The Reason Place Matters

Lessons from customary land tenure regimes in PNG

Julia Blocher
UN University (UNU-ONY)
University of Liege (Hugo)/
Sciences Po (IEP Paris)

Dalila Gharbaoui
University of Liege (Hugo)/
University of Canterbury (MBC)

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MAKING MOBILITY WORK FOR ADAPTATION TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Results from the MECLEP global research
Agenda

1) Research Questions & Methods

2) What is environmentally-induced migration?
   - The Pacific and the need for Adaptation

3) Customary Land Tenure in the Pacific

4) Overview of past and recent examples of environmentally-induced community relocation
   - Case studies

5) Conclusions
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3) Customary Land Tenure in the Pacific

4) Land Tenure and Environmentally-induced Migration: An Overview of Local Adaptation Strategies
   ➢ Case studies

5) Conclusions
Research question

• Considering some key cases of environment-related resettlement projects in the Pacific Islands Countries & Territories (PICTs), what lessons can we learn to implement planned relocations that maximize resilience building and minimize negative outcomes in the long term?

• To what extent are customary land tenure and customary relationships central to these outcomes?

• What can we learn from community-based resilience and adaptation strategies, and knowledge?
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Community cohesion approach to *sustainable relocations*

Defends predominance of need to preserve community cohesion above individual-centered

Key points of protest:

1) **Community desegregation and loss of access to community resources** are two of the eight main risks endangered by people displaced (Cernea, 1999)

2) **Lack of consultation** with hosting and affected population when planning for relocation projects (World Bank; Martin, 2009)

3) **Lack of consideration for local cultures** when planning for relocation (Olivier-Smith; de Sherbinin, 2014)
# Case studies

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<th>Case Study</th>
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| **Biausevu relocation**    | • Under Colonial era (1881)  
                            | • Relocation within same land tenure as facilitator |
| **Solodamu relocation**    | • Independent State (1970)   
                            | • Challenges of relocation within same Land tenure |
| **Manam relocation**       | • Recent example (2004- current) across land tenure boundaries  
                            | • Does land matter in current relocations? |
| **Narikoso relocation**    | • Recent example (2013)   
                            | • Does land still matter? |
Manam case study, PNG (2004 – present)

- **Case study**: 16 villages (now approx. 20,000 people), currently residing in “care centers” near Bogia, PNG following displacement from Manam island. Initial temporary relocation inadequate, large-scale resettlement planned.

- **Type of relocation**: internal, outside of customary land boundaries (complex)

- **Cause of relocation**: volcanic eruption

- **Date**: initial ‘temporary’ relocation 2004; ongoing resettlement plan

- **Political Context**: provincial government-led care centers and resettlement plan
Manam resettlement plan

- Major livelihoods questions
  - Many km inland – in virgin forest

- Approx. 20,000 Manam islanders to join the “host” community of 5,000
  - Provincial government negotiated with land owners

- Staggered resettlement planned
  - Limited consideration or involvement of women, children

- Multi-billion dollar resettlement plan – law recently reopened
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Customary Land Tenure in the Pacific

- 80% of PICTs is customary based
- Reflects cultural & spiritual identity
- Dictates usage, conditions & “leases”
- Defines scale of economic development but also social harmony
- Legal & governance pluralism
- Modern systems based on individual land rights encounter great dispute (collective land rights vs. individual land rights)
Role of pluralistic governance

• ...or the absence of the post-colonial state?
  – Few safeguards in place

• Predominant role of customary chiefs
  – Government struggles to maintain authority
  – Little adherence to concepts of national identity and citizenship

• Relationship with government can be one of suspicion, antagonism
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   - Case studies in PNG & Fiji
5) Conclusions
Indigenous knowledge & adaptation strategies

Migration among traditional adaptation methods

a) Maintenance of **food security** through surplus production, controls on consumption, crop diversity, famine foods, food storage and food preservation

b) Inter- and intra-community cooperation (**taoa**)

c) **Settlement patterns** and housing design (fortified settlements on ridges or increasing their high)

d) Use of **traditional environmental knowledge systems**
Lessons from Manam relocation

- Manam remains the social, cultural and political center of gravity
  - Expressions of place attachment
  - Non-insignificant number of returnees

- Challenges and conflicts with customary land owners are land-related:
  - Government gazetted colonial-held land now contested by customary owners
  - Access to natural resources
  - Population growth and sedentarization
  - Burial rites (and rights)

- Perpetuity of tenure is a key barrier to addressing perpetual displacement
  - Temporary relocation, permanent movement, or a second home?
Effects of Manam displacement

• For **displaced** Manam islanders:
  – Economic inactivity
  – Increased substance abuse
  – Disarticulation from land:
    • Origin stories (Zaria’s fire)
    • Customary system of land allocation and use
  – Political and social marginalization
  – Increased out-migration of youth

• For **returnees**:
  – Limited livelihoods options
  – Complete isolation (no transport)
  – Services essentially non-existent

• For the **community**:
  – Bifurcation of the community threatens cultural and social unity
Community, place-bound resilience

• Customary *land- and trade relationship-based rituals*
  
  – Reciprocal *Buleka*: traditional safety net established with other clans
  – Gifting of Galip nuts
  – New Year’s celebration – despite different location of stars
  – Mourning customary chief

• Unreported number of displaced hosted by *taoa* partners
Limits to relocations as ‘adaptation’

- Provincial boundaries v. trade and kinship partners (taoa) – a missed opportunity?

- Underlines the possibility of inter-generational backlashes between proponents of individual land rights (relying on formal deeds to own land) and proponents of collective land rights (relying mainly on oral ownership).

- Underlines need to profoundly consider the long-term protection of the hosting communities’ land rights to avoid conflicts over land and to ensure the long-term security of tenure of relocatees.
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Conclusion

• **Debate over land rights** (individual vs. collective) in Pacific needs to be considered as key issue in planning [environmentally-induced] relocations

• Debate over land rights in the Pacific alerts us that international and regional governance should include appropriate forms of land management **including communal forms of land management**

• .... otherwise a **mismatch** between normative perspective and real-life processes is likely to occur.
Recommendations - Policy gaps

- Strengthen governmental focus and regional coordination on land, migration and climate change issues
- More consistent *regional* dialogue on land related policies
- Identify interlinkages between secure land tenure, land governance, regional and global frameworks
Recommendations – Policy approaches

• Clear government policies on climate change adaptation and relocation planning combining both modern and traditional approaches to address insecurity of land tenure

• Relocations should be based on a participative approach ensuring that affected communities have an access to reliable information at all stages of relocation process

• Emphasize community cohesion and the preservation of Pacific people’s identity, social and belief systems linked to their land tenure systems

Can land tenure boundaries be the main borders to be considered when planning for relocations?
Recommendations - Research Gaps

• **Impacts of non-economic losses** – non-economic losses are difficult to measure and quantify. *Land, culture, heritage and community assets comprise a valuable tangible and intangible component of the national economic capital.*
  – Identify and define the losses (quantify), and overcome issues of incommensurability.
  – The development of wellbeing indicators (as developed in Vanuatu) is an example of good practices.

• International standards for capturing environmental and biodiversity (including their loss) contributions to national economies already exist; *cultural and heritage aspects should be equally recognized.*
  – Further research on how land tenure associated non-economic losses can be accounted for in national systems of accounting would be highly needed.
Thank you!

blocher@unu.edu
@juliablocher