

# ROMANCE AND RESISTANCE IN THE PACIFIC: NEOLIBERALISM AND INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE IN THE PACIFIC

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*The central argument of this chapter is that Neoliberalism is detrimental to the Pacific. It is an ideology that is based on flawed and generalised assumptions about the world and reinforces a process of re-colonisation in the Pacific. International institutions and even various regional organisations are asserting to Pacific governments and leaders that Neoliberalism is not only the simplest solution to Pacific 'problems' but is inevitable anyway. However, these prescriptions are anything but simple, neutral or inevitable. Resistance in the Pacific is working in a changing global political economy to counter the hegemony of Neoliberalism and by its existence will continue to demonstrate that alternatives to Neoliberalism are possible and numerous.*

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*La thèse centrale défendue par l'auteur dans cet article tend à démontrer que le néolibéralisme est une théorie qui ne doit pas trouver application dans le Pacifique.*

*En effet, pour l'auteur, il s'agit d'une idéologie qui repose sur de faux a priori ou encore sur une vision trop globale du monde qui tendent à instaurer et promouvoir un retour à la colonisation dans le Pacifique. Les organisations internationales voire régionales répètent aux gouvernements des Etats du Pacifique Sud que le néolibéralisme est non seulement la solution la plus facile mais que de surcroît cette approche économique est inévitable.*

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*Toutefois, l'auteur considère le contraire et fait valoir que dans le Pacifique, des expériences et des propositions de développement économiques sont mises en place pour offrir une alternative viable au néolibéralisme.*

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## **I INTRODUCTION**

Using the terms "Neoliberalism" and "romantic" in the same sentence may appear to be something of a contradiction, an irreconcilable paradox. That is, if you accept a Neoliberal claim to not only rationality and objectivity but also to validity. What results are discoverable from a challenge to this claim? The result is that Neoliberalism cannot substantiate its claims and in fact displays many of the traits it claims are representative of its opposition. The central argument of this chapter is that Neoliberalism is detrimental to the Pacific. It is an ideology which reinforces a re-colonisation in the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> International institutions and even various regional organisations are asserting to Pacific governments and leaders that Neoliberalism is not only the simplest neutral solution to Pacific "problems" but is inevitable anyway. However, their prescriptions are anything but simple, neutral or inevitable. Resistance in the Pacific is working in a changing global political economy to counter the hegemony of Neoliberalism.

Why is Neoliberalism perceived as a form of re-colonisation? Is "globalisation" not just "change"? Globalisation is to a large extent about change. However, "change" suggests a naturalness which does not exist. There are common effects from Neoliberalism which we can see in many countries around the world. One example is that the gap between rich and poor grows larger. As Neoliberalism colonises it replaces indigenous structures with its own ones. In other words, if we examine which "change" we are able to "freely" choose and what is being imposed upon us, we find that there is very little to choose and that a lot of things are forced upon us.

Neoliberalism is an ideology based on a set of specific assumptions. Most significantly Neoliberalism is based upon positivism: valuing rationality above other forms of analysis, assuming the possibility of complete objectivity, creating a dichotomy between fact and value and therefore assuming that there are immutable "facts" in the social world which it is possible to "know". Secondly, Neoliberalism bases its models and estimations of the world on an idealised conception of people as rational self-maximising individual men. Thirdly, Neoliberalism gives the economy precedence and believes in the essential "freedom" of the

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1 Re-colonisation is the embedding and re-embedding of Neoliberalism utilising multiple avenues including institutional, state, corporate and intellectual pressure.

market. This leads Neoliberals to argue for policies such as reductions in the size of government; privatisation; "free trade" and the "free" movement of capital.

How can Neoliberalism be romantic? How can an ideology, which claims above all else that it is not in the least 'idealistic', embody precisely this? Neoliberalism's romantic attributes are perceivable in exactly this claim to rationality, objectivity and truth. Being romantic can be characterised by an idealised or sentimental or fantastic view of reality, remote from experience (Thompson 1995, 1195). For Neoliberal theorists to believe unreservedly in the superiority of their supposedly rational, objective truth and the processes which they advocate, namely "global economic liberalisation", indicates that they believe in an absolute truth. Their separation of politics and economics suggests an idealised view of reality and their commitment to failed policies proves their remoteness from experience. As John Ralston Saul has convincingly argued, nothing is inevitable and only ideologues believe in determinism (Saul 2000, 9).

The purpose of this critique of Neoliberalism in the Pacific is part of a larger project of critical theory. Robert Cox distinguishes between two types of theory: problem solving theory and critical theory. The former "takes the world as given (and on the whole as good) and provides guidance to correct dysfunctions or specific problems that arise within this existing order" (Cox 1995, 31-32). The latter "is concerned with how the existing order came into being and what the possibilities are for change in that order" (Cox 1995, 32). This paper takes the critical theory approach. By analysing and critiquing Neoliberalism it attempts to contribute to the questioning of the current global power structures which are therefore in part undermined by such questioning of their alleged "natural", "commonsense" but nevertheless dominant status.

## ***II PACIFIC ROMANTIC TENDENCIES***

In the Pacific there is clear evidence that some governments and regional organisations are also following the romantic trend of Neoliberalism. The South Pacific Forum Secretariat (SPF) has shown clear signs of believing Neoliberalism's highly romantic perception of the world, in accordance with policy prescriptions laid down by international Neoliberal institutions like the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). As a regional organization, the SPF supplies information and advice to member governments. The utilitarian and simple nature of Neoliberal policy solutions has been one of the many factors for its extensive proliferation. Pacific officials believe and are reassured by the SPF, which is in turn reassured by APEC and WTO officials, that Neoliberal policy prescriptions can work in the Pacific, regardless of their origin and their

basis in conditions alien to the Pacific. Clearly members of the SPF would strenuously deny assertion of their romantic tendencies. However, some of their work in the past decade – the Forum Economic Action Plan and negotiation for a Pacific 'free' trade agreement, for example – displays their bias.

William Sutherland attributes the shift in what he describes as the "regional reform agenda" to a directive from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand which refocused the SPF agenda according to their priorities. This culminated, he argues, in the convening of a meeting which later became the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) in 1994 (Sutherland 2000, 465).

The Forum Economic Action Plan emerged as part of an intensification of pressure for Neoliberal policies in the Pacific. It was the 1997 FEMM that devised the Forum Economic Action Plan. The Plan seeks to achieve "free and open trade and investment" and to commit Pacific Island countries to APEC and WTO consistency (Forum Secretariat 1998). SPF members were encouraged at this meeting to be consistent with APEC non-binding investment principles and to implement them rapidly to avoid diluting reforms (Sutherland 2000). At the 1998 FEMM a review of the 1997 FEMM Action Plan took place which reiterated that member countries should be "implementing domestic measures consistent with WTO and APEC principles and obligations" (Forum Secretariat 1998) and that they would report progress at subsequent meetings.

As Sutherland argues, the two key factors in the "regional reform agenda" were "the pressure to move from generalities to specifics, and the constant emphasis on the need for action. Increasingly, therefore, commitments became more specific and detailed timeframes for implementation were set" (Sutherland 2000, 466).

The Forum Action Plan was squarely criticised by Pacific Groups attending the Fourth NGO Parallel Forum. The participants argued that the Action Plan was "based on narrow economic models which take little or no account of the central importance of systems of customary land tenure or the traditional "subsistence" economy for Pacific peoples...APEC Non-Binding Investment Principles are not a sound basis for Pacific island development" (NGO Parallel Forum Communique 1998). The Principles referred to here stemmed from the Jakarta APEC meeting in November 1994. They include aspirations for the promotion and increase of foreign investment, "national treatment", and a specific commitment for governments not to "relax health, safety and environmental regulations as an incentive to encourage investment" (APEC Secretariat 1994). The last point appears somewhat ironic and contradictory in the face of apparent reductions of regulations to attract investment.

The SPF commitment, to not only adopt Neoliberal policies but also to ensure that these are consistent with international Neoliberal institutions, makes their advice to Pacific states considerably more strategic and persuasive. Encouraging APEC and WTO consistency incorporates Pacific states further into a global Neoliberal disciplinary regime. Being part of this structure increases the amount of discipline and pressure of capital and Neoliberal policies on Pacific states. Global political economist Stephen Gill has outlined the way in which this disciplinary Neoliberalism is connected to the power of capital: involving the redefinition of public policy so that governments seek to prove their *credibility* and the *consistency* of their policies according to the criterion of the *confidence* of investors (Gill 1999, 3). "Credibility", "consistency" and "confidence" are then defined by Neoliberal institutions like the World Bank Group, WTO and the IMF. Herein lies an inherent contradiction in Neoliberalism. It claims a separation is possible between politics and economics and yet their prescriptions often involve specific policy restructuring and prescriptions for governments.

#### IV THESIS OF INEVITABILITY

Even more strongly than through the Forum Action Plan, the SPF's negotiations regarding a Pacific "free" trade area indicates their romantic Neoliberal tendencies. The most common claim which has arisen from these discussions has been that "globalization and universal trade liberalisation" (Forum Secretariat 1999) are inevitable. A distinction needs to be made in this context between globalisms. The SPF's thesis of the inevitability of globalisation is never adequately defined in SPF literature. Critically examining the lack of definition for this term is crucial in exposing the way in which shared assumptions are assumed to be held by the SPF and the broader Pacific population. From the SPF literature it appears that globalisation is synonymous with "global liberalisation", and therefore Neoliberalism. However, by failing to adequately define their versions of "globalisation" the implication is that there is but one form, that there is, if not agreement, then a shared understanding of what this word connotes. This definition of "globalisation" is far from uncontested. What is presented today as a singular "globalisation" is only one particular strand of globalisation. There are multiple other versions. Ralph Pettman contrasts what he calls a "Western" globalism with an "Eastern" globalism. Pettman argues that: "When we look at the ordering that goes on in world affairs, what we see is a historically specific, culturally particular kind of ordering. Any specific order is not universal, in other words, nor is it preordained to stay the same. It is what currently prevails—nothing less, nothing more" (Pettman 1996).

Renato Constantino Jr from SANLAKAS in the Philippines emphasises more of the oppressive nature of globalisation. He argues: "Globalization ... is simply this: Recolonization.

It seeks to integrate every economy into a single world system under the direction of global corporations" (Constantino 1998, 1). With regard to the inevitability of such a system, Constantino adds: "Like colonisation before it, globalization is neither desirable nor inevitable nor so powerful that it cannot be stopped" (Constantino 1998, 4).

Greg Fry has argued convincingly against this perspective of inevitability in his work on "doomsdayism". Fry argues against the perceptions of some scholars and policy makers that if the Pacific doesn't restructure, and follow the prescriptions as laid down by Neoliberals and strive to be included in the "new world order", they will be worse off (Fry 1997, 305). The logical conclusion to the inevitability thesis is not that Pacific states find Neoliberal policies most appropriate for the Pacific, just that they are inevitable. Being WTO consistent therefore is part of a range of policy prescriptions based on negative scenarios created for the Pacific.

The SPF acts *as if* their thesis of inevitability is an objective, immutable "fact" about the world which cannot be disputed. Any resistance to their thesis of inevitability can be rebuffed as "idealistic", subjective and therefore lacking in "fact". In this circular way the SPF argues the legitimacy of its own worldview. If the SPF's thesis of inevitability is accepted, we are committed to accepting that resistance is futile and that we should accept Neoliberalism by default as it were. This line of argument encourages the perception that all resistance is "within" Neoliberalism, that nothing properly exists beyond. Gibson-Graham has produced an insightful critique of capitalism and ways in which to reconceptualise "globalisation" so that rather than being an all encompassing beast globalisation is "soft, fragile, and vulnerable" (Gibson-Graham 1996, 146). Conceiving of Neoliberalism as all encompassing with no viable alternative "outside" delegitimises subsistence production in the Pacific as merely "underemployment" or a barrier to productive market participation, and writes out the multitude of cooperatives and community organisations operating successfully in the Pacific. It writes out successful resistance to Neoliberalism.

The relationship between the SPF and the WTO is made more complex by the fact that Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Fiji, PNG and the Solomon Islands are members of both. The fact that the largest, but still not the majority, of the Pacific Island states are members of the WTO adds an apparent legitimacy to SPF calls for "WTO consistency".

By encouraging WTO consistency in trade policies the SPF is emphasising that it believes Neoliberal policies, and the values that are embodied in the WTO, are positive for Pacific development and Pacific peoples. These values are being challenged from Pacific groups like the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC), which argues that Neoliberal policies are erroneous and misguided in the Pacific. The SPF recently held a meeting with WTO officials to

"assist in the development of unified policies on WTO issues relevant to the Forum Island Countries for the consideration of Forum Trade Ministers" (Levi 2000). The establishment of an SPF office in Geneva to facilitate Pacific participation in WTO negotiations will no doubt add to the amount of Neoliberal policy prescriptions being circulated and calls for WTO consistency. The SPF desire for WTO consistency is driven less by an agreement that Neoliberal policies will be immensely successful in the Pacific, and more by a perception that there is no escape from the SPF's undefined "globalisation".

The romantic vision of the SPF is supported by the governments of Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and Papua New Guinea who, despite political economic and political cultural problems, also aspire to the vision of "global economic liberalisation". Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, Fiji and PNG have considerable political economic power in the region, together accounting for 84 percent of the estimated output of the region (Hughes 1998, 20). Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia are well "advanced" in their adoption of Neoliberalism, having begun implementation in the early 1980s. Fiji and PNG are gradually becoming more deeply entrenched albeit with much disruption from "internal" political economic conflict. Prior to the disruption to Fiji's political economy by the May 2000 coup, it had been hailed as something of a Neoliberal Pacific success, joining the appropriate international institutions and even establishing free trade zones. PNG, although somewhat turbulent, is also pursuing Neoliberalism, with privatisation committees to facilitate the process.

Pacific governments are not convinced to "sell their countries and their people" (Klak 1998) because they have adopted the core values of Neoliberalism. Rather they are convinced that there is no alternative and that Neoliberal solutions are sensible, rational and difficult, but better in the long run for their people. The Neoliberal discourse encourages a belief that the policies are stringent yet fair. They have accepted that the sustainability of the economy takes precedence over the sustainability of the environment or people. Put another way, they are only concerned with the environment and social "matters" if they are of relevance to the strength, growth and sustainability of the economy. The supposedly "external" (external to economics) consequences are secondary (World Bank 1995, 49). Neoliberal academics like Neil Vousden argue that "it is ... important that governments wishing to promote growth should try to reduce cultural, institutional and policy impediments to a healthy inflow of foreign investment" (Vousden 1998, 20). These beliefs result because Neoliberals argue that a two step process takes place: firstly, secure the well-being of the economy and secondly, the effects of this will create positive changes for people and the environment. The World Bank states that for the Pacific, "establishing the conditions for recovery first, followed by more rapid sustained growth, will be essential to alleviate poverty" (World Bank 1998, 5). However, evidence

suggests that Neoliberal policies do not produce these two conclusions but an array of other detrimental effects.

To remain competitive, that is attractive for roving transnational corporations (TNCs), or in Neoliberal parlance "investment", states are required to offer extreme concessions and incentives which make production cheaper for investors. The two most prominent aspects of this relate to labour and the environment. Wages in the Pacific are often claimed to be too high, "held artificially high" (Elek 1993, 61), especially in comparison to other countries like Vietnam, Mexico or China who are seen as being at the "leading edge" of competitive wage rates. Schoeffel rejects such claims and argues that "generally these "high wages" buy less than a lower wage in Asia will buy, so that *in terms of purchasing power wages in the Pacific islands are not higher than in Asia* [original emphasis]" (Schoeffel 1996, 94).<sup>2</sup> The World Bank has encouraged the view that wages should be lowered according to market principles in line with its own Neoliberal policies. In a Regional Economic Report the World Bank recommends that, "Governments ... need to ensure that labor markets are flexible and that firms have the ability to hire and dismiss or reallocate workers easily and that pay is determined by market forces" (World Bank 1998, 16). The World Bank's Neoliberal bias is evident in its desire to make some labour, namely what they term "low skilled" labour, as malleable as possible for corporations, in the belief that market forces are the best allocators of resources, including labour. This highlights their value of the economy over longer term concerns for the public good.

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) government is one of the most explicit in the Pacific in supporting policies of downward levelling by encouraging TNCs and other, particularly South East Asian companies, to locate in the CNMI specifically to exploit labour and trade access arrangements with the US. The CNMI currently have quota free access on their products shipped to the "mainland United States" (Office of Insular Affairs, United States department of the Interior 1998, 4). The signing of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the US and Mexico and the filing of several major lawsuits has led the CNMI government into difficulties, however, after opting to cast itself as a site for cheap labour. The NAFTA agreement has resulted in US companies relocating to Mexico in order to exploit the workforce there. This has given rise to some concern within the CNMI government that they may lose business. The CNMI government is therefore now trying rigorously to attract and retain companies. At the same time, the CNMI

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2 Schoeffel fails to adequately substantiate this claim, although she does indicate that it is a result of the importation of food.

government is coming under increasing pressure from the US to improve its human rights record regarding allegations of slave-wage conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Papua New Guinea has been continually involved in a process of downward levelling for its natural environment and now increasingly so under re-colonisation. Here, production and trade are more difficult to distinguish as PNG's major exports of minerals and other natural resources require limited "production" after extraction. The establishment of a Privatisation Commission by the PNG government suggests that foreign ownership and control of these sectors in PNG will increase. The Privatisation Commission was established in 1999 in order to facilitate the sale of PNG's public assets. It is not a foregone conclusion that these will be to foreign companies; it seems doubtful, however, that local companies can compete with prices offered by foreign interests. The establishment of the Commission was met with approval by the WB and IMF and the Australian government. Australia, whose companies currently dominate the exploitation of natural resources in PNG, could well benefit substantially from the privatisation of PNG's key public assets.<sup>4</sup>

In Fiji, the exploitation of labour, particularly women's labour, has been entrenched in the garment manufacturing and food processing sectors as part of the government's quest for national growth. Several studies of the Pacific Fishing Company Ltd (PAFCO) have indicated that increasing competitiveness in the 'global market' is demanding cost-effective operations and higher output and productivity levels which places increasing burdens on the labour standards for women workers (Emberson-Bain 1994, 150). The women in the PAFCO factory at Levuka are subjected to poor working conditions as a result of the Fijian government's policies for a competitive labour force. In her examination of the Fijian fisheries sector, Emberson-Bain argues that the working conditions of the women manufacturing workers and those at PAFCO highlight the urgent need for a reassessment of the labour implications, and the "worker-

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3 The US Department of the Interior's Annual Report has produced a report regarding indentured alien workers and Labour and Immigration and concludes that U.S. Federal immigration law and minimum wage laws should be extended to CNMI in order to stem the multiple and rising breaches of human rights. The Report described CNMI's "heavy and unhealthy dependency upon an indentured alien worker program" (Office of Insular Affairs, The US Department of the Interior 1998).

4 Shortly after Sir Mekere Morauta came to power, the Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Treasurer Peter Costello made separate trips to Port Moresby to ensure that the new government followed the Neoliberal Agenda demanded. Costello made clear that any financial assistance was conditional, saying: "Australia's position is, and remains, that it will engage in help which will be very closely tied to economic restructure." He praised Mekere's decision to re-establish ties with the IMF and World Bank and announced a payment of \$20 million in aid (Gaglioti and Philips 1999).

unfriendly climate" (Emberson-Bain 1994, 167) of Neoliberal policies. She argues that contradictions between Neoliberal policies and Pacific values are obvious and a more holistic approach is needed which incorporates the dignity of work and the rights of workers to sustainable livelihoods.

In the Solomon Islands the ending of preferences under the Lome Convention IV, an agreement between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) developing countries to give them preferential access to European Union markets, has led to consideration of cost cutting measures for Solomons Taiyo Ltd, which produces canned tuna, in order to compensate for the benefits it currently receives under EU trade preferences. One key area being examined for cost cutting is labour costs. One proposal suggested the recruitment of Filipino workers to save costs (Grynberg 1998, 80). These workers would be chosen from the Philippines specifically because it is seen principally as one of the many "low-cost labour countries" (Grynberg 1998, 80).

Although the distinction between 'local' and 'foreign' may be increasingly difficult to discern, it is still possible to perceive large scale foreign ownership and control in the Pacific. In the fisheries sector, Philip Muller, Director of the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, argues that foreign ownership is set to continue well into the next decade, with the US, Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean vessels dominating the long line fishing licences (Muller 1994, 123). This control is not limited to the fisheries sector, however. Corruption and control wielded by foreign corporations in Melanesia was highlighted in the Barnett Commission of Inquiry into the timber industry in PNG in 1990 (Larmour 1997, 2). The findings of the Inquiry were highly embarrassing for several politicians and only two out of seven interim reports were ever published. Additionally in PNG the mining sector is notorious for its ownership and control by foreign companies and especially for its exploitation by Australian companies. There is an extensive literature on the detrimental effects of such practices on local Papua New Guineans (for example, see Temu 1997). The case of PNG's allocation of a seabed mining licence highlights the continuation of these practices. The Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) of Australia and a team of others discovered the seabed nodules in the Bismarck sea in 1994. The original discovery was a by-product of a six-year investigation by the CSIRO, in collaboration with researchers from Canada, Germany, Japan, PNG, and the United States, into how ore deposits are formed on the sea floor (CSIRO 1997). In 1997 applications were sought for mining licences by the Nautilus Minerals Corporation, a Papua New Guinean registered Australian company owned by members of the research team. In 1999 the mining licence was granted to the company. This

highlights the way in which foreign ownership in the seabed mining sector appears set to continue.

The vast majority of production in the Pacific is for subsistence purposes. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) estimates that 70% of the population of the region live in rural villages and sustain themselves through subsistence production, typically taking up wage employment specifically for cash (UNDP 1999, 79). This form of activity is often not regarded as being "real" production by Neoliberals; however, their distinction between industrial and subsistence production as corresponding to "developed" and "developing" requires rethinking. Like the labour of women in the home, subsistence production is not conceived of by Neoliberal theory as "proper" production and work. This highlights the way in which Neoliberal analysis fails to perceive of activity beyond that which takes place in the market place. The definition of production as synonymous with 'industrial' produces an equation which many conservative modernists follow: being a "developed" country equates to being "industrialised" and those countries which engage in widespread subsistence, non-industrial production are not modern or civilised. There is a limited capacity in such a view to perceive other cultures and political economic systems with respect. This simplified categorisation of "industrialised" and "industrialising" or "developed" and "developing" countries is no longer valid or useful. All countries now contain well entrenched divisions of developed and developing communities within their borders. There are many islands of "First World" activity present in many low-income economies and vice versa (Agnew and Corbridge 1995, 167).

In the Pacific the "subsistence" sector enables people to support themselves in periods of "unemployment": that is, employment beyond the market where labour is bought and sold. To complicate matters for Neoliberals, the subsistence sector also means that those who rely on it do not have time to "diversify" into market activities. In a report for AusAID, *The South Pacific: Finance, Development and the Private Sector*, Michael Skully suggests that "... in most [Pacific] countries it is not so much encouraging people to become commercially active, but rather commercially active in a Western sense. This involves conducting business on a daily basis ..." (Skully 1997, 32). This is where Neoliberals feel the urgency for change, to eliminate or radically reconfigure subsistence production, because for Neoliberals people engaged in this production are *underemployed*.

Although Neoliberals claim to want to exclude the government from interference with the market, at the same time they are attempting to apply market principles to the government. In many Pacific islands the major employer is the government which places it in the position of a

significant "producer". This leads Neoliberal international organisations to argue that it is part of their ambit to concern themselves with the "production" and "productivity" of governments even though they claim to separate "politics" from "economics".

The World Bank's latest *Pacific Islands Regional Economic Report* lays down some clear guidelines for government productivity in the Pacific. Their latest proposal includes the recommendation for Pacific states to implement "performance orientated budgeting" which, they argue, "holds the potential to improve the productivity of public expenditure in the PMCs [Pacific Member Countries]" (World Bank 1998, 41). The *Report* explains that performance budgeting was developed in the US in the 1950s and is now most often associated with "the New Zealand public management reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, which are built around a contractual relationship between ministries as purchasers of goods and services, and departments as providers" (World Bank 1998, 33). This new relationship between ministries as purchasers and departments as providers, or more recently of the private sector as providers, conceals the original purpose of government, namely, the distribution of goods and services in a manner consistent with the public good.

Curiously the *Report* fails to further investigate the Aotearoa New Zealand connection. If it had done so it would discover a burgeoning literature on the failure of this inherently Neoliberal policy program (see Kelsey 1995). In Aotearoa New Zealand this program produced a continuous restructuring process within the public service which became disruptive for government departments and made them unproductive.

## V RESISTANCE

In a critique of Neoliberalism, emphasising the resistance dimension is crucial. An overemphasis on Neoliberalism as a dominating and hegemonic force reduces and marginalizes examples of successful resistance and entrenches Neoliberalism's dominance. Maori protest against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment in 1998, the models of development from Bougainville and Vanuatu, and the work done by the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre provide four of many examples of protest from the Pacific.

Resistance to Neoliberalism in the Pacific is strongly connected with two interlinked and overlapping movements: the independence struggles of indigenous peoples and the nuclear free movement. Indigenous movements are involved with various issues and have differing priorities in the Pacific as their historical trajectories have been different. Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, Kanaky (New Caledonia), Rapanui (Easter Island), Te Ao Maohi (French Polynesia), and West Papua continue to be occupied by colonial states. Many other

Pacific states have only relatively recently achieved "state" independence from colonial powers. Following state independence, indigenous people recognised quickly many of the traits of neo-colonialism in the form of TNC exploitation. In this way the discourse of resistance to Neoliberalism and re-colonisation is framed with relation to colonialism. The General Secretary of Melanesian Solidarity, Powes Parkop, argues: "Colonialism takes three forms in the Pacific today... "old European colonial rule" continues in countries such as Tahiti (French Polynesia) and Kanaky (New Caledonia); "south-south colonialism" by Indonesia in East Timor and West Papua; and the "recolonisation" of the region by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and transnational companies" (Dixon 1998). He adds: "becoming a post-colonial state does not mean that colonialism is over"(Dixon 1998). For unique reasons, mainly the adoption by the New Zealand government of Neoliberal policies in the early 1980s and Maori experiences with the effects of this, many Maori name Neoliberalism as an oppressive ideology. In other islands, however, Neoliberalism is rejected under the label of neo-colonialism, re-colonisation or in terms of specific manifestations of its policies.

The two major concerns of the indigenous movements in the Pacific surround land and sovereignty. With regard to Neoliberal production and trade indigenous people in non-occupied territories are fighting back at attempts to individualise land title and are struggling to defend the integrity of their state sovereignty. Although Neoliberals seek the individualisation of land title in order to commodify and enable it to provide "secure" investment, most land in the islands is communally or customarily owned. There are provisions in some countries for long-term leases with the permission of landowners; however, ownership is extremely restricted and these restrictions appear to provide islanders with a protection against dispossession. However, Tarcisius Kabutaulaka points out with regard to the Solomon Islands that: "The fact that foreign logging companies swamped the Solomon Islands at a time when logging was mostly on customary land is an indication that they have established a means of acquiring "security of access" and maintaining it for a period long enough for them to accumulate substantial profit" (Kabutaulaka 2000, 90).

Although customary ownership can act as a protection mechanism, the divisions between indigenous groups can make this at best problematic. For those in occupied territories the return of their land is of utmost importance. In these countries the return of land appears increasingly uncertain, as Neoliberal policies alienate potentially claimable "government" land to private companies and individuals, making it near impossible to secure its return.

Land and sovereignty were the dual concerns for indigenous protests against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in 1998. The OECD countries, including Aotearoa

New Zealand and Australia and the United States governments, had been negotiating the Agreement since 1995. It was in 1998, however, as the Agreement appeared to near completion that protest increased. Mass protests and lobbying by the Maori Tino Rangatiratanga movement forced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Te Puni Kokiri (the Maori Affairs Department) to hold consultations around the country with Maori, at which Maori rejected the MAI in its entirety.

The "No MAI" protests extended to the other Pacific islands via the nuclear free protest networks. The Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) published several articles on the MAI in early 1998. However, the implications of MAI appeared a little distant as most Pacific islands are not OECD members (Pacific News Bulletin 1998a; Pacific News Bulletin 1998b). This sense of distance was a result of a lack of analysis by Pacific governments or the OECD as to the impact on American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, Niue and Tokelau who presumably would have been affected by the MAI via their links to the US and Aotearoa New Zealand. Negotiations on the MAI are currently stalled; if approved, the MAI will still affect Pacific states. Apart from those countries with connections to OECD members, the OECD does pressure their regulations on to non-member countries and encourages non-members to sign their agreements. For example, in July 2000, several Pacific states were listed by the OECD as uncooperative tax havens. The OECD has stated that if these states do not instigate policies as outlined by the OECD, "defensive measures" (OECD 2000, 17-18) will be enacted upon them.

Resistance to Neoliberal policies in the Pacific has led to a Neoliberal backlash, as opponents of "free" trade have been labelled as "anti-trade". This Neoliberal discourse has trapped opposition groups into having to fight their way out of the Neoliberal constructed dichotomy of free trade vs. protectionism. In the Pacific, the response which resistance groups are taking has been that they are not anti-trade, just anti-Neoliberal trade. Fei Tevi from the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) says: "We do not oppose trade liberalization, but we are more concerned that it deals without a safety net for industries and without social ramifications considered, such as increased unemployment and social unrest" (Phelan 1999). The NGO Parallel Forum stated that they viewed the establishment of an FTA with caution, not because they are anti-trade but because they feared the area "may not be based on mutual respect, fair trade and appropriate environmental standards" (NGO Parallel Forum Communique 1998). The participants of the NGO Parallel Forum are not arguing against trade in itself, but against the types of trade which they perceive as producing oppression. As an alternative, they advocate bilateral trade agreements leading to "healthy integration" as opposed to "dominating by imposed economic models" (NGO Parallel Forum Communique 1998). Tevi adds: "APEC is simply not feasible for us. Unbridled free trade affects the common

life of Pacific Islanders." He notes that the values of competition which are promoted by Neoliberal trade have not been a part of the Pacific way. He says "[a]t this stage the Pacific has the choice to opt not to be part of APEC. We shouldn't jump on the bandwagon - there are no bandwagons in the Pacific. We have canoes" (Phelan 1999). Entering into bilateral agreements contains the same risks, however, if Neoliberal principles are also being intended for use and endorsement in the Pacific.

The PCRC takes a similar position on the WTO as do other "developing" countries. Tevi reiterates the arguments made by Martin Khor of the Third World Network for the "review, repair and reform of the WTO." Tevi argues that the WTO policies have not produced benefits for the Pacific or developing countries. He argues that 1.6 billion people are economically worse off today than 15 years ago. Statistics from the Human Development Report support this position, with the 1999 Report stating that "many millions of people are being further marginalized" and "only 33 countries achieved sustained three percent annual growth in gross national product (GNP) per capita during 1980-96" (United Nations Development Programme 1999, 3).

Much of the resistance to romantic Neoliberalism in the Pacific comes from criticism of local manifestations of Neoliberal policies. Many Pacific Islanders protest and direct their activism at the outcomes of Neoliberal policies, without naming Neoliberalism directly. Pacific Islanders may attack "privatisation" as opposed to "Neoliberalism", but it is the same ideology and process which is being criticised.

It could be argued that Neoliberalism is simply a theory, not an ideology, and that it is just about "simple" changes in the constitution and shape of society. This apparent division between "theory" and "practice" suggests that perhaps Neoliberal theory has nothing to do with a widening of the gap between "rich" and "poor" in the Pacific, as these are just "social" problems. This is where Neoliberal romanticism can be discredited. When the "politics" and the "economics" which are customarily separated by Neoliberalism, are combined the policies and their results become increasingly transparent. Neoliberal theorists have realised that denying that their policies have damaging effects is unfeasible. Thus they claim that although the effects of their policies are bad now, they will eventually get better and, more importantly, they would have been even worse if not implemented at all. Neoliberal prescriptions for free trade do acknowledge that there will be "adjustment costs" (Scollay and Gilbert 1998, 118) but this acknowledgement is seen almost in terms of hurting the "instigators" more than the "victims". The problem with this scenario, however, is that evidence from other parts of the world, especially the developing world, has shown that standards of living and the gaps

between rich and poor and standards of health and education do not improve after massive cutbacks to the public sector (Castro 2000). In Aotearoa New Zealand the number of people living below the poverty line rose to an estimated 35 percent between 1982 and 1992, a key period of Neoliberal policy implementation (Kelsey 1996, 104). Fiji is often held up as the example of 'successful' export orientated strategies. However, recent studies indicate that the gap within Fiji between rich and poor is widening at a time when the Fijian economy is claimed to be booming (Radio Australia 2000). In 1999 it is estimated that Fiji's economy grew by about 7.8 percent (Fiji's Daily Post 2000). Fiji's Welfare Department recently released research showing that between 1992 and 1997 requests for family financial assistance jumped by 46 percent (Radio Australia 2000).

Although there may be difficulties in defining the barriers of "resistance", clear examples of activity are taking place with indigenous models of development also being successfully implemented. Many of the incidences of resistance, however, are not perceived as such. It is seen as just a local/cultural way of conducting political economic affairs. This in no way detracts from the fact that it represents a challenge to Neoliberalism. The strengthening of indigenous political, economic and cultural frameworks seriously undermines the values which underpin a Neoliberal worldview. The most significant barrier to the knowledge of the existence of these models is that in Pacific oral cultures much of this knowledge is not written down. The only way for "outsiders" to come to know about these instances is by actually visiting these countries. The other significant factor is that the people involved do not always perceive what is going on as "resistance".

Two examples of this resistance are the Bougainville Community Based Integrated Humanitarian Program (BOCBIHP) and the Turaga Nation Peace model from Pentecost in Vanuatu.

The BOCBIHP model was developed under the Papua New Guinean blockade as a self-help integrated community-based program to combat continued deprivation of essential medical drugs, clothing, safe water supply, food and security (Havini 2000, 24). It was also accompanied with a desire for freedom from foreign leadership and interference.

The population have developed this model for and by their community and in terms of interference from non-Bougainvillian sources. Havini asserts that "[t]o over ride or compete with the existing infrastructure will not only waste valuable resources on duplication of services, but it will challenge the whole philosophy of self reliance to a people who will reject dependency in any new guise that is presented" (Havini 2000, 23).

The BOCBIHP aim of self reliance is a direct challenge for Neoliberal policies aimed at "integrating" all nations into a global political economy. Producing goods and providing services locally, creating a system which encourages work that is unpaid and rejects the Neoliberal concept of the maximisation of profit and production, is a serious affront to a Neoliberal global system. As this system came to fruition under an externally imposed isolation, multiple questions must be asked regarding the "aid" giving and accompanying international development structures.

The Turaga Nation in Vanuatu is another example of the way in which an indigenous community is actively practising a system that demonstrates the existence of successful alternatives to Neoliberalism.

The Turaga Nation is based on the island of Pentecost and has its own education and banking system. The nation's main challenge to Neoliberalism can be seen as stemming from its education system, particularly the Melanesian Institute of Philosophy and Technology established in 1997, which, like the Bougainvillian model, advocates self reliance. The institute is a "co-ordinating centre for indigenous education and its relationship to all indigenous systems of living" (Lini 2000, 7). The Institute takes children and adults and teaches them indigenous laws for a minimum of four years before specialisation. Hilda Lini, Director of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre who is from the Turaga Nation, says: "The overall aim of the institute is to preserve, teach and promote Melanesian indigenous values. This is a community initiative set up after 20 years of analytical researching and piloting which proved that [the] indigenous education system [is] yet the most appropriate for Vanuatu because it safeguards respect, human values, leadership qualities and economic empowerment for self reliance" (Lini 2000, 7).

The Turaga Nation's education system is intricately connected to their banking and economic system as it specifically teaches people what is required to be "economically self-supporting" (Lini 2000, 7).

The Turaga Nation's inclusion of the concept of peace in its development alternative also modifies the discourse of Neoliberal development which not only pays scant attention to peace but, as some scholars have argued, actually increases violence in societies as unemployment rates, or in Neoliberal parlance "adjustment costs", take effect.

Indigenous movements in the Pacific have different priorities in their struggles and as a result, the trajectories, rhetoric, and the dynamics of these are very different (Linnekin 1997, 400). The governments of Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and Hawaii have been more open

that their policies are Neoliberal. As a result, Maori for example have become explicit that their attacks are on Neoliberalism as an ideology, as well as its manifestations on the Maori community. In her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith is explicit in her connection of the shift by the government in Aotearoa New Zealand towards Neoliberalism and the profound implications for Maori cultural values and practices (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999, 189).

The very process of writing, or writing out, is essential for what gets attention and legitimacy in international relations scholarship in the Pacific. Much has been written on the importance of writing as a political act (Clark and Ivanic 1997). If a romantic Neoliberal perception of the world is adopted by practitioners of international relations in the Pacific, then they will be limited to "seeing" as relevant only those objects which this ideology conceives as legitimate. As has been previously argued, Neoliberalism considers the economy the most legitimate object of attention. Through a Neoliberal division of "politics" and "economics", Neoliberalism does not see an analysis of social movements or "resistance" as relevant to discussions of what they call "international economics". Neoliberal theorists are interested in "resistance" insofar as it threatens the stability of the country's economy, the "enabling environment"; however, they do not see resistance concerns as taking precedence over the needs of the economy. Therefore the arguments and alternatives proposed by resistance movements are not seen as valid. At a more fundamental level they are not seen as valid because they are to a large extent openly subjective and employ proposals which extend beyond the realm of a capitalist system.

As previously discussed, Neoliberals separate what they consider "political" from "economic" concerns. To Neoliberals the "political" represents and includes accounts of the world which are value laden and which are therefore not "fact". The combination of these two features severely limits Neoliberal analysis as it can only conceive of its own types of analysis as relevant to discussions of the economy, believing these to be the only truly neutral accounts. As a result the SPF will not commission the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement (NFIP), for example, to provide an analysis on the benefits of an FTA as it cannot conceive that the NFIP has anything to do with "economics" or that its opinion can be valid. This shows the way in which theory influences practice. Theory does matter, particularly dominating and romantic theory.

## **VI NUCLEAR FREE AND INDEPENDENT PACIFIC**

The testing, transportation and storage of nuclear weapons and waste in the Pacific has produced a successful resistance structure which is also now utilised to fight Neoliberalism.

The NFIP was originally established for the purpose of campaigning against nuclear weapons. It soon developed into other areas. This move displayed the way in which land and sea in the Pacific and environmental concerns are "central to Pacific people's values and customs" (Hamel-Green 1996, 145). The movement provides an important voice to regional governments and institutions against Neoliberal policies.

The Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) is the steering committee for the NFIP and has been active in the NGO Parallel Forum which, as the name suggests, takes place alongside, but separate from, the South Pacific Forum annual meeting. The communiqués from the Parallel Forum have been overt in their resistance to Neoliberal policies. On the issue of economic development the *Fourth NGO Parallel Forum Communique* specifically highlighted the FEMM Action Plan, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), and APEC Non-Binding Investment Principles as flawed economic models (NGO Parallel Forum Communique 1998).

The Communique explicitly compared these Neoliberal economic models to colonialism. The similarities between colonisation are explicit although now re-colonisation is no longer solidly state-based, utilising a combination of state, TNC, and intellectual pressure.

The PCRC has been involved in numerous conferences, playing a "vital role in the articulation of Pacific peoples' interests at both the national and international forums where key policies and decisions are being developed or made" (Hamel-Green 1996, 151). In 1995 the PCRC organized a meeting which led to the "Declaration of the Regional Meeting of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives on the Conservation and Protection of Indigenous Peoples' Knowledge Systems". The Declaration made reference to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, urging Pacific governments not to sign in light of the fact that it failed to adequately protect indigenous knowledge and resources. This urging also contained a deeper rejection of the principles upon which Neoliberalism is based. Commodification results in the destruction and alienation of indigenous peoples' rights and their properties.

The PCRC's published update, the *Pacific News Bulletin*, increasingly covers issues regarding Neoliberalism. It challenges assumptions regarding the benefits of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the WTO, agreements like the MAI and publishes articles from activists of other 'developing' countries in the world who also perceive these Neoliberal organizations as largely detrimental. The *Pacific News Bulletin* provides a literature on the effects of Neoliberal policies in the Pacific.

## VI REFLECTIONS

Neoliberalism is a flourishing ideology in the Pacific. It is supported worldwide by not only an institutional web of support but also an intellectual one. It is this intellectual support, the foundation of Neoliberalism as a re-colonising force, which is strongly defended by many international relations and conservative Pacific scholars. Indigenous resistance in the Pacific has long been aware, however, of the vital importance of a culture's knowledge and perception of the world.

The SPF is a crucial factor in the sustenance of a process of re-colonisation at a regional Pacific level. The SPF does not work "alone" or out of line with many Pacific island "leaders" and governments but is rather supported by them.

In the Pacific the extent of subsistence production makes farcical Neoliberal attempts to define "production" as simply "production for exchange in the market". Neoliberalism focuses on exchange; production in the Pacific matters not only in terms of subsistence but also cultural obligations. By excluding other modes of production from their analysis Neoliberals strengthen the simplicity and simplistic nature of their case.

The Neoliberal inevitability thesis is a powerful myth which has the potential to engulf decision-makers. It places them in a position where they are provided solely with Neoliberal policies, where the simplicity, rationality and sensibility of these policies appears overwhelming, and where they are convinced that "exogenous global changes" are such that Neoliberal policies must be implemented as they are the global standard. However, these changes are not inevitable and with successful resistance growing, there are increasing assertions of world views that are a far cry from a Neoliberal one.

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