much as attending to the demands to fix the tangibles like buildings, roads, wharves and runways.

As this research advanced, it has generated many insights. To fully appreciate the implications of lost land, let alone a whole island because of sea-level rise and storm surge, was disturbing because land (and ocean) is fundamental to Cook Islands identity. Surely this must be an important issue for the policy makers? Also, as I worked with the New Zealand and Cook Islands government officials negotiating their common and different development priorities and agendas, I wondered about the challenges that governments faced in bringing attention to this issue of self-determination in the context of climate change in the 21st century. I could see that here was an issue that potentially had multiple implications for the country, but how do the government and its people address this kind of issue?

For all these reasons I felt there was a story to be told. Not just about the issue of climate change mobility, but also about the approaches of oceanic island states to such issues. I travelled with Cook Islands officials, at home and abroad. I saw them in action, drawing in their development partners for the 2015 Development Partners Meeting and doing the same with the public during national climate change workshops in 2015. I participated with the officials at the 2014 United Nations Small Islands Developing States (UNSIDS) conference and 2015 United Nations Framework for the Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP21 in Paris, three weeks after the Paris terrorist attacks. The officials marched along corridors and sat in closed negotiation rooms. They wrote and re-wrote speeches. They made interventions in plenary meetings. They drew on texted messages from others who sat in other negotiation rooms and side events. They kept each other safe getting back to their accommodation after concluding meetings in the early hours. They showed up again for early morning briefings. They kept in touch with their families, colleagues and continued with their 'real jobs'. Yes, there are still challenges for the government and policy actors, but there are additional perspectives and approaches that float on the noise and blindness of the everyday expectations of how things should be. I thought about what makes an issue an issue. And, just whose issue is it anyway? How are issues and their solutions constructed? For the Cook Islands the issue of 'climate change mobility' can be constructed to take account of particular features and understandings. Resolving or at least understanding and giving attention to it involves navigating a course that takes account of certain features inherent in Cook Islands context and culture – just like voyaging the great ocean on a double-hulled canoe.

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Glossary of Maori Terms

Akama	Embarrassed, ashamed
Ama	Outrigger or smaller left-side hull of vaka
Are Ariki	House of Ariki
Ariki	Paramount chief
Aronga Mana	Institution of traditional leaders
Ataata	Centre staging/platform (of vaka moana)
Enua	Island, land, territory, placenta
Kaa	Sinnet rope - made from coconut husk fibres
Katea	Larger right-side hull of vaka
Kavana	Chief, head of family line
Kaveinga	Compass, direction
Kaveinga Tapapa	Cook Islands Climate and Disaster Compatible Development Policy 2013-2016
Kiato	Cross bars (on vaka moana)
Kie	Sail
Kimi	Explore
Kite	Discover, find
Kopu tangata	Family group
Koutu Nui	Structure of sub-chiefs including mataiapo and rangatira
Manamana	Magic - refers to a spiritual sensory sense of knowing
Mangaia	A southern group island of the Cook Islands
Manihiki	A northern group island of the Cook Islands
Manuiri	Visitors, guests

Maori	Indigenous, native or belonging to the place. In the Cook Islands all things indigenous (both animate and inanimate) carry the name Maori. We call ourselves Maori, our language is Maori and our culture is Maori. In truth, one is only a Cook Islander outside the Cook Islands (refer footnote 1)
Marae Moana	Name of the Cook Islands marine domain or economic exclusive zone
Maro-itiki	Art pattern of Mangaia - relates to the story of two brothers tied back to back in battle to defend the island. Symbol of the double K depicts unity, sacrifice and protection of family.
Mataiapo	Sub-chief
Matakeinanga	Community, tribe
Matariki	Pleiades constellation
Ngati	Tribe/clan
Ngutuare	Household
Noo	To settle, stay
Oe akatere	Steering oar/rudder (Elsdon Best, 1925)
Oevaka	Outrigger canoeing sport
Pa enua	Used to refer to a group of islands; also used to refer to Cook Islands excluding Rarotonga
Pa enua ki Tonga	Sub-regional group of Southern Islands
Pa enua ki Tokerau	Sub-regional group of Northern Islands
Pa metua	Elders
Paii	Boat, canoe including double-hulled voyaging canoe
Papaa	Person/people of European descent
Papaanga	Genealogy
Papaanga tupuna	Ancestral genealogy. All Maori are born into a network of pirianga (relationships). Genealogy confirms one's place, and culture defines role(s) and responsibilities which are understood in relation to others of the same genealogy and those of other genealogies. This is not peculiar to Cook

Islands culture but it does have specific relevance in terms of an individual's or collective's entitlement to land and traditional titles. Maori practise both patrilineal and matrilineal entitlements.¹

Papapapa	Prepare
Pirianga toto	Blood connection
Pito	Navel
Pitoenua	Umbilical cord
Pu ara	Pandanus tree
Rangatira	Traditional title for the sub-chiefs of Ariki and Mataiapo
Rarotonga	Main island of the Cook Islands
Raui	Restriction as a conservation method
Takitumu	Name of Tom Davis' vaka
Tane	Man
Taumata Kuku	Taurus constellation
Tautoru	Orion constellation
Te Ara Tiroa	The Cook Islands national college, Tereora College, Learning Charter
Te Au o Tonga	Name of Cook Islands double-hull canoe
Te Mana o te Moana	Name of canoe fleet on the Okeanos Foundation campaign
Te Marumaru Atua	Name of Cook Islands Voyaging Society vaka moana
Te Kaveinga Nui	Living the Cook Islands Vision - A 2020 Challenge - Pathway for Sustainable Development in the Cook Islands
Tere	Travel, trip, journey
Tira	Mast
Tivaevae/Tivaivai	Applique quilt

¹ James, Mitaera & Rongo-Raea, 2012, pp. 5-6.

Toia	Launch
Tu Oe	Master navigator
Tupuna	Ancestor
Ui Ariki	Group of paramount chiefs
Va	Intervening space or distance, space in between
Vaine	Woman
Vaka	Boat, canoe, district
Vaka Eiva	Annual outrigger canoe festival
Vaka moana	Double-hull voyaging canoe
Vaka Takitumu	District of Takitumu, Rarotonga

Mangaian Framework of Sustainable Development²

Oraanga Mangaia	Refers to life on Mangaia and Mangaian livelihoods bound in cultural practice and three development dimensions: akonoanga enua, aroa taeake, and te ipukarea ia rangarangatu.
Akonoanga enua	Environment
Aroa taeake	Economic exchange
Te ipukarea ia rangarangatu	Cultural values, beliefs, epistemologies, culture and language

KIA ORANA - Cook Islands Values³

Kitepakari	Wisdom
Irinaki	Faith
Akakoromaki	Patience

² Beumelburg, 2016, p. 123.

³ Jonassen, 2003, pp. 128-140.

Ora	Life
Rotaianga	Unity
Akaaka	Humility
Noa	Freedom
Aroa	Love, compassion

Tivaevae Research Model⁴

Taokotai	Collaboration - striving to achieve shared objectives and patiently practising skills
Tu akangateitei	Respect - respecting the knowledge of others; learning is a form of respecting the knowledge of others
Tu inangaro	Relationships - a process of relationship-making over time; time spent on listening, observing, demonstrating, practising, analysing, experimenting and reviewing
Uri kite	Reciprocity - sharing of ideas in a learning environment
Akaari kite	A shared vision - important because it represents the values of patience, humility and respect
Tu akakoromaki	Patience
Tu kauraro	Humility
Tuakangateitei	Respect

Turanga Maori Framework⁵

Akonoanga Maori	Maori culture - the expression of knowledge, beliefs, customs, morals, arts and personality. It is both the substance and a set of processes whose primary purpose is to ensure wellbeing, facilitate the practice of respectful relationships and enable the individual and collective to pursue their aspirations. Maori culture is considered 'evolutionary and situated in the "now" - it is not prescriptive and offers the opportunity to be relevant,
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⁴ Te Ava, 2011; Te Ava, et al., 2013; Futter-Puati, 2017.

⁵ James, Mitaera & Rongo-Raea, 2012, pp. 5-6.

realistic and flexible given the circumstances at hand' (Refer to footnote 1).

Peu tupuna	The ways of the ancestors, which is not the same as culture.
No teia tuatau	The present/now - importance of being relevant and realistic in the environment and context in which people live today.
Ta angaangaia	Transformation - occurs when aspects of the Turanga Maori framework are undertaken. On their own they are simply cultural concepts isolated in space.
Papaanga	Geneology/kinship - provides a basis for understanding relationships. This framework comprises concepts to guide one's practice comprised of turanga, pirianga, akaueanga, and ngakau aroa.
Turanga	Position and standing - can be inherited and/or ascribed. It is the shared responsibility of the individual and collective to support each member's turanga.
Pirianga	The action of putting together or connecting. Relationships - individual collective belonging to a reciprocal network, responding to shared responsibilities and privileges inside and outside the papaanga. All Maori are members of multiple collectives, both kin and non-kin, which require acknowledgement and support of others.
Akaueanga	Fulfilling individual and collective duties - observance of duties are reciprocal. One is a giver and a receiver. Maintaining relationships requires shared labour, resources and participation from all members of the collective. Duties include: ara tipoto, ara tiroa, are vananga.
Ngakau aroa	Willingness and conviction of the heart, generosity to self and others. Considered the emotional and spiritual expression of being Maori. Given and received is to experience wellbeing.
Ara tipoto	Duties to one's immediate family or one's parents, their siblings and first cousins and your own siblings and first cousins - such as those associated with the haircutting ceremony, weddings and funerals.
Ara tiroa	Refers to duties to one's extended family, community, church, a tere party or the vaka where you reside.

Are vananga

House of learning which includes: traditional and contemporary institutions such as church, schools, sports, educational and other modern academies.

NB: Noting there are dialectical differences, Rarotonga terms have been used. A useful source is the 2016 Dictionary of Cook Islands Languages available at: <http://cookislandsdictionary.com>

Glossary

Climate change	A change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods. ⁶
Climate change mobility	Refers to three forms of population movement: (1) displacement – understood as the primarily forced movement of persons; (2) migration – primarily voluntary movement of persons; and (3) planned relocation – planned process of settling persons or groups of persons to a new location due to effects of climate change and disasters. ⁷
Cook Islands	Western construct of the grouping of 15 islands that form Cook Islands. There is no agreed indigenous name for the Cook Islands. A national referendum to adopt a Maori name for the Cook Islands was defeated in 1994. However, historically <i>Avaiki Raro</i> was used to describe the Cook Islands which included Rarotonga as a reference point when traveling from one Avaiki (place of origin) to another Avaiki. Such as Avaiki Raro (Cook Islands) and Avaiki Tautau (Aotearoa). ⁸
Displacement	Refers to instances where there is no choice but to move, either temporarily or permanently, within or across borders.
Environmental migrants	Persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so either temporarily or permanently, and who move within their own country or abroad.
Forced migration	A migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or human-made causes (e.g. movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects). ⁹
Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)	Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human

⁶ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992, p. 192).

⁷ Platform on Disaster Displacement website: <https://disasterdisplacement.org/the-platform/key-definitions>; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2010).

⁸ Jonassen, 1996, p. 62.

⁹ IOM website: <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>

rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.¹⁰

Migrant	Migrant is any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is. IOM is the organisation that concerns itself with migrants and migration-related issues and, in agreement with relevant States, with migrants who are in need of international migration services.
Migration	The movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes. It includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification.
Oceanic island states	Refers to islands with shared or independent sovereign identities. Such entities are formed from the ocean floor, surrounded by deep water and are not linked with any land mass. This is informed by Small Islands Developing States rethinking of a commonly held deficit-based model and constraints of smallness and vulnerability of small islands. This includes a self-characterisation as Large Ocean States focused on strengths and opportunities. ¹¹
Planned relocation	Organised movement of people typically instigated, supervised and carried out by the State. Ideally undertaken in a transparent manner and with informed consent of the people and communities concerned. It is undertaken to protect people from risks and impacts related to disasters and environmental change including the effects of climate change. Controversially it can include development-related factors; for example, moving people for land use or natural resource extraction. ¹²
Small Island Developing States (SIDS)	A distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. SIDS were recognised as a special case both for their environment and development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (3-14 June 1992). This recognition was specifically in the context of Agenda 21 (Chapter 17 G). Made up of 38 UN member countries and 14 non-UN Members/Associate Members. ¹³

¹⁰ Refer to UN Doc E/CN.4/1988/53/Add.2.)

¹¹ Refer to <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2017/2/22/Oceans-and-small-island-states-First-think-opportunity-then-think-blue.html>

¹² Refer to Stapleton, et al. (2017) and Warner (2012), p. 1067.

¹³ UNOHRLLS (n.d.).

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CARICOM	Caribbean Community of island states
CIGov	Government of the Cook Islands
CIIC	Cook Islands Investment Corporation
CI News	Cook Islands News
COP	Conference of Parties
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
CSIRO (Australia)	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EMCI	Emergency Management Cook Islands
GEF	Global Environment Fund
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JNAP	Joint National Adaptation Plan
LIC	Low income countries
MFAI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals

MOE	Cook Islands Ministry of Education
NES	Cook Islands National Environment Service
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
OPSC	Office of the Public Services Commissioner
UNOHRLLS	UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
PASAP	Australian Pacific Adaptation Strategy Assistance Programme
PICTS	Pacific Islands Countries and Territories
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
RNZ	Radio New Zealand
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SNIJ	Subnational Island Jurisdiction
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference for Trade and Development
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Chapter 1: Ka Akamata Matou – We Are Beginning

Shall we make “island” a verb?

As a noun it’s so vulnerable to impinging forces.

Let us turn the energy of the island inside out. Let us “island” the world.

Teresia K. Teaiwa (2007, p. 514).

1.1 Introduction

During the United Nations Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in Samoa in September 2014, Cook Islands Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Henry Puna (2014), said in his speech that pursuing a development future for the Cook Islands means providing for the needs of all its islands and people. It requires, he said, decisions to be made that may not make good economic sense but for a country such as the Cook Islands the decisions make ‘island sense’ (Puna, 2014). He was referring to the importance of maintaining Cook Islands cultural and social values when facing development challenges (such as climate change and depopulation) in addition to calculating economic costs and benefits.

As seen at the conference in Samoa, climate change and its impact on island communities is a priority issue for all SIDS. Also the cross-border issue of climate change mobility is being tackled increasingly by island states (Campbell, 2014; CDKN, 2014; IPCC, 2014). Climate change mobility refers to the long-term and sudden effects of climate change that result in the movement of people across borders within their countries, and internationally. This movement is considered by many policy makers and scholars to be a consequence of and strategy to adapt to climate change impacts. For the leaders of countries such as the Cook Islands with their shared and varied economic, social, cultural and environmental particularities, grappling with this issue and its existential implications require decisions to be made that also make, in Puna’s words, ‘island sense’.

This means handling a complex and complicated issue in complex and complicated arenas where the multiplicity of global and local perspectives and interests converge and conflict. These arenas include policy spaces that are comprised of multiple actors, interests, processes and policies (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013; Grek, Lawn, Ozga, & Segerholm, 2013). These external and internal actors interact and engage in ways that may both inhibit and enhance the policy aspirations and actions of oceanic island state governments and their peoples.

1.2 Motivation for this Research

Motivation for this research arose in two ways. First was a concern about the existential implications for island communities when moving people elsewhere is presented as both a consequence and a solution to the creeping impacts of climate change. In the cases of low-lying island states such as the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Maldives, these implications are clearly apparent as sea levels rise, temperatures increase and rainfall fluctuates. Indeed scientists predict 'most atolls will be uninhabitable by the mid-21st century because of sea-level rise' (Storlazzi et al., 2018, p. 1) and attention is required now for later (Noy, 16). But inevitably, climate change is also having an impact on other island states, such as the Cook Islands, with a mixture of island geographies that influences migration decisions within and beyond country borders. Island state governments commonly understood to endure a particular set of risks and vulnerabilities, are now also confronted with the difficult task of negotiating meaningful solutions to climate-related issues.

There is an emerging body of literature elaborating the perspectives of SIDS in addressing climate change mobility (Arnall & Kothari, 2015; Bettini & Gioli, 2016; Bettini, 2017; Ilan Kelman & Shabana Khan, 2012; Kelman et al., 2017; McLeod, 2010; Suckall, Fraser, & Forster, 2016). Other studies have examined the policy space in which SIDS address trade and economic

development (Chang, 2006; Chang, 2007; Gallagher, 2011; Khan, 2007; Koivusalo, 2014; Mayer, 2009; South Centre, 2005), or climate change mobility (Mechler & Schinko, 2016). This study responds to work with other Pacific SIDS (Farbotka & Lazrus, 2012, Mortreux & Barnett, 2009), particularly the atoll states of Tuvalu and Kiribati, in giving agency to the perspective of Pacific nation states. It specifically responds to the contention by Campbell (2014, p. 2) that relatively little research has been done on the possible migration processes or outcomes for Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTS) initiated by climate change. I was particularly motivated to undertake research that recognised the need for increased dialogue and policy work when climate change-related migration (internal and external) is considered as part of national development planning (Campbell & Warrick, 2014, p. 27).

Secondly, the direction and focus of this study emerged out of my experience, as outlined in the Preface, as an indigenous Cook Islands woman working in the development sector and living in the Cook Islands. A diverse background and experiences from living in New Zealand and the Cook Islands provided me with a fairly unique opportunity to interrogate what had taken place in the relevant Cook Islands policy spaces over the past decade. It was an opportunity to question and better understand how oceanic island states manoeuvre within and across policy spaces in ways that allow for their values and priorities to be articulated, negotiated and respected.

1.3 Research Question and Significance

Climate change mobility constitutes a serious and complex concern with existential consequences for many states and communities, with social, cultural, environmental and economic implications for the current and foreseeable future, extending beyond the national to impact on regional and global realms.

The aim of this study is to examine how oceanic island state governments make sense of and address the threat of climate change to the movement of their people. Guided by the analogy of the *vaka moana* (the double-hulled voyaging canoe, as described in detail in Chapter Two), the overall aim of this thesis is to analyse the ways in which the Cook Islands as an oceanic island nation with a particular sovereign arrangement with New Zealand addresses the cross-border issue of climate change mobility. To achieve this, the research poses the following questions with respect to the Cook Islands:

1. To what extent is climate change mobility an issue for the Cook Islands?
2. How do the institutions, policies, individuals and discourse, as the constituted elements of policy spaces, address climate change and human mobility in the Cook Islands?
3. What experiences and perceptions of individual actors in these policy space shape the attention given to addressing climate change mobility?
4. What sovereignty considerations arise for the Cook Islands in addressing climate change mobility and other similar cross-border issues?
5. How might nuanced understandings of sovereignty and policy spaces assist oceanic island states like the Cook Islands to address cross-border issues?

1.4 Contribution of the Research

A strategy for oceanic island states to assert sovereignty in policy spaces is to reconceptualise prevailing concepts. It is argued here that in the Cook Islands case of negotiating its responses to climate change mobility, its policy processes are compromised by the ambiguities and failures of existing policy space and sovereignty conceptualisations. I argue that this is due to taken-for-granted discourses about island states development and their limited capacity to govern over their affairs. This discourse indirectly refers to limitations in the agency of individuals to mediate policies and discourses.

This research adds value in several ways: first, it makes a theoretical contribution to policy space scholarship by taking account of national and cultural contexts; secondly, it makes a methodological contribution to Cook Islands indigeneity scholarship as research that is by, for, with and about the Cook Islands; and thirdly, it makes a policy contribution to benefit the policies and practices of oceanic island states by informing future policy processes and decision making on the issue of climate change mobility. It highlights alternative avenues for intervention as well as offering possible options for informing other new cross-border issues through an understanding of policy space and sovereignty from the perspective of oceanic island states.

1.5 The Cook Islands

The research uses a case study approach to carry out an in-depth analysis of the Cook Islands climate change and human mobility policy space. This analysis primarily covers the period from 2005 to 2015, beginning in the wake of five cyclones the Cook Islands experienced during the 2004/2005 cyclone season. This period was also a marker for the Cook Islands' fifth decade of 'self-governing' sovereignty and the completion of a recovery period following major economic reforms over the previous decade.

Cook Islands' sovereignty is especially relevant because being 'self-governing in a free association' arrangement with New Zealand means, in legal, international relations terms, the Cook Islands is neither a fully independent state nor a dependent territory. Nevertheless, its sovereignty serves as the basis for its global participation and relationships as an international entity. Categorised as a 'small island developing state' and recognised as such by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) means the Cook Islands qualifies for development assistance by OECD members. Possible graduation from this status, and all that implies in terms of Cook Islands' management of its development partner relationships, is an ongoing consideration. The vexed issue of graduation is a matter that

features in the context of ongoing economic and fiscal reforms for the country's government and its international development partners.

In 2005 the country became a signatory to the Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness, paving the way for the preparation of the Cook Islands' first national development strategy. During the subsequent ten-year period the country managed to achieve a level of economic growth that withstood the 2008 global financial crisis, and to maintain a degree of political stability despite the continued out-migration of its people (among other factors that also challenged political stability).

During this 15-year period the Democratic Party governed for two terms before the Cook Islands Party took power in 2010, maintained with a one-seat majority in the 2014 elections. Economic growth and political stability signalled a growing confidence and determination in a Cook Islands' approach to managing its affairs as it celebrated 50 years of self-government in 2015. 2015 was also a year when a number of international mandates and mechanisms converged. These included international agreements on the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Third United Nations (UN) World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Paris Agreement on climate change that was adopted at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP). These all have implications for how the Cook Islands, as a small island state, addresses climate change mobility.

Similar to other SIDS, the country faces a number of development challenges due to economic, geographic and demographic factors. The Cook Islands, one of 22 countries and territories in the Pacific region, consists of 15 oceanic islands spread across two sub-regions. It has an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 1,974,760 km². There is a total land area of 237 km², which equates to only 0.012 per cent of its EEZ (Bell et al., 2011; Campbell, 2010; National Environment

Service [NES], 2000). The 15 islands are physically varied with a combination of atoll, barrier reef, fringe reef and volcanic island structures. The Cook Islands has a narrow tourism-led economic base and a highly mobile and migrating population, in common with many SIDS. With a resident population of fewer than 15,000 people (Government of the Cook Islands, [CIGov], 2011), the majority of indigenous Cook Islanders live in New Zealand and Australia (CIGov, 2007, 2009 & 2011b). A major risk for such a small population is climate change as a multiplier of existing development challenges.

Historically, the Cook Islands colonisation by the British empire began in 1800's, continued with annexation by New Zealand in 1901 and ended with a self-governing status in 1965 where the Cook Islands chose to remain New Zealand citizens. The long-standing relationship between the Cook Islands and New Zealand has seen a steady flow of Cook Islanders between New Zealand and their home country. New Zealand citizenship meant that Cook Islanders can freely travel to and from New Zealand and Australia.

Overall, there are characteristics of the Cook Islands that are both representative of, and different to other oceanic island states. One of these characteristics is its particular sovereign identity and status, and the international implications of these for climate change mobility.

1.6 'Islanding' Policy Spaces

This thesis proposes a rethinking of the policy spaces where decisions are made about the movement of people due to climate change. This rethinking takes place in two ways. First, through a clarification of policy space as a concept, and secondly in its application to an analysis of issues in a national oceanic island state context. By contributing to the scholarly conversations taking place about policy space and its application, this thesis contends that taking a more nuanced look at the context will reveal legitimate and varied interpretations of climate change mobility that might otherwise be overlooked.

This thesis works with socially constructed notions of policy space – as an institutionalised field of actors, rules and practices associated with governmental efforts to address social issues and problems (Boin, Ekengren, & Rhinard, 2006). Policy spaces are perceived with and without geographical locations that materialise as the result of time-sharing social practices (Castells, 2000; Beech, 2009). They are shared, regulated yet fluid spaces encompassing national and transnational contexts and their interactions (Grek et al., 2013, p. 487). Actors, rules and practices are bound together allowing for a demarcation from other social issues and problems of focus (Boin, 2006, p. 406).

The following chapters show how policy-space actors include institutions and individuals, while their agency refers to ‘the potential and actual ability of individuals and institutions to affect the circumstances that structure their thought and action’ (Castree, Kitchin, & Rogers, 2013). In working with the agency of individual actors and their capacity to act independently – a capacity that is meaningful, with both intent and purpose (Mayhew, 2015) – attention is given to those individual actors within national boundaries ‘where policy making and policy implementation are socially constructed and enacted by actors who are located within specific institutional frameworks’ (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 345). This includes understanding an ‘actor’s subjective interpretations of conditions, working practices and opportunities’ (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 346). The individual actors for this research were based in the Cook Islands primarily and are mainly indigenous Cook Islanders, with some foreign expatriate individuals also included. A fuller discussion of actor agency follows in Chapter Two and Chapter Six.

The way actors interpret policy discourse, adapting to the circumstances in which people find themselves, is discussed including the ways in which individual actors embody ‘global transnational ideas and invest them with meaning and action to suit particular local work contexts’ (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 354). Since local policy actors construct,

mediate and reconstruct policy discourses (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013), analysing discourses provides useful insights (Beech, 2009) into how actors mediate policy, making it possible to identify policy convergences and tensions (Boin et al., 2006) as well as hidden and hence less-obvious narratives.

1.7 Seas of Sovereignty

As already noted, the term 'policy spaces' is used to mean critical spheres where sovereign governments articulate their country visions while engaging with actors within and beyond their borders. Related to policy space is the concept of sovereignty. I have attempted to clarify its meaning and use to offer insights about the relationships between states and other actors. This is particularly applicable when the sovereign intent and institutional boundaries constrain policy transfer across borders (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013). Similar to the concept of policy space, sovereignty enables actor interactions in addressing issues to be understood. However, without clarification the agency of oceanic island state actors and the manner in which issues are addressed or not, may be underplayed. This is because there are dominant discourses about island contexts, actors, policies and processes that preside over island affairs.

Accounting for prevailing discourses is important when considering how the direct and indirect impacts of climate change cause people to move across borders, the consequences of which lead to the displacement (temporary and permanent), relocation (forced and voluntary) and migration (internal and external) of peoples (individuals and whole communities) (Campbell, 2014). But equally present in climate change discourses is the promotion of relocation and migration as adaptation measures (Connell, 2013). When faced with exposure to hazards, relocation and migration are promoted as disaster risk reduction strategies and economic interventions for development.

I also contend that the experiences of island states and their policy spaces are influenced by differing understandings of sovereignty. That is to say that sovereign actor relationships are shadowed by differing understandings that influence a country's aspirations and attention to complex issues. This includes the influences external actors assert over national and local attention given to the cross-border effects of some issues. As reflected in the literature, I have broadly interpreted these influences in relation to trade, technology, economic and social development, and environmental sustainability in the context of the movement of goods, services and people. They can also include the movement of ideas, discourses, policies and processes. I have outlined in my discussion how the potential relocation and movement of peoples across international borders is one such cross-border issue for SIDS as they address the impacts of climate change.

Overall, my reading of the framing and constituent elements of policy spaces and sovereignty has led to a questioning about how oceanic island states, as sovereign actors in global governance and development arenas, are able to manage their futures. Framed as 'small islands' and 'small island developing states', they are conventionally viewed as vulnerable, lacking in capacity, and in need of external assistance (Baldacchino, 2006).

By examining the cross-border issue of climate change mobility this study brings to the fore an understanding of the policy spaces and sovereignty considerations that are relevant for oceanic islands states, given their specific historical, political and cultural contexts. This involves examining climate change mobility from the geopolitical and indigenous perspectives in which island states and communities exist in an oceanic context.

1.8 Vaka Moana

A key contribution of this thesis is the use of the vaka moana analogy. It takes account of the concepts of policy space and sovereignty, and their usefulness in an oceanic island nation-state

context. The double-hulled ocean voyaging canoe of the Pacific serves as a cultural metaphor to encapsulate and inform a conceptual and analytical framework for this study. This provides the research with the means to lash together oceanic thinking (Steinberg, 2005) and the relationality of islands (Stratford, Baldacchino, McMahon, Farbotko, & Harwood, 2011) with indigenous Pacific and Cook Islands perspectives of an oceanic island state (Jonassen, 1996; Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009; Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2015; Pascht, 2014b; Underhill- Sem, 1989) addressing climate change mobility. For example, the *tira* (mast) and *kie* (sail) offer useful lines of analysis by considering both the design and material used to create sails. Traditionally masts were hand fashioned timber. Sails were V- shaped made from the fibres of the rauara (pandanus tree), its natural fibres are prepared and woven to create a flexible and durable sail cloth (Best 1925; Howe, 2006). Alternatively, western sails are made from canvas and shaped differently. The *tira* is firmly fixed to the *ataata* and the *kie* is lashed to the *tira*. With skilful seafarers, this gives the *vaka moana* the ability to capture the winds power and propel the vessel forward.

Over time through wear and tear, both become less effective and efficient in capturing the wind in advancing the vessel. They are examined, then repaired or replaced but their original design and purpose does not change radically. The same can be said of sovereignty. Conventional western notions of sovereignty and sovereign arrangements were designed and used in particular ways in particular times. Overtime and with the benefit of strengthening oceanic and indigenous perspectives, sovereignty also needs to be examined recognising that it can be understood differently.

This analogy emerged through the research process from an initial philosophical tussle when trying to analytically apply the elements of policy space to the material gathered and the Cook Islands cultural context and an indigenous identity that transcends geographical borders. This challenge arose early in the research process when reconciling policy space with the theorising of *va* (space in between) by scholars of Oceania and the Pacific (Ka'ili, 2005; Ka'ili, 2008; Mahina,

1999), particularly the scholarship undertaken by Oceanic women (Airini., Anae, Mila-Schaaf, UniServices, & New Zealand Ministry of Education, Research Division, 2010; Anae, 2010; Anae, 2016; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009a; Mila-Schaaf, 2006). The tussle was mellowed eventually through retracing the *papaanga* (genealogy) of these concepts with the cultural products of Cook Islands (Avaiki/Maori) scholarship (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003; Herman, 2013a; Jonassen, 1996; Jonassen, 2003; Jonassen, 2009; Te Ava, 2011; Te Ava, Rubie-Davies, & Ovens, 2013) by indigenous Cook Islanders about the Cook Islands, working with cultural concepts and my conversations with Tu'oe (expert navigator) Peia Patai about '*akonoanga vaka*' (*vaka* culture) as a way of life. In contemporary times, *vaka moana* emerges as a metaphorical lens through which to view current issues through revived ancient cultural expressions and traditions (Nia, 2009). Linked to this are the Pacific notions of islandian sovereignty (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017) and policy sovereignty (Overton, Prinsen, Murray, & Wrighton, 2012) of oceanic island states. Combined with the innovative handling of post-colonial debates by Pacific Studies scholars (Hau'ofa, Waddell, & Naidu, 1993; Teaiwa, 2014; Teaiwa, 2011; Wesley-Smith, 1995; Wesley-Smith, 2007; Wesley-Smith, 2016) that support the oceanic thinking of *vaka moana* as an 'islanding' of policy-space actors, policies and processes. That is to say, 'island' becomes a verb of possibilities rather than a noun of limited space (Teaiwa, 2007). This is more than simply thinking of the ocean as a metaphorical space of connections and a social construction of human encounters from the shore, ship, surface or depths (Steinberg, 2013, p. 156). It is about paying attention to the actual lives of individuals who experience and interact with the ocean on a regular or occasional basis (Steinberg, 2013, p. 158). In this case it is those individuals who, as part of island communities, are also part of government policy spaces.

The *vaka moana* metaphor is presented as a framework of relationality. It draws upon traditional cultural knowledge that is representative of the Pacific, Oceania and the Cook

Islands. These are berthed alongside Western conceptualisations. *Vaka moana* is presented in detail in Chapter Two.

1.9 Methodological Design

Vaka moana provides the study with an indigenous Pacific design (Sanga, 2004) and immersive methodology (Squire, 2017). As a case study it has made use of ethnographic techniques through participant observation and interviews.

I have applied participant observation tools in two ways. First, as a participant observer at various events over a period from September 2014 and December 2016. These events included attending the:

- a. Third International Small Island Developing States conference in Samoa in July 2014,
- b. UNFCCC COP negotiation meeting in Paris in December 2015,
- c. Cook Islands delegation conference preparation meetings in Rarotonga as an observer and member of the delegation since September 2014,
- d. Cook Islands 5th Development Partner Meeting held in February 2015, and
- e. Cook Islands climate change public lecture series in Rarotonga during February 2015.

Secondly, I was immersed in Cook Islands policy debates from 2005 to 2015 in a variety of roles. This practical experience provided an opportunity to develop techniques of retrospective auto ethnography that uncover information by research participants, and an opportunity to be critically reflexive of my positionality in policy spaces and the policy debates. My work-related journals record a range of activities and events, document my direct involvement in events such as the response efforts following each of the five cyclones in 2005 and Cyclone Pat in 2010, my

fieldtrips to various *pa enua* (outer islands), and project and policy consultancy field notes since 2004. I have carefully documented the process of analysing this material to ensure its credibility.

The interviews were a combination of oral exchanges and narratives, during which I was able to determine the self-reflective capacity of each participant. Where participants demonstrated high levels of self-reflection, and they were willing, repeat interviews were made.

1.10 Thesis Structure

The thesis is arranged in eight chapters, establishing and discussing in detail the research context, design, experience, findings and conclusions.

Chapter One: *Ka Akamata Matou* – We Are Beginning. The thesis begins with an introduction to the research, outlining the motivation, significance and contributions. This is followed by a discussion of the aim and significance of this research as well as an introduction to the Cook Islands geographic, historical, political and development identity and context. The research approach is also outlined.

Chapter Two: *Tarai te Vaka* (building the canoe) – Concepts and Literature. This chapter presents the vaka moana as a metaphor for the double-hulled concept of climate change mobility. It appraises relevant material for setting out the use of policy space and sovereignty in the vaka moana design. This involves laying out understandings and use of policy space, its constitutive elements of institutional and individual actors, tools, rules, practices and discourses in different contexts and disciplines. Notions of sovereignty are presented as the tira (mast) and kie (sail) of vaka moana. Climate change mobility literature is summarised.

Chapter Three: *Kaveinga* (the compass) – Map and Methods. This chapter details the research methodology. As case-based study within an indigenous Pacific paradigm of relational accountabilities, the strategies of inquiry using interviews, participant observations and

document analysis are explained. Data analysis using Nvivo as a research assistant is also explained. A discussion of ethical considerations completes this chapter.

Chapter Four – *Katea e te ama* (right and left hull/canoe) – a two-canoe context. This chapter draws on broader contextual findings that contribute to the two hull design of vaka moana as policy space. This chapter seeks to establish how climate change and human mobility as two separate canoes are framed together in the Cook Islands context of broader institutional arrangements and actors. Relevant public service reforms that have taken place are discussed as is the the country's distinct sovereign identity, including its relationship with New Zealand. The indigenous institution of the *Aronga Mana* (traditional indigenous leaders) is also presented. By approaching this chapter in this way, preliminary attention is given to research questions one two and four.

Chapter Five: *Ataata* (central platform) – Institutional Forms. This chapter focuses on the institutional formations and policy frameworks of Cook Islands policy spaces tying climate change and human mobility together. Included as part of ataata is the national development framework and an analysis of how climate change mobility is identified in these arrangements and frameworks to connect climate change and human mobility. The influence of prevailing discourses and narratives about island state economies and development in the construction of taken-for-granted entities and insititions (Wesley-Smith, 2013) that obscure alternative island narratives based on strengths and opportunities is also discussed. As such this chapter examines the institutional, policy and discourse elements of research question two.

Chapter Six: *Oe Akatere* (steering rudder) – Actor Agency and the power to navigate. This chapter, based on findings from observations and interviews, discusses actor agency in mediating and transforming conventional policy discourses about SIDS vulnerability and development. Actor perceptions and experiences of climate change mobility are examined to

understand the extent to which climate change mobility is an issue and what other narratives comply or challenge the influence of conventional discourses about island states climate change mobility policies. This chapter contributes to research question three - what experiences and perceptions of individual actors in these policy spaces shape the attention given to addressing climate change mobility?

Chapter Seven: *Te Tira e te Kie* (mast and sail) – Sovereign Climate Change Mobility. This chapter presents an analysis of findings giving attention to sovereignty, particularly Islandian sovereignty (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017). This focuses on understanding the implications for Cook Islands sovereignty in the context of climate change mobility, particularly due to sea-level rise and cyclones, as well as other cross-border considerations that emerged during the research. These include the Cook Islands' graduation from OECD eligibility for development assistance; Cook Islanders' eligibility for New Zealand Superannuation; Cook Islands deportees from Australia; and the partnership between the Cook Islands government and the Tainui tribe of Aotearoa New Zealand. The chapter concludes with a look at what sovereignty and policy spaces are available for oceanic island states to address cross-border issues. The sovereignty considerations that arise for the Cook Islands in addressing climate change mobility and other similar cross-border issues is examined in this chapter. This answers research question four.

Chapter Eight: *Ka Tae Mai Matou* – We Are Arriving. Finally, in arriving at the end of this thesis, this chapter summarises the key findings and conclusions in relation to the research questions. Theoretical and policy contributions are discussed in determining the extent to which the Cook Islands is able to address climate change mobility given its sovereignty and policy spaces. Future work considerations and some reflections and recommendations complete this thesis.

Chapter 2: Tarai te Vaka – Concepts and Literature

2.1 Introduction

This study is an example of a Pacific development studies research project that uses decolonising methodologies and indigenous conceptual frameworks. It challenges the central tenet of objectivity of traditional conceptual and methodological approaches by adopting an indigenist research approach that works from a worldview in which knowledge is relational rather than objective. For the purposes of this study, Pacific indigenous research refers to projects led by Pacific researchers using Pacific theoretical frameworks to inform the methodology of the research. Cultural knowledge, truth and reality inform the methodological choices in the study which focuses on how indigenous actors work within national and international policy spaces using alternative narratives to advance Pacific SIDS objectives, in this case the issue of climate change induced mobility in the Cook Islands.

The study is based on indigenous research models proposed by Pacific researchers, such as Jean Mitaera's (1997) concept of the "researcher as the first paradigm", James, Mitaera and Rongo-Raea's (2012) Turanga Maori framework, and the Pacific Health Research Committee of the Health Research Council. It draws on methodological guidance from Pacific and other indigenous scholars (Ferris-Leary, 2013; Gegeo, 2001; Mahina, 1999; Quanchi, 2004; Te Ava, 2011; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2013; Wilson & Wilson, 2013), and examines the use of cultural metaphor in Pacific research (and policy making), such as Teremoana Maua-Hodges's (2000) *tivaevae* model. The contribution of this study is to establish the Vaka Moana model to provide an indigenised understanding of the twin development issues of climate change and population mobility.

This chapter shows how concepts of policy space and sovereignty of small island states can be understood, how each has emerged as a concept, and how these concepts have been used in other studies. I explain the development and application of the vaka moana (double-hulled ocean voyaging vessel) metaphor through a critical engagement with the literature and other knowledge sources. The vaka moana metaphor is a model or framework that is intended as tool to understand how the Cook Islands is able to negotiate its development future when addressing cross-border issues such as climate change mobility.

The vaka moana framework is informed by indigenous Pacific island studies and marine geography perspectives of the concepts of policy space and sovereignty. This contextualising of key concepts is important to understand how policy space and sovereignty are made relevant in island state contexts. Indigenous perspectives of these concepts challenge conventional understandings about island states and cast a different light on the effects of climate change and the long-standing flows of people within the Pacific. Alternative conceptualisations of policy space and sovereignty call for a disentanglement of the multi-dimensions of issues, approaches and solutions that transcend the territorialised decision-making powers of domestic and international policy regimes and policy actors.

These multi-dimensional concerns are often ambiguous and inconsistent in the context of an island state such as the Cook Islands, a 'sovereign nation' with a unique constitutional arrangement with New Zealand (Connell, 1988; Crocombe, 1964; Fepulea'i, 2002; Jonassen, 2009; I. Short & Holmes, 2013; Stone, 1971; Strickland, 1978).

In this case study of climate change mobility in the Cook Islands, policy space is regarded as fluid, shifting over time and place (Boin et al., 2006), and sovereignty is malleable and contested (Androus & Greymorning, 2016; Grydehoj, 2018; Overton et al., 2012). Both are affected by human mobility associated with climate change (Bettini, 2012). Cultural-based ocean and island-

centred interpretations are applied to these concepts of policy space and sovereignty to provide a context in which to establish an indigenous view of climate change mobility (Hau'ofa, Waddell, Naidu, & University of the South Pacific School of Social and, Economic Development, 1993; Hau'ofa, 2008). The need to better understand the dynamics involved in developing appropriate policies in the Cook Islands' situation is driven by the urgency resulting from the multi-layered impacts of climate change for small island developing states, and the evolving nature and role of sovereignty prompted by rising numbers of people displaced and on the move in the global south.

2.2 Space and the Concept of Va

Social constructionist views rest on assertions that 'humans interpretation of the world produce social reality' and these 'shared understandings among people give rise to rules, norms, identities, concepts, and institutions' (Klotz & Lynch, 2007, p. 3). To understand the concept of policy space, this thesis recognises that 'space' is socially constituted (Hacking, 1999; Haslanger, 2012; Massey, 2005), and conceptualised as a product of interrelations, multiplicity and openness (Massey, 1999). Massey proposes that, first, space as a product of interrelations is 'constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny'; and secondly, space is 'the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist ... [and] therefore of coexisting heterogeneity' (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Thirdly, space is never finished, and is 'always in the process of being made ... [t]here are always loose ends in space' (Massey, 2005, pp. 11-12).

This study considers such notions of space in relation to island studies scholarship and the social construction of islands (Baldacchino, 2008; Pugh, 2016; Royle, 2007; Steinberg, 2005), to offer insights from island thinking about space. Prevailing thinking is of islands as fixed land masses

bordered by sea, different from ‘mainlands’, often seen as symbols of singularity, isolation, dependency and peripherality (Baldacchino, 2008; Pugh, 2016; Royle, 2007; Stratford, Baldacchino, Farbotko, & Harwood, 2011). This has produced ‘dominant discourses *about* and *on* islands and islanders, rather than *with, from* or *for* them’ (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 114). Instead, island thinking places value on relationality with the ‘archipelagos [as] fluid cultural processes, sites of abstract and material relations of movement and rest, dependent on changing conditions of articulation or connection’ (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 122), thus redefining islands as connected and dynamic spaces. This is particularly so for the Pacific, recognised for its ‘ocean-going vessels and navigation systems, and the original settling of and travel between the islands, from which emerged powerful collective identities’ (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 122).

Marine geography scholarship has added to this alternate understanding of islands with its social construction of the ocean (Steinberg, 2001) that, like land, ‘shapes and is shaped by a host of physical and social processes’ (Steinberg, 1999, p. 367). Oceanic thinking (Steinberg & Peters, 2015) is a space for interpreting global social and physical processes (Steinberg & Peters, 2015, p. 366). Rather than thinking of the ocean as blue, flat and unchanging – stable in both space and time as portrayed in a static world map, fixed with a series of latitude-longitude points (Steinberg, 2013, p. 159) – the ocean is a ‘world of flows, connections, liquidities and becomings’ (Steinberg & Peters, 2015, p. 248) with three-dimensional and turbulent materiality of depth and volume (Steinberg & Peters, 2015, p. 254). The long history of the movement of people in the Pacific when viewed through the lens of oceanic thinking make it possible to ‘facilitate the reimagining and re-enlivening of a world ever on the move’ (Steinberg & Peters, 2015, p. 248) leading to aquatic epistemologies (Satizábal, Batterbury, 2018), wet ontologies (Steinberg & Peters, 2015) and immersive methodologies (Squire, 2017).

Scholars have added to this island and oceanic thinking – where land meets sea, on shorelines, estuaries, swamps as and reefs – spaces where interactions occur with marine and terrestrial

environments (Gillis, 2012). While islands may be closed systems with maritime boundaries of a finite space and limited resources (Benedicto, 2014), they also have an ability to transform.

Oceanic thinking and the 'role of the "ocean-space" in indigenous peoples' sense of place transcends the Western perspective of the ocean as empty' (Steinberg, 1999, p. 369). This is eloquently shown in Epeli Hau'ofa's seminal work of 'a sea of islands' (1993) and its unifying discourse of Oceania. This study takes these socially constituted notions of space and oceanic thinking and berths them alongside indigenous Oceania conceptualisations of *va*¹⁴ as a space of relationality.

As part of the post-colonial project that has resisted and challenged the paramountcy of Western frameworks and scientific knowledge, scholars (Airini, Anae, & Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Anae, 2010; Ka'ili, 2005; Mila-Schaaf, 2006; Mila-Schaaf, 2009; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009b; Panapa, 2014) have pillared the oceanic idea of *va*, *va'a*, or *vaha* denoting the 'space in between' (Airini et al., 2010; Ka'ili, 2005; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009a). Rather than space being seen as an expanse or open areas (Ka'ili, 2005) *va* is an 'imagined space' (Mila-Schaaf, 2006) in which entities, identities and subjectivities are interrelated.

Applications of *va* can be seen in various sectors. In education, the *teu le va* approach is applied across the relationships of Pacific education research and policy making in New Zealand. This approach 'places strong emphasis on optimal relationships in the *va*' (Airini et al., 2010, p. 9), sustaining good relationships between the researcher and policy makers – a key element in conceptualising and intervening in Pacific education outcomes. In social work practice (Ka'ili, 2005; Ka'ili, 2008; Mila-Schaaf, 2006) *va* is theorised and applied as a 'negotiated space' (Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009) of indigenous Pacific mental health and addictions.

¹⁴ In this context I have used *va* to refer to the space between things, the between-ness. It is not empty space or space that separates but gives meaning to things.

In the New Zealand health sector, the concept of *va* mobilises a Pacific discourse through the process of developing the Pacific Health Research guidelines where *va* is part of an endeavour to understand and articulate the logic of Pacific indigenous paradigms and knowledge systems (Mila-Schaff, 2009). In this regard, *va* is considered the conceptual glue cementing the ethical relationships of Pacific health research in New Zealand. The meaning and use of indigenous Pacific constructs such as *va* are set alongside the social construction of space as fluid and dynamic, emerging as a net that connects the parameters of this research with an understanding of the inherent relationships and meanings of space.

Indigenous scholarship from Oceania has engaged with the notion of space and inherent relationships. The pivotal work of Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) about the deconstruction of dominant Western theorising and research provides a significant marker of such developments. Her critical postcolonial thinking reconceptualises notions of the indigenous other in the research space and provides a philosophical place from which indigenous scholars and others might undertake research.

2.3 Policy Space

The notion of policy space is central to this study because it is in this space that conventional and indigenous interpretations of knowledge are contested and co-exist, where power relations determine whose voice is heard, and which actors are considered as experts. It is in the examination of Cook Islands policy space and its actors that the association between climate change and human mobility, or lack of association, can be better understood.

Drawing on the foundational work of Berger and Luckmann (1967), Shore and colleagues posit that policy is a fundamental 'organising principle' of society which 'provides a way of conceptualising and symbolising social relations, and around which people live their lives and structure their realities' (2011, p. 2). Within the space in which policy is made, power relations

are at play in the 'process of problem definition, interpretations of cause and effect, characterisations of knowledge and information as relevant or not relevant to a policy issue, as technical and scientific are contrasted with anecdotal and impressionistic' (Schneider & Sidney, 2009, p. 108).

It is in this policy-making space that the role of experts and the type of knowledge that causes an actor to be considered an expert is determined (Schneider & Sidney, 2009). Groups or voices that garner more attention will shape policy while 'others are excluded in part because their knowledge is socially constructed as less reliable, or invalid or irrelevant' (Schneider & Sidney, 2009, p. 108).

This is particularly so for climate change issues, where Western science, knowledge and technology pervade, with a reliance on certainty to aid decision making and action (Campbell, 2010). As such, a questioning of the social construction of policy brings a focus to the knowledge-power relations at play. What knowledge is privileged over others, and by whom, are key elements in the analytical and methodological design of research that examines an individual actor's perceptions and experiences.

This study considers how constructions of groups and problems are manifest to become institutionalised into policy designs that subsequently reinforce and disseminate these constructions (Schneider & Ingram, 1997), and examines the sources and forms of evidence used in the construction and status of different ideas, knowledge and relationships. The social construction of space and policy shows how it is possible to bind together these two notions to form a material and conceptual construct that can help to make sense of phenomena in geopolitical contexts, such as the national and development policy spaces of oceanic states addressing cross-border issues.

The literature provides a rich source of examples about the construction of policy space from the northern and southern hemispheres, developed countries, developing countries and small island developing states, related to education, health, trade, economics and development (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013; Chang, 2007; Jules, 2014; Hauray & Urfalino, 2009; Khan, 2007). These studies also highlight the limitations in the scope and focus of policy-space research because there were no explicit examples of conceptualising Pacific country issues related to climate change and/or migration using this concept, nor were there examples related to any Pacific country's development.

Comparative educationalists Alexiadou and van de Bunt-Kokhuis (2013) examine two case studies, one on policy transfer between the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU), and the other on education mobility practices of individual academics engaged in Dutch tertiary education. The authors draw on the concept of policy space to highlight the effects that changing relationships between national, international and supranational levels of discourse and practice have on education policy and practice (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 344). Together these studies contribute a useful understanding of the institutional boundaries and constraints in the transboundary movement of policy. They also provide the notion of policy 'inflectedness' to understand the agency and policy action taken as individuals interpret and mediate through policy discourses.

In another study of the European education sector, Beech's (2009) examination of global policy spaces differentiates 'between a space of flows (organised around networks of interaction without the need for territorial contiguity) and a space of places (where social interaction is attached to a locale)' (pp. 347-8). As alternatives to the nation state that is commonly used as the unit of analysis, or reference point, to interpret space, Beech draws on Castells' (2000) theory of the network society formed around high-speed information which avoids the nation state as its main spatial reference (Beech, 2009, p. 349). From this, Beech argues that 'as

discourses that define an educated identity for the information age move from global space to the state and to practice-based institutions these discourses change their meaning and their practical effects' (Beech, 2009, p. 348). While nation states do not need to be a central analytic of policy space, analysis of discourses provide useful insights particularly as local cultural traditions, national institutions and economic systems are disrupted at the expense of indigenous populations (Castells, 2000).

Also from Europe, Hauray and Urfalino's (2009) study examines the complexities of intertwined processes to explain the formation of new policy spaces. Based on the case of forming a European medicines licensing system, they concluded that competition, cooperation and the mutual transformation of relations between expertise and policy-making played a role in forming this new policy space (p. 431). Informing this study are the policy convergences – such as shared drafting of rules and transnational problem-solving – and the socialisation of actors into the norms and rules of the industry that resulted from the cooperation amongst national leaders and institutional experts.

Scholarship outside the European context study, such as that of Khan (2007), Gallagher (2011) and Chang (2006) provides further insights into the policy space of developing countries, their economy, trade and development. Concerned with extending the debate in development economics between neoliberals and neo-developmentalists, Kahn examines policy space in a trade context and 'the closing of the development policy space for low income countries' (Kahn, 2007, p. 1073). The study proposes that the policy space of low-income countries (LIC) shrinks as a result of the gap between various World Trade Organisation (WTO) mechanisms, such as the bound tariff rates and actual tariff rates. In contrast to previously reviewed studies, this study advances the notion of policy space as a gap – and that it is in the interests of nation states to prevent this gap from closing.

Gallagher (2011), despite a limited conceptualisation of policy space, provides an analysis of the extent to which nations have the policy space for capital controls in the world economy. The study finds that while 'United States trade and investment agreements, and to some extent the WTO, leave little room for deploying capital controls to prevent and mitigate a financial crisis' (Gallagher, 2011, p. 409). Nevertheless, there are circumstances where there is room for developing countries to deploy capital measures (Gallagher, 2011, p. 409). Similar to Khan (2007), policy space is conceptualised as a gap in which a nation state needs room to move in order to prevent and mitigate financial crises. This gap is said to be 'shrinking' with a nation state's increasing integration into international economic relationships: more global integration equates to less national policy space.

Development economist Chang (2006) examines the policy space of trade and industrial policies. In this case, the policy space of developing countries is presented as an issue to be addressed. As with Khan (2007) and Gallagher (2011), policy space is in danger of shrinking or being squeezed (Kumar & Gallagher, 2007). Chang takes a historical look at the 'creep' of multilateral/bilateral agencies and aid/loan conditionalities (controlled by developed countries) influencing the ability of developing countries to achieve economic development. By examining the principles that dominate international negotiations, Chang identifies the limitations and double standards embedded in seemingly fair and equal notions of a level playing field, autonomy, flexibility and reciprocity that restrict policy space and limit economic growth. Khan (2007), Gallagher, (2011) Chang, (2007) and others (Gallagher, 2005; Brown & Stern, 2006; DiCaprio & Gallagher, 2006; Kumar & Gallagher, 2007) have all flagged concerns regarding the capacity of multilateral negotiations to hinder the development progress of developing countries, implying national policy spaces can be increased by opting out of international obligations (Mayer, 2009).

Framed differently, Mayer's study is focused on the tension between international economic integration and the nation state's autonomy to pursue effective economic development policy. This study examined 'how developing countries can effectively use existing national policy space, and indeed enlarge it, without opting out of international commitments' (Mayer, 2009, p. 374).

Concerned with the operational content of policy space, Mayer perceives policy space as a useable construct. If used effectively developing countries 'have been rewarded with accelerated development' (Mayer, 2009, p. 375), but 'having policy space does not imply that it is always put to good use' (Mayer, 2009, p. 375). In order to use and enlarge policy space, Mayer advocates a model for thinking of policy-making in terms of targets, instruments and other variables that describes the relationships between them.

Interestingly, in analysing the relationships between targets and instruments of closed or internationally integrated economies, Mayer alerts us to the notions of policy sovereignty and policy autonomy whereby policy space is simply defined 'as a combination of *de jure* policy sovereignty and *de facto* national policy autonomy' (Mayer, 2009, p. 376). This implies that policy space and policy sovereignty can be conceived as being interrelated notions expressing state authority and power.

The United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) constructs policy space in a similar manner. This 194-member-state intergovernmental forum is responsible for dealing with 'international trade and related problems of economic development' (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2014, p. 1). UNCTAD provides a 'top down, outside in' perspective where 'policy space' provides 'scope for domestic policies to be framed by international disciplines, commitments and global market considerations' (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2004, p. 3, para. 8). Policy space 'refers to the freedom

and ability of governments to identify and pursue the most appropriate mix of economic and social policies to achieve equitable and sustainable development in their own national contexts, but as constituent parts of an interdependent global economy' (UNCTAD,2014, p. vii). This suggests policy space consists of a space where the state's power over its policy choices are made as part of a global phenomenon.

UNCTAD goes further in explaining Mayer's definition 'as the combination of *de jure* policy sovereignty, which is the formal authority of policymakers over their national policy goals and instruments, and *de facto* national policy control, which involves the ability of national policymakers to set priorities, influence specific targets and weigh possible trade-offs' (UNCTAD, 2014, p. vii). This definition refers to the interaction of the formal authority, ability and actions of national actors to set policy directions. However, while it situates the state, its policy makers and actions as central, the definition fails to take account of the multiple identities and their readings of the 'interdependent global economy' rendering them invisible.

Under the United Nations (UN) mandate for South-South Cooperation the South Centre promotes developing countries' common interests internationally. The South Centre advocates for a more nuanced view in which 'policy space is about the freedom to choose the best mix of policies possible for achieving sustainable and equitable economic development given their unique and individual social, political, economic, and environmental conditions' (South Centre, 2005, p. 1). This view still rests on the centrality of the state, its power to exercise authority over its policy choices and alludes to the interface between national and potential influence of external agenda and mechanisms. For the South Centre policy space for developing countries is a 'fusion of three key principles in international law and policy' (South Centre, 2005, p. 1): the principle of sovereign equality of states, the right to development and the principle of special treatment for developing countries. In this context, a definition of policy space is institutionally embedded within the UN framework and the principles of the UNCTAD. The South Centre also

sees policy space as a universe of available policy choices for development that is shaped by domestic and international constraints (that are socially constructed). Such constraints shape the effective national policy space of developing countries to expand or contract depending on the state of such constraints. It is the enabling mechanisms in multilateral agreements that allows these national policy spaces to expand (as shown in Figure 1), (South Centre, 2005, p. 4).

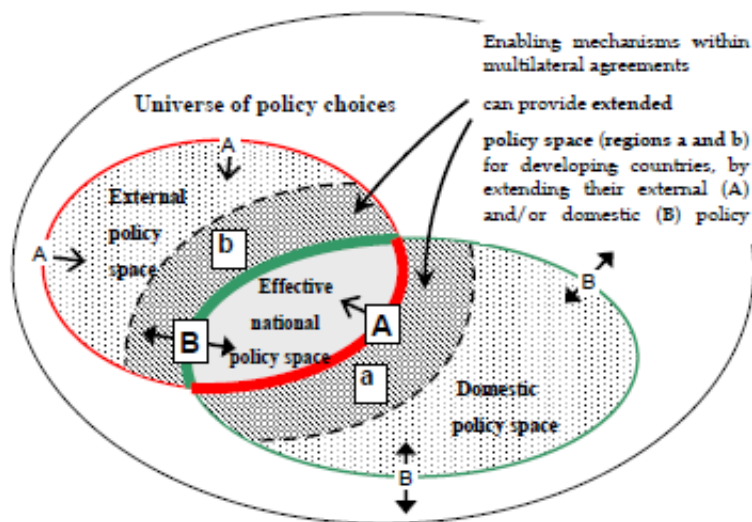


Figure 1: Determinates of Effective Policy Space

This suggests that 'policy space' is a proxy for and extension of legitimate state authority. We can explore this point. On the one hand, policy space in a trade and economic development is conceived as a form of sovereignty and autonomy, and on the other in an education and health context. A different interpretation of space means policy space is constructed around broader social interactions. More broadly, Boin et al. (2006) define policy space as an institutional field of actors, rules and practices associated with governmental efforts to address a particular category of social issues and problems. Grek et al. (2013) go on to describe policy space as 'the active construction of a shared, regulated, but fluid space that encompasses national and transnational contexts and their interactions' (Grek et al., p. 487).

Referring to a transnational context and the European policy space, policy spaces are thought by Hauray and Urfalin (2009) 'as a cognitive and normative area, through the development of a "we-image" (Elias, 1991) and common ways of thinking and doing things in a sphere of policy (Surel, 2000), and as an arena within which actors orient their actions toward one another (Stone Sweet et al., 2001: 1)' (2009, p. 433).

The literature shows that policy spaces are complex and complicated, varying in their material and conceptual forms. The examples (above) drawn from the literature show that policy spaces relate to more than policy autonomy or sovereignty. A policy space is constructed through the social interactions of its actors, how are they governed, and what outcome they are working towards. While less explicit about the role of sovereignty, the literature highlights the flexibility of the space to make visible the movements of relations. The diversity of the identities as individuals and organisations and their interests as situated within a country context that extends beyond geographical and conceptual borders are also highlighted. The space materialises as a product of time-sharing social practices (Castells, 2000; Beech, 2009). The nation-state as a social construct features as a key reference point of policy spaces (Beech, 2009) with sovereign intent and institutional boundaries that can constrain policy transfer across borders (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013).

With an understanding of agency as a capacity to act (Mayhew, 2015) – and of policy action seen through an individual's interpretation of policy discourses (Alexiadou et al., 2013) – it then becomes possible to identify policy convergences and tensions (Boin et al., 2006). Tensions in this case can refer to the limitations in bringing together domestic and external capacities, or the tensions between notions of sovereignty and solidarity and the conceptual confusion over the goal of co-operation to advance policy concerns.

In summary, policy spaces can be understood using a regulative, inquisitive or mediative governance frame (Grek et al., 2013) with principles of consensus, collaboration and cooperation (Jules, 2014). Interrelations of entities and identities of policy spaces can advance the shared and multiple development trajectories of states. This is revealed through the cooperation between leaders and experts that results in policy convergences and the socialisation of actors into norms and rules of communities (Hauray & Urfalino, 2009).

For the purpose of this thesis, policy space is a relational and fluid space of institutional and individual actors, rule and practices associated with government effort (Boin, et al., 2006) to address particular societal issues. It is a space of consensus, collaboration and cooperation (Jules, 2014) that is also constrained by institutional boundaries (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013) and encompasses national and transnational contexts and their interactions (Grek et al., 2013). In conceptualising and applying policy space in this research, I propose policy space as *vaka moana* – a vessel and island in an indigenous Pacific oceanic context.

2.4 Cook Islands Research and the Use of Metaphor

In this chapter, I present (below) the *vaka moana* as a dynamic cultural metaphor for this study. In searching for an appropriate research model, I was particularly interested to find if and how cultural metaphors and concepts informed or guided Cook Islands policy research. What cultural concepts were used and what role did they play in the organisation and coherence of academic research? In the literature, I found recent Cook Islands social science studies by emerging Cook Islands scholars that used cultural metaphor in their research. For example, Paul Beumelburg (2016) is a New Zealand *papaa* educationalist married to a *vaine* Mangaia based in New Zealand. His PhD thesis presents a Manganian framework of sustainable development and Manganian Education for Sustainable Development pedagogy centred on *Oraanga Mangaia*, referring to life on Mangaia and Manganian livelihoods bound in cultural practice and three development

dimensions: *akonoanga enua* (environment), *aroa taeake* (economic exchange), and *te ipukarea ia rangarangatu* (cultural values, beliefs, epistemologies, culture and language) (2016, p. 123). His thesis also refers to the *maro-itiki* art pattern which depicts the strength of two brothers tied back to back who fought against their enemies. It represents Mangaian critique of Western knowledge and technology against *Oraanga Mangaia* and values.

Neti Herman, a health professional from and based in Rarotonga, developed the *Pu Ara* (pandanus tree) model of health promotion for Cook Islands youth. In her PhD thesis she presents 'a *Vaka Takitumu* worldview that embraces a cultural and spiritual identity to protect and navigate the positive development and health of young people' (Herman, 2013, p. 211).

Aue Te Ava (2011), an education academic from Rarotonga, now based in Australia, applied the *tivaevae* (hand-made applique quilt) research model (Maua-Hodges, 2000) and applied the metaphor to the Cook Islands Ministry of Health (MOE) and physical education curriculum programme (Cook Islands MOE, 2006), to address the limitations of the *pitoenua* conceptualisation used in curriculum document. He did this by contextualising the curriculum within Cook Islands cultural values and proposing a Cook Islands culturally responsive pedagogy (Te Ava, 2011).

Debi Futter-Puati (2017), a New Zealand *papaa* health education research consultant married to a *tane Rarotonga* and based in Rarotonga, also made use of the *tivaevae* metaphor in her PhD exegesis of Cook Islands young people's views of gender, sex, sexuality and relationships (Futter-Puati, 2017). Jonah Tisam (2015), a Papua New Guinean man married to a Cook Islands woman now based in New Zealand, applied Maua-Hodges' (2000) *tivaivai*¹⁵ research model in his PhD thesis within a General Systems theoretical framework. He explored Cook Islands

¹⁵ Alternate spelling of *tivaevae*.

governance and used a Cook Islands-lensed Pacific worldview to capture Cook Islands epistemological underpinnings (Tisam, 2015).

Overall, these studies engaged in Cook Islands indigenous knowledge in various ways where cultural concepts and values are emphasised and conveyed in their frameworks. The vaka moana metaphor is a means by which indigenous research is able to (re)inscribe the dominant discourse of what counts as knowledge (Te Ava, 2011; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012), making it possible to etch out alternative productive understandings of the Cook Islands government response to climate change mobility.

2.5 The Vaka Moana Research Model

The vaka moana was chosen because of its importance in the context of everyday Cook Islands life. As the key organising cultural metaphor of this thesis, its purpose is two-fold. It provides a concept to frame the study as well as a structural device. The vaka moana, its construction, its purpose and use, along with the contextual influences that come to bear on its journey, make up this research model. In its physical and conceptual forms, vaka moana is an historical and contemporary means of transport able to unify and move individuals, institutions and sectors to destinations near and far across the ocean. Metaphorically, diverse interests and issues converge and diverge as it moors and moves about its oceanic world.

The research makes use of the vaka moana metaphor. It does this by considering the vaka moana in terms of the main elements of its construction, and the use of the vaka moana to navigate journeys. The vaka moana metaphor provides a framework of relationality within which to organise concepts, as well as a framework for approaching the research. This framework emerged from and extends indigenous understandings of relationality which is a fundamental notion of indigenous research. The focus is on relationships – the relationship between researcher and people; between people and their knowledge; and the researcher and

ideas. In the Eastern Pacific this is specifically expressed through the concept of va, the space in between. This is an occupied space, and a negotiated space.

Figure 2 below shows, the first critical elements are the two vaka (hulls or canoes). One is referred to as the katea: the right side, the male side, the rational thinking side. Likened to western science traditions, the katea represents climate change. The other is the ama: the left side, the female side, the emotional creative side. This represents people and their mobility. The other elements are the ataata (platform). The bridging and tying together the katea and ama represent institutions and policies related to addressing the two separate yet connected phenomena of climate change and human mobility. The oe akatere (steering blade) is also critical and represents the agency of actors that participate in policy spaces. The final element of the vaka moana is the tira and kie (mast and sail). They represent sovereignty.

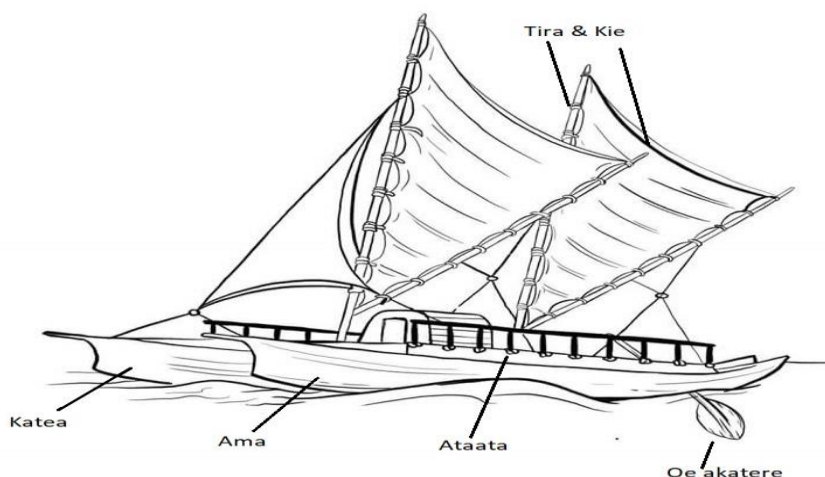


Figure 2: Diagram of Vaka Moana elements

Source: Ellison, R. (2018). Vakamoana Graphic adapted from the Cook Islands \$5 coin.

Historically, throughout the Pacific, canoes were a common means of transport for trading, invading, long-range exploration and settlement (Howe, 2006; Salmond, 2006). Vaka moana disappeared from the Cook Islands and other parts of Polynesia until a renaissance in the 1970s, and the Hawaiian construction of the *Hōkūleʻa* and *Hawaikinui* in the 1980s (Finney, 2006a).¹⁶ In 2010, the Okeanos Foundation for the Sea, founded by underwater filmmaker Dieter Paulmann, began working with Pacific voyaging societies to build a fleet of seven fossil-fuel-free vaka moana using the design of *Te Au o Tonga*. From April 2011 to August 2012 the international voyage of *Te Mana o Te Moana* fleet advocated for the protection of the ocean's bio-diversity, demonstrating the power and potential of the vaka – and celestial navigation – by sailing over 210,000 nautical miles of open ocean.¹⁷

The *vaka*, *waka*, or *va'a* is a common technology throughout Polynesia. There are different types of vaka, from the double-hull ocean-voyaging vessel to the outrigger designs with a single hull and single or double counter levers. These may have single or multiple sails, or no sails at all. There is also the single canoe, with or without sails (Best, 1925b; Buck, 1971; Howe, 2006). I

¹⁶ In the Cook Islands, prior to and during early colonisation, the large double-hull canoes decked with masts and sails were used in ocean voyages and inter-island trips. Smaller outrigger canoes with and without sails were used for coastal and lagoon fishing and gathering seafood by men, women and children (Best, 1925a; Howe, 2006). These smaller vessels are still in use along with modern aluminium crafts, but the vaka moana disappeared from the Cook Islands and Polynesia.

Cook Islands construction of modern vaka moana began with Tom Davis, Pa Tuterangi Ariki MD KBE and his 1990s replication of *Takitumu*, the double-hull '*alia*', a Western Polynesian shunting canoe sailed in the 1300s by Tangi'ia from Upolu, Samoa who settled on Rarotonga. The construction of *Te Au o Tonga* followed, based on a Tahitian *tīpaenua*, a tacking canoe (Finney, 2006a, p. 316). The smaller *pa'i* or *pa'iere* (outrigger canoe) used by fishers for coastal fishing continue to use these with modern adaptations.

In more recent times, these have become popular as recreational and sporting vessels with the development of single and multi-person outrigger designs. As part of the *vaka* renaissance, canoes made from timber and fibreglass were donated from Tahiti to newly formed Rarotonga-based canoe clubs. By the early 2000s a local race calendar was underway and a national body was formed to develop *oe vaka* (outrigger canoe racing nationally and internationally). In November 2004 the inaugural International Vaka Eiva festival was held with competitors from around the region coming to compete. The event is still running and provides a week of sprint and long-distance open ocean races held at Muri Lagoon and Avarua Harbour in Rarotonga. A similar event is also held in Aitutaki.

¹⁷ As cultural icons and environmental advocates, four *vaka* were gifted by Okeanos to the voyaging societies of the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa and Tahiti (Okeanos Foundation for the Sea, 2017, <http://okeanos-foundation.org/foundation>).

have focused on the double-hulled ocean-voyaging canoe known in contemporary times in the Cook Islands as the vaka moana.

Structurally, the vaka moana is made up of interrelated parts. Constructed from traditional or modern materials such as wood or fibreglass, it has two canoes or hulls. The hulls may not be the same size. One account from 1913, cited in Best (1925), identified the canoe on the left, the ama, as the female side while the canoe on the right, the katea, was called the male side being the larger of the two. In this vaka moana framework, one canoe, the katea – the male, rational side – represents climate change with its Western science traditions. The other, the ama – the female, creative side – represents human mobility underpinned by humanity concerns. As two separate phenomena, the analysis seeks to determine how the katea and ama are understood as issues for the Cook Islands. This is examined in Chapter Four.

The two canoes are joined by *kiato* (cross-pieces) and are lashed together by the *kaa* (sinnet lashing). The kiato form the joists for the ataata (centre staging/platform) that extends across the two canoes. The kiato and ataata between the two canoes/issues – that is, between the katea and ama – represent the institutions, arrangements, policies and practices as a dynamic and flexible space for exchange, brokering and thinking (Grek et al., 2013). The make-up of institutions in this policy space – how they came to be and interact with others to create a platform to accept or not climate change migration and what actions to take – is the focus of Chapter Five.

The oe akatere, or steering rudder, represents individual agency of actors in navigating courses towards favourable outcomes. Agency is a property that may or may not be ascribed to actors – an attribution likened to the granting of a privilege that can be withdrawn and withheld. Societies and cultures differ in how such privileges are distributed and to what sorts of entities, ascribing agency – and hence responsibility and accountability – to different persons in different

ways, resulting in variable distinctions between actors. Furthermore, context and practices create particular subject positions (Underhill-Sem, 2017; Underhill-Sem, 2012), such as the expert scientist, the compliant consultant, or the Maori public servant. Taking account of the subject positions and actor agency, analysis is focused on individual actors' perceptions and experiences to understand how actors mediate policies and discourses to influence and achieve outcomes (Shore, Wright, & Però, 2012). This is the focus of Chapter Six.

The tira (masts) are stepped into the platform and guyed with *kaa*. The kie (sails) of mats from woven pu ara (pandanus tree) propel the canoe with the oe akatere (steering oar) (Best, 1925a, p. 288-289). The tira (mast) and kie (sail) represent sovereignty. As a malleable and flexible concept (Overton et al, 2012), analysis is concerned with the how the state and its communities are able to keep the tira in place and control the kie in different conditions. How the Cook Islands policy sovereignty is to be understood in this space (Overton et al., 2012) is the focus of Chapter Seven.

Vaka moana has significant historical, social, cultural, economic, environmental and political meaning for people and communities of the Cook Islands and other countries and territories in Oceania. Culturally, the vaka moana provides the mechanics for cohesion while also offering a strategy to build a structure that embodies deep-level values (S. Carter, Kelly, & Brailsford, 2012, p. 69). As a Cook Islands woman, this enables me to adopt multiple positions as a community member and academic, where cultural values are emphasised and privileged. In this regard, values drive the thesis structure. Where Cook Islands indigenous values overlap with Westernised academic ones, these are expressed through a culturally specific lexicon and framework (S. Carter et al., 2012, p. 70).

By examining the parts and interactions of vaka moana as policy space, it is possible to understand the domain within which climate change and mobility are issues. The purpose of

vaka has local, away-from-home and out-of-the-way applications. By this I mean *vaka* is instrumental in interpreting the everyday activities of individual actors as they participate in a range of activities and events in multiple locations.

Historical accounts report *vaka* as a way to facilitate and sustain life, livelihoods and trade as well as being an integral part in mediating disputes, conflict and breaches of custom through resolution, conquest or reconciliation (Best, 1925a; Buck, 1971). *Vaka* are also a means to explore, discover, settle and resettle (Howe, 2006). This aspect of the *vaka moana* model can provide insight into the treatment of climate change mobility because it clarifies the processes that actors *papapapa* (prepare), *toia* (launch), *kimi* (explore), *kite* (discover/find) and *no'o/ariki* (settle/agree) on policy priorities and strategies. In other words, the purpose and use of *vaka moana* provides an analogy for the purpose of policy space and how actors come together to address an issue.

But what system of navigation is employed to assist actors to undertake their deliberations? Traditional systems rely on environmental cues from the sun, stars, wind patterns, cloud formations, waves, swells and currents, and landmarks (Finney, 2006b; Howe, 2006; Lee & Paulmann, 2015a; Lee & Paulmann, 2015b). In this regard, the world around the *vaka moana* is a compass. In the award-winning *Mana o te Moana* documentary about the 2011-12 historic journey in the Pacific by a *vaka moana* fleet, a navigator said, 'Be prepared to run with the storm, never go against it' (Marbrook & Single, 2015a). In this sense, the *vaka moana* model pays attention to policy-making processes; the cues, tools and advice that are used to frame an issue; and possible conflicts or convergences that exist.

Traditional systems of navigation represent a body of knowledge and skills that are revered and passed on from generation to generation. Traditional navigation is practised without the use of maps and instruments. It is a system of approximation rather than one of precision. For instance,

the vaka moana is conceived as the needle of a compass that makes directional turns on a compass. Rather than the vaka moana sailing towards its destination, it is understood as being stationary and the world around us is always moving. As the destination comes to the canoe, we are always in a state of becoming rather than going (Spiller, Barclay-Kerr & Panoho, 2015). Vaka moana also represent a dynamic interaction between individuals and the environment. It is a holistic sensory experience of travel that is more than simply moving from one island to another (Finney, 2006b; Lee & Paulmann, 2015b). Therefore, attention in this study is given to assessing the individuals that make up the crew of vaka moana and their subjectivity - that is, their knowledge, skills and experiences that enable them to collectively navigate and sail their vessel. In policy spaces, a range of individuals interact with others and mediate policy tools (Shore, et al., 2011). As policy navigators, the interactions of individuals, particularly government officials and others that interact closely in the Cook Islands climate change mobility policy space, are also analysed to clarify where policy interpretations, actions and decisions regarding climate change mobility converge and conflict.

In this way the policy process, and how individuals mediate policy, are examined to assess the value of the processes and tools needed to navigate through favourable or unfavourable conditions.

The use of this metaphor is not without tensions and shortfalls. For instance, the relationship between one element and another invites exploration into technical design details, such as the construction of the kie and tira representing Cook Islands sovereignty. Analysis could be extended to examine how the shape of the sail and height of the mast are designed to counter lever the shape and size of the hulls and how this might inform our understandings about sovereignty and climate change mobility. By doing so it might be possible to find ways to resolve such tensions. Despite the analytical discomforts from unresolved shortfalls, other metaphoric cues can still be pursued within the scope of this thesis.

2.5.1. Vaka as Cook Islands Cultural Symbol

There are many examples where vaka moana is a recognised symbol of cultural significance in contemporary Cook Islands society. In 2015, the Cook Islands government released a commemorative coin as part of the Te Manava Vaka festival where five vaka moana from the Pacific gathered (MFEM, 2015c). This event was part of the 50-year commemoration of self-governance.



Figure 3: Cook Islands \$5 Coin with Vaka Moana, Te Marumaru Atua

The coin shows the Cook Islands vaka moana *Marumaru Atua* in full sail being guided by three major constellations, *Matariki* (Pleiades) *Taumata Kuku* (Taurus) and *Tautoru* (Orion) (see Figure 3) (MFEM, 2015c). Cook Islands *Tu Oe* (Master Navigator) Teuatakiri (Tua) Pittman, who was involved in the design, stated the coin ‘was an everyday reminder to our people and visitors to the Cook Islands [of] the spirit of Cook Islands and our spirit of adventure’ (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2015c).

In 2016 the banking sector recognised the significance of the *vaka*. The Bank of the Cook Islands (BCI) launched its Vaka Debit Card with a photographic image of Marumaru Atua in full sail off the coast of Rarotonga (Figure 4) (BCI, 2017). In this and the previous example, the

representation of the *vaka* is associated with commercial interests and governmental institutions conveying a relationship between cultural traditions and modern economic technology.



Figure 4: BCI Vaka Debit Mastercard

In the education sector, the *vaka* serves as the basis for *Te Ara Tiroa*, the learning charter of the Cook Islands national college, Tereora.¹⁸ In its application, the *vaka* or hull represents the college; teachers are the *tu oe*, the navigators; students are the *kiato*, the explorers; and parents are the *ama*, the elders. In this conceptualisation, students, parents and teachers all play a part in keeping the *vaka* on course towards its destination of educated Cook Islands youth. In this example, it is the parts of the *vaka* that create cohesion for the its purpose.

In 2014 the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) commissioned the design of an activity management system to address fragmentation and inefficiencies in its systems. As part of improving its national systems and taking account of the Cook Islands cultural context, the project and programme management system *Te Tarai Vaka* was launched in 2015. This was achieved by adapting a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade system to the Cook Islands context. *Te Tarai Vaka* aimed at rationalising the government's approach to plan, implement and monitor projects (labelled 'activities') across government and its donor partners in development assistance, and to align with the UN Adaptation Fund requirements for

¹⁸ Source: www.tereora.edu.ck

accreditation as a National Implementing Entity. Likened to the process of building a canoe, the three-phased process included: *Orama*: planning – identification, design and appraise; *Tarai*: implementing, reporting and monitoring; and *Akara Matatio*: evaluating and completion plan (MFEM, 2015a; 2015e). In this example, it is the process of construction that is used to convey meaning by using indigenous knowledge alongside a Western system of government.

2.5.2. Discourses and Narratives

Policy space as a dynamic and fluid institutional field of actors, discourses and institutions resonates with the oceanic, island and indigenous concepts presented earlier in this chapter. Integral to policy spaces, policy discourse can be described as ‘configurations of ideas which provide the threads from which ideologies are woven’ (Shore & Wright, 1997, p. 19). This suggests the discourses about a particular phenomenon are socially constructed, and that actors have the power to construct what is said and accepted about a subject.

Dominant discourses work by setting up unquestioned terms of reference – for a policy, for instance – and in doing so foreclose alternative policy processes and outcomes. For example, small Pacific Island states are often described in policy documents as being economically and environmentally vulnerable because of their small size and geographical location in the Pacific Ocean. This works to suggest that their economic, social and cultural viability is under threat. Mainstream development policies enact dominant discourse by shaping external political agenda and persuading developing countries to follow through their aid policies. In the Pacific this is illustrated by the New Zealand government’s focus from 2009 that prioritises sustainable economic development over social development activities. In this time period there was little investment in food security and a lot of support for private sector development.

In contrast, the concept of relationality by indigenous scholars and oceanic geographers – among many others – is an emergent discourse overlooked in development policy but with the

potential to fundamentally reshape narratives about islands state development and economics. There remains a fair distance to travel before these emergent discourses have a significant impact on policy making and policy makers. This is because, as I found in my thesis, of the tensions between mainstream discourse that has been captured in development policy – often in a dry and formulaic manner – and indigenous notions of concepts, such as relationality, which are metaphorical and dynamic.

Fairclough, in laying out the ‘power in’ and the ‘power behind’ discourse, argues ‘on the one hand that power is exercised and enacted in discourse, and on the other hand that there are relations of power behind discourse’ (Fairclough, 2015, p. 98). This is expressed in particular in taken-for-granted discourses about islands and their development (Armstrong & Read, 2002, 2006; Baldacchino & Milne, 2000; Bertram, 2013; Connell & Corbett, 2016; Steinberg & Peters, 2015; Grydehøj, 2018; Androus & Greymorning, 2016).

A dominant theme in many of these discourses is the marginality of islands. Overton et al., (2012) discuss conditions of marginality and processes that lead to marginality of small islands states and territories in the Pacific based on a set of dimensions: smallness (of population, land or natural resources); isolation (peripherality and distance from markets); environmental vulnerability (exposure to environmental hazards including sea-level rise and climate change); and questionable viability (lack of endogenous/internal economic bases for growth and development). Given the diversity among Pacific islands these dimensions apply differently for each island, depending on its physical, social, and economic characteristics. For example, Nauru is an island small in population but was rich in mineral resources (and is now in difficulty in terms of social and economic status).

This thesis argues that the marginalisation discourse forms part of the dominant discourses that frame the development lens of many Pacific small island states and the extent to which such

discourses are present and embedded in the Cook Islands policy space, particularly as it relates to climate change migration. The relationship between discourses of marginalisation and the way in which they are implicitly or explicitly enacted by individuals and institutions can be seen as an expression of power or as helpful tools in negotiating, establishing and implementing actions to address climate change migration for the Cook Islands government.

2.5.3. Section Summary and Link to Vaka Moana

Overall, the literature shows that policy spaces are complex and complicated, varying in their material and conceptual forms. The examples drawn from the literature show that policy spaces relate to more than policy autonomy or sovereignty. A policy space is constructed through the social interactions of its actors, how are they governed, and what outcome they are working towards. *Vaka* as an island or land is located at the horizontal space in between sky and ocean. *Vaka moana* is land and policy space. In this 'in-between' horizontal space our gaze is cast out to an oceanic context and the environmental elements that have an influence on the journey, such as the sun, stars, wind patterns, cloud formations, waves, swells and currents and landmarks (Finney, 2006b; Howe, 2006; Lee & Paulmann, 2015a; Lee & Paulmann, 2015b). These elements provide metaphoric guidance to frame climate change mobility within a small island state and large ocean development context.

The policy space in this context is affected by ocean currents and prevailing winds that surround *vaka moana* interactions. The waves and winds represent the dominant discourses and interests of external actors that originate beyond the Cook Islands policy spaces and cross conceptual borders to influence policy processes and actor interests and actions. By examining the discourses and narratives as prevailing and dominant arguments about small islands state identity and development, it is possible to assess the relevance of such narratives in addressing development concerns. For example, size and proximity to trade markets informs a deficit

narrative about small island economies (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009) where smallness is perceived as a barrier to economic development.

The same can be applied to climate change and migration as development concerns. For example, the climate change narrative of mitigation and adaptation is used to promote migration as an adaptation measure. However, when coastal and island communities and island governments give more weight to social, cultural and spiritual imperatives, resistance increases to promoting relocation as an option. Therefore, it is possible to identify when and under what conditions these narratives are less influential and when and what other courses of action can be taken to achieve a development outcome.

The *vaka* metaphor was also used in the television documentary, *Mana o Te Moana*, in which a crew member said, 'As we voyage, the *vaka* is our island' (Marbrook & Single, 2015a). He was comparing being on the *vaka* as the same as living on his own island in the middle of a vast ocean where they had everything they needed to live. In this model, his analogy leads us to consider that if *vaka* is island, then policy space is also island. Nuancing understanding about policy spaces as *vaka moana* is about 'islanding' (Teaiwa, 2007) policy spaces for island purposes and futures.

2.6 Sovereignty

The Cook Islands as a modern state, constructed from its small autonomous and culturally distinct island societies placed across thousands of square kilometres, was established as a nation with scant regard for the traditional cultural and political features of island groupings (Wesley-Smith, 2007, p. 34). Indeed, in the decolonisation phase of the UN agenda where significant pressure was placed on colonial powers to move their colonies towards self-government, New Zealand 'decided early on to rid itself of the colonial taint and worked hard to decolonise Western Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau' (Wesley-Smith, 2007, p. 32) from

the UN list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. This was a list of places the UN General Assembly deems to be 'non-self-governing' and subject to the *decolonisation* process. The Cook Islands was removed from the list and became a self-governing state in 1965.

Since then the Cook Islands free-association partnership with New Zealand has been characterised by independence and interdependence. It has entered into many bilateral and multilateral agreements as a state and become a state member of several UN entities, and established diplomatic relations with many other states. Today, most Cook Islanders would probably regard the country as sovereign.

Determining what it means to be 'sovereign' is not a simple matter. Krasner (1999) believes that there are four features of sovereignty that mean it will always be challenged: 1) international legal sovereignty – the practices linked with mutual recognition such as territorial entities with formal juridical independence; 2) Westphalian sovereignty – which refers to political organisation based on the exclusion of external actors from authority structures within a given territory; 3) domestic sovereignty – the formal organisation of political authority within the state and the ability of public authorities to exercise effective control within the borders of their own polity; and 4) interdependence sovereignty – the ability of public authorities to regulate the flow of information, ideas, goods, people, pollutants, or capital across the borders of their state (Krasner, 1999, pp. 3-4).

Wesley-Smith argues that the Cook Islands Associated State is an example of Westphalian¹⁹ sovereignty and state-building efforts being imposed over rather than grafted onto traditional political systems, as it had been in Tonga and Samoa, both of which are culturally homogenous and politically centralised (Wesley-Smith, 2007). Levine (2012) contends that 'for many island

¹⁹ *Westphalian* sovereignty, or state sovereignty, is the principle of international law that each nation-state has exclusive sovereignty over its territory and excludes interference by external powers in another country's domestic affairs. The Westphalian doctrine is named after the 1648 *Peace of Westphalia* agreement that ended the Thirty Years War, in which the major European countries agreed to respect one another's territorial integrity.

entities, the experience of sovereignty and independence has been something of a disappointment, with ongoing dependence and limited room for manoeuvre a more accurate rendering' (Levine, 2012, p. 440).

In the context of international law and international relations, the conceptualisation of sovereignty is tied to conditions of statehood with 'a permanent population; a defined territory; a government; and a capacity to enter into relations with other states' (Kelly, 2014, p. 752). Applied through its concern with the control of territory, Westphalian sovereignty pervades the notions of the modern independent nation-state (Maogoto, 2008) and the global governance regime of the UN. Based on the principle of sovereign equality of 'one nation, one vote', the UN was chartered to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and solve international problems through international cooperation (Croxtton, 1999; Gross, 1948; United Nations, 1945). Following World War II and the UN decolonisation declaration (Smith, 2010), newly independent entities were conferred as sovereign equals to established nations (Rich, 2008). This included developing countries and a number of small island states which, as holders of this form of state sovereignty, carved out reconstituted relations with their former colonisers and other nations.

As a norm of international relations, the sovereignty of states 'is considered to be one of the most important norms, if not the most important norm, of international relations, encompassing states external and internal rights and responsibilities' (Ramos, 2013, p. 2). Ramos says that at its core is the question about the 'division of responsibility' between the state and the international community? (Ramos, 2013, p. 17). In other contexts, such as trade and economics, debate continues about the diminishing nature of state sovereignty and the erosion of historical and geographical boundaries due to globalisation (Archer, 2004; Cunningham, 2013; Sassen, 2010).

In the social construction of the concept of sovereignty, different disciplines show that sovereignty can be understood in multiple ways. A wide variety of adjectives are used to describe sovereignty as a concept that is rigid and absolute (Reus-Smit, 2001), at risk of shrinking (Khan, 2007), diminishing (Cunningham, 2013; Archer, 2004) or flexible and malleable (Overton & Murray, 2012). Sovereign entities can include social groupings such as nations, communities and individuals (Rudolph, 2005). There are also many different types of sovereignty: state, internal and domestic, (Biersteker & Weber, 1996), popular (Levine, 2012), indigenous (Morrison, 2014), virtual (Levine, 2012) and indigenous maritime sovereignty (D'Arcy, 2009).

From a constructivist perspective, Reus-Smit's (2001) work contributes an understanding of sovereignty as a norm, a dependent principle and a territory-bound concept of authority and power by examining the social construction of sovereignty and human rights in international relations that are generated through historical communicative processes. His study determined that sovereignty 'is a social norm, subject to the same constitutive processes as all other norms, rules and principles', that is 'above all else a set of norms concerning the legitimate organisation of political authority, the content and implications of which vary from one historical and practical context to another' (Reus-Smit, 2001, p. 526). Sovereignty is a principle that is dependent in that its value is upheld in 'relation to' other social values rather than without connection or reference to them, and as such sovereignty is 'but one part of larger complexes of normative values that undergird international societies ... [and] constitutional structures' (Reus-Smit, 2001, p. 528). In relation to its territory-defined nature, sovereignty can be taken to mean that the power and authority of such groupings are territory bound by supposed geographic borders.

Other constructivists (Glanville, 2014; Ramos, 2013; Rudolph, 2005) have shown, like Biersteker and Weber (1999) and Reus-Smit (2001), that sovereignty is not a fixed and enduring principle or norm. Fox (1997) makes a distinction between the content and form of sovereignty.

According to Fox, 'the form of sovereignty functions as a constitutive element of the modern international order ... the content of sovereignty is the variable factor: it describes the attributes of states as political units that define limits on their decision-making authority' (Fox, 1997, p. 109). In its form, 'as a legal concept it embodies the normative order governing the relationships among states and between states and international organisations' (Fox, 1997, p. 109). Fox contrasts this to the realist conception of sovereignty as 'absolute in form, as being the ultimate and unlimited power within a political community' (Fox, 1997, p. 109). As such a sovereign state is not obligated to a higher authority. The state is at liberty to take actions up to the point where other states counter by protecting their own sovereign entitlements (Fox, 1997, p. 109).

Biersteker and Weber, upon whom Reus-Smit has drawn, contend 'the meaning of sovereignty is negotiated out of interactions within intersubjectively identifiable communities; and the variety of ways in which practices construct, reproduce, reconstruct, and deconstruct both state and sovereignty' (Biersteker & Weber, 1996, p. 11). It is in drawing largely on the discussions of Biersteker and Weber (1999), Krasner (1999), and Reus-Smit (2001) that sovereignty has been conceived and applied in this thesis.

In a similar vein, Blitza adopts an 'evolutionary' concept of sovereignty with 'a relative rather than absolute nature'. A concept of 'shared sovereignty' is proposed where 'the state is no longer exclusively competent to regulate certain matters but must interact with other states or international organisations' (Blitza, 2016, p. 267). The instances in which 'sovereign states willingly transfer power to other states or international organisations' (Blitza, 2016, p. 267) present shared sovereignty 'as a factual rather than a legal concept', something that is exercised rather than given away (Blitza, 2016, p. 275). Free association arrangements (such as that of the Cook Islands) that include the transfer of a competency to another state, for national defence for example, do not diminish a state's legal personality – it is still sovereign. Blitza concludes that a 'transfer of some single sovereign rights ... are merely of a descriptive nature and, while

they may hold some political force, do not affect the legal status of sovereign nations' (Blitza, 2016, p. 282).

Others (Androus & Geymorning, 2016; Morrison, 2014; Pitty & Smith, 2011; Prinsen & Blaise, 2017; Steinberg, 2009; Wesley-Smith, 2007) challenge Westphalian sovereignty when looking in particular at the sovereignty of oceanic island states. A more dynamic alternative, the concept of an island-centred perspective of sovereignty – an 'Islandian' sovereignty – has emerged as an alternative to Westphalian sovereignty. Prinsen and Blaise's (2017) study of 42 non-self-governing islands offer five mechanisms of this emerging Islandian sovereignty concept: 1) vote 'no' in independence referendums; 2) continuously negotiate constitutional exceptions; 3) get away with bending their metropole's²⁰ laws and regulations; 4) manage public budgets whose shortfalls in domestic revenues are complemented by financial transfers from the metropole; and 5) can sign international treaties or agreements beneficial to them, but uncomfortable for their metropole and/or contrary to its interests.

This framing of sovereignty is actively created out of the debates on the relevance of Westphalian sovereignty and cases of emerging indigenous sovereignty (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017, p. 56).²¹ Within this frame islands that are not sovereign in the Westphalian sense find creative ways to use classic symbols of sovereignty, such as flags, diplomatic representations and international treaties, as they negotiate their status. It is these structural notions of sovereignty – Islandian sovereignty – in the context of the indigenous and cultural influences of self-determination and autonomy (Wesley-Smith, 2007) that have informed my research.

²⁰ 'Metropole' refers to the parent state of a colony.

²¹ This is based on analysis of 42 non-self-governing islands of which the Cook Islands is included. The Table 1 list of non-self-governing islands includes islands on the UN list of "non-self-governing territories" (<http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/nonselfgovterritories.shtml>), Islands on the CIA list of "non-independent entities" not on the UN list and other non-self-governing islands that are remnants of colonial histories <https://thecic.org/an-emerging-islandian-sovereignty-of-non-self-governing-islands/> (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017, p. 75-76) Pacific examples include French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Tokelau, American Samoa, Guam, Norfolk Island, Wallis and Futuna, Cook Islands, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Rapa Nui.

Understanding sovereignty in this way helps to inform climate change mobility where human mobility induced by climate change can occur across international borders and within a country's territory ([British] Government Department for Science, 2011).

2.6.1. Policy Sovereignty

Another conceptualisation of sovereignty, related to independence and domestic sovereignty, that is relevant to the Cook Islands case is that of 'policy sovereignty' (Murray & Overton, 2011a) in which, through the aid and development lens of small-island development, states are influenced by persistent neo-liberal approaches to market reform. States are often overburdened by the compliance regimes of external actors, thereby reducing local actors' ability to pursue independent ways of working (Murray & Overton, 2011a, p. 278). The Cook Islands policy space takes account of the burden of compliance regimes imposed by the new aid agenda that purports to increase ownership by recipient governments but in practice has increased the burden on them with many conditions related to the management of aid funds, the setting of development strategies and the meeting of other global obligations.

This issue is of particular concern in small Pacific island states where the small size of government is coupled with increasing demands from donors for consultation, accountability and engagement to create what we argue is an 'inverse sovereignty' effect: despite the rhetoric of ownership and independence, recipient states are actually losing control over their development strategies, policies and programmes. (Murray & Overton, 2011)

This stresses the importance of policy vigilance to ensure Pacific island states maintain control over their policy agenda and processes. This includes keeping in mind the indigenous and cultural influences of self-determination and autonomy (Wesley-Smith, 2007) – such as sub-national autonomy by individual island councils and tribal/kinship structures within the Cook Islands.

Murray & Overton (2011b) have also drawn attention to the 'inverse sovereignty' effect on small Pacific island states in which the increasing demands from donors over the management and conditionalities of aid funds and climate financing can be interpreted as reducing the sovereignty of Pacific country states.

2.6.2. Islands as Sovereign Identities

At the international level, the UN system has a system of categorising island states, commonly used at international and state levels, that recognises their unique circumstances and provides an indication of the status of their sovereignty. It has been constructed in a way that accords oceanic states special consideration through the UN system. For example, states such as the Cook Islands which are not UN member states are still able to be parties to certain international agreements and to be members of some UN entities, as well as be eligible for UN development funding, through being recognised as a small island developing state (SIDS). The UN also recognised the Cook Islands as a self-governing country when it removed it from its list of non-self-governing countries in 1965.

Recognition by the UN of oceanic states as a unique category dates back to 1972, when UNCTAD initiated the land-locked and island developing countries programme in recognition of the development challenges faced by such states and territories but it was not until two decades later with the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (popularly known the 'Earth Summit') in Rio de Janeiro that the programme was reenergised with the call for an islands-specific conference. The category of Small Island Developing State (SIDS) (Hein, 2004) was formalised in 1994 at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States in Bridgetown, Barbados in 1994, although the UN has never established criteria to determine an official list of SIDS. However, it does provide an unofficial list of 57 SIDS on its

website for analytical purposes, grouped into three geographical groups:²² Pacific, Caribbean and AIMS (Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea). Currently, there are 20 Pacific SIDS. The 1994 conference produced the UN Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of SIDS (usually referred to as the Barbados Programme of Action [BPOA]), which remains the only internationally approved SIDS-specific programme that has been endorsed collectively by SIDS. Implementation of this programme has been slow and uneven.²³

In the Pacific region there is a range of different nation state identities (Levine, 2012), and types of constitutional arrangements, so there is not a simple definition separating fully independent nation states and the territories of nation states (Overton & Murray, 2012). At one end of the continuum are fully independent nation states – e.g. Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji. At the other end are territories that are fully integrated into other independent nations, such as French Polynesia into France. Along this continuum are ‘territories that are nominally independent but have one or more aspects of their sovereignty negotiated in a special relationship with their patron’ (Overton & Murray, 2012, p. 238) – jurisdictions such as New Caledonia that practise ‘para-diplomacy’ and ‘multi-level governance’ (Sutton, 2011) – with the ability to establish diplomatic relations.

In 2014, Samoa hosted the Third International Conference on SIDS, which focussed on the sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships. The main outcome document of the conference was the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, which includes the sum of SIDS challenges, means of addressing them, and evaluating achievements. The SAMOA Pathway Outcome Report was adopted by the UN General Assembly

²² Not all of which are UN member states.

²³ A review of progress on the implementation of BPOA was held after five years (BPOA +5) in a UN special session – progress was uneven – and again after 10 years (BPOA+10) with the high-level International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, in Mauritius in 2005. The international meeting culminated in a report reviewing 10 years of – still uneven – implementation and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, which effectively revised and reorganised the original BPOA priority areas.

in November 2014 (UNGA, 2014), once again reaffirming the ability of countries such as the Cook Islands to represent themselves in intergovernmental and international fora.

2.6.3. Borders

In considering the concept of sovereignty and territory beyond the limits of land, this study has drawn on Ruldoph (2005) and Ivans' (2012) work on borders, where 'bordering has become much more multifaceted, in terms of both geographic and non-geographic forms, as well as of social, political and economic characters' (Ruldolph, 2005, pp. 13-14). Borders serve as symbols of connection and separation, determining inclusions and exclusions. They are portrayed as soft shells, elastic and responsive to change as in economics with global markets, or hard shells that are highly resilient as in maintaining stable national identities (Ruldoph, 2005). These ideas direct the examination of how dimensions of sovereignty converge and are played out in policy spaces.

Rudolph's (2005) work on cross-border matters including migration usefully directs attention to the interaction of three facets of sovereignty. The first facet of interdependence refers to the control over transborder flows, such as 'flows of capital, weapons, drugs, information, epidemics and some people' (Mostov, 2008, p. vii). Second is the Westphalian facet that refers to the maintenance of borders and territory in recognising the supreme authority over a state's affairs without interference. Third is the domestic facet that refers to the relationship between the government and people (Rudolph, 2005, p. 12).

Climate change mobility involves the crossing of borders that are geographically, culturally and socially constructed as people move within an island states' territories and beyond. Legally borders set restrictions about islanders' movement. However, beyond these ideas there are borderless connections based on indigenous experiences (Clifford, 2013) that reflect the mobile,

emotional geographies of islands, places and people (Burkett, 2011; Burkett, 2015; Hermann, Kempf, & Meijl, 2014; Stratford, 2013).

Communities and states have the power through a complex and contested set of practices to 'balance national sovereignty and political independence with everyday practices and negotiations with other, often more powerful, states and global institutions' (Overton & Murray, 2012, p. 7). This is not a static process but involves a dynamic interaction between the different sovereignties at play which serves to highlight how complex and contested the practices and interests of actors are in small island state development policy spaces attending to the movement of people in response to climate change.

2.7 Climate Change Migration

In climate change scholarship, the social constructivist approach (Barnett & Campbell, 2010; Dermeritt, 2006; Onuf, 2007; Pettenger, 2007) views policy space 'as a space where convergence and conflicts over domestic policy development and international policy drivers occurs' (Pettenger, 2007, p. 3). This is applicable to the current research because it establishes the notion that 'the dominant ways of thinking are socially constructed' (Burnett, 2012, p. 486) and provides a perspective from which policies related to climate change can be understood. It challenges the long-standing policy development practice of drawing primarily from the empirics of the physical/environmental sciences. But more importantly, it opens up the possibilities of 'framing these key issues in other ways' (Burnett, 2012, p. 486).

During recent times, climate change migration has attracted more attention from different perspectives and interests (Bettini, 2012; Bettini & Andersson, 2014; Bettini, Nash, & Gioli, 2016; Campbell & Warrick, 2014; Felipe Perez, 2018; Kelman & Khan, 2012; Methmann & Oels, 2015). Environmentalist and political scientist Chris Methmann, and political scientist Angela Oels (Methmann & Oels, 2015), have made a useful contribution to the climate-change-induced

migration debate with a conceptualisation of 'resilience' as governmentality, and a genealogy of the dominant discourses of climate change induced migration. They argue that 'the rise of resilience as a strategy of government, is its tendency to eliminate the political' (Methmann & Oels, 2015, p. 64). In so doing, they conclude, the discourses 'are based on the implicit assumption that dangerous levels of climate change cannot be avoided' (Methmann & Oels, 2015, p. 64.) and reduce policy options to 'stay' or 'go'. Meanwhile the option of emissions reduction is masked. This study backs their call for 'a different kind of problematisation' of climate-change-induced migration 'that renders the presumed inevitability of dangerous levels of climate change contestable and questionable' (Methmann & Oels, 2015, p. 64).

Displacement as a result of climate change continues to be raised at high-level global fora. The UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the highest level of governance of international environmental affairs in the UN system, held its Second Meeting of UNEA (UNEA-2), in Nairobi, Kenya in 2016 at which it convened the symposium 'Environment and Displacement: Root Causes and Implications'. Participants called for a stronger focus on the interconnectivity between climate change, conflict, displacement and development as reported by the Earth Negotiations Bulletin of the International Institute for Sustainable development (International Institute for Sustainable Development - Earths Negotiations Bulletin [IISD/ENB], 2016). As a panellist, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Director-General William Lacy Swing highlighted three key policy actions: minimising forced migration through better Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) planning; using migration as an adaptation strategy; and doing more to bridge policy silos to move from commitments to action (IISD/ENB, 2016). In addition, he highlighted the need to build institutional capacities in recipient countries, to protect the rights of host communities to ensure compensation for communities displaced by climate change, and to adopt flexible policy measures, such as temporary protected status and insurance schemes for migrants (IISD/ENB, 2016).

The global recognition of climate change as a factor influencing the movement of people across all regions of the world has resulted in the inclusion of climate change and migration in a number of international policies and frameworks. A major milestone was establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage at the 2013 the UNFCCC climate negotiations (COP19 in Warsaw). This mechanism was noteworthy because it created a legitimate policy space to discuss the negative effects of climate change if mitigation and adaption efforts failed.

Other milestones were the Paris Agreement at COP21 in 2016 that addressed the emission of greenhouse gases; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015- 2030 at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan in 2015, that succeeded the Hyogo Framework for Action as the most encompassing international agreement on DRR; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global plan of action for sustainable development for 'people, planet and prosperity' agreed in 2015 with its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that succeeded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development that provided a global framework for financing sustainable development by aligning all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities.

In Oceania, this recognition has emerged with the various agencies of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) undertaking research to inform policy-making to 'promote human security and minimise conflict associated with forced migration in the Pacific region' (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility, & United Nations University for Environment and Human Security, 2015, p. 5). While climate change migration is recognised, there is a lack of migration policies at regional and national levels (PIFS et al., 2015) and a seeming absence of:

legal and political frameworks from which Pacific Islanders can benefit, whether they migrate internally or to another country, or whether migration is driven by the search

for better standards of living or as a consequence of climate change and natural disasters. (PIFS et al., 2015, p. 13)

Discourses of climate change mobility prevail from various fields and disciplines. This section provides a summary. In doing so, it lays a basis from which to establish where and how such discourses exist in the Cook Islands context. First, there is the issue of de-territorialisation with its legal implications (Ferris, Crenea, & Petz, 2011; Gerrard & Wannier, 2013; Jane Mcadam, 2011; McAdam, 2012; McAdam, 2013) and in-situ and ex-situ solutions (Codère, 2015). This is related to the loss of land (Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012; McNamara, Bronen, Fernando, & Klepp, 2016) and hence territory for SIDS due to rising seas (Gerrard & Wannier, 2013; Willcox, 2015, 2016; Kostakos, Zang & Veening, 2014). Secondly, climate change mobility is a security issue with implications for host countries receiving displaced populations (Locke, 2009). This is spurred on with crisis and apocalyptic narratives (Bettini, 2012; Bettini & Andersson, 2014; Christian Aid, 2007) of the 'climate refugee'. This issue includes a view of climate change as a 'threat multiplier' capable of acting through various channels, intensifying existing vulnerabilities and creating impediments to development, such as socio-economic instability and political insecurity (UNHCR, 2009; Stern, Jotzo & Dobes, 2014). Thirdly, is the human security issue in which migration is viewed as an adaptation measure to climate change impacts (Barnett & Chamberlain, 2010; Betzold, 2015).

Viewing climate change migration in the latter has reframed and marginalised the crisis approach and apocalyptic narratives. The debate is more concerned with designing governance strategies to manage climate-related migration, harvesting its positive effects and minimising its drawbacks (Bettini, 2012). While adaptation can respond to climate change impacts – although 'the economic cost of adaptation to climate change is high in SIDS relative to the size of their economies' (CDKN, 2014, p. 1) – 'there are limits and risks involved' for the 'trapped populations' (Government Office for Science Foresight Programme, 2011; Gray & Mueller, 2012;

Nawrotzki & DeWaard, 2018), for example, who are left behind and unable to move, possibly including women, children, the elderly and disabled people.

The 'migration as adaption' paradigm contrasts with the view of 'migration as compensation' (Connell, 2013) and is disputed by Felli and Castree (2012) as a part of a neo-liberal environmental fix. By taking account of differences and commonalities in responses to climate change migration as an adaption solution (Smith & McNamara, 2015), locally focused initiatives that integrate climate change and development concerns – such as food and water security, coastal protection, reduction of poverty, inequality – that enable the retention of culture 'reduces the need for unnecessary and problematic migration. Migration is only a secondary adaptation.' (Connell, 2013, p. 243)

It is difficult to develop legal frameworks to protect climate change migrants or address the problems of a 'climate change refugee' definition (Smith & McNamara, 2015) for cases of international migration. The complicated nature of migration is an issue, due to contrasting short and long-term coping strategies, and related to the short and long distance of migration. This can be a move of a few hundred metres to relocate a coastal village further inland temporarily during a cyclone, or several thousand kilometres to move an entire island community to another location (Smith & McNamara, 2015).

In responding to climate change migration, issues arise in distinguishing between spontaneous individual/family migration versus state-planned migration, or voluntary versus forced migration. Unravelling the weave of climate change and environmental factors with social, political and economic considerations also poses challenges in determining policy action. During resettlement across international borders, land tenure is a concern for host country landowners and governments when land claims are asserted across distances and time. The same considerations occur for governments attending to in-country migration from one region,

islands or district to another. Successful resettlement can only be achieved where important characteristics of the original community are retained, including its social structures legal and political systems, cultural characteristics and worldview: ‘the community stays together at the destination in a social form that is similar to the community of origin’ (Campbell, 2010, p. 59).

In taking account of all of these points, consideration has also been given to categorising the process of movement (Government Department of Science, 2011; McMichael, Barnett, & McMichael, 2012). Campbell (2014) and Felipe Perez (2018) distilled the process into groupings of voluntary and forced climate change mobility. According to Campbell, the first category of voluntary climate-change-induced migration, which is difficult to distinguish from general migration patterns, occurs when reduced land, livelihood and habitat security make community settlement hard to sustain. The second category of forced relocation occurs when land, livelihood and habitat security is so compromised to be uninhabitable and communities must relocate.

McMichael, Barnett & McMichael, (2012) offer a three-category typology to categorise the process of migration. This is set out in the table below.

Table 1: Process of Migration - A Three Category Typology

Forced Displacement	Occurs as environmental changes and extreme climate events undermine peoples’ ability to live in their place of residence. The displacement will typically be over short distances and may involve large-scale movements of people, most often within countries.
Planned Resettlement	Of large populations to reduce their exposure to climate impacts. Likely to be at the scale of communities, resettled within countries.
Migration	Likely to be within countries and contribute to urbanisation.

Note: Adapted from McMichael et al (2012) McMichael, C., Barnett, J., McMichael, A.J. (2012) An ill wind? Climate change, migration, and health. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 120 (5), 646-654.

This typology makes broad brush distinctions about the process of migration highlighting that movement is likely to be at the scale of communities and within countries. By contrast, Felipe Perez (2018) usefully proposes four categories of displacement, relocation and resettlement to understand the process and risks of climate change mobility in the context of oceanic Islands states. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 2: Categories of Climate Migration

Category	Description
Climate-emergency migration	<p>Takes place before or right in the aftermath of rapid-onset events (floods, hurricanes, and cyclones).</p> <p>Affected people flee the catastrophe by themselves or they may be evacuated.</p> <p>They have little control over the migration process and a high degree of vulnerability.</p> <p>The temporality depends on the impact of the climate hazard and on the resilience of the affected population, but it is usually not permanent.</p> <p>It mostly takes place at the national level.</p>
Climate-induced migration	<p>Occurs in the context of changing environments, which at an early stage begin to affect people's economy and livelihoods (drought, salinisation, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, thawing of permafrost).</p> <p>The option of not moving is still a feasible choice.</p> <p>The urge to leave is weaker than in 'climate emergency migration' as it occurs as a prevention measure against the worst environmental deterioration.</p> <p>A family may move as a diversification strategy, but the rest of the family remain under fair living conditions.</p> <p>Affected people move within their country where some cross-border movement can take place.</p> <p>Often takes the form of labour/economic migration.</p> <p>This category is characterised by a higher voluntary degree than others.</p> <p>Climate-induced migrants have greater control over the process and are less vulnerable than in the other categories.</p>

Climate-forced migration	<p>Occurs within the context of the later stages of already deteriorated environments, for example after long periods of drought or permanent flooding of coastal areas.</p> <p>Affected families or even entire communities flee their homes, as the consequences of further environmental deterioration could be fatal, and their survival could be at risk in the near future.</p> <p>The option of not moving is no longer a feasible choice.</p> <p>It is permanent.</p> <p>Could be both internal and cross-border and is clearly forced. The affected population is highly vulnerable.</p>
Migration in/from small island states	<p>A subcategory of climate-forced migration as they share characteristics, but distinct because small islands states possess certain particularities and vulnerabilities of sea-level rise and other climate change-related effects (coastal erosion, floods, coral bleaching and salination) are increasingly affecting their territories.</p>

Note: Adapted from Felipe Perez (2018) Beyond the shortcomings of international law: A proposal for the legal protection of climate migrants. In S. Behrman, & A. Kent (Eds.), *Climate refugees: Beyond the legal impasse* (pp. 214-229).

Although these categories offer an opportunity to take soft-law principles of internal displacement, and translate them into national hard laws and domestic policies (Felipe Perez, 2018, p. 219), there is no specific mechanism to address climate change mobility that can assist national decision making. One option, such as the 2009 Kampala Convention,²⁴ articulates an obligation to protect internally displaced peoples within the states that ratify it (Felipe Perez, 2018).²⁵ As such, this emphasises the challenge for policy space actors grappling with the complexity of migration and climate change that is further increased by the complexities of sovereignty when examined in relation to the effects of sea-level rise and cyclones as slow and sudden onset events (Betzold, 2014; Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012; Kostakos, Zhang & Veening, 2014; Pontee, 2013; UNEP, 2014). Overall, climate change mobility requires careful consideration in

²⁴ The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa was adopted in 2009 and is known as the Kampala Convention. The convention established state responsibilities for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons, whose displacement is the result of 'natural or human-made disasters, including climate change'.

²⁵ Participant 12.

how it is understood as a policy concern by oceanic island states. The next section takes a closer look at human mobility.

2.8 People Movement

Theories on the causes of migration vary, from global accounts of shifting migration patterns to migrant transnational identities covering international migration and internal migration. There is a range of categories of migrant – voluntary, forced, refugee, family or economic – and differing and multiple motives for migration (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014). Population mobility ‘as the flow of people between different places’ (Underhill-Sem, 1989, p. 13) incorporates ‘moves for varying lengths of time and reasons beyond the narrowly economic, which has come to dominate mobility research’ (Underhill-Sem, 1989, p. 13).

In making sense of the processes of migration, including its causes and consequences related to climate change, Castles et al. (2014) make three key points. First, ‘it is important to see migration as an intrinsic part of broader processes of development, globalisation and social transformations rather than a problem to be solved’ (Castles et al. 2014, p. 26). Secondly, it is important to draw ‘a distinction between theories on the causes of migration processes and theories on the impacts of migration for sending and receiving communities and societies’ (Castles et al. 2014, p. 26). Thirdly, there is a distinction between macro-structures (such as sending and receiving states’ efforts to control migration) and micro-structures (practices, beliefs and family ties of migrants), both of which are interlinked by meso-structures as intermediate mechanisms (migrant networks, for instance).

These three points frame the current research into Cook Islands policy spaces. Functionalist migration theories of push-pull models ‘identify economic, environmental, and demographic factors which are assumed to push people out of places of origin and pull them into destination places’ (Castle et al., 2014, p. 28). However, in Oceanic states it is not a matter of settling for the

‘doomsdayism’ that is consistently disparaging and negative, but also exaggerated and otherworldly (Fry, 2000).

Regional scholars assist in conceptualising human mobility in oceanic contexts. Scholars such as Bedford (2004), Bedford and Hugo (2012), Chapman (1991), Lee and Francis (2009) and Spoonley and Bedford (2012) have debated migration and development in the region. However, the current study seeks to connect with the ‘new generation of scholars [from the Pacific] questioning the dominant approaches to migration research’ that offers ‘critical insight into indigenous conceptions of movement, social relations, space and identity’ (Young, 2015, p. 165). Lilomaiva-Doktor (2009) contends that such debates continue to be based on a ‘Euro-American model that assumes a local/global dichotomy ... too simplistic in its focus on movement between rural/urban, or village metropolitan situations and concern with the impact of Westernisation and modernisation on local economies’ (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009, p. 1).

In line with Lilomaiva-Doktor’s (2009) dynamic conceptualisation of mobility, this study found also that ‘a more balanced approach must include people’s indigenous knowledge and understanding of their movements, as well as the structural, economic, and political environments in which they are enmeshed’ (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009, p. 1). For example, in bringing further clarity to the analysis of Cook Islands conceptualisation and experiences of migration, Lilomaiva-Doktor (2009; 2015) examines the way in which migration is understood from a Samoan perspective. Her analysis of *‘fa’a-Samoa* (Samoan way of life/culture), integrates movement, *aiga* (household, family, kin group) and configurations of mobility ... [T]hat embodied experience is central to Samoan identities as exemplified in local metaphors of movement, identity and place.’ (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2015, p. 66).

The concept of *malaga* (journeying, movement back and forth) provides some useful insights, highlighting the different kinds and configurations of mobility. *Malaga* implies both visiting and

returning, irrespective of the time involved. The perception of reciprocity is an intrinsic part of *malaga*. It plays a role in maintaining relationships between chiefs and land. *Malaga* as a cultural imperative ties the *aiga i inei* (family here) with *aiga i fafo* (family overseas). These are mutually interdependent rather than oppositional, connecting relationships rather than a separate person and mutually exclusive spaces (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009; 2015).

Lilomaiva-Doktor noted that journeys were 'not simply movements through space but, like all travels, led to a reshaping of boundaries and reconfigurations of culture, community and spirituality, as well as an expanded territorial distribution (2015, p. 67). Related to *malaga* is the concept of *va* (social space) signifying 'the mutual respect in socio-political arrangements that nurture the relationships between people, places and social environments' (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2015, p. 67). As an alternative to the Western concept of space that is seen as open and void, *va* as an indigenous Polynesian concept considers space to be an occupied space *and* a space 'in between'. In terms of relationality (Anae, 2007; Mila-Schaaf, 2009), it is 'not empty space that separates but social space that relates' (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2015, p. 67). For Lilomaiva-Doktor (2015), the narratives of mobility, identity and place symbolise *va* as social space. Individual life cycles and the development cycle of the *aiga* are essential elements of mobility, identity and kinship. Moving away from one's home does not result in severing of ties or loss of identity because identity is not bounded in space or tied to particular locations (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2015, p. 77). There are ceremonial reasons for mobility, routine or daily reasons for mobility, and offences and sanctions for some types of improper movement. It is from this elaboration that a construction of Pacific mobility can be enounced.

There is wealth of Cook Islands research generally, and migration-related research and scholarship specifically (Alexeyeff, 2009; Anderson, 2014; Horan, 2012; Marsters, 2013; Pascht, 2014a; Sharma, 2008; Underhill-Sem, 1989; Wright-Koteka, 2006). As New Zealand citizens, the factors influencing the international migration of Cook Islanders are more than just

economically based (Wright-Koteka, 2006). Over space and time, they concurrently negotiate their obligations and connections (Marsters, 2013).

As the literature suggests, the reasons for migration within and from the Cook Islands are dynamic rather than fixed, entwined with indigenous concepts of belonging, social relations, space and identity.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has built the conceptual foundation of the study by presenting the key concepts of space, sovereignty and climate change mobility, and outlining the main parts of the vaka moana research framework. The discussion demonstrates how the concepts of policy space and sovereignty can be used to tackle national issues by interrogating government efforts and the actors, rules and practices associated with them. An Islandian concept of sovereignty challenged classic Westpalian concepts, consistent with the indigenous methodological approach in the study.

I argue that addressing climate change migration is a dynamic and contested endeavour due to the embedded power relations that are played out through the fashioning of sovereignties and policy spaces. The multi-dimensional interrelationships over time and space between sovereignty, institutions and individuals – and the prevailing discourses of climate change, migration, development and knowledge production – have the power to bestow value and determine who is an expert, thereby whitening out and silencing already present narratives. However, I argue also that local narratives are revealed in the midst of these dominant discourses of marginalisation and vulnerability, and the privileging of selected knowledge. Conversations that are indigenously scripted are amplified to reframe the helpful and unhelpful discourses in policies and practices seen at the level of government to government, institution to institution, person to person. They show up the inconsistencies in the multiple places

individual development actors move through, such as UNFCCC negotiations, national fora and community projects, enabling a rebalancing of power that challenges prevailing narratives.

The next chapter focuses on the methodological considerations of the research and its theoretical underpinnings, outlines the research questions and addresses ethical issues.

Chapter 3: Kaveinga – Map and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The first two chapters outlined the focus of this study and presented the concepts on which the research framework is based. This chapter sets out the methodological approach and its theoretical underpinnings. The introduction includes a discussion of my positionality and reflexive practice, leading onto the indigenous framework based on the vaka moana model that is used throughout this research. Also discussed are the fit between the methodological approach and the research questions, and possible blind spots in the research design and existing debates related to studies of this nature. The research tool and techniques are presented, outlining the type of data collected and how it was analysed. Ethical issues that arose in the course of the study are considered as I reflect on my role as researcher and the influence of my positionality on the research process, results and participants.

3.2 My Positionality

This study has been guided in a large part by the influential Cook Islands social work educationalist and researcher Jean Mitaera's (1997) work on combining Pacific research methodologies with best practice qualitative methods for a more culturally responsive approach to research in the Pacific, by privileging local narratives and indigenous knowledges in the research process. She identified researchers as the 'first paradigm' in which the researcher's own principles and values shape how the research is conducted, such as respect, collaboration, honesty, compassion and empowerment (Mitaera 1997). In Linda Tuhiwai-Smith's (2012) updated work on decolonising research and the use of indigenous methodologies she challenges the hegemonic stance of objectivity and the exceptionalism of Western epistemology and calls instead for practices that are more useful, respectful and ethical. Indigenous knowledges

revealed during the research process are regarded as having the potential to provide 'continuing energy and force in the present' (Mila-Schaaf, 2007, p. 27). Researcher subjectivities such as values, genealogies, social location, beliefs, languages and worldview are of foremost importance as they interact with the research challenging the neutrality of the researcher (Mila-Schaaf, 2009).

Positionality, the practice of a researcher delineating her own position in relation to the study, is a well-examined construct in social science research, especially indigenous and feminist research. It assumes that the 'position' of the researcher – usually referring to issues of culture, ethnicity, or gender, and the intersection between them – is never completely objective. Researchers acknowledge that, ethically, 'conduct of fieldwork is always contextual, relational, embodied, and politicized' (Sultana, 2007, p. 383). This is because the researcher's position has the potential to influence the study in terms of the data collected and the way in which it is interpreted: 'It is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research...' (Sultana, 2007, p. 380). Sultana draws attention to the 'politico-temporal' position of the researcher in the field (Sultana, 2007, p. 382) and how it can affect relationships and blur boundaries. Temporality is also an issue Smith raises in her discussion of 'the tricky ground' of indigenous research methodology, particularly the shifting value of information over time: 'Research in [...] a time of uncertainty, and in an era when knowledge as power is re-inscribed through its value as a commodity in the global market place, presents tricky ground for researchers' (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2008, p. 102).

Positionality is a strategy used to contextualise research observations and interpretations (Cloeke, Cooke, Cursons, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2000) – and challenge notions of 'objective truth' – that acknowledges that how a researcher is positioned 'may inhibit or enable particular fieldwork methods and interpretations' (Moser, 2008, p. 385). May and Perry (2011) draw

attention to the tension between belongingness and positioning whereby positionality – capacity to act – is not the same as belonging as a sense of place. Indeed, the context in which the research takes place and my capacity to act within this context begins with my sense of place located through my papaanga (geneology).

I am a Cook Islands woman with links to Rarotonga, Mangaia and Aitutaki as well as European ancestry that establishes a range of pre-existing relationships. My previous experiences also frame my positionality in the study. I live on family land on the main island of Rarotonga. I was raised in Porirua, New Zealand where I practised as a social worker, social work educator and researcher amongst indigenous and Pacific migrant families and communities. Having returned to live in the Cook Islands 15-years ago, I continue to work as a development practitioner and policy researcher, after seven years working for the New Zealand High Commission as Senior Coordinator for the New Zealand Aid Programme in the Cook Islands. With my husband, I have five adult children and 13 grandchildren. I was not born in the Cook Islands but Rarotonga is my home and I consider myself to be Maori and a ‘local’.

3.3 My Reflexivity

The ability to reflect on positionality, the research process and representation is a key feature of critical social research (Falconer Al-Hindi & Kawabata, 2002; Jones, Nast, & Roberts, 1997; Sultana, 2007). Reflexivity provides a way to examine how positionality comes to bear on the research, the participants and outcomes, for better or for worse. It involves reflection on ‘self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics in the research process, and researcher accountability in data collection and interpretation. (Sultana, 2007, p. 376). For me this involved a constant reflecting and questioning of my involvement, thoughts and actions throughout this research process.

I have been immersed in various Cook Islands policy debates from 2005 to 2015 in a range of roles. This practical experience provided an opportunity to develop techniques of retrospective auto-ethnography where research participants' information led me to recall my own experiences of events as well as provide me with an opportunity to be critically reflexive of my place in this study. For example, a participant talked about a trip she made to the Northern Group of the Cook Islands, following the 2005 cyclones when she took vegetable seeds as a gift to help the locals with food production. I was with her on that trip, traveling with six other passengers for four hours on a noisy small plane where weight restrictions were rigidly enforced.

I was reminded of that experience, and the need to travel light and be self-sustaining with our own water and food. We were not there to be a burden on communities that were in trying conditions of recovery efforts. Also, as custom would dictate, those same communities would be preparing to host us as *manuiri* (visitors) on our arrival, using the scarce resources they had for the occasion. I also met up with one of the school teachers, a young woman I knew from Teachers' College. In that moment when we hugged, she wept. I felt her despair for the situation she faced. I remembered feeling *aroa* (love and compassion) and a determination to do more, knowing I would get on a plane and leave, but she would continue with a strength she may not have realised she had, to teach the children as the island lives and facilities were slowly restored.

This constant reflection on my involvement and motivations throughout this research process helped to determine a research approach that allowed for an integrated understanding of policy space, sovereignty and development centred on, and promoting, an indigenous island peoples-centred perspective. This perspective is networked, negotiated, malleable, interdependent and able to transform policy approaches into inclusive representations of issues.

3.4 Research Design

The research design is guided by the overall research question, 'How is the Cook Islands government with its special relationship with New Zealand able to negotiate its future when addressing a cross-border issue such as climate change mobility?' In order to investigate this question, the study is conceptually situated in a paradigm of indigeneity using a case study approach. The study is collaborative in nature, with the community of actors in my inquiry ensuring 'the three R's – respect, reciprocity and relationality – are guiding the research' (Steinhauer, 2002, p. 73). The strategy of inquiry for this thesis has made use of auto-ethnographic and ethnographic techniques such as participant observation and interviews. Document analysis was also used to gather information.

The inquiry took place in two phases over a 14-month period. The scoping phase commenced in September 2014 when I attended the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa as an observer and member of the Cook Islands delegation. Soon after, I joined the fourth Cook Islands Development Partners Meeting in 2014 and the Cook Islands Series of Climate Change Forum held in Rarotonga during February 2015. In December 2015 I was part of the Cook Islands team as an observer and accredited member of the SIDS and COP21 delegation to UNFCCC negotiations in Paris, after having taken part in the conference preparation meetings in Rarotonga.

Phase One of the research included preliminary interviews with Cook Islands government officials and other stakeholders; Phase Two included interviews in New Zealand and the Cook Islands. This latter phase of inquiry concluded with my attendance at the UNFCCC COP 21 in France, held in November 2015, as an observer and member of the Cook Islands country delegation.

3.5 Indigenous Research Paradigm

This study acknowledges the dominant and competing paradigms of social qualitative research that permeate development research. The preset menu of paradigms, which includes positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism, have offered a framework from which to develop one's research strategy (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014). However, for researchers with an indigenous perspective (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008), the dominant paradigms are too limited to provide a paradigm that resonates with their philosophical tones. In an indigenous paradigm the ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology entities are 'inseparable and blend from one into the next ... [t]he whole of the paradigm is greater than the sum of its parts' (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 70). In indigenous ontology, there are multiple realities which are not external. It is not the object that is as important as is the relationship one has to that object (S. Wilson, 2008). Epistemologically, this extends beyond the way we know reality to include the systems of knowledge and relationships such as 'interpersonal, intrapersonal, environmental and spiritual relationships, and relationships with ideas' (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 74). It also extends to obtaining knowledge not just through the intellect but also through the senses and intuition (Cordero, 1984).

Axiologically, relational accountability underpins indigenous research where fulfilling a role and being accountable is important in the research relationship. Methodologically, relational accountability is more important than determining, for example, right and wrong, or validity of statistical significance. In selecting methods, one would consider not only if the methods serve the research question but whether they build respectful relationships between the topic and researcher.

3.5.1. Pacific Indigenous Paradigm

The philosophical focus of this study is sharpened by locating it within the epistemological and ontological orientations of indigenist research, research about and for the Pacific carried out by indigenous Pacific researchers. In doing so, the study steps beyond the efforts of indigenous researchers who in the past were ‘spending their time and effort ... justifying their indigenous-based research methodologies through mainstream theoretical arguments’ (Wilson & Wilson, 2013, p. 347), and brings forward the work of Pacific research and Pacific researchers – in particular, indigenous Pacific research and researchers – into the realm of Pacific island states’ policy, planning and implementation.

Drawing methodological guidance from indigenous Pacific and other scholars (Ferris-Leary, 2013; Gegeo, 2001; Mahina, 1999; Quanchi, 2004; Te Ava, 2011; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2013; Wilson & Wilson, 2013), this study adopts an indigenist research approach that ‘works from a worldview that understands knowledge is relational: indigenous people are not in relationships; they are relationships. This is indigenous truth and reality’ (Wilson, 2013, p.311). As such, cultural knowledge, truth and reality inform the methodological choice of the study to advance the theoretical orientation of the policy spaces of Pacific island states. This includes understanding the interconnected nature of the relationship between the spiritual, physical and social elements of an indigenous paradigm in relating people to place (Kovach, 2010; Louis, 2007; Wilson, 2013). By using relationality and relational accountability, indigenous Pacific research ‘can be put into practice through choice of research topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and presentation of information’ (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 4). In this way, this study provides a way to *understand* the perspectives and narratives of climate change mobility and *redefine and transform* the structural and functional characteristics and pressures that inhabit the policy spaces of island states like the Cook Islands.

3.5.2. Research Values

In order to answer the research questions a research design was needed to support the study's examination of the institutions and policy mechanisms, as well as the experiences and perceptions of individual actors. However, the Cook Islands cultural context with its Western democracy and Westminster style of governing – embedded in a colonised but indigenous network of tribal/village individuals – meant that a Western methodology was not able to provide fully a research process that could answer the research questions (Kovach, 2010) and take account of this context.

In speaking to the conceptual bases of Western and indigenous research models, Kovach maintains that '[t]he word *conceptual* privileges thought as the sole pathway to knowledge and places feelings, spirit, and experience as secondary' (Kovach, 2010, p. 41). In addition, conceptual frameworks 'make visible the way we see the world ... they are either transparent ... or not, yet they are always present' (Kovach, 2010, p. 41). As such, conceptual frameworks show up the researcher's standpoint, their beliefs about knowledge production and the impact on their research giving the reader insight into the researcher's interpretative lens (Kovach, 2010, p. 41), sending a purposeful message about researchers and their intentionality (Kovach, 2010, p. 42). In coming to understand I was after such a holistic conceptual design, the vaka moana model began to emerge.

Consistent with Kovach, the vaka moana model privileges Cook Islands indigenous knowledges and actor perspectives and experiences, and in its attempt to unify the conceptual framework and methodology of this study it serves as a holistic organisational device that acts 'as a nest, encompassing the range of qualities influencing the process and content of the research journey' (Kovach, 2010, p. 42).

The design and implementation of my research are guided by key cultural concepts informed by Cook Islands scholarship (Herman, 2013b; James, Mitaera, & Rongo-Raea, 2012; Jonassen, 2003; Perkins, 2015; Reilly, 2015; Reilly, 2016). Jon Jonassen identified eight interconnected values in Cook Islands Maori culture: *kitepakari* (wisdom), *irinaki* (faith), *akakoromaki* (patience), *ora* (life), *rotaiangā* (unity), *akaaka* (humility), *noa* (freedom) and *aroa* (love) (Jonassen, 2003). Educationalist Teremoana Maua-Hodges' (2000) *tivaevae* research model is based on five values: *taokota'i* (collaboration), striving to achieve shared objectives and patiently practising skills; *tu akangateitei* (respect), respecting the knowledge of others – learning is a form of respecting the knowledge of others; *uri kite* (reciprocity), sharing of ideas in a learning environment; *tu inangaro* (relationships), a process of relationship-making over time, time spent on listening, observing, demonstrating, practising, analysing, experimenting and reviewing; *akaari kite* (a shared vision), important because it represents the values of *tuakangateitei* (respect) *tu akakoromaki* (patience) and *tu kauraro* (humility) (Futter-Puati, 2017; Te Ava, 2011; Te Ava et al., 2013).

In recent work the *tivaevae* model has been extended in Cook Islands research projects as a methodological tool (see Tisam, 2015), as a structural device (see Futter-Puati, 2017) and an analytical tool (see Te Ava, 2011). Health professional Neti Tamarua-Herman made use of New Zealand's Pacific Health Research Council principles,²⁶ translating and reshaping these for her research into the health of Cook Islands youth (as cited in Herman, 2013, pp. 11-12).

²⁶ **Relationship** – *Pirianga tau tetai ki tetai* emphasises the building of group and interpersonal relationships. **Respect and Humility** – *Kauraro me kore Akangateitei* refers to an individual subjugating or humbling his or her personal autonomy and giving priority to the needs of others. **Cultural Competency** – *Kia tukatau te tangata i tana ua'orai peu tupuna* means the researchers must have awareness of their own Cook Islands cultural beliefs, values and practices, and how these impact upon their interaction with others. **Meaningful Engagement** – *Te ooanga tetai ki tetai*, involves forming relationships that are sustained, maintained, on-going and deepening. **Reciprocity** – *Tauturu atu, tauturu mai* is founded in kinship relationships, which can be demonstrated in practical ways, such as interchanging of gifts and goods or services for reimbursement for time. **Rights** – *To te tangata au tika'anga* gives each individual, group or community the right and freedom to make informed choices, that is, whether to participate in research or not. Also, any risks must be made clear to the participant, and they must feel free in their decision to participate or not. **Participation** – *Te Pirianga ki roto ite au anga'anga*, requires the active involvement of Pacific people at all levels of decision making and implementation of the research. **Balance** – *Kia Tau te Ravenga Paruru* is the basis for relationship

Resonating with relational accountability, this research makes use of cultural concepts articulated in the Turanga Maori framework of James et al. (2012). Their framework provides guidance to those working with Cook Islands families to address family violence and restore Maori wellbeing as part of a New Zealand Ministry of Justice programme. These examples show there is increasing engagement in research about the Cook Islands by Cook Islands researchers – indigenous and others connected to the Cook Islands – as they pursue and transform Cook Islands research through indigenous conceptualisations²⁷ of Pacific family violence in Aotearoa. This framework consists of three elements: *akonoanga Maori* (Maori culture), *no teia tuatau* (the present/now), and *ta angaangaia* (transformation).

Akonoanga Maori (Maori culture) is considered 'evolutionary and situated in the 'now' – otherwise it is *peu tupuna* (the ways of our ancestors), which is not the same as culture (James et al., 2012, p. 6). While values such as those identified by Jonassen remain in place 'the way in which those values and principles are practised evolves with and within each generation ... *akonoanga* Maori is not prescriptive and offers the opportunity to be relevant, realistic and flexible given the circumstances at hand' (James et al., 2012, p. 6).

The first element of the Turanga Maori framework is *papaanga* (geneology/kinship) and *papaanga tupuna* (ancestral geneology) which provides a basis for understanding relationships. This framework comprises four concepts to guide one's research practice. They are: 1) *turanga* (position and standing), 2) *pirianga* (individual collective belonging to a reciprocal network),

development. Partnerships formed with people during the research should be equitable and fair for both parties, engendering symmetry in the balance of power. Member partners must respect and reciprocate the wellbeing and good of others. **Capacity Building** – *Te 'akamatutu'anga* involves Pacific people conducting original investigations in order to gain knowledge and understanding about the problems and challenges that face Pacific communities. It demonstrates a commitment to the empowerment of Pacific people, which is critical to improving health outcomes through research. **Utility** – *Te puapinga ka rauka mai* should always endeavour to link its findings with tangible improvements in health outcomes for Pacific people (HRCNZ, 2004).

²⁷ Cook Islanders include: Te Ava, 2011; Marsters, 2013; Herman, 2013. There are a number of researchers who have family connections as the partners of Cook Islands Maori. See Futter-Puati, 2017; Beumelburg, 2016; Tisam, 2015).

responding to shared responsibilities and privileges inside and outside the *papaanga*, 3) *akaue'anga* (fulfilling individual and collective duties), and 4) *ngakau aroa* (the willingness and conviction of the heart, generosity) to self and others are defined and practised (James et al., 2012, p. 6). The second element is the concept of '*no teia tuatau* - importance to be relevant and realistic to the environment and context which people live in today' (James et al., 2012, p. 5-7), and the last element is '*ta angaangaia* – transformation that occurs when all of the above are put into practice. On their own they are simply cultural concepts isolated in space' (James et al., 2012, p. 7). I work with these three elements and four concepts throughout the research process in relation to the metaphor of *vaka moana*.

3.6 Methodological Approach

Based on the framework and concepts discussed above, the research question has been formulated by drawing inspiration from one's day-to-day life and experiences (Merriam, 2009) and my experiences of events outlined in the preface of this thesis. In determining the fit with my research question and a suitable approach, consideration was given to the context-specific aspects of the question, that is, an oceanic island state, the Cook Islands, with its particular cultural, colonial and development history, sovereign relationship with New Zealand, and the issue of climate change mobility. Accordingly, an approach was needed that was able to explore multiple perspectives in this context and to give agency to Pacific island states (Barnett & Campbell, 2010). As a result, a case study approach was adopted.

3.6.1. Case study

According to May (2011), cases are chosen for the extent to which they illuminate and extend understanding of relationships between constructs (p. 228), or expressed in terms of Schrank's (2006) question of concept contribution: 'what is my case a case of?' (p. 22). My study is the case of an island state's development and sovereign response to an emerging issue, which is the

Cook Islands' approach to addressing the issue of climate change mobility. As a single-country study that is an intrinsic rather than instrumental case study, its design lends itself to inductive and participative techniques, rather than deductive theory testing (May, 2011) by relying more heavily on the analysis of the data. According to Shrank, 'the best case studies are methodologically catholic; they let their questions drive their data collection and analytic procedures and not vice versa' (Shrank, 2006, p. 18).

3.6.2. Tool and Techniques

In Pacific indigenous research it is possible to draw on specific methods that are part of long-standing research traditions (Ritchie et al., 2014; Wilson, 2008). Methods are used from suitable research paradigms that 'have inherent in them more relationship building and relational accountability than others and therefore may be more attractive in an indigenous paradigm' so 'long as they fit the ontology, epistemology and axiology of the indigenous paradigm' (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 39). The strategy of my inquiry involved primarily face-to-face interviews, participant observation and document analysis. These are discussed below.

3.6.3. Semi-structured Interviews

To answer the research questions, semi-structured interviews were carried out that focused on individual development actors as interpretative subjects of their own engagement in Cook Islands development policy and practice. Potential participants, most of whom resided in the Cook Islands, were drawn from a list of possible stakeholder organisations. I had pre-existing associations with a number of these organisations, and with people who were or had worked in those organisations. This enabled an easy integration into the community I was researching.

The discussion themes varied between interviewees. I was intent on using open-ended questions based on a set of themes that had emerged from the literature review that were tailored to suit the participant's interest, knowledge and experience. Themes focused on:

- Experiences and perceptions related to climate change mobility, policy space and policy processes.
- Understanding and examples of involvement in national policy processes and relevant international negotiations.
- Perceptions and examples of New Zealand (and other aid and development partners') relationships in Cook Islands domestic policy processes and relevant international negotiations.

According to Huberman and Miles, (2002), 'in qualitative interviews, typically most of the talk is not narrative but question-and-answer exchanges, arguments and other forms of discourse' (p. 219). The interviews included a combination of thematic question-and-answer exchanges and 'topic-centered narratives (snapshots of past events that are linked thematically)' (Huberman & Miles, 2002). In this way I was able to determine the self-reflective capacity of the participant. Some participants demonstrated high levels of self-reflection and were able to give more in-depth accounts of their experiences that were closely related to the discussion themes.

3.6.4. Purposive Recruitment

Interviewees were selected using the method of purposive interview recruitment (Rouch et al., 2010). An information sheet and consent form were provided to each potential participant before the interviews commenced, initially by email or by face-to-face informal contact when I would explain my project and ask to follow up with a call or email. In one instance, the head of a government department called a group of staff together, which was followed up with one-to-one meetings with staff. In other instances, I approached specific officials in a department because of their role as a Cook Islands UNFCCC delegate.

Overall the interviews were held mainly with Cook Islands-based government officials, members of civil society including private-sector leaders and stakeholders, and officials of government

partners of the Cook Islands. Some face-to-face interviews with New Zealand-based participants were carried out in Auckland and Wellington. There were also a few interviews by phone or Skype with others based in Samoa, France and Fiji. All interviews were carried out in English.

In total, 43 people were interviewed. Of these, 22 were women, 33 were indigenous Cook Islanders, and five who were non-indigenous but had permanent residency status²⁸ in the Cook Islands. I transcribed all the interviews in preparation for participant verification and data analysis. Interviewees were offered an opportunity to comment on the transcripts, with a two-week turnaround period for responses. Twenty-two asked for the full transcripts to be sent to them. Eleven made changes to their transcripts. These changes were grammatical in nature. Six were indigenous Cook Islanders (four women and two men). Five were expatriates which included three New Zealand officials based in Rarotonga and Wellington.

3.6.5. Identified as Maori and Local

Participants were mainly 'local' in the sense they lived in the Cook Islands at the time of their interviews. In everyday terms a 'local' typically refers to an indigenous Cook Islander – and if they are married, their non-indigenous spouse – but more recently has also come to include non-Cook Islands permanent residents. For the purposes of this research, I use the term Maori rather than 'local' to distinguish between those Cook Islanders who are Maori by descent and those who are not but who are long-term residents with permanent resident status. I also use the term Maori to refer to Cook Islands participants who are Maori by descent, whether or not they were born in the Cook Islands and regardless of where they currently reside – the importance is that they are Maori. Using this description, the majority of participants in this study were Maori.

²⁸ Permanent residency is granted to 650 people at any one time. Non indigenous spouses of indigenous Cook Islanders or Permanent residents are eligible for permanent residency and are not included as part of the quota.

3.6.6. Interviewees

Of the 43 total participants, 35 were based in Rarotonga, and 40 had *pa enua* experience – that is, had stayed for a short or extended period of time on at least one other island in addition to Rarotonga. Even a short stay was sufficient for participants to have been familiarised to a range of cultural, social and economic similarities and differences with Rarotonga. They would also have been familiar with size, scale and characteristics of the population, geography, ecology, climate and levels of development such as physical infrastructure, coastal settlement patterns, consumerism and commercial activities; and with the challenges associated with transportation and communication on and between islands and other geographically distant locations.

Where it is known, I have included the island or islands from which the Maori participants came, based on information they disclosed to me, what was publicly known about them or what I knew about them personally.

Ethics approval for the current research established a range of protocols to ensure the safety of the participants – and myself – through the research process, such as recruiting participants for interviews. Recruitment involved a formal request to the head of each government agency for permission to interview staff, and seeking permission to observe relevant internal meetings and join government delegations as part of the UNSIDS conference in Samoa and the UNFCCC COP21 in Paris.

The protocols established an assumption of silent consent to use the interview contents for analysis unless I heard otherwise within an agreed period of time. In reality, I felt uncomfortable about such an open arrangement. I contacted participants close to that time with a reminder. Underlying my discomfort was the feeling that it was important to ensure our relationship was intact regardless of whether they consented or not to my analysis of their information. However, when some time had passed without hearing from them, I didn't want them to feel *akama*

(embarrassed or ashamed) about not getting back to me. This was particularly the case when I was communicating with people via email or phone during the periods when I was not living on Rarotonga, so it was unlikely to see them in passing or easily call in to visit them.

3.6.7. Document Analysis

This analysis included review of print and electronic literature, both peer-reviewed articles and book publications. These were collected for analysis along with grey literature (Luzi, 2000) such as relevant reports, policies, documents and images. Although grey literature is not always the preferred source of information for academic research, in the case of this study with its focus on government decision-making and policy development and a lack of well-established published literature on climate change mobility in the region, it was a crucial and useful documentary source of information. A range of relevant Cook Islands policy documents and reports produced during 2005 and 2017 were sourced, reviewed and analysed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software.²⁹ Other sources included newspaper articles and personal communications such as emails replies to follow up questions with participants, documents participants emailed to me, and documents obtained through internet search of government department websites.

3.6.8. Participant Observation

Participant observation ‘encourages researchers to immerse themselves in the day-to-day activities of the people whom they are attempting to understand’ (May, 2014, p. 164), enabling ideas to emerge from the observations. As a member of the community of inquiry for my research, I have applied participant observation tools in two ways. First, as a participant

²⁹ The NVivo process, coding process and usefulness is discussed later in this chapter.

observer at various national, regional and international policy-space events over the period from January 2005 until December 2015 (see 3.4 above).

At these events I focused on observing how discussions progressed given the diverse range of stakeholders, the multiple interests and thematic strands. In general, I was interested in observing how participants engaged with each other and the topics of discussion, and in relation to Cook Islands interests specifically. The opportunity to observe gave me the chance to familiarise myself first-hand with the different policy processes at play in the development policy space of the Cook Islands. As one of a large number of participants, I was able to observe discussions in public spaces, at conference events and at smaller convened sessions such as side events.

As a member of the delegation to the SIDS conference, it was possible for me to attend various conference workshops and sessions. It was particularly valuable to share accommodation with six members of the delegation who were government officials, sharing meals, travelling to and from the conference venue, and attending some conference events together. It provided valuable 'behind-the-scenes' insights as I participated in working sessions at the accommodation with members of the delegation, such as reviewing official speeches

Planning for the SIDS conference in Samoa included obtaining permission to attend the conference and observing government pre-conference planning meetings in-country. These served as a scoping exercise that helped to refine the research questions and review the literature on concepts of policy space. In addition, it provided an appreciation of the scale and logistics of international meetings and conferences, the level of preparation required, and the preparedness of officials and their capacity to engage and manoeuvre in these events.

Observational data – of the conference sessions I attended, informal conversations, and activities with various delegates – were recorded in my research journal (Bringer, Johnston, &

Brackenridge, 2004). This included 'personal thoughts, theoretical ideas and concerns relating to the research project' (Bringer et al., 2004, p. 254). In reality, I ended up with two sets of journals. One journal I used as part of my recording device - a Livescribe pen that I used to audio-record interviews and events, and for handwritten notes. On one occasion, I also used my phone as a recording device. I would then upload the file and transcribe to a Word file before adding to NVivo. I used the other journal as a research diary and an aid to reflection, to help with time management and daily goals.

During the proposal preparation stage of the research I used a handwritten journal to record my observations at events. I also electronically recorded insights and reflections covering personal, theoretical and methodological thoughts in NVivo and linked to node extracts, annotations and documents (Bringer et al., 2004; Kikooma, 2010). In practice this entailed creating a 'Tina's reflections' node and a 'not sure' node. As I coded the interview and observation transcriptions I would drop items into the relevant node, for attention as my analysis progressed.

It is possible to use NVivo to code the literature from the outset of the project. However, in my case I began to use NVivo in the fieldwork stage. Interviews, events, policy documents and reports I gathered were added to NVivo and coded. All interviews were fully transcribed. As I transcribed these I would record notes about possible themes, connections and themes for each interview.

3.7 Data Analysis Technology

Analysis of the data was assisted, as mentioned above, with the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (GQDAS) NVivo. The experience of other researchers who had used CAQDAS (Bringer et al., 2004; Kikooma, 2010; MacMillan & Koenig, 2004; Walsh, 2003) provided useful advice for a doctoral candidate such as myself, including its limitations: there is

‘an assumption that the software is the methodology, and that by simply learning to use the program, the researcher is doing analysis’ (Kikooma, 2010, p. 40). I was motivated to use this tool because of its time-efficiency compared to the manual, time-consuming methods I had used in the past. As with MacMillan and Koenig (2004), I think of NVivo as being ‘able to offer active assistance with coding, thus reducing the burden to researchers, making coding more efficient, and improving its quality’ (p. 281).

3.8 Audit Trail

The ‘audit trail’ refers to a step-by-step documented history of how information was handled. For this study, the audit trail and similar to Kikooma’s study (2010), I created the NVivo project, node sets, cases, case types and case nodes to assist me with qualitative (versus quantitative) analysis of text. Logical and creative pathways were pursued to search for patterns, connections and explanations within the data (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Saldana, 2009). This meant initially that I created nodes based on themes from the thematic areas of the interview question guide. These were later amended as further connections were made with the literature and the initial nodes.

3.9 Ethical Considerations and Issues

Several ethical challenges were navigated during the course of this research. These related to the reality of carrying out the institutional ethics requirements in fieldwork outside New Zealand – fieldwork was carried out in Cook Islands, France, New Zealand and Samoa. I met these challenges on several levels.

First, ethics approval was sought and granted by the University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee. Secondly, I gave consideration to the Health Research Council of New Zealand’s Pacific Research Guidelines (May 2014), and the regulatory frameworks set out in the New Zealand Privacy Act (1993) and the Cook Islands Official Information Act (2008). Thirdly, the

research was registered with the Office of Prime Minister of the Cook Islands Government and approved by the Cook Islands National Research Committee. Fourthly, consideration was given to the expectations of funders of a scholarship and research grant recipient. Lastly, and of central importance, I also sought the blessings of my *mataiapo* and *pa metua*, tribal leader and elders.

Collectively these highlight the multiple accountabilities that were manifest throughout the research process. The challenge to ensure these accountabilities were honoured, respected and met was a constant companion of this research journey. At times it felt burdensome as I tried to resolve an ethical tension or make good on a procedural step. Other times I was able to sort out the dilemma with ease through insights of blinding and inspired clarity. As Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) points out, 'indigenous research is not quite as simple as it looks, nor quite as complex as it feels! ... indigenous research is a humble and humbling activity' (p. 5).

My intention was to manage my obligations by being explicit about my role as 'Tina the PhD researcher' rather than 'Tina the consultant researcher', and by taking care to protect the people and their contributions throughout the research process. However, meeting my researcher obligations also included attending to my other obligations that extended beyond that of a researcher. Family obligations posed many challenges to balancing multiple expectations and responsibilities. In many cases the insight that 'family comes first' held true, and enabled decisions to be made when prioritising family duties over research responsibilities. For example, timing 'leave' for our oldest son and daughter-in-law's wedding and the haircutting ceremony of our grandson in January 2016; or sending off chapter drafts before the arrival of a grandchild in January 2017. However, 'living with' the diagnosis, care and passing of my sister, and carrying out her wishes as executor and trustee throughout the last 18 months of the research process, proved the most challenging.

Noting these relational accountabilities, and my continuous responsibilities and obligations during and beyond the life of this research, I also visited my mataiapo (chief) and pa metua (elder) who were both resident in the village of Titikaveka, Rarotonga, Cook Islands where I live. This involved visiting each separately, explaining my research, seeking their guidance and thoughts, and sharing written information about the study. This accountability continued throughout the study.

Participants were given the opportunity to be anonymous or publicly acknowledged for their contribution to the study including attribution of direct quotes. All volunteered to be identified. Prior to commencing the interviews, we talked about the research, my obligations and the safeguards in place to protect their participation in the study. This involved discussing the written information sheet and consent form with them or allowing them time to read before signing or capturing their verbal agreement on the audio recording or making a note in my notebook of their authorisation. In some instances, participants signed the form. Other times it was verbally agreed. This was because we were not physically in the same place for them to sign, but mainly it was because they did not think it was necessary. The point was, the process facilitated their agreement. The paperwork was a useful tool as it created a record of how they wanted their information to be handled, which meant I was able to create a list of who wanted the audio recording and/or the transcript. So in terms of managing a cultural imperative and an ethics application expectation of a signed consent form, one's verbal word turned out to be sufficient to uphold informed consent. As such this aspect of the research process was carried out based on the cultural values of on which the study is based.

3.10 Conclusion

The research design is guided by the overall research question, 'How is the Cook Islands government with its special relationship with New Zealand able to negotiate its future when addressing a cross-border issue like climate change mobility?' After surveying the literature on indigeneity and research methodologies, I adopted a research methodology consistent with an indigenous perspective that values cultural knowledge, truth and reality. Western methodology with its reliance on 'thought' as the sole pathway to knowledge, was deemed insufficient to provide a research process that could answer this question.

Eschewing the notion of 'objective truth', an indigenous methodology provides a means of understanding the interconnectedness of the spiritual, physical and social elements that relate people to place. In this research, sense of place for me is located through my papaanga – my genealogical position as a Cook Islands woman with European ancestry – and an established network of pre-existing relationships within my community of inquiry. Guided by the literature on indigenous research, I examined my own positionality and its bearing on my relationships, methods and analysis by constantly reflecting and questioning my presence, thoughts and actions throughout this research process.

Following Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) and Wilson (2008), my research blends indigenous ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological entities, in which the relationships are paramount, knowledge is obtained through senses and intuition in addition to the intellect, and relational accountability underpins the research relationship. Respect, reciprocity and responsibility are key to both answering the research question and to building relationships between the topic and myself as researcher.

The research took place in several countries, which created multiple lines of accountability that could be both burdensome and humbling. In Tuhiwai-Smith's words 'indigenous research is not

quite as simple as it looks'. I found the procedural and ethical tensions of the situation were balanced by official (such as ethics approval in New Zealand and in Cook Islands) and traditional means. This involved seeking the blessings and support of my mataiapo and pa metua as noted above.

The immersive methodology I used, particularly participant observation and interviews, reinforced the findings in the literature that the assumed divide between professional and personal selves does not apply for indigenous development actors, for whom there is an expectation to advocate, promote and act with integrity. However, ascribing agency to actors carries risks associated with attribution that can be bestowed and thus withheld. It was interesting, therefore, to discover cultural differences in ascribing agency, and to identify the context and practices that created particular subject positions, such as the expert scientist or the risk-averse donor representative. There were also multiple subjectivities for individual actors in some cases that complicated the policy space and the policy.

In addition to awareness of my own positionality and reflexivity, my research identified some key informants in the climate change mobility policy space that also practised a high level of critical self-reflexivity. These were experienced policy actors with a depth of knowledge who added a richness and depth to their own narratives and to the research generally.

The design and implementation of my research were guided by key cultural concepts informed by Cook Islands scholarship based on indigenous conceptualisations, and key cultural values that were unchanged essentially though time, but which evolved in their practice through generations (Jonassen, 2003). Cook Islands scholarship often used metaphor (such as tivaevae) in applying an indigenous framework that was based on a fairly common set of cultural values, although there were some differences in how they were described. The values in my research methodology are consistent with the Turanga Maori framework (outlined above) with its four

guiding concepts of position or standing, collective belonging with shared responsibilities and privileges, fulfilling individual and collective duties, and generosity or conviction of the heart. These elements are interdependent and given meaning through their relevance to the environment and context in which people live, and the transformation that occurs when they are put into practice.

It was in coming to understand how to put these elements into practice in the context of my own research design – in a way that privileged Cook Islands indigenous knowledges and actor experiences – that the vaka moana framework began to emerge. This conceptual framework acted ‘as a nest’ bringing together all the characteristics and qualities that shaped the process and content of the research.

The next chapter introduces the Cook Islands context with some key institutional actors, how they came to be and their influence in Cook Islands policy spaces and issues.

Chapter 4: Katea e te Ama - Two Canoe Context

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters introduced the study and established its conceptual and methodological frameworks. The aim of this chapter is to establish the contextual influences in the formulation of Cook Islands policy spaces. This is done by drawing on interviews, document analysis and observations, to provide an initial overview of how climate change and human mobility are framed as policy issues. A discussion of the country's broader institutional arrangements and actors is provided. Cook Islands' sovereign relationship with New Zealand and the indigenous relationship between Maori of the Cook Islands and Maori of New Zealand is also considered in this chapter.

The chapter begins with a discussion of why climate change is an issue for the Cook Islands, and what its relationship is to human mobility. The government's interventions in both issues are explored, as are alternatives to the depopulation discourse. In drawing on other considerations that shape policy spaces, the distinct sovereign identity of the Cook Islands – as tira (mast) and kie (sail) of vaka moana – is explained with a focus on the Cook Islands' relationship with New Zealand. This is followed by a discussion about institutional actors and arrangements that metaphorically form the ataata as a platform of policies and institutions of the vaka moana. This chapter also contextualises Cook Islands policy spaces further by presenting influential government reforms that have taken place since the 1990s. This is followed by a presentation on the indigenous institution of the Aronga Mana. Overall, this chapter provides the contextual detail that is not always apparent yet influences the constituent parts of policy space that addresses climate change mobility as a policy concern in the Cook Islands.

4.2 The Katea of Climate Change in the Cook Islands

The prioritising of climate change as an issue in the Cook Islands explains its placement in the vaka moana model as the katea – the larger port or right-side hull of the canoe – as part of the ‘double-hulled’ nature of climate change mobility. Climate change has been interpreted many ways, but this study uses scientific and economic meanings of climate change. Scientifically, the internationally accepted definition of the UNFCCC is that ‘climate change’ is ‘a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity which alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods’ (1992, p. 7). However, it is also generally understood that ‘world economic activity is a cause of climate change and climate change has an impact on economic activity but action to reduce the extent of climate change requires global cooperation or at least coordination’ (Stern, Jotzo, & Dobes, 2014, p. viii). In the context of SIDS sustainable development, climate change is also generally understood to increase vulnerability, heighten exposure to risks and hazards, testing the resilience of islands and communities (Hay, 2013).

4.2.1. The Science Story of Climate Change

Scientific measures of climate change show the Cook Islands has negligible – but increasing – greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The Cook Islands 2006 GHG emissions inventory showed a 34 per cent increase since 1999 that the National Environment Service (NES) attributed to a rise in the demand for energy as the tourism and transport sector drove economic growth (NES, 2011). According to the NES (2011), climate trends and projections ‘indicate cause for even more concern with increasing temperatures, rainfall and winds, rising sea levels, and in the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme events’ (NES, 2011, p. 12). Over the course of the last century, air temperature and sea-surface temperature have increased, annual and seasonal mean rainfall have increased, and the intensity and frequency of days of extreme heat and extreme rainfall have increased, with a change in drought patterns.

In the future the Cook Islands can expect the sea level to rise approximately 7-17cm by 2030, increasing to 39-86cm by 2090 under a high-emission scenario (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2014). This is because of 'increasing ocean and atmospheric temperatures, due to thermal expansion of the water and the melting of glaciers and ice gaps' ((Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2014, p. 37). There is also an increasing risk of ocean acidification (NES, 2011), which impairs coral growth and the ability to maintain healthy reef ecosystems. For the Cook Islands, the aragonite saturation state (an indicator of acidity) is still rated as optimal, although ratings show acidity has increased over the past century (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2011).

In the Cook Islands, climate change impacts are felt most during the tropical cyclone season (November to April), when, on average, there are 11 cyclones per decade, increasing in frequency to 15 during El Niño years. Tropical cyclones are more likely to bring high-wave events compared to tides and annual climate variability (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2011). The NES (2011) reports further that 'tropical cyclones are the main meteorological features affecting the Cook Islands and are influenced by climate change' (p. 12). The data shows an increasing intensity of cyclones, with the 13 reported cyclones 'between 1981/82 and 2010/11 seasons [that] became severe events (Category 3 or higher)' (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2014, p. 30).

The latest science findings (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2014) indicate that El Niño and La Niña events will continue in the future, and annual mean temperatures will continue to rise with more extremely high daily temperatures. Compared to 1995, the global temperatures are predicted to warm by up to 1.0°C by 2030, but after 2030 there is a growing difference in warming between each emission scenario. In the Northern Cook Islands this means that by 2090 a warming of 2.0°C to 3.8°C is projected for very high emissions while a warming of 0.5°C to 1.2°C is projected for very low emissions (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO,

2014, p. 31). While warm and cool years will continue due to natural climate variability, 'there is projected to be more warm years and decades on average in a warmer climate' (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2014), p. 31).

Average annual rainfall is expected to decrease in the Northern pa enua (island group) during the dry season with more extreme rain events, and drought frequency is predicted to increase. The Southern pa enua can expect rainfall and drought frequency to stay the same as the current climate. Although wave climate is not expected to change significantly, oceans will, however, warm and acidify, and coral bleaching will increase (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2014, p. 22). The main effects will be destruction of coastal areas that support important ecosystems, such as coral reefs, estuaries and beaches. Intertidal habitat loss will occur due to 'coastal squeeze' resulting from the high-water mark being fixed by a defence or structure (for example, a seawall) and the low-water mark moving landward in response to sea-level rise (Pontee, 2013, p. 206). The resultant reduction of available land suitable for settlement and infrastructure development will be a concern for all of the country's islands, including volcanic islands like Rarotonga where its steep morphology renders parts of the island unsuitable for human settlement (UNEP, 2014, p. 28) limiting development mainly to its coastal areas.

The country's small atoll islands are reliant on rainwater and thin lenses of fresh groundwater to sustain human settlement and maintain ecosystems. Degradation of these lenses occurs from physical erosion due to storms or long-term sea-level rise, changes in rainfall patterns with extended drought, or lens salination due to overtopping an island by storm surges (Terry & Falkland, 2010, p. 749). This was the case in Pukapuka during the 2005 cyclones. Cyclone Percy hit the island on 28 February 2005, late in the cyclone season just prior to the April-September dry season when rainfall levels are lower. The absence of large rainfalls with their flushing effect and groundwater recharge meant that when seawater formed above the freshwater layer it stayed for 11 months (Terry & Falkland, 2010, p. 757).

Collectively, these trends emphasise the slow and sudden onset nature of climate and weather events that are having an impact on the whole country, exacerbating its development challenges, particularly for the Northern pa enua atolls which will become warmer and drier. Coastal erosion will be an ongoing problem. The intrusion of sea water into occupied coastal areas affecting surface and ground-water supplies will have a detrimental impact on economic activities, crop production and ecosystems. Warming seas will affect marine migration and access to marine stocks including the productivity of aquaculture. Decreasing rainfall in the dry season with more intense cyclones during the wet season will also be an issue affecting the human and environmental health of each island and surrounding waters. The accumulative impact of these environmental and climatic trends (Australian Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO, 2014; Terry & Falkland, 2010) leads to questions for the Cook Islands, as it does for other similar oceanic islands states, about the long-term habitability of its atolls and coastal areas (Betzold, 2015).

In general terms, the awareness of the potential impact of climate change on small island states 'should be raised at all levels, including schools and the grass-root level, so that the population can be better prepared (UNEP, 2014, p. 48). Specifically, climate change combined with other pressures increases the potential threat to development 'in terms of capacity for trade, tourism, transport, energy supplies, and food security' (UNEP, 2014, p. 45).³⁰ In response, regionally, there are substantial climate change adaptation projects underway.³¹ Local efforts are

³⁰ Refer to Rongo & van Woesik 2012 for a detailed study on the socioeconomic implications of ciguatera poisoning outbreaks on Rarotonga communities due to global climate change and other factors.

³¹ Such as the Adaptation Fund project - Strengthening the Resilience of the Cook Islands to Climate Change (SRIC) which aims to strengthen the ability of all Cook Islands communities, and the public service, to make informed decisions and manage anticipated climate-change-driven pressures (including extreme events) in a pro-active, integrated and strategic manner. Refer to: <http://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/af-strengthening-resilience-cook-islands-climate-change>

Also the Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States (GCCA: PSIS) funded by the European Union and implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). This project supported nine small island states' on-the-ground adaptation and policy mainstreaming efforts to deal with climate change effects. The countries were the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu. For final report see: http://ccprojects.gsd.spc.int/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/web-Volume_1_Global_Climate_Change_Alliance_PICTs.pdf

promising, such as one on the island of Manihiki to improve pearl-farming practices to avoid oyster disease outbreaks caused by current and future projected environmental conditions under climate change (Cambers, Carruthers, Rabuatoka, Tubuna, & Ungaro, 2017, pp. 5-7). Government interventions to address climate change are presented in more detail in Chapter Five.

Just as the katea represents the rational, scientific hull of the vaka moana and the climate change mobility policy space, it makes sense that mainstream understandings of climate change and interventions in the Cook Islands are based on environmental and climatic evidence as potential threats to its development capacities.

4.3 The Ama of Human Mobility in the Cook Islands

In the vaka moana model, human mobility is associated with the ama (left hull of the canoe) as the creative and human dimension of a climate change mobility policy space. At this point of my discussion, I examine human mobility in the Cook Islands from a demographic perspective. This was the most common way the Cook Islands government presented evidence about human mobility in its policy documents that were reviewed for this study.

4.3.1. The Demographic Story of Human Mobility

The majority of the Cook Islands population is comprised of indigenous Cook Islanders (approximately 70%).³² Most recent official figures available are from the 2011 census,³³ when there was a population of 14,974, 7,484 females and 7,490 males (MFEM, 2012, p. 4). Drawing from the six-yearly census data, the state of the population residing in the Cook Islands shows

For Cook Islands country report see: http://ccprojects.gsd.spc.int/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/web2-Volume_2_Global_Climate_Change_Alliance_PICTs.pdf

³²Exact figures were not yet available at the time of writing for the reason set out in the following footnote.

³³ There was a census in 2016, but official data was not available at the time of the research for this thesis. Technical problems within the Cook Islands Department of Statistics in 2017 meant the census forms had to be sent to New Zealand for compilation.

that from 1902 to 2011 it grew to a peak of 21,000 in the early 1970s. This was despite Cook Islanders with New Zealand citizenship being able to migrate from 1965. The trend reversed during the census period 1971-1976, and then fell sharply again in the 1996-2001 period, as shown in Figure 5 below (Demmke, 2015).

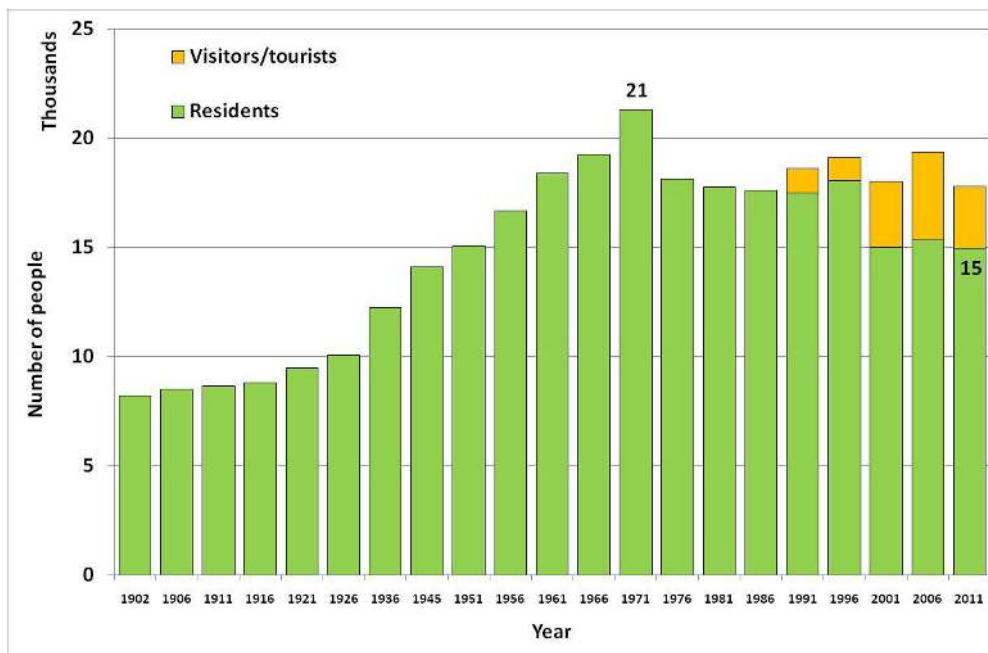


Figure 5: Cook Islands Population Trends 1902-2011

Key events influencing this change were, first, increased air travel following the opening of the international airport on Rarotonga in 1974 when the population declined to below 1961 levels (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2008; MFEM, 2014b). Secondly, the introduction of the public sector reforms in 1996 when two-thirds of public sector employees were made redundant (ADB, 2008; ADB, 2015a).

A sub-regional view of the country's population trends shows the total resident population in the pa enua (outer islands) has declined to below 1900 levels. Figure 6 shows the decline in the

Southern Group population (excluding Rarotonga) to below 1902 levels from just over 4000 to around 3,500 in 2011, well below the peak in 1971 of almost 7,500 people (Demmke, 2015).

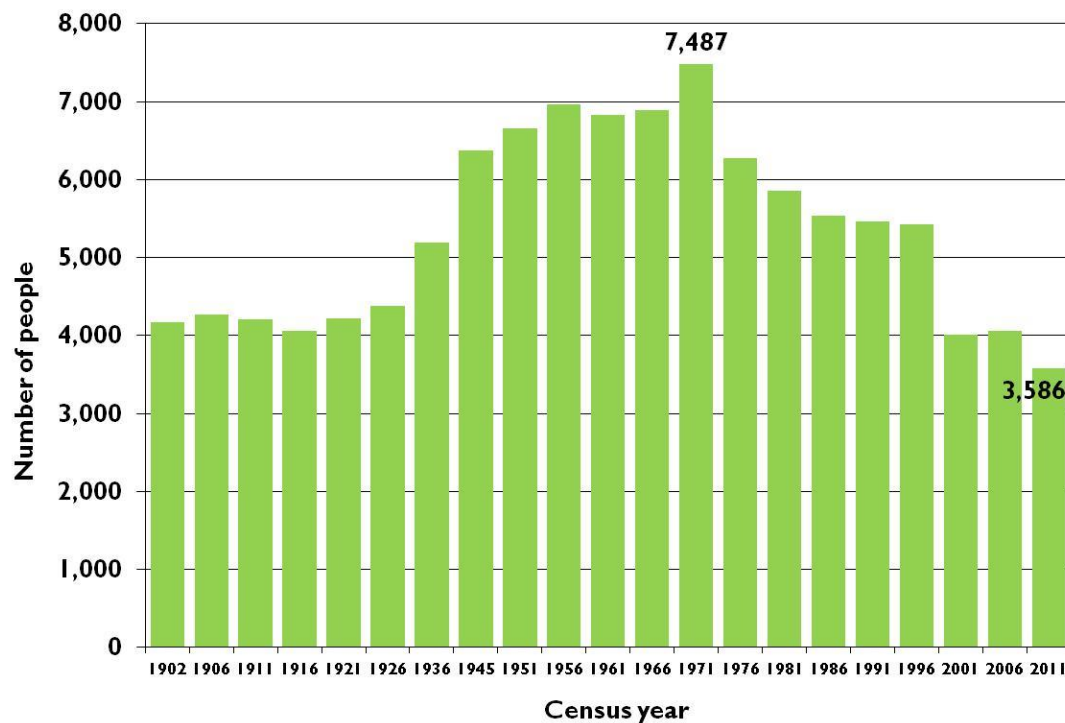


Figure 6: Southern Group Islands Population Trends 1902-2011

Figure 7 shows the same pattern for the Northern Group islands with numbers increasing from 2000 in 1902 to more than 2800 in 1971, and then falling to just over 1,100 in 2011 (Demmke, 2015).

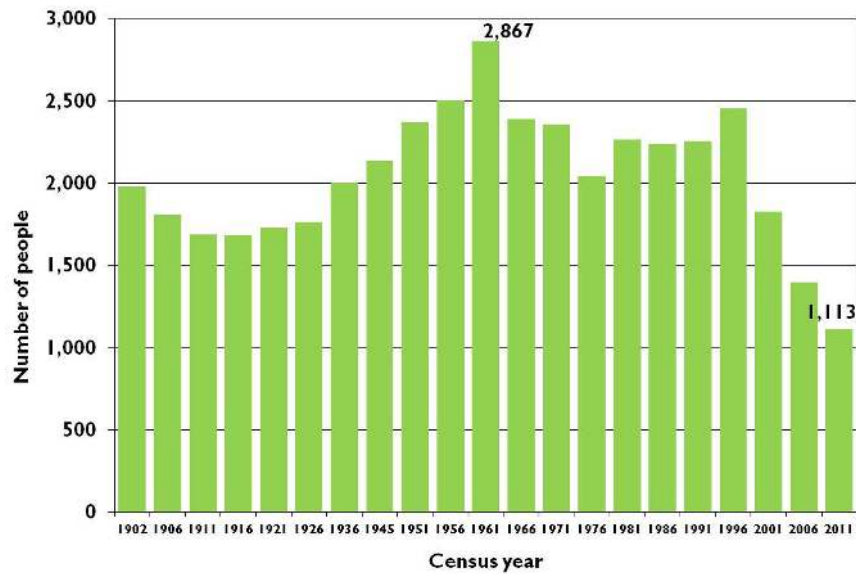


Figure 7: Northern Group Islands Population Trends 1902-2011

The impact of the arrival of air travel and the public sector reforms are clearly visible in Figure 8 below (Demmke, 2015). There was some recovery after each of these events but never to the population levels of the late 1960s and early 1970s. While people from pa enua (outer island group) continue to move to Rarotonga, the increase is also attributed to a rise in the number of foreigner investors and workers taking up residence in the Cook Islands.

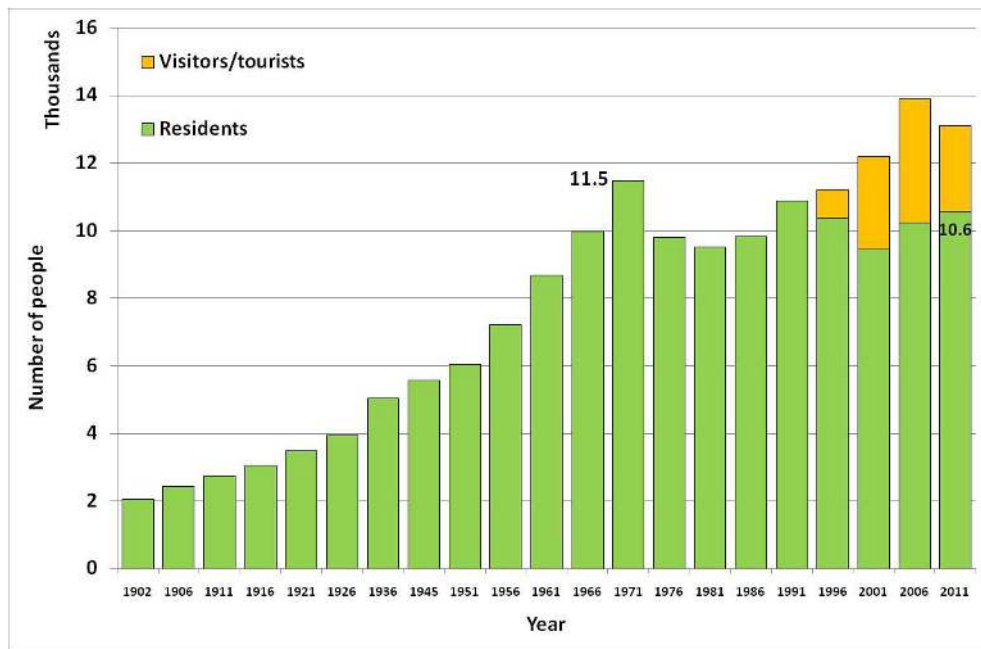


Figure 8: Rarotonga Population Trends 1902-2011

Despite internal migration to, and an increase of foreign residents in, Rarotonga, the downward trend of population numbers has continued: ‘population estimates in June 2015 were 12,900 [for Rarotonga] and about 4,000 pa enua residents’ (Short & Herrmann, 2015, p. 11). This downward trend is predicted to continue. On-going research is needed about why people leave the Cook Islands, for how long, and if they return on a temporary or permanent basis, but it is generally accepted that individuals and families leave for economic and social reasons such as for work, education and training, and healthcare (see Hayes (1985), Marsters (2013), and Wright-Koteka (2006)).

In the Cook Islands context the movement of people is primarily cast as ‘depopulation’ and an economic threat to the country’s viability. In fact, analysis of policy documents and reports show depopulation is considered to be the main development challenge facing the Cook Islands (ADB, 2008; ADB, 2015a; Cook Islands Peer Review Team, 2014; CIGov, 2007; CIGov, 2011b). It is an issue that continues to require attention as indigenous resident Cook Islanders migrate internally to Rarotonga and further afield across international borders, mostly to New Zealand

and Australia. As such ‘the magnitude of the demographic changes, their causes, and wide-ranging implications make population a key dimension of public policy’ (ADB, 2008, p. 29). As a cross-cutting concern, with economic, social, environmental, cultural and political implications, the Consultation Panel for the draft Public Sector Strategy 2015-2025, comprised of three eminent Cook Islands members, found that ‘depopulation is a national development issue creating an imbalanced and costly political infrastructure, eroding the economic base and threatening the socio-cultural identity of Cook Islands Maori’ (Short & Herrmann, 2015, p. 6). In the interviews for this thesis, depopulation was described by participants as a ‘catastrophic’ problem, echoing the Consultation Panel’s assertion that depopulation ‘threatens socio-cultural identities on islands with catastrophic population levels’ (Short & Herrmann, 2015, p. 11).

Arguments about depopulation have dominated policy dialogues over the past 50 years. From an economic and labour market perspective, depopulation means a reduction in the working population, leaving mainly the elderly, infirm and young who are functionally unable to contribute significantly to the country’s economy. It includes the brain-drain phenomenon with the loss of the highly skilled and experienced, and the cream of the academic youth.

The Northern Group and the Southern Group (excluding the main island of Rarotonga) continue to be affected disproportionately by depopulation compared to Rarotonga. Their respective island’s geographical location and small land mass present limited access to goods, services, transport, communication, technology and infrastructure, making it difficult to sustain modern livelihoods or foster economic opportunities for each island’s population.

The demographic research on depopulation shows that it is the indigenous Maori population that is leaving – with a roughly equal ratio of men and women in each age bracket, as shown in the hour-glass shape structure of Figure 9 below – particularly in the 20-40-year-old age bracket.

This poses significant threats to the social and cultural aspects of community life (Demmke, 2015; MFEM, 2012).

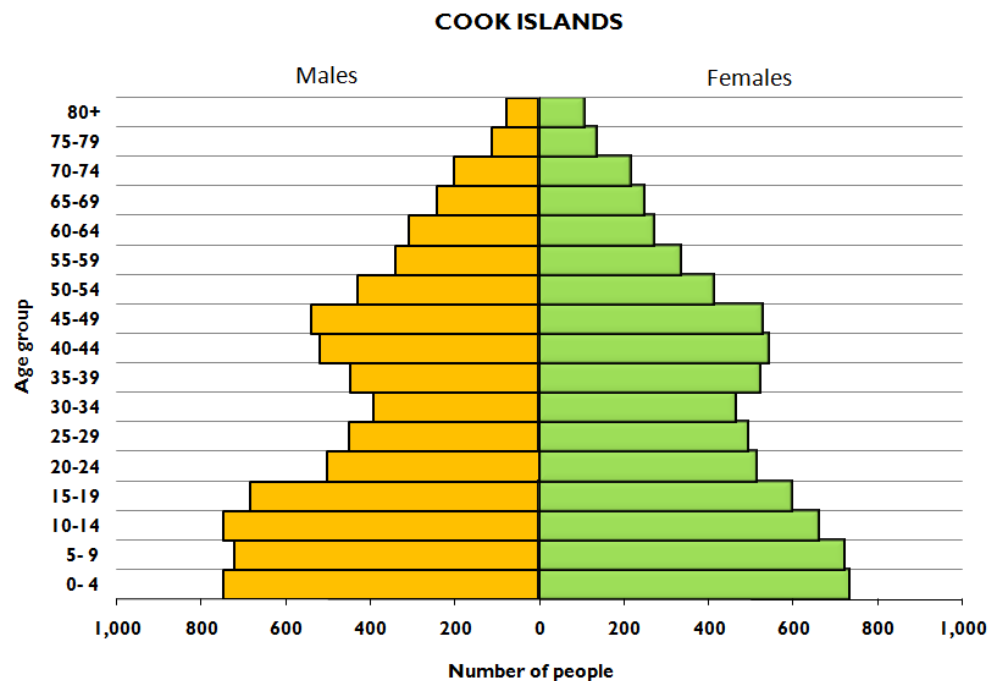


Figure 9: Age and Gender Distribution of Population 2011

Coupled with high levels of consumption and reliance on imported goods, a community's ability to maintain subsistence and its social and cultural practices is threatened to the point where, as one participant warned, the 'collapse of community life is imminent' (expatriate male senior official). Another participant feared that as numbers continue to fall in the pa enua, services will cease, schools and shops will close, and the cost of goods will continue to rise as transport costs increase and services become less frequent (Maori male senior official). A theme that ran through the interviews was the perception of a lack of political will and decision-making by political leaders and government officials to tackle depopulation. The reason for the lack of action, some felt, was because it is just too difficult an issue to resolve.

Nevertheless, a range of development interventions are available to the government to address declining island populations. These include development initiatives in the pa enua to foster economic activity, support livelihoods and community life. Investments in improvements to physical infrastructure (particularly harbours and air strips), power supply, transportation, tax reforms, education and health services, fisheries, agriculture and aquaculture are considered key. Policy documents show efforts had been made to carry out such interventions. Successive governments, with the support of various aid agencies and development partners, continue to invest in the pa enua, as well as Rarotonga, to improve public infrastructure and access to services. As two Cook Islands officials said, with these investments people should not see the need to leave an island or the country in search of a better life and it should attract others to return.³⁴ Nevertheless, the population continues to decline.

4.3.2. Repopulation

An alternative view to emerge in the research was that the focus on depopulation was too negative an approach.³⁵ Depopulation was seen as a red-herring because ‘there is nothing wrong with people leaving, it is natural, and the attention should be on encouraging people to return, particularly indigenous, local Cook Islanders’ (Maori female senior official). As the flip side of this population coin, repopulation was suggested as an alternative focus to depopulation.

This was problematic because it raised questions about the strategy of employing foreign workers as part of the repopulation, and of defining who is an indigenous Cook Islander. Also investments were needed to improve standards enough to attract more expatriate Cook Islanders as part of a repopulation solution. By 2011, 4.4 per cent of Cook Islanders born in New Zealand and Australia (2,679 of a total of 61,568) were living in the Cook Islands (MFEM, 2014b, p. 51). However, the concept of ‘re-migration’ only applies to those who were born in-country

³⁴ Participants 4, 34.

³⁵ Participants 11, 35, 41.

and returned as opposed to second or third-generation Cook Islanders who were not born in the Cook Islands and migrated there, such as children sent to family back in the Cook Islands. It can also include prisoners and criminals deported to the Cook Islands, because Cook Islands deportees from Australia have the choice of going to the Cook Islands or New Zealand (see Chapter 7 section 7.4.3).

It is worthwhile to consider the premise that populations are mobile. This takes us away from a deficit view of Cook Islands development and towards a more flexible understanding of the movement of Cook Islanders. By focusing instead on the mobility of Cook Islanders, depopulation becomes much less of a forever-despairing challenge. Mobility of Cook Islanders occurs within and outside the Cook Islands for different reasons and lengths of time (see section 7.1.1). This enables a different set of assumptions to emerge that provide a nuanced view of the Cook Islands and its population. Furthermore, it opens a new path to consider how climate change and human mobility as the *katea* and *ama* of the *vaka moana* are connected beyond casting human mobility as a depopulation problem limited to labour-market implications for the Cook Islands economy and on-going development.

Currently, the Cook Islands situation falls mainly into Felipe-Perez's (2018) first category of sudden-onset climate-emergency migration, resulting in particular from cyclonic events. As time goes by the country may increasingly experience climate-induced migration, for the reasons outlined in section 4.2 above and perhaps even fall into the climate-forced migration sub-category of SIDS.

4.4 Informing *te Tira* e *te Kie* as Sovereignty

This section examines the historical and contemporary context of Cook Islands sovereignty in shaping the *tira* (mast) and *kie* (sails) of the *vaka moana*, which is the focus of Chapter 7. During the colonisation period of the Pacific, authority over the Cook Islands was formally transferred

from the United Kingdom to New Zealand in 1901. There was an expectation that the Cook Islands would become fully integrated into New Zealand (Crocombe, 1979; Stone, 1971). Crocombe (1979) identified three key undertakings by the New Zealand government during annexation: 'abolishing the Cook Islands Parliament, breaking the traditional leadership system and closing existing opportunities for higher education' (p. 2). These steps 'resulted in a population of the Cook Islands that was passive, dependent, lacking in confidence and experience, and very easy to manage' (Crocombe, 1979, p. 2). On his return visits to the Cook Islands during 1945-1950, Albert Henry attempted independence through the Cook Islands Progressive Association, but nothing came of this (Crocombe, 1979; Stone, 1971). In the 1960s other alternatives were considered. Self-governing in free association was one of four options available to decision makers at the time. The other three – forming a wider Polynesian federation, integration with New Zealand, and full independence – were debated, but were rejected by New Zealand and the people of the Cook Islands (Stone, 1971).

On 26 July 1965 the New Zealand Parliament passed the Cook Islands Constitutional Amendment Act. Subsequently, on 5 August 1965, the Cook Islands achieved its UN-backed political status of self-government in free association with New Zealand (Jonassen, 2009). This marked the birth of a new and more visible international persona. Today, the Cook Islands is actively engaged in regional and international development agreements, demonstrating its willingness to participate as a global citizen.

The absence of its own distinct and separate national citizenship is considered by some to be a limitation towards being a mature sovereign entity (Levine, 2012), although the arrangement still permits the Cook Islands to develop its governance systems to be able to participate on the international scene. It provides an opportunity to develop its own international identity and presence beyond its traditional ties with other Polynesian clans and islands in the Pacific, increasingly forming diplomatic relations with other countries, and entering into partnerships

with donor governments, most notably the Peoples Republic of China³⁶ and the European Union. Despite more partners engaging in the Cook Islands policy spaces, the sovereign relationship with Aotearoa New Zealand – bound with strong relationship ties – continues to have a bearing on the policy spaces of the Cook Islands in addressing the cross-boundary issues of climate change, disasters and migration. This is examined more closely in Chapter Seven.

4.4.1. Relationship with New Zealand

The significant relationship with New Zealand is also a key contextual element of Cook Islands policy spaces that shapes the *ataata* of the *vaka moana*. Broadly speaking, contemporary engagement with New Zealand in policy spaces is often marked by Western practices. These emphasise the asymmetrical relationship between the two countries that is based on close historical, cultural and social ties that are, in part, encapsulated formally within Cook Islands' constitutional arrangements (Frame, 2018; Igarashi, 2002; Jonassen, 2009).³⁷ There are also close economic ties. New Zealand is the largest tourist source market for the country's tourism industry and the largest trading partner (MFEM, 2014a). Approximately 75 per cent of Cook Islands imported goods from 2009 to 2013 were sourced from New Zealand, and about 66 per cent of its visitors in 2010-2014 were New Zealand residents (ADB, 2015b, p. 34).³⁸ In terms of trade annually, the Cook Islands imports, on average, a little under 100 million dollars' worth of goods from New Zealand, and exports roughly a quarter of million dollars of goods to New Zealand.³⁹ The private sector has a growing number of New Zealanders – and Australians – owning and operating a wide range of businesses as a part of the foreign investor cohort. A

³⁶ In July 1997, Cook Islands became one of nine Pacific Island countries to recognise China and its 'One-China policy' (Jonassen, 2006 p. 209).

³⁷ Also see Ministry of Foreign Affairs <http://www.mfai.gov.ck/index.php/foreign-affairs/pacific.html>

³⁸ Other sources include: Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Statistics Office. 2015f. *Cook Islands Statistical Bulletin: Migration Statistics—June 2015*. Avarua; and C. Wilson, R. Corbett, and D. Lanham. 2015. *Evaluation Report for Cook Islands Tourism Sector Support*. Wellington: New Zealand Government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Aid Programme.

³⁹ See also <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/pacific/cook-islands/#Trade>

number of business mentoring services initiated in the private sector are facilitated through the New Zealand aid programme. Collectively this signifies a strong New Zealand presence in the Cook Islands development context.

In the public domain, New Zealand's influence is also reflected in the judiciary. The Cook Islands operates a three-level court system. The High Court of the Cook Islands is the court of originating jurisdiction, with the right of appeal to the Court of Appeal of the Cook Islands, and a further right of appeal available to the Sovereign in Council (Privy Council) in London (ADB, 2015, p. 9). The judiciary is comprised of senior or retired judges of the New Zealand High Court and Court of Appeal. They rotate on a sitting circuit of the Cook Islands High Court at least four times a year. It includes New Zealand Maori Land court judges presiding over Cook Islands land matters. Laws were based on New Zealand statutes (Sissons, 1999).

A number of Cook Islands government departments have established relationships directly with New Zealand government departments; for example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs with New Zealand's Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Culture with New Zealand's Te Papa Tongareva Museum. Together, these show the extent to which New Zealand's influence has been institutionalised into Cook Islands systems and reflects the patterns and flows of social interactions that have developed and been sustained over time between the two countries.

New Zealand has the only diplomatic mission in the Cook Islands,⁴⁰ which includes diplomatic and aid programme staff, and a consular office acting as the primary conduit for state-to-state interactions. The mission is represented by a high commissioner, deputy, first secretary and a number of locally engaged staff providing development programme assistance, consular support and domestic duties for the official residence. Conversely, the only embassy of the Cook

⁴⁰ Also, France, Germany and Spain have Consulates in the Cook Islands, and Japan a Consulate-General. All are based in Rarotonga.

Islands is in New Zealand.⁴¹ The Cook Islands established its own mission to New Zealand in 1993 in an historic building in central Wellington (Wellington City Heritage, 2017), with the appointment of lawyer Laveta Short as its first high commissioner (Maori male civil society representative). So at the level of the state, the ties between the two countries are strong and unique.

The Cook Islands relationship with New Zealand is underpinned by its indigenous relationships with Aotearoa (New Zealand) Maori that existed prior to colonial times. In 2015 the Cook Islands government formalised one of these relationships with a memorandum between Te Kingitanga (the King Movement), known as the Tainui Covenant. A more detailed description of the process and consequences of the covenant is found in Chapter Seven.

4.5 Informing the Ataata - Institutional Reforms Since 2005

Another part of the context that informs policy spaces and particularly the ataata (platform of policies and institutions) are the ongoing institutional and regulatory reforms that have taken place since 2005. The Cook Islands has adopted a Westminster system of governance that is constituted through its political relationship with New Zealand (Crocombe, 1979; Fepulea'i, 2002; Jonassen, 2009; MacDonald, 2018; Sissons, 1999; Stone, 1971; Strickland, 1978). Domestically, the government through its parliamentary structure also has a political relationship with traditional leaders, through the *House of Ariki* and *Koutu Nui*, both of which have accountabilities to the people (Jonassen, 2009; Pascht, 2011).

Drawing on grey literature commonly used in policy spaces, it is considered that SIDS with their 'inherited colonial government structures [have] inherent line ministries and poor inter-ministerial liaison and collaboration, with a general tendency for government administrations

⁴¹ The Cook Islands also has Consulates in Monaco, Panama, Philippines, and Turkey, and a Consulate General in Auckland, New Zealand.

to be inadequately resourced and weak compared to local and traditional governance structures’ (Global Environment Fund [GEF], 2007, p. 15). In the Cook Islands’ case, it has a fragmented and complex arrangement, with potentially multiple lines of accountability (OPSC, 2016), as shown in Figure 10 (OPSC, 2016, p. 18).

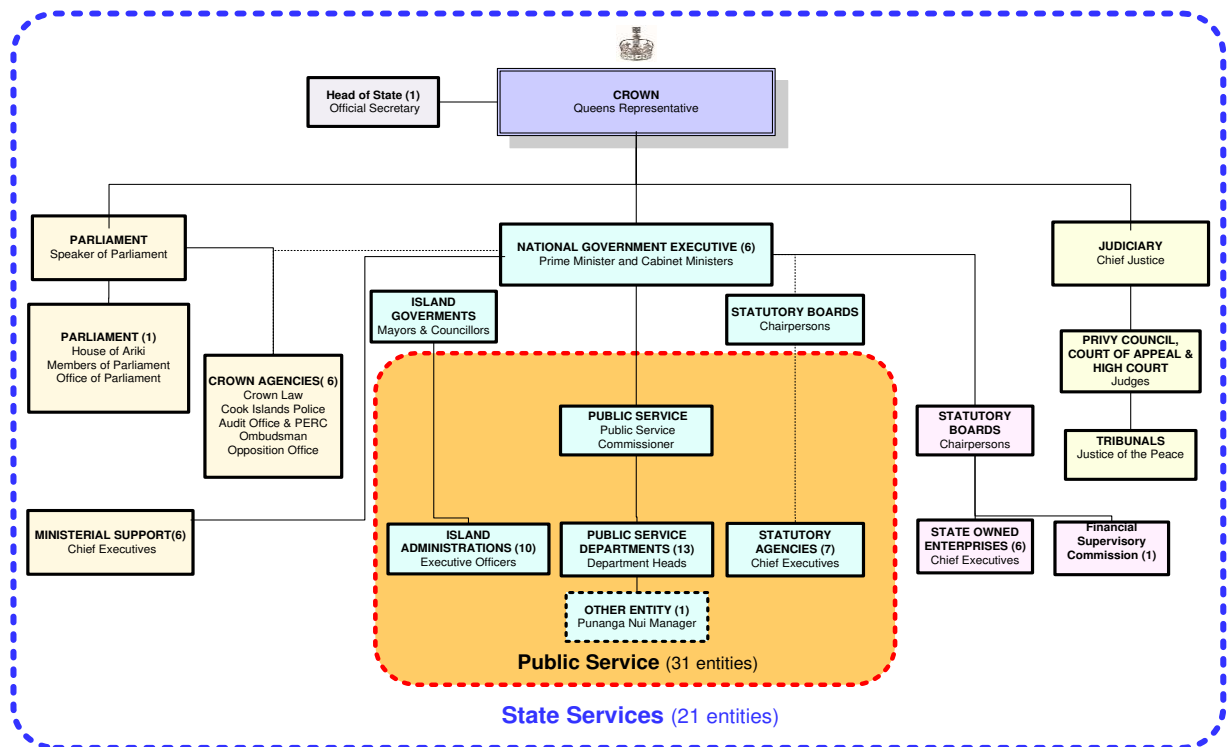


Figure 10: Structure of the Public Sector 2016

The Cook Islands public sector (as shown in Figure 10 above) had (in 2016) 31 public service entities and 21 Crown and state agencies, each with its own legislated functions. In policy spaces, this kind of structure can lead to difficulties for actors ‘understanding how government works, how it is made accountable and how it is paid for’ (OPSC, 2016, p. 10) making it difficult to manoeuvre through these complex processes. The mandates and functions of the public sector are reflected in specific legislation for each entity but all are governed by a number of

key acts.⁴² Collectively these regulatory reforms are key to effective and efficient operations of the state.

One tension to emerge with this arrangement of agencies has been the gradual increase in the number of entities (to 52). It is now at the point where the number, up from 22 in the wake of the 1996 reforms, now equals the pre-1996 total (OPSC, January 2016). This is an issue because of transparency, effectiveness and efficiency concerns associated with increased costs and public accountability raised in the government's 2016 public sector strategy and a functional analysis by the ADB carried out in 2010 (OPSC, January 2016). The functional review proposed a consolidation of government functions to improve ministry and agency performance management, planning and monitoring in line with annual and medium-term budgeting linked to national development planning (ADB, 2011). This included cutting the number of agencies, removing duplicating functions such as corporate functions (financial management and administration) and clustering functions into eight sector ministries instead of the current arrangement (ADB, 2010, 2012; OPSC, 2016). However, in 2012 the government decided to take a phased approach to structural changes. To date some consolidation of corporate services has taken place and two Crown agencies have amalgamated. Further changes are planned with the implementation of the new Public Sector Strategy 2016-2025. It remains to be seen which reforms are carried out because the memories of the 1996 reforms and its effects remain an influential factor in the minds of many.

During the earlier reforms of 1996, the number of staff was reduced to one third, new legislation was introduced, and debt was restructured (ADB, 2008, 2012; OPSC, 2016). Two standout results of the reforms were 'the rapid recovery of the fiscal balance and the accelerated rate of

⁴² This includes the Cook Islands Constitution Act 1964, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Act 1995/96, Public Expenditure Review Committee and Audit Act 1995/96, and the Crown Law Office Act 1980. The Employment Relations Act 2012, Public Service Act 2009, Island Government Act 2012/13, the Official Information Act 2008 have been introduced since 2005.

emigration from the Cook Islands, affecting most significantly the social vitality of the outer islands' (Sharma, 2007, p. 83). This 'forced displacement' (Sharma, 2007) resulted in an estimated 1600 Cook Islanders leaving the country (Knapman and Saldanha, 1999). The downsizing of the public service was considered a 'drastic' measure (UNDESA, 2006). Subsequent reviews of the reform programme have found it was rapidly implemented (over 18 months), ambitious and ill-designed. It did not take account of the small island state context where 'it would have been beneficial to have assessed the track record of this model in developing countries, calling on relevant expertise in both public expenditure management and public administration' (Knapman & Saldanha, 1999, p. 39).

Funded by the ADB and New Zealand, the reform programme was adapted from New Zealand's own economic reform model and driven by external advisers. Lloyd Powell, a New Zealander with a commercial-sector approach who had reformed the Bank of New Zealand (Duituturaga, 2011, p. 104), led its implementation. Local interpretation of these moves characterised by the arrival of New Zealand consultants was considered 'nothing less than a process of recolonisation [that] led to a perception that Maori Cook Islanders did not have the ability to handle their own political affairs' (Rasmussen, 1996, p. 206). Despite the economic and fiscal successes that resulted from the 1996 reforms, it is perceptions such as these that underscore the approaches of current decision-makers (including those who were around at the time of the 1996 reforms) who are more inclined to take a cautious approach and avoid staff cuts beyond natural attrition. As such, this points to a tension between public sector and economic reforms plus a recognition that the ongoing expansion of public sector entities is tied to a diversification of the country's economy. This also points to an institutional memory of displacement in Cook Islands policy spaces.

A range of contested reforms have taken place since 2005. One was reform of the land tenure system with the 2005 Unit Titles Act, which allowed for the ownership of a building without

having to be the lessee of the land. While there may be some economic benefit from land rentals, this freeing up landownership for development effectively diminishes traditional landowner authority over commercial activities developed on top of their land. Other reforms were related to marine resources. The government entered into agreements with foreign interests to explore the extraction of seabed minerals despite parliamentary sub-committee submissions opposing the move (Newport, 2015); and in 2016 a fishing deal with the European Union was agreed and purse seine fishing licences granted despite public protest marches and a petition to Parliament (Newport, 2017).

At the same time, the government declared the country's entire economic exclusive zone (EEZ) a national marine park allowing the controversial mining and fishing activities to occur in designated areas of its waters (RNZ Pacific, 2016a; RNZ Pacific, 2016b). This represented a conceptual shift in the government's regulatory approach. Rather than setting aside marine conservation areas, chair of the Marae Moana project, Kevin Iro said:

We just want to change the mindset of how we look at our own ocean space or our own ocean domain. It's a paradigm shift in how we are going to look at our oceans. So basically, we are going to call our whole EEZ or our whole ocean domain, Marae Moana, which loosely translates as 'Sacred Ocean' and then ask our commercial or industrial operators to carve out areas that they want to operate in, instead of saying 'where are your protected areas, or where are your areas of conservation', we change that around and say it is all sacred, it is all protected. People should be asking now 'where are your areas for fishing, where are your areas for deep sea mining for instance', you know. So it is a whole different way to look at the ocean and we believe that it is the indigenous way to look at the ocean. Our forefathers we believe considered the ocean as sacred and we want to bring that back and make the ocean sacred again and educate our children. (Wiseman, 2016)

Economic reforms related to land and marine resources have been pursued to grow and diversify the tourism-reliant economy and attract foreign investment, with some evidence that indigenous interests have been taken into account. At the same time additional demands to administer these reforms are created, increasing the functions of government and other actors with associated operational costs that potentially cancel out benefits to indigenous people.

Collectively, these ocean and land-related reforms together with the 1996 reforms and their unintended 'displacement' impacts reflect politically and socially diverse histories, cultures and social processes and come into play as part of the social interactions between institutional and individual actors of policy spaces (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013).

The reforms have taken place between state and non-state actors in geographically and conceptually diverse places and times. These exchanges involve individuals as state policy makers on the main island of Rarotonga, government officials located in local government administrations in the pa enua (outer islands), diplomats based at high commissions and embassies in other countries, and government representatives participating in events of varied duration around the world. Community and non-state actors also feature in these interactions, such as the Aronga Mana (traditional leaders), non-government organisations and the social networks of Cook Islanders living throughout the Cook Islands, New Zealand, Australia and other countries. Regional and international institutions and individuals also construct the social interactions of Cook Islands policy spaces. These actors have formal and informal ties through institutional actors of the state. This includes bilateral and multilateral agencies and individuals such as diplomats, officials and community representatives. These particular actors are drawn from the government's formal diplomatic relations with over 40 countries, and memberships of organisations associated with over 100 multilateral treaties, agreements and frameworks.

4.5.1. Development Reforms

Another context that shapes the ataata relates to the development framework of the Cook Islands. Through its diplomatic relationships development cooperation reforms have taken place that also shape policy space interactions.

Before 2005, the Cook Islands government had a traditional relationship with its development partners that was not unlike that of other SIDS and Pacific countries in that it was typically

viewed as a donor-recipient country relationship (Overton et al., 2012). In this model there was a narrow view of foreign aid that 'is often understood to be that which is measured and monitored as Official Development Assistance (ODA) and overseen by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD' (Overton, Murray, & McGregor, 2013, p. 116). In building a development cooperation framework to further its development aspirations, the Cook Islands government has committed to various international agreements about the delivery and management of ODA.⁴³ Together, these agreements and policies established a framework to manage development partners and resource flows. The effect of this has been increased ownership and country-led management of all its revenue, development activities and engagement with development partners. Of note was the adoption of 'total official support for development' (TOSD). This concept modernises ODA to include other financial flows or non-concessional resource transfers (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 135). For the Cook Islands this includes ODA, South-South cooperation support, humanitarian aid, climate finance, domestic resource mobilisation through taxation and lending (Expatriate male senior official). In this way, the additionality of climate finance is not reported separate to ODA (Tomlinson, 2014).

This policy shift is important for two reasons. First, it addresses the pre-2005 situation of having multiple donors with their own specific development priorities, and divergent, time-consuming and overlapping implementation and reporting conditionalities. It provides an avenue for the Cook Islands government to streamline, account for and access multiple sources of resources into its own financial management systems to support its own development priorities. Specifically, this means that climate change-related development activities are flagged for

⁴³ These include the 2005 Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness, 2008 Accra Action Agenda, 2011 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, 2007 Pacific Principles on Aid Effectiveness, and the 2009 Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination (CIGov, 2015; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2014). In the implementation of its commitment to increase ownership and effectiveness of overseas development assistance (ODA), the government consolidated its aid relationships to support its development plans. This was achieved first with the 2011 Official Development Assistance policy (CIGov, 2011a), followed by the 2015 Development Partners policy (CIGov, 2015).

funding through climate-finance facilities and becoming an accredited designated authority to the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund. This effectively bypasses costly multilateral projects (Newport, 2015).

Secondly, this shift is important because a significant change is expected to come about through the Cook Islands status with the OECD (see sections 1.5 and 7.3.4).

Institutional changes have taken place as part of the instigation of an overarching national development planning approach that have also shaped the *ataata* of policy spaces. Government's processes for determining priorities for aid funding shifted from being of a piecemeal fashion where aid was delivered mainly through conventional approaches with donor-led and managed projects to country-led and managed activities using government systems (Health Specialists Limited, December 2010; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2014). Three committees were introduced, with the effect of strengthening country ownership of development objectives.⁴⁴ They are mandated to provide high-level advice to the political leaders and direction to the public sector. These government committees are an integral part of the institutional boundaries that filter discourses and the rationalities of particular actors. As mechanisms of governance they make up institutional fields that can be dense with extensive administrative structures leaving little room for additional external policy initiatives (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013). This is seen in the annual Development Partners Meeting introduced to foster mutual accountability between the government and development partners. Held each February between 2011 and 2015, the meetings are timed to precede the government's national budget process and jointly assess aid quality in light of global partnership

⁴⁴ Participants 5, 8, 11.

principles for development effectiveness (CPEDC, 2016).⁴⁵ The inclusion of climate change mobility at the 2015 Development partner meeting is explored in Chapter 6.

As a culmination of ongoing interactions that take place throughout the year, these annual meetings review progress and flag policy intentions. The interactions can include officials and consultants on mission visits to the Cook Islands – supplemented by emails and Skype or phone calls – and visits by Cook Islands officials, political leaders and other representatives to development partner venues outside the country. This might also include working through the Cook Islands High Commissions and other countries' high commissions and embassies to facilitate visitation programmes with border access and support during visits, depending on the rank and purpose of those visiting.

The agenda for each bilateral meeting is generally negotiated beforehand by relevant officials. Invariably agenda items are dependent on the nature of a development partner's involvement in the Cook Islands development programmes as well as the seniority of the officials and diplomats attending. As an example of the social interactions that take place in policy spaces, it is in these moments that discourses of dependence and independence are created and become 'incorporated as legitimate or appropriate in the practice of policy makers, organisational leaders or individual practitioners' (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 346). Priorities are, as one participant described:

Mostly driven by internationals. They come and say climate change is an issue, purse seining [purse seine fishing] is an issue or giving up smoking is a global issue. So suddenly it becomes our issue. It's not because we had a policy dialogue around what is important. Mainly because there is funding associated with it. Some form of recognition for those involved, through conferences, through having a policy toolkit laid out for them and they look good.

⁴⁵ Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, 2016, Cook Islands Monitoring Profile. Downloaded 21 March 2017 http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/DCD_Docs/Development-Resources/GPEDC/GPEDC_Monitoring_Profile_-_Cook_Islands_Oct2016.pdf

In this extract there is a sense of coercion associated with funding in the adoption of issues that is not always meaningful for meeting local ends. Withstanding or challenging coercion requires confidence amongst individual actors as well as leadership and an openness to facilitate learning beyond the conventional processes amongst actors. One participant with experience of this situation said:

At officials' level, we go into this new policy dialogue around issues that are important to the Cook Islands like depopulation, jobs or whatever it is we define, which the NSDP is defining. The difficulty is that our administration is not really confident to have those policy dialogues. So we are going to have to go through a learning process and who is going to drive that? So people can understand it, and focus staff to understand that rather than rushing off to conferences. Need more research, and facilitating that dialogue, which includes the public. It's not just a matter of going into a meeting and negotiating some administrative procedure anymore. (Male senior official)

The call for increased policy dialogue is an interesting aspect because it has come to be a condition of donor engagement. This is particularly so with the New Zealand government's shift to deliver its ODA through a budget-support mechanism as previously New Zealand's support was provided primarily as development assistance through traditional donor-aid recipient approaches. The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is the main point of contact. In the 2015/16 financial year, of the total ODA budget of NZ\$49,115,200, New Zealand's contribution of NZ\$18,404,500 was approximately 38 per cent of the Cook Islands ODA appropriation for 2015/16 (MFEM, 2015a, p. 143).

In 2015 the way New Zealand delivered aid to the Cook Islands changed. A new performance-based agreement was signed, reflecting 'the strong and trustworthy partnership' between the two governments (CIGov, 2016, p. 159). The new agreement was promoted as a significant arrangement marking a swing away from a donor-led project/programme-based approach to a country-led higher-order aid modality using a budget-support approach. In other words, donor funds are appropriated by the government and dispersed using government's financial management systems and reported against agreed outcomes rather than inputs. The new

arrangement reduced duplication of administrative effort and replaced the hands-on management of day-to-day matters by donor officials and their appointed consultants.

The new arrangement established a working group of government representatives to engage in higher-level domestic policy dialogue rather than deal with the operational details of projects (Health Specialists, 2010; MFEM, 2015).⁴⁶ This was not a novel arrangement for the Cook Islands as prior to the 1996 economic reforms, New Zealand 'bulk-funded' its assistance directly to the government. However, with policy spaces now constituted by international agreements,⁴⁷ the Cook Islands was able to apply country ownership and leadership principles and use its own country systems to manage external development activities and funds. Yet the adoption of aid effectiveness principles that are part of these international agreements have resulted in a kind of interaction that erodes state sovereignty via the conditionalities of external actors (Khan, 2007; UNCTAD, 2014).

This process of managing and delivering aid brings New Zealand to the Cook Islands' policy-making table in such a way that suggests an 'inverse sovereignty' effect (Murray and Overton, 2011) where the policy dialogue requirement places an increased demand and conditionality on the Cook Islands' state institutions and individuals. An example of this can be seen in the New Zealand and Australia's harmonised development programme.⁴⁸ The harmonised programme restricted the Cook Islands ability to deal directly with Australia. In the harmonised arrangement New Zealand was the lead donor because of its 'close association and institutional understanding of the Cook Islands by New Zealand' (Health Specialists Limited, 2010, p. 27).

⁴⁶ Participants 32, 35.

⁴⁷ Such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Busan Agreement for Development Effectiveness, and the regional Pacific Cairns Compact.

⁴⁸ Trialled in 2004, and confirmed in 2006, a tripartite agreement was reached between the Cook Islands, New Zealand and Australia, to establish a single co-funded aid programme. The Australian government now delivers its aid programme through the New Zealand aid programme, under a delegated-cooperation agreement. Considered a significant change in donor engagement, its benefits included improved communication and the use of Cook Islands government financial procedures and systems (Health Specialists Limited, 2010).

Such a closeness appears as a subtle conditionality, where the one agreement brings two partners to the Cook Islands policy table. This kind of conditionality at one level reduces administrative pressure for the Cook Islands officials, while also decreasing Cook Islands' independence because of increased levels of monitoring and reporting as a function of New Zealand's responsibility to its own and Australia's government for measurable results. In reality, it is probably fair to say its main achievement was to reduce New Zealand and Australia's administrative burden.

While this section has focused on different reforms that have taken place in the Cook Islands, it serves to highlight the policy and social interactions that shape the *ataata* of the *vaka moana*. These institutional reforms, and land and ocean resources management reforms together with revamped development cooperation arrangements are relevant because they play a part in climate change policy spaces. The primary means by which external assistance is channelled into the country to address the development concern is through the country's institutional arrangements for its development planning and financial management regime.

4.5.2. Aronga Mana

Another contextual consideration in the construction of the *ataata* is the indigenous institution of the Aronga Mana (traditional indigenous titleholders) of the Cook Islands. This institution, based on the hereditary system of chiefs, has undergone numerous changes since the arrival of agents of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in the 1820s (NES, 2011, p. 23). It includes Ariki, mataiapo (sub-chiefs), and rangatira/kavana (head of family lines). The Aronga Mana is one of the three pillars of modern Cook Islands society (NES, 2011, p. 23).⁴⁹ At a village, *vaka* (district) and island level, the Aronga Mana preside over customary matters (Pascht, 2011; Monga-Maeva, 2003). During the Cook Islands' colonial and post-colonial period, their *mana* (power

⁴⁹ Participants 39, 40.

and authority) over tribal and island matters diminished but was partially recognised and formalised in legislation after 1965 as part of nation building (Sissons, 1999). It was intended that the role of the *Are Ariki* (House of Ariki) be similar to the British House of Lords and one of the Ariki be appointed as the Queen's representative, legitimising and strengthening its country status and national identity (Sissons, 1999; Pascht, 2011). Instead, the role of the *Ui Ariki* (paramount chiefs) although constituted by law in 1966, is an advisory one with a mandate to provide comment and recommendations only on cultural matters of custom and tradition when requested by Parliament (Pascht, 2011).

A small operational and personnel budget, plus a building on Rarotonga, is provided by the government for the Are Ariki and Koutu Nui (MFEM, 2015a). This financial support on the one hand enables the Are Ariki to carry out their legislated duties, and on the other it can be read as making them more compliant to government wishes. The power dynamics between these two bodies is unbalanced, with authority of one at odds with that of the other. One is based on indigenous conceptions of mana (Jonassen, 2003) where titles are lifelong and a titleholder's influence is closely tied to the land (Pascht, 2011). The other is based on Western understanding of power (Dreher, 2016) through a democratic political process with time-bound political terms (Paschts, 2011). While both represent 'the people', the relationship between the state and titleholders is a complex and ambitious one because, while the Aronga Mana's position is legislatively weak, it is culturally strong as advocates, whistle-blowers and an alternative source of authority to the state.

4.5.3. The Koutu Nui

The same can be said of the Koutu Nui which is another grouping of hierarchical indigenous leadership. This consists of mataiapo and rangatira/kavana. As with the Ariki, they 'are charged with the responsibility of preserving traditional, cultural and customary practices' (Monga-Maeva, 2003, p. 218). They preside over tribal and family matters, providing advice on a range

of issues. In 1972 their functions were included in an amendment to the House of Ariki Act (Sissons, 1999; Pascht, 2011). Similar to the Are Ariki, their role is purely consultative. The National Environment Service (NES), in its consultations and dealings with the Koutu Nui, assessed them to be well informed on the impacts of climate change (NES, 2011). This is important to note as it shows they are conversant and have value in contributing to matters of concern to the community. As Cook Islands indigenous titleholders, the Are Ariki and Koutu Nui are active as family, village, district, island and national representatives and in finding ways to address their concerns (Pascht, 2011) beyond the scope of their legislated duties. So despite their limited formal political power, and limitations in the processes of government, the Are Ariki and Koutu Nui are able to contribute to the substance of discussions in policy spaces. Their potential for engaging in policy spaces is demonstrated in the following section.

4.5.4. 2008 – 2015 Events

During the years 2008 – 2015 actions by the Ui Ariki and Koutu Nui have contested the nature of their relationship with the government. In 2008 the majority of Ariki from the Are Ariki challenged the elected government. They declared ‘that all the country’s natural resources in the air, land and sea be vested in the hands of the Ui Ariki’ (M. Wilson, 2008). They proclaimed they no longer recognised the government and Head of State, the Queen of England, as the government failed to recognise the *mana* of the Ariki. This action was reported in the media as following interactions with New Zealand Maori sovereignty activist, Bruce Ruatapu Mita, and discussions about sovereignty and the potential wealth of seabed minerals within the Cook Islands exclusive economic zone. These Ariki sought to ‘abolish parliament, cut off ties with the Queen, and vest executive power in the Ui Ariki’ (M. Wilson, 2008). Their action also reflected their disquiet about government treatment towards them (Pascht, 2011).

The response from politicians and other Ariki was immediate and condemning. This resulted in the exclusion of the dissatisfied Ariki who were proclaiming their independence from the Are

Ariki. This became official in December 2008 after the Deputy Prime Minister at the time, Sir Terepai Maoate, tabled the House of Ariki amendment bill. This bill stipulated an official written apology must be made to the Queen's Representative before re-joining the Are Ariki (Greig, 2008; Jonassen, 2010; Wilson, 2014). During the considerable public debates that followed, Pa Ariki pointed out that political parties could not uphold cultural values and argued that the Aronga Mana played a central role in doing so. She stated the 'government needs to know that for this reason, if no other, we are as much players in the future of the Cook Islands as we are guardians of its past' (Greig, 2008) and that the Ui Ariki 'are at the heart of Cook Islands society and that our house should be part of a strategy of taking Cook Islands culture, tradition and custom confidently into the twenty-first century' (Greig, 2008).

In this public interaction, the influence of an external but connected actor was provocative, inciting this kind of activism by the Ui Ariki that had not been seen before although they tried unsuccessfully to influence policy making and extend their powers in the past (Sissons, 1999). The public division between the Ui Ariki in the challenge to the government's sovereignty was also something new. The event demonstrated their agency and capacity to act with intent (Mayhew, 2015) showing an appetite for greater influence in Cook Islands policy spaces.

By 2011, with the protesting Ariki back in the fold of the Are Ariki, a realignment of its relationship with the government took place. The newly elected Cook Islands Party government re-designated one of two public holidays commemorating the arrival of Christianity in favour of the Ui Ariki and their respective *kopu tangata* (extended families) and *matakeinanga* (tribes). Ariki Day is now officially observed on 6 July and is a public holiday to mark the role of the country's traditional titleholders.

Both these events demonstrate the capacity of individuals to take action as part of an indigenous institution. This agency of indigenous actors is discussed as part of the *oe akatere* in Chapter 6.

These events also showed that the role of the government in its social interactions with the Cook Islands traditional leadership and their respective authorities can be a restrictive as well as a facilitative one. While the claim for sovereignty may have been ill-conceived, it served to reinforce to the state that non-state actors with only consultative influence warrant greater consideration in shaping the processes and ideas in key policy spaces.

Other boundaries have also recently been realigned. In September 2015, the Are Ariki undertook its first official *tere* (visit, journey) since they were formed by the House of Ariki Act in 1966. They visited Cook Islands communities based in New Zealand and Australia (RNZ Pacific, 2015).⁵⁰ This was a four-fold opportunity for the Are Ariki, in pursuit of their interests, to proactively engage with Cook Islands social networks abroad on government policy matters of land, immigration and governance.⁵¹ Discussions focused on the issue of absentee titleholders; the role of the Aronga Mana (group of chiefs, sub-chiefs and heads of families) in granting Cook Islands residency to foreign nationals; the occupation rights and vesting orders related to the land-tenure system; and the 2016 celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Are Ariki (Newport, 2017).

These were considered to be important matters by the Are Ariki that would inform their interactions with government, spurred on by a recent challenge by the government. Prior to their three-week sojourn, the Prime Minister, Henry Puna, raised the issue of the diminishing mana (authority) of the Ui Ariki. He cited the prolonged absenteeism of chiefs who reside overseas from their matakeinanga (tribe) and enua (island), arguing that they were not able to lead, serve and live among their people. For Puna, this was a key contributor to their loss of mana. He also called on the Ui Ariki to consider their roles, functions and contributions to their people and the nation as a whole in this twenty-first century (Syme-Buchanan, 2015a; Syme-

⁵⁰ Participants 5, 26, 37, 39, 40.

⁵¹ Participants 5, 26, 37, 39, 40.

Buchanan, 2016, 2016b; Newport, 2017). However, it seems his concern was not due to concern about the erosion of cultural leadership and power, but rather a public reprimand of the Are Ariki (who had earlier lobbied for increased public funding) to consider its purpose before seeking more funding from the government (Syme-Buchanan, 2015a, 2015b; Newport, 2017).

The Koutu Nui has also been able to pursue its interests through actions that have clear policy implications and opportunities in policy spaces. One example is the use of *raui* to manage overfishing lagoon areas. Using this method of restricting the harvesting and exploitation of natural resources (Pascht, 2011), the Koutu Nui has worked with the NES and the environmental non-government organisation Te Ipukarea Society to protect marine areas. The Koutu Nui has been involved as lobbyists and implementers in projects funded by different agencies that offer greater visibility and acknowledgement of their efforts (Pascht, 2011; Maeva-Monga, 2003). For example, it proposed watershed management projects as part of their annual Koutu Nui forum (NES, 2011); it was funded by UNESCO in 2009 for a community visioning project; and recently it received funding for cultural preservation activities from Matheson Enterprises and Te Tika Premium Skin Care, two Cook Islands-based businesses (Kumar, 2016).

Clearly, traditional titleholders have the capacity to influence the social interactions as well as some processes of policy making, even though their formal role is only advisory. Such interactions suggest that while social actors in the Cook Islands share a common history, culture and community, policy spaces are inevitably contested and therefore negotiation will be a consistent feature. Despite the formal way the relationship between the state and Aronga Mana is constructed, indigenous titleholders have been increasingly able to pursue matters of concern to them outside their legislated terms of references. The various ways in which titleholders, as representatives of the people, exercise their tribally ascribed influence confirms Pascht's (2011) analysis that the relationship between titleholders and the government is a complex and ambiguous one.

Echoing this ambiguity, Jonassen (2009) concludes the Cook Islands' 'inadequate, introduced parliamentary political system subverts an outdated, weakened, yet surviving traditional system, one that sustains tribal groups and individuals at the expense of good national-level governance' (p. 43). Rather, the presence and interactions of titleholders broaden and increase their interactions in policy spaces. Such direct engagement between titleholders, as non-state actors, and others is likely to be seen differently by each actor. For example, donors may see interactions with titleholders as positive in diversifying their range of relationships and interests. NGOs may welcome the opportunity to access influential partners of the government directly. As such these relationships and interactions can be considered positive. This may mean that, despite the political shortcomings, titleholders are increasing their influence with other actors, such as traditional aid donors, and philanthropic and business actors. What this means for these other actors is discussed below.

As an example, the Ui Ariki met with Te Kingitanga at Ngaruawahia⁵² during their September 2015 tour to New Zealand, and with other tribes, including Te Arawa, to reinforce history and genealogical connections (Witton, 2015). Details about what was discussed and reactions to these interactions were not available at the time of the fieldwork, but these historical, indigenous relationships have the potential to be a part of the social and political interactions that influence policy spaces. Indigenous leaders from the region attended the 50th anniversary of the Are Ariki, including leaders from New Caledonia and Aotearoa. They were afforded government protocol services by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI) (Chand, 2016), which shows that such cultural processes and actors are formally recognised by the state yet appear absent in substantive policy discussions. While the state relationship between the New Zealand and Cook Islands governments dominates Cook Islands policy spaces, it is possible for indigenous relationships like these to also have a presence and exercise influence in these

⁵² Participants 37, 39, 40.

institutionalised fields. This is an important point because these actors are well placed to also influence the ways climate change and migration issues take place in an environment that is simultaneously fluid and rigid (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013).

4.6 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter presents the country context of the Cook Islands through the lens of vaka moana. It shows how different perspectives on context shape the policy space through consideration of the construction of the katea and ama of the vaka moana. The canoe represents climate change as the katea (the right-sided rational, logical, male-sided hull of the canoe) and human mobility as the ama (the left-sided, creative, female-sided hull of the canoe). Environmental and climatic evidence was presented along with demographic data about human mobility in the Cook Islands. The latter is officially cast as a demographic problem. Attention was given to the historical and contemporary context of Cook Islands sovereignty in shaping the tira (mast) and kie (sails) of the vaka moana including the ever-present influence of the relationship with New Zealand. This was shown in the development institutional and policy reforms that have taken place as part of contextualising the ataata (platform of policies and institutions). The indigenous institution of the Aronga Mana was also presented showing the dynamic and contested relationships influencing policy spaces.

Overall this chapter provides the contextual detail needed to understand the constituent parts of policy spaces that make up the institutional field of actors in Cook Islands policy spaces who are addressing climate change mobility. Through the examples of reform and the cultural dimension of actors, this chapter concludes that policy spaces draw on dynamic processes and contested actor relationships as part of understanding the Cook Islands experience of climate change mobility as a development concern.

In the following chapter I begin a more focused analysis of the Cook Islands policy space of climate change mobility that emerged from these initial findings. In particular, I analyse the institutional and policy arrangements related to climate change and human mobility in national development planning.

Chapter 5: Ataata – Institutions and Policies

5.1 Introduction

According to Boin et al. (2006) policy spaces are institutional fields of actors, rules and practices associated with government efforts to address an issue or offer an analytical distinction that transcends narrow sectoral divisions commonly imposed by government authorities for political or bureaucratic reasons (p. 407). How the structures of these spaces are organised and what institutions (national and international) influence policy making are important considerations in understanding the institutional and policy basis of what is going on in these spaces (Boin et al., 2006).

The previous chapter introduced the country context of the Cook Islands including economic, environmental, political, social and institutional dimensions, as well as information on climate change and human mobility relevant to the Cook Islands and its people. The aim of this chapter is to examine in detail the structural dimension of the vaka moana model – the institutional arrangements, and the government policy processes and policies that are produced including the national development planning framework to determine the extent to which climate change mobility is addressed. Analysis of the data from interviews, observations and documents is framed by the metaphor of a double-hulled canoe that is lashed to form the vaka moana. The two hulls are connected by three kiato (crossbeams). In this institutionalised field of actors, rules and practices associated with governmental efforts to address an issue (Boin et al., 2006, p. 407), these kiato represent three elements of policy space – actors (individuals and institutions), rules (policies) and practices (processes). They are the supports upon which the *ataata* (platform) – the specific policies, processes and actors – are lashed together to address the issue of climate change mobility. The *ataata* includes climate change and human mobility institutional

arrangements and policies as well as international and national frameworks and processes to form this institutional field.

This chapter has three sections. The first begins by examining the institutional reforms that have taken place to address climate change, the actors involved and their practices of engagement. This is followed by a similar examination of the institutional formations that have taken place for human mobility. Together the findings help to define the structural platform (*ataata*) that addresses climate change mobility. The second section examines how the national development framework came about, the scope of the three National Sustainable Development Plans (NSDP) of 2007, 2011 and 2016, and presents an analysis of the extent to which climate change mobility is deemed to be an issue for the Cook Islands. Still focused on the national development framework, the third section examines the ways in which climate change and human mobility have been fashioned together as two challenges that transcend national borders. It shows how these two separate but connected issues are bound by the structural platform (*ataata*) of policy spaces. In addition, I intend to show how – as a matter of design and construction – the *ataata* has been influenced by discourses about small islands economies and their development. This creates taken-for-granted entities and governance institutions (Wesley-Smith, 2013) that often obscure and cloud discourses capable of transforming these policy spaces.

Scholars have presented ongoing arguments about the limiting discourses of small island states development (Stratford et al., 2011) and their economies (Baldacchino, 2006), due to views of islands as ‘small, closed, isolated and vulnerable’ (Dean, Green, & Nunn, 2017). This includes ‘derogatory and belittling views of indigenous cultures’ (Hau’ofa et al., 1993, p. 149). In the institutional arrangements and the national development planning framework, island-vulnerability discourses can be found in the solutions and measures that stimulate and encourage the private sector, microeconomic reforms and structural adjustments (Barnett & Waters, 2016, p. 736). Different actors – international agencies, development agencies,

consultants, the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP), and civil society organisations that participate in the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) consultative process – communicate between themselves (Beech, 2009, p. 350) but with different ideologies, objectives and methodologies. In the process they produce and reproduce different discourses (Beech, 2009, p. 351) and narratives about oceanic island states development priorities and measures. This is important as other narratives could contribute more nuanced takes on taken-for-granted discourses.

5.2 Ataata – Institutional Arrangements

The aim of this section is to examine the institutional arrangements that form the ‘institutionalised field’ (Boin et al., 2006) of policy spaces related specifically to climate change and human mobility in the Cook Islands.

5.2.1. Climate Change and Institutional Arrangements

Like assembling planks on a deck, a number of changes were made by the government to integrate climate change as a function in its institutional systems and policy processes. The turning point occurred in 2011 when a number of activities converged resulting in some major decisions that refocused national priorities and restructured the central government institutions dealing with them. Up until 2011, issues pertaining to climate change as a function of government were addressed by the Cook Islands National Environment Service (NES) because climate change was considered primarily an environmental concern. In 2011 the few staff in the Island Futures Division of NES included a divisional head and environmental officers. They were augmented by project-funded personnel responsible for operationalising climate change-related activities (NES, 2011).

In 2010 the Office of the Public Service Commissioner, with Australian government funding as part of a regional initiative to support Pacific countries’ response to climate change, reviewed

the public service institutional arrangements related to climate change. The timing of this review coincided with a major review of the country's public service functions and structure that was well underway (as discussed in Chapter Three and Chapter Four), the release of the UNFCCC second national communication report that called for climate change to be embedded in government institutions (NES, 2011), as well as consultations for a Joint National Action Plan (JNAP) on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaption (CCA), and a five-year \$NZ5 million CCA project funded by the UN Adaptation Fund.

I recall this institutional review because it was an assignment I undertook in my role as an international development consultant – my first contract specifically related to climate change. I partnered with another local consultant, Mr Tamari'i Tutangata, a traditional titleholder and seasoned regional and national-level public servant who had returned to live in Rarotonga after serving two terms as the Director of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). At the time of my fieldwork he was head of the Cook Islands Investment Corporation, the government entity responsible for all government-owned assets and State-owned enterprises.

The review found institutional arrangements at the time to be 'piecemeal and fragmented due to the division of labour within government agencies' (Newport & Tutangata, 2011, p. 99). This fragmentation at community, island, government, sector and international levels extended to international negotiations, reporting obligations, energy, and adaptation activities and partnerships. In addition, funding for work on climate change was reliant on external assistance (Newport & Tutangata, 2011).

The government adopted some but not all of the review's recommendations. Subsequently, the new institutional arrangement together with the Joint National Action Plan (JNAP) to guide disaster risk management and climate change adaptation priorities, and the UN Adaptation Fund

project set up to resource community initiatives of the JNAP, combined to reconfigure the Cook Islands national climate change policy space. Specifically, the government's partial adoption of the review's recommendations led to the establishment of the current institutional arrangements related to climate change. A Climate Change Division was established within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), with provision for two staff members and operational costs funded from government's ongoing personnel and operations budget. Also, the Cook Islands Investment Corporation – in its national coordinating and leadership role – had a comprehensive range of climate change-related responsibilities, as outlined in its 2016 annual business plan (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, June 2016a; Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, June 2016b). These included:

- Developing and contributing to policy and planning frameworks
 - Resource mobilisation
 - Mainstreaming and integrating climate change-related activities into government procedures
 - Strengthen governance arrangements for climate change
 - Provision of advisory services
 - Improving climate change knowledge
 - Strengthen capacity development efforts to address climate change impacts
 - Support relevant research efforts
 - Coordinate participation and input into relevant regional and international meetings
 - Reporting on progress in fulfilling obligations under the UNFCCC
 - Communicate effectively on climate change matters to an array of audiences
- (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, June 2016b, p. 135)

The creation of Climate Change Cook Islands office and the transfer of the Emergency Management Cook Islands office (EMCI) to the OPM, were signals of government's recognition of climate change as more than an environmental issue, and their willingness to give greater attention to 'creating the enabling environment for the country to more effectively address climate change issues' (Newport & Tutangata, 2011, p. 5). This recognition stemmed from government's efforts not just to address climate change issues but also to improve its economic sustainability and leadership.

However, comments from the interviewees indicated that although there was support for prioritising climate change this was tempered in some cases by uncertainty about the value of a designated unit, its perceived focus on international negotiations as a means to resource in-country implementation activities, and the belief that only minimal human resource capacity was needed to link climate change to investments. For example, in 2015, three years after the unit was established, a Maori community representative said:

I think as a nation, we have the ability to do well for ourselves as a people, but we need to coordinate ourselves better, [so] the establishment of the climate change unit at the Prime Minister's office is a good thing.

This was qualified by a male resident senior government official, who commented:

I think the climate change unit needs some tinkering. I think they spend all their time focusing on the negotiations, [but] the end result isn't the negotiations, [it's] trying to put in place and facilitate projects ... At least we acknowledged that we needed a unit and set one up. Its following through the next steps [that's needed now].

In contrast, another male resident senior government official queried the need for the new unit:

At a policy level we can actually say, climate change will guide our investment systems. We don't need a whole division. Maybe put a climate change person into the budget office.

Interestingly, while opinions differed about the value of this divisional structure, it was accepted generally that the government possessed the ability to set reforms in motion and sustain them.⁵³

The Division was only the first step recommended by the review for a phased approach towards a standalone unit that combined disaster risk management, climate change functions and opportunities to mobilise resources. Nevertheless, based on my interviews there was a recognition that the arrangement has provided a more integrated and systematic approach to addressing climate change matters as a national development priority and international

⁵³ Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 37, 41, 42.

commitment. The new arrangement also demonstrated the types of activities that fit into an emerging policy space (Boin et al., 2006, p. 408).

The Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI) office was established after the disaster management division (now EMCI) was transferred from the Cook Islands Police Service to the OPM, although EMCI is still located physically at the Police national headquarters. (The EMCI was created following the experiences of and lessons learned from the five cyclones in 2005.) The emergency management function was transferred to ensure a more integrated approach to tackling the impacts of disasters. As a division of OPM, EMCI functions are to:

- Ensure disaster risk management procedures are put in place and provided by EMCI by means of disaster risk reduction, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.
 - Establish an efficient structure for the management of disasters and emergencies by promoting cooperation amongst agencies with a role in disaster risk management and enhancing their capacities to maintain the provision of essential services during periods of disaster and emergency.
 - Enhance the capacity of the government, relevant agencies and the community to effectively manage the impacts of disasters and emergencies and to take all necessary action to prevent or minimise threats to life, health and the environment from natural disasters, man-made disasters and other emergencies.
- (MFEM, 2016, p. 135)

The EMCI arrangement set a precedent that was replicated in setting up CCCI by giving greater institutional attention to disaster risk management. It created a network of interrelated actors that converged in a connected institutional arrangement. This happened partly because the functions and positions were created, revised and relocated in the high-profile government department of the OPM. A new divisional director and coordinator positions were created, funded by the government's own resources and supplemented with externally funded advisory and project management positions. In addition, an institutional arrangement was proposed during the consultation process of the JNAP to oversee the implementation of the joint CC and DRM plan, but this was never fully implemented. A National Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Council, responsible for high-level oversight of the JNAP – reporting directly to

the National Sustainable Development Commission – was proposed in the JNAP design. This was not established.

Also proposed and modified, the JNAP management committee consisting of government officials was put in place. An ex-officio advisory consultant funded through the Adaptation Fund project – Strengthening the Resilience of our Islands and our Communities to Climate Change (SRIC-CC) – provided initial advisory support to the committee. The JNAP Programme Management Committee consisted of the directors of EMCI and CCCI, and officials from the Development Coordination Division of MFEM. CCCI provided secretariat support to the group. Also proposed and implemented, the UNFCCC-established Climate Change Country Team was extended to include DRM actors, in effect establishing the National Platform for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change. This group of actors meets periodically as a collaborative, coordination and information-sharing forum (CIGov, 2012, p. ix). Hosted by CCCI and EMCI, the people in this forum include representatives from a range of government agencies and civil society with a mix of different and overlapping interests and skills. Organisations have included the National Council of Women, National Disability Council, Cook Islands Red Cross, NES, and the ministries of Education, Health, and Internal Affairs (CIGov, 2016, p. 21). Through this mechanism, co-operative efforts crossed over sectoral boundaries and drew in government and societal actors (Boin et al., 2006, p. 406).

Aspects of the initial JNAP arrangements might be considered to add further complexity and burden to government's architecture and resources (Wrighton & Overton, 2012), with additional costs, tasks and time of actors needed to establish and maintain these arrangements. For example, the council arrangement would have required legislative changes to the existing 2007 disaster management legislation. A legislative review had been carried out in 2013 to consider this and other options to legislate efforts tackling climate change. As of December 2015, government had made no changes to accommodate the expanded scope that would have

added climate change to the DRM legislation nor pursued a separate piece of legislation for climate change. Eventually, a modified version of the proposed arrangement was adopted. Without a high-level council, CCCI and EMCI take instruction from and report directly to the National Sustainable Development Commission and Cabinet. Even though the previous climate change country team is now defunct (SPC, 2013, p. 5), the effect of this was minimal because the JNAP Programme Management Committee and Platform mechanism provided an alternative avenue for sharing information and advocacy. To this end, the Platform offers what Grek et al. refer to as ‘a space for exchange, brokering and thinking’ (Grek et al., 2013). In supporting these changes, the incoming Cook Islands Party government – elected in 2010, led by the Honourable Henry Puna – had shown a willingness for reform by incorporating some institutional changes into the machinery of government. The decision to locate these functions within the OPM signalled the political importance of DRM and CC. It also showed the ability of national actors to modify (externally) recommended structural changes – such as those included in the public sector functional review referred to above – rather than accept these changes. Instead, they determined that reforming existing arrangements related to climate change and DRM functions could provide similar results (for example, OPM divisions reporting to the NSDC).

By 2016, further modifications were made with the release of the second JNAP. The Programme Management Committee was changed to a JNAP steering committee and its membership expanded to include other government agencies as well as a civil society representative and two islands-government representatives – one from the Northern Group and the other from the Southern Group.

5.2.2. Discussion

Overall, the reforms that were adopted and the management adjustments that were made demonstrate the political drive of government and political actors to try to retain autonomy and independence from external preconceptions about institutional arrangements and legislation –

as presented in commissioned reports and development-partner interactions. This was done by modifying proposals, following consultations with stakeholders that might otherwise have complicated already workable arrangements. The modified adjustments can be seen as strengthening functional and non-government actor roles, such as those within the National Platform for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change, and a useful investment in time and effort to improve communication (Grek et al., 2013, p. 500).

The upgraded priority given to climate change and DRM had broader economic implications. Locating CCCI in the OPM – with an initial budget of \$NZ170,000, funded by government appropriation and a grant from the Australian Pacific Adaptation Strategy Assistance Programme (PASAP) (Newport & Tutangata, 2011) – was controversial initially because at the time the ADB-sponsored public service review was calling for a consolidation of government functions. It highlighted the role of the OPM as an incubator of new structures in setting up new divisions to foster greater attention to emerging issues, such as one for renewable energy that was also established in 2011 during the first term of the Cook Islands Party government.

Arguably, the interactions in Cabinet decision-making between politicians and senior officials from the central agencies committee – MFEM, OPM, OPSC, and Crown Law – constitute policy spaces. Their deliberation and decisions on a co-operative course of action from the two JNAP and institutional review recommendations suggest that as a network of interdependent individuals their decisions reflect the convergence and socialisation of actors into the norms and rules of communities (Hauray & Urfalino, 2009). In this case, that of an oceanic state government and its policy-making community.

Finally, rather than considering the SIDS vulnerability narrative that island states are desperate for outside help to address climate-change-related doom (Kelman, 2018), these climate change institutional reforms can be considered instead as oceanic island states seeking external

assistance on their own terms, based on decisions where requesting assistance does not mean lack of domestic interest or abilities (Kelman, 2018, p. 159). For example, even though concerns were raised about the cultural and consumption implications on daily lives and dependency on outside or government assistance,⁵⁴ there was a high level of interest by central and island-level government representatives, Aronga Mana (island chiefs) and communities in the 100 per cent conversion to 24-hour renewable electricity generation and solar power installation project funded by New Zealand that got underway in 2015 (de Jong, 2015, p. 62).

5.3 Migration and Institutional Arrangements

The government body dealing initially with immigration matters within existing institutional arrangements is the MFAI. Under output five of its mandate, MFAI provides a national immigration service to 'safeguard the Cook Islands national interests with respect to the lawful movement of persons across the border and their presence in the Cook Islands' (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, June 2016a, p. 76). MFAI's key objectives included:

- Protecting our borders by managing the movement of persons into, residence in and departure from the Cook Islands
 - Identifying and effectively managing the movement of persons who will make a positive contribution to the economic development of the Cook Islands
 - Pursue a renewed legislative mandate to better strengthen and protect our borders by facilitating the movement of persons into, residence in and departure from the Cook Islands
 - Establish and maintain beneficial network relations that provide the opportunity and potential for drawing support for effectively implementing government immigration and policies
- (MFEM, 2016b, p. 76).

These objectives show the management of people's movements is assumed to be primarily for economic and security purposes. Updating legislation and mobilising resources is integral to this management. The ministry's mandate is determined by an out-of-date 1971/72 Entry, Residence and Departure Act that came into effect before the Rarotonga Airport was opened in 1974. This was at a time of minimal tourism, and when local – predominately indigenous – Cook

⁵⁴ Participants 6, 32, 36, 42

Islanders serviced the economy. A draft immigration policy that has been floundering for a number of years has yet to be finalised (Moore, 2017).⁵⁵ Immigration services are delivered by nine staff, led by a director, with a mix of immigration and compliance roles.

Demographic patterns on Rarotonga (see Chapter Three) have changed as a result of growing numbers of tourists and permitted residents. Consequently, the increase in people moving across Cook Islands international borders has increased the demands on immigration services. These services include processing of visitors through border controls and processing entry, work and residency permits for non-Cook Islanders recruited to meet labour market demands not met by permanent Cook Islands residents (Moore, 2017).⁵⁶ The demands for entry permit and residency applications are an indication of an economy that has a shortage of labour triggered by an increasingly successful tourism industry.

In 2015, around 16% of the 7000-strong Cook Islands' labour force were foreigners. They were mostly from New Zealand (395 people, or 6% of the employed), Fiji (303, 4%), and Philippines (158, 2%), with others from Pacific countries (90, 1%) such as French Polynesia, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, and Vanuatu, plus some Australians (59, 1%) living in the Cook Islands (CIGov, 2015b, p. 8). The majority (81.3%) of foreign adults living in the country were participating in the labour force, but there were a number who were unemployed (32), or outside the labour force either because they were studying (29), doing home duties (109), or retired (149) (CIGov, 2015b, p. 16).

Related to its immigration function, MFAI is also responsible for foreign trade and investment.

A draft foreign trade policy framework was released in 2015 and – at time of writing – awaits

⁵⁵ Participants 18, 29.

⁵⁶ The 2011 census showed there were around 1,500 foreigners aged 15 or above living in the Cook Islands at the time of the 2011 census (Table 2). The vast majority (92%) live in Rarotonga, with 7% in the southern group and 1% in the northern group.

finalisation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2015). This draft policy framework proposed a policy 'platform for the government to manage trade issues in a coherent and effective way' (MFAI, 2015, p. 8). In proposing to do this, it shifted focus beyond the movement of imports and exports across borders to also cover international delivery of services, investment between countries, temporary movement of labour, competition policy, and intellectual property (MFAI, 2015, p. 7). The draft policy framework also proposes that the institutional arrangements for dealing with trade and trade-related issues be reviewed and articulated (MFAI, 2015, p. 8).

In 2015, an ADB assessment of the Cook Islands private sector considered that its challenges included a 'sluggish business entry process that discourages foreign investment' (ADB, 2015, p. 85). The report determined that: foreign investment should be encouraged, and areas prohibited to private investment should be kept to a minimum; if foreign investment is restricted it should be done using a transparent and fast system; and there should be effective investment promotion as well as efficient procedures for business entry and exit (ADB, 2015, p. 62).

Both documents recognised, in relation to human mobility, that the decline in population posed threats to the domestic economy with serious consequences for labour shortages. 'As a result of high levels of emigration, the Cook Islands has suffered from depopulation and shortages of skills in a number of areas that are essential to the proper function of its economy' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2015, p. 64). Affecting health, education, the construction industry, tourism management and professional and technical services, labour shortages have been met through the temporary importation of labour (MFAI, 2015, p. 64). Cook Islands requires that both foreign investors and workers obtain work permits (ADB, 2015, p. 15), but government's policy processes are regarded as problematic, deemed 'slow, discretionary, dependent on outdated laws, and discourage foreign investment. Bureaucratic problems also

make it difficult for business to engage foreign workers, despite their expertise and ability to significantly contribute to business productivity’ (ADB, 2015, p. viii). This is attributed to a work-permit process that lacks transparency, is time consuming, and applies the same requirements regardless of the position (ADB, 2015, p. vi).

However, the scope of people’s movements when considering foreign immigration is broader than the functions of this ministry alone. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) is mandated under the recently updated regulatory requirements through the Employment Relations Act 2012 to safeguard worker protections as set out in labour laws for foreign and local workers with minimum wage reviews, worker compensation and dispute resolution services (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, June 2016b, p. 103). This is an important function because there have been concerns about the treatment of foreign workers in the past (ADB, 2015b, p. vi).⁵⁷

The collation of demographic information on arrivals and departures is a function of the Cook Islands Statistics office, a division of MFEM. This function was emphasised in the 2015 ‘Strategy for the Development of Statistics’ (CSDS), which aimed to increase the value of official statistics and the national statistics system to ensure reliable and relevant statistics were available on the economic, social and demographic status of the country (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2015b, p. 5).

The OPM’s Central Policy and Planning Office takes responsibility for the oversight of national policy development and leads national development planning (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, June 2016a). In 2014, it began delivering training for government policy

⁵⁷ MIA database of foreign worker contracts showed just over 530 contracts had been processed in the two-year period between July 2012 and July 2014. The majority of these workers are from the Philippines (37%) or Fiji (35%); others included New Zealand (10%), Indonesia (7%), China (2%), Australia (1%). The remaining 8% originate from 22 countries in the Pacific, Southeast Asia, Europe and South America’ (CIGov, 2015, p. 16).

personnel on its newly developed 'Policy toolkit - A guide to policy development in the Cook Islands'.⁵⁸ The document states that 'policy development is often a complex and unpredictable process that requires those involved to be open-minded and flexible' and recommends this toolkit 'be used in concert with an ongoing dialogue with Central Policy and Planning Office, that will enable the user to make appropriate policy decisions according to their specific context' (OPM, 2014, p. 4). Having said that, the OPM is the lead agency in the development of population policy which includes interests from other government departments like the Business Trade and Investment Board, Ministries of Culture, Education and Health as well as civil society, the Aronga Mana and private sector.

Collectively these government departments are involved in the immigration and foreign labour aspects of human mobility policy development and implementation in the Cook Islands, but there was not yet a fully integrated approach in place. As a MFAI senior official said, 'we need a whole-of-government response, but we are looking at it from our [MFAI] perspective' and said that it has, 'a narrow perspective because we don't have the resources to tackle other aspects, like looking at the social aspects of labour, treatment of workers, putting employers on the prohibitive list' (Male civil society representative).

This was a view shared by another senior official from MFAI who said:

That's the key point, Immigration [MFAI] is not the one that provides the overarching policy with respect to how labour provision of services works in the country. [We need] a whole-of-government response. What about the overall strategic plan? Does government have a policy of how many people it wants working in the country? Is there co training? Is there opportunity to? That's the investment code. What's left for indigenous Cook Islanders? There is no policy looking at depopulation.

These extracts allude to the multi-dimensional aspects of the movement of people in and out of the Cook Islands that must be recognised in this policy space. To ensure a co-operative policy

⁵⁸ Participants 11, 28, 33.

activity bound together by common concern is critical but it is not clear how to do this (Boin et al., 2006). Co-operative policy for the Cook Islands can be seen in its whole-of-government approach.⁵⁹ However, taking a joint approach to concerns about human mobility – in particular, immigration – also means taking account of the various aspects that immigration binds together for different actors.

Developing policy responses that are only sector-orientated risks missing useful opportunities and challenges. Boin et al. (2006) argue that co-operative policy activity crosses sectoral boundaries and draws in government and other actors covering multiple institutional venues. In the Cook Islands, this co-operative approach to national planning and development in climate change is demonstrated in the three policy documents mentioned above – JNAP, Institutional Review and AF SRIC project. Boin et al. (2006) suggest that underlying this co-operation is the institutional effort to bring policies together. However, in relation to co-operative policy arrangements for human mobility and population, this study discovered a sense among some participants that the relevant Cook Islands departments – OPM, MFEM, MFAI, and MIA – have been less co-operative.⁶⁰ This has implications for bringing together climate change and human mobility policies. A degree of consistency between policy arrangements is needed. This means the two canoes can then be successfully pegged and lashed together to weather calm and stormy conditions.

⁵⁹ The whole-of-government approach, sometimes called 'joined-up government', refers to the joint formal and informal activities of government departments and agencies in order to find a common solution to a particular problem or issue. It arose from public sector reforms that took place in many countries over the past couple of decades that aimed for greater coherence in policy making, better coordination of service delivery, and less duplication of resources.

⁶⁰ Participants 1, 8, 11, 17, 29, 32, 33.

5.3.1. Institutional Arrangements – Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, this section has begun to identify the institutional arrangements that in part comprise the ‘institutional field’ (Boin et al., 2006) of policy spaces related to climate change and human mobility in the Cook Islands. There are various government agencies that form part of the institutional bases of the Cook Islands current policy making - the *ataata* (platform) of the climate change mobility vaka moana *model*. For climate change, a newly fashioned piece has been added to existing institutional arrangement – the movement of people - although its institutional pieces as functions of government appear fragmented. Over time, as demographic and economic changes have taken place, institutional arrangements directed at immigration and depopulation have not been attended to in the same way as institutional arrangements that accommodate climate change – mostly because climate change is the focus of global attention. This also contrasts with the Cook Islands long-term engagement with the UNFCCC while it is not a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to bolster national co-operative efforts.

The result in the Cook Islands is an unevenness in the institutional platform which can make it difficult to connect together these two priority issues. This is because climate change already has a history of co-operative policy actions whereas human mobility does not. This makes it difficult to see beyond what is already in place and construct what relevant institutional arrangements could attend to climate change mobility. The unevenness between the institutional arrangements and attention given to different issues related to climate and people movement provides an unsteady policy platform, which provides challenges to attempts to combine, in terms of policy, the well-attended issue of climate change to the less-well-attended issue of human mobility.

5.4 National Sustainable Development Plans

This section builds on the institutional arrangements section by adding boards to the *ataata* of the vaka moana. I begin with a closer look at Cook Islands' sustainable development agenda - its framework, how it was established and the three multi-year NSDPs that have been produced in the past decade. These plans were produced in 2007, 2011 and 2016 as part of the construction of shared and fluid policy space that encompasses the interactions of national and transnational contexts (Grek et al., 2013). After describing how they came about, I examine the ways the plans treat climate change and human mobility – initially as separate and seemingly unconnected issues for development, but later as increasingly more connected. Finally, I analyse how these planning tools have been affected problematically by particular discourses of small island economies and development.

5.4.1. Establishing a National Development Framework

The Cook Islands national sustainable development agenda came about as a part of international and regional reforms in which Pacific islands state leaders were called upon by their international commitments and national circumstances to implement political and economic reform programmes during the 1990s (Firth, 2006; Slatter, 2006; Duituturaga, 2011; Wesley-Smith, 2013). Implementation of measures to achieve 'good governance' was a prerequisite to successful reforms that were based on accountability, efficiency, and transparency (Wesley-Smith, 2013, p. 154).

In the case of the Cook Islands government, the pressure for institutional reform came about following the financial crisis and economic reforms that are discussed in Chapter Three. Serving as a central policy structure, the national sustainable development framework established the country's development priorities, identified the necessary resources and elaborated implementation strategies. This framework was founded on principles from international and

regional agreements to which the Cook Islands was a signatory that set out plans of action to achieve sustainable development. This was part of an ongoing process of the government 'to meet its national obligations from the World Summit for Sustainable Development, the Barbados Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals (UNDESA, 2006, p. 31) and aligning to 'Agenda 21' – a global action plan for sustainable development into the 21st century adopted by the world leaders at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992 – and the 'Mauritius Strategy'⁶¹ and the 'Pacific Plan'⁶² (Ibid., p. 3). These documents are non-binding commitments designed to guide national operational activities for sustainable development, and regional cooperation to raise the living standards across the Pacific. However, by participating in these consensus-building and knowledge-sharing forums, and in cooperation with other SIDS who were also required to achieve regional goals, Cook Islands actors were required to interact with individuals from external institutions and bodies.

The NSDP was a long-term development guidance tool. It was urgently required for its reform arrangements and to address the slow progress in implementing UN and the ADB objectives to manage the risk of unsustainable development activities. As part of the restructuring programme, and following the poorly designed 1995/96 Economic Recovery Programme, the

⁶¹ The Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was adopted in 2005. It was a follow-up to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted in 1994, which highlighted the special challenges and constraints that caused major setbacks for the socio-economic development of SIDS. The Barbados Programme of Action translated Agenda 21 into specific actions and measures to enable SIDS to achieve sustainable development. The Strategy sets forth actions and strategies in 19 priority areas, including the original themes of the Barbados Programme of Action.

⁶² The Pacific Plan was endorsed by Forum Leaders at the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Port Moresby in 2005. It is designed to strengthen Pacific regional integration and cooperation through four key pillars for development progress: economic growth, sustainable development, good governance, and security. It is regarded as a 'living document' that states the Pacific, as a region, must work to address these challenges to raise living standards, increase access to opportunity and stimulate pro-poor growth for its peoples.

government dissolved the national planning department and '[s]ince then sectoral planning has been based on annual budgetary policy statements' (UNDESA, 2006, p. 31).

With Cook Islands commitments to international agreements requiring national strategies, the government – with external technical assistance⁶³ – set about developing a combined single national development planning process. By the early 2000s, and led by MFEM and OPM, a draft national development strategy had been developed, together with several sector plans – also drafted with external technical assistance⁶⁴ – to support an overarching framework with a 20-year national vision supported by medium-term plans (UNDESA, 2006, p. 3). Throughout the process technical and financial support was provided by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNDESA, the ADB, SPREP, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, and the governments of Italy, New Zealand (NZAID) and Australia (AusAID) (CIGov, 2007; UNDESA, 2006). There were extensive consultations with private and public-sector actors including several national decision-making bodies. Two with a focus on climate change were the National Climate Change Country Team, established as part of the Cook Islands membership to the UNFCCC, and the National Disaster Risk Management Council, constituted by an act of parliament in 2007.

The preparation of the first NSDP was not without issues, not least because it was developed during a period of political instability that saw multiple changes of government. This adversely effected the commitment and participation of the interagency working groups, national planning taskforce and Process Management Unit (PMU) (UNDESA, p. 33). Finalising the plan required further elaboration and external help to do so. The UNDESA review reported at the time that due to capacity issues, the current government staff had 'inadequate skills and

⁶³ From the New Zealand Agency for International Assistance (NZAID) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). These were appropriated towards the 2003 National Development Forum and post-Forum activities including consultations' (UNDESA, 2006, p. 13).

⁶⁴ 'The Forum Secretariat, UNDP and SPREP provided technical assistance during the NSDP process, especially in drafting the strategy. While there were inconsistencies in the TA support, the government of the Cook Islands acknowledged this support, especially during the drafting phase of the NSDP.' (UNDESA, 2006, p. 13)

experience to complete the NSDP' and 'there are priority areas still lagging behind in terms of effective legislations and strategies' (UNDESA, 2006, p. 44). No national oversight committee had been established and there was no national policy office in place after being dissolved as part of the restructuring programme of the 1996 economic reforms (UNDESA, 2006, p. 31). Despite these institutional and human capacity issues, and the high cost of undertaking broad-based consultations across all islands, there was still interest among government and NGOs to collaborate and implement the NSDP according to the UNDESA report. One interviewee, a Cook Islands national, who was involved in the planning process and participated in the 2003 national consultation held at the National Auditorium in Rarotonga said:

I think it was ambitious, but it turned into a political football. The other thing I didn't recognise at the time [was that] I overestimated the capacity of people in strategic planning. Some can't think strategically. ... We can take these issues and tools and be on the front foot rather than just being blown in the wind. We can have some agency about our development. ... We saw immigration was going to be a thing. We saw all these things happening and started to be proactive. That's what started the strategic plan. How we get ahead of this, is to be proactive with strategic planning. And strategically we can avoid all these things. We could see the economies, the encroachment of foreign investment, losing agency of our country, Cook Islanders selling their assets. Let's be proactive and let's start planning. (Senior government official)

This extract reflecting on local shortcomings shows that even though government action to pursue development planning might have been influenced by international agreements, it also provided clarity about the agency of local policy actors, what was at stake and a way forward. Although, as Sassen (2010) argues, there was not only an interdependence between the global and local but a sense in which global institutions had inhabited and reshaped the national. It could also be said that national policy actors were able to interpret and mediate the movement of transnational policies (Grek et al., 2013).

Notwithstanding this clear sense of agency, the situation continued to deteriorate. A joint NSDP Process Management Unit of MFEM and OPM staff, set up by Cabinet in 2003 to manage the

preparation, monitoring and implementation of the NSDP, became dysfunctional after most of the key staff left government in 2004. To add to this, the 32-member National Planning Task Force, which included community representatives, also became dysfunctional (UNDESA, 2006, p. 4). This suggests that national policy spaces without functional arrangements, skilled leadership and co-operation amongst actors will encounter difficulties in navigating ahead.

However, with some external technical assistance, a draft vision and NSDP was completed in 2006. It was the country's 'first national vision statement for development ... known as *Te Kaveinga Nui – Pathway for Sustainable Development in the Cook Islands* setting out a 15-year visionary framework called Living the Cook Islands Vision – A 2020 Challenge' (2007, p. 2). Despite extensive buy-in to the draft, it had taken over 10 years to finalise the plan. This might have been reflective of an unwillingness or inability to operate differently but it took place in the period of time when substantial change was taking place. Following the 1996 economic reforms, the government was preoccupied with economic and public-sector reform, and key legal frameworks were introduced. This included the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Act, Public Service Commission Act and the Public Expenditure Review Committee Act, which set out new public sector financial management and good governance policy measures (UNDESA, 2006, p. 9). So it might be understandable that during this time there was little progress in the implementation of sustainable development programmes other than those tied to the Economic Reform Programme (UNDESA, 2006, p. 9).

In 2006 Cabinet considered the draft strategy. Although there had been discussion on changing it, the original national vision formulated at the Economic Reform Programme national retreat held in November 1997 was retained (UNDESA, 2006, p. 11) as it remained relevant, encapsulating the aspirations of the government and the people (UNDESA, 2006):

Te oraanga tu rangatira kia tau kit e anoano o te iti tangata, e kia tau ki ta tatou peu Maori e te aotini taporoporoia o te basileia: To enjoy the highest quality of life

consistent with the aspiration of our people, and in harmony with our culture and environment. (CIGov, 2007, p. 7)

Five strategic outcomes (below) expanded upon the national vision. They were holistic, wide ranging and conceptualised to ensure the Cook Islands 'development efforts are balanced across the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social growth' (CIGov, 2007, p. 2).

1. Well educated, healthy and productive people and resilient communities
 2. A secure society built on law and order and good governance
 3. Sustainable economic growth in harmony with our social values, culture and environment
 4. Responsible and mature foreign relations with New Zealand and other regional and international communities in the interests of the people of the Cook Islands
 5. Enhanced cultural and environmental values
- (CIGov, 2007, pp. 7-8)

Interestingly, the first goal presents the social pillar, signalling people are important. In this order, people are prioritised ahead of others. Also of note, New Zealand is singled out as a first point of reference in foreign relations which reflects the sovereign relationship the Cook Islands shares with New Zealand.

5.4.2. Analysis of the NSDPs

Accompanying the 20-year national vision was the first of three multi-year implementation plans. Each plan is discussed in the following section.

5.4.2.1. NSDP 2007-2010

The first NSDP (CIGov, 2007) was finally launched in 2007 at a public forum attended by a wide range of national and international representatives. The strategic goals are led by the people/social orientated goals followed by economic, natural resource management and infrastructure goals:

1. Equal opportunities for education, health, and other social services towards maintaining an inclusive, vibrant, resilient and productive society in harmony with our culture

2. A society built on law and order and good governance at all levels
3. Innovative and well-managed private sector-led economy
4. Sustainable use and management of our environment and natural resources
5. A strong basic infrastructure base to support national development
6. A safe, secure and resilient community
7. A foreign affairs policy that meets the needs and aspirations of the Cook Islands people
8. Strengthened national coordination and institutional support systems for development planning, evaluation and monitoring

The plan was produced with extensive consultation with civil society, the private sector, *vaka* (district) and *pa enua* (outer islands) communities, with community, island and national-level consultation forums (UNDESA, 2006, p. 23-26). The lengthy period to prepare and launch the National Vision and NDSP provided plenty of time for extensive consultations with non-government representatives sitting on project committees. This set a model for the future, so it is now considered common practice to include broader representation in policy and programme activities (UNDESA, 2006, p. 26). There is now an expectation that *pa enua* communities will be involved directly with workshop and forums on island or that their representatives will attend events on Rarotonga (UNDESA, 2006, p. 27).

The consultation process crossed sectoral boundaries and drew in government and societal actors with its co-operative policy approach (Boin et al., 2006), and the NSDP process encompassed many of the actors, rules and practices (Boin et al., 2006) that relate to sustainable development. When it is remembered that this process took place within a 10-year period that included major financial and economic challenges, a number of elections and changes of governments, widespread consultations over a huge geographical area, and the series of devastating cyclones of 2005, then the completion of the framework – and the precedent it set for community engagement in future planning exercises – was a considerable achievement for the country.

5.4.2.2 NSDP 2011-2015

The second NSDP (CIGov, 2011b) retained the same strategic goals as the first plan, but reframed the goals, strategies and measures under eight priority areas. In all, it included a set of guiding principles, eight goals, 58 strategies, 176 actions, 28 objectives, 181 indicators.

Priority areas and goals were:

1. Economic development: A vibrant Cook Islands economy
2. Infrastructure: Infrastructure for economic growth and sustainable livelihoods
3. Energy Security: Renewable energy for energy security to enhance our economic and social development and environmental integrity
4. Social Development: Opportunities for all people who reside in the Cook Islands
5. Resilience: Resilient and sustainable communities
6. Ecological Sustainability: Environment for living
7. Governance: Good governance
8. Law and Order: A safe, secure, just and stable society

In contrast to the earlier plan in which the first goal was about people, in this plan economic and infrastructure goals led the line-up of priorities followed by energy and then social development priorities. This reshuffle may possibly be attributed to global and regional policy shifts. The 2008 global economic crisis took place during these intervening years. The New Zealand government also changed in 2008, and with it a change in New Zealand aid policy and delivery from a goal of poverty elimination to that of sustainable economic development. This was accompanied by a move from a multilateral approach that emphasised untying aid from the donor partner's national interest and aligning more with development priorities of developing countries, to a greater emphasis on bilateral arrangements in New Zealand's national interest.

The semi-autonomous New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) that had previously reported directly to its own Minister was absorbed into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) to become one of MFAT's divisions – the International Development Group – that reported internally to the head of the Ministry. The most visible impact of these changes was the reduction in the social and poverty focus of many of its international development

programmes and an increase in emphasis on evaluation and accountability. Apart from various political pressures domestically, a major exogenous influence on New Zealand's ODA programme was the adoption of the aid effectiveness agenda following the OECD's Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005.⁶⁵

A New Zealand MFAT evaluation report of New Zealand's overseas development assistance (ODA) programme to the Cook Islands considered the 2011-2015 NSDP to be of limited use as a strategic document. It said, '[it] is a very general and high-level plan, which provides some visionary guidance for the CIG [Cook Islands Government], but as noted in the recent Pacific Forum Compact Review⁶⁶ it "fails to identify big picture priorities and structural impediments", and as such its utility as a strategic document, which could address key issues such as migration, public debt, tax reform, or public sector reform is limited' (Adam Smith International, 2015, p. 19).

Interestingly, the evaluation did not make a comparison with the first NSDP which would have revealed the improvements made in building upon the earlier plan. The NSDP presented as the overarching national development plan that integrates other sectoral planning tools intended to form a connected if not comprehensive suite of plans and policies. It might be argued that

⁶⁵ The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, adopted in 2005, was the result of the recognition by Western donors that they were partly responsible for the often disappointing results of foreign aid. The Declaration was based on five core principles, including recipient countries' ownership of their poverty reduction strategies, donors' alignment with this vision and harmonisation among donors. A total of 138 countries (donors and recipients), 28 international organisations, and many civil society organisations endorsed these principles.

⁶⁶ Often referred to as the Cairns Compact, the Forum Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination recognised that Pacific SIDS were off track in achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 because they were constrained by small administrations and limited economies of scale. Signed in Cairns, Australia, in 2009 the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders agreed to various initiatives including: i) annual Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) tracking; ii) peer reviews of national institutions, policies and systems; iii) development partner reporting on aid effectiveness commitments; iv) Public Financial Management (PFM) reforms; v) more effective climate change financing; vi) private sector engagement/dialogue and vii) investment in infrastructure development. The gains made through the Compact have been due to the significant and sustained interest and support from political leaders, senior public servants and development partners. (Ref: UN: Partnerships for the SDGs at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=7669>, accessed 29/4/18.

the wider context reflected a more settled economy and public sector nearly 18 years on from the economic crisis and 1997 ERP.

The 2013 NSDP Indicator Report was the government's own report and it's 'first report to quantify progress against the goals of the NSDP' (MFEM, 2015a, p. 126). The report using a 'traffic light' system (and there are no traffic lights in the Cook Islands) to categorise progress concluded that results have been mixed (MFEM, 2015a), identifying:

Numerous gaps where data was insufficient, fragmented or non-existent such that no trend or reliable figures could be extracted. In other instances, the data lacked the adequate rigor and integrity to be reported on, or data sets were incomplete, and did not represent an accurate depiction of development across the entire country. (MFEM, 2015a, p. 126).

Despite these short-comings, the government's process in developing this NSDP was markedly different to the previous plan. Led by the Central Policy and Planning Office (CPPO) of the OPM with wide-ranging consultations, no external partner assistance was enlisted to prepare the plan to the same extent as was involved in the previous plan. This was a deliberate move on the part of the CPPO to retain greater control over the process and also because it was considered that there was the capacity among the public-sector staff at the time to complete this task.⁶⁷

5.4.2.3 NSDP 2016-2020

The current NSDP (CIGov, 2016) shows the largest degree of change. This plan took account of the review of the global development goals that were undergoing review at the same time (resulting in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The plan also took account of earlier NSDP reviews with the aim of developing a technical instrumental planning document. The previous eight goals were replaced with these 16:

1. Improve welfare, reduce inequity and economic hardship
2. Expand economic opportunities, improve economic resilience and productive employment to ensure decent work for all
3. Promote sustainable practices and effectively manage solid and hazardous waste
4. Sustainable management of water and sanitation

⁶⁷ Participants 11, 17, 33.

5. Build resilient infrastructure and information communication technology (ICT) to improve our standard of living
6. Improve access to affordable, reliable, sustainable modern energy and transport
7. Improve health and promote healthy lifestyles
8. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities
9. Accelerate gender equality, empower all women and girls, and advance the rights of the youth, elderly and disabled
10. Achieve food security and improved nutrition, and increase sustainable agriculture
11. Promote sustainable land use, management of terrestrial ecosystems, and protect biodiversity
12. Sustainable management of the oceans, lagoons and marine resources
13. Strengthen resilience to combat the impacts of climate change and natural disasters
14. Preserve our heritage and history, protect our traditional knowledge and develop our language, creative and cultural endeavours
15. Ensure a sustainable population engaged in development for Cook Islanders by Cook Islanders
16. Promote a peaceful and just society and practice good governance with transparency and accountability
(CIGov, 2016, p. 18)

Cook Islands officials reported that the new plan was developed to take account of the increasing number of sector and departmental policies. While also reflecting international commitments and making links to the SDGs, it is more of a ‘scorecard’ with an emphasis on the strategic goals, targets and indicators to measure and reflect progress (CIGov, 2007, 2011b, 2016).⁶⁸

This latest plan has reduced complexity in its substantive content, compared to the previous plan, with 16 goals and 66 indicators⁶⁹ (CIGov, 2016). With more of a focus on monitoring and evaluation, there has been a technical repurposing of the document and increased reliance on other inter-related policy instruments from a more densely populated policy suite compared to those in place in 2007. Nevertheless, by including marine, terrestrial and indigenous goals it takes account of specific challenges of oceanic states development context.

⁶⁸ Participants 28, 33.

⁶⁹ Participants 28, 33.

From the country officials' point of view, the NSDPs were fit-for-purpose policy instruments that initially filled a void where there was no comprehensive national framework in place and no joined-up suite of policies to link national strategic policies to departmental or individual island annual plans and budgets. Those involved, have seen a shift towards a stronger government led process in developing and managing each plan. Further progress over time linked the plans and a suite of national policies to national budget cycles. Nowadays if activities are not aligned to a departmental business plan, sector plan and the NSDP then it will not be eligible for funding.⁷⁰

This section attempted to show the comprehensive scope of national planning endeavours and the accompanying processes that have developed over time to facilitate these plans. The aid effectiveness agenda has placed demands on small economies and island states – from aid, islands and climate change perspectives – for greater alignment of policies and ownership of national development planning (Dean et al., 2017; Wrighton & Overton, 2012). This in turn has 'promoted a drive to consult widely with partners in governments and civil society and encourage their active involvement in aid-funded development activities' (Wrighton & Overton, 2012, p. 244). However, the considerable burden on agents and institutions by these demands for participation and consultation compromises effectiveness and ownership (Wrighton & Overton, 2012).

Similarly, other writers have exposed the burdens created by Western-based perspectives, such as Baldacchino & Bertram (2009), who argue for a discourse of economic *flexibility* of small states rather than of economic *vulnerability*, along with Barnett and Campbell (2010) who argue that the issue of island vulnerabilities to climate change has been appropriated by 'groups within politically and scientifically powerful countries ... in ways that do not do justice to the lives of island people'. In a similar vein to Sassen (2010) who drew attention to the embedding of the

⁷⁰ Participants 11, 27, 33.

global in the national and how this process was mediated by the agency of local actors, Barnett and Campbell (2010) believe that climate change mitigation and adaptation policies – the global – cannot be effective without an understanding of the social systems and values of oceanic island societies – the national.

These complex, busy, and dynamic interactions have shaped the national development policy framework within which climate change mobility could emerge. Acknowledging that discourses can be found in the solutions and measures conveyed through different actors - international agencies, development agencies, consultants, CROP organisations and individuals - information flows across transnational borders and external actors have a taken-for-granted presence as narrators of dominant discourse messages. Through the experiences of local actors working in the NSDP processes, they have interpreted, mediated and translated those messages into action (Grek, et al., 2013) contributing to a national planning approach that reflects content and process changes over time and that provides a nuanced understanding of oceanic island state development challenges and responses.

5.5 National Planning, Climate Change and Human Mobility

The previous two sections examined the institutional arrangements that help and hinder policy attention to climate change mobility, and the national development planning regime in place since 2007. This section takes a closer look at how climate change mobility has been attended to in the national planning framework. In doing so, I examine how climate change and human mobility have been treated in the national development plans for insights about the extent to which climate change mobility is regarded an issue, by whom and why; and question whether those insights relate to particular narratives and influences of particular actors (Stratford et al., 2011) .

5.5.1. NSDPs and Climate Change

Over the lifetime of these plans, there has been a shift in the plans about how climate change is treated. Unlike the first two plans, the latest NSDP has a specific climate change-related goal that is consistent with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The NSDP Goal 13 is to 'Strengthen resilience to combat the impacts of climate change and natural disasters' (NSDP, 2016, p. 44). Under three indicators, the goal seeks to: promote resilient communities; enhance protection from cyclones; and build resilient infrastructure (NSDP, 2016, p. 20). The SDG's Goal 13 is 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. It includes specific reference to small island states (and least developed countries) with a global commitment to promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management, and a commitment by developed countries to mobilise funds for mitigation measures to address the needs of developing countries and operationalise the Green Climate Fund (SDG 13, UN A/Res/70/1, 2015, 13.a and 13.b).

SDG 13 is a new goal that was not explicitly addressed in the MDGs on which the SDGs are built. However, the 2015 UN Resolution that includes the SDGs, (A/Res 70/1 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'), acknowledges 'that the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC] is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change'. This treaty dates back to more than 20 years. Also, in the build-up to the SDG negotiations there had been some pressure applied to the UN General Assembly by Pacific Leaders in 2013 with the Majuro Declaration, which called for better climate change leadership from developed countries. The Cook Islands had joined with fellow members of the Pacific Islands Forum in Majuro, Marshall Islands, to express their frustration in the lack of progress globally in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The outcome statement of the 2013 meeting was the Majuro Declaration, which was presented 'as a gift' from the Pacific to the UN Secretary-General for action. The Declaration demonstrated that

despite their negligible contribution to GHGs, Pacific leaders were committed to the reduction and phasing down of greenhouse gas pollution worldwide. Their actions to reduce their own omissions enhanced their previous arguments based on moral grounds. In doing so, they showed their desire to spark a 'new wave of climate leadership' (*Majuro Declaration: For Climate Leadership*, Pacific Islands Forum, September 5, 2013.)

Even before this though, the Cook Islands had long been involved in global negotiations around climate change since signing the UNFCCC at the Rio Summit on Sustainable Development in 1992 (NES, 2011, p.19). Research and reviews that were carried out by the NES as part of the UNFCCC commitment were conveyed in two country reports known as National Communications (NES, 2011; 2000). The First National Communication was initially published in 1999. The report was prepared with assistance from the Global Environment Fund (GEF) under the regional Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme (PICCAP). Presented in four sections – national circumstances, national inventory of greenhouse gases, vulnerability and adaptation and cross sectoral measures (NES, 2000, p. 5) – 'the initial communication is a culmination of activities undertaken by Cook Islanders since November 1997' (NES, 2000, p. 5). This included a national country team of government and civil society actors and Cook Islands consultants. It also included technical-training and capacity-building activities (NES, 2000, p. 5). The report began gathering scientific baseline data on impacts and greenhouse gas emissions (NES, 2011, p. 19).

The Second National Communication (2011) released 12 years later was supported by the UNDP and the GEF. The preparation of the report was over a five-year period during which various assessments were carried out.⁷¹ The project was overseen by the National Climate Change Country Team, which included representatives from public, private and community sectors and traditional leaders.

⁷¹ These are available through the NES website: www.environment.gov.ck

The report, compiled by the NES, provides a stocktake of what has happened in the Cook Islands area of climate change since the first national communication in 1999. It updated the national circumstances, vulnerabilities and impacts, and described advances in adaptation planning and mitigation measures. It also documented some traditional knowledge in relation to, for example, the management of migratory fish species, traditional knowledge systems and disaster preparedness, and the loss of traditional local knowledge through urbanisation and internal migration (NES, 2011, p. 19).

The national communications showed an understanding by the authors that climate change policies and activities needed to be embedded and institutionalised into the country's development agenda. This was because their consultations highlighted the cross-cutting nature of the issues affecting multiple sectors and actors working within and across the sectors.

The Second Communication states:

Overall development of the Cook Islands also determines how climate change will impact the country and its communities. Linkages between climate change and development are increasingly recognised as resulting from anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions driven by development patterns characterised by economic growth, technology, population and governance. These socio-economic development patterns, in turn, determine vulnerability to climate change and the human capacity for greenhouse gas mitigation and for adaptation to climate change. The impacts of climate change on human and natural systems in turn influence development patterns. (NES, 2011, p. 57)

This link between climate change and development, as established in the UNFCCC Second National Communication (2NC), is reflected in the NSDP's assertion that development will not be sustainable without working in accordance with and protection of the environment. The 2011 NSDP states:

For the Cook Islands, sustainable development implies the selection and implementation of development options which allow for the achievement of appropriate and justifiable social and economic goals without compromising the natural system on which it is based. (CIGov, 2011b, p. 35)

In the intervening years there were several differences between the first (1NC) and second (2NC) communications, including a shift from regional to national programmes and 'significant advances in understanding of expected impacts along with adaptation planning and mitigation measures since the 1999 1NC (NES, 2011, p. 19).

One of the biggest changes between the 1NC and the 2NC was the establishment of the Renewable Energy and Climate Change Coordination offices within the OPM in 2011. This was a result of a functional review carried out as part of 2NC to see how to strengthen institutional arrangements for climate change and achieve greater prominence on the national agenda. In the 2NC an explicit link was made between renewable energy (and land management) and climate change, specifically mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions:

Although the Cook Islands contributes few emissions, there is still a willingness to make efforts to minimise greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) to slow global warming, particularly through renewable energy/energy efficiency and improved land use practices. (NES, 2011, p. 30)

But overall, the Cook Islands, as with other SIDS, knew it was a low emitter, although it was mainly SIDS that were most exposed to the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise. In terms of the Cook Islands own mitigation efforts, the government had become much more ambitious by the time of the 2NC compared to 1NC. The 2NC report also found that sustainable development was more likely when mitigation measures had positive social and economic development impacts as well as reducing emissions – what the report called 'win-win attributes'. (NES, 2011, p. 70). In identifying the energy sector as the main area in which the country could significantly reduce GHG emissions, the report said this would not only reduce reliance on imported fuel for electricity generation and transport but had the added benefit of increasing energy security and reducing dependence on fossil fuels:

This is consistent with the long-term objective of the Cook Islands Government of self-sufficiency of energy resources. The Cook Islands' heavy reliance on imported diesel for electricity generation and petroleum for transport makes it particularly susceptible to

fluctuations in global oil prices ... with flow-on effects for electricity prices. High prices and fluctuations have a destabilising effect on businesses and households, limiting growth, particularly in the most isolated and vulnerable areas. (NES, 2011, p. 70)

An example of how this translated into the NSDP was a national target of 100 percent renewable energy by 2020. The government wanted to contribute to a reduction of greenhouse gases by reducing fossil fuel consumption to generate electricity (CIGov, 2016). In 2010 the newly elected Cook Islands Party announced a move to reduce the costly diesel generation of electricity to all inhabited islands by introducing solar-powered systems – a good example of the ‘win-win’ approach discussed above of combining sustainable environmental and economic development measures, and one that took advantage of pledges of support from development partners. The New Zealand Aid Programme provided grant funding and technical assistance to set up a renewable energy commission and provided funding for the position of Energy Commissioner as an additional function of the OPM (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, June 2015; Newport, 2015).

The initiative promised to decrease reliance on fossil fuels, avoiding price fluctuations and cutting the cost of supplying electricity to consumers. Importantly too, it was seen as delivering mutual benefits by reducing environmental impacts from lower GHG emissions (Renewable Energy Development Division, 2012a; Renewable Energy Development Division, 2012b).

Not everyone was convinced however that it was driven purely by environmental considerations, as expressed by this central agency senior official:

We just are not a significant emitter. But we do mitigate. Measures are taken at government, households, and major reasons being ... [it's] not driven out of a policy framework to reduce emissions. The mitigation measures are around economic decisions. ... We'd like to be 50%, 100% renewable [goal]. So we've got this policy process there. But this was driven by how expensive it's to run power in the outer islands, and difficult logistically. There is the economic imperative that drives these ... even though the 50%, 100% is about being a good global citizen, it's nice to do it and practically it can be done. Especially since someone else is paying for it ... the means are not altruistic, [they are] driven by economic desires. (Expatriate male senior official)

This pragmatic view does not necessarily minimise the importance of economic gains from mitigation measures. There are genuine concerns regarding the restrictively high cost of fossil fuels for electricity generation facing the country with its narrow economic base and high costs associated with doing business on a small scale often with vast distances from markets. Agenda 2030, which sets out the global development goals – the SDGs – acknowledges that economic development is integral and intertwined to addressing climate when it declared:

The challenges and commitments identified at these major conferences [including the third International Conference on Small Islands Developing States⁷² and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development⁷³] and summits are interrelated and call for integrated solutions. To address them effectively, a new approach is needed. Sustainable development recognises ... preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are linked to each other and are interdependent. (A/Res/70/1 para 13)

Alongside the Cook Islands' economic reality is the national policy positions and ecological development characteristics typical of small islands economies as reflected in the NSDP goals discussed above. Small island states such as the Cook Islands are characterised as having 'low population density, fortress islands, significant, unadulterated and pristine natural resources, choosy exporters (niche markets), exclusive tourism appeal, low carbon footprint and low urbanisation' (Baldacchino, 2008, p. 57). As a result, the prevailing discourse privileges dominant world economic traditions that consider the small size and isolation of small islands states as being detrimental to viable economies, synonymous with low standards of living and high levels of vulnerability and in need of external help (H. W. Armstrong & Read, 2002; H. Armstrong & Read, 2006; Baldacchino & Milne, 2000; G. Bertram, 2013; Connell & Corbett, 2016).

In this view, smallness, isolation, 'islandness' and remoteness are perceived as inherent disadvantages including diseconomies of scale, resulting in an inherent and unavoidable economic vulnerability (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009; Baldacchino, 2011; Campling, 2006). Such

⁷² A/Res/70/1 para 11.

⁷³ A/Res/70/1 para 12.

vulnerability narratives become incorporated as legitimate or appropriate in the practice of, knowingly or not, complicit policy actors (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013; Kakonen, Lebel, Karhunmaa, Dany, & Try, 2014).

With a wide-ranging scope of vulnerability that includes economic and environmental hazards, such as those associated with climate change, the tone of this vulnerability narrative in the literature is in Baldacchino and Bertram's view overly pessimistic and deterministic (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009; Baldacchino, 2011). By contrast, in their actor-driven assessment of small economies they present citizens of SIDS as securing their place in the world through strategic choices (despite some economic, geographic and historical limitations on the choices) and, overall, found a generally positive global picture for small island states' economies:

The triple accidents of size, geography and sovereignty have endowed many small economies with: an element of cultural cohesion; a relatively large and ubiquitous public sector; a disproportionate presence in international affairs; rich social networks with commensurate levels of social capital; an extensive and relatively affluent diaspora; and, especially in the temperate and tropic regions of the world, a disposition to become tourist attractions. (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009, p. 154)

The strategic flexibility exercised by actors in small islands states in which they exploit opportunities and maximise economic gains 'in a turbulent and dynamic external environment with which they must engage' managing a 'portfolio of skills and revenue streams' enabling trans-sectoral and transnational migration by these actors (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009). This mobility and the vulnerability narrative are themes of all three NSDPs.

5.5.2. NSDPs and Human Mobility

Analysis of the three NSDPs show different levels of attention given to human mobility. The first NSDP 2007 -2010 (CIGov, 2007) refers to the Cook Islands vulnerability 'because of its scattered population distributed across sparsely located islands' (p. 37), the issue of 'the declining national population'(p. 2), and setting a target that 'by 2020, [that] will achieve population sustainability of no less than 25,000' (p. 8). It refers to 'the large Cook Islands population residing in New

Zealand' (p. 12) and the need to 'encourage population retention and return migration' (p. 12). A key action is the goal to 'Develop a new national population strategy by 2008' (p. 16). In this regard, the strategy is focused on finding ways to retain the existing population as well as finding ways to entice overseas Cook Islanders back to the Cook Islands.

The plan also identifies the 'limited population base and increasing reliance on foreign labour' (p. 29) as part of this concern and suggests immigration of non-indigenous Cook Islanders is problematic alluding to cultural and social implications. In this regard, depopulation is addressed by opening borders to foreign labour and investors. For island economies, as inherently vulnerable (Baldacchino, 2006) this is a taken-for-granted way to address depopulation. Particularly as the disadvantage of a small population restricts economies of scale, labour specialisation and increases production costs (UNEP, 1994) forcing small island states to look beyond their territories for labour markets, higher education and investment opportunities. While also reinforcing the representation of small island states as non-viable and inherently dependent (Dean, Green, & Nunn, 2017, p. 58).

The NSDP 2, in taking a similar approach, stresses that 'depopulation is a significant issue', referring to depopulation as the 'brain drain of trained and educated Cook Islanders' (CIGov, 2011b, p. 13). However, it also touches on Baldacchino and Bertram's idea of transnational migration by actors with 'portfolio skills' which the NSDP 2 sees as providing a resource in its reference to the 'large diaspora' and 'their potential to contribute to national development' (CIGov, 2011b, p. 13) as a means to address this issue. This is notable because it shows a turn towards a different view of islands as 'integrated, mobile and resourceful' and discourses of mobility and migration (Dean et al., 2017, p. 59).

As with NSDP 2, the latest plan states 'continuing depopulation is a significant issue'. However, unlike the previous two plans, there is now a specific goal related to population sustainability:

Goal 15 seeks to 'Ensure a sustainable population, engaged in development for Cook Islanders by Cook Islanders' (CIGov, 2016, p. 48) that can be measured through five selected indicators. The goal is to maintain a sustainable population and seeks to do from an economic and labour market point of view asserting 'true self-determination and ability to decide our future is inherent in the ownership of our country's assets and equity in our economy' (CIGov, 2016, p. 48). The success in implementing this goal will be measured by the percentage of Cook Islands investment versus foreign investment in the economy.

Echoing the 2030 Agenda quoted above, the rationale for this goal is that 'Cook Islanders are not driven by purely financial or economic motives. We are motivated by the need to not only provide and prosper, but also to engage socially, to give and care for our community, our environment' (CIGov, 2016, p. 49). It proposes to measure Cook Islanders wellbeing through a Quality of Life Index that measures job satisfaction, disposable income, youth wellbeing, leisure time, and cultural engagement (CIGov, 2016).

In order to enhance social and economic development and protect natural assets (p. 49), this goal will also measure political engagement and research undertaken on the Cook Islands (p. 48-9). The goal attempts to integrate different population indicators while alluding to the economic, social, cultural and political complexities of such a goal. In contrast to the previous plans, a broader picture is presented that is based not only on demographic patterns of the population but also participation in different aspects of Cook Islands life.

Overall, the multifaceted view of Cook Islands social and economic wellbeing in the latter plan is reflective of a more holistic and meaningful perspective of island lives that has developed over time.

5.5.3. NSDPs and Climate Change Mobility Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, analysis of the three NSDPs shows there is no specific connection made between climate change and human mobility. Although climate change issues have increasingly entered national policy spaces, debates on human mobility issues appear under-developed.

Interestingly, the first two NSDPs acknowledge the value of kinship networks of Cook Islanders overseas, but this is not acknowledged in NSDP 3. This appears at odds when recent political speeches suggest otherwise. Examples include the Prime Minister's speech to expatriate Cook Islanders in Auckland during his August 2015 visit to New Zealand and the Deputy Prime Minister's speech at a development panel on 4 August 2015 where the value of kinship networks was conceptualised as being more than country of 10,000, but a world of 100,000 Cook Islanders.⁷⁴ On the Prime Minister's speech in New Zealand, one Cook Islands official said,

The PM wasn't saying to expatriate Cook Islanders, come back. He was suggesting they should be successful and contribute to the Cook Islands development. Which is realistic and more fruitful way. Retention of Cook Islanders is a challenge. But people come back at different stages of their lives. For education, at retirement. Everyone's got a story. A very mobile population is part of Polynesian history. (Expatriate male diplomat)

There is a sense of a different kind of narrative in this statement. By taking a strategic flexible approach, the kinship networks overseas can be seen as a source of strength and competitiveness rather than a source of weakness and powerlessness (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009; Baldacchino, 2011). This speaks to a narrative of mobility and migration (Dean et al., 2017) that accounts for people and cultural practices beyond 'abstract national economies disembodied from meaningful lives' (Barnett & Waters, 2016, p. 736).

Other Pacific countries have taken specific population and migration policy steps. For example, the Republic of Vanuatu has a national population policy (2011), and Tuvalu (2015) and Kiribati

⁷⁴ Participants 5, 11, 30. Personal fieldwork note 4 August 2015.

(2015) have national labour migration policies. In the Cook Islands case no such policy is currently in place.

Nevertheless, attempts have been made to develop a population policy. This began in 2014 with assistance from UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) and technical assistance from demographer Dr Geoffrey Hayes who completed his PhD research on the Cook Islands in the 1980s. According to interviewees⁷⁵ this policy gap in the national policy suite is because difficulties arose about how the issue was conceptualised and addressed beyond trade, labour market and immigration activities and the purpose of policy. As such, population movement remains problematic. This is examined further in the next chapter.

While there are no population/migration policies in place to supplement the national development plan and the population goal, climate change related instruments such as *Te Kaveinga Tapapa: Climate and Disaster Compatible Development Policy*, JNAP 2011-2015 and JNAP 2016-2020 help to frame climate change mobility. The Kaveinga Tapapa policy takes a ‘stay and adapt’ approach to addressing climate change impacts. Initial policy consultations did not raise ‘forced migration’ as a concern until the first regional consultation meeting of the Nansen Initiative was held in Rarotonga in 2013. Concerned with human mobility, natural disasters and climate change in the Pacific, the meeting was hosted by the Cook Islands government. The meeting was part of a ‘state-led, bottom-up consultative process intended to build consensus on the development of a protection agenda addressing the needs of people displaced across international borders in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change’ (Nansen Initiative, 2014, p. 1). The Cook Islands participation in this meeting acknowledged the threat of displacement and relocation. As a result, the ‘stay and adapt’ approach was included in the policy to signal that migration was only to be a measure of last

⁷⁵ Participants 1, 11, 17, 28, 29, 33.

resort (CIGov, 2013). This position contradicts the migration-as-adaptation discourse of the UN. The country's experience with cyclones and displacement due to disasters also informs discussions and potential policy on climate change mobility. These aspects are discussed further in chapter the next chapters.

In the NSDPs, the limiting discourses of small island states development (Stratford et al., 2011) and their economies (Baldacchino, 2006) can be found in the solutions and measures that stimulate and encourage the private sector, microeconomic reforms and structural adjustments (Barnett & Waters, 2016, p. 736). Through different actors - international agencies, development agencies, consultants, CROP organisations and civil society organisations - that participate in the NSDP interactions, they communicate between themselves (Beech, 2009, p. 350). With different ideologies, objectives and methodologies, they produce and reproduce different discourses (Beech, 2009, p. 351) about oceanic states development priorities and measures.

The views of islands as small, closed, isolated and vulnerable and at the same time are integrated, mobile and resourceful highlights that while deficit discourses have initially been incorporated as legitimate in the practices of formulating this NSDP (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013), over time show emergence of alternative narrative, in particular a mobility narrative that integrates the cultural value of kinship networks as an appropriate conception in addressing development challenges.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

Overall, construction of the national development platform, the *ataata*, is uneven. Institutional arrangements and national planning to address climate change and human mobility have been fashioned differently. Climate change had a period where it received a lot of regional and international attention, and hence national attention in terms of resources, technical assistance

and political will. The approach included revised institutional arrangements, new policy frameworks, and mobilising resources.

In contrast, human mobility has received a different level of attention by Cook Islands government actors. Despite ongoing concerns regarding the country's declining population, less attention has been given to addressing these concerns and institutional arrangements are weaker with no specific co-operative arrangements in place compared to measures addressing climate change. Little integrated policy work has taken place to address the depopulation issue with repopulation implications given the large non-resident indigenous population and accessible foreign labour market. The absence of key UN affiliates is also notable when compared with presence of the UNFCCC in the national climate change arena.

The national development framework has been transformed over time from a one-stop standalone policy to be a technical instrument – a scorecard within a national policy suite. Increased country ownership in managing the development of the NSDPs underscores shifts that elevate climate change and sustainable population as goals. Despite articulating a 'stay and adapt' policy position to potential displacement in a national policy, little else is present in national plans to suggest it has a priority status.

The chapter examined the institutional arrangements, and national sustainable development policy framework to determine the extent to which climate change mobility has been addressed. When it comes to climate change mobility, there are no specific institutional arrangements in place. Nor is it a well-defined or agreed concern in national development planning. However, the national development framework together with the climate change institutions – and some immigration functions – of government provides enough institutional elements of an *ataata*, the platform above the hulls that represents useful institutions, rules and practices. To this end, in forming the *ataata* of vaka moana, it is possible that a structural

platform is in place and able to connect climate change and human mobility as an emerging policy space.

In the formation of *ataata*, particular discourses of small island economies and development are at play creating taken-for-granted entities and governance institutions (Wesley-Smith, 2013) based on structural determinism and grounded on prescriptive, deductive, top-down construction, to address development issues (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009). However, other discourses are also at play such as a strategic flexible approach (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009), the interconnectedness narrative (Stratford et al., 2011), mobility and migration (Dean et al., 2017), SIDS climate change narratives (Kelman, 2018) and the Cook Islands own indigenously derived mobility narrative.

The next chapter moves on to discuss the perceptions and experiences of individual local actors and their policy inflectedness in relation to climate change mobility. As the *oe akatere* (steering paddle) of *vaka moana*, this element represents the agency of individual actors and their capacity to navigate policy discourses.

Chapter 6: Oe Akatere – Power to Navigate

6.1 Introduction

Va as a space of relationality in oceanic island contexts (Airini et al., 2010; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009a) is an imagined and negotiated space (Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009) that is able to mobilise Pacific discourses and narratives (Mila-Schaaf, 2009) through the agency of individuals. This agency is represented by the *oe*, (steering ruddler) of the vaka moana model and frames the focus of this chapter.

Chapter Five established that a Cook Islands policy space can be discerned in the construction of its national development framework of institutional arrangements and policy suites. But this policy space is an uneven platform for coherent policy development because climate change and human mobility have been treated differently by local, national and external actors. This treatment can be traced back to the variety of discourses about small economies and small islands. These include discourses of vulnerability and resilience (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009; Barnett & Campbell, 2010; Campling, 2006) of marginality (Overton & Murray, 2014) and of economic flexibility (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009). Chapter Five showed that the notion of ‘climate change mobility’ is not well-defined or locally owned in the Cook Islands national policy space or in national development planning, at either institutional or policy levels. This suggests the reality of climate change mobility is not a priority issue for the Cook Islands government. While there are obvious practical attempts to address climate change, such as building seawalls, climate-proofing ports, conversion to renewable energy and improving water harvesting, it is less obvious what consideration has been given to broader policy that addresses the impact of climate change on the mobility of the population. Even though the sustainability of the population is deemed a national priority, a survey of official documents suggests this has not

yet translated into clear and focused policy to address wider issues that include the notion of climate change mobility.

The findings of the previous chapter were based on analysis of institutional and policy-level processes and structures, while the present chapter moves to the analysis of individual and event-level data. My aim in this chapter is to examine the perceptions, experiences and agency of individual actors, and the extent of their understanding of the impact of climate change on human mobility – and what further development policy attention might be warranted in this policy space. I argue that individual understanding of human mobility as a consequence of and response to climate change and disasters in the Cook Islands context is critical because their personal perceptions and life experiences influence (as the *oe* of the *vaka moana*) the policy processes and structures. From these findings I draw some conclusions about why there has not been a stronger focus on developing policy on climate change mobility; the submerging of Cook Islands climate change mobility policy space under a long-standing depopulation discourse; and how the ‘mediation of policy’ and ‘policy inflectedness’ (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013) might provide alternative discourses that convey other oceanic and indigenous derived narratives dealing with mobility and kinship.

This chapter works with the notion of agency as the capacity of the individual to act independently – a capacity that is meaningful and has both intent and purpose (Mayhew, 2015). Within this framing, I examine the indigenous positionality of individual actors to explore the possibility that ‘indigeneity’ and the qualities of being indigenous, as an individual construct, contributes in specific ways to the social construction of policy. This builds on the argument of Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, (2013). They argue that ‘policy making and policy implementation are socially constructed and enacted by actors who are located within specific institutional frameworks’ (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 345). I expand on this by

including the actors' subjective interpretations of conditions, working practices and opportunities (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 346).

The chapter consists of two thematic sections. The first section examines national and international events I observed and how climate change mobility was expressed by different actors, and their agency. This includes analysis of narratives during those events. The second section examines interview material of mainly Cook Islands government and civil society individual's perceptions and experiences related to climate change mobility. Both sections examine the understandings by the actors' of climate change mobility and the extent to which it is an issue, for whom and why.

After a discussion of their agency and narratives that comply and challenge conventional discourses about SIDS vulnerability and development, the chapter sets out conclusions about the nature of Cook Islands climate change mobility and its policy space before introducing the final analytical chapter.

6.2 Climate Change Mobility from Observed Events

Onuf (2007) reminds us that, '[C]limate change as a social construction, is no one thing. Instead it is an ensemble of constitutive processes, yielding an ever-changing panoply of agents and institutions, fixed in place and meaning only for the moment.' (2007, p. xiv-xv) The same can be said of climate change mobility,

... where large numbers of scientists from a number of disciplines are engaged in its study; news stories appear constantly; activists hold meetings; politicians make speeches and propose policies which governments adopt, reject, implement or sabotage; governments negotiate with other governments. (Onuf, p. xi)

So, 'What we do about climate change depends on the stories we tell. As these stories change, the world changes too' (Onuf, p. xv). Below is a collection of stories fixed in 2015 moments.

6.2.1. Climate Change in National Spaces

In February 2015, as part of the 50th anniversary of Cook Islands independence and the 40th Anniversary of the University of the South Pacific (USP) Cook Islands' campus, Climate Change Cook Islands co-hosted a series of four open fora titled 'Climate change in the Cook Islands - from concerns to actions', held at the USP campus in Rarotonga, 4-25 February 2015. Each themed session followed a panel format with a range of speakers interacting with the audience in a question and answer (Q&A) session. The 29 presenters – 10 women and 19 men – offered a broad range of perspectives related to the national context, the Northern Group, the Southern Group, and Rarotonga climate-change concerns and actions. Government and community representatives provided overviews of each sub-region and island specific concerns. They covered coastal erosion, salt water intrusion, food and water security, fisheries and pearl farming, fossil fuel energy, inter-island transportation, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, infrastructure development, cyclone recovery, financing, education, health and welfare considerations as well as national international participation in the UNFCCC.

I attended all four meetings. In forum two for the *Pa Enua ki Tonga* (Southern Group), Tourism Officer, Taoi Nooroa from Mangaia representing the Aronga Mana (traditional leaders) spoke about food and water security with the production of dry taro and challenges in maintaining water supplies using waterways or pipes that could result in migration because of climate change. In forum three for the *Pa Tokerau* (Northern Group), Maori journalist Rachel Reeves highlighted the lessons learned after Cyclone Martin hit Manihiki. Lives were taken and people lost their homes and subsequently relocated to Rarotonga and further afield as a result.

In the final session on Rarotonga concerns and actions, climate change mobility was raised. In her keynote address, NES Environment Officer and climate change adviser, the late Mi'imetua Matamaki, spoke briefly about migration due to climate change at the end of her speech. While

she did not elaborate, she said this was an issue that needed to be considered because of the impact of sea-level rise and cyclones on island living.

In these three instances, displacement and migration were not pursued during the question and answer discussion that followed the presentations. Overall, attention focused on the other multiple aspects of climate change and response measures. In these public fora, the small number of instances and absence of debate about displacement and migration appears to confirm the previous chapter's findings that this is not a concern. However, despite the inclusive format of the series of knowledgeable presenters and diverse experiences and perspectives, it was not a forum that privileged indigenous knowledge and perspectives. If it had, then it is possible we may have heard more about the spiritual, social and physical relationship and significance of the land and water to indigenous people and their custodial role. For example, as the back story of Nooroa's presentation, an account by Rod Dixon (2016) shows that Mangaia's territorial divisions are based on its six river valleys and swamps. Its complex water distribution system and its pre-Christian indigenous beliefs that honours water and the god Te Manavaroa are located at the islands centre as the *pito* (navel) of the island and a series of streams radiate out from its sanctified core to the valley swamps (2016, p. 87). The system, with water flowing horizontally or vertically from one field to the next, relies on reciprocity and mutual reliance to ensure the water flowing from one pond field is passed on in the state it is received – i.e. weeded, virus free, and in sufficient quantity to ensure a cool growing environment for the *taro* (Dixon, 2016, p. 87). Privileging understandings of spiritual and social ties to land and water in public discussions help to contextualise the tangible actions responding to climate change mobility.

At the February 2015 Development Partners Meeting – with an opening address by Prime Minister Puna (Puna, February 10, 2015b) – no remarks were made about the threat of climate change on migration, during the opening-day speeches or two dialogue sessions. These latter

sessions included prominent Cook Islanders and invited international guests. The first session reflected on 50 years of development challenges and perspectives. The second debated how development can make 'island sense'. During those discussions migration and climate change were raised as separate, unrelated issues.

In a video recording following the opening address, the Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and former Norwegian diplomat and politician, Erik Solheim, raised climate change as a regional concern for the Pacific and encouraged the Cook Islands to bring their perspective as part of the SIDS voice to the next UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Paris later that year. However, his point was made in the context of poignant messages about the challenges for SIDS that were not reflected fully in the OECD development assistance classifications nor the Cook Islands' impending graduation to 'high-income country' status (and the loss of access to resources graduation entailed).

On day two, a panel discussion on climate change in the Cook Islands took place. The themes from the ensuing discussion related to: accessing climate finance; the upcoming global climate change agreement in Paris in November 2015; reforming aid rules for SIDS, including eligibility for grants and concessional lending; climate technology; insurance; and private sector facility. No panellists made any reference to climate change mobility. However, during the Q&A session, and in a response to a question from a UN representative about community resilience to climate change and migration, Maori artist, master carver and political commentator Michael Tavioni said from the floor in English that 'climate change has no effect on migration'. His comment was followed by a Maori business woman who added that 'people leave out of necessity', implying that people leave for reasons other than climate change. On the face of it these responses may well be read as a rejection of the impacts of climate change on migration. However, it is also possible that these responses might reflect local-actor resistance to narratives conveyed through external actors (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013) such as the disappearing-

islands narrative and the island-resilience narratives. In the former, there is an assumption that SIDS are low-lying small islands and therefore physically doomed because of climate change and sea-level rise (Kelman, 2018, p. 156). In the latter, there is an assumption that the 'islandness', represented by the geomorphological and societal stability of islands that are able to withstand shocks and adversity, will also be undermined by climate change (Kelman, 2018, p. 1).

However, it is also possible their resistance to the proposition of linking climate change to human mobility is due to the dominance of a depopulation narrative that fails to take account of the multi-dimensional, interrelated nature of human mobility, and related indigenous perspectives and cultural implications.

6.2.2. Climate Change and International Spaces

At international events outside the Cook Islands I observed other perspectives about climate change mobility, specifically during the UNFCCC COP21 held at Le Bourget venue in Paris over a two-week period. As a signatory to the convention, the Cook Islands is a regular attendee to the Conference of Parties and preparatory meetings. Early in the conference, two side events were held on the topic of climate change migration. The first was hosted by European and American scholars.⁷⁶ This event provided an opportunity to disseminate key findings of a four-year European collaboration known as EU Cost Action IS1101 - Climate Change and Migration.

Contributions of knowledge, law, policy and theory argued the importance and contribution of the social sciences in enhancing understanding climate change-induced migration. Angela Oels offered a critique of three dominant discourses of climate migration – fear of climate refugees, save climate refugees, and migration as a strategy of adaptation. She proposed an alternative

⁷⁶ Panellists included: Dr Andrew Baldwin (Durham University), Professor Jürgen Scheffran (Hamburg University), Dr Angela Oels (LUCSUS), Dr Giovanni Bettini (Lancaster University), Dr Francois Gemenne (Liège University), and American academics Dr Koko Warner (United Nations University) and Professor Diana Liverman (University of Arizona).

discourse from her findings. For small island states peoples, relocation was not an acceptable solution to the problem of climate change. One example of this alternative was activists referring to themselves as ‘climate warriors’, resisting being called climate refugees. In the lead up to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) 2014 World Parks Congress in Sydney Australia the Pacific Climate Warriors took action as part of global climate change movement with 350.org and their slogan ‘We are not drowning. We are fighting’. In protest of the fossil fuel industry, they rallied vessels including vaka moana to peacefully block the world’s biggest coal port at Newcastle north of Sydney.⁷⁷

The second side event presented findings and practical experiences from the Nansen Initiative on addressing human mobility as a strategy of adaptation to climate change. Five panellists discussed opportunities and challenges for scaling up human mobility-related adaptation efforts beyond the Paris conference. Special envoy to the Nansen Initiative, Professor Walter Kalin, pointed out the multiple causes and cross-cutting nature of displacement in disaster risk reduction, economic development, climate change and humanitarian domains. He advocated for the UNFCCC to provide support for the inclusion of displacement as part of adaptation, and loss and damage in the outcome agreement of COP21. He also pointed out the Nansen Initiative used the term disaster-displaced persons rather than referring to people as climate refugees. This usefully offers more positive connotations and empowering sense of identity and agency to people’s experiences of displacement (Farbotko, Stratford, & Lazrus, 2015).

The Cook Islands Prime Minister was a speaker at this event. He recalled the experiences of Cyclone Martin in 1997 on his home island of Manihiki, in the Northern Group of the Cook Islands. Cyclone Martin caused major damage, loss of life and the subsequent migration of many

⁷⁷ See their website <http://world.350.org/pacificwarriors/the-pacific-warrior-journey/>

residents. In order to build solidarity against the worsening effects of climate change, he identified the ‘need to have those discussions sooner rather than later’.

In between these two side events, the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network and Pacific Islands Development Forum hosted the ‘We are the Pacific’ dialogue forum at the AOSIS⁷⁸ Pavilion, drawing on key messages from the Suva Declaration of the third meeting of the PIDF held in September 2015, such as limiting temperature rise ambition to well below 1.5°C; the 2015 Paris Agreement to be legally binding and ensure strongest possible mitigation efforts; that loss and damage be a standalone element of the Paris Climate Change agreement; include fast track assistance to most vulnerable countries and an integrated approach of support for Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS).

Panelists included the President of Kiribati, Anote Tong; Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga; the Secretary General of PIDF Francois Martel, and the Minister of National Disaster Management of Fiji, Inia Seruiratu. Representing the Cook Islands, Prime Minister Henry Puna, was recent graduate and Crown Law solicitor Ms Talissa Koteka, attending her first COP. In delivering the Prime Minister’s prepared speech, no link was made between climate change and migration. However, Tuvalu Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga, a seasoned climate change negotiator and indigenous diplomat, delivered a strong message. Without a written speech, he said,

... the lives and the livelihoods are on the block. Of course, yes, I appreciate offers from the brothers in the region for relocation. Fiji’s Prime Minister has [kindly made offers] to Kiribati and Tuvalu. But I think the challenge is to maintain that relocation cannot be an excuse for no actions [for] saving people in their god-given islands. For Tuvalu, we will never be forced to move out. (Personal Communication, 1 December 2015)

In resisting migration as a response to climate change, he also said,

The urgency is here. We need an agreement out of COP21. But together it’s gonna be very very difficult. The first week is easy because we are just making our statements.

⁷⁸ AOSIS refers to the Alliance of Small Island States

The challenge is in the second week up to the last hours on 11 December. And I would encourage all our leaders, our negotiators, to be vigilant. There will be twists and turns, and we have to be watchful and whisper to our people, be there in that room. Be there in that room. Once you blink, the paragraph would have been concluded. And we say [then] it's too late. And we don't have anything to take home for Christmas. (Personal Communication, 1 December 2015).

A week later, as negotiations began to build in intensity, discussions were taking place on a draft of the agreement. During one of sessions of the G77+China negotiating bloc (the group of developing countries that includes the Cook Islands), a Bangladesh delegate spoke in support of keeping yet-to-be-agreed text regarding displacement and migration in the agreement, despite opposition from other delegates. Among the differing positions within the bloc was a fear that in the negotiation of competing priorities the previously non-negotiable redline of Loss and Damage might be traded off.

Loss and Damage as a concept was first proposed in 1991 by Vanuatu, on behalf of AOSIS, in discussions for an insurance fund to address the impact of sea-level rise and compensate small islands states and low-lying developing countries (Roberts & Huq, 2015, p. 149). However, it did not appear in a UNFCCC document until COP13 in 2007 and gained further momentum with establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (L&D) associated with Climate Change Impacts (the 'Loss and Damage Mechanism') at COP19 in Poland in 2013 (Roberts & Huq, 2015, p. 153) and approved at Lima COP20 in 2014. The shift to include L&D recognised that mitigation and adaptation efforts had not been enough to avoid climate change impacts (Roberts & Huq, 2015, p. 141) – and acknowledged the instrumental role and the 25-year persistence of small island state voices.

The other 'redline' at the Paris COP21 for the Cook Islands, in its alliances with AOSIS and PSIDS, was the global warming temperature target of 1.5 degrees Celsius (°C). Despite the 2°C target being adopted at the Copenhagen COP15 in 2009, many countries objected and promoted 1.5°C target as a more adequate limit for dangerous interference (Tschakert, 2015, p. 1). This included

AOSIS, which at the Cancun COP16 in 2010 reiterated their 2009 claim –supported by the science – that ‘a 2°C temperature rise was unacceptable as a safe threshold for the protection of small island states and that even a 1.5°C increase would undermine the survival of their communities’ (Tschakert, 2015, p. 2).

Both of these redlines encapsulate years of AOSIS leadership and advocacy for which it was able to garner support. In the end, it was a successful outcome for AOSIS. Agreement was reached in COP21 on the 1.5°C target, and loss and damage was included as a standalone article. As often happens in international negotiations characterised by trade-offs required to reach consensus among parties with competing interests, the displacement and migration references were reduced through the negotiation process and ultimately removed from the adaptation and loss and damage sections of the final agreement.

The intergovernmental process at these international events provided valuable insights and understanding about the negotiation process, alliance building, and trade-offs over climate change migration in the context of the wider UNFCCC debates.

Despite its reduced presence in the agreement, displacement has continued to be pursued globally through other avenues such as the Warsaw Implementation Mechanism, the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD, previously the Nansen Initiative) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The Cook Islands is a party to these intergovernmental and state-led processes, which provide opportunities for the government to promote Cook Islands representation on climate change migration and address its climate change and human mobility concerns.

6.2.3. Section Discussion

There was clear evidence in these national and international events climate change and human mobility were key concerns for many parties, particularly SIDS, even if a consensus could not be reached in the final document. At a national public level in the Cook Islands, climate change mobility was flagged but not prioritised or debated. During COP21, with its complex and multifaceted diplomacy (G. Carter, 2015) with ‘seemingly endless negotiations on a wide range of issues with a plethora of actors (state, civil society and private businesses)’⁷⁹ (G. Carter, 2015, p. 205-206), climate change mobility was a topic of debate but not one as strongly advocated by the Cook Islands as it was by other Pacific SIDS such as Tuvalu and Kiribati. The mix of experienced indigenous and non-indigenous Cook Islands negotiators entered into the negotiations with a mandate to promote the Cook Islands policy positions on the 1.5°C ambition target, loss and damage as a standalone article, access to climate finance and alignment with Pacific Islands Development Forum key messages, so the absence of climate change mobility in the final document was an expected and pragmatic call on their part.

In this regard, internally and externally for the Cook Islands government, climate change mobility is an issue that is ‘visible and amenable for policy intervention while simultaneously becoming side-lined and obscured’ (Kakonen et al., 2014, p. 352). At the community level the climate change mobility issue is obscured and underwhelming. It has failed to impress, or stimulate interest. Yet it appeared, from my experience and observations at international meetings, that the individuals who participate in these events exhibit a greater complexity of understanding of the issue than those who worked at the domestic level because their agency is constituted by experience, purpose and judgement. The dynamic interplay between these dimensions varies between and within different structural contexts of action (Emirbayer &

⁷⁹ COP21 included 30,372 participants in total representing 19,208 participants from 196 countries plus 2 observer states. 8314 observer organisations and 2798 media representatives. UNFCCC, 2015, List of Participants. Downloaded 27 October 2017 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/inf03p01.pdf>

Mische, 1998, p. 963), such as when attending community meetings, policy discussions, or in global negotiating spaces. This can be seen by the conduct, seniority and experience of, for instance, the Tuvalu Prime Minister in COP21 who delivered strong messages about the impacts of climate change. His rallying call to Pacific delegates was to remain vigilant in decoding the nuanced understandings of redlines and trade-offs that might have bypassed newer, less-experienced negotiators. In relation to indigeneity, Sopoaga's statements as an indigenous diplomat convey a strong sense of connection to Tuvalu. Its name 'draws on an identity based on shared senses of competition and cooperation between and among the communities of eight of nine islands in the archipelago' (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 122) where 'life is enacted in place and made mobile across places' (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 122). In this regard, the act and idea of forced migration appears at odds with indigenous identity and its indigenous name of 'eight standing together' (Connell, 1980).

6.2.4. Human Mobility and National Spaces

More substantive debate on human mobility and migration happened during the opening sessions of Development Partners Meeting the 2015 in Rarotonga, an annual event attended by a range of development partners, including UN multilateral agencies. Some international participants acknowledged that this was their first time to visit the Cook Islands and attend these meetings. So it is likely they would have noticed the difference in the direct and unfettered commentary by the panellists and public to the delivery of interventions at international diplomatic encounters. The Prime Minister – a lawyer and pearl farmer from the island of Manihiki – said in his opening address:

Of course, many of the foundations taking place in recent years would not have been anticipated by our founding fathers. Some of our earlier trends have in fact become even more pronounced over the years. And here in particular I am referring to our resident population and the high degree of Cook Islands mobility. The population trend provides an important context to our development talks today. While many of our small communities face human resource constraints, your [Cook Islands] government is totally committed to growing the opportunities for development and enhancement.

The outer islands, for example, which bear the brunt of higher mobility, are a strong focus of our priorities for sustainability. (Puna, 2015b)

Puna avoids the term ‘depopulation’, which in the development policy documents and assessment reports discussed in the previous chapter was also identified as the key development challenge for the Cook Islands. Rather, Puna refers to the declining population as a population trend with a high degree of mobility. This movement of people, pitched as a human resource issue – particularly for the *pa enua* – is presented as a justification for their development activities and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). In this regard, couched as part of a political pledge, the impact of human mobility is a key rationale for development in the Cook Islands. There is, however, no acknowledged link to climate change being a cause.

Further into his speech, the Prime Minister continued with this theme when he referred to the government’s focus on development programmes in energy, infrastructure and water as the three key sectors supported by development partners:

Not only are we making progress for the lives of those disadvantaged by isolation, distance and cost, but we are installing a strong foothold for economic activity and growth. ... The shift to renewables will open the pathways for investment thanks to reduced costs in fuel, shipping and consumption. (Puna, 2015b)

As a response to human mobility, this conveys the commonly understood narrative about island development and vulnerability that is consistent with those discussed in Chapter Five. Island vulnerability discourses arising from within development and environment policy communities are, according to Barnett and Waters (2016), ‘far removed from islands themselves, and if islanders engage in their perpetuation that is less a reflection of what happens on islands, and more a manifestation of what they understand donors want to hear’ (Barnett and Waters, 2016, p. 734). In this regard Puna’s speech can be seen as a purposeful use of vulnerability discourse that shows ‘national actors communicate ... an international language for donors’ (Jules 2014, p. 476).

Here it is possible to begin to understand the agency of Cook Islands actors. In the example of the Prime Minister's address at a national development event this is part of a dialogue with the Cook Islands development partners. As with the Tuvalu Prime Minister with his understanding of the nuances in the UNFCCC arena and the motivating factors for Pacific delegations, the Cook Islands Prime Minister delivers messages that intentionally speak into donor discourses about SIDS development and vulnerability while also reporting back to the *pa enua* public on what the government has delivered. These messages – with the use of a particular language and specific phrases – appear complicit with the conventional narratives, but it is highly likely that they are also deliberately constructed because in other speeches this awareness is apparent. For example, three months later, Puna's speech to a Cook Islands audience at the University of Auckland during the Constitution celebration visit to New Zealand in August 2015 – quoted here at length due to its relevance – presents the issue of human mobility differently:

E uu no te akau roa: ka oki rai aia ki te akau roa. For those who are not familiar with this wise saying, please allow me to briefly explain, and in doing, so lay the setting for our discussions today. In Aitutaki, there is a section of reef that is known as *te akau roa*. Throughout the ages, *te akau roa* is well known amongst Aitutakians as the best fishing spot in the lagoon. It is home to a variety of fish, especially the *uu* – the parrotfish. When the sea conditions and the tide are right, there is an abundance of *uu* at *te akau roa*. But when the tide changes and the sea conditions are not so good, the *uu* swims away from *te akau roa* to other sections of the reef where it waits till the tide is again right before returning to *te akau roa*.

The ancestors in their wisdom noted similarities between the movements of the *uu* and that of people. Firstly, the ancestors observed that in times of hardship or significant change to people's environment and circumstances, they were inclined to move away from our islands. When conditions on the islands improved or when circumstances at the other sections of the reef change, like the *uu*, they would return. Secondly, the ancestors also recognised that despite departing, people maintained a sense belonging to the islands from where they departed. It was this sense of belonging that kept people connected to the islands and that at some stage of their lives, they may return. And if they do not, they always maintained their connection to their homeland. Hence coining the metaphor *e uu no te akau roa, ka oki rai aia ki te akau roa*. (Puna, August 16, 2015a)

On the issue of Cook Islanders leaving, he went on to say:

From my personal perspective, this [migration] is not a new challenge, nor is it an insurmountable one. When we talk about the depopulation of the Cook Islands, we must remember that there was a time in our history in the early 1900s, when there were

only 2000⁸⁰ Cook Islanders remaining. These 2000 went on to expand our population to a more sustainable level. Of course, in those days, the cause was the introduction of foreign diseases. Though extremely unfortunate for our people at that time, I also think that this is an excellent example of the resilience of our people, and their ability to recover and overcome the prospects of what some may see as an uncertain future.

Today, this uncertainty is caused by migration, or as some may say, more specifically outmigration. But are our people really leaving the Cook Islands completely and what does this mean for our development going forward?

The movement of our people today is more transnational than at any other time in history. You, our people residing in New Zealand, Australia and further abroad, are natural partners with our people at home. This is a cooperative link that demands our attention. This has never been clearer than in the past few weeks. Many of our people living abroad made the journey home to celebrate our 50 years of self-government. Those that could not have held their own celebrations in their adopted cities. This is clearly evidence that our people living outside of our Cook Islands borders still very much feel that they are part of the Cook Islands.

Government today recognises that the Cook Islands will always be enriched by its people – our greatest asset – irrespective of where they live. This is dependent on the human links and connections that exist across borders. The same is true for our development as the Cook Islands. It also depends less on territorialised strategies. Engagement stretches the idea of the development of the Cook Islands, beyond territorial boundaries. It is time to look strategically outwards at our own scattered people across the world. (Puna, 2015a)

This indigenously informed framing and use of cultural metaphor emphasises a narrative of *pirianga* - kinship ties and relationality that exist across geographical borders. That is, the borderless connections between people, place and each other based on indigenous experiences (Clifford, 2013). These relational connections are acknowledged as culturally and strategically important for Cook Islands development. The speech also provides 'a fluid alternative to the terrestrial limitations of the nation-state' (Deloughrey, 2007, p. 134).

These speeches may seem contradictory, while I see them as paradoxical. The two events and messages expressed are genuine and simultaneously true. Together they demonstrate that there is a sophisticated awareness of the importance of using a particular framing in particular

⁸⁰ This number was picked up by the media for its inaccuracy. It was possibly a result of confusion with a reference on a local online Cook Islands history site that refers to a population in the early 1900s on Mangaia of around 2000 ([www.http://www.ck/history.htm](http://www.ck/history.htm), as at 23 March 2018). Other sources suggest the total population in 1900 was around 8000 (<https://countrydigest.org/cook-islands-population/>, as at 22 March 2018).

spaces. This understanding of how to navigate in different public spaces is not random or accidental. Rather it shows these actors are mindful movers of ideas and messages through different narratives.

At the aforementioned 2015 Development Partners Meeting, five of the six Maori panellists in the first dialogue session deepened and broadened the historical development context of Cook Islands human mobility by referring to the implications of culture, gender, educational opportunities, economic push-and-pull factors, and politics. The first presenter Dr Jon Jonassen, (scholar, composer, former Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Cook Islands High Commissioner to New Zealand), spoke on the topic of culture and development and had this to say:

In the past 50 years, 1965-2015, when you look at the story of culture we have woven, we could probably say co-option. Citizens are given the feeling of involvement but very little will come. We establish a token house of Ariki with no powers. We establish a Ministry of Cultural Development with a multi-purpose focus. No genuine development capacity. With little if any sanctity. We established a tax base that was never given to culture. We established a marginalised Maori language programme with little or no practical recognition or realistic support.

The culture story now, when we look at it. We have a loss of population as the Prime Minister pointed out. We have replaced a Maori working population with foreign workers. We have a perceived preference for foreign expertise. We fail to recognise overseas Cook Islanders as part of our sweat and not a threat. We lack vision. We've marginalised cultural development. We've failed to recognise its ability and tap into the economic value of cultural images. ... So as we look ahead... to 2015 to 2065 our journey ahead. This is one of my favourite pictures [referring to the slide on the big screen]. This is *Te Au Tonga* [a vaka moana] sailing past a tanker. It has many symbolisms, powerful symbolisms. We can still do it, though we are a small state. We've have done it many times ... We need to refocus and protect all people. Particularly we need to protect our own Maori people. Other countries protect their own ethnic populations. We don't. We don't have any policies specifically to protect them. (Personal communication, February 10, 2015)

He conveyed human mobility as a story of cultural loss tied to the need to protect Maori futures from marginalisation through policy. Following his address was Vaine Wichman (Poet, development economist and former Member of Parliament, from Penrhyn and Rarotonga) where human mobility was embedded in the context of the gender gap in development:

... what is left to be done? What are we overlooking? Perhaps it's the fact that basic needs and requests of our women and families are being blanked out of existence. Let me explain. ... Our islands are maybe one of the region's better performing nations, but still it has marked imperfections and we need a unique way of dealing with this.

I have sat at homes of women who look after their families, their elderly, their disabled, their community obligations, and who watch their youth leave faster now because there is nothing there to keep them. Who, with a tear in their eyes, advise that only because of their belief in god, they bear the burden of living in their island and pray that god, not the government, not the development partners, will look after them. (Personal communication, February 10, 2015)

Wichman conveys a sense that women are comforted in their daily concerns and the loss of migrating family through their faith. Together (women and god) are an overlooked aspect of Cook Islands development. Her words also illustrate that the most vulnerable are women, children, the elderly and disabled. As 'trapped populations' they are unable to migrate not only because of obligation, but because of poverty and financial costs of moving (Government Office for Science, 2011; Gray & Mueller, 2012; Nawrotzki & DeWaard, 2018). Being able to determine the characteristics of those trapped in places is critical to ensure climate change migration policy interventions anticipate and respond to their needs (Nawrotzki & DeWaard, 2018). This assumes, of course, these communities prefer to migrate rather than remain in the home islands.

6.2.5. Discussion of Climate Change Mobility

Overall, at these events, climate change and migration were discussed as separate concerns with little reference or debate about the interrelationship between them – that is, climate change-induced mobility. What stood out at these events was the difference between the interpretations by actors from differing perspectives that show the interrelationship to be multi-dimensional and dynamic, compared to government policy narratives (see Chapter Five) that draw on and mirror existing island and vulnerability discourses that 'simplify relationships, emphasise benefits and overlook burdens' (Kakonen et al., 2014, p. 354).

The mediation of policy – as the ‘process that embodies discourses formed both within and outside of the institutions of the state’ (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 345) – rests on the notion that policies are not constructed solely within state boundaries but influenced by the dominant discourses promoted by international and transnational organisations that transcend states. These discourses become internalised by the state’s policy processes to converge with policy structures, practices and expressions (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013). This is illustrated by the case, in terms of the discourses, in the previous chapter.

However, the extent of policy inflectedness where discourses get recontextualised – ‘adapted, resisted or silently transformed from original intentions’ (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013, p. 348) – is an important consideration. From the interview extracts above, in which the agency of actors recontextualised dominant discourses, two conclusions can be drawn. First, actors purposefully make use of dominant discourses to pursue intended aims in different moments. Secondly, actors emphasise other narratives, thereby abating the dominance of common uncontested discourses. Accordingly, this means that individuals have substantial capacity to construct and mediate policy ideas across contexts (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis (2013). For example, during the panel dialogue, there was only one panellist who used the term ‘depopulation’. This is significant because it suggests that, while there is a more nuanced understanding of human mobility at play here, the notion of ‘depopulation’ remains an unchallenged concept. This reinforces a perception that the movement of people from the Cook Islands is permanent. Who is using this term and what happens with its use is examined further in the next section.

Human mobility can also be comprehended as stemming from the ‘mobile emotional geographies of island places and peoples’ (Dean, Green & Nunn, 2017, p. 70). That is, giving importance to emotion and sense of place (Burkett, 2011) ‘where the human world is constructed and lived through the emotions:

[A]t particular times and in particular places, there are moments where lives are so explicitly lived through pain, bereavement, elation, anger, love and so on that the power of emotional relations cannot be ignored. (Anderson & Smith, 2001, p. 7)

The sense of loss is certainly one emotion expressed by panellists who shared a sense of place and belonging (Hermann, et al., 2014).

From the indigenous positions of actors, indigenous and cultural imperatives are detected and emphasised as in the panellists. To this end, the agency of actors can be shown as sophisticated interplays where the awareness of actors brings about nuanced understandings of climate change and human mobility. These understandings are linked to long-standing western narratives as well as those derived through Maori (indigenous) identities and positions. From this emerges a culturally constructed mobility narrative. This is examined further along with other points above and how this informs 'policy as process with agency' (Shore, et al., 2011, p. 2) in relation to climate change mobility.

6.3 Climate Change Mobility and Interviews

This section examines interviewee understanding of climate change mobility and the extent to which they deem it is an issue and why.

In general, climate change migration was not a deeply considered issue⁸¹ by the people I interviewed. A senior expatriate male official said, 'I've never heard about the linkage because climate change is forcing people to urban drift the ocean. It's new.' (Expatriate male senior official) where people move from rural to urban areas for work reasons not climate change. Others who had not made the link before were prepared to give it some consideration. A Maori male senior official from Mitiaro said:

[C]limate change and migration are not really an issue for us and we don't have any policy around that. ... As a policy person if I had to address this problem, I'd say don't

⁸¹ Participants 4,5,6,8,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,25,26,33,34

worry about it. ...Migration is an issue not driven by climate change itself, like other factors, economic and social factors. ... Health, quality of life. What's the evidence? You'd have to say why are people leaving? If its climate change, then yes, I'd reassess my thinking for this. I haven't heard any reference to it. Don't get me wrong, if we did have that, we would factor that into our policy making and leverage that like Kiribati and Tuvalu. Although we have reasonably high lands in Raro, we [Mitiaro] do have low lands that will get done.

Because if it's a problem, as a policy maker, there is a solution to this and an easy solution to this. Well, much easier. It can mean abandoning your islands. But you'd still have ... liveable parts of the Cook Islands. If we didn't have that then I'd try some negotiations. But at the end of the day, it isn't a priority. We have so many other priorities.

But in the main, interviewees considered that climate change mobility needed further examination. Those involved in international negotiations at the UNFCCC offered more informed insights about climate change mobility. Eleven had attended the UNFCCC COP and/or preparatory meetings.⁸² Of these, two were associated with the Nansen Initiative, one was in a regional coordination role, and another in an advisory capacity.

6.3.1. Depopulation

Overall, interviewees⁸³ were less certain about the status of climate change mobility as a priority issue. This was because there were other issues that were considered to be of greater importance – in particular, depopulation. It was variously referred to as 'a loss of working population', 'loss of functional use for contributing to the economy', 'brain drain' and 'loss of indigenous population'. Some described its effect as 'catastrophic' (Maori female civil society representative) where 'mobility is extreme' (Maori female adviser) and has 'gone past the tipping point and you simply exist' (Maori female civil society representative).

Depopulation is defined as 'the decline, in absolute terms, of the total population of an area, more often brought about by out-migration than by a fall in fertility or excessive mortality.

⁸² Participants 1,2,6,9,11,12,17,22,27,29,32

⁸³ Participants 1,2,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,15,17,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,38,41.

Depopulation typically occurs in more remote areas; it is initiated by loss of employment, effected through out-migration,' (Mayhew, 2015). Participants' views in this study were consistent with the economic drivers and implications of this definition.

The reasons people gave for choosing to leave were similar in theme: 'life is too hard' (Maori female senior official), 'the cost of living is a major' (Maori male civil society representative), 'lack of economic and education opportunities' (Expatriate male senior official) and a view that 'people get into financial trouble and live beyond their means' (Maori female civil society representative). An example of this is people converting occupation-right entitlements of land to leasehold titles to secure personal or home loans from banks. Subsequent changes in household circumstances result in them not being able to meet loan repayments. As a result, individuals leave to find work overseas or call on family overseas to assist with the debt. When this fails, banks foreclose on the loan, resulting in the mortgagee sales of leased properties (after entitled landowners are offered first right refusal to buy the land).

Not all stories were personal in nature – some referred to events in their public roles. One Expatriate male senior official recalled during their participation in the 2016-2025 Public Service Strategy consultations how 'the word "catastrophic" was used in looking at population figures from 2001 to now for the pa enua, and you had a drop in population that is drastic':

Certain people weren't in favour of using that kind of emotive language. But I said the reality is when you go to Tamarua in Mangaia you'll see most of the houses boarded up. They are in effect ghost towns. And catastrophic is the only word you could use. Because for the pa enua, you have gone past the tipping point where you've lost the bulk of your earning population and the economic drivers have gone. You have an aging and a young population there. And as soon as the younger ones get to an age, they will go. (Maori male senior official)

The magnification of problems for those in the community who had chosen to remain was a theme echoed by several interviewees. As another interviewee pointed out:

Here and now and over time last 500 years, life, nature, ecosystems have always been a delicate balance of this and that. Problem is we have a dwindling population but still we have a problem with water. All of these water projects over the last 50 years, but there's still problems. We are still carting water to homes. Something is not right. The dwindling population is very old and young, and the few able-bodied are ready to get the next barge and leave. (Maori female senior official)

Consideration was given to the cultural implications of human mobility where it is the indigenous population who are leaving: 'losing your indigenous population is a catastrophe' (Maori male senior official); 'collapse of community life is imminent' (Expatriate female policy adviser). But they also raised the issue of problems arising in the move from outer islands to Rarotonga, because as people move from their islands to Rarotonga tensions arise over land when 'you get landless Cook Islanders living in Rarotonga' (Maori female policy adviser). This form of urbanisation refers to obtaining land based on entitlement through genealogy and in some cases customary favour where use of land for residence or planting is granted by landowners to non-landowners. It particularly applies to people moving internally within the Cook Islands to Rarotonga, as the country's economic hub, and adds to the ongoing debates regarding land use and ownership the rules of which vary across each island. These include cultural, identity, social, economic and legal issues about matters such as land rights, land use, absentee land ownership, land banking as well as environmental degradation and potential permanent loss of land⁸⁴ (Pascht, 2014b; Short & Hermann, 2015). The impact has the potential to influence the future of the country, or as one interviewee summed it up:

Continuing depopulation highlights the nation's challenge of struggling to retain its indigenous people. This can dilute the 'voice' of the indigenous population in policy-making – especially when there is a growing influence from foreign actors in the policy space. (Maori female senior official).

⁸⁴ Participants

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,19,21,22,23,25,26,27,29,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,37,39,39,40,41,42.

There is a useful body of scholarship about depopulation and Pacific mobility that should also be considered (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009, 2015; Young, 2015). New Zealand scholar and geographer Professor Murray Chapman offers useful thinking about the limitations of such terms based in his study of migration in the Solomon Islands. He flagged that ‘technical terms such as “emigration” and “depopulation” convey neither the contemporary ebb and flow of Pacific Islands movement nor its inherently volatile and ambiguous character’ (1991, p. 263). Rather it is ‘ambiguity and paradox, metaphor and imagery’ (Chapman, 1991, p. 286) that helps to place an alternative island narrative of mobility and tease out the ideas about climate change mobility from a cultural perspective and indigenous position. This is particularly the case as ‘travel to New Zealand and Australia in order to work, study, visit relatives or for other purposes is a normal occurrence’ (Pascht, 2014b, p. 117) and such movement is an ‘an integrated part of everyday life’ (Pascht, 2014b, p. 117) alongside ‘a fundamental sense of belongingness’ (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 275) associated with land and fluid kinship ties (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003; Te Ava, 2011; James et al., 2012; Pascht, 2014b) where roots and routes simultaneously exist (DeLoughrey, 2007).

Other points can also be made about climate change mobility, which, as argued in the previous section, were not normally perceived as connected but two separate issues – climate change and human mobility. A female Maori senior official, with ties to Rarotonga and the Northern group, said:

I think in our context that’s why it’s difficult for our people to see that connection. In the Northern Group there is [climate change impact], but they don’t associate movement with those particular things. Unless like Manihiki and the cyclone. People can see that. They don’t see the gradual. Aside from the cyclone, people don’t make the connection. In our case anyway. If you have inundation, you can’t grow crops. But do they make the connection that it’s because of climate change? Do they need to? Not necessarily. We going to move because there is a food security issue here.

This comment is important because it shows that despite the prevalence of the depopulation narrative, actors do make climate change and migration connections. However, a distinction is

made between sudden events such as cyclones, which have recognisable consequences of people's movement, and slow-onset events such as salt-water intrusion due to sea-level rise. Less obvious to some people is how inundation over time affects the ability to harvest food from the land and ocean. As she points out, the causes of sea-level rise may be less obvious or understood by those directly affected. However, its impact on island living, including factors such as food production and supply, poses an indirect influence on decisions to move. Her understanding of climate change as an intensifier of pre-existing challenges is echoed by this Maori male government adviser:

It certainly limits our options you know. Actually, it contributes in direct and indirect ways. It takes resources from people as a result of climate change. Takes away the options ... through that, it contributes to migration.

This evidence shows that the country's actors understand climate change mobility implications without a comprehensive policy being in place. This same theme emerges from other actors' comments. A New Zealand diplomat said:

We don't have a policy in place at the moment. Although there is some talking on it but no policy in place. It's something we will need to look at ... Our first approach is to support people to stay where they are.

This extract acknowledges climate change mobility as an emerging issue where policy attention is required, and also indicates that movement is undesirable, but with different implications for host countries.

In a subsequent discussion with Mi'imetua Matamaki, who made a brief reference to climate change mobility in her presentation at the USP forum on climate change in the Cook Islands, she identified that she had first become aware of the issue attending a UNFCCC-related meeting in South Korea. At first, she did not really consider it a possibility for the Cook Islands but on hearing the stories of those affected by its impacts she felt this was an issue to which the Cook Islands needed to give attention:

I really thought about it when I did the V&A [Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment] for Manihiki in 2012. And Mac Mokoroa [Atiu, former disaster response coordinator, former police officer and former chief of staff for the PM] was my writer and we sat down one day putting the report together ... People were talking about Cyclone Martin, how people came here [to Rarotonga] and never went back. We should be talking about people moving because of climate change ... I think it was then I thought about it. We were not really talking much about migration and forced migration. (Personal communication, August 20, 2015).

Her report stated:

One of the discussions revolved around the 1997 Cyclone Martin which had a negative impact on the island. Comments from participants included that “evacuation of the people from Manihiki should not have been carried out as it led to the huge out-migration of the people of Manihiki” [quote by Luka Tobia, Deputy Mayor of Manihiki, 2012] This resulted in the displacement of the population which eventually led to the decrease in the labour force. Whilst some may have decided to stay in Rarotonga, the majority have travelled on to New Zealand and Australia. (NES, 2012a, p. 13)

The report on Manihiki, an atoll island of 481 residents and 59 households and only four metres above sea level (NES, 2012a, p. 37), also identified an increase in internal migration to Rarotonga as one of ten listed outcome risks associated with more severe weather events (NES, 2012a, p. 18) – meaning relocation due to adverse weather hazards would increase existing internal mobility.

In the assessment migration was again seen as an unfavourable outcome. The strategy to relocate people to Rarotonga 1,200 km away was implemented as an emergency response with unanticipated consequences for the island and its remaining population.

This was also identified in other island assessments. For example, the Penrhyn Island’s assessment identified ‘increase internal migration’ as one of 20 outcome risks associated with more severe weather events (NES, 2013, p. 23). The social impact and severity of displacement was rated ‘high’ by the community leaders in the event of sea-level rise and storm surge. This was a lower rating compared to economic impacts related to the loss of livelihoods, property (house and land), financial cost and GDP (NES, 2013, p. 25). Nevertheless, the community leaders in their estimation of the severity of impact rated displacement as a direct impact.

Similarly, in the Rakahanga Island report, with 77 people and 21 households, the social impact of displacement as well as cultural aspects were rated high in the event of sea-level rise and storm surge. Increased incidents of coastal erosion, flooding and inundation of low-lying areas affecting agricultural and planting areas were their number one concern (NES, 2012b, p. 17).

Mi'imetua Matamaki's experience in carrying out the V&A assessments, and as a country negotiator at the UNFCCC COP meetings, led to her seeking out the insights into island communities' perceptions and experiences of climate change mobility. They reveal an awareness of climate-change impacts⁸⁵ and the risk of displacement due to cyclones and sea-level rise. Connected to the section above and the Cook Islands own Climate and Disaster Compatible Development Policy (2013), the displacement and relocation concern is linked to the 'stay-and-adapt' narrative. This narrative is featured in SIDS own discourses of climate change where climate-induced migration is viewed as a negative consequence for island life. However, further debate is warranted about migration-as-a-last-resort measure when adaptation efforts are ruled out or fail.

Importantly, Mi'imetua Matamaki's experience also shows agency in linking climate change and human mobility through direct participation in multiple sites of a policy space. Like Mi'imetua, other country negotiators to the UNFCCC are familiar with climate change mobility. Their experience brings further nuances to how climate change mobility can be understood in the Cook Islands context.

Taking it to the international-agreement level of UNFCCC, prior to COP21, a Cook Islands environmental advocate and climate change specialist said:

It's starting to come up now in the language. ... So, there is language that recognises migration but no actual mechanism or policies. No decisions that have been put in place

⁸⁵ Not only did these communities have an awareness of climate change but their local knowledge about environmental changes in their communities validated climate science data. See Rongo & Dyer, 2015..

or recommendations put forward to deal with it. There have been things done to identify what's been done, where gaps are. Some feel the climate change convention doesn't have the expertise to deal with it and should direct another UN agency to deal with it and give them the mandate.

Her perceptions alert us to challenges in locating and handling of climate change mobility within the UNFCCC framework. However, parallel to UNFCCC, there has been increasing engagement by other multilateral agencies such as the involvement of International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for example. This locates climate change mobility in a more holistic frame (Bettini, 2017).

Another negotiator, and environmental lawyer, who has been involved with UNFCCC as a Cook Islands delegate since 2009 following Adaptation and Loss and Damage added more detail:

Climate change migration hit the decision-making process in 2010 and there's been an interesting debate amongst islands countries from a political standpoint of whether or not to broach the issue of migration. There is a sense of some governments that by broaching migration you are already throwing in the towel on getting a good deal on adaptation for example. So different governments really want to discuss the issue of migration at the international level. ... I think that's because people are actually realising they're going to have to deal with migration associated with climate change impacts. And now that we have a mechanism on loss and damage with the agreed two-year workplan, one of the work areas in this workplan is specifically looking at issues of migration and displacement. ... Although it's early days in terms of implementation of the workplan, it's there in black and white that parties are mandated to discuss and tackle through the UNFCCC. I certainly think issues of migration are being taken up in parallel outside of UNFCCC. As the international mechanism continues its work it will liaise with and work to make connections where relevant with some of the work that's going on. (Climate change negotiator)

She confirmed that migration issues are being taken up through other arrangements as well as through a UNFCCC Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) workplan. She also identified the political implications for islands states that resist migration as an acceptable outcome in the context of international negotiations. In the national context this is interpreted as migration-as-a-last-resort option as part of the stay-and-adapt narrative of islands states:

There are a lot of [reasons for] migration. Like migration for labour, and refugees but not climate change. It's kind of hard. People are sceptical. People are making grand

statements and saying climate change will cause mass migration. But then they are sceptical because they are afraid. Their countries are already trying to manage other regions and are going to open the flood gates. (Climate change negotiator)

She resisted the alarmist discourses of climate change – the impending mass migration of climate refugees – that are posed as a security threat for host countries (Christian Aid, 2007; Myers, 2002).

Actors, perceptions also considered the cultural imperatives:

What's more important is to make sure cultural connections are still maintained. The essence of being a Cook Islander, whatever that is, is protected so that you don't end up, one thing worse than being stateless is having no identity. Being nobody. People like to have a sense of place. People are social beings and they like to know their place. Being a Rarotongan gives you that sense of, you are anchored to something. When you cast adrift it's really important to maintain that sense of where you are. It doesn't matter where you may end up. The fact that you are in a culture, environment that still recognising who you are is important. (Maori male senior official)

Together these actors show the extent to which they are across the range of debates and issues associated with the multiple causes and complex make-up of migration and the impacts of climate change. While it appears that the stay-and-adapt perspective seems to contradict the view of islands and relationality, oceanic fluidity and mobility, understood within its indigenous context, these ideas make sense – 'island sense'.

6.4 Discussion

The following section is a discussion of actor agency and narratives that comply with as well as challenge conventional discourses about SIDS vulnerability and development. It finds that as with the attention given to structures and policies in the previous chapter, policy attention given to climate change mobility by individual actors is mixed and downplayed. As well, the narratives of pirianga (connectedness) and tere (mobility) are present where actors exercise their agency and indigenous positionality.

The importance of actors identifying and making use of these cultural narratives can be likened to an aspect of traditional navigation that relies on the *ngaru tu* (dominant swell) to sail a course and bring land toward you. Expert navigator Peia Patai, said:

'I can sit, lie down and can actually tell where we are going. ... you can feel it down there and every evening you have to determine the dominant swells when you sailing through the night when its covered with rain and clouds. ... There are different swells. You got swells come this way. You got the wave breaks. You got the wind. But you can feel that one big swell. It will hold you right through the night because swells don't change. Waves do. Waves change when the wind changes. So you got to make sure to identity that wave. You can see the waves are created by the wind and gives you a lot of effect on the canoe. But the swell comes and lifts you. (Pers. comm. 14 September 2017)

Similar to the previous section, the agency of individuals refers to a capacity that is meaningful, has intent and purpose (Mayhew, 2015). These actors are located as part of the institutional frameworks of the state where policy-making and implementation are socially constructed and enacted by them (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013). They are also part of cultural institutions that also influence actors' interpretations of conditions, working practices opportunities.

In the Cook Islands situation, the links between climate change and human mobility are not straightforward, as presented above. In this regard, '[w]e see climate change mapping seamlessly onto pre-existing development discourses to further amplify the vulnerable feature of islands' (Barnett and Waters, 2016, p. 739). The same might be said of human mobility and, particularly, international migration as shown in the MIRAB model of Islands economies and development (I. G. Bertram & Watters, 1985).

A complexity in the Cook Islands context is the strong presence of the depopulation/repopulation debates that form part of the conventional discourse about SIDS vulnerability. While we see national actors mediating and resisting this discourse about the

vulnerability of small island state development, other narratives that are indigenous in nature are tied to interconnectedness and mobility.

6.5 Chapter Conclusion

This section draws out a set of conclusions about the nature of climate change mobility in the Cook Islands. Primarily, it concludes that the depopulation discourse has the effect of submerging an indigenous mobility narrative that exists in these national/local policy spaces. In these policy spaces, depopulation forms part of SIDS development transnational/globalised discourses, which in Alexiadou and Bunt-Kokhuis terms are inflected. That is to say, the globalising effect on narratives about SIDS climate change and migration makes them more homogenised. However, through actor agency, policy narratives are mediated leading to transformational aspects – or inflectedness – in the Cook Islands local policy spaces. This means it is possible to enlist other narratives like *pirianga* (interconnectedness) and *tere* (journey/travelling groups) that resist, reject and transform the depopulation discourse. These narratives are not necessarily in the usual fora of public debate and governmental policy making mechanisms and not necessarily immediately visible.

The policy space of climate change mobility in the Cook Islands is at best an emerging one. The issue does not appear to be well understood or pursued much by policy makers. This is partly because the country's experience with the movement of people is related to the impact of disasters such as cyclones. Climate change-attributed impacts are less obvious for these policy makers. In particular, their knowledge is informed by international influences through actor experiences overseas and the experiences of other countries in the region, rather than a strongly internally articulated perspective from community actors and advocates. Where international experiences cross over into the local context they have been taken up by some national policy makers or are challenged by others as priority issues when set next to other

pressing issues – such as depopulation. Often the official discourses on climate change mobility in the public arena are met with resistance and silence, leaving actors to ponder ‘a created regime of truth, which ... makes future displacement seem plausible’ (Hermann et al., 2014, p. 202). Hermann et al. argue that potential forced migration and relocation help to underscore local discourses of the enmeshments of place, culture and identity’ as the COP21 extracts try to show.

In this chapter I attempted to reveal how the agency of actors is at play in this policy space. The issue of climate change migration appears on face value to be inconsequential and not a key concern. However, the events discussed, and interviewee responses show that these actors’ perceptions and experiences provide a nuanced understanding of climate change and human mobility complexities for the Cook Islands. In the absence of a clearly articulated national policy they are able to distil and interpret different conditions, working practices and opportunities (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, p. 346) from a range of local, national and international situations. In other words, as represented by the *oe*, their agency enables them to navigate through the complexities of an issue that is only now emerging as a concern. Given their agency, they are well placed to advance climate change mobility policy activities in the future.

The Cook Islands policy space is not a well-formed arrangement of actors demarcating climate change migration as an issue. However, by examining the agency of actors it is possible to establish that there is a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the complexities of climate change and human migration by these actors. This in turn deepens understanding about the climate change and human mobility structures and policies that are in place.

The agency of these actors is represented in the *oe* of the *vaka moana*. It is the means by which actors are able to power through the range of policy moments of time and space – with their

sophisticated understandings of issues and context they are able to navigate towards their self-determined agenda of outcomes.

The next chapter examines sovereignty in the Cook Islands policy space and the handling of climate change mobility. This is represented by the kie and tira of the vaka moana as another means by which power is exercised.

Chapter 7: Te Tira e te Kie – Being Sovereign

7.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters found an uneven *ataata* – the platform bridging institutional arrangements and policies related to climate change and human mobility in the Cook Islands. These are two issues whose connections are critically important but have proven to be difficult to define. Thus it is not surprising there is an absence of specific climate change mobility policies. On the surface, this might suggest climate change mobility is not an issue for Cook Islands policy makers. However, this is not the case, as revealed in the discussion and analysis of the practices of policy making in the previous chapters. Those chapters established the nature of the agency of individual actors at work in this loosely bound and emerging policy space. Local actors demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the separate but connected canoes of climate change and human mobility at play, as seen in the use of the seemingly paradoxical narratives they employ. These narratives show how some actors are able to distil and interpret the different conditions, practices and opportunities to advance government policy positions. This agency, as represented by the *oe* (paddle) of the *vaka moana*, is the means by which actors are able to power through the range of policy moments in which they are engaged and navigate through different processes towards policy outcomes.

Following on from those two chapters, the aim of this chapter is to draw on the information gathered from participants, government policy and reports to understand what sovereignty considerations arise for the Cook Islands in addressing climate change mobility and other similar issues?

Sovereignty is a critical concept that underpins the process of policy making. It therefore plays an important part in addressing climate change mobility as an emerging policy issue. The

concept of sovereignty is important because it both reinforces and challenges the authority given to different narratives present in these policy spaces. As kie (sail) and tira (mast) of the vaka moana, the sails and masts represent the sovereignty arrangements of the Cook Islands policy space and the capacity of individuals to manoeuvre within these arrangements. Though understood seemingly as a fixed concept, I argue that the particular construction of Cook Islands state sovereignty is a malleable and flexible means by which actors are able to attend to climate change mobility, other cross border considerations and narratives. The vaka moana is constructed with two tira and sets of kie. Analytically this points to a sovereign arrangement where two countries are closely tied in policy spaces though also able to operate independently of each other. Attached to the *ataata* of institutions and policies bridging two hulls of development concerns, the tira with its kie serves to provide power sourced from the prevailing winds that allows the *oe akatere* – the agency of actors to determine the course and actions to be taken when addressing concerns.

This chapter first looks at sovereignty, briefly exploring what it means for the Cook Islands to be an Associated State sharing citizenship with New Zealand, and some of the issues related to membership of the United Nations General Assembly. The second part of the chapter focuses on understanding sovereignty in relation to climate change mobility and how climate change is both a catalyst for migration and a lens through which to view implications for sovereignty. The focus in this part of the chapter is on sea-level rise, with its existential threat to territorial integrity and the associated intensifying impact from cyclonic events including storm surge. Some additional issues are outlined briefly to show the range of events that contribute to the complex circumstances within which a discussion of climate change mobility and sovereignty is framed.

Building on the discussion, the third section of this chapter examines sovereignty as part of the policy space framed in the context of issues that emerged during this study. It outlines how

current policy processes might take into account other issues such as entitlement to New Zealand superannuation, the indigenous relationship with Aotearoa Maori, Australia's deportation of Cook Islanders and OECD graduation and its implications.

This chapter does not include discussion of whether or not Cook Islanders should – or would be able to – retain New Zealand citizenship in pursuit of international recognition of its sovereignty. This is a complicated and contentious issue that is outside the scope of the current research.

The chapter concludes with an attempt to identify how sovereignty and policy space might contribute to addressing climate change mobility and related issues in the future.

7.1.1. Internal Migration

The internal movement of people is generally considered an internal matter of state sovereignty (Martin, 2012). States exercise their authority in determining what policy actions if any are required to address an issue within the territoriality of their sovereignty. In the Cook Islands, people have continued to move within and between islands for various and multiple economic, social, cultural and environmental reasons, and for varied lengths of time (Alexeyeff, 2009; Horan, 2012; Pascht, 2014b; Underhill-Sem, 1989; Wright-Koteka, 2006).⁸⁶ In this internal and territorialised context, people's movement also involves crossing over, through and around the physical and cultural borders between villages, districts and islands.

People travel to Rarotonga to pursue employment and business opportunities, or for education – to attend the national college for years 12 and 13, the national tertiary training institute or academic programmes at the Cook Islands campus of the University of the South Pacific. They also travel for justice-related matters for land and criminal court proceedings. Travel between islands is often for cultural purposes such as Te Maeva Nui – the national constitution

⁸⁶ Participants 3, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 22, 23, 24, 31, 42.

celebrations – family ceremonies and occasions such as deaths, births, marriages and haircutting.

People's movement is not just one-way to Rarotonga. People are on the move for work as teaching and health professionals, tradespeople, and tourism providers and consumers. People travel on official government business, for donor development initiatives together with work related to civil society outreach activities. People also travel between islands bypassing Rarotonga. For example, people travel for sports events such as the Manea games for the Southern Group islands and Purapura games for the Northern Group islands. On their respective islands people are also on the move for everyday activities that include relocating to coastal communal areas and islets during seasonal times for recreation, gathering food and natural materials, and fishing purposes.

But there are restrictions on internal movement for cultural, social, religious and economic reasons that limit who and when people move. Restrictions range from not being able to access land for residence, planting, livestock purposes, to not crossing land occupied by tourism accommodators to gain access to the coastline for fishing, gathering seafood or preparing natural materials for costumes. Movement is also restricted in the observance of religious principles that prohibits physical activity, work or inter-island travel on a Sunday or Sabbath. Cultural restrictions include the use of *raui* as a conservation method restricting activities (NES, 2011). The state plays a regulatory role, through laws for example on land tenure, liquor licensing, Sunday trading, and setting religious and cultural public holidays.

People in the Cook Islands are always on the move. Yet for the three-quarters of the population who are indigenous descendants, they are also grounded in 'the material and lived aspects of culture, identity, community cohesion and sense of place' (Adger, Barnett, Brown, Marshall, &

O'Brien, 2013) where movement is a long-standing norm (Weir, Dovey, & Orcherton, 2017) and people move in order that some can stay (Chapman, 1991; Underhill-Sem, 1989).

However, long-term or permanent relocation to the main island of Rarotonga also occurs – both planned and unplanned, as happened with Cyclone Martin in 1997. People moving to the economic hub of the country for economic and education reasons highlights the ongoing infiltration of modern consumption aspirations into the Cook Islands ways of living (Weir, Dovey, & Orcherton, 2017), thereby masking the rooted and routed cultural dynamics (Deloughrey, 2007) of Cook Islands indigenous identity. In terms of the dynamic nature of human mobility in the Cook Islands, migration induced by climate change should not be treated as a matter of science shaped by computer modellers from outside. Climate change is a vital social and cultural issue affecting almost every aspect of future development, raising multiple challenges for our institutions and communities (Barnett & Campbell, 2010).

Under the current status as an Associated State the Cook Islands government is able to address such human mobility issues as a recognised state entity with legal authority to manage domestic matters and participate in international affairs. However, the Cook Islands case as a sovereign state is not clear cut given its free association arrangement with New Zealand that includes New Zealand citizenship. Particularly, as one female NGO representative said, 'The New Zealand choice will always be better for Cook Islanders, unless you live comfortably', implying that unless you have means to stay, moving to New Zealand is preferred to staying in the Cook Islands.

7.1.2. Status as 'Associated State'

In 1965, the Cook Islands became an Associated State, often referred to as 'free association', as part of the UN's decolonisation programme. Essentially the Cook Islands moved from being self-governing indigenous societies (Jonassen, 1996) to a non-self-governing state, to self-

government (Smith, 2010, p. 180). Free association⁸⁷ status is considered to be a 'pivotal force' (Marsters, 2016) behind human mobility because the New Zealand citizenship that Cook Islands opted to retain as part of the Associated State arrangement has underpinned the free flow of Cook Islanders to and from New Zealand. Other research has found that the free-association arrangement has been of mixed effectiveness in meeting initial expectations of the Cook Islands and New Zealand governments (MacDonald, 2018). This is because the policy space of climate change mobility emerges in the midst of lingering debates about Cook Islands sovereignty and the free association model (Fepulea'i, 2002; Igarashi, 2002; Jonassen, 1996; MacDonald, 2018; Marsters, 2016; Smith, 2010; Stone, 1971). Findings from the participants confirm the simultaneous existence of considerations focused on pursuing independence from New Zealand, membership to the UN and the value of New Zealand citizenship. Participants had mixed views about the country's free-association arrangement, identifying advantages and disadvantages that helped and hindered the Cook Islands government's aspirations and abilities to govern over its affairs.⁸⁸

Doubts were expressed about the Cook Islands' ability to ever be fully independent, but they did agree on the benefits of having a voice and vote on the world stage. However, there was an expressed paternalism that crept in whenever the interviewee was highlighting the economic benefits of the free association relationship or the efforts to build an international profile.

I do think there is a lot of grey space around the realm relationship. Interpreting it is challenging at times. ... Because of the unique relationship, New Zealand will always look to support the Cook Islands. But I think the aid relationship will change. At least the ODA will become something else. I guess maybe the Cooks and New Zealand will ask that question themselves if the Cooks will ever be economically self-sufficient. Like in 2005 with the five cyclones. It's hard to imagine the Cooks could manage that by itself. (New Zealand male public servant)

⁸⁷ There does not appear to be a universally accepted definition of 'associated statehood' at international law (Smith, 2010, p. 180).

⁸⁸ Participants 1, 5, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

Cook Islands officials also referred to the economic benefits, but for them these were offset by Cook Islands' international profile, although on this issue there was not an obvious consensus, with the lack of any clear-cut position exemplified by this Maori male senior official:

... in global politics we could have influence on certain issues. ... it's in our interests to maintain that present relationship with New Zealand and citizenship. That has benefits. Sure we could have a bigger footprint on the international scene. But what are the benefits? Do we really need to express our thoughts on the international stage when there are some of the other small island countries that could be doing what we would be doing? What's something new we would bring to the international debate apart from being just another number or voice?

Taking that paternalism further, Overton et al. (2012) reported through an aid lens that the Cook Islands along with Niue and Tokelau as part of the 'realm' of New Zealand should have aid 'expanded so that they receive a level of government services equivalent to a suburb of New Zealand' (p. 235).

7.1.3. New Zealand Citizenship

A key theme in the interviews was one of the main features of being an Associated State with New Zealand – that is, New Zealand citizenship. Participants⁸⁹ on the whole recognised it as being both positive and negative. New Zealand citizenship was described variously as an escape route or safety value, as well as a cause of migration that had led to depopulation. From a legal perspective, there is no 'Cook Islands citizenship', but there are nationality rights. All Cook Islanders have New Zealand citizenship as of right. Retention of New Zealand citizenship was a choice made by the Cook Islands in 1965. On the other hand, Cook Islands nationality bestows specific rights on all indigenous Cook Islanders born in the Cook Islands that are not normally available to others.

Citizenship provides a borderless protection for Cook Islanders wanting to migrate to Australia as well as New Zealand for social and economic reasons that distinguish it from other SIDS (apart

⁸⁹ Participants 1, 5, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

from Niue and Tokelau which also have New Zealand citizenship). However, it also stimulates human mobility resulting in demographic changes that have had a negative impact on the labour force and consequently economic development. Depopulation was commented on by many participants, such as one MFAI senior Maori male official who said, 'We have suffered the most depopulation because of our citizenship giving free and easy access to New Zealand and Australia'.

At an individual level there were obvious benefits because of the flexibility New Zealand citizenship offered – as one Maori woman official said, it is 'about being safe' – but participants were aware of the ramifications at the national level of this easy access. The Second National Strategic Development Plan warns about the negative impact on economic development from emigration:

Another impediment to economic growth is the limited labour force in the country. The accessibility of New Zealand and Australia by way of the Cook Islands relationship with New Zealand has meant that there has, and continues to be, considerable outward migration. (ClGov, 2011b, p. 12)

The issue of New Zealand citizenship for Cook Islanders has implications for regional debates on climate migration. Legal debates on climate migration for Pacific Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) are different for Cook Islanders because of the right to open entry to New Zealand and onto Australia with the trans-Tasman travel arrangement established in 1973 (MacDonald, 2018). As one participant involved in negotiations put it:

[C]ertainly for the Cook Islands the fact that New Zealand is there and that the doors are open for the Cook Islands as opposed to some other countries ... makes the picture different. I'm thinking about Australia and migration from different Pacific Island countries. (Climate change negotiator)

Another participant referred to this as an automatic form of 'protection' for the Cook Islands:

I always thought about it, when it comes to the climate change mobility and the Nansen Initiative, it doesn't affect that much the Cook Islands because of that arrangement. I mean the Nansen Initiative protection agenda, it's all about what's going to happen at the other end. You need some form of protection. And it comes with human rights

protection and resources and education and all those things. And that is something Cook Islands are already entitled to. If they choose to go. As long as that arrangement is in place, the Cook Islands is set. But for other Pacific Islands, they will have to have some kind of [other] protection. (NGO representative)

And another – an expatriate senior official – saw it as a form of ‘compensation’: ‘[T]his [citizenship] can be taken to mean that New Zealand and Australia do compensate ... to a degree because you can relocate to New Zealand and Australia’. This aligned with the dominant discourse in which a case is made that SIDS – each within their own specific context – need the protection of or continue to benefit from some aspects of their relationship with their metropole (i.e. ‘parent state’) but contrasted with a narrative of more balanced power and mutual benefits.

The ideas of balance and mutuality arose in an interview with a Maori senior male official who spoke about the exchange of letters in 1983 he referred to in which there was a ‘subtle but fundamental shift’ in the language used about the constitutional status:

The letters set out the definition of the Queen’s realm in the South Pacific. Her realm. The ‘New Zealand realm’ once upon a time included Tokelau, the Cook Islands, Niue and the Ross Dependency. Now it includes New Zealand, Tokelau the Cook Islands, Niue and the Ross Dependency. What it has done is put New Zealand at the same level as everyone else. So the concept of New Zealand citizenship is more a level thing. Each component part is the same as the other.

So in the case of the Cook Islands making a case to be [a member] at the UN and New Zealand saying we don’t like this or that. That’s ok. But the idea that you are somehow above us in determining what’s what. This recasting of the relationship. We all share this citizenship. We should take your view into consideration. But actually you are no bigger or different from us as New Zealand citizens. We share this.

He saw this as an important distinction, from a paternal relationship to a more equal partner. Instead of the Cook Islands being a country ‘of’ the New Zealand realm, the Cook Islands can be considered a realm country ‘with’ New Zealand. This distinction resonates with a discourse of relationality which emphasises the interconnection, networks and shared interests.

During an interview in Rarotonga in March 2018, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern offered her views about the relationship between New Zealand, Cook Islands and other Pacific countries that were remarkably similar. She said that one of the aims of the ‘Pacific Reset’ mission was to challenge the perception that New Zealand ‘had the higher status in its relationships with Pacific countries, and emphasise that the goal of her government was to not act on behalf of Pacific nations but walk alongside them:

Yes, our economy is at a different stage to a lot of others, and yes we are in the fortunate position to be able to support our Pacific neighbours with specific needs and projects. But that doesn’t mean that we’re there as a replacement voice, although it does mean we have a duty of care to amplify those voices. (CIN, March 9 2018, downloaded 18 April 2018)

7.1.4. Independence

The quest for independence is a contested aspiration for the Cook Islands that has been raised intermittently by consecutive Cook Islands governments since it became an Associated State in 1965. The notion of independence in terms of Westphalian sovereignty emerges in relation to two key aspects, namely, pursuing UN membership⁹⁰ and holding New Zealand citizenship.

In dealing with sovereignty and independence, the notion of sovereignty is contested because for SIDS – or more specifically Pacific SIDS – sovereignty is ‘Islandian’. This is not so much about concluding independence negotiations with a respective metropole, rather it is the ability to sustain negotiations and relations with the metropole even if the metropole does not appear

⁹⁰ Membership to the UN is, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, ‘open to all peace-loving States that accept the obligations contained in the United Nations Charter and, in the judgment of the Organisation [UN], are able to carry out these obligations’. States are admitted to membership by decision of the UN General Assembly upon the recommendation of the UN Security Council. As the UN is not a State or government, it does not possess any authority to recognise either a State or a Government, but as an organisation of independent States, it may admit a new State to its membership.

In addition to membership as a State, the UN General Assembly can grant Permanent Observer status to non-member states, which allows it to speak and to a standing invitation to meetings (i.e. ‘a seat at the table’). The main difference from full membership is that a Permanent Observer cannot vote (although in reality much of the UN decision-making is based on consensus rather than voting), or present resolutions or put up candidates. Currently there are two non-member Permanent Observers, the Holy See and Palestine (in recognition that this is the only representative of the Palestine people). (ref: www.un.org homepage)

keen to continue (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017, p. 77). Along these lines, it is about having the power to negotiate interdependencies (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017) rather than independence. The emphasis is on narratives of networking and negotiating – epitomised in Hau’ofa et al. (1993, p. 69) ‘sea of islands’ – and the relational turn in island studies (Pugh, 2016) where there is sufficient buoyancy (Jonassen, 1996) in the sovereignty arrangement to ensure the Cook Islands continued engagement with others as it pursues its objectives.

There were substantive comments by many participants⁹¹ about the advantages and disadvantages of the Cook Islands, as an Associated State with New Zealand, joining the UN and other international processes. Although there is cooperation between the two countries at international meetings, there is also the potential for fundamentally different negotiating objectives, for instance on climate change:

Certainly, in the international arena, the Cook Islands acts and is a separate party and acts differently and separately from New Zealand. I know that in advance of all the big meetings there are discussions about positions. There’s no getting around there is a relationship there, but you don’t feel it when New Zealand is in the negotiating room. New Zealand negotiates as a developed country... the Cook Islands negotiates as an Islands country that’s vulnerable. (Female climate change negotiator).

Although participants considered the issue of independence as requiring more robust debate between the Cook Islands and New Zealand – ‘[It] needs a conversation. I think it’s being tiptoed around’ (Maori female senior official) – it was seen also as a matter for a discussion for the whole country:⁹²

[We] need to speak to a lot more Cook Islanders rather than just the public service. Need to have the discussions and debates about the pros and cons of UN membership. It’s good to think about independence and what steps we as a country need to take over a set time period to get there.

⁹¹ Participants 1, 5, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

⁹² Participants 1, 2, 5, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 20, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 41.

Even though Cook Islands participants saw independence as a positive goal, not everyone agreed that the time was right to pursue independence, mostly because of structural and human capacity deficits. As one Maori female senior official said:

My personal view, right now I don't think we are ready for 'complete' independence ... We should give ourselves time to ensure our systems of governance are running effectively and we have a sufficient pool of Cook Islands leaders and Cook Islanders with the right skills in the right roles to usher the country forward.

7.1.5. Sub-national Independence

Linked to the idea of national independence is that of sub-national independence – that is to say, Individual Island or sub-regional autonomy. There are implications for island jurisdictions when they are located many kilometres away from the mainland. As one female Maori official recalled the relationship between government agencies in Rarotonga and her island:

It crucial now to make them see the perspective from here. And the reason why. We are not confronting but almost educational sharing what life is like here. For example, with MFEM [Ministry of Finance and Economic Management]. How they have the monthly bulk funding of a set amount. ... We can't do that in the north. Because our spending is always on the transport arriving. If the boat's coming up, now we start shopping. The monthly isn't enough. We need a three-month advance. Then we don't need to shop anymore. ... It's an adaptation strategy in terms of resource allocation

We say, here's the boat now. It's going to cost 30 grand, but we only have 15. So we're gonna miss the boat. I find the staff there are conducive. It's true it's better to teach them than to confront them. It's been really good. [They] begin to realise the two different modes of operation of the North and south. At least the South have the planes to help out.

Given the challenges of transportation and the irregularity of domestic shipping that epitomises island vulnerabilities due to scale and isolation, this participant considers sovereignty in a practical way where 'self-determination is exercised and performed on a day-to-day basis by individuals and communities that co-exist' (Overton et al., 2012, p. 239). This can reflect the power-differentiated perspective where resources and solutions come from the core to the periphery (Overton et al., 2012). This perspective is reinforced particularly when all islands in

the Cooks except Rarotonga are commonly referred to as the 'outer islands' in government documents and in the general public domain-

7.1.6. UN Membership

The Cook Islands is not a member of the UN, although it is recognised as a member state for seven of the 17 specialised agencies of the UN and a signatory to at least 100 multilateral conventions (such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Conventions on the Rights of the Child, and the Geneva Conventions (Smith, 2010)).

In theory, Smith (2010) argues, if an application was made it would be successful. His argument is based on his analysis of international law, UN resolutions, and precedents set by the UN of successful applications for full membership by Associated States, microstates, and states with shared citizenship. An application requires the agreement of nine of the 15 UN Security Council (UNSC) members, including all of the UNSC Permanent Members, and two-thirds of the 193 member states that make up the UN General Assembly. Membership is open to all sovereign states that accept the terms and obligations of the UN Charter (basically maintaining peace and security, and respect for human rights) and are able and willing to carry out these obligations. Recognition by other states generally implies readiness to assume diplomatic relations. In practice, Smith (2010) concedes, there are often geopolitical forces at play within the UNSC that might veto the application regardless of whether the Cook Islands meets the classical tests of independence (which he argues it does).⁹³

⁹³ 'However, the Cook Islands clearly satisfies the four classical criteria for statehood, in that it has (1) a permanent population; (2) a defined territory; (3) government; and (4) capacity to enter into relations with other States' (Smith, 2010, p. 201 citing Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (26 December 1933, entered into force 26 December 1934, art 1).

A benefit to the Cook Islands of UN membership, other than international recognition as an independent state⁹⁴, is that, as with other microstates, membership to a universal forum such as the UN extends its range of contacts significantly without needing a traditional diplomatic apparatus: 'By obtaining UN membership, the Cook Islands could thus vastly increase its diplomatic reach while at the same time maintaining a modest level of spending in funding its diplomatic ventures' (Smith, 2010, p. 214). For microstates, UN membership is usually regarded as an important indicator of sovereignty and statehood.

Overall, interviewees agreed that '[m]edia coverage of UN membership and citizenship is not a new issue' (Expatriate male senior official). During my fieldwork, there were different conversations taking place about UN membership, some of which showed differences between New Zealand's two main political parties, the right-of-centre National Party, which was replaced in the 2017 elections by a coalition led by the left-of-centre Labour Party. During the August 2015 visit by then Prime Minister John Key one Maori female senior official said,

We spoke to the Labour Party too about it. They were very receptive about it. We wanted to see what their view was. They said 'We are puzzled why they [the right of centre National Government] won't come to the table and talk about it rationally. You are right. You sign conventions in your own right, ... you just need your seat at the table. And we will support you'.

This contrasts with the view by a Maori male senior official who saw the potential – albeit limited – in reciprocated or mutually beneficial alliance-building among states in the UN,

For me the UN membership is interesting. You can leverage your sovereignty. One vote. People believe if I vote for you, I know you will help me out later. It's nice to be in that big club of nations. Will it give us extra power? I don't think so.

However, in taking UN membership discussions forward with the New Zealand government and the Cook Islands public at home and abroad, Cook Islands policy makers have to manage the

⁹⁴ And possibly an increased chance of membership of the World Bank, which is part of the UN system.

debates and messages, most of which have played out in the media rather than in organised forums. This was highlighted as a concern following media reports and social media reactions to reports in 2015 about the option of rescinding New Zealand citizenship in return for independence – not only to progress UN membership but also to form more profitable relationships with other countries (Espiner, April 30 2015). As one Maori woman senior official shared with a sense of frustration:

But talking about sovereignty and the whole UN membership. My personal view, I just wish we would stop talking about it. We do ourselves no favours by keeping it prominent in the media because it's been misreported the whole time and continues to be misreported. Either be proactive or put out your own coms on it.

While this particular viewpoint speaks to technical-level concerns in managing communications, other interviewees⁹⁵ also explained that applying to be a UN member would meet geopolitical barriers in the UNSC that would prevent the application proceeding to the UN General Assembly. As a Permanent Member of the UNSC, and ally of Israel, the United States is disinclined to support any move that might set a precedent that could potentially open the door for full UN membership for the State of Palestine (currently a Permanent Observer). At present, there seems little chance that this situation will change but this does not prevent the Cook Islands continuing to participate as a member of many UN specialised agencies and in international meetings.

So far, this chapter has looked at what it means for the Cook Islands given its free association arrangement with New Zealand to be sovereign and the range of considerations that arise.

7.2 Climate Change and Implications for Sovereignty

This section looks at how migration and mobility is triggered by climate change – specifically sea-level rise and cyclones – and the implications for sovereignty, particularly in relation to

⁹⁵ Participants 11, 30, 37, 38.

population and territorial integrity. As a result of human activity, the inundation of land that occurs as a result of rising sea levels has territorial, legal and political implications (Gerrard & Wannier, 2013; Willcox, 2015; Willcox, 2016).

7.2.1. Government Approach

Findings presented in previous chapters identified policies attending to climate change through national and island-level planning, UNFCCC negotiations, national reporting, allocation of financial resources^{96 97} and project funding⁹⁸ (CIGov, 2007 2011b; MFEM, June 2015; NES, 2000).⁹⁹ MFEM in its annual reporting and planning has highlighted the need to take climate change and disaster risks into account when planning for the long-term sustainability of infrastructure (MFEM, 2015d, p. 115). Some broad-level attention has also been given to sea-level rise in national planning and reporting documents:¹⁰⁰

There is a growing realisation that development processes and people in the Cook Islands are increasingly vulnerable to slow and fast-onset disasters resulting from natural, man-made and climate-related hazards, and that a culture of risk reduction and preparedness needs to be instilled across all levels of society in order to minimize (and if possible prevent) disaster impact. The many threats associated with climate change and sea-level rise, across a multitude of sectors, adds impetus to the need to become prepared and to ensure that the capacity to adapt exists across all spheres of society in the Cook Islands' (CIGov, 2012, p. viii).

⁹⁶ During 2015/16 MFEM reported 'closer development cooperation: Cook Islands working with the European Union Global Climate Change Alliance, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Pacific Finance Ministers and Frankfurt Business School of Management to improve direct access to Climate Change financing' (MFEM, 2015a, p. 151) and pursuing an application to achieve National Implementing Entity status with the United Nations Adaptation/Green Funds which will channel climate change funding to the national budget process (MFEM, 2015a, p. 152).

⁹⁷ In the 2015-16 Budget, \$2.8 million (5.9% of the \$49 million from ODA was appropriated for climate change related activities (MFEM, 2015a, p. 145). This was climate finance from UN Adaptation Fund for the SRIC - CC project.

⁹⁸ A key project funded by UN Adaptation Fund started in 2012 - Strengthening the Resilience of our Islands and Communities to Climate Change (SRIC - CC). Programme objective is to strengthen the ability of the pa enua communities and the public service to enable them to make informed decisions and manage climate change driven pressures (including extreme events) in a proactive, integrated and strategic manner. SRIC supports the implementation of the JNAP - Joint National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation (MFEM, 2015a, p. 168).

⁹⁹ Also includes CIGov 2012 and 2016

¹⁰⁰ CIGov 2007, 2011b, 2012 and 2016.

7.2.2. Mitigation of Causes of Climate Change

Several interviewees emphasised that the action required in response to sea-level rise, and climate change generally, was not only about the Cook Islands adapting in the face of the challenges, but also about ensuring other countries mitigated the emissions that caused greenhouse gases. In calling for action from the Cook Islands and other countries, a Maori female climate change adviser advocated,

We have to get on and do what we do, but at the same time if the world doesn't make a change then that's not good for us here. ... We have to cut down on the greenhouse gas emissions. If we don't, then there is no point in adapting because that's not going to stop the sea level from rising is it? We have to keep the pressure on other countries to bring down the greenhouse gases.

An expatriate male senior official suggested that investing more money in mitigation in high-emitter donor countries might reduce the need for adaptation strategies in states affected most by rising sea levels.

Seems a lot effort fighting about what adaptation activity is the best for the Cook Islands. In fact, there is no way we can adapt to the worst scenarios. Even the medium scenarios are scary. Surely, I would have thought it would have been in our interests to be saying to our development partners, 'you guys need to change. Actually, you need to spend more money on yourselves'. It's not about us asking for grants but organising a global system that's going to make it possible for these big polluters to stop. Otherwise I can't see the light at the end of the tunnel.

7.2.3. Cook Islands Compared to Other Pacific States

As a legal concept, state sovereignty possesses four elements: a permanent population, a defined territory, government and capacity to enter into relations with other states (Kostakos, Zhang, & Veening, March, 2014, p. 8). The Cook Islands is not threatened by loss of territory and population to the same extent as Tuvalu and Kiribati, which are comprised wholly of multiple low-lying atolls (Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012; Government of Republic of Kiribati, 2015; Mcnamara, Bronen, Fernando, & Klepp, 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, Tourism, Environment and Labour, 2015; Yamamoto & Esteban, 2014). it is possible that the Cook Islands may lose part of

its territory and permanent population due to sea-level rise in low-lying islands and atolls in the Northern and Southern groups, and the coastal fringes of the higher mountainous islands. Highlighting other factors at play, some interviewees pointed out that coastal inundation and erosion can also be caused or exacerbated by development-related actions such as sand mining for aggregate used in construction projects. Coastal erosion may also be accelerated by an increase in the intensity of extreme weather events such as cyclones and storm surge.

Some countries, such as Tuvalu, Kiribati and Nauru, are looking at climate change adaptation measures that relocate entire populations to islands or territories within the boundaries of another state. These measures challenge conventional understandings of sovereignty and what it means to be a legally recognised state entity, and would affect 'the privileges of statehood, membership in international organisations, diplomatic immunity, trade relations, eligibility for development aid or loans from multinational financial institutions, access to international courts and tribunals and so on' (Kostakos et al., March, 2014, p. 8).

7.2.4. Land, Identity and Culture

The Cook Islands might not be facing an existential threat to the same intensity as some other Pacific states – such as the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Kiribati – but the interviewees still drew attention to the risk posed by internal migration from low-lying islands within the Cook Islands with its attendant loss of land, identity, culture and traditions.

When it comes to land, people can fight. Imagine when someone from the outside comes in. Our land system, the way we manage our land, doesn't really cater for that sort of thing. Land will have to be leased to cater for people from the other islands. We really have to make some hard decisions. And whether these decisions come to government taking land, leasing land, these people need a home and practise their own cultures and traditions or else it is loss of identity right there in our own country. This is what makes the Cook Islands unique. The fact we've got 13 different islands. All within one country, it may not seem like much compared to other countries, bigger indigenous countries. If anything, we only need to lose one or two and boom, there's the identity gone. (Maori male government official).

If you look at Cook Islanders whether north south, the main thing is that they are safe. They are happy – identity security, water security, cultural security. They want to be safe in all their values. (Maori female government official)

What makes you a Cook Islander? Not your passport. ... My grandmother and grandfather left me land to look after. Now where else in the world will that happen to me? I have a little piece of sand that is mine. ... It might not be much, but it's our ancestors. Nowhere else have you got a piece of sand with the blood of your ancestors. We have to hold onto it. (Maori female government official)

Each island within in the Cook Islands has its own communities that possess customary authority over their lands, peoples and resources. The traumatising effect on the collective identities of communities and island societies from being uprooted through loss of land was raised by the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) in the UN and addressed in the 2009 UN Secretary General's report *Climate change and its possible security implications*:

Climate change poses a fundamental threat to cultural survival for those societies whose territories and ways of life are threatened by sea-level rise and inundation, as noted by small island developing States. ... Such peoples may also face challenges in using migration as a coping strategy as a result of discrimination in receiving locations. Thus the impacts of climate change on vulnerable societies will need to be addressed not only as an issue of sovereignty (UNSG, 2009).

This report, driven to a large extent by small island states,¹⁰¹ highlighted the unique challenges faced by island states from sea-level rise compared to other regions, specifically challenges related to territorial integrity and threats to sovereignty if they become submerged or deserted. (UNSG, 2009)

7.2.5. Law of the Sea

In the Cook Islands, loss of land has the potential for a substantial economic impact. With its numerous islands and vast area of ocean, the Cook Islands has a significant exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Any loss of land represents a loss of thousands of square kilometres of maritime territory. Fishing and deep-sea mining are valuable economic assets that may be affected

¹⁰¹ Although the Cook Islands is not a UN member state, the PSIDS group of states still referred to the Cook Islands in their submission to the UNSG.

positively and negatively by 'inter-annual and inter-decadal fluctuations of sea-level [that may] lead to contracting, but also [result in] expanding maritime territories' (Maas & Carius, 2012, p. 656). However, international law is far less flexible than the potentially changing coastlines, so this remains an area that requires further discussion and agreement internationally to protect the interests of island states such as the Cook Islands:

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ... is not designed to handle dynamically changing boundaries, but presumes a more or less 'fixed' coastline, extending from the land mass of a country ... As a result of SLR [sea-level rise] and coastal erosion, it becomes uncertain, how far actually the EEZ and thus maritime territory of the island states may change, with conventional international law currently offering little advice. (Maas and Carius, 2012, p. 656)

7.2.6. 'Climate Refugees'

UNCLOS is not the only area of international law and structures that are not well adapted to environmental change. Interviewees identified the gaps in international law in relation to 'climate refugees' and the need for urgent attention by governments individually and collectively.

There's really nothing. There's no international agreement that looks at 'climate refugees'. Refugees are political refugees in the current international law. So I think those types of questions you are asking right now, we are going to have to start grappling with. Certainly, at the international level, because whenever individuals or groups cross boundaries then it becomes an international issue. I think it's really early days. So really understanding what this means or may mean in the face of the climate change and certainly in the face of permanent losses, land and territory, or liability in terms of livelihood. (Female climate change negotiator)

Countries do realise there is a lack of law, not just national but international law that covers this issue. Which is a bit of a gap. No follow through or guidance of responsibilities on governments' side. Where do they draw the lines and where to the lines start? It all seems a bit ad hoc. (Maori male climate change adviser)

Something that needs to be pushed by countries. Governments need to be seen as taking the lead as it's within their mandate. (Maori male official)

At issue here is the distinction between migrants *forced* to move through loss of land from sea-level rise and those that migrate for reasons of employment, education or family reunification.

International law (the 1951 Geneva Convention, in this case) recognises the rights and provide protections for those *forced* to flee because of armed conflict and persecution but does not currently address displacement and relocation across international borders due to reduced territory – or even complete loss of state – from sea-level rise. At the moment, according to the 2009 UNSG report there are urgent questions but not necessarily clear answers:

Islands becoming uninhabitable or disappearing as a result of sea-level rise raise the issue of the legal status of the citizens and legal rights of these States, including over fisheries. With the disappearance of territory, one of the key constituting elements of statehood, it is not clear that these States would continue to exist as such. The same would apply if the territory would be uninhabitable to such an extent that the entire population and the Government would be forced to relocate to other States. In the event that statehood is deemed to have ceased in such a scenario, the populations concerned would be left stateless unless they acquired other nationalities. (UNSG, 2009)

The report drew attention to a submission on climate change and statelessness by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2009 in which UNHCR also confirmed that the current international legislation on statelessness (which assumes there remains a possibility of return to one's home state) provides some guidance on how to avoid statelessness (*ex ante*), but none on what happens to statehood and sovereignty *ex post*. However, it does agree that 'sinking island states' present one of the most dramatic scenarios of the impact of climate change, in which the existence of their state as such may be threatened (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2009).

7.2.7. Impact of Cyclones on Mobility

In addition to sea-level rise, the damage caused by cyclones – and the predicted increase in cyclone frequency and intensity¹⁰² – exacerbate decision-making about whether to relocate within the Cook Islands and further afield.¹⁰³ In response, the Cook Islands government has

¹⁰² JNAP references.

¹⁰³ Documents - cyclone Pat assessments, JNAPs, Nat Coms, and interviews.

mobilised resources and avenues for support in times of national disasters, including increased capacity to access climate finance¹⁰⁴ and set-up a self-insurance fund¹⁰⁵ for immediate response. This was particularly so after the series of damaging cyclones that hit the Cook Islands in 2005. The effect these cyclones had on depopulating communities was raised in the interviews,¹⁰⁶ with access to New Zealand providing an alternative to rebuilding. For example, in the case of Pukapuka in 2005, a civil society representative said,

I think here in the Cook Islands you have no control of mobility because of the easy access to New Zealand because of the New Zealand passport. We can always say to people, like in Pukapuka, we can leave you here, and build back, but if people want to go you cannot stop them. And they have a choice not to go back. If we take another island example, like outer islands in Tonga, and these people have no choice, these people have no choice. They will have to stay back and build back. They cannot go anywhere unless they have some form of access to New Zealand. But you have to give them some form of incentive to stay back and live. If this is the third time they have gone through this, these people are tired. They may not want to stay back anymore.

Another, speaking about Cyclone Pat in Aitutaki in 2010, explained there was often pressure from family already in New Zealand to leave – it was better to pay one-way airfares than pay to rebuild. In most, if not all, cases they have not returned.

It is also at sub-national levels that the island administrations are able to exercise their authority to ensure procedures and resources are in place in event of disasters, particularly cyclones. An example of this was the development of the Mangaia Disaster Risk Management Plan 2014-2018 by the Mangaia Island Government (Mangaia Island Government, 2014).

There are a number of challenges to sovereignty due to sea-level rise and cyclones, not least access to science information to inform decisions and to continue advocacy for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. There are also issues associated with the loss of land and

¹⁰⁴ Refer to earlier footnotes.

¹⁰⁵ The Natural Disaster Response Trust Fund, which acts as a source of immediate funding in the event of a national disaster, is declared by setting aside \$50,000 a year until the fund reaches \$1 million. Budget Book 1 MFEM, 2015a, p. 15. The fund works in conjunction with the World Bank Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance scheme. (MFEM, 2015a, p. 76)

¹⁰⁶ Participants 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40, 41, 42.

consequent threats to identity, culture and traditions. At the state level, there are threats from reduced authority over ocean, and statelessness related to loss of territory.

Overall this section highlights the complexities of climate change on migration with implications for the territorial element of Westphalia sovereignty. This is not necessarily so for the mechanisms of Islandian sovereignty where the state in the Cook Islands case still has an ability to pursue its objectives and avenues of support to address the multiple dimensions of climate change mobility that arise from sea-level rise and cyclones.

7.3 Other Cross-border Issues

This section briefly outlines other cross-border concerns that contribute to understanding the complex circumstances of sovereignty and climate change mobility. Sovereignty conveys the authority of nation state, internal and external communities and entities. How it is conceptualised and applied informs the interests, actions and identities of policy-space actors. Sovereignty in all its variations is under constant and growing challenge (Lewis, Sampford, & Thakur, 2008, p. 1). During my 2015 fieldwork, four issues emerged from participant interviews, all of which had also received varied degrees of policy debate and media coverage. These included: the Cook Islanders' eligibility to the New Zealand National Superannuation Scheme; the Tainui Covenant; OECD Graduation from 'developing state' to 'developed state' classification; and the deportation of Cook Islanders from Australia. Together, these issues can inform government's approach to climate change mobility considerations and debates.

7.3.1. New Zealand Superannuation

In February 2015 the Cook Islands government became involved in the New Zealand government's process to reform the New Zealand National Superannuation (and Veterans' Pension) eligibility rules for the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, a popular topic among the

participants.¹⁰⁷ The Social Services Select Committee, chaired by the first Cook Islands national to become a New Zealand MP, Alfred Ngaro, was hearing submissions on the Social Assistance (Portability to Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau) Bill. In what was described in the media by the Green Party member of the select committee, Denise Roche, as a ‘rare sight’ (Pacific Guardians, 2015) as Cook Islands Prime Minister Henry Puna delivered an oral submission in the final slot of the hearing (which he shared with Niue Premier Toke Tufukia Talagi). Roche said at the time that, *‘It was a rare experience to have two leaders of Pacific nations attend a select committee to present a submission’* (Pacific Guardians, 2015).

Prior to 2015, New Zealand Superannuation was universally available for people over the age of 65 who were resident in New Zealand at the time of applying, and who had lived in New Zealand for 10 years after the age of 20 and five years after the age of 50. This changed so that after 2015, people who met the other requirements no longer had to be in New Zealand at the time of application – they could apply from the Cook Islands, Niue or Tokelau on the condition that they had spent 10 years in New Zealand since the age of 20, and five years since the age of 50.

Although this change was welcomed, it did not overcome the disruption caused by Cook Islanders returning to New Zealand for five years to meet the remaining eligibility requirements just at the age where they were valuable contributors to the community, workforce and economy. In Prime Minister Puna’s submission to the select committee in 2015 he had highlighted this dilemma and sought the removal of the five-year restriction because it would mean that people might contribute more fully to the economy if they moved to the Cook Islands at 55 rather than 65.

Three years later, while in the Cook Islands, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced changes to the eligibility requirements for receiving New Zealand Superannuation

¹⁰⁷ Participants 1, 11, 15, 17, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38.

and the Veteran's Pension that meant residency in Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau after the age of 50 would count towards the eligibility requirements.

In a press statement explaining the change, Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, a member of the 2015 select committee, issued a press release to say:

This will mean that people who are eligible for New Zealand Super will be able to remain in these countries and contribute to the local economy without having to return to New Zealand just to qualify for their pension. These are changes which the Governments of Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau have advocated for. We will continue to work with them to ensure New Zealand's superannuation requirements recognise the special constitutional relationships we have with the Realm countries. (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2018)

When Prime Minister Puna made that historic submission to a New Zealand parliamentary committee, and notwithstanding the fact that some of the changes for which he advocated were introduced, the perception was that the National government of the time was not fully supportive in removing the 'five-year rule'. As the New Zealand media reported during Ardern's visit, his efforts in 2015 were 'batted away by the last Government ...[b]ut it's been on the the minds of leaders of these countries [Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau] for decades as they've watched their populations slowly shrink'. (Cooke, March 8 2018).

As one interviewee noted in reference to discussions with visiting Labour politicians, the Labour Opposition party as it was then, was seen as more supportive: 'We spoke too about the Superannuation. They would scrap the five years. Labour was very receptive.' (Maori female senior official) The determination of Cook Islands politicians to address the problem, government to government, that New Zealand Superannuation rules caused depopulation of a significant age cohort coupled with their ability to build partnerships across the political spectrum based on strong cultural and constitutional ties had finally brought about a change that many believe could help to stem the outflow of hundreds of Cook Islanders to New Zealand, and encourage others to return.

7.3.2. Te Kororomotu - Tainui Covenant

Introduced in Chapter Four, and raised by several participants, Te Kororomotu is a cultural partnership between the Cook Islands and the Kingitanga Movement of the Tainui people in New Zealand that was signed in 2015.¹⁰⁸ It had developed following discussions with Tainui representatives and Cook Islands officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI) and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). In October 2015 it was signed at Turangawaewae marae in Ngaruwahia, New Zealand by Te Arikinui Kiingi Tuheitia and the Prime Minister Henry Puna (Office of the Prime Minister and Scott, October 27, 2015).¹⁰⁹

The *kororomotu* (cultural covenant) acknowledges the indigenous authority of both parties. It also strengthens shared ancestral ties between Maori of the Cook Islands and Aotearoa, New Zealand (Office of the Prime Minister and Scott, October 27, 2015). It sets out key areas of cooperation related to the environment, climate change and fisheries, matters related to economic development including investment and commercial opportunities, and cooperation on social and cultural matters related to language retention, health and social well-being (Office of the Prime Minister and Scott, October 27, 2015).¹¹⁰

The covenant was an example of how Cook Islands government officials and diplomats might exercise sovereignty to create and formalise relationships that go beyond its sovereign state-defined relationship with the New Zealand government (Newport, 2017) despite New Zealand trading dominance in the Cook Islands. It opened the door for collaborative business partnerships in areas that included fishing, farming, tourism, energy production, and property development, particularly with the 11-country¹¹¹ free-trade economic bloc newly formed by the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) that

¹⁰⁸ Participants 5, 11, 30, 37, 40, 41.

¹⁰⁹ Participants 5, 11, 37.

¹¹⁰ Participants 5, 11, 37.

¹¹¹ Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.

extended the exchanges between countries to cover labour, the environment and government procurement. There were hopes that Te Kororomotu might provide incentives for young graduates to return to the Cook Islands.

The memorandum demonstrates the capacity of Cook Islands government officials and diplomats to create and formalise relationships that go beyond its sovereign state-defined relationship with the New Zealand government (Newport, 2017). It can be regarded as a mechanism of Islandian sovereignty: signing international treaties and agreements (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017). A bilateral agreement of this kind is generally considered the prerogative of sovereign states that are recognised by the international community according to international law (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017, p. 67).

Although, as reported in the media, the role of Maori King Tuheitia Paki is a non-constitutional one without any legal power from the perspective of the New Zealand government, the agreement reinforces the strong historical, ancestral and cultural linkages between Maori in both countries, unique in the Pacific (Webb, 2015). It is significant that a state government and a tribal authority with shared citizenship were able to formalise their indigenous ties for mutual benefit, thereby linking self-determination and self-government, and recognising the inherent rights and political affiliations of unique cultural identities, histories and relations (Barker, 2005, 2015).

In highlighting the indigenous relationship between the Cook Islands and New Zealand, a former senior official and academic reminds us of these ties:

The other part of the problem, which is often forgotten, is our relationship with New Zealand is not the same as the relationship New Zealand has with other Pacific countries. We tend to get categorised as one of the Pacific Islands. We are not. ... When you go onto a *marae* and they do their genealogy to a *poupou*. For instance, [the ancestor] Uenuku. We can do our genealogy and point to the same *poupou* ... a Maori is a Maori. (Maori male former senior official)

The agreement between the government and Tainui highlights indigenous leadership in the Cook Islands vis a vis the government where the cultural basis of the relationship serves to pursue education, business, health and other areas of mutual benefit for the partners. Indeed, as pointed out in Chapter Four when the Ariki undertook its own tere to New Zealand in 2015, their programme included visits with indigenous tribes in Wellington, Rotorua and Ngauruhia.¹¹² One Cook Islands foreign affairs official remarked on the tensions Cook Islands indigenous actors contended with for planning the then upcoming engagements with Tainui. In providing support to Ui Ariki *tere pati*, the Maori women senior official said,

The classic is Ui Ariki ... the potential for this visit to disrupt the conversations we are having with Kingitanga. Because we're trying to sign an agreement with the Kingitanga. We're trying to do something that's setting up a platform so we can start to branch out into education, health, business investment. So kind of need a framework. Those talks are on right now. So with this delegation, is this visit endorsed by cabinet? Yes or no? What is our position as a government on this visit? What's the status of the Ui Ariki on this visit?

As government actors pursue formal relationships with indigenous entities, relationships are also forged and maintained by other Cook Islands indigenous actors.

Another official added,

This is kind of an asymmetrical arrangement. Because they are not a government. In the normal scheme of things, their arrangements would be with our Ui Ariki. What do you do? It's a bit tricky, and I think for the Cook Islands Foreign Service, I think you have to be prepared to go beyond the formal diplomatic sphere.

The Covenant was signed three years ago, although Caren Rangi, Cook Islands Investment Board Director said:

Not too much has happened since then, but it has given us cause to reflect about 'what about other iwi?' We should start to generate some of those conversations to see what

¹¹² Participants 5, 26, 37, 39, 40.

mutually beneficial business opportunities there might be for us all. (Ratana, March 15 2018)

In terms of Cook Islands policy spaces, these interactions and arrangements between indigenous actors show ‘decentred understandings of sovereignty, conceived in terms of interconnections and interdependencies’ (Morrison, 2014, p. 34). This means for the Cook Islands with its Associated State arrangement, actors are able to engage in transformative practices (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013). This can also be viewed as making use of another Islandian sovereignty mechanism to bend metropole laws and regulations (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017) while recognising indigenous relationships between Maori as the first connection between the two countries (Jonassen, 1996, pp. 62-64).

7.3.3. Australia Deportation of Cook Islanders as New Zealand Citizens

Participants¹¹³ raised the deportation of Cook Islanders from Australia in 2014 as relevant to Cook Islands because it highlights sovereign responsibility for its non-resident indigenous population. In December 2014 the Australian government amended its Immigration Act to lower the character test threshold. Deportation was made mandatory for any person who had been sentenced to a 12-month or more prison term regardless of whether individuals were long-standing residents in Australia with little or no connection to their country of origin, or their means of support or local knowledge (Pereira, 2014; Weber & Powell, 2018).

In the case of a deportation, the Cook Islands government receives 48 hours’ notice that a deportee is arriving (Maori female senior official). This form of return migration – ‘forced return’ (Weber & Powell, 2018) – has serious implications in terms of managing the resettlement and integration of offenders back into Cook Islands society of which they may have little familiarity after a lengthy absence. There are cultural and social implications for communities depending on the nature of offending. It places demands on government agencies as well as family and

¹¹³ Participants 1, 15, 17, 29.

community structures. It introduces reintegration challenges such as limited opportunities, cultural isolation and a lack of community acceptance, and over-policing (Pereira, 2014) due to the taint of their criminal label (Weber & Powell, 2018, p. 207). In 2015, at the time of the interviews, government officials were working with the Australian government to establish a memorandum of understanding to better facilitate the arrival of deportees.

The sovereign act of deportation by the Australian government with the forced return to the Cook Islands expands on the ways New Zealand citizenship plays out in Cook Islands policy spaces. As New Zealand citizens, deportees of Cook Islands descent can choose to return to New Zealand or the Cook Islands. This situation shows that in exercising its sovereignty, government efforts to 'attract' Cook Islanders home (Spoonley, 2004) must also contend with the multiple ways and reasons people return.

7.3.4. OECD Graduation

OECD Graduation was another issue that emerged from the findings of participant interviews¹¹⁴ and document analysis. 'Graduation' refers to the Cook Islands graduation from 'middle-income' to 'high income' country status – from 'developing' to 'developed' – removing it from the OECD Development Advisory Committee's (DAC) list of countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA). Removal from the ODA list means that although the Cook Islands can still receive development assistance it will not count towards the UN-recommended ODA target of 0.7% of GDP for donor countries, and therefore acting as a disincentive for funding. Although the OECD has determined that the Cook Islands should graduate because of several years of strong economic growth, graduation would pose several risks and challenges. OECD graduation means the Cook Islands will no longer be eligible for concessional loans and grants from OECD countries.

¹¹⁴ Participants 1, 15, 17, 29, 30, 32.

In 2018, the government was preparing for reduced support for the Cook Islands. While there is some uncertainty about when graduation takes place, the views of local officials point towards the government continuing to pursue relationships and partnerships regardless of the country's OECD status:

It changes the dynamics of our relationships. In that we have to source a wider pool, grow our network rather than rely on the few. ... In our financial relations, we trying to grow our diplomatic relations to diversify our sources of support rather than just relying on New Zealand, Australia and the EU. Also mindful with graduation, we will be ineligible for concessional rates, like under the ADB. This is another reason why we are going out. So we going after countries like the UAE [United Arab Emirates] who are a non-traditional donor in this part of the world. (Male senior government official)

For the New Zealand government as one of the 'few' referred to above, graduation is also a concern. One official said:

We have said that we would continue our assistance regardless. Just means New Zealand funding wouldn't count as ODA. And there is nothing much you can do about it. Just accept it. In one sense, it's a sign of success. Cook Islands economy will need to generate more income from tourism. ODA is hard to justify when you've got per capita income of \$20,000. It's hard to justify putting to other countries. New Zealand is a special case because of the relationship. We accept we will continue providing funding. As we look out over the next 15 years, we have been brainstorming New Zealand's approach.

I think New Zealand's support will be much more on how do we support initiatives that help the Cook Islands be self-sufficient. No country is really self-sufficient but at least enough to be economically able to buy services it needs. Probably from New Zealand. So we're thinking perhaps of partnership arrangements between Government agencies and their counterparts in New Zealand. So they are actually working for mutual self-interest. Health is one example. Another could be civil aviation. The Cook Islands would pay for the service, on the basis of a business contract, or perhaps tap into some policy/expertise that's already there. Under that scenario, you'd aim for aviation in 15 years' time to be economically self-sufficient. Who knows what the population will be at that time, and what the human resource capacity might be. (Male senior New Zealand government official)

A Cook Islands senior official said:

New Zealand will have to decide if it continues to give the Cooks money that we got for this. If we do, can't call it part of our normal aid budget, DAC-ed. But in this day and age we are measured with milestones and do anything to make yourself DAC-able. New Zealand is in the camp about that one. They want the DAC rules to take that into

account, not only does it take account of our circumstances, it also takes account of theirs. They don't want to keep putting money into the Cook Islands. They want to stop. But they won't, if there is something in there that makes their targets and measures seen, that helps them along. (Senior government official)

At the time of the study, details were uncertain about how New Zealand will continue to provide support and the issue of graduation as part of the Cook Islands management of its development partner relationships continued to feature in the context of ongoing reforms.

It is possible the change in status may not have a huge impact in the short term (G. Bertram, 2016) because New Zealand has provided assurances that its budgetary support will continue. Commitments for multi-year project and programme funding will continue along with important sources of funding that sit outside the DAC such as the UN Global Environment Fund (GEF) and China. Despite being categorised as a middle-income country, the Cook Islands is still vulnerable environmentally, socially and economically:

The Cook Islands' population of 21,000 is spread over 15 islands, meaning the cost per capita of the delivery of basic services – such as health and transportation – is particularly high. Consider, for example, the economic burden of maintaining 10 airstrips – some of which are used by fewer than 1000 people – or of shipping supplies, providing health services and generating electricity for isolated atolls with populations below 500. Then there are the challenges of diversifying such a small economy – driven primarily by tourism and fisheries – and overcoming both a lack of natural resources and geographic isolation from larger markets. (Harris, 2017)

Severe tropical cyclones have the potential to reduce GDP overnight. The Cook Islands, as with many Pacific islands nations, is among the 30 countries most prone to experiencing significant disaster-related losses to GDP – the economy is based on tourism, pearl farming, fishing and agriculture, all of which are susceptible to cyclones, as is the build-up of assets along the coastline (World Bank, 2015). The multiple cyclones that hit the islands in 2005 caused a loss of GDP of six per cent, and the historic Cyclone Sally in 1987 caused damages that were estimated to be equivalent to 66 per cent of GDP (Harris, 2017).

This might be exacerbated by the disincentive for some countries to provide international assistance if this funding cannot be drawn from their ODA budgets. This was a problem that emerged when the small island economies of the Caribbean were hit in 2017 by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. The United Kingdom, reacting to criticism that its response was slow and inadequate, called for urgent changes to OECD regulations to allow development funds to be used in disaster relief efforts for countries who have graduated from the donor recipient list:

The OECD should heed such calls. Introducing some flexibility would allow for assistance to nations in the event of unexpected natural disasters to be counted as ODA. This is particularly important as more small island developing states approach the threshold of high income status. In the Pacific, Fiji, Palau, Nauru, Niue, Wallis and Futuna, the Marshall Islands and Tonga appear on the OECD list of Upper Middle Income ODA recipients, with Palau and Nauru most likely to be the next to graduate to high-income status. If they do so, they will face many of the same challenges the Cook Islands now confronts. (Harris, 2017).

Graduation was to have taken effect late in 2018, however mid-2017 the government reached agreement with the OECD that a decision will be deferred until the Cook Islands has been able to produce Gross National Income (GNI) data. In the absence of GNI data the OECD based its determination on GDP, which, the government argued, was to its disadvantage:

The problem with this approach is that primary income, or rents that flow in and out of the economy, are not included in GDP statistics. In this case, like in many small island economies, the Cook Islands measurement of GNI is likely to be much lower than GDP. It is possible that GNI will be below the 'high income' threshold required for graduation. If the Cook Islands graduates prematurely due to inadequate data, this could have serious long-term negative consequences for economic development. (MFEM, 2017).

In this context and in terms of Islandian sovereignty, the Cook Islands ability to sign international agreements also shows its capacity to negotiate a possible exception or at least a clarification and incremental challenge to OECD rules.

It is possible that the Cook Islands might not graduate, but the Cook Islands Government is preparing a possible transition plan, based on an analysis on the sectors that would be affected

in the event of graduation. In the interviews¹¹⁵ some options were also raised about alternative sources of income as traditional sources are likely to diminish with impending OECD graduation as ‘it changes the dynamics of our relationships in that we have to source a wider pool, grow our network rather than rely on the few’ which was considered ‘a good thing’.

Some participants also felt that being defined as an OECD high-income country placed the Cook Islands in a position to assist other countries in the region – or at least raised expectations about being able to assist, such as offering training and employment to others in the region. In one account by a Maori woman senior official, the Cook Islands government had been approached by the Republic of Kiribati to take in young people to train and work in Cook Islands Tourism industry. This was interpreted by the Cook Islands as a sign it was seen as a possible development partner providing assistance in training and employment opportunities for Kiribati. The approach was not regarded as surprising because it reflected Kiribati’s National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) and ‘migration with dignity’ policy that recognises ‘labour migration as a strategy for permanent migration and population control ... in response to climate change threats to livelihoods’ (Government of Republic of Kiribati, 2015, p. 8).

An advantage of such an arrangement was the involvement of the private sector, where immigration and settlement costs could be met initially by the employer. It also has implications that relate to what some participants¹¹⁶ referred to as the other side of the depopulation coin – repopulation – as a means to support the Cook Islands labour market with other indigenous people from the Pacific.

¹¹⁵ Participants 1, 17, 29, 30, 32.

¹¹⁶ Participants 1, 4, 11, 17, 22, 29, 30, 31, 35, 38.

7.3.5. Section Summary

This section above provides some examples of how the Cook Islands government has participated in New Zealand's domestic policy-making processes because of its close cultural and constitutional ties, as well as its ability to participate on the international stage as a country in its own right. The Tainui Covenant shows new arrangements can be forged based on historical indigenous relationships. Managing reintegration of deportees from Australia highlights challenges and opportunities for returnees that broadens out the scope of human mobility concerns that the government needs to address. The management of the OECD graduation issue demonstrates that the government's is able to leverage its international memberships to ensure a degree of control over its transition to high-income country status.

The Cook Islands as a recognised member of many UN specialised agencies, exercises an Islandian sovereign mechanism of signing international agreements and continues to extend those memberships. This has provided opportunities for the government to interact directly with intergovernmental agencies concerned with, for instance, migration.

In November 2017, the Cook Islands became a member of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)¹¹⁷ enabling its participation in the development of a global compact for migration. This compact will be one of the first intergovernmental agreements within the UN system aimed at covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.¹¹⁸ The benefits of membership of the IOM were described by the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Immigration (and former Manager of Punanga Tauturu, the Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre), Kairangi Samuels:

Migration is an important issue for the Cook Islands and cuts across a number of our National Sustainable development goals and security issues ... Access to technical

¹¹⁷ The IOM, an intergovernmental organisation that provides services and advice concerning migration to governments and migrants, IDPs and refugees, became part of the UN system in September 2016.

¹¹⁸ <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>

assistance and resources for improving our migration policies enhances our ability to become an effective player in our mobile world and recognises that despite our geographic distances, smallness in size and population we are an arrival and departure point for members of the global community. (Samuels, 2017)

Coupled with its membership of the International Labour Organisation (ILO),¹¹⁹ the Cook Islands government in recent times has shifted its gaze in a different direction in terms of how it attends to a broad scope of population and migration matters. Membership of international agencies, as acts of sovereignty, are a means to broaden its catch of possible support and strengthen its capacity to respond to mobility issues.

These cross border examples highlight how fluidity unsettles the territorial aspect of sovereignty (Steinberg, 2005; Steinberg, 2009) where oceanic thinking (Hau'ofa et al., 1993; Steinberg, 2005) and the relational shift in island thinking (Pugh, 2016) challenges the land bias in understanding territory (Peters, Steinberg, & Stratford, 2018, p. 2). Territory is understood in this context to consist of:

four dimensions of the political – economic, strategic, legal and technical ... [It] is a process, not an outcome ... as an assemblage, continually made and remade. Territory can be understood as a political technology ... for measuring land and controlling terrain ... and is more than just a bounded space or the area controlled by a certain kind of power. (Elden, 2013, pp. 35-36)

This means that island states and communities living on, in and off watery surrounds bring alternative and fluid ideas about territory (Peters et al., 2018, p. 2) compared to thinking related to continental landmasses that is now deemed inadequate for the spaces of modern forms of governance (Peters et al., 2018, p. 4). As shown in this section, a more nuanced understanding of sovereignty is required to be able to untangle and probe the policy spaces of differing issues.

¹¹⁹ The ILO is a UN agency dealing with labour problems, particularly international labour standards, social protection and work opportunities for all.

7.4 Chapter Discussion

Interpreting sovereignty as a contested but flexible and malleable concept enables oceanic island states to apply an Islandian approach to sovereignty. It is not so much about concluding independence negotiations with a respective metropole, but the ability to sustain negotiations and relations with the metropole even if the metropole does not appear inclined to continue (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017, p. 77). It is about having the power to negotiate interdependencies (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017) rather than independence. As such, sovereignty can be understood through narratives of networking and negotiating that assume equitable relationships rather than those based on donor/recipient or vulnerable island/prosperous mainland perspectives – relationships that mark a shift away from dependency and vulnerability of islands discourses and models (for example, Bertram & Waters (1985) MIRAB).

Network and negotiation narratives support perspectives in which islands are less dependent on outside resources, and instead facilitate the creation of structures and networks to exploit these resources (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017). The Cook Islands with its free association arrangement shows how island sovereignties actively manage their powers in relation to people, resources, overseas para-diplomacy, finance/taxation and transportation as represented in Oberst and McElroy's (2007) 'PROFIT' model (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017, p. 63). This can be seen reflected, to some extent, in the subnational jurisdictions of the Cook Islands island communities and administrations (Baldacchino, 2002; Baldacchino & Milne, 2006; Baldacchino & Hepburn, 2012) that uphold their autonomy through shared arrangements with the central government and other actors.

Cook Islands human mobility takes place in the context of a sovereign arrangement that offers borderless protection and unhindered access between the Cook Islands, New Zealand and Australia. For the Cook Islands, this constitutional aspect of sovereignty as Overton et al. (2012)

suggest for other sovereignties across the Pacific, offers ‘political and strategic value that can be traded and exploited’ (p. 238). While aspirations for ‘full independence may thus seem to provide bargaining power and potential for gain’ (Overton et al, 2012, p. 238) it is its ‘negotiated, fluid, and evolving dependence that yields benefits (Overton et al, 2012, p. 238) with New Zealand.

Sovereignty adds to and challenges the authority given to different narratives present in these policy spaces. This was shown in the State and domestic sovereignty arrangements and the ways individuals manoeuvre within these arrangements. Through malleable and flexible sovereignty, actors are able to attend to climate change mobility considerations and narratives.

Climate change impacts act as an intensifier on existing challenges. This is so for migration which is already an existing challenge for the Cook Islands and its island communities. Climate change impacts are also an intensifier of opportunities (Overland et al., 2017) to pursue more comprehensive policy. I have shown that in settling for a flexible and malleable conception of sovereignty, the physical environmental and atmospheric manifestations of climate change – sea-level rise and cyclones – are related.

The same can be said of sovereignty in relation to other issues. While consecutive Cook Islands governments have displayed a rising interest in pursuing full independence as a sovereign state, its Associated State status in free association with New Zealand is a workable arrangement that has not remained static. Its mechanisms of Islandian sovereignty are demonstrated in the government’s ability to engage in matters important for its development future such as OECD graduation, eligibility to New Zealand Superannuation and the Kororomotu with Tainui. Through such mechanisms in the emerging climate change mobility policy space the government and its communities are able to exercise authority and influence even as its policy reach has yet to be fully explored and extended. Cook Islands actors are able to participate and manoeuvre through

their own and external policy processes, not just in relation to New Zealand but with other local and external institutions and individuals.

The New Zealand citizenship issue adds to the complexity of Cook Islands policy spaces. From an indigenous perspective, it can obscure the importance of cultural identity. Despite its demonstrated capacity to leverage its sovereignty for increased access to resources and harness support from external actors, the relocation of indigenous Cook Islanders continues and is approached without any substantial policy certainty and cohesion.

The island-centred perspective of sovereignty is entwined with an oceanic approach to development (Overton et al., 2012) that works with actor agency in interpreting discourses (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2013). For the Cook Islands approach to climate change mobility and other issues, the Islandian nature of sovereignty with oceanic underpinnings tends towards understanding policy spaces of island states that emphasise different and culturally derived discourses and narratives that might otherwise be overlooked and overshadowed by the conventional dependency and vulnerability narratives that are associated with island state capacities and futures.

The policy spaces for these issues show the contested nature of sovereignty. In relation to Islandian metropole sovereignty, it is about having the power to negotiate interdependencies (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017) rather than independence and making full use of the free association arrangement. Understanding sovereignty as flexible and policy spaces as fluid and voluminous spaces makes it possible for oceanic island states to address cross-border issues from their own perspectives, drawing on their own narratives.

7.5 Chapter Conclusion

Addressing a critical concept underpinning policy-making processes, this chapter sought to make sense of how sovereignty is understood in the Cook Islands within the context of the emerging issue of climate change mobility and other cross-border issues. In identifying how sovereignty and policy space might contribute to addressing climate change mobility and related issues in the future, this chapter concludes that it is important to nuance understandings of taken-for-granted concepts.

Classical Westphalian interpretations of sovereignty were challenged by alternative indigenous Islandian interpretations of the dynamic and complex interplay between sovereignty and climate change mobility and other issues of Cook Islands policy spaces. Evidence from interviews and documents points to the contested nature of sovereignty, including the tensions within the Associated State arrangement. In making use of an Islandian interpretation (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017), sovereignty provides actors with the means to advance policy interventions despite the seemingly limited attention currently given to the interrelationship between sea-level rise and relocation at the institutional level.

In the case of cyclone preparedness and disaster response, there has been greater government effort that reflect its sovereign capabilities, although the study did find that the Cook Islands government has and is also able to exercise its sovereignty in other policy issues. New Zealand citizenship and depopulation perpetuate prevailing discourses and narratives of dependency and vulnerability that impede transforming sovereignty debates into more culturally in-sync narratives of networks and negotiation.

For actors engaged in these respective policy spaces, the implications reported in this chapter are significant because in terms of the vaka moana framework in which sovereignty is represented by the kie and tira, it is these elements that provide the means by which actors are

able to harness the power and authority of the state and its communities and navigate towards policy outcomes.

The final chapter considers the overall research aim and questions. The overall findings and conclusions of the thesis are discussed along with future research and insights.

Chapter 8: Ka Tae Mai Matou - We Are Arriving

8.1 Introduction

Overall, this research set out to discover how the Cook Islands as an oceanic island nation and with a particular sovereign arrangement with New Zealand is able to address cross-border issues such as climate change mobility. It found that an indigenous Pacific-informed perspective of oceanic islands policy spaces and sovereignty was required that disrupted conventional perspectives about small island states development, policy spaces and sovereignty. An indigenous perspective also provided a more nuanced understanding of oceanic island states development concerns.

To study the policy spaces and sovereignty of the Cook Islands I examined institutions, policies, practices and individual agency relevant to climate change mobility. Throughout my approach was guided by the vaka moana framework

The overarching research goal was to find out *how* the Cook Islands as an oceanic island nation and with a particular sovereign arrangement with New Zealand is able to address cross-border issues such as climate change mobility. To do this, the study posed the following questions:

1. To what extent is climate change mobility an issue for the Cook Islands?
2. How do the institutions, policies, individuals and discourse as the constituted elements of policy spaces address climate change and human mobility in the Cook Islands?
3. What experiences and perceptions of individual actors in these policy space shape the attention given to addressing climate change mobility?
4. What sovereignty considerations arise for the Cook Islands in addressing climate change mobility and other similar cross-border issues?

5. How might nuanced understandings of sovereignty and policy spaces assist oceanic island states like the Cook Islands to address cross-border issues?

This chapter discusses the research findings, their theoretical contributions to the literature and policy implications for actors of oceanic contexts. Future research areas are identified before concluding with some final reflections about my research. Each of the five research sub-questions are addressed individually in Section 8.3 below.

8.2 Research Summary

This study was designed as indigenous Pacific research. It uses the cultural metaphor of the *vaka moana* as a model or framework to understand the interconnectedness of socially constructed concepts of policy space and sovereignty, and the intertwined issues of climate change and mobility. The *vaka moana* moves purposefully through Hau'ofa's (1993) 'sea of islands' in a fluid, dynamic and voluminous ocean context. From their lived experiences in this oceanic island policy context, individuals exercise agency and mediate policy structures and discourses. They are able to navigate through public and policy interactions and skilfully bring clarification to policy contentions. Metaphors are 'grounded in our experiences of the world around us' (Ibarretxe-Antunano, 2013, p. 316). They are embodied and cannot be represented independently of their experiential basis (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 19). However, their use is not without tensions. In this research, one tension is that the distinction of *vaka moana* as a cultural metaphor is not intended as 'a conceptual overlay which we may or may not place upon experiences as we choose' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 57). Rather, 'we experience our "world" in such a way that our culture is already present in the very experience itself' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 57). This requires reflexivity to ensure that indigenous knowledge of the metaphor is not relegated to a contextual background (Ibarretxe-Antunano, 2013). On that note, this is where the use to cultural metaphor may not work so well if its intended use is not well understood.

So for this thesis there is much more that could be said. Such as the construction of the *kie* and *tira* representing Cook Islands sovereignty in relation to the shape and size of the *katea* and *ama* representing climate change and human mobility which together they act as a counter lever and prevent capsizing. Or the representation of agency by the *oe akatere*. How is it possible to explain the relationality of agency with the seeming invisibleness of those officials who prepare public speeches and statements for political leaders such as the Prime Minister? As a cultural metaphor this is an area where further analysis is needed beyond the research presented here.

8.3 Overview of Findings

This section presents the findings as they relate to the five research sub-questions.

8.3.1. Climate Change Mobility

The first research question was to find out the extent to which climate change mobility was an issue. The research found that, on the surface, climate change mobility is not considered a major issue for the development of the Cook Islands. That is to say, the Cook Islands national institutional arrangements, policy frameworks and actors pay little attention to climate change mobility and its threat to Cook Islands society and development. Evidence showed it is not considered to be a significant national issue compared to other economic, environmental and social matters. This is mostly because, to many, climate change and human mobility appear unconnected. However, as separate issues climate change and human mobility are primary development concerns for the Cook Islands. The study found that climate change mobility was a submerged rather than absent issue in an emerging policy space.

The *vaka moana* framework assists in understanding climate change and human mobility in the Cook Islands context as a double-hulled phenomenon. The two parallel issues represent the two *vaka* – the canoe or hull – of this conceptual framework. Each *vaka* is understood differently in Cook Islands policy spaces but are constructed from knowledge that privileges Western sources

over others. These privileged knowledges are conveyed through dominant discourses and taken-for-granted narratives about the 'vulnerabilities' of small island states, their economies and their development.

8.3.2. Ataata – a Platform of Institutions, Policy Frameworks and Discourses

The second research question asked what institutions, policies, individuals and discourses as the constituted elements of policy spaces are able to address climate change and human mobility?

The construction of an *ataata*, the platform between the hulls, refers to a national development platform. This connecting state is uneven because institutional arrangements and national planning to address climate change and human mobility respectively have been fashioned separately and differently. Even though the findings show uneven institutional arrangements for climate change and human mobility, without much emphasis on climate change mobility in the national policy frameworks, it shows there is enough of an institutional and policy space to address the issue further.

Addressing climate change mobility is complicated by the limited understanding in this institutionalised field about the issue, even though there is a reference to it in two national policy documents – the new JNAP and Development Compatibility policy respectively. To some extent these two references act as place holders where the issue is flagged for further work.

Another complicating factor is the prevalence of certain discourses that dominate perspectives about climate change and human mobility. This is most apparent with the strong focus on the issue of depopulation. Linked to SIDS vulnerability and marginality discourses, the long-standing narrative of depopulation is primarily argued as an economic and labour market problem.

My research found that climate change has received considerable regional and international attention, and hence national attention in terms of resources, technical assistance and political

will. This has resulted in revised institutional arrangements, new policy frameworks, and the mobilisation of resources. In contrast, human mobility has received a different level of attention by government actors. Despite ongoing concerns regarding the country's declining population, less attention has been given to addressing these concerns and institutional arrangements are weaker with no specific co-operative arrangements in place compared to measures addressing climate change. Little integrated policy work has taken place to address the depopulation issue. This includes options for repopulation despite the large indigenous population living overseas and the need for foreign labour recruitment. The absence of key UN affiliates linked to population issues is also notable when compared with presence of the UNFCCC in the national climate change arena.

Analysis showed that the national development framework has been transformed over time from a one-stop standalone policy to a scorecard within a national policy suite. There is increased country ownership in managing the development of the NSDPs that has elevated climate change and sustainable population as goals. Despite articulating a 'stay and adapt' policy position on displacement and migration in a national policy and recent inclusion in the JNAP, little else is present in national plans to suggest climate change mobility is much of a priority.

Findings reveal particular discourses of small-island economies and development are at play creating taken-for-granted entities and governance institutions (Wesley-Smith, 2013). These are based on structural determinism and grounded on prescriptive, deductive, top-down constructions to address development issues (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009). However, other discourses are also visible. Narratives related to a strategic and flexible approach (Baldacchino & Bertram, 2009), interconnectedness narrative (Stratford et al., 2011), mobility and migration (Dean et al., 2017), and SIDS climate change (Kelman, 2018) are all constellations to navigate by with the Cook Islands own indigenous mobility narrative.

This is important because it means that there is more going on than might appear on the surface of policy spaces. This points to the volume and depth of an oceanic perspective in understanding this issue. In traditional navigating terms, these narratives speak to contextual cues. Atmospheric and ocean surface narratives are juxtaposed with the solid ocean swell that rolls metres below the ocean surface, distinct from the wind-swept white caps and surface waves through which the vaka moana is steered. Tu Oe, Peia, referred to the ability of the navigator to be able to detect this deeper dominant swell, and once detected, the vaka moana, like the needle of a compass, is set to be carried in the direction of the current.

8.3.3. Actor Agency and Discourses

The third research question asked, what experiences and perceptions of individual actors in these policy spaces underpin the attention given to addressing climate change mobility?

Primarily, the depopulation discourse has the effect of submerging an indigenous mobility narrative that exists in these national and local policy spaces in which depopulation forms part of SIDS development transnational and globalised discourses, a process Alexiadou and van de Bunt-Kokhuis refer to as inflected. That is to say, the globalising effect on narratives about SIDS climate change and migration makes them more homogenised. However, through actor agency, policy narratives are mediated leading to transformational aspects – or inflectedness – in the Cook Islands local policy spaces. This means it is possible to enlist other narratives such as pirianga (interconnectedness) and tere (journey/travelling groups) that resist, reject and transform the depopulation discourse. These narratives are not necessarily in the usual fora of public debate and governmental policy-making mechanisms and not necessarily immediately visible.

The thesis concludes that the policy space of climate change mobility in the Cook Islands is at best an emerging one. The issue does not appear to be well understood or pursued much by

policy makers. This is partly because the country's experience with the movement of people is related to the impact of disasters such as cyclones and the slow-onset impacts of climate are, by definition, less obvious. Rather than an internally articulated perspective from community actors and advocates, the knowledge of many of the Cook Islands policy makers is informed by international influences through their experiences overseas (in negotiations, meetings, and so on) and through the experiences of other countries in the region. Although international experiences crossover into the local context they have not been taken up by national policy makers or are challenged as priority issues when set next to other pressing issues such as depopulation.

In the public arena official discourses on climate change mobility are met with resistance and silence, which leaves actors to ponder 'a created regime of truth that renders future displacement plausible' (Hermann et al., 2014, p. 202). Furthermore, the potential of forced migration and relocation help to emphasise local narratives of the interconnectedness of place, culture and identity.

Findings show that actors' perceptions and experiences suggest a nuanced understanding of climate change and human mobility complexities for the Cook Islands. In the absence of a clearly articulated national policy individuals are able to distil and interpret different conditions, working practices and opportunities (Alexiadou & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, p. 346). In other words, as represented by the *oe* (steering paddle), their agency is able to navigate through the complexities of an issue that, for many, is only now emerging as a concern. Given their agency, they are well placed to advance climate change mobility policy debates and activities in the future using mobility and kinship narratives.

The agency of these actors is represented in the *oe akatere* of the *vaka moana*. It is the means by which actors are able to power through the range of policy moments of time and space –

with their sophisticated understandings of issues and context they are able to navigate towards their self-determined agenda of outcomes.

8.3.4. Sovereignty, Climate Change and Other Issues

This sub-section attempts to address the fourth research question, namely what sovereignty considerations arise for the Cook Islands in addressing climate change mobility and other issues?

The tira (mast) and kie (sail) of the vaka moana represent the means by which the state and communities are able to make use of sovereignty. This is a crucial concept underpinning policy processes and actor interactions. This research found that individual actors must contend with the contested nature of sovereignty and tensions within the Cook Islands' Associated State arrangement. However, in making use of Islandian definitions of sovereignty (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017), the interplay of sovereignty and climate change mobility is dynamic and complex. Sovereignty gives actors the means to advance policy interventions, despite the seemingly limited attention given currently to the links between sea-level rise and relocation whilst also challenging the classical interpretations of sovereignty and existential implications for the country's territorial integrity.

In the case of cyclone preparedness and disaster response, there has been greater government effort that reflect its sovereign capabilities. Findings show the Cook Islands government has and is able to exercise its sovereignty in many of the other issues that emerged in the research, although New Zealand citizenship and depopulation continue to perpetuate prevailing discourses and narratives of dependency and vulnerability. This has impeded the capacity to transform sovereignty debates with more culturally in-sync narratives of networks and negotiation.

Sovereignty is represented by the kie and tira in the vaka moana framework. Its flexible and malleable construction is the power and authority of the state and its communities. These features provide the means to negotiate and work with prevailing policy and discourses.

8.4 Research Contribution

This section presents the key theoretical and policy implications of this thesis as a way to answer the final research question: how might nuanced understandings of sovereignty and policy spaces assist oceanic island states such as the Cook Islands to address cross-border issues?

In the case of climate change mobility, policy and sovereignty are able to nuance understanding by bringing deeper and more thoughtful engagement to this and similar cross-border concerns. These concepts do this when considering the answer about the extent to which an issue is a concern. Based on the findings related to policy and structural arrangements of policy spaces, the initial and most straight forward answer is that it is not a development concern for the Cook Islands. This also appears the case when considering the sovereign arrangement the Cook Islands has with New Zealand. However, when the other constituted elements of policy spaces are examined – actor agency and discourse along with flexible and dynamic understandings of sovereignty - then differences in how issues are understood emerge. For example, findings presented in this thesis surface submerged enduring narratives of ‘pirianga’ and ‘tere’ derived from the indigenous context of the Cook Islands.

By giving attention to all the constituent elements, it has also been possible to give consideration to the integrated, dynamic, rigid, yet fluid policy spaces. Furthermore, by contextualising policy space and sovereignty with an indigenous metaphor meant that it was possible to nuance indigenous knowledge through a framework of relationality. .

8.4.1. Framework of Relationality

The most important contribution from this thesis is the use of the vaka moana metaphor to advance a framework based on indigenous relationality. Vaka moana provided an immersive means to explore and transform Cook Islands policy spaces where attention is given to the oceanic island context and narratives of the country's development issues such as climate change mobility.

Recent Cook Islands doctoral scholarship in education and health research by Beumelburg (2016), Te Ava (2011), Herman (2013) and Futter-Puati (2017) shows an upsurge in theoretical and methodological frameworks examining Cook Islands issues that include indigenous perspectives and incorporate Cook Islands worldviews. For scholars and Cook Islanders pursuing indigenous and Cook Islands interests this thesis is an attempt to add to the indigenous shift taking place in Cook Islands critical scholarship.

This thesis also makes a nuanced contribution to indigenous Pacific research (Sanga, 2004) with its theorising of va as a space in relation to land (Massey, 2005) and ocean (Steinberg, 2009). The vaka moana is a mobile island that occupies the space in between the environmental elements of water, air and earth (Peters et al., 2018). It is constructed of institutions, individuals, rules, practices and discourses moving through, around, under and over Cook Islands policy spaces influencing policy and policy actors who, through sovereignty and individual agency, mediate and transform those policy spaces. The study found that actors in Cook Islands policy spaces demonstrated a skilful ability to manoeuvre in the multiple sites of policy spaces.

8.4.2. Policy Implications

The most important implication relates to the policy inertia or slowness in attending to the 'depopulation' narrative. There was no doubt that most people were troubled by depopulation and its ramifications. This study has provided some direction for developing a policy brief on the

broader issue of human mobility and climate change mobility. It has brought to the surface other narratives of mobility, kinship and networks, confirming the interdependence of sovereignty and the narrative of networking and negotiation. In this regard, it provides a policy brief that might broaden the terms of reference for future policy work on tackling depopulation that takes account and privileges these perspectives. It has also underscored the importance for local actors of recognising and attributing their own indigenous narratives in policy formulation. This means resisting the urge to be complacent in letting the taken-for-granted discourse navigate. It is about 'thinking outside the rocks' (Puna, 2015), making 'island sense' of issues and maintaining 'sovereign buoyancy' (Jonassen, 1996).

8.5 Future Work

The research identified three areas for future work that may be of interest to other researchers. There were limitations in the breadth of actors that participated in the interviews, so further research could engage other groups of actors to examine their agency. The first aspect relates to the scope of the study that focused mainly on government officials. This meant the perspectives of others were supplementary to those of government officials' perspectives. It might be worthwhile to widen the scope to investigate the perspective of other actors, in particular those from civil society particularly women, children and youth, the Aronga Mana and religious leaders. This has the potential to uncover quite different understandings, such as the spirituality of climate change mobility and policy spaces. Given the prominence of Christianity and faith-based services alongside customary governance in Cook Islands society it would be worthwhile to see how these perspectives inform this emerging policy space.

A second topic for future work is focused on the theoretical implications of this thesis. I would encourage researchers to consider working on their own conceptual frameworks that are able to unveil Cook Islands bodies of knowledge and perspectives. This would certainly enrichen what

we already have and grow our papaanga of indigenous and other scholarship. This is important when we consider intergenerational equity and our obligations to future generations and the scholarly ideas and practices we leave them.

The third theme for future work relates to exploring other narratives. For example, the experiences of individual actors in the international negotiations of the UNFCCC and other international arrangements highlighted interpersonal interactions and negotiation skills of actors. This would be a fruitful exercise in understanding how such experiences of attending events could transform less-than-positive subjectivities of the 'travel junkies' and 'plastic islanders', and narratives that see such activities as 'not real work', 'being out of touch' and 'riding junkets'. This work is linked to material that I have not presented in detail about the process of traditional navigation systems and the analytical use of this material to interpret these narratives and the relational nature of agency.

8.6 Reflections

The lessons learned from this thesis have been immense and all encompassing. The value of scholarly research to deepen and expand understandings of the Cook Islands capacity to address climate change mobility has been stimulating and liberating. By this I mean, grappling with the power of this endeavour to equip one to break free from and come back to different explanations and positions that nuance and transform Cook Islands policy spaces, sovereignty and climate change mobility.

8.7 Overall Research Conclusion

Overall this thesis concludes that the concepts of policy space and sovereignty promoted in vaka moana argue for a relational, fluid and flexible approach to understand and address the complexities and multi-faceted aspects of climate change mobility. To address climate change mobility in the Cook Islands meaningfully requires an indigenous approach to defining and

applying concepts of sovereignty and policy-making that challenge and transform classical and absolutist notions. It appears that even though this is not happening overtly at an institutional level, individual actors experienced in globalised western fora and discourses who are secure in their own place are skilfully manoeuvring in a range of policy spaces in a way that enables indigenous and westernised narratives to co-exist as these actors work to address the country's development challenges.

Finally, remembering too our obligations, honouring our connections through the value of reciprocity, I offer this thesis firstly as *apinga aroa*, a gift and appeasement back to those who gave. This thesis serves to acknowledge the people, and the encounters of spirit, ideas and experiences that came my way in arriving at this moment.

Appendices

Appendix I: University of Auckland Human Participant Ethics Approval

Appendix II: Government of the Cook Islands Research Approval

Appendix III: List of Participants

Appendix IV Participant Reference and Subject Description

Appendix V: Participant information Sheet.

University of Auckland Ethics

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UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE (UAHPEC)

10-Sep-2014

MEMORANDUM TO:

Assoc Prof Yvonne Underhill-Sem
Development Studies

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 012820): Approved

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your project entitled **No te Orama ki te Ravenga - Illuminating the policy space for climate and disaster – A case study of the Cook Islands..**

We are pleased to inform you that ethics approval is granted for a period of three years.

The expiry date for this approval is 10-Sep-2017.

If the project changes significantly, you are required to submit a new application to UAHPEC for further consideration.

If you have obtained funding other than from UniServices, send a copy of this approval letter to the Research Office, at ro-awards@auckland.ac.nz. For UniServices contracts, send a copy of the approval letter to the Contract Manager, UniServices.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, you are requested to notify UAHPEC once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals. If you wish to do so, please contact the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at ethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

Please quote reference number: **012820** on all communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application.

(This is a computer generated letter. No signature required.)

UAHPEC Administrators
University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

c.c. Head of Department / School, Development Studies
Dr Bruce Curtis

Government of the Cook Islands Ethics approval



COOK ISLAND RESEARCH COMMITTEE

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

PRIVATE BAG, RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS

Phone +682 211-50 Facsimile +682 20-856

Email: elizabeth.koteka@cookislands.gov.ck Web: www.cook-islands.gov.ck

File ref: 510.3
Letter no: 14-020

29 July 2014

Ms Christina Ann Newport
Tamakeu Rd
Vaimaanga, Rarotonga
COOK ISLANDS

Kia Orana Ms Newport,

RE: APPROVED RESEARCH APPLICATION

I am pleased to advise that the National Research Committee has granted approval for your research titled "No te Oramaki te Ravenga – Illuminating the SIDS Policy Space in addressing Climate and Disaster Risks to Sustainable Development – A Case Study of Cook Islands Resilience, Migration and Land Loss" on the island of Rarotonga from July 2014 to February 2015.

Enclosed is your research permit issue # 20/14

The following conditions listed below have been imposed by the National Research Committee

- Provide a preliminary report to the Office of the Prime Minister at your earliest
- Submit 3 hard copies + 1 e-copy of your final findings to the Office of the Prime Minister by December 2016

Kia Manuia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Wright-Koteka'.

Elizabeth Wright-Koteka
CHAIRPERSON

List of Participants

	Name	Organisation
Mr Jim	Armistead	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Mrs Fine	Arnold	Cook Islands Red Cross Society
Mr Sean	Buckley	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Mr Ewan	Cameron	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
Mr Charles	Carlson	Office of the Prime Minister
Mr Andreas	Demmke	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Ms Celine	Dyer	Office of the Prime Minister
Mr Mana	Etches	Office of the Prime Minister
Ms Amelia	Fukofuka	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Ms Tapaeru	Herrmann	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Ms Elizabeth	Hoskings	Office of the Prime Minister
Mr Nick	Hurley	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dr Jon	Jonassen	Cook Islands Research Association
Mr Liam	Kokaua	Te Ipukarea Society Inc.
Mrs Teresa	Manarangi-Trott	Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce
Ms Miimetua	Matamaki	Cook Islands National Environment Service
Ms Diane	McFadzien	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
Mr Joshua	Mitchell	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Mr Richard	Neves	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
Ms Miimetua	Nimerota	Office of the Prime Minister

Mr Petero	Okotai	Office of the Prime Minister
Mr Kelvin	Passfield	Te Ipukarea Society Inc.
Mr Peia	Patai	Okeanos Foundation
Mrs Myra	Patai	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Mr Tupuna	Rakanui	Ui Ariki Kuki Airani
Ms Caren	Rangi	Cook Islands Investment Corporation
Mrs Niki	Rattle	Cook Islands Parliament Services
Mrs Daphne	Ringi	Office of the Public Services Commissioner
Dr Teina	Rongo	Office of the Prime Minister
Ms Kairangi	Samuela	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Ms Kim	Saunders	Crown Law Office
Ms Linda	Siegele	University College London
Ms Andrea	Stewart	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Mrs Lydia	Syjp	Office of the Prime Minister
Mr Peter	Tierney	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
Ms Ana	Tiraa	Office of the Prime Minister
Mr Tou Ariki, Travel	Tou	Ui Ariki Kuki Airani
Mr William	Tuiravaga	Office of the Prime Minister
Mrs Maureen	Tukaroa-Betham	New Zealand Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs
Ms Maria	Tuoro	Cook Islands National Environment Service
Mr James	Webb	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
Mrs Vaine	Wichman	Penrhyn Island Government
Mrs Elizabeth	Wright-Koteka	Office of the Prime Minister

Participant Reference and Subject Description

#	Subject Description	#	Subject Description
1	Maori female official	23	Maori female senior official
2	Maori female senior official	24	Maori male official
3	Expatriate female senior official	25	Maori female senior official
4	Expat male senior official	26	Maori female senior official
5	Maori female senior official	27	Maori female senior official
6	Maori female senior official	28	Maori female senior official
7	Maori male senior official	29	Maori female senior official
8	Maori female senior official	30	Expatriate male senior official
9	Maori female senior official	31	Maori female civil society representative
10	Maori female official	32	Expatriate male senior official
11	Maori female senior official	33	Maori male senior official
12	Maori male official	34	Expat male senior official
13	Expatriate female civil society representative	35	Expatriate male diplomat
14	Maori male senior official	36	Maori male senior official
15	Maori male senior official	37	Maori female senior official
16	Maori male civil society representative	38	Maori female civil society representative
17	Expat male senior official	39	Maori male civil society representative
18	Maori female senior official	40	Maori male civil society representative
19	Expatriate male civil society representative	41	Maori female senior official
20	Maori female civil society representative	42	Maori male senior official
21	Maori male civil society representative	43	Maori male civil society representative
22	Expatriate female civil society representative		

Participant Information Sheet



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Participant Information Sheet

Project: *Policy Space, Sovereignty and Development: the case of Cook Islands Climate Change mobility*

Supervisors: Associate Professor Yvonne Underhill-Sem and Professor John E. Hay

Researcher: Tina (Christina) Newport (Doctoral Candidate – Development Studies)

Kia Orana, I am researching how the Cook Islands is able to advance its development future with special reference to climate change mobility. I would like to talk to people who are involved in policy development and advocacy, climate, disaster or migration issues from community, private sector or government perspectives.

The overall research question is: How does climate change and mobility related policies address the concerns of sovereign small islands developing states like the Cook Islands with a special relationship to New Zealand in ways that strengthen their ability to negotiate their future?

Key objectives are to:

1. Examine the Cook Islands climate change, disaster risk management and sustainable development policy spaces and context.
2. Explore how these spaces and sovereignty enable or constrain Cook Islands policy processes in relation to climate change and mobility.
3. Examine how current Cook Islands policy and processes can advance new cross boundary issues.

Your Involvement

The research involves a one on one interview with me at a time and place that is convenient for you. It will consist of open ended questions tailored to your area of work and/or expertise. You may identify and be willing to share with me evidence such as documents that maybe relevant to the research. I will use this evidence along with the interview data to inform the research question and objectives. Following the interview/s I may contact you via phone or e-mail to discuss issues that arise from the data analysis.

Your participation is expected to require no more than 3 hours of your time, over 3-4 months. This includes an hour for an interview, time to review the transcript and some follow up phone calls or emails to clarify any issues that may arise.

It is not anticipated that there will be any physical or mental risks to you by being involved in this study. However there is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential

information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You may also share information about the agency you work for. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

There may also be no benefits to you directly as a result of your participation. However your participation may contribute to the further public policy development related to climate change and migration in the Cook Islands. Funding to conduct this research is provided by the Commonwealth Scholarship of the Government of New Zealand.

Use of the Data

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by myself. Even if you agree to being recorded, you may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time. In such a case, I will seek your permission to continue to record the interview using hand written notes.

A full transcript of the interview including any follow up discussions will be emailed or hand delivered for you to verify the content of the interview. Two weeks is available for you to verify the transcript. Noting you may be busy during that time, if you are unable to reply, I will assume you agree to my using the transcript for my analysis. Other than the research team, no other person will receive the recording or transcript. This includes an employer or employees.

The attached Consent Form asks for your contact details and for you to authorise the use of the transcript and any additional data you provide such as written material, documents or emails. Any confidential documents you provide will not be referred to in any of the project outputs and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team. If you require, these documents can be returned to you at the end of the research period.

Data collected will be used to form part of my doctoral thesis in Development Studies. It may also be used for wider publication including reports, articles and presentations. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the research findings by email, please indicate so in the space provided on the consent form.

Data Storage

In the Cook Islands, electronic interview data will be kept on a secure computer in Vaima'anga. Any physical copies of data will be kept in a lockable box. The consent forms will be held in a separate lockable box. In New Zealand, the electronic data will be kept on a secure computer and any physical data will be kept in a secure lockable box held at my office in Auckland, New Zealand.

Protecting your rights

There is no obligation to participate in the project. You can withdraw from the study at any time up until one month after your interview. Confidentiality, anonymity and your participation is an important part of this research. As the Cook Islands community is small and participants are likely to be known, it is not possible to offer total anonymity and confidentiality. Information may be passed onto a third party in the event that information is disclosed that may lead to serious harm or ill health to any person.

To protect your interests, I will undertake to ensure no information that could identify you will be used in any of the research outputs without your permission. This includes authority to include your name, position and organisation in the participants list, and attributing any direct quotes by citing your name.

Meitaki ma'ata e kia manuia. Many thanks for your contribution to this project. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, contact details are provided below.

Researcher:	Ms Tina (Christina) Newport	Ph: CI +682 52075 or NZ +64 (0) 20 40 28 3660 E: cnew839@aucklanduni.ac.nz
Supervisor:	Associate Professor, Yvonne Underhill-Sem	Ph: +64 (0) 9 923 2311 Email: y.underhill-sem@auckland.ac.nz
Supervisor:	Professor, John E Hay	Ph: +682 25350 Email: johnhay@ihug.co.nz
Head of Department:	Professor, Andreas Neef	Ph: +64 (0) 9 923 3486 Email: a.neef@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may have, contact:

The Chair	The University of Auckland, Research
The University of Auckland Human Participants	Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142.
Ethics Committee	Ph: +64 (0) 9 373-7599 extension: 87830 or 83761. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10
September 2014 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE 012820**

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