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Rethinking Polynesian Mobility:
A New Polynesian Triangle?

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Biographical Note

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Introduction

The notion of a 'Polynesian Triangle' stretching from Hawai'i in the north, to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the west and Aotearoa/New Zealand in the south, was first posed by European ethnographers attempting to gauge the extent of Polynesian settlement of the islands of the Pacific (Kirch 2000: 230-245). Movement, often over long distances, has characterized the history of Polynesian peoples: 'so much of the welfare of ordinary people of Oceania depends on informal movement along ancient routes drawn in bloodlines' (Hau'ofa 1993:11). Despite the impact of colonisation and the development of nation-states, with their associated regimes of surveillance and passport control, Polynesian migration has continued on to the present day and in fact, it has expanded in scope: 'The island realms have increasingly become arenas of migration, mobility, movement and multiple meanings, as individuals and households move – whether physically or metaphorically – between different worlds and different spaces' (Connell and Conway 2000:56). Thus in contemporary times people of the Pacific '... are once again enlarging their world, establishing new resource bases and expanding networks for circulation' (Hau'ofa 1993:11).

For many Polynesians migration is still framed within a particular spatial context, though on an enlarged scale - one which we have termed the New Polynesian Triangle. With its apexes in the North American continent to the east, Australia in the west and New Zealand in the south, this new Polynesian triangle encompasses a particular field through which ongoing Polynesian migration and movement continues to occur.

Researchers have been documenting the significance and dynamism of Polynesian migration for many years now, and we build upon this work in our article. Movement within this New Polynesian Triangle is both multi-dimensional and multi-directional. While it is the movement of economic resources, particularly remittances, that has captured the interest of many agencies operating in the region, we argue that such economic flows are integrally linked with other flows – of goods, ideas, skills, and culture - to form a single dynamic system of movement. Importantly, such flows are not uni-directional (from 'rich' to 'poor' countries) as was assumed in times past.

Furthermore we contend that the literature on Polynesian migration has major gaps. In particular, there is a lack of attention placed on the international migration of Polynesians based in metropolitan countries, specifically, New Zealand Māori and indigenous Hawaiians. As Polynesians, they too have been caught up in the dramatic changes in the region. They share with other Polynesians a history of movement, often across great oceans, and a colonial past. They too have moved to remove themselves from sometimes difficult circumstances and to explore new opportunities for families and wider social groups.[1]

Rather than seeing the continuing movement of Polynesian peoples across large distances as a sign of desperation in the face of the non-viability of small island states (as suggested by certain interest groups – see Hughes 2003) or their failure to seize opportunities which exist to them within their own country (e.g. for native Hawaiians or New Zealand Māori), we regard this movement as a

continuation of the exploratory processes which were established centuries ago in Polynesian societies. As contemporary migration theorists are now arguing, 'Migration should be seen as … an integral part of societies rather than a sign of rupture - an essential element in people's livelihoods, whether rich or poor' (De Hann 1999:14-15). We concur with Gough (2006:32), who speaks of movement of Polynesian peoples in terms of 'a culture of mobility'. Thus in developing ideas on the New Polynesian Triangle, we wish to move away from the dominant Western discourse of the Pacific Ocean as a barrier to development and movement and towards the reclamation of the Ocean as a conduit and source of connection and movement for Pacific peoples (Hau'ofa 1993).

In this article we begin by discussing the history of Polynesian migration and then raise specific issues related to our notion of a New Polynesian Triangle, including exploration of the types of movement that occur and the motivations of Polynesian migrants. We also weave into this discussion contemporary ideas on mobility from the international migration literature. In so doing, we aim to show the value of conceptualising movement of Polynesian peoples within a New - expanded - Polynesian Triangle.

The Making of the Polynesian Triangle

The First Polynesian Triangle

The Polynesian Triangle, built upon the notion of 'Polynesia' coined by the French explorer Dumont D'Urville in the 1820s (Campbell 1989:14), was the product of a long and sustained epoch of exploration and settlement by Austronesian-speaking people who came to the Pacific Ocean probably by way of Southeast Asia from about 5,000 years before present. They brought a strong maritime culture and were able to navigate long sea journeys. This long wave of settlement moved through the inhabited parts of Melanesia to a hearth in Samoa and Tonga, eventually spreading to Eastern Polynesia as far as Rapa Nui (Easter Island), north to Hawai'i and finally, about a thousand years ago, south to Aotearoa/New Zealand (Howe 2003).

These three island groups defined the corners of a broad cultural group with strong similarities in language and culture, despite the evolution of distinctive local forms. The Triangle was neither regular in shape nor fixed in composition. There was interaction with neighbouring Melanesian people, as in eastern Fiji, and there were later waves of settlement, for example to the Polynesian 'outliers': small islands such as Rennell and Ontong Java in Melanesia.

One common fallacy that recent archaeological, linguistic and genetic evidence has put to rest, was the mistaken belief that this Polynesian migration was a haphazard affair owing more to chance than to concerted action (Howe 2003: 92-138). Polynesian explorers purposefully traversed the Pacific settling new islands and atolls, maintaining extensive trading links across the large sections of the Ocean. Proof of this multi-directional travel is no more apparent than in the dispersal across the Pacific of the sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*), a South American domesticate. In many respects then this first wave of Polynesian migration and voyaging is an early example of chain-migration – where

individuals or families follow their kith and kin who have already established settlements in the new territories and who provide support for those who come later.

This pattern of Polynesian migration continued up to and beyond the period of European contact. However, rather than travelling on their traditional vessels this new generation of Polynesian travelers traversed the Pacific as labourers and navigators on European trading and whaling vessels. In addition, Polynesian men were recruited (not always voluntarily) as labourers for plantations across the Pacific, occasionally marrying into local populations although many often returned to their original homes after the conclusion of their contract (Lal et al 1993). In this way, kinship networks were maintained even though Polynesian people travelled great distances, often for long periods of time. Many customary connections with other islands and distant kin were also maintained, despite the fact that these lines of connection were crossed by new national boundaries.

Colonial control over movement

During this initial contact period traditional forms of Polynesian leadership continued to exert their authority over their peoples, although with some social change necessarily occurring due to the growth in number of European traders and plantation owners in the region and the uptake by Polynesian peoples of European technology. However, with the expansion of colonialism in the nineteenth century the Pacific began to be carved up by the various competing European and American powers. By the end of the nineteenth century the entire Pacific region had been claimed by some or other European or American power.[2] It was during this period, as Polynesians were incorporated into the European international system, that Polynesians began to be seen as being poor 'natives' cut off from the wider world – trapped as they were on their remote islands. Thus, Epeli Hau'ofa has argued:

> Nineteenth century imperialism erected boundaries that led to the contraction of Oceania, transforming a once boundless world into the Pacific islands states and territories that we know today. People were confined to their tiny spaces, isolated from each other. No longer could they travel freely to do what they had done for centuries. They were cut off from their relatives abroad, from their far-flung sources of wealth and cultural enrichment. This is the historical basis of the view that our countries are small, poor and isolated. It is only true so far as people are still fenced in and quarantined (Hau'ofa 1993: 10).

While the events of World War I and II saw some changes in terms of who administered and ran the various colonial territories of the Pacific, the region remained colonised well into the 1970s and the colonial imprint on people's movement remained well beyond decolonisation. Polynesian countries which retained strong links with their colonial administrators or rulers received considerable economic support from the metropoles and have had access to their labour markets. Thus American Samoans have had easy access to the mainland United States, and residents of Niue, the Cook Islands and Tokelau, Islands although governing themselves in 'free association' with New Zealand, can access New Zealand passports and thus the New Zealand and Australian labour markets. Samoans enjoy a special relationship with New Zealand as a former colonial

power which gives them some preferential treatment migrating there and residents of French Polynesia have the rights of French citizens. The British have, in contrast, restricted access for their former colonial subjects to Britain almost completely.

While writers such as Crocombe (1994: 311-12) acknowledge the influence of these colonial ties on movement of Polynesian peoples, they generally fail to consider the free right of access Hawai'ians have to the continental USA and that of New Zealand Māori to Australia. These rights of access are important in light of the way in which the New Polynesian Triangle proposed in this paper is framed.

Economic nationalism

The late colonial period, following the end of the Second World War, marked a change in Polynesian migration. This period saw a significant transformation in the political and economic direction of development. It did not greatly change the parameters of the Polynesian Triangle but it did markedly affect the volume and direction of migration within it.

In the 1950s industrialized countries, including the United States, Australia and New Zealand, adopted economic development strategies that drew their inspiration from Keynes and aimed for full employment and sustained economic growth. It was a form of economic nationalism, for it often rested on policies of economic protectionism, sheltering local industries from foreign competition, and it involved strong economic leadership and intervention from the state. Such import substitution industrialization created a high demand for labour. In the United States, some of this gap was filled by Hawai'ians who left home partly in response to the appropriation of Hawai'ian land for the tourist industry on the one hand, and the United States military on the other (Drzewiecka and Halualani 2002). With a requirement of a 50 percent blood quantum to be recognized as 'Hawai'ian' and thus be able to claim homestead lands, many native Hawai'ians chose to look for opportunities in the growing industries on the mainland. Many joined the United States military and were stationed on the mainland (Drzewiecka and Halualani 2002). In Australia much of the labour demand was met by post-war immigration from Europe, but in New Zealand, employers in factories, farms and service industries increasingly turned to Polynesian labour. Māori rural to urban migration increased sharply in the 1950s and 1960s as new opportunities opened in agricultural processing industries, forestry and manufacturing (Barcham 2004). More Māori also took advantage of their open access to the Australian economy. Thus while there were only 197 registered Māori in Australia in 1933, by 1966 this number had risen to over 6,000 (Walrond 2007). Economic growth continued and, with virtual full employment in New Zealand through the 1950s and 1960s, labour was in short supply. Workers from the Pacific Islands became more in evidence, cutting scrub on newly-settled farms, processing meat in provincial 'freezing works' or on the factory floors of South Auckland. Such movement was eased by relatively liberal immigration laws which, as well as allowing the free movement into New Zealand of people from the Cook Islands, Niue and the Tokelaus, opened quota for Samoa and, in practice, turned a blind eye to many who traveled to and stayed in New Zealand.

The movement of Polynesian workers to the United States, New Zealand and Australia received a considerable boost with the spread of new transport

technologies and infrastructure in the 1960s and 1970s. Jet aircraft operating from newly-constructed airports in places such as Rarotonga, Pago Pago, Apia and Nuku'alofa linked these places with Auckland, Sydney and Los Angeles much more closely than ever before. Travel became cheaper and much quicker. Where there was open access to metropolitan labour markets (as with people from Hawai'i to the US mainland, from the Cook Islands to New Zealand, or from New Zealand to Australia), Polynesian people moved to seek well-paying jobs. They could also plan to return home on a regular basis. Labour migration became a much more straightforward proposition and one that no longer necessitated long periods of absence or breaks from social networks.

Another dimension to this late colonial era was the way metropolitan countries subsidized welfare and incomes in their Polynesian colonies. In the Cold War geo-political setting, it was important for colonial powers (in Polynesia, this meant France, New Zealand and the USA) to ensure political stability and social order and keep Soviet and Chinese influence to a minimum. Despite their small population size, Polynesian island states were able to exercise considerable diplomatic leverage and literally cash in on their strategic value. Aid levels were high – amongst the highest per capita in the world – and this allowed countries to maintain relatively large bureaucracies, offer reasonable incomes in the public sector and stem some of the flow of migrants. In addition, there were attempts to bolster rural development in both the colonies and metropoles. For example, New Zealand used to purchase much of its tropical fruit from the Pacific Islands, extending its virtual protective trade barrier to encompass its Polynesian territories. Subsidization of agriculture and the welfare state at home also helped boost rural incomes and slow the rate of Māori migration to the cities (Barcham 2004).

This era of state-led development in both the Pacific Rim and the Pacific Island colonies did much to both raise the incomes of Polynesian people and increase their participation in the modern economies. Although employment was often only available in the lower levels of the labour markets, full employment meant that wages were good and employment secure. Choices opened up. At home, there was the comfort of the cultural hearth supported by either aid and bureaucracy or the welfare state. In the industrial towns and cities of the Rim there was good employment and schools for the children of workers and their relatives. By the late 1960s, therefore, well-established migration chains were bringing substantial numbers of Pacific Island migrants into New Zealand, and small numbers were arriving in Hawaii and Los Angeles as well.

In New Zealand, Polynesian migrants were focused in the three largest cities of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. However increasing numbers of Pacific Islanders were also moving to smaller centres such as Tokoroa or Hastings to work in primary industries. There was a also strong push from migrants for the education of their children and kinship networks were soon being established that linked their old and new homes so that not only were new arrivals able to be greeted into the houses, churches and workplaces of their relatives but also aunties were able to offer a home to nieces, nephews and cousins while they attended schools.

So there was much new movement in this era, but still largely within the bounds of the old Polynesian Triangle. Most movement was from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand, or involved Māori rural to urban migration. A small migration stream was also established between Hawai'i and the USA mainland.

A new, expanded Polynesian Triangle

Soon, however, there were signs of an expansion of the triangle's boundaries. Polynesian – including New Zealand Māori - population flows into Australia were facilitated by the close harmonisation of Australian and New Zealand immigration policy throughout the twentieth century.[3] Australia, like New Zealand, was also keen to attract new workers for its expanding industries and both governments opened up their borders to allow in Pacific Island migrants (Barcham 2004; Gibson 1983; Ongley 1981). Māori and Pacific Island communities began to be established in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, in particular.

Elsewhere in the region there were also some small openings. Residents of American Samoa could gain free access to USA and, because of the close kin connections between the two Samoas, the Western Seaboard of the USA began to become a favoured destination for Samoan people, a movement again driven by economic expansion on the Rim and facilitated by new transport links (Macpherson 1997).

Hawai'ian migration to the mainland escalated in the 1970s in response to a perceived 'invasion' by tourists and the growth of the tourism industry, and also the failure of the Department of Hawaiian Homelands to allocate homestead lands to 'proven' Hawai'ians (Halualani 2003). There were significant 'push' factors at play, related to the lack of recognition of native Hawai'ian rights, therefore: 'Hawaiians dispersed to other spaces away from Hawai'i to realize a stable, or at least better, economic living, and to retreat from the ineffective and unjust local government and its state agencies' (Drzewiecka and Halualani 2002: 352-353). This has had sometimes devastating impacts on rural Hawai'ian settlements whereby '… entire Native communities have been dismembered and displaced' (Trask 2000: 376).

This pattern of late colonial Polynesian migration began to transform the region but it showed signs of change in the mid 1970s. Following the oil shocks of that decade, the economy of New Zealand in particular slowed markedly and the old Keynesian strategies appeared to offer no solution. Full employment ended and one of the first government responses was to turn its attention to its immigration policies and practices. It tightened entry requirements and began to seek out and deport immigration 'overstayers'. This was seen most blatantly in the notorious dawn raids of the mid 1970s when New Zealand-based Polynesians, rather than other immigrant groups, were targeted for deportation (Spoonley et al. 2003). It was to be several more years before a more fundamental examination of the structural causes of New Zealand's economic woes led to a reformulation of Polynesian migration.

Effects of economic reforms in the 1980s and 1990s

Economic restructuring following neoliberal economic theories became a worldwide phenomenon in the 1980s. The programs of reform and deregulation that characterised the Australian and New Zealand economies in this period followed a well-established recipe of trade liberalization, deregulation, privatisation and an end to the subsidization of private enterprise. The results shook the very foundations of these economies, New Zealand in particular. Previously heavily subsidized industries could not compete internationally and

either closed or moved off-shore, public service employment was cut significantly and welfare services were reduced. Even Australia seemed to offer little relief, for unemployment levels rose there too. The result was widespread unemployment across entire economies, with the impact of these reforms being felt particularly hard by low-skilled workers in the primary and manufacturing industries such as freezing works, where in New Zealand employment fell by some 40 percent (Le Heron and Pawson 1996: 142). As these were sections of the workforce where the majority of both Australia and New Zealand's Polynesian workforce was concentrated, this period of reform and restructuring thus had a particularly dramatic effect on these groups, meaning that large numbers of Polynesians were now unemployed.

One response to the economic crisis for Polynesians was for return migration, to move back to the islands or rural areas where at least a low-cost semi-subsistence lifestyle could shield them from the harshness of unemployment in the cities. For Many Māori, such unemployment was a new experience as throughout the 1970s and early 1980s the labour force participation rates of Māori men and women had regularly been higher than those of non-Māori. Thus while the labour force participation rate of Māori men sat around 80-85 percent for the thirty years from 1951 to 1981, by the end of 1991 it had fallen to only 67 percent (Barcham 2004: 171). Many moved abroad to seek out new opportunities - the Māori population in Australia had risen to over 26,000 by 1986. Here they had become so significant a group that they were sometimes nicknames Ngāti Kangaru, Ngāti Skippy and Maussies (Māori Aussies) (Walrond 2007). Another option was to move back to one's tribal homelands. Thus between 1991 and 1996, a time when welfare benefits were cut and unemployment remained high, Māori populations in traditional rural areas such as Northland and East Coast in New Zealand increased noticeably (Barcham 2004).

Another response to the economic crisis was seen in Hawai'i. Here, a major wave of out-migration occurred in the 1990s in response to the rising cost of living, including the cost of houses, and lack of adequately-paid job opportunities in Hawai'i. However, this movement must also be understood as being embedded in the ongoing political conflict between native peoples and the state over land rights and cultural entitlements (Halualani 2003). As opposed to the New Zealand situation, whereby Treaty settlements meant that large tracts of land were being returned to some Māori groups and reparations were made by the government, in Hawai'i even those with recognized indigenous status struggled to gain access to homelands. Thus in New Zealand, urban to rural migration was a viable option for some whereas in Hawai'i, movement offshore was seen as the most logical step to enhance one's opportunities.

For other Polynesians the reforms eventually took on a second aspect, affecting even the living standards at home. Changes in aid policies removed the direct subsidy for bureaucracies in the island states (Scheyvens & Overton 1995) and aid donors in the region, especially New Zealand, Australia, the USA and even France, forced their client states, by reduced and restructured aid packages, to undergo the same neoliberal restructuring that they had endured. The effect was painful: in the Cook Islands, the civil service was reduced in one hit by fifty percent in 1996 (Koteka-Wright 2007). The effect of neoliberal reforms was more severe in small island states than in the metropoles, at least in terms of formal sector employment, although access to land and the means of subsistence did provide a safety net that was largely absent elsewhere.

With unemployment rising in the metropolitan industrial cities, welfare support cut in both the cities and (for Māori) in rural New Zealand, and aid reductions diminishing employment prospects and incomes at home, it was apparent that Polynesian people, hitherto welcome in the industrialized economies during the years of expansion, no longer had a secure place there and they suffered more than most from restructuring. Furthermore, whilst the neoliberal agenda aimed to open national borders to trade and investment, it did not extend to a liberalization of immigration: 'control over the movement of people has become the last bastion of sovereignty' (Dauvergne 2004: 588). Although New Zealand has opened up to immigration from new source countries, this has mainly been to those with financial resources or required formal skills and it continues to strongly regulate in-migration from the Pacific (Spoonley et al. 2003:42). However, this may be changing as New Zealand has recently announced a Seasonal Work Permit Pilot Policy to help meet labour shortages in the horticultural and viticultural industries (Immigration New Zealand 2006). This scheme will provide opportunities for Pacific Islanders and others from specified countries to work for short periods of time in New Zealand.

While various migration patterns have thus emerged in recent decades, a dominant factor is that net migration figures are negative in almost all Polynesian countries (Duncan et al. 2006). Interestingly, however, the Cook Islands too has had to bring in more foreign workers in recent years to fill gaps in the labour market caused by high rates of out migration. Here, however, they mainly move in to semi-skilled positions in the tourism industry. Consequently there was a doubling of foreign work permits issued in the Cook Islands between 1996 and 2004 (Koteka-Wright 2007).

It seems, then, that globalization should have affected Polynesian migration; and, if anything, led to a contraction of the triangle as former migrants returned home. Yet, this paper argues that the reverse has happened. In an increasingly unfavourable geo-political climate, Polynesians have moved even further afield – yet this expansion of movement has, for too long, been disregarded. Hau'ofa has argued that

> [We must not…] overlook culture, history, and the contemporary processes of 'world enlargement' carried out by tens of thousands of ordinary Pacific islanders right across the ocean from east to west and north to south, under the very noses of academic and consultancy experts, regional and international development agencies, bureaucratic planners and their advisors, and customs and immigration officials, making nonsense of all national and economic boundaries, borders that have been defined only recently, crisscrossing an ocean that had been boundless for ages before Captain Cook's apotheosis (Hau'ofa 1993: 6).

Polynesian populations are now sizable and significant in Australia and the western seaboard of North America and the new Polynesian Triangle now encompasses areas of settlement in these industrialized regions. In this movement, Polynesian people have exploited the few options that have been opened by former colonial relationships, allowing movement of some to New Zealand, Australia, France, New Caledonia or the USA. They have drawn on their skills and experience gained from previous years of employment and they have been able to utilize cultural resources to open up new opportunities for work and

residence and smooth the transition to life in a new country. It is to these distinctive Polynesian characteristics of migration that we now turn.

In tracing the contours and nature of the new Polynesian Triangle, it is apparent that a simple political economy approach cannot readily explain the how and why Polynesian people seemed to have been able to adapt to new and seemingly adverse conditions within the global economy. We also feel that a purely economic perspective on migration, emphasising factors such as wage differentials, is similarly inadequate. Thus in the following section we turn instead to an examination of the way Polynesian people have been able to draw upon their cultures, on their kinship networks and their associated social capital, to open and exploit new opportunities for movement and development. In doing so, we draw on the international migration literature and ways in which recent theorists have attempted to explain movement and flows of people around the world.

Themes in contemporary Polynesian Movement

This section begins with a discussion of the rationale for looking beyond economics in understanding migration. It also details the multidimensional ties that motivate movement but which simultaneously bind Polynesian peoples to their homelands, resulting in movement that is also multidirectional. The section finishes with a discussion of contemporary Polynesian movement in relation to the concept of transnationalism.

Beyond the economic rationale: the multidimensional nature of migration

In conceptualising the motivations for movement of people within the Polynesian triangle, our research concurs with a general trend in migration studies whereby researchers are deliberately moving away from the neoclassical economics-based studies which focus on movement of 'rational individuals' in response to labour shortages or greater economic opportunity in the destination site. Rather, social-cultural factors can be seen as framing many decisions made about migration, and political dimensions also need to be considered (Afolayan 2001).

To date the literature on Polynesian migration has focused overwhelmingly economic causes of migration and on associated economic flows. In particular, Bertram and Watters' (1985) concept of the MIRAB (Migration, Remittances, Aid, Bureaucracy) economy has structured both academic debate and policy construction in and about Polynesian states in the Pacific. The traditional MIRAB model conceived migration as something of a 'safety valve' in the face of poor employment opportunities and population pressures on people's home islands (Marsters et al. 2006:33). It also raised questions about whether development can be sustainable in countries where external resource transfers rather than productive activity within the country drive the economy. Whilst the MIRAB model did much to highlight the particular characteristics of small island states and the close relationships they have with metropolitan patron states, and thus argued for a continuation of such ties rather than a neoliberal-inspired weakening of state aid and welfare strategies, the model fed, perhaps unintentionally, into

neoliberal arguments about the viability of small island states. Even reworkings of the MIRAB model are largely entrenched in the new economics of labour migration school of thought (see volume 47, number 1, 2006 of *Asia-Pacific Viewpoint*), which does not appreciate the multidimensional nature of flows associated with migration. As Marsters et al. (2006:31) point out, 'Cook Islanders live in rich networks of flows of goods, people, labour and meaning that the MIRAB model does not fully capture'. Researchers working on Polynesian case studies have started to acknowledge a number of significant 'non-economic returns' from migration (Connell and Conway 2000:53). Such returns were easily identified in a study of the Cook Islanders who had moved to New Zealand in direct response to the economic restructuring of 1996: only 38.5 percent of respondents felt they were financially better off in New Zealand than in the Cook Islands. However they tolerated this situation because of other perceived advantages mainly in relation to health and education services (Koteka-Wright 2007:114).

One easily identifiable non-economic reason for migration of Polynesian peoples has been religion. This is particularly obvious in the case of movement of Mormons to the state of Utah. There were around 300 Māori families living in Utah in 2000 (Walrond 2007).

Neoliberal logic has informed much of the interpretation of patterns of migration and flows of remittances, offering only partial – sometimes flawed – insights into the reality of Polynesian movement and what it means to Polynesian peoples. For example, much interest in remittances has focused narrowly on the nature of expenditure, determining that this was 'unproductive' and used mainly for conspicuous consumption (World Bank 1993: 3). A number of authors have now criticized this stance, including Connell and Conway (2000) who identify a range of different uses of remittances and show how they are in fact achieving a wide range of development outcomes. For example, remittances of cash or goods (often with associated skills and knowledge transfers) have been used to support a wide range of business ventures, from petty trading in the informal sector to more substantial enterprises. When remittances are used to support household consumption, this is often used to meet the welfare needs of children and aged parents. House construction through remittances can also contribute to improved family welfare or, in cases where the house is then rented out, is a sound economic investment (Connell and Conway 2000: 67). Clearly, therefore '… there is a far richer complexity to remittance practices than the strategic accumulation of wealth or underwriting of consumption in a home village' (Marsters et al. 2006: 33). Furthermore, economic theories cannot explain why remittances are often bi-directional.

We thus gain a much deeper understanding of migration and remittances when we look beyond economics. Remittances, for example, can be technical, political or social in nature (Goldring 2004). Levitt (1998, cited in Spoonley et al. 2003:36) identifies 'social remittances' such as the exchange of letters, phone calls, and videos between migrants and non-migrants. Similarly Goldring argues that remittances are multifaceted: 'One can talk about non-economic remittances, that is, social, technological and technical or political remittances' (2004: 832). Thus for example a Cook Islands nurse resident in Auckland may return to her home island to run the health clinic in order to allow the local sole-charge nurse to come to New Zealand for a short time for additional training.

According to Connell and Brown (2005: vii), those sending remittances are not necessarily motivated by economic principles, rather, 'They respond to an implicit social contract, contribute to human capital formation, and can be seen as a form of intergenerational transfer'. Thus remittances embody flows that often have deep cultural significance:

> The households that we studied … gave by remitting – sometimes strategically but sometimes altruistically, sometimes to redistribute but sometimes to secure relations, yet in all cases the act of gifting was constitutive, defining and culturally expressive or beyond-self (Marsters et al. 2006: 40).

Perhaps one problem here is that in much of the relevant literature the focus is on the remittances themselves – their amount, the direction they are going in, and how they have changed over time – rather than on the people doing the remitting and the meanings they attach to what is being remitted and how. It is only when we focus on the remitters that we get a deeper understanding of the motivations to remit, tied up as they are in social and cultural obligations and the commitment to keep kin ties intact even across vast tracts of ocean. It is now appropriate to explore the significance of kinship ties in more detail.

Kinship ties and the building of social capital

The assumption that the nature and length of migration are determined by individual choice is being increasingly questioned in the international migration literature (e.g. Baláz et al. 2004; Wong 2004), and instead, the family, kinship ties, and social systems are seen as central to new approaches to migration (Arango 2000): 'A recent development in the literature is the emphasis on family and family strategies as crucial elements in migration decisions … Migration is seen as a form of portfolio diversification by families' (De Hann 1999: 6).

This family-based approach to understanding migration seems logical in relation to Polynesian peoples, whose societies are structured closely around extended family ties and for whom the notion of the 'individual actor' makes little sense. Polynesian migration – both within and between countries - has occurred across generations, but equally importantly it is often still, to a large extent, family-based (Connell and Conway 2000:59). George Marcus' early study of Tongan migration (1974) identified how adult brothers and sisters who had moved apart due to migration had nevertheless maintained important social and economic ties which he referred to as 'dispersed family estates'. Bertram and Watters (1985:511), following Marcus, further highlighted the significance of family relationships in directing Polynesian migration, using the term 'transnational corporations of kin'. They saw these extended families as enterprises which operated like a corporation to increase a family's access to economic resources. Similarly, Walker and Brown refer to the existence in Oceania of a 'migrant family-based transnational corporation' "where the sending of remittances in the forms of goods is an integral part of the family's international trade and investment activities" (Walker and Brown 1995: 111).

In demonstrating the importance of family-based motivations for migration, Arango (2000) draws on the idea of social capital in relation to motivations for movement and continued linkages between kin. Thus Connell and Conway

(2000: 53) call for a reassessment of migration and remittances involving microstates in order to see 'the ways in which return migration and remittance investments enrich social capital stocks and enable families to have both increased access to opportunities and more flexibility in their livelihood options'. Furthermore, when remittances are invested in major family events such as weddings and funerals, or in community endeavours such as new water supply systems or church rebuilding, this can be seen as meeting welfare needs and contributing to the formation of social capital:

> remittances and return migrants' contributions to social and cultural capital accumulation strengthen familial and communal networks and ties. They not only help to maintain these institutions but enlarge their social fields of interaction, incorporating them into transnational, multilocal networks of support and empowerment (Connell and Conway 2000:53).

Thus kinship ties are vital factors in explaining why, in a number of situations 'mobile populations do not necessarily migrate to start a new life elsewhere, but rather to search out new opportunities that may allow them to enhance and diversify livelihoods practiced and valued back home' (Olwig and Sørensen 2002:1).

Multidirectional movement

It is commonplace now to talk of 'flows' and 'movements' of people, thus moving beyond the narrow concept of migration as a unidirectional, linear process (Chapman 1991). Ward has in fact suggested that Pacific migration is best conceptualised in terms of the process of anastomosis – a term used in the physical sciences to describe the way in which rivers and arteries divide and then rejoin to form a web of interconnected channels (Ward 1997: 186-187). Increasingly the migration literature has demonstrated that these flows do not occur between two static locations, the home country and the destination, rather they are fluid over time and space (Marsters et al. 2006). Thus even remittances, long conceived as being sent from the place of migration to the home country because of the assumption that people only move for better economic opportunities, can also flow in the opposite direction: '…economic, social, technological and political remittances may be multidirectional and multi-polar' (Goldring 2004:805).

Furthermore, return migration is very common among Polynesian peoples. It has been noted that the act of migration often makes people more aware of their sense of 'home', and can indeed strengthen migrants' attachment to 'home' (see Al-Ali and Koser 2001). It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that two thirds of New Zealand-based Cook Islanders interviewed by Koteka-Wright (2007:116) stated that their emigration to New Zealand was *not* permanent. They planned to move back to the Cook Islands in the future. The main motivations for people to return home were family-related (especially parents and children), the desire for a change in lifestyle, and a rediscovery of their identity and culture. Similarly, many Tongans and Samoans with children born in Sydney or Auckland choose to send them 'home' to the islands to discover something of their roots (James 1991).

This movement 'home' is also evident in populations such as Māori who have settled in urban areas. While some urban Māori in New Zealand move back to their traditional lands during downturns of the Australian and New Zealand labour market, this mobility dynamic contradicts theories which posit that urban-rural migration in general is an attempt by individuals and families to remain in the labour market (Mabbett 1988: 666), as many of these migrants are actually moving to areas of higher unemployment.[4] While for New Zealand Māori return-migration is at least partially dependent upon labour market conditions it is also dependent upon certain cultural factors, with the most important of these being the relationship between Māori and their *papa kāinga* (traditional tribal territories) – and the related desire to maintain connections to their cultural base. The re-construction of traditional Māori social and political organisations over the last twenty years has meant that some have 'returned home' to help in this revitalisation process and to ensure that their children and grandchildren are able to partake of the cultural, social and economic opportunites that these developments present. (Barcham 2004: 173)

Many of those returning to their 'traditional homes' have brought with them a wide variety of skills acquired in their lives in the metropole – be it Auckland, Los Angeles, Sydney, Suva or Apia. This growing skills pool provides a potential base for economic growth and development, through both the public and private sector that is often unrecognised by bilateral and multi-lateral donors. Koteka-Wright's discussion with returned migrants to the Cook Islands, for example, revealed that 30 percent of people had started their own business, and over half of all returned migrants were contributing to community development through their involvement in NGOs, sports clubs and other community groups (2007: 139).

Among New Zealand Māori this growing skills base of return migrants is only now beginning to be utilised by the region's tribal organisations as they attempt to further solidify their organisational and economic structures. Accordingly, the re-creation of Ngāti Kahungunu tribal structures (a tribe on the east coast of the North Island) has had an impact, albeit small, on the regional labour market. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, funds were increasingly made available to 'Māori Service Providers' who would compete for contracts offered by government departments to provide services to the Māori community – particularly in regard to health services. While some of these providers are private companies, a large number are tribally based – operating at either the Iwi or Hapū level, or through the new Iwi structures that have emerged over the last twenty years. A large number of the key figures behind these institutions are return-migrants who learnt their professional and managerial skills in their time away in the major cities of Australia and New Zealand (Barcham 2004: 178).

It must also be remembered that this flow of people, skills, goods, and ideas across space is an ongoing phenomena. Return migration is thus not necessarily the end of the journey. It represents merely one stop along the ongoing journey across and through the Pacific that is Polynesian life.

Transnational flows

The notion of flows has currency in an increasingly popular concept: transnationalism (Faist 2000). Spoonley et al. explain transnationalism thus:

> Transnationalism translates into the significant movement of people and resources across borders, both formal and documented, and informal and undocumented, in order to meet multiple loyalties – to place of residence, culture of origin and to traditional, diasporic and non-Polynesian values and institutions. These are apparent in the circulation of people, capital and ideas (2003:35).

Transnational communities are likely to have multiple identities and allegiances, thus migrants do not necessarily have a strong sense of connection to just one country. Rather, they can be *embedded* within multiple communities spread over a spatial field (Kastoryano 2000). This leads Lam and Yeoh (2004:141) to refer to transmigrants as people whose 'identities, behaviour and values are often not limited by location'; rather, they may be active members of more than one nation-state and have 'simultaneous embeddedness' in more than one society (ibid:157). Increased international migration has collapsed the way in which each country has been seen as the embodiment of a distinctive culture or society (Gupta and Ferguson 1992): 'We imagine…a more fluid system in which home and away are blurred and neither "place" represents a decisive cultural condition' (Marsters et al. 2006:41).

With relation to Polynesian peoples and movement, Richard Bedford discusses the emergence of 'Oceanic meta-societies' (2004: 242-245). Thus we see that Niueans, Cook Islanders, Tongans, Samoans, Tuvaluans, New Zealand Māori and others are dispersed across space, and may move relatively frequently, but still retain connections to their people:

> The assumption of transnational identities by repetitive circulators, the continual flows of information, remittances, pocket transfers, skills and mobile people which circulate between two or more worlds within such extended networks, and the endowment of those involved with flexibilities to take advantage of opportunities in both world-spaces, is becoming recognized as an important aspect of today's contemporary global system and specifically relations between islands and metropolitan states (Connell and Conway, 2000:66).

While transnationalism is not a new phenomenon, it has become more pervasive in recent times due to new technologies which have eased transport and communication across state borders (Portes 2003). Electronic means of communication have, for example, been instrumental in the flow of knowledge and ideas between migrants and non-migrants across vast distances, and this in turn has provided new opportunities for indigenous entrepreneurship for Polynesian peoples (James 1993). Thus, there is a 'web of "connectivity" being constructed and reconstructed through migration' (Baláz et al. 2004: 6), and this is facilitated in part by new communications technologies. Electronic forums ensure that many members of the Polynesian diaspora - both first and second generation migrants - still feel in touch with events back 'home'. While the once popular Kava Bowl is now defunct, Planet Tonga <www.planet-tonga.com> receives over one million 'hits' per month, thus providing a popular forum for communication among the Tongan diaspora: 'Tongan participants from all over the world…are eager to communicate with one another, share their experiences and opinions, and access news and information about Tonga itself, often sparking an interest in Tonga that was either absent or minimal before' (Lee 2004:247). Polynesian Café <www.polycafe.com> is also popular (Spoonley et al. 2003).

Wolf (2002, cited in Lee 2004:247) claims that such communication forums help to keep the idea of a homeland alive through 'emotional transnationalism'.

The existence of transnational societies also allows people to position themselves in particular ways in relation to political issues back 'home'. Some Cook Islanders, for example, have chosen to migrate to New Zealand at least partly because of a lack of confidence in the current government (Koteka-Wright 2007). Meanwhile the electronic forums discussed above have allowed people to express concerns about their society or culture which could not be expressed elsewhere; for example, challenging the Tongan monarchy (Lee 2004). Overseas Tongans are heavily involved in the pro-democracy movement, one way in which they show their concern for the long term future of their homeland: 'The "long distance" Tongan nationalists are becoming increasingly vocal … In the not too distant future it would not be surprising if at least some of the overseas population unites to demand more of a say in the nation building process' (Lee 2004:242). Similarly, indigenous peoples continue to migrate out of Hawai'i at least partly in response to lack of recognition of their sovereign rights. Thus by the time of the 2000 United States Census, approximately forty percent of Hawaiians (161,507) were living on the mainland, with a strong concentration in the Western Seaboard states such as California and Washington (Halualani 2003:1). Hawai'ians tend to see more opportunities to fight for land rights, sovereignty and retention of their identity on the mainland:

> Many see their movement from "home" as an exercise of their political identities against the US nation and its arm of power, the local state. "Off-island" Hawaiians have therefore identified the diaspora itself as the centralized means for preserving a cultural spirit that is suppressed at home (Drzewiecka and Halualani 2002: 355).

The Tongan and Hawai'ian examples above relate well to Fouron and Glick-Schiller's (2002: 173) concept of 'long distance nationalism' whereby people not resident in a territory are nonetheless actively involved in the construction and maintenance of the 'nation' in their 'homeland'.

Conclusion

The concept of a Polynesian Triangle has existed for many years though its boundaries, nature and relationship with other cultural groupings have long been contested. This paper has argued that a new expanded Polynesian Triangle has emerged, just as contentious as the old but still valuable as a device for analysing development and change in the Pacific Island region.

The notion of Polynesia itself, we argue, still has validity. Although changed by migration, development and other processes, Polynesian peoples continue to have much in common. Old linguistic and cultural similarities are augmented today by shared experiences and reinforced by new means of communication. Most Polynesian people, due to accidents of colonial history, face relatively open doors for migration to metropolitan countries. In these metropolitan places, though aware of their differences, they often share a common identification and place in society as 'Pacific Islanders'. The old concept of Polynesia though also informs the new: discussions of Polynesia in recent years have tended to focus on a 'Third World' view of the triangle, of the independent countries of the region and their

development experiences. This has tended to overshadow what is a larger set of populations; that of the indigenous ('Fourth World') Polynesians of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Hawai'i, and those other Polynesians who have moved, settled or been born in metropolitan countries. It could even be argued that our concepts of Polynesia now need to also incorporate a 'First World' view, as evidenced in the lifestyles, wealth, power – or conversely, marginalisation - that some Polynesian people are experiencing in metropolitan countries.

We argue that the re-insertion of Māori, Hawaiian and migrant peoples into discussions of Polynesia is overdue, thus the concept of a Polynesian triangle is still valid, although it is a triangle that has become enlarged: stretched at its corners to include both the western seaboard of North America and Australia. Whereas the original Polynesian Triangle constituted a cultural-linguistic grouping that more or less matched the broad spatial domain of ancient oceanic navigation and settlement, these new boundaries are an artefact of both colonialism and a post-colonial political geography which has given limited rights of access to Polynesian peoples to move to New Zealand (and thence to Australia) and to the U.S.A. Yet the boundaries also reflect limits, for rights of access remain restricted. Migration and circulation through the interstices of national boundaries has allowed Polynesian people to participate in an emerging regional labour market in the Pacific but future liberalisation of such a market is far from certain. Polynesian engagement within this market will continue to depend on their ability to negotiate and manage resources and constraints associated with skills, education, kinship, multiple nationalities and remittances.

The new Polynesian Triangle, even more than the old, spans the Pacific Ocean and though new technologies of movement and communication have perhaps lessened the importance of an oceanic character to the region and its people, the idea of the Pacific Ocean as a realm of opportunity and exchange remains (Hau'ofa 1993). People, ideas, money, goods and services flow throughout the triangle through networks of kin, culture, politics and business. As Cluny Macpherson has noted current "models of the consequences of diaspora lead us to attend either to the setting from which the diaspora began or that in which diasporic communities have become established … [thus we tend] to consider parent and/or migrant societies as separate entities rather than as parts of the same society." However, in reality, "these groups are increasingly tied together and regard themselves as part of some larger entity" (Macpherson 1997: 95-96).

However, although it may be tempting to see an imbalance in power and wealth between the metropolitan countries on the margins of the triangle and the islands at its centre, enduring features of the Polynesian Triangle remind us that the island heartlands are far from passive and powerless. Indeed, they are often the source as well as the destination of many of the resources that flow throughout the region and many kin networks remained anchored to – and controlled from - the home islands (Scheyvens, forthcoming). In addition, there are often-unobserved interactions across and within the Triangle: it is not simply a matter of interactions between the island centre and the metropolitan rim.

This new conception of a Polynesian Triangle has value in contemporary analyses of development in the Pacific Island region. The Triangle is a device which focuses our attention on the often-overlooked social, political and cultural dimensions of development processes, for purely economic analyses of remittances or migration, for example, fail to capture many of the subtleties and

enduring characteristics of the way Polynesian people experience and guide development. Such cultural dimensions are long-standing, durable and cross-generational in ways that transcend simple and rational economic calculations.

These re-conceptions of a Polynesian Triangle point to a need for different conceptual frameworks, methods and units of analysis for research in and on the region. This is a broad region still cut in important ways by national boundaries and subsequent restrictions of movement; yet a re-spatialisation of the region, standing above those national boundaries, can both deepen and enrich our understanding of Polynesia and Polynesians in the contemporary world. There are kin-based lines of movement and communication; there are regional clusterings of people and organisations; there are different levels of cultural identification; and there is a multi-layered architecture of governance. The challenge for research is to find and employ both qualitative and quantitative tools and methods that draw on multiple disciplines to enhance our understanding of this complex development space.

Notes

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[1] We acknowledge that that many of the features of Polynesian movement we identify as occurring over most of the islands with links to New Zealand, Australia or the USA may well also be evident in francophone Polynesia and it might even be argued that a Polynesian triangle might even stretch to metropolitan France, given the rights of French citizenship that are enjoyed by the residents of French Polynesia. However, such an argument is beyond the scope of this paper and requires further research on this important aspect of Polynesian mobility.

[2] The only group of islands not claimed by a European power during this process was the modern day Kingdom of Tonga.

[3] Up until the mid-1980s New Zealanders did not require a passport to travel to Australia (and vice versa). With New Zealand's large Polynesian population, and the general ease of movement of Polynesian populations into New Zealand up until that point in time, we can safely assume that some Polynesian migration occurred through this New Zealand-Australian link.

[4] In a study on the relationship between Māori inter-regional migration, unemployment and Iwi affiliation Rhema Vaithianathan found that Māori were willing to live in an area of high unemployment if that area happened to be their traditional tribal homeland. (Vaithianathan 1995: 140-141)

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