Migration, Gender and Politics of Developement in Pacific Islands: an Introduction to the Special Issue

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INTRODUCTION

The last decades have witnessed a global surge of interest in the developmental impact of migration and mobility. A growing body of research has shed new light on the nature of the migration-development nexus, with emerging evidence showing a positive impact of migration on poverty reduction in migrant sending countries (e.g. Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002). The rising awareness of the development potential of migration has also reached policy arenas, counterbalancing long-established – and still motivated – concerns about the negative impact of the loss of skilled professionals (Newland, 2013). Analysis of the development outcomes of migration has also moved beyond the economic impact of labour mobility and remittances, considering the broader social implications of mobility processes and recognising their highly gendered connotation (e.g. Piper, 2009).

Interest in the transformative potential of migration has also risen in the South Pacific region, where small island economies and environments share development challenges related to a history of (neo)colonial exploitation of labour and natural resources; reliance on a limited number of industries; remoteness from markets; and vulnerability to economic shocks, political upheavals and environmental hazards. Furthermore, rapid demographic growth and pockets of high population density in low lying and coastal areas make island dwellers particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which threatens the very existence of atoll island communities. While for many Pacific Island Countries (PICs) massive out-migration has played a significant role in mitigating unemployment, it has also left behind labour markets affected by strategic skills gaps and economies highly reliant on migrant remittances (see Connell, 2006 and Bedford and Hugo, 2012 for a comprehensive overview).

Despite a rich migration literature that has unveiled the main qualifying features of Pacific mobility systems, attempts to provide an integrated reading of the multipronged nature of the migration-development nexus in the region are rare. The recent diversification of Pacific migration flows, that have become more multidirectional, interdependent and temporary/circular in nature, further challenges our ability to conceptualize, operationalize and measure the developmental implications of migration and to formulate effective policy strategies in this area.

The general objective of this edited collection is to shed new light on significant gendered, social, economic and political aspects of the diverse Pacific Islands' migratory landscape. The articles focus on some of the emerging patterns and development implications of current migration trends and policies in the region such as temporary and seasonal labour mobility, migrant women's work in traditionally male-dominated sectors, strategies for managing environmentally-induced

migration and the policies for coercive relocation of asylum seekers. Processes of internal mobility, which have often been left out of the picture in international dialogues on migration and development, and the challenges posed by rapid urbanisation in Melanesian countries, are also addressed in this collection. The intent is to set future grounds for a more integrated approach which will enable researchers in the Pacific to explore the diversified impact of multiple mobility patterns and their linkages with processes of social and economic development (e.g. Skeldon, 2008). Without losing sight of global forces that have structured and still impact economies and patterns of mobility in the region, our approach situates the migration and development nexus within the context of Pacific Islands' colonial legacies and post-colonial relations, economic and environmental vulnerabilities, and socio-cultural belongings. Ultimately, the gendered and situated perspectives deployed by the authors expose structured relations of power and unpack some of the problems and contradictions of current migration governance and related politics of development in the region, allowing for questions of accountability and responsibility to be addressed.

This introduction sets the scene by providing an overview of mobility patters in Pacific Islands, identifying some key knowledge and evidence gaps in the regional literature, and synthesizing the conceptual approach and principal arguments put forward by the contributed articles.

POPULATION MOBILITY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

The South Pacific region, with its three sub-regions of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia (figure 1), is characterised by a long-standing history of population mobility (Hau'ofa, 1998). In Pre-Colonial times Pacific island peoples would regularly move between communities and islands of the Region. Those inter-islands movements were aimed at trading goods, strengthening kinship relations, fostering resilience to natural hazards, and periodically at engaging in conflicts and wars. 19th and 20th century European imperialism have played a major role in reshaping and redirecting mobility patterns in the region. The historical interconnectedness of Pacific island peoples was replaced by intraregional labour mobility and 'blackbirding', largely orchestrated by colonial powers, and by international arrivals of indentured Indo-Chinese and Indian workers (Connell and Rapaport, 2013; Crocombe, 2001, Lee, 2009).

While the territorial boundaries imposed by colonialism and its new political and administrative structures "placed significant restrictions on the movement of people between the islands of the Pacific" (Opeskin and MacDermott, 2010: pp. 2), de-colonisation also brought about new prospects of migration for Pacific islanders. Pacific towns and cities, initially established as European trading ports and administrative centres, became hubs for rural migrants attracted by job opportunities in the public sector and by facilitated access to health services and higher education. Progressively, circular and temporary mobility patterns that typically involved the return to the island or village of origin were replaced by more permanent forms of rural-urban migration – that led, in some cases, to the depopulation of some smaller islands (Storey and Connell, 2013).

Opportunities for international migration also opened up through new managed labour mobility schemes as well as "new rights of citizenship" for some Pacific islanders from former colonial

Figure 1: *Map of the South Pacific and its sub-regions*

territories (Opeskin and MacDermott, 2010: pp. 2). From the post-WWII period, and following the establishment of the trusteeship systems developed by the League of Nations and United Nations, international mobility flows have been largely re-directed towards the so called *Rim Countries* – the U.S., New Zealand and Australia. These new avenues for international labour migration have not been equally accessible to all PIC citizens, but have rather emanated from different approaches taken by the former colonial rulers, generating separate "clusters of mobility" (Burson & Bedford, 2013). The U.S. and New Zealand provided relatively unrestricted migration opportunities to Pacific islanders of their former Micronesian and Polynesian territories by granting citizenship and/or establishing targeted visa categories for labour migration (such as the New Zealand's Samoan quota and Pacific Access Category visa lottery) to meet demand for cheap unskilled labour in the primary and secondary production sectors. In contrast, Australia did not provide targeted migration opportunities to Melanesian territories over which they had exercised colonial authority (Bedford & Hugo, 2012; Burson & Bedford, 2013). As such, Pacific islanders are entitled to permanently migrate to Australia only if they qualify for general visa categories – or as naturalized New Zealand citizens benefiting from the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangements. While in the last decade both New Zealand and Australia have established new schemes for managing temporary labour mobility of workers in the agricultural sector, the different degree of openness of the two countries towards Pacific islanders' mobility is also apparent from the size of these schemes. For example, recent data (2012-14) shows that about 6 thousand Pacific workers (almost half of whom from Vanuatu) have been admitted annually into

New Zealand, compared to less than 2 thousand in Australia (Bedford, 2014).

PICs' historical and post-colonial legacy is reflected in the significant diversity of the current demographic and mobility landscape, characterised by large variations in the rates of international migration, as well as in the patterns and pace of the rural-urban transition (Table 1). Independent Melanesian countries feature high population growth rates that have not been mitigated by large permanent overseas emigration. These countries are still at an early stage of the urban transition, with still predominantly rural populations (about 80%) that are rapidly urbanizing. They currently experience some of the highest urban growth rates in the region largely driven by a massive rural-urban drift – but natural change is also a significant factor because urban fertility rates remain high (Rallu, 2009). Fiji is the partial exception: after decades of rural-urban migration the country has already a majority of urban dwellers living in several cities and urban agglomerations. Population growth has slowed down (0.5% annually) and is now largely concentrated in urban areas, while the rural population has stopped growing. Fiji's demographic regime is further characterized by significant outmigration, with large waves of highly skilled migrants leaving the country in the aftermaths of several coups that destabilized its economic and political climate (Reddy et al., 2004).

The dominant feature of Polynesian's population trends is the large and persistent overseas migration. For several decades Samoa and Tonga have had some of the highest negative net migration rates in the world (cfr. United Nations, 2015-revision of the World Population Prospects), including the loss of about three quarters of their highly skilled professionals. This has brought about significant reliance on migrant remittances, which account for one fifth or more of these countries' economic outputs (cfr. Tab.1). Emigration in Polynesia has also acted as a 'safety valve' for population growth (Connell and Rapaport, 2013: 281), counterbalancing a high birth rate and even mitigating the demographic pressure on urban areas – Apia, Samoa's only urban area, has even experienced negative population growth over the last inter-censal period (2006-11). The demographic impact of high emigration in Polynesia has also resulted in the depletion of young adult cohorts, contributing to high dependency ratios (Rallu, 2008).

Table 1: Population and mobility Indicators in selected Pacific Island Countries

Region/country or territory	Population (estimate, mid-2013)	Urban population at last census (%)	Last intercensal annual growth rate (%) Urban	Last intercensal annual growth rate (%) Rural	Crude net migration rate (‰)	Emigration rate of tertiary educated (%, 2000)	International migrant stock (% of pop.)	Remittances (% of GDP, aver. 2004-13)
Melanesia								
Fiji	859,200	51	1.5	-0.1	-6.1	63	2.1	5.5
New Caledonia	259,000	67	2.3	-0.7	3.6	..	23.7	..
Papua New Guinea	7,398,500	13	2.8	2.7	0.0	28	0.4	0.1
Solomon Islands	610,800	20	4.7	1.8	0.0	26	1.4	1.9
Vanuatu	264,700	24	3.5	1.9	0.0	8	0.4	1.8
Micronesia								
FSM	103,000	22	-2.2	1.0	-18.5	36	2.6	6.4
Guam	174,900	94	0.4	-1.2	14.1	..	48.9	..
Kiribati	108,800	54	4.4	0.2	-0.7	56	2.1	8.1
Marshall Islands	54,200	74	1.4	-2.0	-17.1	43	3.2	14.8
Nauru	10,500	100	1.8	-	-9.4	..	..	..
Palau	17,800	77	0.0	3.9	0.0	81	29.3	0.9
Polynesia								
Cook Islands	15,200	74	-1.2	-3.0	-5.2	..	..	..
French Polynesia	261,400	51	0.7	1.8	-9.6	..	12.9	..
Samoa	187,400	20	-0.3	1.2	-24.1	73	4.4	18.7
Tonga	103,300	23	2.4	0.9	-19.3	76	1.0	25.3
Tuvalu	10,900	47	1.4	-0.2	0.0	65	1.7	15.7

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2013 population & demographic indicators; World Bank, World Development Indicators Database

Some Micronesian countries (FSM and the Marshall Islands) are also characterized by very high levels of permanent emigration to the United States. In contrast, recent permanent emigration from Kiribati has been a prerogative of the highly educated population, while many i-Kiribati lesser skilled workers migrated temporarily to work in the fishing and mining industries (see Kagan's article in this special issue). The small landmasses of most Micronesians states imply that urbanization has been a pervasive phenomenon in this Pacific sub-region, with urban densities reaching those of the most populated Asian cities (Storey and Connell, 2013). U.S. territories or associated countries such as Guam and Palau are also amongst the few PICs with large immigrant populations.

Although the volume of international migration between PICs is low compared to flows directed towards the Pacific Rim, case-study research has shown the existence of significant intra-regional mobility networks. This has been mainly associated with work-related movements of skilled professionals in women-dominated industries such as the education and health care sectors (Liki, 2001; Rokoduru, 2006; Voigt-Graf, 2003; Connell, 2010). However, there is a lack of quantitative data on intra-Pacific flows and it is likely that official population statistics do not capture the full extent of the phenomenon – a gap that is also reflected in the dominant conceptualisation of Pacific mobility as emigration to the Pacific Rim and in the very limited volume of studies investigating migration between Pacific Island States.

THE MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: PERSPECTIVES FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS

Academic and policy debates on migration and development that have taken place since the 1950s have witnessed several discursive shifts, moving back and forth in between the developmentalist optimism that characterised those discourses until the 1960s, to the neo-Marxist pessimism of the 1970s and 1980s, and towards more heterogeneous and articulated views from the 1990s (e.g. Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002). More recent years have seen a revival of optimism around the potential of migration, and of the migrant as *homo economicus*, to enhance development in countries of origin (de Haas, 2010: 227-28). This has been appealingly summarized as the *three Rs* of the migration-development nexus – Recruitment, Remittances, and Return (Martin et al., 2006). Support for optimistic views was also driven by research providing new empirical evidence of a positive impact of migration on the economic and social status of households in migrant sending communities, including – but not limited to – a significant contribution of remittances to human development (see de Haas, 2007 for a review).

In a similar vein, the MIRAB acronym – MIgration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy – has long been used as the main conceptual framework for the economic analysis of Polynesian and Micronesian migration (Bertram & Watters, 1985). A number of empirical studies on Pacific countries have also revealed the (largely positive) impact of migrant remittances (e.g. Brown and Jimenez 2008; Kaitani et al. 2011) and the patterns and implications of human capital loss on economic development (e.g. Reddy et al., 2004).

Largely disconnected from international migration research, research on internal mobility and urbanization has undergone similar discursive swings, with the modernisation theory emphasising the roles of cities as poles of economic growth, job creation, education and technological

advancement, and the world system/dependency perspective focusing on the inherent economic and social inequalities that arise from rural-urban mobility induced by capital penetration into developing countries (Peng et al., 2010). Currently a more balanced approach emphasizes the duality of outcomes of rural-urban mobility and the need for inclusive rural-urban strategies to maximise the benefits and limit the costs of urban growth (e.g. UNFPA, 2007). Given the failure of policy attempts to limit rural-urban migration, consensus is also now emerging that urbanization is an inevitable component of development and modernization processes in the Asia-Pacific (Skeldon, 1997).

Traditional dichotomist ways of looking at the links between migration and development have been challenged in the recent migration literature. The brain drain vs. remittances cost-benefit paradigm has opened up to encompass more nuanced and embodied implications of migration which is increasingly becoming more multidirectional, diverse (i.e. age, gender, nationality, status) and interdependent (Vertovec, 2007; Piper, 2009). An emerging literature on transnationalism and transnational migrant families (Vertovec, 2001; Levitt, 2001; Nyberg-Sørensen and Vammen, 2014) has brought to the fore a concern with the social and cultural implications of mobility, gendered remitting patterns (Rahman and Fee, 2009), and the different social spaces and networks women and men embody in the migration process (Piper, 2005). An alternative reading of the gender, migration and development nexus has also been suggested by highlighting the multifaceted character of social practices encompassing "multi-layered social relations, contested concepts of identity and multiple social roles" (Oso and Ribas-Mateo, 2013: 18).

Also in the regional migration literature the initial framing of the MIRAB model has been criticized for being, as Bertram himself recalls, a "reductionist economic exercise which fails to engage with the richness and detail of social and economic reality as lived by islanders themselves" (Bertram, 2006: 3). Its macroeconomic focus and purely economicistic interpretation of development has been seen as overshadowing local contexts (James, 1993) and the agency of Pacific Islanders as well as their embeddedness in transnational networks of goods, people, and meanings (Marsters, et al. 2006, 31). While this critique somehow seems to build on the existing metaphor of the *transnational corporation of kin* discussed within the original formulation of MIRAB, its analysis goes beyond maximising families' economic benefits and strongly advocates for the centrality of culture and (gendered) personal experiences as catalysts for social networks and motivations for migration and remitting practices.

From the 2000s studies looking at the broader social, cultural and gender aspects of migration have started to become more visible in the South Pacific literature. A concern with the emergence of autonomous decision-making and the agency of skilled migrant women who leave their families behind providing them with remote support has been highlighted by research on Pacific migrant nurses (Rokoduru, 2006). In turn, Chandra (2004) discusses the consequences of family separation for family relationships and care responsibilities of women left behind. Interestingly, the case of Fijian nurses and teachers (Voigt-Graf, 1993) who left in the aftermath of the 1987, 2000 and 2006 coups (the largest group of skilled migrant women who left for the Pacific Rim) also illustrates the intersections between gendered labour demand in receiving countries and

political and racial push factors.

The transnationalist perspective has also contributed to shifting the focus from the study of Pacific Island communities in their countries of settlement on the Rim to transnational communities that inhabit cross-border and multi-directional social spaces (Lee & Francis, 2009; Rensel & Howard, 2012; Keck & Schieder, 2015). This analysis builds on the human face of migration and transnational experiences of life and work of Pacific islanders and explores questions of cultural values and identity, so called "social remittances" (Levitt, 2001) and intergenerational and kinship changes. Gendered migration patterns of Pacific Islanders have also been analysed within a household framework deploying indigenous metaphors such as the Samoan concept of 'aiga', (Liki, 2001), or extended family, to explain migration as a "social and cultural act" (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009, p. 3) characterised by regular transnational gendered family connections including the mobility of wealth as well as diasporic ceremonial exchanges (Addo, 2015). Transnational labour mobilities should therefore be seen not simply as "a path to economic development" (Cummings, 2013, p.390). Successful experiences of mobility (and local development for that matter) look rather more nuanced when seen from the contextualised and gendered perspectives and understandings of migrants, their families and local communities (see also Kagan and Cummings in this Issue).

Notwithstanding the thick legacy of influential indigenous scholars and western anthropologists and human geographers such as Epeli Hau'ofa, David Gegeo and Murray Chapman whose works have strongly advocated for "alternative manners of thinking" (Chapman 1995, 254) about practices of mobility in the Pacific, regional studies focusing on socio-cultural dimensions of migration rarely engage with mainstream development debate. As a matter of fact, existing work which provides conceptualisations of migration processes from a more contextualised migrant agency perspective rarely attempts to identify clear and feasible policy options to enhance the transformative potential of migration for Pacific island societies – a challenge that is taken up by some of the articles in this Special Issue. It is then unsurprising that, despite the mainstreaming of the more comprehensive 'capabilities' approach underpinned by the notions of human and social development and under the aegis of dedicated UN agencies such as UNDP, migration policies and programs in the region show little understanding of gender and socio-cultural concerns. A notable example is the temporary/circular migration "triple-win formula", which tends to define development exclusively in economic terms (Castles & Ozkul, 2014) or, at most, to establish simplistic correlations between the (low) number of women involved and processes of women empowerment.

A more refined understanding of the manifold ways in which human mobility contributes to PICs' development is also needed in the light of the diversification of mobility patters, in the South Pacific as well as globally. The traditional characterisation of small islands as countries of permanent out-migration and remittance-dependant economies no longer fully describes the region's migratory landscape (Lee, 2009). The partial shift from permanent to more temporary or circular forms of mobility to the Pacific Rim, the emergence of new intra-regional migration routes and the new role of some PICs (e.g. Fiji) as immigrant-receiving countries, the rise of student mobility and women-led labour migration, the gaining significance of environmental

and climate change push-factors, and the diversification of transnational diasporic linkages and practices have added significant complexity to the South Pacific mobility systems. This calls for an integrated approach emphasizing the links between various forms of mobility – for example, between rural-urban mobility and temporary labour migration to Pacific Rim countries (see also Cummings and Bedford in this issue) – that is conspicuous by its absence in the regional literature.

Last but not least, the regional migration literature would benefit from deeper analyses of the links between the migrant agency and socio-cultural practices that shape migration decision-making and the institutional and regulatory structures that enable and (largely) constrain labour and other types of cross-border mobility. Structures for the governance of mobility inherited from colonial architectures provide unequal migration opportunities for Pacific islanders. Restrictive mobility routes primarily designed to fulfil the economic needs of the receiving countries constrain the transformative potential of migrant agency, thereby limiting the benefits of labour and skill transfers and of diasporic connections for PICs' socio-economic development. Therefore, a postcolonial, situated reading helps unravelling significant examples of current neo-colonial interference in the South Pacific mobility system through intertwined processes of exploitation of economic and environmental vulnerabilities of PICs and double-edged regional integration and aid distribution policies.

CONTRIBUTION OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

To address some of the evidence and knowledge gaps reviewed in the previous section, this Special Issue embraces a wide-ranging and inclusive analytical perspective. While remittances and economic empowerment through mobility and access to paid work are certainly acknowledged as factors contributing to socio-economic development, the conversations within and among the different articles provide a more comprehensive and diversified perspective going beyond the economicistic reading of the *three Rs* paradigm and MIRAB framework. The analytical lens adopted by the contributed articles moves between global pressures and sensitivity to context, between political and economic structures and agency-driven processes, and between local histories and legacies and contemporary experiences of vulnerability and adaptability. In particular, to "situate" our findings, the underpinning inquisitive approach of this Special Issue is guided by a concern with the contingency of knowledge on the presence of culture, history, power, and geography (Harraway, 1988; Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). The combination of case study and mixed-methods using both qualitative and quantitative data also allows for deeper and more complex interrogations of the intersections between migrant agency and macro-level development outcomes. Ultimately, the diversity of disciplinary backgrounds of the authors enriches the special issue with a variety of voices and narratives and leads to an ample and articulated spectrum of findings that could better inform migration and development policies.

The six contributions to this Special Issue weave together empirical and analytical reflections on some qualifying features of the migration-development nexus in Pacific Islands, including – but not limited to – the role of gender norms in migrant experiences of temporary and seasonal work, the social transformations associated with internal mobility and urbanisation, the impact

of policies for the coercive relocation of asylum seekers, and the prospects for "managed" labour migration policies and regional integration agreements to enhance migration opportunities for Pacific Islanders as adaptive strategy to environmental change.

The need to incorporate gender as a central analytical category taking into account the diverse ways in which men's and women's social relationships and belonging are negotiated and reconstructed throughout the migratory process strongly features in Maggie Cummings' and Sophia Kagan's articles. In her paper, Cummings looks at the gendered experiences and responses to the New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme of young urbanised men in Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila. Developing her analysis along the intersecting lines of gender and generations, the author's ethnographic work shows that social transformations brought about by participation into the scheme must be considered not only as the result of migratory experiences, but also in relation to local understandings of gendered relationships, and their connection to commodity consumption. Her findings also reveal that participation in the RSE scheme is often a stepping stone to an urban life. This points to the above-mentioned connections between temporary international labour migration and urbanization, opening up promising avenues for future research on Melanesian mobility. In an effort to translate ethnographic findings into policy language, Cummings argues that for a more efficient and sustainable RSE scheme actions should be taken to develop the transferability of skills and to support local entrepreneurship in urban areas as tangible local "exit plans" for a post-RSE life in alternative to repeated migration. Gender imbalance in recruitment should also be redressed to reshape gender biased cultural norms and work practices at both ends of the migratory process that undermine women's agency and the positive development impact of migration.

Migrant women's potential in relation to overall social development of PICs is also taken up by Sophia Kagan in her article on i-Kiribati women working on international cruiseships. Her interesting empirical study of the "migrant workers of the ocean" emphasises the relevance of temporary migration as both long-standing employment opportunity for i-Kiribati nationals and significant experience with the potential to reshape the social positioning of women in Pacific societies. Interviews conducted with migrant worker returnees unveiled the "complex and nuanced nature of women's migration on cruiseships" – and, we can add here, the lack of a gender focus in temporary labour mobility schemes in the Pacific and beyond. While greater control over remittances did not appear to be central to women's narratives and experiences, and household roles of women returnees were for the most part unchanged, significant transformations had taken place in respondents' confidence in their working abilities and future work and family aspirations and plans. The author's indications for policy actions emphasize the need for striking a good balance between enhancing market access for i-Kiribati migrant women – with a view to rebalance what is currently a male-dominated sector – and ensuring the presence of appropriate measures to prevent migrant exploitation.

Bringing back to the forefront the role of structures in constraining or enabling sustainable development in the Pacific Islands, Ash's and Campbell's article makes the case for voluntary labour migration to be pursued as an adaptive response to climate change. The paper emphasizes the positive benefits for both Australia and Pacific countries that could arise from the

identification and promotion of skilled and unskilled labour migration avenues – including more equal opportunities for Pacific women. This strategy would rely on strong national commitment of the sending countries to ensure full and inclusive participation in existing unskilled labour schemes and to improve training and strengthen capacity in areas that would enhance access to skilled labour migration avenues. On the other hand, public opinion towards Pacific migrants in receiving countries is pivotal. Reflecting this, the article addresses some of the myths that have contributed to negative views of Pacific migration, promoting a more evidence-based understanding of the impacts of Pacific Islander migration to Australia and fulfilling the need for a multipronged approach to migration management.

The specific case of the forced transfer of asylum seekers arriving by boat on Australian shores to detention camps on Nauru and Papua New Guinea (Manus Island) [1] is addressed in Brian Opeskin and Daniel Ghezelbash's article. Their analysis of Australia's well-known and controversial 'Pacific Solution' expands the regional migration and development debate through a situated lens that acknowledges the role of superimposed institutional factors deeply rooted in colonial legacies and neo-colonial economic and political dependencies. In their article the authors argue that Australia's border security and refugee policies have profound economic, political and social impacts on the two PICs, making them *vulnerable to coercion* and imposing the social costs of resettling refugees in already fragile socio-economic contexts. Gendered implications of the policy are also paramount. Besides the contested reintroduction of Temporary Protection Visas (TVPs), with its potential implications for increased numbers of women and children willing to take the dangerous boat-journey to Australia, numerous cases of gender based violence, including those against underage asylum-seekers, are reported in and outside the processing facilities in Nauru. Episodes of conflict between refugees and locals highlight that failure to address contextual socio-cultural and gender dynamics embedded in the asylum experience may compromise the success of the broader refugee determination process and be harmful to local community relations and social cohesion. At a broader level, we may add, the example of the 'Pacific Solution' mirrors a dismissing attitude towards Pacific island states' sovereignty that undermines long-standing prospects for sustainable socio-economic development.

The inclusion in this Special Issue of articles looking at internal mobility provides the reader with a more inclusive understanding of the multiplicities of migration patterns in the region and of their complex and potentially interrelated impacts. Vijay Naidu's and Linda Vaike's article offers a panoramic view of internal migration processes in the South Pacific, their historical genesis and their predominance over international migration especially in Melanesian countries. Building on development theories of urbanization, the paper highlights the intertwined economic, social, structural (colonial and post-colonial factors) and socio-psychological motivations, opportunities and constrains underpinning mobilities. The analysis undertaken by the authors also points to further, less evident, dynamics characterising both internal rural-to-urban migration processes and life in urban, often informal, settlements such as the birth of ethnic enclaves, inter-ethnic conflicts, gendered changing demographic realities, and increasing exposure to environmental hazards and climate change.

An integrated approach to the analysis of the links between population dynamics and mobility

within and across national boundaries inherited from the Pacific colonial history is also provided in the last paper of this collection by Richard Bedford. Building on influential scholarly work that has shaped our understanding of Pacific mobility systems since the 1990s – and reconciling the ostensibly contrasting perspectives of Hau'ofa's borderless Pacific and Callick's "doomsday scenario" – this article reflects on the prospects for enhancing future mobility opportunities in the region, especially for the large majority of the new urban dwellers in Melanesian countries who have so far been excluded from the major admission routes to the Pacific rim. Bedford's forward-looking vision highlights the challenges of Melanesia's urban future and identifies the potential for enhanced labour and study migration opportunities to Australia and New Zealand as an essential policy strategy to build skills and entrepreneurship indispensable to the development of Melanesian urban economies and societies. Setting his discussion against the backdrop of the current restructuring of Pacific international relations, the author suggests that opening up options for greater circulation of all Oceanians would also be a constructive way to fulfil a commitment to regionalism and address the significant environmental challenges that all Pacific Island countries will face in the 21st Century.

Without the presumption of touching upon all aspects of the migration-development nexus in the South Pacific, articles in the Special Issue provide a more refined analysis of mobility in PICs, taking into account its enabling character but also its broader cultural and social implications and distinctive impact on gendered customary roles and institutions. In-depth analyses of context-specific experiences of mobility, besides revealing the diversity of the South Pacific migratory landscape, also demonstrate the value of Pacific-centered empirical evidence to inform effective policy-making in the region. Such conducive and enabling policy environment is shown to be essential for unleashing the transformative potential of migrant agency and for reaping the benefits of migration for the wellbeing of Pacific peoples.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ENDNOTES

[1]   *Nauru and PNG (both were first protectorates under the German and British control and then trust territories under the UN with Australia designated as a mandate power, and then trustee, until these territories achieved independence—Nauru in 1968 and PNG in 1973)*

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