



PACIFIC STUDIES SERIES

# THE EMERGENCE OF PACIFIC URBAN VILLAGES

URBANIZATION TRENDS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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URBANIZATION TRENDS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS



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Printed in the Philippines.

ISBN 978-92-9257-609-7 (Print), 978-92-9257-610-3 (e-ISBN)  
Publication Stock No. RPT168446-2

Cataloging-In-Publication Data

Asian Development Bank.

The emergence of pacific urban villages: Urbanization trends in the Pacific islands.  
Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2016.

1. Urban Villages. 2. Urbanization. 3. Pacific. I. Asian Development Bank.

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This report has been prepared by Paul Jones. The author would like to thank Jude Kohlhase, infrastructure specialist; Allison Woodruff, urban development specialist; and Cecilia C. Caparas, knowledge management analyst, Pacific Department, ADB, for coordinating and overseeing the publication.

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# Foreword

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In late 2012, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched a report on urbanization in the Pacific, *The State of Pacific Towns and Cities: Urbanization in ADB's Pacific Developing Member Countries*. This report investigated urbanization trends across 14 Pacific developing member countries of ADB. It thoroughly examined the history of Pacific urbanization, the current state of infrastructure and service provision within urban areas, and systems of urban governance. It also presented key actions that Pacific economies needed to take to manage urban growth, meet the needs of their urban citizens, and benefit from the potential of the urban economy. Central to this assessment was the need by governments and development partners in the Pacific to meet the escalating demand for urban housing, land, and infrastructure on infill and edge lands. Importantly, an overarching challenge was how to address the growing scale and proportion of urban residents now living in some form of informal and squatter settlement housing.

It is now nearly 4 years since the release of the 2012 report, and this publication adds to the important discourse of how to explain and conceptualize the phenomenon of increasing housing informality as expressed in an array of urban village types in the Pacific. As ADB is committed to urban development as one of its operational priorities, this assessment outlines alternative ways that ADB, development partners, member governments, and practitioners can approach the challenge of growing numbers of urban villages, and better manage their permanency and integration into Pacific towns, cities, and national development plans and policies. In this setting, the report expands and builds on the earlier ADB publication by examining in greater depth the need for a quantum shift in how development agencies, practitioners, and researchers perceive and address the needs of those urban residents who live in some form of urban village and often in hardship and poverty. It is the latter urban residents who are least able to access the basic human rights of adequate land, housing, and associated services and infrastructure in contemporary towns and cities of the Pacific.

The publication is also timely as the eight Millennium Development Goals, as agreed in 2000, were replaced in 2015 by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Importantly, SDG number 11 is focused on better-managed urbanization outcomes: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” With the first indicator for SDG 11 aiming to “by 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums,” this report is an important reminder of the urban challenges ahead in the Pacific, as well as the need for all to collectively contribute to global efforts to reduce and end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. In this context, it is hoped that this publication will have relevance and application for all ADB developing member countries in achieving better local, city, national, and global urban development outcomes. These and similar messages will be high on the Habitat 111 agenda

when the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development is held in Quito, Ecuador, in October, 2016.

This report was prepared by ADB's Pacific Department under the supervision of Robert Jauncey, Regional Director of the Pacific Subregional Office. Jude Kohlhasse, Infrastructure Specialist, and Allison Woodruff, Urban Development Specialist, led the preparation and publication.

This report was authored by Associate Professor Paul Jones, Program Director of the Urban and Regional Planning Program in the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, University of Sydney.



**Xianbin Yao**  
Director General  
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# Abbreviations

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|            |  |
|------------|--|
| ADB        | Asian Development Bank   |
| PNG        | Papua New Guinea   |
| UNEP       | United Nations Environment Programme                                   |
| UNESCAP    | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| UN-Habitat | United Nations Human Settlements Programme                             |

# Acknowledgments

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The Asian Development Bank and the author would like to thank the following peer reviewers for their constructive comments on this publication—Jude Kohlhase, Allison Woodruff, Andrew McIntyre, and Stefan Rau, Maria Paniagua (ADB) and Sarah Mecartney (formerly UN-Habitat). John Lea, formerly with the Urban and Regional Planning Program, University of Sydney, provided insightful comments on the first draft of this work. The following ADB staff and management also reviewed and provided comments on the final draft: Yurendra Basnett, country economist, Papua New Guinea Resident Mission; Steve Blaik, principal urban development specialist, Urban, Social Development and Public Management Division (PAUS); Alex Conroy, young professional, PAUS; Hayden Everett, senior country specialist, Pacific Liaison and Coordination Office (PLCO); Robert Jauncey, regional director, Pacific Subregional Office; James Lynch, deputy director general, Pacific Department; Roland Rajah, senior economics officer, PLCO; Paolo Spantigati, country director, Timor-Leste Resident Mission; Emma Veve, director, PAUS.

The author would like to thank Karibaiti Taoaba and Megan Praeger (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Fiji); Donovan Storey (UNESCAP); Max Kep, Elias Masta, and Edward Pulagis (Office of Urbanisation, Port Moresby), Romano Reo (Mayor of Betio Town Council, Kiribati); Vincent Pyati (UN-Habitat, Port Moresby); Tebutonga Ereata (formerly with the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Agriculture Development, Kiribati); Elisapeti Veikoso (Planning and Urban Management Agency, Tonga); Francis Lacanivalu (Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and the Environment, Fiji); and Ninik Suhartini and Grace Lee (research assistants) for their time and contributions to this book.

# Key Terminologies

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**Cultural permeation of urban areas:** the interface of kin-based norms, values, attitudes, and aspirations of ethnic, kin, clan, and tribal groups which play out in all facets of day-to-day urban life in Pacific towns and cities. The term was first used in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 2009 by customary landowners during the national consultations undertaken during the preparation of the first National Urbanisation Policy for PNG, 2010–2030 (Office of Urbanisation 2010).

**Fragility:** describes Pacific economies characterized by (i) isolation relating to both geography and knowledge-sharing; (ii) weak state functions of policy formulation, resource accumulation, and public sector governance; (iii) weak political, social, and security systems that affect the delivery of essential infrastructure and services; (iv) volatility and unpredictability of international assistance; and (v) a high level of vulnerability to climate change and the occurrence of natural disasters (ADB 2012).

**Land tenure:** the rules, norms, and practices as defined in law or in customs by which individuals and groups manage land use and development of their lands (Australian Aid 2008).

**Melanesia:** includes the larger Pacific economies of the southwest Pacific as located to the north and east of Australia's eastern seaboard. Pacific economies included are Fiji, New Caledonia, PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, as well as the indigenous peoples of the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua.

**Micronesia:** includes more than 2,000 atolls, islands, and reefs in the Western Pacific to the east and northeast of Melanesia. Micronesia is characterized by low islands and atolls with harsh climates, and includes Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, and Palau.

**Native and traditional village:** settlement located on native, traditional, or customary lands containing local indigenous landowners, their descendants, and newcomers whose lifestyles are based on attachment to kin, tradition, and custom. In some Pacific economies, the term native village or traditional village may be used; in others, urban village may be the preferred term; or the terms may be used interchangeably. For many residents of Pacific towns and cities, the notion of native or traditional village is associated with physical localities and with clans and ethnic or tribal groups around which the town or city has developed. This unique historical association means the native or traditional village may not be included in urban laws, plans, and policies.

**Polynesia:** comprises the central and southern Pacific economies, and includes the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

**Sociocultural orders:** the norms, values, attitudes, and aspirations that shape and influence the way Pacific residents (including settlers) interact and participate in their economic, social, and political way of life. Pacific sociocultural orders are sets of social and cultural relations that emphasize traditional social protocols founded on custom and have a strong affiliation to land, kin, and subsistence living. They are translocal in that they operate across boundaries and are pivotal to the way in which urban villages and their inhabitants produce and adapt their village spaces and places in varied urban settings. The strength of varying Pacific sociocultural orders will be influenced by urbanization, globalization, monetization, poverty levels, and state attitudes toward cultural activities.

**Urban village:** an overarching term encompassing native and traditional villages and village-like settlements that display features anchored on kin-based place relationships, ethnic association, land tenure based on custom, and persistence of subsistence activities. Forming and maintaining social relationships based on local sociocultural orders are central to urban villages being meaningful places tied to a common and shared identity. Urban villages include the native and traditional villages as located and demarcated within town and city boundaries, plus unplanned village-like settlements defined by terms like informal and squatter settlements. Urban villages exist within all Pacific towns and cities, differing in number, size, and intensity according to local, national, and historical circumstances, including urbanization.

**Urbanization:** the process by which people move from rural areas to areas defined as towns and cities, causing social, economic, and environmental consequences and impacts. Urbanization is the spatial translation of the production structure of the economy whereby there is a declining share of primary (agriculture) production, and an increasing share of secondary, industrial, and tertiary services sectors, with higher levels of productivity, located in urban areas. The urbanization process drives changes in the physical form and structure of towns and cities, as well as in consumption patterns, sociocultural orders, and the lifestyles of urban and rural residents (ADB 2012).

**Village-like settlement:** a component of the wider concept of urban village, these unplanned settlements include informal and squatter settlements, and display village-like features in their organization, management, and way of life. Village-like settlements are increasingly the main form of urban growth in many towns and cities in the Pacific islands, especially Melanesia. In this work, the term village-like settlement excludes the native and traditional villages given their unique historical position in town- and city-building processes. However, enclaves of native and traditional villages may include the development of village-like settlements as both internal and external boundaries become blurred.

**Village city:** a distinctive form of Pacific urbanization whereby a town or city is characterized by patterns of (i) distinct underlying land tenure types, including tracts of customary lands; (ii) discernible groupings of native and traditional villages embedded in a wider form and structure; (iii) a spatial distribution of settlers in a range of urban village types that exhibit strong affiliation to kin- and ethnic-based relationships; (iv) persistent and durable sociocultural orders that define and shape the “village world” in which settlers operate in their urban villages and in the wider town and city; and (v) the operation of traditional governance-based arrangements working alongside and interspersed with formal systems

of government. The visibility of village cities and embedding of village world values are most visible in the towns and cities of Melanesia, though they also persist in Micronesia and Polynesia where kin, tradition, and other features of Pacific sociocultural orders remain strong across all aspects of urban life.

**Village world:** a term used to imply Pacific residents affiliate with varying types of urban villages which cross artificial and real boundaries within their Pacific economies such as urban and rural delineations. Regardless of location, indigenous Pacific residents adapt their village-based sociocultural orders and values to suit their needs and circumstances at hand. Thus, village based sociocultural orders are translocal covering wider physical territories and social realms.

# Key Messages

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## Urban Villages - A Consequence of Informal Urbanization

- The future of the Pacific islands will be increasingly determined by continued patterns of urbanization, especially the ongoing growth of myriad urban village types. As the rate of urbanization accelerated in the postindependence era and late 20th century, new village-like settlement forms such as informal and squatter settlements became a more visible feature of Pacific towns and cities. These settlements began outstripping the colonial-designated native and traditional villages as well as planned development in both number and population size. In 2012, it was estimated that 800,000–1,000,000 Pacific urban residents lived in native and traditional villages and informal and squatter settlements and, by the end of 2015, this number is likely to have risen to more than 1 million residents. The largest numbers of village-like settlements are in the Melanesian Pacific capitals—Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva—and smaller towns of Micronesia, such as South Tarawa. All Pacific towns and cities contain a mix of native and traditional villages and village-like settlements, with the largest proportion being in Port Moresby, where 50% of the population lives in some type of urban village.

## Spatial Patterns

- Village-like settlements have flourished not only within and adjoining land owned by customary landowners, but increasingly on state and freehold lands as residents seek available and affordable land and housing. Lands being occupied by settlers and village-like settlements are invariably those discarded by the formal planning system, being deemed unsuitable for “properly planned” urban development. As such, village-like settlements imprint themselves into the morphology of Pacific towns and cities by developing on
  - the edges of rivers and estuaries,
  - accretion lands on ocean and lagoon foreshores,
  - electricity easements,
  - mangrove wetlands,
  - tidal lagoons and swamps,
  - peri-urban “edge” lands,
  - waste disposal sites, and
  - residual land parcels within formally planned residential areas.

## Defining Features of Village-Like Settlements

- Four overarching elements can be identified as central to village-like settlements such as informal and squatter settlements being conceptualized as urban villages. These are (i) place development tied to kinship and ethnicity, (ii) kin-based social organization, (iii) custom-based land tenure, and (iv) the persistence of subsistence-based activities, such as home gardening. Place of birth and family, kin, clan, tribe, and ethnic group are intrinsically tied to the notion of village, given that “home” in Pacific economies is invariably the village and locality in which settlers are born and raised. For a range of reasons, a sense of attachment to place of origin as a polity in its own right looms strongly in the mind-set of Pacific residents. Kin-based communal, sharing, and egalitarian values and practices lie at the heart of the social organization and structure of village-like settlements and native and traditional villages, and continue to be adapted and molded to the circumstances of urban life.

## The Notion of Village City

- With the continued emergence of a plethora of village-like settlements concurrent with changes to the nature of native and traditional villages, the notion of village city exists across all Pacific urban settings in varying degrees. There are three overarching elements central to exploring how the notion of village city can be constructed:
  - the underlying sociospatial patterns of native and traditional villages,
  - the utility of the prevailing sociocultural orders, and
  - the fusion of traditional and formal realms of governance.
- A unique feature of recognizing Pacific towns and cities as village cities is that they have physically developed around a patchwork of native and traditional villages on customary land. Pacific towns and cities are in effect mosaics of land fragmentation within which sit patterns of native and traditional villages on customary land physically frozen in the urban milieu and now expressed in their contemporary manifestation. Aided by the decline in the overall urban condition, the borders and boundaries between native and traditional villages, village-like settlements, and formally planned areas are increasingly blurred and indiscernible to the outsider. While clusters of village-like settlements may merge into each other and suggest a lack of physical and territorial clarity, for local settlers and residents the boundaries of the colonial-created native and traditional villages confer special meaning as places of identity and sociocultural interaction.

## Managing the Diversity of Peoples and Places

- There is a major need to rethink approaches to urban management and urban development in the Pacific. For many Pacific economies, especially those in Melanesia, Micronesia, and to a lesser degree Polynesia, the paramount urbanization challenge is one of learning to live together in a harmonious and secure environment where (i) the diversity of development and place-making processes by individuals and groups are recognized and acknowledged; and (ii) the basic urban development ingredients of water, sanitation, governance, and other essential public infrastructure and services

are provided. The issue is not whether there should be adequate and accessible levels of services and infrastructure provided—this should be a given. The question is what is the acceptable minimum standard required to be put in place in the context of aiming for equity for all in urban villages and wider Pacific town, city, and national settings.

- In terms of development processes, there is a need to mainstream and accept the many processes that characterize the development of urban villages and wider urban form in the Pacific. The processes at play in ordering and creating urban villages are essentially the reverse of those promulgated, adhered to, and sometimes enforced (and/or ignored) by the top-down formal planning systems. What emerges in urban villages is an alternative order where it is common for land occupation and buildings to come first, with services, infrastructure, and land tenure security following later, if at all. The spaces in urban villages tend to be highly utilized, housing construction is “stop-start” and reiterative, access ways invariably evolve from the residual spaces adjoining houses and land boundaries, and government imposition and control is minimal or absent. Hybrid processes invariably emerge using elements of both processes. The permanence of local bottom-up development of new and existing urban villages, where the focus is on meeting individual and collective local needs, requires new ways of providing for basic urban development needs, such as services and infrastructure.
- If a major objective of urban development and management is to improve the living conditions of residents, then there is an urgent need to reconceptualize approaches to Pacific urbanization. There is a need to move from the simple basic abstractions of “unplanned,” “informal,” and “squatter” settlements and the like, to recognizing urban villages as meaningful local socioterritorial entities operating as part of wider villages and cities. In this context, there exists an opportunity to seriously question current approaches, including asking who really builds Pacific towns and cities, what processes are used, and how they can be best supported and managed in a more equitable manner. Importantly, such support does not lie in “formalizing the informal” by standardization and regularization, as this will continue to perpetuate current practices and approaches to managing urban villages. The report concludes with a number of lessons in addressing the demand for infrastructure, services, and land and housing, and which can be applied to the myriad forms of Pacific urban villages.





# Introduction

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“The specific needs of the Pacific in the process of urbanization must be recognized and adequately addressed in the post-2015 development agenda. Key priorities include upgrading of informal settlements and access to safe and affordable housing for all, land, provision of basic infrastructure and services, building urban resilience to climate risks and other shocks, enhancing rural–urban linkages, addressing gender inequalities, job creation and strengthening capacity for urban governance, planning, management, and data collection and analysis. Continuing the ‘business as usual’ approach to the development of cities and urban areas will not be enough to manage the pressures of rapid urban growth.”

*Excerpt from the Outcome Statement of the New Pacific Urban Agenda, Nadi, March 2015.*

## Why Explore Urban Villages and Village Cities in the Pacific Islands?

Generalizing across a plethora of varying towns and cities in the three Pacific subregions of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia can be fraught with challenges. Every town and city has its own unique geographic setting, economy, politics, and sociocultural history tied to local and national development. Collectively, they have defined their own identities and paths of evolution. While there is much diversity across Pacific economies settings, there is also much commonality in terms of colonial past, underperforming rural economies, exposure to natural hazards and climate change, limited economies of scale, the condition of the state, and importantly, the newness of urbanization.

In the 19th century, far-reaching change was introduced by colonial governments, missionaries, traders, and others as part of a wider foray of encounters into the relatively unexplored Pacific. Notions of village, town, and city based on European norms and values were to be germinated in island settings where traditional social and economic systems had been in operation for thousands of years. Not surprisingly, the lifestyles of many Pacific residents were to become fractured, colored, disoriented, and reoriented by the tangible and nontangible aspects of cross-cultural interaction driven by colonization, missionaries, and influences of modernity. One significant consequence of the above was that managing towns and cities and the wider urbanization process in the Pacific has become one of the most pressing national and regional challenges in the new millennium.

In the Pacific, for example, some towns and cities, such as Port Moresby, are rated as one of the more dangerous places in the world to live and visit. Noumea in New Caledonia

(66) was the only other Pacific economy to be ranked out of the 140 listed cities (*The Economist* 2015). In many Pacific capitals, and most prominently in Melanesia, decreasing urban safety and rising unemployment have stimulated the growth of private security firms and vigilante groups to provide protection for businesses and safeguard of public property. Many towns and cities struggle to provide basic services and infrastructure, despite being in countries that are among the richest in natural resources in the world. Only those Pacific economies in receipt of sufficient remittances from foreign aid, and with reasonable levels of inclusive governance, are able to provide and maintain a marginally adequate level of infrastructure and services for their growing populations.

Towns and cities such as those in low-lying atolls in Micronesia and the dispersed islands of Melanesia and Polynesia are also subject to the effects of climate change, sea level rise, and cyclones. These phenomena threaten infrastructure assets, livelihoods, and precious sources of limited water supplies in atolls, as well as in coastal towns and cities on larger islands. Climate change is eroding the limited supply of developable land and constructed assets that fringe many islands and are the social and economic lifeline for communities. Recent examples are the flooding and asset damage from cyclones that lashed Honiara and the northwestern coast of Guadalcanal Island in April 2014, and in Port Vila and wider Vanuatu in March 2015, causing deaths and washing away town bridges, roads, and squatter housing. Similar devastation was caused throughout the islands of Fiji by cyclone Winston in February 2016. The majority of Pacific economies have been classified as “extremely vulnerable” to climate change and most are in the top tier of the world’s most vulnerable nations. (UNEP, 2014). Not surprisingly, the need to relocate thousands of environmental refugees from urban areas due to the consequences of natural hazards and climate change impacts is, for some, an increasing possibility. Low-lying Kiribati, for example, has bought islands in Fiji for possible resettlement due to the ongoing impacts of climate change (Pacific Institute of Public Policy 2012a).

Pacific economies are highly vulnerable not only to natural hazards and disasters, but to economic shocks such as the global financial crisis. They have not been able to successfully manage such vulnerabilities and their consequences in existing fragile settings. The spluttering economic performance of Pacific economies combined with generally poor management approaches have resulted in two main crosscutting themes characterizing urban growth in the new millennium: (i) growing poverty, and (ii) the rise of squatter and informal settlements in Pacific towns and cities. Many unplanned and informal settlements taking the form of village-like settlements or urban villages, as argued in this work, have established kin-based social and organizational structures and systems that underpin their operation, management, and way of life. Poverty and the expansion of these urban villages—including both the long-established native and traditional villages and the new urban village forms as expressed in flourishing village-like settlements—are strongly connected, as it is the growth of such settlements that allows settlers to manage and cope with poverty.

Urban informality in Pacific towns and cities can be defined as processes and activities deemed to be outside the bounds of the formal regulated planning, building, land, and related systems. The formal town and city comprises top-down government processes and its agents, institutions, rules, and regulations that have been used since the colonial era to control urban spaces, places, and economic and social dimensions. On the other hand, urban informality in the Pacific is the reverse of what the formal system stands for—that is, myriad bottom-up individual and local solutions with little or no government and public involvement. Occupation and land development comes first, with the provision of services invariably an addendum in the sequencing of decisions in making a home. Residents in the Pacific live in urban informality for two main reasons: either through a deliberate decision, or because the formal systems fully or partially exclude them from participation and accessing

land and housing in other parts of the city. Thus, many residents have constrained choice, including the inability to share in the limited pool of financial, human, and political resources allocated by governments to manage urban areas, such as for providing public services and infrastructure. As more people live in informality, including informal settlements in Pacific towns and cities, the urbanization of poverty will continue to increase with its adverse social, economic, and environmental implications for human, town, and city development.

The term urban village is used in varying global contexts, from the inner city suburbs of Sydney, to New York, London and many European cities. In developed countries, urban village is a term generally associated with communities which are mixed use, compact, walkable, human scale, and have good public transit and permeable public spaces. Many people are attracted to ‘new and old’ forms of urban villages as they represent a key symbol of the “new urbanism” planning and design movement which was founded in the late twentieth century based on the neo-traditional planning and design values as outlined above. Recent literature assessing urbanization and urban development issues in the Pacific has identified the emergence of myriad forms of urban villages under the guise of such terms as “rural village in the city,” “village in the city,” squatter and informal settlements, or simply urban village (ADB 2012, Jones 2012a) (Box 1). Within the Pacific, the importance of urban villages as an integral component of the urbanization process has been well recognized. Mecartney, for example, in her recent analysis of urbanization in Melanesia, states, “We are remiss on confining the term of these residential areas (that is, urban villages) simply as ‘settlements,’ for they are communities with social networks, governance structures and a defined way of life” (Mecartney 2014: 2). In the new millennium, there is wide agreement that (i) the continuing emergence of varying forms of urban villages has now become more permanent, clear, and visible in modern Pacific towns and cities; and (ii) these urban villages contain people from all walks of life, including professionals, unskilled laborers, the unemployed, customary landowners, and migrants.

Building on the premise that growing numbers of squatter and informal settlements increasingly reflect village-like features and are a type of urban village, a distinctive form of Pacific urbanization termed village city continues to emerge, predominantly in Melanesia (ADB 2012). Village cities in the Pacific have been defined as those “where the creation of squatter and informal settlements (villages) dominates the city’s physical space, and there is little state redistribution of services and infrastructure. Self-organization in housing, subdivision, land tenure, and livelihoods prevail” (Jones 2012b: 11). Modernist planning notions of how towns and cities should be planned and developed in the Pacific are continually being challenged by rising numbers of squatter and informal settlements which are being built by incremental, adaptive and nonlinear processes (Jones, 2011a). While

### Box 1 The Concept of the “Rural Village in the City”

“**Rural village in the city:** the persistence of squatter, unplanned, and informal settlements that exhibit the physical, social, and sociocultural characteristics of rural villages, but within an urban setting. An increasing number of people move to towns and cities, but still behave in the image of the rural societies from which they have come. Such squatter, unplanned, and informal settlements are often developed as enclaves, being characterized by settlers who have migrated and retained strong ties to a particular kin, ethnic group, rural area, or locality, including outer islands. The phenomena of the ‘rural village in the city’ will dominate urban development in Melanesian [developing member countries] over the coming decade.”

Source: ADB. 2012. The State of Pacific Towns and Cities, Urbanization in ADB’s Developing Member Countries. *Pacific Studies Series*. Manila (p.x).



Squatter Settlements Emerge Above Port Moresby's Central Business District.

appreciating the diversity and complexity of the three main Pacific subregions of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, understanding and conceptualizing the nature of the increasing volume of squatter and informal settlements in growing towns and cities and what this means have not been explored regionally in the Pacific (Figure 1).

In this setting, there are a number of key thematic areas of inquiry to pursue: What is the nature of the village-like settlements expressing themselves as urban villages? How have village-like settlements and native villages been conceptualized, including the historical basis of the term urban village? What is an urban village in the Pacific context, and why do such terminology and concepts matter anyway? Is it possible to conceptualize towns and cities in Melanesia specifically, and in the Pacific generally, as village cities, given that urban villages continue to expand and that kin, tradition, and village values and practices cut across the lives of all Pacific residents? What do these explanations mean for addressing current and future urban development and management?

In the above context, this work contends that village cities exist in the Pacific, and have the following key characteristics:

- Distinct underlying land tenure types that bring with them obligations and expectations of landowners, as well as the settlers who reside on such lands. Settlers reside on customary land owned by indigenous landowners or on state and freehold land. Settlers occupy customary, state, and freehold lands with or without the permission of the landowner. At the heart of the morphology of most Pacific towns and cities is the presence of native or traditional villages as developed on customary lands. These

Figure 1 Traditional Dancing in a Maneaba in South Tarawa



Traditional skirts are replaced by dresses made out of recycled videotape from imported films.

enclaves represent the original urban village comprising descendants of the indigenous landowners and now other newcomers who live on the remnants of customary lands upon which the cadastre of the wider town and city has developed.

- A spatial distribution of village-like settlements. Recognizing that existing native and traditional villages continue to be shaped and reshaped, these are newer forms of urban villages exhibiting their own identity via a common place of origin and blood ties of tribal and kinship members migrating from a particular tribe, ethnic group, and locality. These squatter and informal settlements are invariably connected to a wider village world with settlers invariably bonded to varying degrees by blood, language, and place, and the history that this encapsulates. As such, the networks and relationships in which urban settlers are involved are translocal, extending beyond the physical boundaries of their rural and urban villages, towns, and cities.
- The operation of traditional sociocultural orders which, among other matters, define the fluid boundaries of the village world in which settlers and urban villages operate. Villages and town are increasingly one, with values and norms transposed across rural and urban space, places, and scales. This translocalism provides settlers and their urban villages with a wide geographic framework within which to meet their social, economic, and governance needs. While the application of norms, values, and customs may not be as strong in urban villages as it is in rural areas, sociocultural orders still provide the “glue” that binds kin and tribal groups and fosters socially rich and distinctive urban villages. These villages act as conduits that allow settlers to network with people from the same village to meet their daily social and economic needs, as well as fostering interaction and engagement at the citywide level (Figure 1). The features of local sociocultural orders are paramount to settlers shaping and maintaining the social, economic, and



environmental character of their urban village, while viewing the wider city as a larger village or village city.

- The tandem operation of modern and traditional governance systems, with such systems comprising elements borrowed and adapted from each other. Examples are the village court system and native land laws embedded in formal legislation, as well as informal arrangements for land occupation and the application of village-based rules and regulations for village planning and development. Settlers recognize and acknowledge formal government systems, but do not actively participate in them as they have little relevance to what is important in their day-to-day lives. Traditional governance, including adherence to custom, fills this void in dynamic settings where elements of both systems are tolerated and accepted. They may be legitimate and accepted in one realm, but not necessarily in the other.

Collectively, the above traits muddy the urbanization process and increasingly characterize mainstream life in many Pacific towns and cities, especially in Melanesia. Importantly, this occurs in the context of failing urban security driven by poverty, unemployment, ethnic conflict, and transition from traditional to market economies. Understanding Pacific towns and cities through the lens of urban villages and wider village cities provides deeper ways of thinking, conceptualizing, and explaining the processes and outcomes of urbanization in Pacific economies.

## Objectives of This Work

Within the above setting, the objectives of this book are threefold. First, the work explores the conceptualization, meanings, and messages conveyed through mainstream terms, such as native and traditional villages and squatter and informal settlements, which this work contends can all be considered as manifestations of the wider term urban village. The work introduces and clarifies the unique concept of urban village in the Pacific, including how the meaning of the above terms as introduced to simplify urban reality and reduce complexity, has changed over time and why.

Second, the work outlines a case that there is a distinct and unique regional form of urbanization emerging in the towns and cities of Pacific economies, most pronounced in Melanesia but also existing in Micronesia and Polynesia that is increasingly embodied in the growth of what are termed urban villages and village cities. This work seeks to identify and explain common threads as to what elements constitute the nature of urban village in the Pacific over and above generic mainstream terms used to conceptualize squatter and unplanned settlements. These first two objectives are inextricably linked, as one cannot explore the phenomena of urban villages without understanding the sociocultural milieu in which urban villages have been conceptualized, constructed, and reconfigured over time.

Third, the work contributes to a richer and deeper understanding of the process and nature of Pacific urbanization, including how traditional sociocultural orders transcend boundaries and borders to produce a diversity of urban villages in the Pacific. In this setting, policy directions for enhancing the better integration of urban villages into the management of the urbanization process are provided.

The central theme underpinning this work is that many Pacific towns and cities continue to grow rapidly, and most of this growth is occurring in an array of settlement types, especially in those termed native and traditional villages, as well as squatter and informal settlements. These entities are more than just nonformal native villages and village-like settlements—they display specific qualities that produce and reproduce space

and place, and can be defined as urban villages in one form or other. For many Pacific economies, the growth and permanency of urban villages has become the major force in shaping their towns and cities in the postindependence era and being central to the logic of Pacific urbanization processes. While village-like settlements may be explained and conceptualized as unplanned, dysfunctional, and illegal development in the eyes of the prevailing formal planning and development system as guided by middle- and elite-class rules and regulations, many are still planned and managed in some form according to the rules, regulations, norms, values, and protocols of their inhabitants. While village-like settlements may vary in their social cohesiveness, unity, and structure, they continue to flourish in Pacific towns and cities on the basis of traditional sociocultural characteristics, namely, kin relationships, defined social organization and structure, land tenure based on custom, and persistence of subsistence activities. These characteristics were suppressed during the creation of European planned and managed native and traditional villages and wider town and city settings. Not surprisingly, indigenous ways have now reasserted themselves, taking a strong hold in social relations and the physical form and structure of contemporary Pacific towns and cities.

In the Pacific, the various forms of urban villages in town and city settings are in effect melting pots of traditional village world values and norms based on evolving expressions of kin, ethnicity, and custom. They are translocal in that they are based on values and practices derived from the influences of modernization and globalization cutting across urban and rural spaces. In this setting, settlers and their urban villages are connected to a wider village network with many village-like settlements reflecting traits that define the identity of the village found in rural areas, namely, the centrality of family, ancestry, cultural practices, and commonality of interests including attachment to kin, place, and land. When urban villages are in sufficient numbers, residents engage in common citywide functions utilizing a plethora of connections, interests, and exchanges that are outside the territorial boundaries of their urban village. It is in Melanesia where urban villages are most visible and pronounced, and where towns and cities represent a form of village cities (ADB 2012). As such, urban villages and village cities present unique management and challenges for policy development at local, town, city and national levels.

With the permanency of urbanization and its consequences becoming more visible over the last 50 years, the notion of what constitutes an urban village as reinforced through lived experiences and transcending geographic boundaries has become topical. The village-like settlements that continue to evolve in Pacific towns and cities are, in effect, a construction and reconstruction of wider village world social organization and sociocultural orders. These continue to be played out, produced, reproduced, and adjusted by settlers to accommodate their urban circumstances, with the modification of such features increasingly defining the form and structure of towns and cities as well as rural lifestyles. As urban growth continues to increase around and within the native and traditional villages, myriad new village-like settlements have evolved within both formal urban boundaries and peri-urban areas. In a region marked by a strong history of colonial imposition and control, the work contends that the ongoing growth of urban villages in the postcolonial era generates a special type of Pacific urbanization that continues to be criticized via antiurban rhetoric, yet is tolerated and accepted by the middle class and urban elite. However, urban villages have the greatest disparities in human development levels, and biggest gaps in the provision of adequate housing, services and infrastructure. Put simply, the challenge for more effective policy development is significant. In this context, the work is central in helping us to better understand and explain why, how, and by whom Pacific towns and cities are being shaped, thus informing and deepening our understanding of the complex nature of contemporary Pacific urbanization and the policy responses required for its management.



# Revisiting Drivers and Responses to Pacific Urbanization

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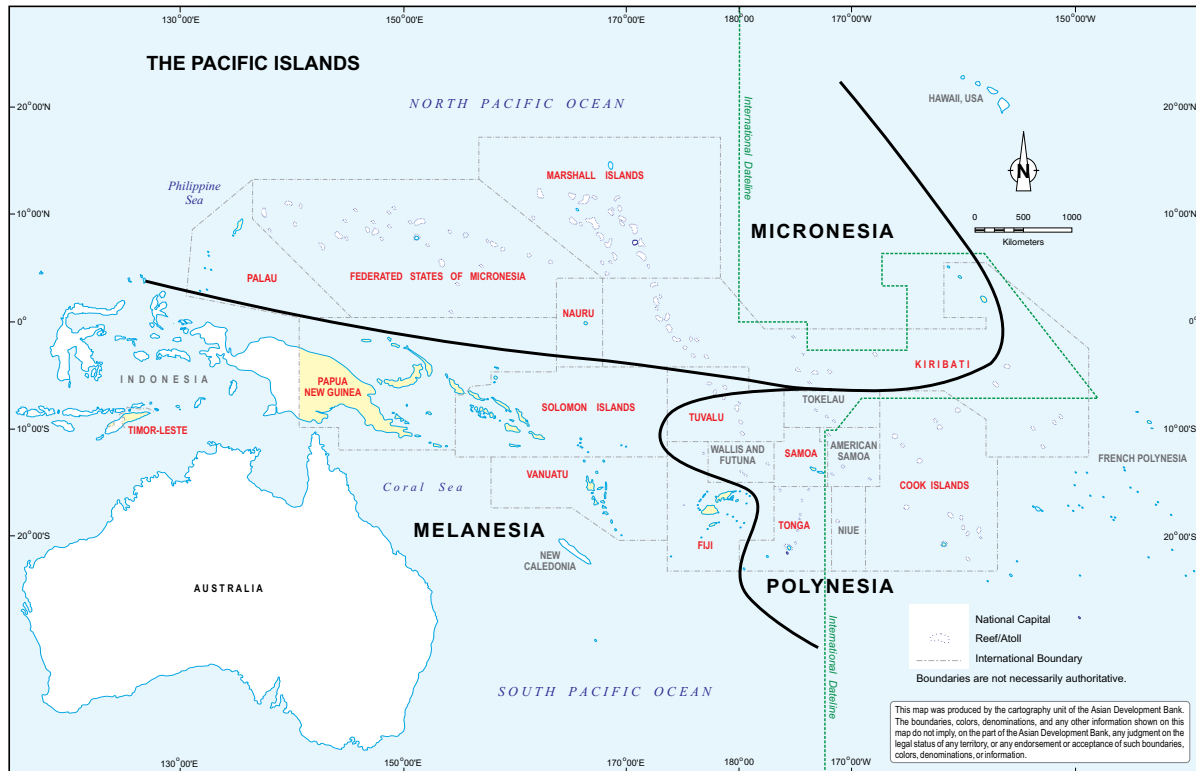
## The Legacy of Colonial Beginnings

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the nature of current Pacific urbanization patterns take their identity from the era of missionaries and colonial governments, which took a foothold in the 19th century in the Pacific. In nearly all Pacific economies, the main catalysts of change were the colonial administrations who sought economic gain and the establishment of trading opportunities. While the growth of Pacific economies and their towns and cities reflect a mix of geography, resources, economic management, and social and governance systems, their development remains a consequence of foreign interventions establishing commercial and administrative centers as part of wider empire-building activity. In this context, Pacific urban centers emerged as creations of faraway European and later American entities, with Britain being the dominant player.

European explorers including the Spanish, Dutch, French, British, and Germans, and later the Americans, ventured to the Pacific islands during the 16th–19th centuries and claimed discovery of the islands they found. Spanish explorer Álvaro de Mandaña de Neira, for example, was the first European visitor in Solomon Islands on a voyage from Peru in 1568, Portuguese explorer Pedro Fernández de Quirós was the first European visitor in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) in 1606, Dutchman Abel Tasman was the first European visitor in the Fiji archipelago in 1643, and officers of the British Navy were the first European visitors in the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) during the period 1764–1824 (Colonial Office 1960). While large parts of the Pacific were originally placed under the overarching term Polynesia by the French writer Charles de Brosses in 1756, growing recognition of their diverse size, ethnicities, and geography led the French explorer Jules Dumont d’Urville to delineate in 1831 the myriad of Pacific islands into three geographic areas: Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia (ADB 2012). Despite the migration of ethnic groups outside of the defined geographic areas—for example, I-Kiribati (Micronesians) have migrated and established their own communities in both Fiji and Solomon Islands (Melanesia), while Samoans and Tongans (Polynesians) have established communities in Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, and the United States—the subregions remain embedded as the three main social, cultural, and geographical groupings of western, northwestern, and central-eastern Pacific (Map 1).

Many of the explorers documented in detail what they saw and found, including settlement patterns. Captain James Cook, for example, makes extensive use of the words “village” and “native” in his journal to describe a range of traditional settlement patterns he encountered during his foray into the Pacific in 1769. In New Zealand, Cook observed that the “natives” lived in a range of village types, from walled villages to fortified villages

Map 1 The Pacific's Three Subregional Groupings: Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.



Source: ADB. 2012. The State of Pacific Towns and Cities, Urbanization in ADB's Developing Member Countries. *Pacific Studies Series*. Manila.

(Wharton 1893). During this exploratory period, engagement with islands and their inhabitants was initially infrequent and ad hoc. However, the momentum increased as visits from explorers shifted to a more permanent presence driven by conquest and exploitation from traders, buccaneers, planters, whalers, sealers, military ships, colonial empires, and missionaries (Meleisea and Schoeffel 1997).

As a result, from the early to mid-19th century, the motives shifted from exploration and trade to exploitation, as wider colonial ventures began claiming and occupying new territories. Importantly, it was at this time that the first Pacific European towns emerged and took on a permanent form. Growing towns, such as Levuka in Fiji, Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea (PNG), and the German-administered Apia in Samoa, emerged as strategic focal points for trade, commerce, and defense. The British, for example, were explicit in their imperative of establishing regimes by which to educate, civilize, and “improve” the lifestyles of the indigenous populations. The traditional cultures of the Pacific and other native communities in the British empire were seen as an obstacle along the path to a civilized state (Colonial Office 1960). In the context of expanding British influence and the introduction of order, central to the process of Pacific colonization was the establishment of planned towns, such concentrations being the center of political authority, trade, commerce, and the ruling elite (Home 1997).

The spatial expression of Pacific towns was often led by a surveyor or governor, with town layouts based on variations of an underlying grid pattern imposed on the prevailing geographical landscape. Importantly, the physical form of ports and the introduction of planning and building regulations based around promenades, open spaces, public buildings, and squares, for example, had more to do with the needs and aspirations of foreign civilizations than with a sound understanding of the social and economic needs of the indigenous population. Colonial governments introduced land laws based upon laws and customs of their home country. Laws pertaining to alienated land in Papua and New Guinea were strongly shaped by Australian law, France applied their laws in Tahiti, while the Cook Islands adapted laws that were used to manage Maori lands in New Zealand (Crocombe 1987).

The legacy of the colonial era effectively means Pacific towns and cities reflect layers of former colonial powers bound to the ideals of modernity being played out at varying points in time. Features remaining in one form or other in current Pacific towns and cities under British administration, for example, had their genesis in the era of the Council of Foreign Plantations, established in 1660 to deal with colonial affairs in newly claimed colonies in the West Indies and North America (Colonial Office 1960). In terms of settlement planning, a standard model of colonial town planning emerged in the 1670s and held rigid until the mid-1800s. Known as the “Grand Modell,” the approach was applied across all British “new world” colonies such as Australia and disseminated into the Pacific so as to introduce uniformity and centralize power within one physical town entity. These “planning principles” evolved from the Act for Building a Town 1692, which provided the essential requirements for colonial administrators to apply when laying out and centralizing settlements in their colonies. Towns that were uniform in layout and could be readily regulated were the order of the day (Home 1997) (Box 2).

The 19th century was a significant period for the Pacific as it was increasingly drawn into the ways of the European world, setting the scene for irreversible change in residents’ lifestyles and how Europeans interpreted their culture. The most extensive impact in the Pacific was driven by Britain, being involved in Pacific economy administration to varying degrees and over varying time periods in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Gilbert Island (now Kiribati), Ellice Island (now Tuvalu), New Guinea, Niue, Solomon Islands, and Tonga. Urbanization in its most basic European form had arrived in Pacific, with its influence unfolding spatially, socially, and economically. The laying out of towns reflecting different functions and ideologies was the initial preoccupation of the time. As small island towns grew, settlements dispatched rural-based goods to support Europe’s industrial revolution, with many transshipped via the new colonial towns on the east coast of Australia. Contact with foreigners introduced islanders to new forms of governance, Christianity, and the notion that labor and provision of goods and services were essential to maintaining a cash economy and a new economic order called capitalism (Macdonald 1982). Rather than appreciating and recognizing the history and traditions of islanders and their societies, deliberately imparting a “civilizing influence” was central to urbanization and development policy, an approach that became mainstreamed for many colonial government and their administrations (Home 1997).

## Key Population Trends

Official statistics on rates of urbanization and urban growth trends are well under-enumerated in the Pacific, a key reason being that Pacific economies exclude their peri-urban areas (Mecartney 2014). Noting this caveat, based on the latest censuses, the Pacific economies had an estimated population of 10.9 million persons in August 2015 (Table 1), with an

### Box 2 The Grand Modell of British Colonial Settlement

Attributed to Lord Shaftsbury and initially developed during the 1670s, the Grand Modell was a set of principles necessary to be applied in the “planting” of a settlement (a term used at that time instead of planning) in the new colonies. The principles were subject to greater variation in their application and selection from the 1850s onward as the nature and speed of the urbanization changed concurrent with wider changes in the autonomy of new territories. The influences of the Grand Modell principles are reflected in one form or other in British colonial towns and cities:

1. “a policy of deliberate urbanization, or town planting, in preference to dispersed settlement;
2. land rights allocated in a combination of town, suburban and country lots;
3. the town planned and laid out in advance of settlement;
4. wide streets laid out in geometric, usually grid-iron form, usually on an area of one square mile;
5. public squares;
6. standard-sized, rectangular plots, spacious in comparison with those in British towns of the time;
7. some plots reserved for public purposes; and
8. a physical distinction between town and country, usually by common land or an encircling green belt.”

Source: Home. 1997. *Of Planting and Planning - the making of British colonial cities*. Oxford: The Alden Press. (p. 9).

average rate of urbanization of 49%. If the small Pacific economies of Tokelau and Wallis and Futuna are excluded, then the average rate of urbanization is 54%. In terms of the number of persons living in Pacific towns and cities, approximately 2.5 million persons were residing in formally defined Pacific urban areas in mid-2015. This is the equivalent of 23% of the total Pacific population. In other words, nearly one in every four Pacific islanders is an urban resident. While the scale and diversity of urbanization in the Pacific contrasts greatly with the urbanization trends seen in Australia and larger Asian countries such as the People’s Republic of China, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, the urban challenges generated by the urbanization process are of equal importance and concern to the residents of the Pacific islands.

Urbanization rates are defined as the percentage of a country’s population living in an area classified as urban (Firman 2012). In the Pacific islands, the rate of urbanization continues to rise steadily via the growth of their towns and cities. However, at a regional level, the bulk of the population in Pacific economies (an estimated 77% in August 2015) continue to live in rural areas, with the rural population and their lifestyles pervading Pacific urban areas in many ways. In 2015, 10 of the 21 Pacific were defined as predominantly urban, while 12 had urbanization rates greater than 40%. In accordance with trends seen in Pacific economies and the wider Pacific over the last 25 years, urban growth rates continue to be higher than rural growth rates in nearly all Pacific economies. The Pacific economies that do not fall within this trend are those subject to declining population, primarily due to out-migration, or those Pacific economies that have peri-urban or productive rural hinterlands that remain formally classified as rural.

In terms of subregional trends, Melanesia contains approximately 89% of the total Pacific population. It also contains the largest proportion of urban residents, some 24% or 1,824,613 persons. These residents live in the larger Melanesian towns and cities of Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva. With the exception of Fiji, the Melanesian Pacific economies generally have lower rates of urbanization. For example, PNG is 13% and Solomon Islands is 20%. However, these Pacific economies have higher absolute numbers

Table 1: Main Population Indicators for the Pacific Economies, 2013

| Pacific Subregion and Countries | Midyear Population Estimate (2013) | Population Growth Rate (%) | Capital City or Town | Current Urban Population (%) | 2050 Urban Population (%) <sup>a</sup> | Last Inter Census Annual Urban Growth Rate (%) | Last Inter Census Annual Rural Growth Rate (%) | Land Area (km) |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--|--|--|----------------|
| <b>Melanesia</b>                | <b>9,796,900</b>                   | 2.1                        |                      |                              |  |  |  | <b>542,377</b> |
| Fiji                            | 867,000                            | 0.5                        | Suva                 | 51                           | 65                                     | 1.5  | (0.1)  | 18,273         |
| New Caledonia                   | 265,000                            | 1.3                        | Nouméa               | 68                           | 80                                     | 2.3  | (0.7)  | 18,576         |
| Papua New Guinea                | 7,744,700                          | 2.8                        | Port Moresby         | 13                           | 23                                     | 2.8  | 2.7  | 462,840        |
| Solomon Islands                 | 642,800                            | 2.7                        | Honiara              | 20                           | 35                                     | 4.7  | 1.8  | 30,407         |
| Vanuatu                         | 277,600                            | 2.6                        | Port Vila            | 24                           | 38                                     | 3.5  | 1.9  | 12,281         |
| <b>Micronesia</b>               | <b>540,600</b>                     | 1.2                        |                      |                              |  |  |  | <b>3,156</b>   |
| Guam                            | 184,200                            | 2.6                        | Hagatna              | 94                           | 96                                     | 0.4  | (1.2)  | 541            |
| Kiribati                        | 113,400                            | 2.1                        | South Tarawa         | 54                           | 55                                     | 4.4  | 0.2  | 811            |
| Marshall Islands                | 54,900                             | 0.4                        | Majuro               | 74                           | 80                                     | 1.4  | (2.0)  | 181            |
| Federated States of Micronesia  | 102,300                            | (0.4)                      | Kolonia              | 22                           | 30                                     | (2.2)  | 1.0  | 701            |
| Nauru                           | 10,900                             | 1.8                        | Yaren                | 100                          | 100                                    | 1.8  | -  | 21             |
| Northern Mariana Islands        | 56,900                             | 1.3                        | Saipan               | 90                           | 91                                     | 3.7  | 2.3  | 457            |
| Palau                           | 18,000                             | 0.6                        | Koror                | 77                           | 93                                     | 0.0  | 3.9  | 444            |
| <b>Polynesia</b>                | <b>650,701</b>                     | 0.2                        |                      |                              |  |  |  | <b>7,986</b>   |
| American Samoa                  | 57,100                             | 0.5                        | Pago Pago            | 88                           | 89                                     | 2.4  | 1.7  | 199            |
| Cook Islands                    | 15,300                             | 3.0                        | Rarotonga            | 74                           | 82                                     | (1.2)  | (3.0)  | 237            |
| French Polynesia                | 263,000                            | 0.6                        | Papeete              | 50                           | 62                                     | 0.7  | 1.8  | 3,521          |
| Niue                            | 1,500                              | (1.0)                      | Alofi                | 36                           | 59                                     | -  | -  | 259            |
| Samoa                           | 187,300                            | 1.0                        | Apia                 | 20                           | 23                                     | (0.3)  | 1.2  | 2,935          |
| Timor-Leste <sup>b</sup>        | 1,066,409                          | 2.4                        | Dili                 | 30                           | -                                      | -  | -  | 14,917         |
| Tokelau                         | 1,160                              | (0.1)                      | Nukunonu             | -                            | -                                      | -  | 0.9  | 12             |
| Tonga                           | 103,300                            | 0.2                        | Nuku'alofa           | 23                           | 32                                     | 2.4  | 0.9  | 650            |
| Tuvalu                          | 11,300                             | 0.5                        | Funafuti             | 47                           | 75                                     | 1.4  | (0.2)  | 26             |
| Wallis and Futuna               | 11,900                             | (1.9)                      | Mata-Utu             | -                            | -                                      | -  | (2.0)  | 142            |

(-) = negative, - = not available, km = kilometer.

<sup>a</sup> Estimates for 2050 urban population sourced from United Nations. World Urbanization Prospects: the 2014 Revision. <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup>

<sup>b</sup> Timor-Leste data sourced from the Government of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Finance. *2010 Census, Volume 2*. Dili.

Note: Table includes both ADB Developing Member Countries and non-ADB members so as reflect an accurate Pacific regional and subregional population context.

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Statistics for Development Division, August 2015.

of urban residents due to their higher overall national population size. Melanesia has the highest urban growth rate, averaging just under 3.0% per annum, compared with the low rates seen in Micronesia (1.4%) and Polynesia (0.9%). Some Pacific economies in Micronesia and Polynesia have experienced negative urban growth due to overseas migration.

Of all the Pacific economies, PNG stands alone in terms of scale, rapidity, and diversity of urbanization. PNG is the most populated and largest land mass of all Pacific economies, containing some 70% of the Pacific population. With the exception of PNG, all other Pacific economies have national populations of less than a million, with many having fewer than 100,000 persons. While PNG has the lowest urbanization rate of the Pacific economies, it has the largest urban populations, including the highest number and concentrations of squatter and informal settlements and the largest city in the Pacific islands (Port Moresby). The total urban population of PNG—estimated to be 800,000–1,000,000 persons by the end of 2014 (personal communication, PNG Office of Urbanisation)—is higher than the total subregional population for Polynesia (650,701 persons) and Micronesia (540,600 persons). As such, the circumstances of PNG strongly impact the analysis of urbanization trends in Melanesia and the wider Pacific islands.

The highest rates of urbanization are found in the smaller Pacific towns and cities in Micronesia. Six out of seven Pacific economies in Micronesia have more than 40% of their residents in urban areas. In Polynesia, all countries (excluding Tokelau and Wallis and Futuna) have urban populations well in excess of 20%. However, overall national and urban population numbers are relatively moderate to small, with national and urban population growth rates kept in check by emigration. From this perspective, urbanization pressures are being transferred by islanders to other town and city settings in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

There is a clear trend of urban growth exceeding national population growth in most Pacific economies. This is most apparent in the Melanesian countries, where moderate to high urban growth rates of about 2%–4% exceed national population growth rates by 100% and more. The exceptions to this are (i) Pacific economies in Polynesia and Micronesia with ready access to regional and international migration opportunities, and (ii) Pacific economies in Melanesia whose residents recently gained access to employment in Australia under the Pacific Seasonal Workers Scheme. The higher urban growth rates in Pacific economies are being driven by rural–urban migration, as well as the youth bulge of urban populations and the greater numbers of females than males. With this comes higher birth rates in urban areas.

High population growth associated with urbanization has also substantially increased population densities. While on a different physical scale, some village densities in Pacific capitals have begun to rival those experienced in Asian cities. Densities have been well documented for the smaller villages and islets of Betio and Bairiki in South Tarawa, Ebeye in the Marshall Islands, and villages in Port Vila and Suva. Ebeye, some 0.31 square kilometers ( $\text{km}^2$ ) in area, is estimated as having 38,600 persons per  $\text{km}^2$ , while Seaside in Port Vila is estimated at 31,000 persons per  $\text{km}^2$  (ADB 2012, Haberkorn 2008). The larger island of South Tarawa remains among the highest-density town in the Pacific islands, with an average of approximately 3,500 persons per  $\text{km}^2$  in an area of 15.67  $\text{km}^2$  (Fraser Thomas Partners 2011) (Figure 2).

Some villages located within South Tarawa are overcrowded, having densities in the order of 15,000–18,000 persons per  $\text{km}^2$ . Aside from the small village of Nanikai adjoining the government administrative area of Bairiki, this high density is most apparent on the government-leased islet of Betio, which contains some 31% of the South Tarawa population on 1.75  $\text{km}^2$ . The islet is occupied mainly by squatters on land leased by the government from traditional landowners under 99-year leases as initiated by the British in



Figure 2: The Atoll of South Tarawa



South Tarawa comprises a series of small and large islets linked by causeways.

the colonial era. With rural–urban migration, the new millennium has seen urban densities increase dramatically in Pacific economies, especially in squatter and informal settlements (Haberkorn 2008). However, official published statistics need to be viewed with caution as Pacific urbanization and urban growth rates are well underestimated and are likely to be in the order of anywhere from 20%–30% higher than reported. A key implication of the above is that estimates of levels of rural–urban migration and rural and urban poverty, for example, will be underestimated, making it even more challenging to build the evidence base for the Pacific urban sector (Box 3). The main towns and cities of the Pacific by subregion are shown in Map 2. What is clear from the maps are the diversity of geographic settings in which Pacific towns and cities are located, the similarity of physical locations (primarily coastal and hinterland), and their relative isolation from other towns and cities larger cities that comprise their subregional grouping.

### Rural–Urban Migration as a Key Driver of Urbanization

Pacific urbanization growth rates are driven by three determinants: natural population increase, rural–urban migration, and, to a lesser degree, the reclassification of adjoining peri–urban and rural areas as part of expanded urban boundaries. The condition of Pacific urban areas and their populations is largely a result of both the declining quality of life in rural areas and the subsequent movement of residents to urban areas with expectations of improved lifestyles. While the motives for rural–urban migration vary within and between Pacific economies, the main drivers of Pacific urban growth are interwoven with real or

### Box 3 Urbanization Trends in Pacific Economies: Defined by Diversity

The urban populations of Pacific economies are characterized by their diversity, set among the three major cultural, ethnic, and linguistic subregions of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

- **Diversity in urban growth rates:** Generally, the smaller and more economically advanced countries are more urbanized (excluding some atoll countries), while the poorer countries tend to be the larger rural-based countries and least urbanized (excluding Fiji).
- **Diversity in physical and geographic settings:** The big islands of Melanesia tend to have higher numbers of urban residents, while the small islands of Polynesia and Micronesia have the smallest urban populations.
- **Diversity in migration impacts:** While all Pacific economies are characterized by rural–urban migration, emigration is a means to contain urbanization growth rates, primarily in Polynesia. Emigration also affects some Pacific economies in Melanesia (Fiji) and in the former United States–controlled states in Micronesia.
- **Diversity in urban size:** PNG has the largest number of residents classified as “urban” and is home to approximately two in every five Pacific urban residents. The urban population of PNG is approximately double that of the total population of Micronesia.
- **Diversity in number and size of urban villages:** The largest number of urban villages in Pacific towns and cities are found in Melanesia, where rates of rural–urban migration are high, the urban condition is worst, and ethnic heterogeneity is greatest. Myriad forms of urban villages exist in Micronesia and, to a lesser degree, in Polynesia.

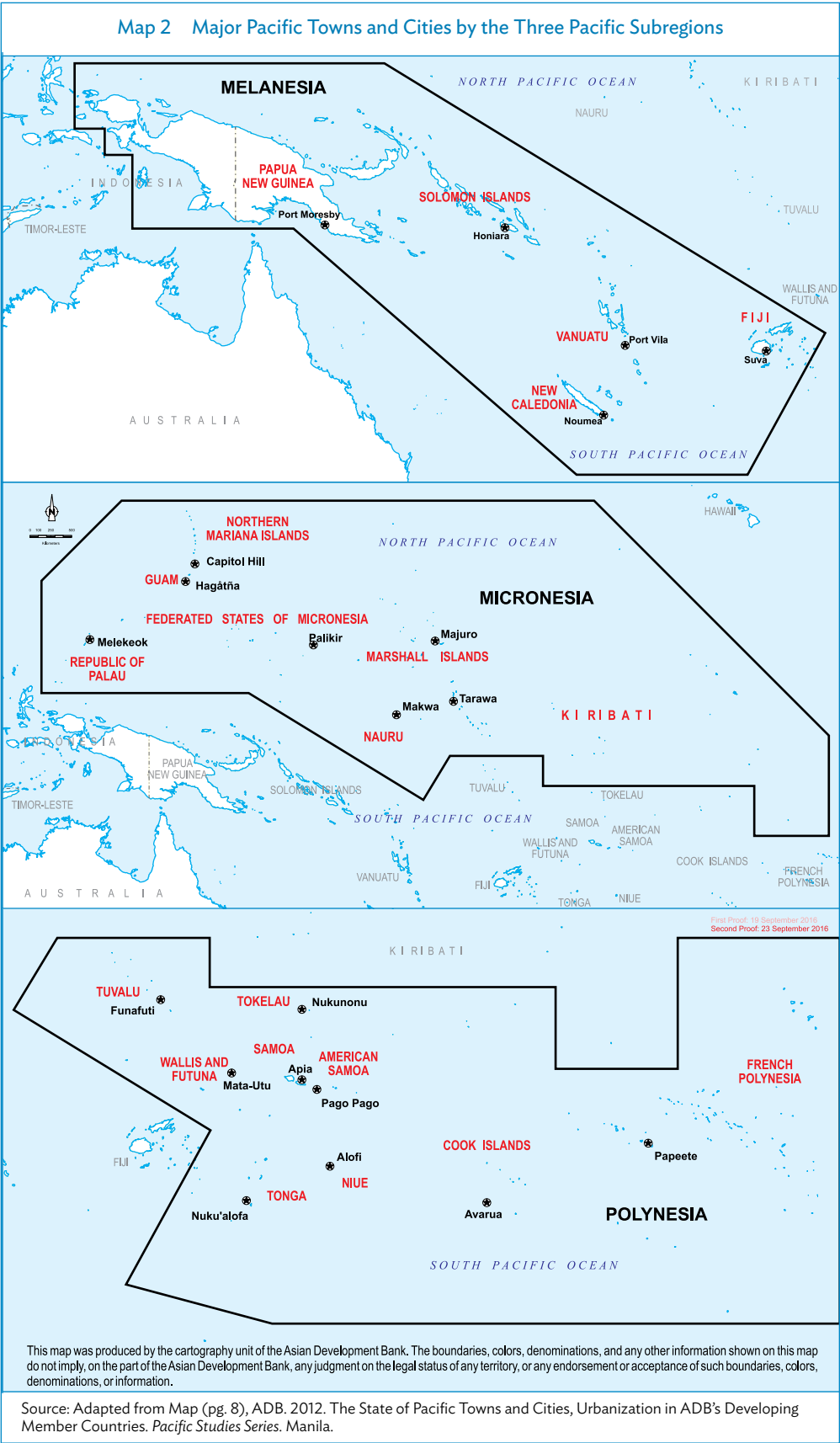
perceived inequalities in socioeconomic opportunities and, more recently, rising levels of rural poverty. Collectively, these fuel rural–urban and inter-rural migration to towns and cities by disadvantaged and poorer groups, with many rural village and small towns failing to keep up with employment, wage opportunities, and basic levels of public services and infrastructure.

During the colonial era, strong regulatory regimes kept the movement of settlers to towns in check. Many islanders saw towns as a display of a newfound order of colonial-driven modernity and as places for the elite and not others. Administrators were strict in controlling rural–urban migrants who lacked clear authority to travel. Curfews were put in place and indigenous residents were only allowed in towns as day visitors, even those working in full-time employment. Anyone without formal permission to work and live in a town was returned to their village. Vagrancy laws and night curfews were strongly enforced, as seen in Honiara, Port Moresby, Suva, and other Pacific towns.

Three basic arguments were used to underpin wider policy and regulatory approaches to discourage rural–urban migration. Firstly, there was the adverse impact on towns and cities from pressure for more land and housing, the ad hoc granting of land leases and land alienation, and the growing demand for increased services and infrastructure. Migration was seen as placing an unnecessary strain on land, housing, services, and infrastructure, and being a key cause of the spread of settlements. As a consequence, rural–urban migration caused large sums of monies to be redirected into continually expanding urban areas, thus propping up and enhancing the continued flow of migrants (Macdonald 1982).

Second, there was an impact on the residents themselves in terms of being “alienated from their village.” Urban living was blamed as causing migrants to detach themselves from their village cultures and traditional values and norms (Pacific Institute of Public Policy 2011). The towns and cities were not seen to provide a sense of long-term belonging and identity in comparison with the goodness and strength to be found in village-based





rural lifestyles. Third, migration was viewed as causing “serious consequences detrimental to village life,” which resulted from the disruption to the social and economic life of the village (Oram 1976: 168). “They were encouraged to stay in their ‘traditional villages,’ remain as subsistence agriculturalists and to maintain the ‘Fijian way of life’ which meant unquestioning obedience to their chiefs and a class of ‘native administrators’” (Naidu 2009: 26). As a result, employment agreements were often short term, requiring islanders to spend time back in their villages before reengagement.

Collectively, these arguments reinforced the view that rural–urban migration led to a decline in village-based rural lifestyles. As an artificially constructed environment, the urban setting was divorced from a rural and “natural” way of life, and islanders who embraced urbanism deteriorated physically, mentally, and morally. Not surprisingly, such attitudes, entrenched in policies in the colonial era, continue to underlie the anti-urban rhetoric in the Pacific (Pacific Institute of Public Policy 2011).

In this setting, providing services and infrastructure in Pacific towns and cities was viewed as a means of attracting more people, which would create more problems in both urban and rural village areas. Typical reasons used by politicians and policy makers to oppose rural–urban migration and fuel the anti-urban position in the postindependence era have included

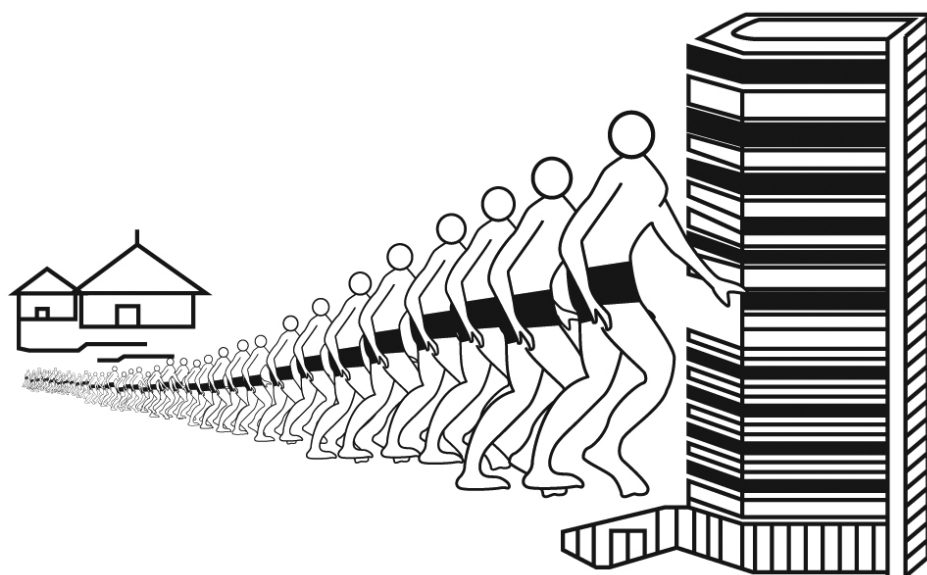
- health concerns, including spread of disease from migrants (such as those islanders living in mountain areas above a certain elevation),
- increasing unemployment and vagrancy,
- impact on urban local government capacity to manage,
- a slowing down of rural economic development,
- increased urban law and order issues caused by migrants living with kin, and
- fear of the rise in squatter settlements and urban security fears.

After Pacific economies attained independence, the regulatory approach that had been put in place to restrict migration was diluted. While there was much rhetoric about curbing urban drift, most of it remained just talk as free movement was enshrined in national constitutions (Pacific Institute of Public Policy 2011: 2). As a result, the most dramatic migration from rural areas and outer islands to towns began in the 1950s and took hold in the 1960s in the aftermath of Pacific economies’ attaining independence and setting their own course of destiny. “From the 1950s, the expansion and centralisation of government activity had acted as a magnet, drawing a constant stream of skilled and unskilled migrants” (Macdonald 1982: viii). For example, in the late 1950s, rural–urban migrants made up some 35% of village residents in Apia (Hirsh 1958). In the pre- and postindependence eras, the urban regulatory approach as developed by expatriate civil servants and colonial administrators and inherited by Pacific economies began to be abandoned by the islanders themselves.

Rural–urban migration, and for some Pacific economies, regional and international migration, has been a significant factor in determining the growth patterns of Pacific towns and cities, including keeping urbanization growth rates in check. It is accepted as part of the Pacific way of life (Figure 3). Colonial ties have meant that islanders from the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, and Tonga have fewer restrictions on movement between Australia and New Zealand and their home countries. For many decades, people from the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau have been migrating to Hawaii and Guam (Pacific Institute of Public Policy 2012b). Like Samoa, many of these people ultimately move on to the United States mainland where employment prospects are better.

Rural–urban migration in all Pacific economies has historically been a key force in shaping towns and cities, especially the distribution of village-based groups drawn from

Figure 3: Rural–Urban Migration as a Driver of Social, Economic, and Physical Changes



Source: Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Office of Urbanisation. 2010. *National Urbanisation Policy for Papua New Guinea, 2010–2030*. Port Moresby.

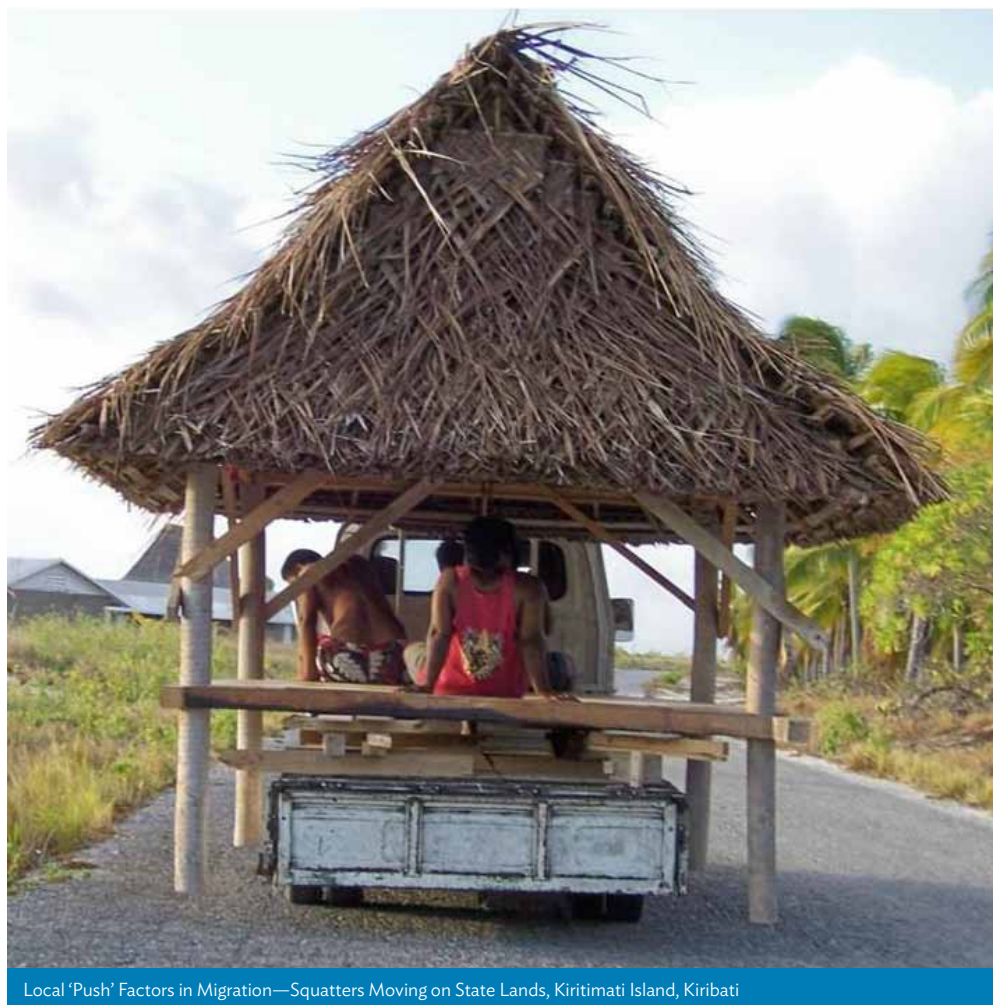
traditional territorial boundaries who now live in urban villages. In PNG, for example, the 2011 census showed that 20% of the total citizen population had not been born where they were enumerated. Of these citizen migrants, 37% were counted in urban areas. Males were slightly more likely than females to be migrants in urban areas. Significantly, from 1980 to 2000, migrants constituted 58% of the population of Port Moresby (Chand and Yala 2008a). In Honiara, some 80% of the population growth between 1986 and 1999 was from rural–urban migration (UN-Habitat 2012a). In Kiribati, the 2005 census showed that only 49% of South Tarawa residents were born in South Tarawa, with 45% having been born elsewhere in Kiribati (NZAid and Australian Aid 2007). In Port Vila, similar trends are also evident (Box 4). In

#### Box 4 Rural–Urban Migration to Port Vila

“By comparing the annual population growth rates for Port Vila (4%) and Efate (4.5%), with the national average annual population growth rate of 2.3%, it is evident that Port Vila and the Greater Port Vila area are absorbing much of Vanuatu’s urban population growth (National Population and Housing Census 2009).

Port Vila’s growth is largely fuelled by rural–urban migration, with jobs, tertiary education, lack of land in rural areas (often due to land disputes) and a perception of improved access to education and health services being some of the main ‘pull’ factors. In the five years previous to the 2009 National Population and Housing Census, the greatest number of internal migrants to Shefa Province came from Sanma, Malampa and Penama provinces, with smaller numbers coming from Torba and Tafea provinces (National Population and Housing Census 2009).”

Source: UN-Habitat and Commonwealth Local Government Forum Pacific Project. 2012., *Greater Port Vila - Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment Report*. Fiji (p. 13).



Local 'Push' Factors in Migration—Squatters Moving on State Lands, Kiritimati Island, Kiribati

this context, Pacific towns and cities are a melting pot of people with diverse backgrounds, with many tied by strongly bonded social relationships and interests, as well as a sense of belonging and attachment, to a particular locality, including the rural-based village.

For many in rural areas, accessing basic services is becoming harder and harder, let alone enjoying thoughts of becoming wealthy via the village economy. In Fiji, "Rural stagnation and relative deprivation have driven people out of the hinterlands and outer islands" (Naidu 2009: 6). Generating garden food in abundance to sell at markets to create an income stream sufficient for a family has not come to fruition to fulfill rural aspirations. As lamented by a family who moved from a rural area to a squatter settlement in Port Moresby: "[That] would have been life in total for a family of four to five. It need not be Utopia, only liveable, enjoyable and stress free" (PNG *Sunday Chronicle* 2010: 10). As a result, migration continues within rural areas, including outer islands to larger islands; and from rural areas to towns, especially national Pacific capitals.

In the above setting, the circumstances of what drives rural–urban migration are complex, with a range of "push" and "pull" factors whose relative strength—that is, push being more influential than pull factors and vice versa—is specific to the Pacific context.

Rural push factors include landlessness and lack of adequate access to arable lands (such as through the nonrenewal of rural agricultural leases to Indo-Fijians in Fiji under the Agriculture Landlord and Tenant Act); unemployment; poor service delivery; disputes with family and kin over land and sorcery; the desire to escape customs, such as cultural rules and practices for reciprocity and church obligations; and the hardship of harsh physical environments, including natural disasters, and ease of access to state lands. Push factors also include individual and family expectations regarding potential gains to be derived from education and employment. In the new millennium, rural livelihoods have been strongly affected by declining commodity prices for sugar and coconut products, such as copra and coconut oil, adding to the economic stagnation in rural areas. All this has occurred despite dedicated rural advancement and development that has topped national investment priorities for more than 3 decades. Collectively, the above factors form the broader imperative fueling migration, namely, rural poverty and expectations of urban utopia (Jones 2012c).

Pull factors to Pacific urban areas relate to the mainstream drivers of employment, education, and entertainment, including the lure of the “bright city lights” for youth. Investments in health and education facilities mean higher levels of services in urban areas. “[Honiara] has benefited from major infrastructure investments in recent years, making it the most attractive destination for rural-urban migration in the country” (UN-Habitat 2012a: 20). Rural-urban and rural-rural economic pull factors vary from resource drivers, such as mining towns and agricultural plantations as found in Melanesia and Micronesia (the Line Islands), to perceptions of better opportunities for regular employment, education, services, and higher income (Office of Urbanization 2010). In the rural areas in Melanesia benefiting from resource royalties, pull factors include cashed-up landowners moving to larger urban areas looking to spend their money (Kep 2011).

In summary, the lines between the terms “urban,” “rural,” “town,” and “city” have become blurred as increased transport networks and communication options, including the ease of sending remittances and expansion of mobile phone coverage, have reframed the impacts and consequences of the urbanization process and mobility. The widespread uptake of mobile phones, their relative affordability, and the resulting compression of distance has allowed both urban and rural residents to more readily maintain their connections with families and relatives in other areas. Thus, the influence of the “urban region” in Pacific economies now extends far and wide as both urban and rural residents meet their social and economic needs via goods, capital, and information with greater ease and accessibility (Pacific Institute of Public Policy 2011). Communicating with kin who have come from the same village, clan, tribe, district, province, or outer island by phone, internet, or face-to-face contact has become a daily occurrence. Rural-urban migration and occupation of a physical place alone is becoming less critical in maintaining urban-type social networks, relationships, and identity, as the notions of what is urban and rural are increasingly intertwined in understanding Pacific urbanization.

## **The Current State of Urbanization in the Pacific Islands**

In the new millennium, urbanization in Pacific towns and cities and the wider Pacific has been documented as being characterized by the following traits (for example, ADB 2012; Chand and Yala 2008a, 2008b; Goddard 2005; Haberkorn 2008; Jones 2005, 2007, 2011c, 2012b, 2015; Jones and Holzknicht 2007; Jones and Lea 2007; Maebuta and Maebuta 2009; Mawuli and Guy 2007; Mecartney 2014; Mohanty 2006; Singh et al. 2014; Storey 2006, 2010):





Inadequate Wet Season Drainage at Fugalei Markets, Apia

- growing primary towns and cities fueled by rural-urban disparities and strong rural-urban and circular migration;
- urban growth rates outstripping rural and national growth rates;
- a backlog of demand for services and infrastructure, including water, sanitation, and adequate drainage;
- inadequate affordable land with formal services to accommodate urban and peri-urban population growth;
- the growth of “urban villages,” characterized by increased numbers of underserved squatter and informal settlements;
- increasing rates of urban poverty, including adverse impacts on children;
- escalation of land disputes and conflicts, with individuals and customary landowners trading their lands;
- increasing impacts of climate change in towns and cities located on low-lying atolls and coastal hinterlands;
- a recognition that infrastructure provision must go hand-in-hand with long-term planning for urbanization and urban growth;
- constraints to improved urban planning via ineffective governance, limited capacity building, lack of political will, and a preoccupation with equating urban planning with resolving land disputes (rather than one of a number of tools for improved management, governance, and productivity); lack of a regional framework endorsed by key stakeholders on understanding the dimensions of Pacific urbanization and a range of options on how best to manage it; and
- minimal understanding of urban management and the actions required at a range of levels to make urban centers more effective drivers of economic, social, and environmental growth.

The most recent comprehensive regional assessment of urbanization in Pacific economies was undertaken by ADB in *The State of Pacific Towns and Cities: Urbanization*

in ADB's *Pacific Developing Member Countries* (ADB 2012). The review of the condition of urbanization in ADB's 14 Pacific developing member countries assessed trends in population, land, housing, poverty incidence, the contribution of gross domestic product to national development, urban governance arrangements, and responses to Pacific urbanization challenges. Within the above context, two main issues have gained prominence over other urbanization challenges in the new millennium: growing urban poverty and the rise of new village-like settlements. Both of these are inextricably linked, as it is widely accepted that poverty is a key growth enabler of urban villages, which contribute to increasing proportions of the city's urban poor, disadvantaged, and others in need.

Central to trends in Pacific urbanization has been the rise in poverty levels in urban areas (ADB 2012, Jones 2011b, World Bank 2014). In Pacific economies, the urbanization of poverty and identification of drivers causing adverse quality-of-life change were initially recognized in national urban policy in Fiji in 2004 as urban drift was stimulated by the nonrenewal of sugar cane leases primarily to Indo-Fijians (Government of Fiji 2004). Global trends show that the urban share of poverty rises with increasing levels of urbanization of towns and cities, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "urbanization of poverty" (UN-Habitat 2009). The Pacific has not been immune to this trend, with the recent global economic crisis reinforcing the shift in poverty from rural areas to increasing concentrations of poverty in Pacific towns and cities (ADB 2012 Parks and Abbott 2009). A bias against the use of the term "poverty," with its connotations of extreme hunger and deprivation, has caused the term to be replaced with "hardship" in many Pacific economy development assessments since the beginning of the new millennium (World Bank 2014, Abbott and Pollard 2004).

In Samoa, cultural obligations and expectations for church contributions have been identified as major drivers of hardship for households below the basic poverty needs line (less than \$1 per day), with some households banished from their villages when expectations are not met (Thornton, Binns, and Kerslake 2013). In Fiji, where squatters and poverty figure prominently in public debate, Walsh (2006) has argued that, while rapid urbanization and a shortage of housing is a contributing factor to rising squatter and informal settlements, the main causes are increasing levels of poverty and the unaffordable costs of accessing public housing (Walsh 2006). In 2010, it was estimated that the income of 70%–80% of Fiji squatters was below the basic needs poverty line (*Fiji Times* 2010). In 2012, the director of the People's Community Network of Fiji linked the growth of settlements to the root issues of poverty and rising cost of living, including less development in rural areas, expiry of agricultural land leases, unaffordable rents, and increased charges imposed by the Fiji Housing Authority (*Fiji Times* 2012).

Of greater concern is that those most affected by rising levels of poverty are children, with poorer households having to use every means available to maximize income to meet their basic needs. In this setting, children are increasingly being required to do their part in boosting household income. A study of child labor in Fiji by the International Labour Organization (2010) produced a number of insights. First, the numbers of street kids in child labor in the Suva Nausori corridor were rising, with children involved in scrap metal collection, pushing wheelbarrows in and around the Suva market, selling sweets and vegetables on the streets, shining shoes, packing, loading and unloading minivans and trucks, market vending, and begging. Many street kids involved in child labor were found to be from families who are rural–urban migrants. Second, there were increasing numbers of children in rural areas and villages dropping out of school at an early age to become farm laborers in plantations and cash cropping to earn some income. The main reason given for children dropping out of school is the lack of money in the household. Thus, earning an income takes

higher priority than longer-term goals of completing an education (International Labour Organization 2010).

Rapid urbanization, rural–urban inequities, and a decline in living conditions in Pacific economies have been the major factors embedding poverty in Pacific towns and cities. Some 7 of the 11 Pacific economies have more residents living below the basic needs poverty line in urban areas than in rural areas. Three Pacific economies—Fiji, Palau, and PNG—have greater rural populations below the basic needs poverty line than in urban areas. However, it is the Melanesian Pacific economies—Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu—with their rapidly growing towns and cities and increasing number of village-like settlements that have the greatest numbers of people moving into urban poverty. In Fiji, for example, some 70%–80% of those living in squatter settlements live below the poverty line (International Labour Organization 2010). As noted in a recent study of urban livelihoods in Honiara, poverty is multifaceted and becomes entrenched in one’s life cycle: “Many families are mired in poverty. Poverty leads to family breakdown, street children, sleeping out, sexual exploitation, alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, violence and lawlessness” (Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA 2009: 19). Such trends reinforce the multifaceted nature of the urbanization of poverty now seen in Pacific economies as defined by the rising cost of living, restricted access to formal employment, and the general inability to meet basic needs.

In all Pacific economies, it is increasingly recognized that poverty and hardship is both a symptom and a driver for the creation of village-like settlements (Jones 2011b). Poverty and the rise of squatter and informal settlements are both inextricably linked, with the majority of urban poor and disadvantaged located in native villages and squatter and informal settlements. Rising prices, minimal or no wage increases, urban unemployment, underemployment, an increasingly “overcrowded” informal sector, and avoidance of government expenditure in settlements all contribute to increasing poverty. Recent field work in squatter settlements in Port Moresby indicated that settlers coming from rural areas see “urban poverty” as a better option than “rural poverty.” Dreams of opportunity versus rural stagnation fuel utopian dreams, and the costs and benefits of living an urban existence outweigh living in rural villages and towns (Jones 2010: 2012c).

At the Pacific regional level, the collective result of increasing poverty and ineffective urban management is that Pacific towns and cities have coalesced into two main urban development types. First, there are many urban villages and village-like settlements comprising traditional or native villages, plus squatter and informal settlements and the like, which continue to expand in both numbers and population. The ADB 2012 regional assessment on urbanization pointed to the new urban village form taking a permanent hold in the Pacific islands. “During the coming decade, ‘village cities’ will likely emerge as the dominant urban form in many Pacific urban locales. Managing the intersection of traditional sociocultural orders and modern urbanized lifestyles is emerging as one of the main challenges facing Pacific urban management” (ADB 2012: 5). Second, there are planned residential areas with housing and land development based on various western standards and quality that are unaffordable for much of the growing urban population. Over time, such areas have had a major impact in delineating spatial patterns of housing in the Pacific towns and cities as seen in distinctive areas of expatriate colonial housing; housing on freehold lands; and public, private, and low-cost housing.

In many respects, the existing patterns of many Pacific towns and cities mirror the smaller imprint that characterized the growing colonial towns—enclaves of the educated elite and well-to-do (now dominated by islanders, not expatriates) and surrounded by and interspersed with growing concentrations of villages of varying form and public and low-cost housing. Unlike in the colonial era, the footprint and nature of urban villages continue to



expand and diversify, reflecting the increasing gap between social, economic, and human development opportunities and the disparity in Pacific living conditions.

## Recent Responses and Constraints to Urban Reform

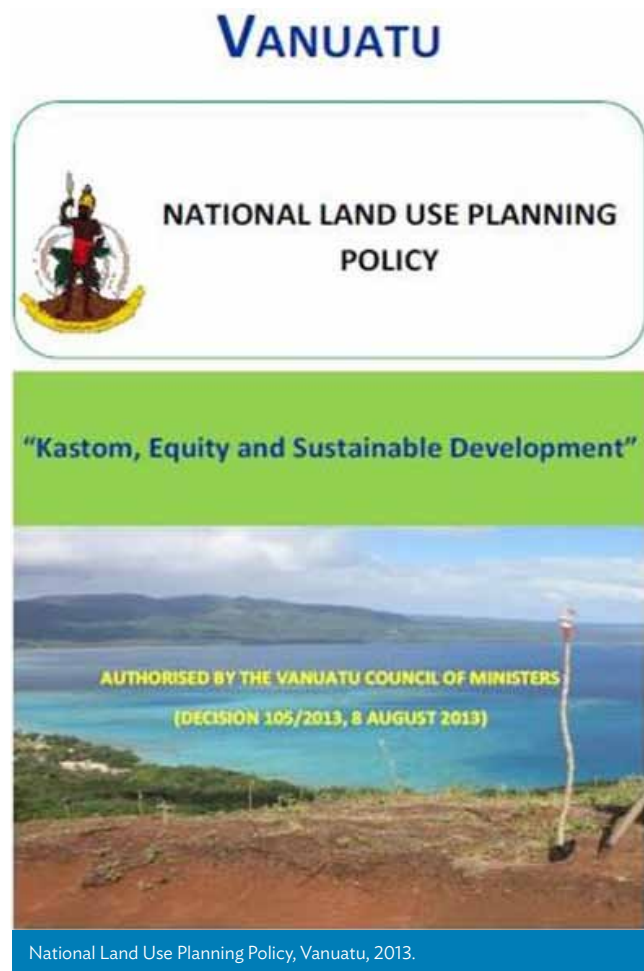
At the Pacific level, various initiatives have been undertaken to put in place urban policies, strategies, projects, and programs to address issues and concerns at the national, city, and community levels. Urban initiatives in the Pacific evolve primarily with the assistance of development partners such as ADB, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the New Zealand Aid Program, and the World Bank as part of bilateral and multilateral support programs that include technical assistance. There are also partnership initiatives supporting the urban sector such as the Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility, the Cities Development Initiative for Asia, and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum based in Suva.

As a general rule, Pacific urban initiatives, including scoping studies, are generally undertaken by Pacific governments with development partners, often as a precursor to putting in place wider urban development projects and programs identified for action in country strategies and plans. Regional initiatives in advocating urban management and development reform exist, such as the robust Pacific Urban Agenda, which has been promoted and supported by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and UN-Habitat and had its most recent dialogue in Nadi in March 2015. However, implementation resources, including coordination to address key Pacific Urban Agenda priorities such as land and housing, have not been consistent due to lack of human and technical capacity and, importantly, an absence of development partner commitment (Mecartney 2014).

With support from ADB, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, UNESCAP, UN-Habitat, and the World Bank, there have been a number of well-developed responses to national urban reform in the Pacific in the new millennium, especially since ADB's assessment in 2012. There has been continued project and program development in all Pacific economies in diverse thematic areas, including water and sanitation; climate-resilient infrastructure; and transportation systems, including road upgrading and port, runway, and air terminal development. The Planning and Urban Management Agency, established in Samoa in 2002, remains recognized as a model urban institution, applauded for the manner in which it was conceived (using appropriate "entry points") and developed via a step-by-step approach to implementation. This experience led Tonga to establish similar arrangements in 2011.

As well, there has been a suite of national and thematic urbanization policies such as the Fiji National Housing Policy 2011, UN-Habitat-funded country sector profiles 2012, and recent land summits, including those held in PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. The 2013 land summit in Vanuatu led to the adoption of the Vanuatu National Land Use Planning Policy. The two most recent national urban policies at the time of writing are the Samoa National Urban Policy (2013) and the National Urbanisation Policy for Papua New Guinea, 2010–2030 (2010). Solomon Islands announced in early 2015 it would also be preparing a national urbanization policy and it is now in a draft form (Figure 4).

The policies in PNG and Samoa vary considerably in scope and application. The Samoa National Urban Policy, while national in name, applies only to Apia and excludes Samoa's other major growth town, Salelologa on the island of Savai'i. This policy document summarizes key issues, objectives, and broad targets for Apia while aiming to raise



awareness of the need for long-term visioning and city planning, which the policy admits are recent priorities. While the villages comprising Apia's core urban areas of Vaimauga East and Faleata West are mentioned in passing, the objectives for the city are wide, addressing infrastructure coordination, improved civic design, climate resilience, and disaster risk reduction. The diverse nature of the traditional and freehold villages that comprise the city, such as Fagalii, Lauilii, Letogo, Saina, Siusega, Ulululua, Vailele, and Vaitele, including the growing squatter settlements in Vaiusu Bay, is not addressed.

On the other hand, the National Urbanisation Policy for Papua New Guinea, 2010–2030 was developed over 5 years by the newly created PNG Office of Urbanisation. This plan builds on lessons from previous policy attempts, as well as from ongoing pilot projects in urban land development on state and customary lands (Box 5). Implementing site and service schemes in PNG towns and cities, including upgrading services in growing native villages and squatter and unplanned settlements, is one of five major implementation components of the policy. At a national policy level, PNG has taken the lead in the Pacific in advocating for national approaches via programs and projects. This includes the forthcoming national housing policy being prepared by the PNG National Housing Corporation to tackle increasing urbanization and urban growth issues. Mobilizing customary land and analyzing lessons from ongoing pilot projects in Port Moresby (Taurama Valley) and the highland

Figure 4: Government of Solomon Islands Decision to Prepare a National Urbanisation Policy



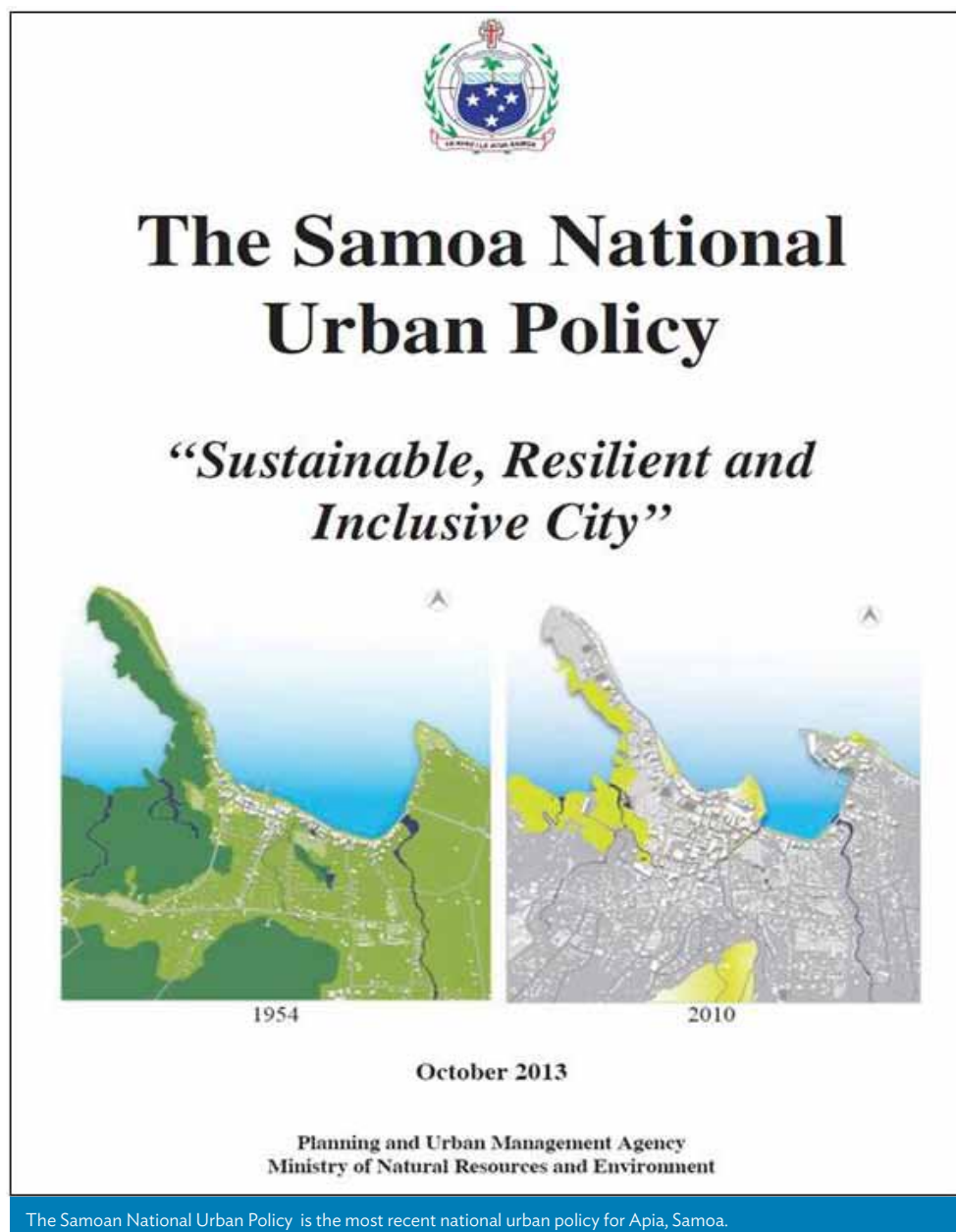
Source: Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, 26 March 2015.

#### Box 5 The National Urbanisation Policy for Papua New Guinea, 2010–2030

The National Urbanisation Policy for Papua New Guinea, 2010–2030 was endorsed by the Somare government on 21 June 2010. The National Urbanisation Policy is a framework and plan designed to strengthen the economic, social, and environmental fabric of PNG's towns and cities by better managing the urbanization process and urban growth challenges. Implementation is based around a program of projects that fall under the following five core policy components:

- (i) the provision of primary and trunk infrastructure and services in towns and cities such as water supply, power, roads, and sanitation;
- (ii) the development of sites and services on customary, freehold, and state lands, including upgrading of squatter and unplanned settlements in towns and cities;
- (iii) the development, rejuvenation, and strengthening of provincial and district service centers, especially investments enhancing the economic base of the towns;
- (iv) building local and community capacity to better manage urbanization, urban management, and urban development at national, district, provincial, and local levels; and
- (v) the development of local urbanization, urban management, and urban development policies, plans, and programs, including elevation of physical planning functions.

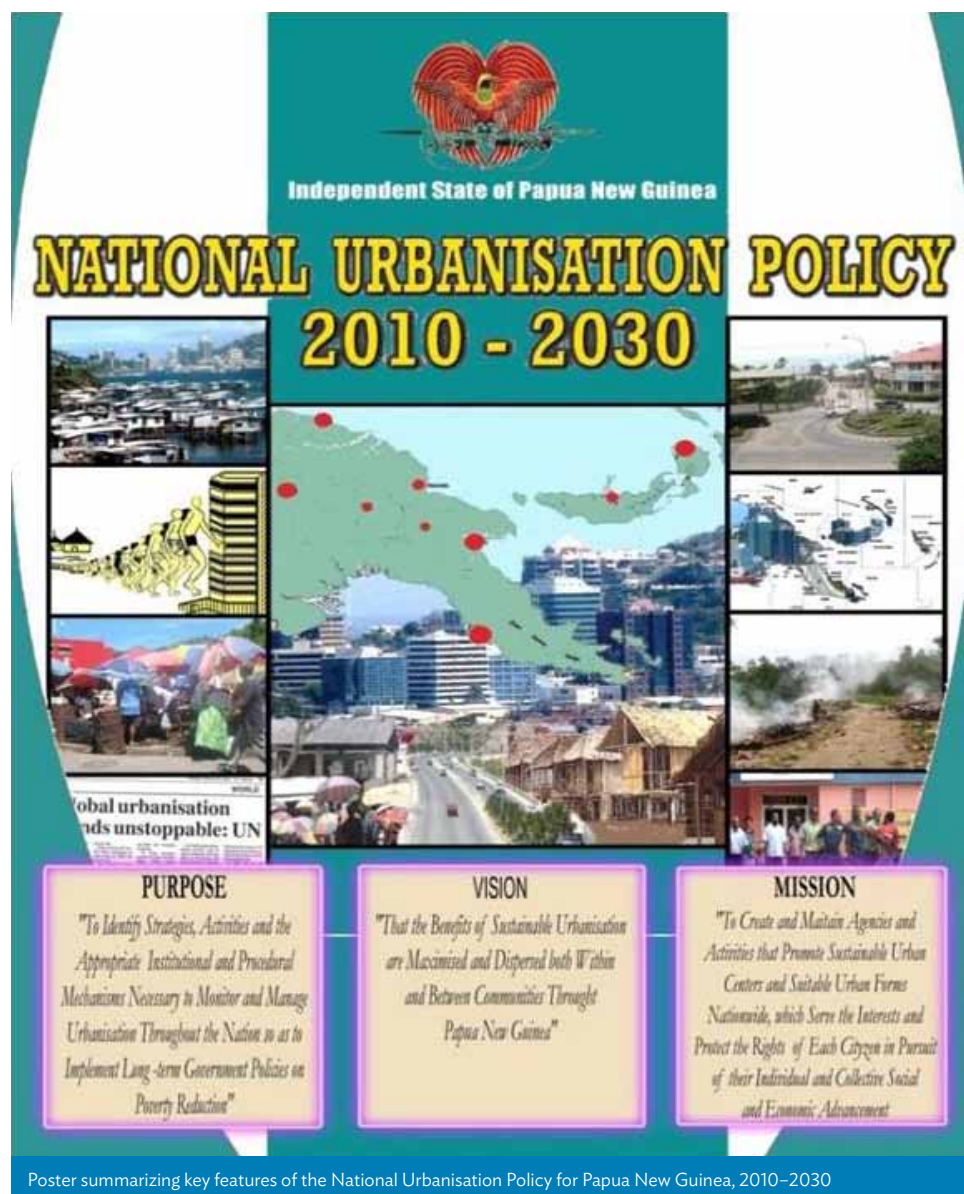
Source: The National Urbanisation Policy for Papua New Guinea, 2010–2030.



town of Goroka, which have been problematic in resolving local governance issues, have been the key to these challenging efforts in PNG.

Under the implementation of the Office of Urbanisation, the National Urbanisation Policy is an initiative strongly linked to ongoing reforms in land administration, customary land registration, and efforts to increase the amount of customary and other land available for urban development in urban and rural areas. These initiatives must be viewed within the wider policy context of the Government of PNG's long-term development objectives contained in Vision 2050; the PNG Development Strategic Plan, 2010–2030; and the recently endorsed Medium Term Development Plan, 2011–2015. Notwithstanding these





gains, the consistent implementation of the National Urbanisation Policy at the national, provincial, and local levels remains problematic (Jones and Kep, 2014).

Despite these modest milestones and achievements, urban reform continues to vacillate in the new millennium. Like the regional level, there remains a lack of consistent support for integrating urban issues into programs and projects that can be scaled up for implementation at town and city levels. While the reasons for lack of support vary by Pacific economy, there are consistent recurring themes that have been documented from on-the-ground experiences across the Pacific that explain the varying approaches and responses (ADB 2012, Jones and Lea 2007, Mecartney 2014). These themes can be summarized as follows:

Figure 5: Sign Promoting the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAid) Sustainable Towns Program in South Tarawa, 2010



This program, which evolved from a joint Australian Aid–NZAid review in 2008, was completed in 2012. Like many urban projects, interest in improved planning and urban development outcomes can be cyclical.

- Pacific urban management and development by its nature is multisector, requiring stakeholders, institutions, and their different urban policy settings to work together. However, different agendas, capacities, and project cycles make it difficult to integrate and work together on a consistent basis. Urban issues and concerns come and go on political and development partner agendas, and ultimately need to be weighed against competing concerns in rural areas. For many Pacific economies, it is in the latter where the bulk of their populations reside (Figure 5).
- The benefits of improved urban management and need for reform in Pacific towns and cities still remain obscured by policy makers. The reality is that national planners, invariably based in economic development agencies, do not see “urban” as a sectoral development theme with spatial dimensions. As such, there has been no identification of appropriate and realistic entry points into the urban reform debate.
- National champions willing and able to provide sustained political commitment supporting better urban outcomes are hard to find. A key reason for this caution is that politicians in the Pacific are acutely aware that improvements to urban development outcomes and urban management systems will require tinkering with landownership issues, including liaising with customary landowners. With uncertainty over their tenure from one election to another, most politicians are not inclined to take the initiative on urban matters that will stir up land and landowner issues and generate unintended development consequences.
- With increasing population in village-like settlements and unplanned development in Pacific economies, the priorities for many urban households in such settlements involve day-to-day survival, not medium- to longer-term urban projects and programs. Issues of cash, land, household tenure, and access to subsistence and markets to meet daily needs remain central to family and household survival, rather than larger-scale plans and policies.

Within this complex setting, Pacific planners, land managers, and policy makers face many day-to-day challenges in carrying out their mandates and trying to implement consistent policies and plans. In national planning ministries and departments, for example, these challenges range from ministers with limited understanding of urban sector dynamics to staff working in nonfunctioning office buildings without consistent electricity, water supply for toilets, and basic office essentials such as computers, photocopiers, and internet access. With local planning and urban development strongly nuanced by local contexts, ongoing tensions between stakeholders—invariably government, private developers, landowners, and residents—color the nature of Pacific urban planning. Many of the tensions between stakeholders remain entrenched, given that all proposals in one form or another will have some impact on land use, landowners, land tenure, underlying land disputes, and possible compensation claims.

At the Pacific Urban Forum in Nadi, 25–27 March 2015, participants reaffirmed that tension and conflict in the form of public rallies, threats, riots, and physical confrontation occurs in circumstances such as the following:

- development in “planned areas” needing formal statutory consent and approval;
- delays, such as for obtaining required landowner consent in the processing of formal development applications;
- evictions from informal and squatter settlements, often driven by leases given by the government to private developers and incorrect landowners;
- opposition by landowner groups to government development proposals, such as mobilizing customary land;
- uncertainty of how to engage with landowning groups for fear of reprisal and retribution;
- verifying whether the parties involved in development have legal title to land;
- defining often ambiguous land boundaries with the correct landowners;
- application of new planning laws such as environmental laws or regulations that set the parameters of key urban planning activities such as “development,” “land use,” “works,” “environment,” and “development;”
- lack of human resources and technical capacity in institutions whose functions still remain modeled on legislation and processes inherited from the colonial era;
- conditions that require land developers and owners to consult with the public prior to development;
- claims of corruption and paybacks in the development process;
- opposition to resettlement and eviction of squatter residents who have lived for long periods in urban villages on state land; and
- negotiations on land values for compensation (ADB 2012, Mecartney 2014).

With Pacific economies at varying stages of development and their urban management, planning, and policy systems evolving slowly due to social, cultural, and landowner issues, there is reluctance to elevate urban issues onto city and Pacific economy national agendas. The reality is that many politicians and some development partners perceive that costs of better management of urbanization outweigh the benefits. Hence, developing and implementing consistent urban policies and plans remain problematic, and continue to be challenged by increasing numbers of informal, squatter, and village-like settlements marking the Pacific town and city landscape. Compared with the relative stability in Polynesia, this urban malaise is most apparent in Melanesia followed by Micronesia where political and economic crises combined with the need to satisfy diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, many of whom live in a plethora of village-like settlements, have made national and local urban reform an ongoing challenge with no easy solutions.



# The Evolution of Settlement Types

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## The Development of Settlements

### Pre-European Contact

The development of settlements as part of the Pacific urbanization process has occurred over three phases. In the pre-European era, indigenous groups were generally located in scattered coastal and inland hamlets dispersed throughout their islands. With the exception of Melanesia, where large tribe- and clan-based groups lived together, large numbers of people living in settlements did not exist in Pacific economies. For example, the average size of a hamlet in Papua New Guinea (PNG) was estimated to be around 200–300 people (Oram 1976), while inland villages in Vanuatu in the mid-1800s when Europeans started arriving was estimated at 300–400 persons (Erskine 1853, cited in Rawlings 1999).

In Melanesia, traditional settlements have been defined as comprising small and stateless tribal groups where social control over the individual was enacted via the norms of the overarching social group (Arua 2011). As a general rule, settlements were focused on sustaining community life via systems based on kinship and social structures as moderated by elders or chiefs. Settlement groupings were effectively closed societies, being self-sufficient from the resources of the land and/or sea, and guided by their own rules, regulations, and customs. Communal rights dominated individual rights, with obligations and rights acquired by relationships developed and played out with other village members of the same kin and ethnic group. Group leadership was primarily obtained in two ways: (i) by being a senior male member of a descent group; and/or (ii) by proving one's leadership by excelling in local activities such as warfare, oratory, and seafaring. With settlers being primarily hunter-gatherers, settlement life was founded on subsistence agriculture and access to marine resources. In Melanesia this included adherence to the principles of shifting cultivation and "slash and burn" agriculture. Climatic, locational, and historical factors meant that all settlements did not produce the same goods and services, with some specializing in different food types and acquiring skills for making various utensils and weaponry (Oram 1976).

In Polynesia, each tribe and clan had its own territory, such as a single atoll, while in larger islands, clans marked out lands that combined a larger fertile coastal area with infertile inland areas. "There is no word in the Polynesian language for village or town, for the pre-European islanders had neither. They lived in small, single-storey, single-room homesteads which were scattered at random throughout the whole of their tribal territory....Occasionally the houses were clustered together around some chiefly residence or particularly favoured site, but by and large homesteads were spread evenly throughout all land that was suitable for cultivation, with families and their dependents tending to congregate together to form

loosely-connected sub-communities within the main tribe” (Cameron 1987: 29). Captain Cook, in his first Pacific sojourn, observed a similar pattern on the island of Otaheite in Tahiti, describing how the natives did not live in towns and villages, but were spread out around the island on the lower elevated lands (Wharton 1893).

The political control and development of the islands strongly shaped the way in which indigenous groups lived in their communities. In Micronesia, islands in Kiribati under democratic rule meant landowners generally lived in hamlets on their own land comprising their extended family of close and distant kin relations. On the other hand, in Polynesia, small centralized groupings existed on islands ruled by high chiefs or feudal overlords. “Under high chiefs there was a royal village complete with the central maneaba of the island. The village included the king’s dwellings and the wives; houses, the dwellings of members of the royal blood, and the slave quarters. Under divided chiefs, there were clan villages” (Maude 1989: 154–155). However, dispersed settlements based on hamlets were the predominant pattern and mode of living. “In pre-European times the Gilbertese did not live in the large consolidated villages which now characterise their islands. The basic residential unit was the *kainga*—a hamlet, sometimes walled for privacy, within which a number of related extended families lived in separate *mwenga*, or households” (Macdonald 1982:5–6).

In Pacific economies in Micronesia, limitations to the subsistence economy, island geography, and potential for commerce affected settlement patterns. Small narrow islands of several kilometers in length and 150–200 meters in width, combined with poor coral soils and minimal quantities of potable water resources, meant many housing areas were spread out in clusters over confined narrow islands. In Kiribati, the *kainga*, for example, was often located on the western or lagoon side of an island away from onshore sea winds and in close proximity to the *maneaba*, or meeting house, in which the oldest male of each *kainga* served as a representative (Maude 1989).

In the larger island groups such as Melanesia, lands of sufficient size and quality allowed the establishment of settlements to permit cultivation and hunting, the length of such settlements generally driven by seasonal factors. Livelihoods were based on gardening; hunting (including fishing in coastal areas); and, where conditions allowed, exchange systems. Concerns for security and defense against land attacks, fear of sorcery, and protection from spirits led houses to be built over the water, such as the Motu Kuita villages in Port Moresby (Maddocks 2012). Community groups vulnerable to attack tended to cluster their houses together. As such, a combination of political control, strategic defense considerations, and island geography strongly influenced the locations where tribes and clans placed their shelter and formed their communities, small or large. Local cultural norms and values also dictated the location of structures and practices, such as shrines to ancestral gods and spirits; the use and distribution of land; community responsibilities; and rules underpinning leadership, reciprocity, and access to resources on the land, reef, and lagoon.

### The Influence of Missionaries, Colonial Administrations, and Cross-Cultural Contact

With the exception of Dili, which was proclaimed the capital of Timor in 1769, early European explorers did not establish settlements in the Pacific until the 18th and early 19th centuries. It was only in the mid-19th century that the first Pacific towns emerged and gradually adopted a permanent form, such as Levuka in Fiji, and Apia in Samoa. From the beginning of the 18th century, major change was created from the initial work of missionaries, followed by the colonial administrations, who introduced new ideologies and ways of life as part of asserting their dominance and authority. Importantly, it was in this period that the foreign term “village” was adapted and mainstreamed into local usage across the Pacific islands. The impact of change, including the creation and institutionalization of colonial towns and rural

**Figure 6: Encircled by Modern Development—the Native Village of Hanuabada, Port Moresby**



The large native village of Hanuabada, Port Moresby, still survives today. The village has transitioned from groupings of 2-3 storey dwellings constructed of local materials as seen in the early twentieth century, to an overcrowded irregular shaped village expanding extensively over both water and the harborside foreshore.

outposts by missionaries, colonial administrations, and other newcomers, was irreversible and far reaching, changing the lives and patterns of islanders forever (Figure 6).

According to the early missionary George Turner (cited in Hirsh 1958), the early post-European village in Samoa was an organized group of family-based households. These families were under the leadership of elected male leaders, and formed a unit that was economically self-sufficient and both socially and geographically isolated. It had political associations and ties with other nearby villages. The typical village was a collection of 300–500 persons, divided into 10–20 families. The “village family” was a “combined group of sons, daughters, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc., and [might] number 50 individuals. They [had] one large house as a common rendezvous, and for the reception of visitors, and four or five other houses, all near each other. The families were classified into two status groups; one or more, in some cases the majority, of families were of chiefly status whose members traced their descent to ‘the ancient head of some particular clan’” (Turner 1884, cited in Hirsh 1958: 268).

The remoteness and isolation of islands meant the arrival of missionaries was piecemeal. Groups such as the London Missionary Society made their presence in the Pacific islands in the 1800s, introducing islanders to Christianity and bringing with them concepts of formal education and a range of new lifestyles and experiences. Like the colonial administrations that followed them, though for different motives, the missionaries encouraged islanders to move from their dispersed hamlets to live in mission villages. For missionaries, this centered on congregating around a church located as the focal point of the “mission station,” such location and attending church essential to changing the “evil ways” of indigenous groups.

In the Ellice Islands (now Tuvalu), missionaries elevated the church to the paramount focus of village life. “As a matter of policy, the London Missionary Society tried to make its churches the center for all village activities, whether or not they were specifically religious in character, and adherents were encouraged to form communities based on a common religious experience” (Macdonald 1982: 44). Similarly, in Solomon Islands, it was observed that the “Christian missionaries led to the movement of inland communities to coastal areas and the formation of larger villages around mission stations” (Allen et al. 2013: 19).

As the missionaries and their spheres of influence gained acceptance, and settlements were consolidated into villages, new practices were introduced based on what the missionaries saw as acceptable codes of behavior based on Christian and European values. This included new languages and literacy (including books), school, attendance, new rituals associated with religion and being part of the “church community,” rights of access to land, and rules including punishment for law and order misdemeanors. It also included restrictions on the use of tobacco, alcohol, and dancing; curtailing customary practices such as worshipping traditional gods; and opposing indigenous religious systems (Lal and Fortune 2000). Traders also reinforced the ways of the missionaries, with traders imposing the observance of the Sabbath; making laws; and collecting fines, taxes, and church contributions. On the island of Arorae, now part of Kiribati, missionaries forced the *kainga* hamlets to be abandoned and islanders moved to live in two consolidated villages with a school in between. Some missionary pastors encouraged road building and construction of new houses with basic setbacks from roads and neighbors (Macdonald 1882).

Following the missionaries and an initial smattering of European entrepreneurs, beachcombers, and drifters was the arrival of colonial rule, which entrenched far-reaching social change via alien political and administrative orders. The colonial administrations provided the impetus for the establishment of settlements for government administration, commercial development, trade, and social services based on the development of multitiered national, regional, district, and local government systems. This layering of centralized control provided the foundation for the establishment of provincial and district towns, island village and town councils, and eventually Pacific economic capitals. The capitals were to be centers of colonial authority and included existing indigenous hamlets and new consolidated villages. In PNG, for example, the term urban village reflected a settlement containing indigenous landowners occupying their customary lands and set in a planned town of centralized population and activities segregated from Europeans (Oram 1976). As such, the emphasis on the village during the colonial era was a matter of administrative convenience and control of public order and health, rather than reinforcing the importance of the village based on the protection of local lifestyles, custom, and tradition.

The colonial administrations, including Australia, Britain, France, Germany, New Zealand, Portugal, and the United States oversaw the physical planning and layout of their administrative towns. The most extensive foreign power in the Pacific was the British, having jurisdiction at varying times over Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and the now PNG. These Pacific economies formed part of the larger British empire and came under the administrative auspices of the Western Pacific High Commission created in 1877 (Denoon 1997). Leveraging the work commenced by missionaries, the British administration consolidated dispersed hamlets into larger villages and declared them part of the town boundaries. Roads were constructed and villagers were required to undertake public and civil works, such as drainage, land clearing, and erecting public buildings.

In the Kiribati island of Makin circa 1931, for example, a “modern village” as developed and planned by the British was defined by house siting, style, street alignment, and size of

housing as prescribed by government rules (Grimble 1989). In this context, the rules required a certain size and type of dwelling modeled on traditional housing, invariably rectangular in shape with raised floors for ventilation and storage, walls of coconut palm fronds, and a pitched thatched roof made from *pandanus* leaf. Higher standards were applied in the main administrative townships, with housing allocation differentiated by socio-economic status and ethnicity (Figure 7). Where British outposts existed, settlements were often centralized, with laws created so that indigenous groups could live in defined village areas while allowing them to retain selected traditional social norms and practices (Tabokai 1985). Where indigenous populations were coerced into joining wider systems of colonial governance and formulating policy, such as the establishment of the Great Council of Chiefs in Fiji in 1874, it was primarily to encourage their indirect collaboration to meet the overarching aims of the colonial authority (Naidu 2013).

Port Moresby, one of the largest colonial towns, was planned comprising two small townships—Granville East and Granville West—and was surveyed on a grid pattern with land divided into quarter-acre plots, with allocated allotment and portion numbers based on Australian (Queensland) regulations (Oram 1976). The higher-level services and amenities available in the center of planned towns and cities were often only available to the Europeans, not the indigenous population. In the main, the indigenous inhabitants such as those in Port Vila lived in unplanned traditional villages on customary lands, with limited services and low-quality housing by European standards. The settlements comprising migrant settlers were restricted in the town area, and the European planned areas were

Figure 7: Imposition of Order—‘Modern’ Village Planning and Architecture



Colonial administrations sought to impose order over variety. Large tracts of traditional village housing were replaced with colonial designed ‘modern’ housing for expatriate officers, many incorporating high pitch thatched roofing. The layouts were replicated on a generic planning and design template with colonial standards applied at the site and village level, as seen in Bairiki village, South Tarawa, Kiribati.



consciously segregated from the traditional villages (Mecartney 2001). Similar trends were seen in many Pacific economies, including Fiji, where the British required ethnic Fijians to live in their villages and focus on their agricultural pursuits. “Colonial ‘native’ policy was directed at keeping indigenous Fijians in nucleated villages separate from people of other ethnicities” (Naidu 2009: 10).

The objective of “neat, tidy, and clean” town areas included villages being formalized by survey plans and the acquisition of land from customary landowners for the purposes of “orderly” land use planning and the provision of basic infrastructure and services. This included land for roads, ports, and government offices, as well as for housing, warehousing, and commercial development. In the Gilbert Islands, laws based on earlier missionary practice required island governments “to make local regulations for the ‘good order and cleanliness’ of their islands” (Macdonald 1982: 76). British colonial regulations required local and permanent housing to be set back equidistant from other houses and roads, while local housing in the planned villages had to be reconstructed to a basic standard design. Importantly, British-based planning regulations restricted the number of houses on village plots, thus forcing the breakup of the large extended family unit and their housing clusters. One major result of centralization was that the all-important nexus between clans living on their own family lands and having flexibility to meet the living needs of the family and clan requirements was disconnected (Macdonald 1982).

During World War II, villagers in affected towns such as Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and South Tarawa were moved away from their settlements. In Melanesia, relocation to rural settings was made easier by the urban villagers having existed as separate enclaves of related kin within the town boundary and, importantly, having retained their traditional subsistence-based economies based on fishing, trading, and agriculture. Tied by kin relationships, existing communities were generally consolidated, and in a time dominated by the distractions of military administration and uncertainty, traditional village ways prevailed. “Throughout Papua, the importance of the village as a social and economic unit was enhanced during the war” (Oram 1976: 83). After the war, many Pacific towns saw major development, including village resettlement and rebuilding of services and infrastructure. Residents returned to their urban village locations, consolidating and expanding their boundaries within the towns.

With migration being driven by expanding centers of administration seeking labor to meet postwar development projects, limited employer housing pushed migrants with no kin connections to seek permission from indigenous landowners to build in their native or traditional villages, or in peri-urban areas. Inter-marriage, trading ties, and friendships combined with a hard-line colonial policy containing new growth of squatter settlements assisted this process. Not surprisingly, informal and squatter settlements started to emerge in Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, Rarotonga, South Tarawa, and Suva, and laws were introduced to control the increased movement of villagers. The prevailing trend in British colonial Pacific economies, with PNG dominant, was to discourage islanders from moving to the growing towns, controlling movement through permits and regulations (Walsh 1987).

During this early colonial period, an important element of village, town, and national development was the introduction of policies and laws to deal with the manner in which land was valued, divided, measured, and recorded. Considered necessary to support the newly introduced capitalist and market-driven economy, new policy focused on the alienation of customary lands in town and rural areas to colonial administrations and European traders, businessmen, and churches. As general rule, colonial administrations introduced three main forms of landownership and associated tenure: indigenous or customary-owned lands, freehold lands, and government or state lands. (See Map 2 for the current land tenure pattern in Port Moresby reflecting state and freehold lands alienated

Map of the Port Phillip region showing land ownership. The map is color-coded: pink for 'Land under state and freehold ownership' and green for 'Land under customary ownership'. Major areas labeled include the Phillip Island, Port Phillip, and surrounding islands like Geelong, Port Phillip, and Phillip Island. A scale bar indicates 0 to 1000 meters. A legend in the bottom left corner explains the color coding.

Land owned by the indigenous inhabitants within the town boundaries—including land in and adjoining villages designated by colonial administrations as native and traditional villages—were selectively obtained by one means or another from the traditional landowners. In 1875, the London Missionary Society bought five land parcels in Hanuabada, Port Moresby, with one block sold for “a shirt, hatchet, knife, and pocket handkerchief....while the largest payment consisted of two shirts, two hatchets, and four pocket-handkerchiefs” (Oram 1976: 22). As Goddard (2010) noted, whether indigenous landowners fully understood the meaning of the transaction, such as a land purchase and exchange of goods as meant by the Europeans, remains unlikely. It is clear the long-term profound implications would never have been envisaged by either indigenous landowners or the colonial administrations at that time.



In the later colonial period, colonial regimes transitioned from ignoring customary land systems to the selective inclusion of local governance systems into colonial-based state administrative systems (Allen et al. 2013). Customary land systems within and adjoining villages and towns were interpreted and deliberated on by outsiders, often to the long-term detriment of traditional landowners in terms of physical loss of land and of impact on custom and knowledge (Linnekin 1997). Laws facilitating the establishment of land courts, land commissions, and land registers were introduced by colonial administrations to reflect how they understood indigenous land issues should be dealt with and conceptualized. These laws were developed to accommodate new and growing interest in land ownership by foreigners, as well as to resolve growing local land disputes over boundaries and compensation. The latter included restricting claims on alienated land by the former customary landowners (Fingleton and ToLopa 2007), while giving tangible land rights to those kin in the landowning group (such land being either within or outside the designated village and settlement areas).

As part of the shift in decentralizing power to village communities, land used for rights of way, cultivation pits, sacred sites, and access to hunting and fishing grounds were enshrined in state land laws and regulations, such as the colonial land registers. Systematic land registration programs were commenced in many Pacific urban areas, only to be stopped due to the conflicts they stirred up with local landowners (Lea 1983). The realities of cultural diversity and the pivotal role of land defining identity was ignored or often not understood, a reflection of the colonial administrations' disregard of indigenous populations and their customary ways. As a result, colonial society was based on a hierarchy of race with white settlers elevated over the indigenous populations and, in some Pacific economies such as Fiji, some ethnic groups were favored over others in the development process (Naidu 2013). Not surprisingly, those with access to land for development had far-reaching implications for the structure and layout of town and city development, including the location of native and traditional villages.

### **The Postindependence Era**

With Pacific economies gaining independence and the rapid population increase in towns and cities stimulated primarily by migration, the growth of squatter and informal settlements accelerated. In South Tarawa in the 1970s, "All established areas of housing have fringe dwelling squatters—those few who have no relatives who can find no room for them" (Macdonald 1982: 217). While squatter settlements were noted in towns like Honiara, Port Moresby, South Tarawa, and Suva in the 1940s and 1950s, often as a result of peri-urban and rural areas being incorporated into town or city boundaries (see, for example, Mason and Hereniko 1987), the main growth of urban settlements commenced in the 1960s as Pacific economies gained independence. The colonial ideology based on control and order, including the laying out of villages with varying combinations of roads, water, sanitation, and public facilities, was no longer a main priority. As such, the opposition to informal and squatter settlements within town boundaries was dismantled as Pacific economies set their own social, economic, and political directions. Former expatriate housing such as bungalows and "labor line" row housing as developed during the colonial era was handed over to indigenous public servants at reduced rentals. One result of this transition was that public servants were accompanied in their detached or unit housing by their extended families. A key legacy inherited from the colonial era was an expectation that public administrations via their respective housing corporations, authorities, or commissions would continue to provide housing, often at subsidized rentals (Walsh 1987).

As Pacific towns and cities gained traction as attractive destinations, informal and squatter settlements blossomed inside and outside town boundaries, including within the

existing native and traditional villages. More squatter and informal settlements began to appear in response to the transient population of laborers, workers, and displaced landowners required to support the market economy established by the colonial administrations. Unlike the precolonial era, migrant workers and their families could now strive to meet their social and economic imperatives in new destinations that were previously prohibited to islanders. In the 1980s and 1990s, many ethnic village enclaves grew in size and number, with settlers constructing their own housing on land that had little long-term security. Governments such as those in Fiji and PNG tried to alleviate unplanned urban growth through self-help housing projects. As the rate of urbanization accelerated, new village-like settlement forms became a more visible feature of Pacific towns and cities, with squatter and informal settlements becoming far greater in number and population size than the original settlements designated as native and traditional villages.

In the 1970s through to the 1990s, the urbanization process was hastened by global trade, the development of new markets (such as fishing and marine resources, minerals, and tourism), and the relaxation of former colonial policies on restrictions of movement. Against a background of the attainment of newly achieved independence and postcolonial “freedom”, residents became increasingly attracted to Pacific towns as they became centers of commerce, seats of government, and places of opportunity and hope. Access to land and housing, which had been rigidly controlled via formal bureaucratic systems in the colonial era, became increasingly negotiable and fluid across all land types, including customary tenure. Issues of service and infrastructure provision in native and traditional villages, which had already been constrained during the colonial era, were exacerbated by the influx of migrants and itinerant workers. In search of better lifestyles and without the prejudices of the colonial regulatory system, an increasing number of settlers moved to towns and lived in one of the varying forms of village-like settlements, including the native and traditional village (Jones 2012d).

Not surprisingly, the growth of village-like settlements, such as those termed informal and squatter settlements, has become the dominant form of urban growth in the Pacific islands.

All the evidence in the new millennium confirms they are now a permanent feature of Pacific towns’ and cities’ growth (see, for example, ADB 2012; Australian Aid 2008; Chand and Yala 2008b; Habitat for Humanity 2009; Jones and Lea 2007; Jones 2011b, 2011c; UN-Habitat 2012b). In 2012, it was estimated that 800,000–1,000,000 Pacific urban residents lived in native and traditional villages and informal and squatter settlements (ADB 2012), and in 2015, this is likely to have risen to over 1 million residents. The largest numbers of village-like settlements are found in the Melanesian capitals—Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva—and smaller towns of Micronesia, such as South Tarawa. Village-like settlements flourish not only within and adjoining native and traditional villages as claimed by customary landowners, but increasingly on state and freehold lands. Importantly, lands being claimed for occupation are invariably those deemed by the formal planning system to be unsuitable for “properly planned” urban development.

Village-like settlements imprint themselves into the urban morphology of Pacific towns and cities by developing on

- the edges of rivers and estuaries;
- accretion lands on ocean and lagoon foreshores;
- electricity easements;
- mangrove wetlands;
- tidal lagoons and swamps;
- the peri-urban “edge;”
- waste disposal sites; and

- residual land parcels, both small and large, within native villages and formally planned residential areas.

In 2008, it was estimated that 45% of Port Moresby's population lived in informal and squatter settlements, while in 2012 that figure was 50% (Jones 2012d). In Honiara in 2012, an estimated 35% of the population was living in informal settlements (UN-Habitat 2012a) (Box 6). In Port Moresby in 2008, there were 20 planned settlements and 79 unplanned settlements, with some 44 unplanned settlements located on state land and 37 on customary land (UN-Habitat 2008). This number would have risen considerably since

#### **Box 6 Squatters and Informal Settlements in Honiara**

"A 2006 survey of households in Temporary Housing Areas under the temporary occupation license scheme noted that only 10 out of 3,000 households had a valid occupation license, diffusing the myth that the majority of these households held a licence.

"Informal settlements represent approximately 33% of the 9,000 households in Honiara and approximately 35% of the city's population. The informal settlements are growing at an alarming rate (Solomon Islands Government 2011; Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Survey 2006). Honiara has 30 informal settlements located within the town boundary and six others located on customary land."

Source: UN-Habitat, 2012a. *Solomon Islands: Honiara Urban Profile*, Nairobi (p. 15).

that time given that PNG has the largest number of settlements in Pacific economies, with squatter and informal settlements a common feature in all of PNG's 3 cities and 17 towns (Office of Urbanisation 2010).

The population living in settlements in Suva is estimated to contain 15%–50% of the Fijian population (Boyle 2011, *Fiji Times* 2009, Kiddle 2010). In Fiji in 2011, estimates indicated that approximately 15% of the urban population lived in over 200 squatter or informal settlements (International Labour Organization 2010). The greater Suva conurbation contains the highest number of squatters, with the Nasinu local government area located between Suva and Nausori having earned the name of "squatter town" (Fiji Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment 2011). In 2012, it was estimated Nasinu had some 30,000 people living in squatter settlements while Suva had some 58 squatter settlements, the highest number of settlements in a local government area in Fiji (*Fiji Times* 2012). In Fiji in 2009, it was estimated that some 80% of all new houses were being constructed in informal settlements (*Fiji Times* 2009). Squatter and informal settlements are also present in Apia and Nuku'alofa, but in smaller numbers. In 2011, Port Vila was estimated as having some 30% of its population in informal and squatter settlements, including the rapidly expanding Blacksands and Freswota-Tassiriki settlements (Australian Aid 2011).

Estimates for some Micronesian capitals, such as South Tarawa, indicate that 25%–50% of the urban population lives in squatter settlements, primarily on lands leased from landowners to the government. In South Tarawa, landowners are the worst offenders in promoting squatting. They receive rent from the government for a head lease, while at the same time residing on their own land and allocating this resource via informal arrangements to new settlers.

In many Pacific economies, informal settlements have been estimated to be growing at two to three times the official urban growth rate (Storey 2006). However, since this

assessment by Storey (2006), settlement numbers will be higher in all Pacific economies given that (i) urban and rural living conditions have stagnated and, in many cases, have deteriorated; (ii) urban poverty levels are increasing, having been exacerbated by the global economic crisis of 2008–2010 and cost-of-living increases; and (iii) Pacific economies continue to under-enumerate their urban populations based on out-of-date urban political or local government boundaries. In 2012, settlements in Honiara were growing at a rate of over 6% compared with an overall urban growth rate of under 5% (UN-Habitat 2012a), while in 2008 in Port Moresby, settlements were estimated as increasing by 5–6 per year in absolute terms (UN-Habitat, 2008). In Port Moresby in 2010, up to 20 settlements per year were estimated as being established, which equates to approximately a 20% annual growth rate of informal settlements (Anis 2010). While there is a paucity of reliable Pacific urban data on informal and squatter settlements, a trend observed globally in developing

**Table 2: Residents in Urban Informal and Squatter Settlements in Selected Pacific Economies, 2015**

| Criteria   | Fiji | Kiribati | PNG | Solomon Islands | Tonga | Tuvalu | Vanuatu |
|--|------|----------|-----|-----------------|-------|--------|---------|
| Urban residents living in informal and squatter settlements (%)                            | 30   | 10       | 35  | 5               | NA    | 3      | 30      |
| Urban residents living in informal and squatter settlements in capital towns or cities (%) | 20   | 40       | 50  | 33              | 10    | 3      | 30      |

NA = not available, PNG = Papua New Guinea.

Source: UN-Habitat. 2015a. Draft Habitat 111 Report for the Pacific Region. September (p. 57).

countries (UN-Habitat 2015b), field observations confirm an image of Pacific towns and cities where squatter and informal settlements continue to grow in both scale and proportion. The latest estimates of informal and squatter settlements in selected Pacific economies are summarized in Table 2.

In the new millennium, the growth of village-like settlements is driven not only by rural and urban poverty, but by a chronic shortage of available and affordable land and housing. Headlines such as “Housing simply not accessible: Abel,” a quote by PNG Minister for National Planning Charles Abel, underscores the lack of formally accessible and affordable land and housing gripping major urban centers (PNG *Sunday Chronicle*, 4 May 2014). Rural–urban settlers and urban residents increasingly seek access to informal land and housing markets to meet their land and shelter needs in squatter and informal settlements. In all Pacific towns and cities, squatter and informal settlements continue to flourish, many being “out of sight, out of mind” behind and between planned areas on lands declared marginal by the formal planning systems.

Cumbersome legal and planning processes, including formal town planning systems, are ignored to varying degrees. Village-like settlements develop and expand without adhering to rules and regulations, with implementation and enforcement lacking. They are acknowledged as having inadequate levels of basic services and infrastructure such as sanitation, water, waste disposal, electricity, roads, and drainage (ADB 2012, PRIF 2015). Such settlements have become problematic in the eyes of formal government, including national and municipal government. “Informal settlements are perceived as ‘sensitive’ and policymakers, particularly Honiara City Council and the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey Planners and Policymakers have paid them little attention” (UN Habitat 2012a: 15). Such views are reinforced in a review of water and sanitation in the Melanesian Pacific



Riverside Squatter Housing on the Lami and Suva City Council Boundary

economies of Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, which found that utility providers had no obligation or budget to provide sanitation services in informal settlements (PRIF 2015). Combined with patterns of land tenure, the above collectively shape and influence decisions on the cost, quality, and location of growing village-like settlements.

### Patterns of Settlement Types

In the development of Pacific towns and cities, European-derived terms such as urban village, native and traditional village, and informal and squatter settlement continue to evolve in usage and application as part of the process of explaining the Pacific urban experience and managing the wider urbanization process. Both settlement and village have been used in differing contexts at varying times in Pacific economies to characterize housing, land, ethnic, and broader urban and rural development patterns, both planned and unplanned. For example, in Dili, an urban village has been described as “a set of interconnected and clustered villages that represents extensions of rural communities in an urbanized setting” (Muggah, 2010:11). Other usage of the term village in the urban setting has been as a catchall term to describe the varying sub-areas of settlement within a town or city, regardless of land tenure type, the application of formal planning rules and regulations, and other classification criteria. The Apia urban area, for example, is defined for political and census purposes as containing 63 villages that form 2 urban subdistricts. Similarly, in Nuku’alofa in Tonga and South Tarawa in Kiribati, all residential sub-areas and types are called by the generic term village. In other words, in many Pacific urban settings, housing areas on customary and other



land tenure types within urban and peri-urban areas are called villages, thus, reinforcing our understanding and imagery of Pacific people, places, and activities.

Vaitele in Apia, for example, is known as Vaitele village, even though it is recognized as a “nontraditional” village developed on freehold lands and not having traditional support structures as seen in rural-based villages (Thornton, Binns, and Kerslake 2013). On the other hand, the traditional village of Apia, developed on customary lands adjoining downtown central Apia, is one small village comprising only part of the formally declared urban area. When one asks about the extent of Apia or where it is, some respond by referring to the small traditional village of Apia. “Apia was originally a small village between the mouths of the Vaisigano (east) and Mulivai (west) rivers, and this village still exists within the larger modern capital which has grown into a sprawling urban area encompassing around 80 other villages” (Beca 2012: 3). Similarly, in Fiji, Sigatoka village is different from the town of Sigatoka, notwithstanding that the iTaukei native village is located within the town boundary and less than a kilometer from the town center (Mausio 2002).

In South Tarawa, the census indicates there are 16 villages stretching from Betio to Bonriki that make up urban South Tarawa. These villages were developed on native lands owned by traditional landowners. However, there are also two native villages as defined by the British colonial administration, Betio and Bairiki, which are contained within part of larger village areas of the same name. These smaller village enclaves were established as “native reserves” by the British administration in the 1950s when the larger village areas of Betio, Bairiki, and Bikenibeu were leased from traditional landowners for 99 years. These villages accommodated the original customary landowners of Bairiki and Betio, and today comprise their descendants and many other newcomers (including squatters) from South Tarawa and outer islands in some of the worst overcrowding conditions in the Pacific. When one asks where Betio or Bairiki village is, some local residents respond by referring to the small native village enclaves of the same name. Thus, as seen in Fiji, Kiribati, and Samoa, the names of towns and smaller residential areas take the names of the native or traditional village areas from which the modern contemporary town and city has morphed and evolved.

In Pacific urban areas, understanding the term village and its nuanced local usage depends on the administrative, legal, historical, social, and political contexts in which it has evolved and been adapted. Belshaw (1957), for example, cites that, in the 1950s, Hanuabada village in Port Moresby, which then contained some 2,500 persons in five smaller villages, was the term used by rural Papua New Guineans to refer to the adjoining European township of Port Moresby. Thus, through the eyes of the indigenous landowners, the large Hanuabada village, which existed long before new European settlements, remained all-important in their lives. The term village, and especially native and traditional village, became embedded in mainstream use via colonial processes, procedures, language, and discourse including village censuses and land records. The British colonial government, for example, designated localities with specific village names and created “village books” as a basis for village censuses, which allowed, among other matters, village information on individuals and their relationship to clans, families, and lands to be recorded. The word village became incorporated into colonial legislation and practice to assist in better understanding and managing local practices, such as rights, interests, and “ownership” of lands within villages as viewed through the eyes and experiences of Europeans. Thus, from a number of perspectives, the term village and its evolution as part of terms such as native and traditional villages is a key legacy of early explorers, missionaries, and the subsequent colonial era. They continue to be used for political and administrative purposes, and are widely used in Pacific economies to reflect a range of settlement types.

In this setting, the term settlement in the Pacific has been used in two main contexts. First, like the term village, it has been used as a catchall word to incorporate all forms

of built habitat within a town and city, both planned and unplanned, straddling both formal and informal and including the native and traditional villages (see, for example, Mecartney 2014). Second, the term has been more commonly used for unplanned housing and land development formed through ad hoc processes. For example, ADB recently carried

#### Box 7 Pilot Fragility Assessment of an Informal Urban Settlement in Fiji

“Early residents describe Caubati Central as a once sparsely populated area with overgrown jungle where residents on unleased state land and surrounding leased land did market gardening to supplement their family incomes. The Indo-Fijian informal settlers came in the early 1980s, while a growing number of Fijians arrived in the 1990s and thereafter. Some residents claim that they have been residing in the settlement for more than three generations, originally on leased land that is now unleased, as residential leases and titles held by their grandparents and passed onto children, then grandchildren, have not been renewed since.

Caubati Central has attracted settlers due to its proximity to Central Suva, where there are employment opportunities, numerous education institutions at all levels, health facilities, and a shopping center. The settlement was also a place where the homeless and destitute were directed and given temporary permits to build homes by the Lands Department. Over the years, Fijians and Indo-Fijians moved in for employment purposes and to provide education opportunities for their children. The Indo-Fijian influx, which increased in the late 1990s and early 2000s, was predominantly due to the expiring farm and home leases under the Agriculture Land and Tenants Act legislation. Most of the Fijians and Indo-Fijians originated from Vanua Levu, while a smaller number of both ethnic groups came from the outer islands of Kadavu, Lau, Gau, and Taveuni; from within the island of Viti Levu; and from the townships of Rakiraki and Tavua.

Conflict during the coups of 1987 and 2000 was said to have shaped informal settlement in Caubati Central. During that time, many casual laborers, specifically those in the garment factories, lost their jobs. Others had farm and home leases that expired and were not renewed. Moving to Suva and renting a place proved to be unaffordable; thus the residents opted to informally settle in Caubati.”

Source: ADB. 2013b. *Pilot Fragility Assessment of an Informal Urban Settlement in Fiji*. Manila. p.2.

out fragility assessments of selected urban settlements in Fiji, Kiribati, and PNG entitled *Pilot Fragility Assessment of an Informal Urban Settlement* (see, for example, ADB 2013b) (Box 7). These ADB assessments were based on a regional template where “informal” is linked with “urban settlements” to imply unplanned development, notwithstanding such settlements will have varying nomenclature in their local town and city contexts to give meaning and understanding to local patterns. These settlement types are characterized by low standards of housing, minimal public services and infrastructure, and often no formal land title and approval under the country’s legislated planning systems.

If one assesses the types of housing areas in Pacific towns and cities that fall under the second definition and, therefore, exclude formally planned developed areas—that is, those areas comprising primarily permanent housing with varying levels of basic services and infrastructure (e.g., water, sanitation, power, drainage, and sealed roads), primarily on freehold and state lands with secure title—four broad “unplanned” settlement types can be identified. In summary, these settlement types are the native and traditional village, squatter



settlements, informal settlements, and planned settlements. These are categorized based on a combination of four key features:

- the type of landownership and tenure implications;
- the nature of the inhabitants and legality of their occupation, such as whether they are the indigenous landowners, migrants, first- or second-generation dwellers, or mixture thereof;
- the state of environmental, socioeconomic, and living conditions, such as housing condition and level of basic services and infrastructure; and
- the extent of development that has occurred at one time or other outside the realm of the formal planned system.

When considering these four settlement types, it is important to appreciate the fluidity of terminology such as native village, as it changes over time. With increasing population mobility and escalating pressure for land and housing, physical boundaries and other social and economic features of native and traditional villages and other village forms have become far from discrete and exclusive. As Norwood noted in Port Moresby in the early 1980s, “[in] some cases separate offshoots have developed from urban villages and it is difficult to say whether such offshoots are more properly classified as parts of the urban village or as squatter areas” (Norwood 1984: 69). As native villages have grown from natural increase and the influx of migrants and intermarriage, informal and squatter settlements have occurred within and outside the original boundaries of the native village as delineated, and on other customary lands owned by the indigenous urban landowners. The native village, or as Norwood (1984) called them, urban villages, once could have been clearly identified with a specific ethnic group from a defined locality. However, tribes and sub-clans are now mixed with a multitude of other ethnic groups from other tribes and clans “Tete Settlement, on the other hand, is quite different. While it is an urban community on Motu-Koitabu land, its inhabitants are settlers and squatters from different parts of the country (PNG), not necessarily from the Motu-Koita stock” (Arua 2011: 13).

As a result, “unplanned” settlements, including native and traditional villages, have increasingly become an intricate assembly of settlers from all parts of the country. Over time, settlement morphology has become complex as Pacific towns and cities have expanded and settlements once viewed as edge villages have been consumed within the town and city. Within this setting, there are four main types of “unplanned” settlements characterizing the Pacific islands, with all definitions being based on the legality or otherwise of the settlement type: (i) native or traditional village (the original urban village), (ii) squatter settlements, (iii) informal settlements, and (iv) planned settlements.

### **Native or Traditional Village (the Original Urban Village)**

The term native or traditional village was introduced by the British colonial administrations, traders, and missionaries to characterize settlements comprising indigenous landowners of a specific locality. Whether in a town, city, or rural area, these village types were applied to characterize indigenous landowners and descendants of a particular tribe or clan who conducted to varying degrees a lifestyle based on custom on their own lands. Appreciating that, prior to missionary and European contact, all land could be viewed as customary land,<sup>1</sup> settlements existed in one basic form or other before the establishment of towns and the introduction of the “village” designation. Belshaw’s (1957) description of the Great Village

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to customary lands implies a reference to native lands, or land owned by customary owners, custom owners, indigenous or traditional landowners, and the like.

of Hanuabada is typical: “The nearest village to the town of Port Moresby, indeed so close that it has been gazetted within the town boundary, is known as Hanuabada, ‘The Great Village’” (Belshaw 1957: 1). Similarly, in the Port Moresby context, Chand and Yala (2012) define an urban village as “[comprising] housing developed by customary landowners on land they claim rights to under customary law” (Chand and Yala 2012: 145). Like many areas in the Pacific islands, the existence of native and traditional villages in a town setting provides the original context for the term urban village as applied in current popular usage.

By virtue of their location, native and traditional villages as occupied and developed by indigenous landowners have been urbanized longer than any other area or village group. In this context, such villages and their customary lands are the elementary building blocks of the colonial and contemporary Pacific town and city, with Melanesian towns and cities noted as having “developed around clusters of traditional villages” (ADB 2012: 4). In some Pacific economies, there will be a preference for one descriptive term over another, such as the usage of traditional village in Samoa. Alternatively, the terms may be interchanged in usage. Work by Evans, Goddard, and Paterson (2010) on the operation of village courts in PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, for example, describes the urban communities in which they worked as comprising “informal housing areas popularly called ‘settlements,’ as well as traditional villages around which urban areas have grown” (Evans, Goddard, and Paterson 2010: 4). In this analysis, the term traditional village has been used in preference to native village, with both terms a legacy of the British colonial era.

On the other hand, Dutton and Pigolo (2014), in their work on water and sanitation in urban informal settlements in PNG, make a clear distinction between “traditional urban villages” and informal settlements. Chand and Yala (2012) in their analysis of settlements in Port Moresby also make a distinction, defining three types: urban villages (that is, the native village in the PNG context), formal housing, and (unplanned) settlements. Central to recognizing urban villages as distinct from other settlement types is their underlying

#### Box 8 The Mota Koita People, Port Moresby

The Mota Koita are the indigenous people of Port Moresby, being the traditional owners of land on which the largest city in the Pacific islands, Port Moresby, has been developed. The coastal dwellers of this group are called the Motu while their cousins, called the Koitabu (now abbreviated to Koita), lived inland. The Motu Koita occupy eight major villages in Port Moresby, including the villages of Baruni, Tatuna, Vabukori, Kilakila, Pari, Korobosea, and Hanuabada. The latter has historically been the largest village, being coastal and adjoining the Port Moresby central business area. In 2001, an estimated 30,000 Motu Koita were living in the Port Moresby area within the wider jurisdiction of the National Capital District Commission, and this number has grown substantially since that time. As Port Moresby has become the nation’s capital and a cosmopolitan city, urbanization, including limited access to lands for development and village overcrowding, meant the Mota Koita have become marginalized in determining their political, economic, and sociocultural future. They now play a reduced role in determining their destiny.

Source: UNESCO. 2001. *Partners in Coastal Development—The Motu Koitabu People of Papua New Guinea*. Paris.

traditional or customary land status, and common ties based around ethnicity and governance. The recognition of the importance attached to tradition and custom in native and traditional villages in Pacific development has meant such villages have formal laws and regulations established for their management—such as the Mota Koita Assembly for

the Mota Kota native villages in Port Moresby (Box 8) and the Village Fono Act, 1900, in Samoa, while in Fiji, the Fijian Affairs Board Act (Cap. 120) and other legislation controls the proclaimed iTaukei native villages some of which exist in urban areas.

Due to pressures generated by (i) land acquisition by the state and private interests; (ii) occupation by new settlers and migrants, some sanctioned and some not sanctioned by the customary landowners; and (iii) population and land pressures driven by the traditional landowning groups themselves, native and traditional villages are now less dominant as autonomous entities in the urban setting (Figure 8). Some urban villages, such as the iTaukei native villages in Fiji, are further disconnected from the rights entitled to full urban citizens administrated by outdated rural authorities (Osborne et al. 2012). As a result, customary

**Figure 8: The Native Village of Betio, South Tarawa**



Narrow public spaces define the living conditions in Betio Village, a native village created by the British colonial administration and located on the larger islet of the same name in South Tarawa. The village comprises the original landowners of Betio plus many newcomers.

landowners find themselves in two predicaments. First, pressure for land by outsiders and the need to address concurrent hardship issues mean leadership and governance providing direction for land development are often fractured and in disarray. Second, customary landowners are no longer the sole custodians of their urban lands as they are marginalized in the wider city development, decision-making, and governance processes. As a result, some remain bitter over their experiences of sharing their lands with “newcomers” and are reluctant players in urban development.

### Squatter Settlements

The term squatter settlement has been used to describe both landless migrants and longer-term urban residents illegally moving to and squatting on freehold, state, and more recently, customary lands without the consent of the landowner (Batchelor 1987, Jones 2012c, Kiddle 2010). In South Tarawa in the 1980s, a squatter was defined “as a person who occupies land without a traditional or other legal right to it” (Itaia 1987: 207). In the same



Squatter Settlements on Reclaimed State Lands, Temauku Bight, South Tarawa

time period, Laqere, in his study of the Makekula settlement in Suva, defined a squatter as “one who is residing as a tenant-at-will on land which does not legally belong to him” (Laqere 1987: 56). Habitat for Humanity (2009) defines a squatter as “where the household lacks legal tenure to their house and/or legal plot” (Habitat for Humanity 2009: 13). In the Port Vila context, a squatter is defined as one having “no formal agreement or lease arrangements” (Mecartney 2001: 12). Maebuta and Maebuta, in their study of urban squatter settlements in Solomon Islands, defined a squatter as “a person who is illegally occupying state, freehold or native land without any form or security of tenure” (Maebuta and Maebuta 2009: 119).

In definitions of the terms squatter and/or squatter settlement, illegality in the eyes of the formal system and tenure insecurity resulting from lack of permission from the landowners are common denominators. In Fiji, for example, a squatter settlement is defined as “a settlement of dwellings occupying State, Freehold or Native land illegally

or without any form of security of tenure or without any consent from the landowners” (International Labour Organization 2010: 96). Tenure security, however, is relative to a squatter’s circumstances and the meaning will depend on the prevailing customary systems in local settings. As Batchelor observed in assessing squatters living on customary land in Rarotonga in the 1980s: “Reference to these people as ‘squatters’ is not using the word in its proper context as these people have permission to occupy the land on which they live” (Batchelor 1987: 230). This situation is common in many countries of the Pacific islands, with settlers having the consent of landowners. Thus, from this perspective, settlers are not illegal in their own eyes or those of the customary landowners. In Fiji, Yates (2011) cited squatters as including those living under traditional *vakavanua* covenants where settlers had a right to occupy lands from the local tribal chief through wider kinship ties. In this context, squatters can be seen as those living in what is commonly defined as informal settlements. Importantly, many Pacific squatter settlements have been in existence for more than half a century, and exhibit well-developed village-like features. In squatter settlements, some form of rent is often paid to the “landlord”—the group or individuals who initially claimed territorial occupation of the land including any houses built on them (Mawuli and Guy 2007).

In the Pacific, squatter settlements are sometimes confused with the term shanty towns. “Recent studies have shown that squatter settlements or shanty towns have mushroomed in urban and peri-urban areas” (Naidu 2009: 9). The use of the terms slum or shanty in the Pacific region is best used to describe the state of physical, social, and environmental condition of dwelling housing, including the absence of services (see, for example, Tauafiafi 2011—Samoa’s slum, in the *Samoa Observer*). The term slum should not be confused with the extralegal implications associated with the term squatter or squatter settlement, which imply illegality of occupation. As a general rule, use of the term slum is not common in the Pacific islands, notwithstanding attempts by United Nations agencies to embed this global term in the late 1990s and the new millennium as part of the process of mainstreaming Millennium Development Goals and the more recent Sustainable Development Goal number 11.

### Informal Settlements

Those settlers who have negotiated occupation agreements with landowners on their customary lands, including land within native or traditional villages, fall under the term of informal settlements (Chand and Yala 2008b, International Labour Organization 2010, Jones 2012c) (Box 9). The term informal has been used in two contexts. First, it is used

#### Box 9 Informal Settlements in Fiji

“‘Informal settlement’ is defined as ‘a settlement of dwellings occupying Fijian customary (Native) land with some type of informal consensual arrangement with Fijian landowners but without any legal form of security of tenure.’

“The Fijian term for the latter bilateral arrangement between the informal settlement and village leaders or landowners is *Vakavanua*. A *Vakavanua* arrangement often implies an obligatory commitment by the tenant to shoulder, in part, the traditional responsibilities of the landowners. This obligation can place enormous burden on the tenants because it is neither quantified nor qualified in a contractual sense but is described commonly as a ‘traditional obligation.’”

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO). 2010. *Child Labour in Fiji*. Suva: ILO Country Office for South Pacific Island Countries. (p. 96)



to reflect settlers who do not possess any legal form of tenure, but may have a verbal or written agreement with the landowner for occupation. In other words, they are “traditionally sanctioned” by occupation agreements on customary land, either within or close to existing native and traditional villages. Second, it is applied to characterize the substandard and unauthorized dwellings developed on the site (see, for example, Dutton and Pigolo 2014). In the eyes of the settlers themselves, informal settlements have some form of tenure security based on a quasi-legal agreement which may or may not generate concerns of insecurity. Regardless of land tenure, some form of rent or compensation is paid as practiced in the informal settlements of Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva (Kiddle 2010, Mecartney 2001, UN-Habitat 2008).

Like the terms native and traditional village and squatter settlements, the meaning attached to informal settlements is a reflection of the circumstances that define Pacific contextual settings. In the urban profile prepared for Goroka, PNG, for example, informal settlements have been subcategorized into two types, unplanned settlements and village settlements. Unplanned settlements “are the unplanned informal settlements located within the town boundaries where basic services are unavailable” and where “The settlers have no legal rights” (UN-Habitat 2010: 20). The definition, as used in this context, equates more to the typical characteristics of squatting rather than to an informal settlement. On the other hand, the subcategory of village settlements reflects the mainstream definition of informal settlements. “These are informal settlements located on traditional land located on the urban fringes. The occupation of this traditional land is arranged through informal agreements between the traditional landowners and the settlers. An annual land rental fee is agreed upon for the occupation of this land” (UN-Habitat 2010: 20).

In the Honiara context, informal settlements refer to unplanned development on state and on customary land within the Honiara City Council town boundary (UN Habitat 2012a). In this setting, the meaning of informal settlement and its association with the occupation of solely customary land is not as strong. In the Port Vila context, others such as Chung and Hill have used a broad definition of informal settlements that could also apply to squatting. “An informal settlement is one where people live in a way that does not accord with urban land-use or housing regulations and laws” (Chung and Hill 2002: iv). Similarly, characterization of settlers as “informal” even though they are squatters is perpetuated in the media, further blurring their boundaries. As noted in the Lautoka context in Fiji: “The informal settlers were given approval notices to lease the lots they were occupying during a ceremony held at the Field 40 Hindu temple” (Fiji Times Online 2015). Understanding local nuances and how key language evolves over time is vital in understanding the why and how of patterns of commonality and diversity (Jones 2012d).

### **Planned Settlements**

Planned settlements, also termed formal settlements in some planning jurisdictions (see, for example, National Capital District Commission 2006), refer to squatter and informal settlement areas that have been upgraded, and now have some basic services and tenure security after their initial development. A form of “retro planning” mainly seen in Fiji and PNG where local and central governments have attempted basic upgrading schemes, these settlements are in the minority in the Pacific islands. The National Housing Commission in PNG, for example, has undertaken a number of housing upgrading schemes in squatter settlements in Lae and Port Moresby, focusing on self-help low-cost improvements that include land security. With increasing poverty levels in Pacific towns and cities, the environmental amenity in these planned settlements has declined, with increased household size, unmaintained housing and public spaces, uncollected garbage, and environmental degradation being the norm. As a result, the visual appearance of planned and other formal



Table 3: Typology of Urban Villages in Pacific Towns and Cities

| Type                          | Key Features in Urban Condition  | Main Land Impacted                                       |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Native or traditional village | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• common usage in many Pacific economies as the “urban village”</li> <li>• land as occupied by indigenous landowners</li> <li>• increasing occupation by non-landowning individuals and groups at the invitation/acceptance of the village chiefs/groups/residents</li> <li>• homogeneity of village population has been diluted</li> <li>• increasing land disputes and governance struggles</li> <li>• national legal jurisdictions due to village and native land status</li> <li>• recognition of custom and usage</li> <li>• incorporated into traditional governance arrangements</li> <li>• use of “native village” or “traditional village” is Pacific economy-specific, depending on context and historical circumstances</li> </ul> | Customary, indigenous, native lands                      |
| Squatter settlement           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community or cluster of families of kin and ethnic group who invade and settle an area with landowner’s consent</li> <li>• some tenure and rent may be agreed with land occupier or initial settler</li> <li>• may be homogenous or heterogeneous in ethnic make-up</li> <li>• many are long-term permanent settlements (third and fourth generation from the 1950s and 1960s)</li> <li>• little enforcement and interference by government</li> </ul>  | State lands, customary lands, leased and alienated lands |
| Informal settlement           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• settlements often by new migrants</li> <li>• settler relationships reinforced by trade, commerce, and intermarriage</li> <li>• short-term poverty concerns generate land “sales” for informal settlements</li> <li>• settlers negotiate tenure with landowners/occupiers—may be “traditional or modern obligations”</li> <li>• some form of tenure agreed</li> <li>• clan governance may not be unified</li> <li>• little enforcement by government: landowner authority paramount</li> </ul>   | Customary lands  |
| Planned settlement            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• basic services and infrastructure provided by government, private sector, and community groups</li> <li>• low cost self-help housing</li> <li>• formal tenure agreement via lease or head lease</li> <li>• extended families—overoccupation of land and crowding of housing</li> <li>• level of amenity has declined</li> </ul>   | State lands  |

Source: Author.

settlements is making them increasingly indistinguishable from other types. Given that some of these planned settlements were based on initial squatter areas, some continue to display the characteristics of villages, but not to the extent seen in the original urban village area and larger squatter and informal settlements (Jones 2012d).

Noting the diversity of urban settings, local contexts, and slippage between terms in varying Pacific contexts, a typology of urban villages is summarized in Table 3. This typology is based primarily on land tenure criteria, rather than the sociocultural features of the places and people themselves. The village types are not mutually exclusive, with many coexisting together in varying forms as their inhabitants respond to social, economic, environmental, and political changes.

Table 4: Evolution of Settlement and Urban Villages in the Pacific Economies

| Element                          | Precolonial Settlement   | Colonial Town and City Settlement  | Postindependence Urban Villages in Contemporary Town and City   |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Physical pattern                 | Dispersed settlement, small and large groupings. Space relationships related to resource exploitation, gender separation, and other social norms, such as reducing likelihood of theft, illness, black magic, etc. | Mixed patterns. In smaller centers, dispersed indigenous settlement centralized into one major village. In larger towns, native and traditional villages and reserves designated and set aside for indigenous landowning groups among European-dominated segregated areas. | Native and traditional villages and reserves expanding internally and outside boundaries. Growth and expansion of new village-like settlements in planned and peri-urban areas. Spatial buffers between settlement types substantially reduced and unclear. Space limits prohibit and constrain traditional layout. |
| Population                       | Homogenous clans, tribes, and ethnic groups  | Homogenous native and traditional villages. Heterogeneous and homogenous kin, clan, and ethnic groups in village-like settlements.   | Heterogeneous and homogenous kin and non-kin, clan, and ethnic groups in village-like settlements and native villages.  |
| Location and number of dwellings | Based on kin and clan, tribe affiliation, and social norms, including influence of elder or chief of household and landowning group, defense, black magic, etc.  | Based on rules and regulations for plot size and town layout as part of “orderly” town.  | Based on homogenous and heterogeneous individuals and groups claiming land by squatting and occupation; agreement and permission from members, elder, or chief of landowning or occupying group such as native or traditional village.  |
| Size of households               | Based on extended family, kin affiliation, and social norms such as gender roles.  | Dwelling size often based on plot area, thus reducing the number of households and size of extended family; kin and ethnic household affiliations dispersed and mixed in dwellings throughout native, traditional, and other villages.                                     | Based on kin and social norms including extended family, plus non-kin affiliation (such as room rental). Household size often larger than rural counterparts.   |
| Land and land tenure             | Indigenous ownership and customary rights unique to ethnic, tribal, and clan grouping. Land central to spatial relationships.  | Uniform sets of rights and ownership types codified in rules and regulations; some lands leased, acquired, and designated as native reserves and villages as part of planned surveyed town development.  | Multiple arrangements and agreements in place with indigenous landowners and other land occupiers and custodians; land treated as a commodity; multiple land disputes and claims to occupation, ownership, and use.   |
| Governance                       | Based on custom and traditional norms, values, and practices of kin, ethnic, and tribal groupings.   | Regulated and controlled by rules and regulations based on western approaches. Some aspects of traditional governance adopted as well as suppressed and banned.  | Mix of traditional and modern approaches (hybrid) modified and adjusted to the urban realm; consensus governance based on the strength of sociocultural orders, land tenure, village type, and urban pressures.   |

Source: Author.

## Summary

Like town and city, the notion of village in the Pacific did not exist in local dialects and languages in precolonial times. It was an alien concept introduced by Europeans with a specific meaning attached to its physical form, layout, and social and cultural setting. In this context, the widely used terms native, traditional, and, more recently, urban village are essentially a legacy of the colonial and missionary periods when the native and traditional village concept was considered necessary to (i) depict a form of settlement constructed and understood through the eyes of Europeans, and (ii) to reinforce sociocultural differences as well as power relationships between the Europeans and indigenous populations. “Under colonial rule, Kiribati households were relocated to form villages for easier administration. Land registration resulted in the increasing fragmentation of properties. Instead of kin groups owning the lands, the latter were registered under individual names” (Talu 1985: 12). As such, the use of settlement language such as native and traditional village, informal, squatter, illegal, and unplanned settlements vacillates within and between Pacific economies depending on the nuanced mix of local, regional, and global conceptions of housing types, land tenure, levels of basic infrastructure and services, and socioeconomic conditions. In Fiji, Kiribati, and PNG, for example, they may be called native villages, while in Samoa and Vanuatu, they may be termed traditional villages. As such, they take on a multiplicity of meanings for different stakeholders at different spatial levels, yet remain central to defining and explaining the myriad communities that make up Pacific urban life.

In the evolution of settlements, the consequence of both designating and, in some cases, creating native and traditional villages and segregating them from other residents in town settings has had far-reaching impact. This European-derived spatial tool of control and order attempted to realign and suppress the strong relationship between kin-based sociocultural orders, including how residents structured and organized their lives in imposed settlement patterns. The village forms created by missionaries and colonial administrations had a major impact not only on the location of kin, but also on access to land, housing, and resources. It also led to realigning gender separation as the kin-based orders were replaced by colonial and other alien rules and regulations. Table 4 summarizes the evolution of settlement with an emphasis on the urban village from the precolonial and colonial periods to the contemporary town and city period, the latter reflecting a surge in village-like settlements in Pacific urban areas.

With increased urbanization since the 1980s, the term native and traditional village in a Pacific town and city context has morphed into the more widely used term urban village. This reflects the diverse amalgam of settlement forms, indigenous lifestyles, and permanence of towns and cities. The ongoing arrival of migrants, the embedding of second- and third-generation urban dwellers in settlements, and the sharing of land and use rights by indigenous landowners and others claiming land rights make it increasingly problematic to distinguish between native and traditional villages and varying village-like settlement types found in Pacific towns and cities. As a result, the notion of the native and traditional village in a town setting as a discrete and self-contained homogenous entity of indigenous landowners frozen within the urban milieu retains little relevance in the contemporary Pacific town and city. The reality is that the concept of such village forms as segregated village entities now has little traction. They have become one of a number of similar settlement types which, it is argued, reflect village-like features and are in effect forms of urban villages.

In this setting, what are the village characteristics and features embodied in informal and squatter settlements that allow village-like settlements to be conceptualized as urban villages? What are traits of the “village world” anchored in traditional sociocultural orders and kin-based systems that allow town and village to come together in village-like settlements and urban villages?

# Viewing Village-Like Settlements as Urban Villages

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## Introduction

It has been acknowledged in the Pacific that, as increasing numbers of people move to towns and cities, they think, live, and behave like settlers from rural areas, but within an urban setting. Settlers can bring to towns and cities the traditional values, beliefs, and customary practices of a kin-based ordered society, and these are embraced, modified, and adjusted as expressed in an array of settlement types. These include the original native and traditional villages, plus village-like settlements that increasingly shape the morphology of Pacific towns and cities.

In Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, such trends have been observed for some time. In the 1950s, Hirsh examined the social organization of an urbanized Polynesian traditional village in Apia, and noted its strong customary underpinnings: “This urban village, then, with its nonagricultural economy and almost complete lack of traditional ceremony, is a community that is firmly founded on traditional principles. Some of the activities in which it engages are quite different from those of non-urban villages, but the sorts of social groupings that occur in the community and the basic patterns of social relationships among its members have been adapted but not disrupted” (Hirsh 1958: 300–301).

Macdonald described similar experiences in South Tarawa in the 1970s when the atoll capital was undergoing rapid population transformation in the postindependence era. “Ever increasing numbers of Islanders decided that they wished to leave one lifestyle for the other, to seek the benefits and to accept the costs of moving to town. It meant change but not a rejection of culture—merely a continuation of adjustment, and of adaptation, that had been going on for centuries” (Macdonald 1982: 203). In the mid-1990s, Rawlings undertook research in Port Vila on the large peri-urban village of Pango on Efate Island, and made similar observations: “In the past, and even today, it appears as if peri-urban villages were perceived as having ‘lost their kastom<sup>2</sup>.’ However, places such as Pango have not ‘lost their kastom,’ but rather kastom has been transformed and continues to operate in people’s day-to-day lives in a flexible and permeable manner” (Rawlings 1999: 85).

Set against these insights, the overarching framework guiding lifestyles was seen as remaining intact. Pacific residents adjusted to European notions of village, including the spatial consolidation of individuals and groups that occurred as part of the wider vision of “development.” The details of how village life played out was dependent on how settlers individually and collectively linked to and valued their past, while at the same time managing and coping with the pressures of urbanization including rural urban migration and vice versa. In these contexts, modified village and kin-based forms of structure and organization were seen as prevailing, with such systems embedded in a past that well preceded the coming of Pacific urbanization. Such features have been observed in theory and practice as existing in many Pacific towns and cities, though not explored at a regional level (Box 10).

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<sup>2</sup> Melanesian pidgin term which replaces or is used with the English word ‘custom’.

### Box 10 Village Ways in the Towns and Cities of the Pacific

- “In the ghettos, the home cultural values predominate and Pacific peoples behave as they do in their home villages” (Duncan 2007: 928).
- “Migrants have been intertwined in the urbanization process by transporting their village surroundings, habits, foods, customs and languages to the urban centers” (Office of Urbanisation 2012: 12).
- “Traditional lifestyle practices found in low density outer island settings still dominate the urban way of life in South Tarawa and are unlikely to be reversed in the short term. South Tarawa’s urban transition is primarily population led, and key social and cultural parameters and practices in the prevailing socio-cultural order tend to ensure the socio-cultural system is maintained, rather than changed and modified to accommodate the pressing urbanization and urban development needs and realities of the population” (Fraser Thomas Partners 2011: 8).
- “[S]ettlement dwellers in PNG and other Pacific Islands replicate the rural lifestyle of providing for all in a house by the house owner. It is a dependent life where one has to support another in times of need. As such, they live in enclaves and create ethnic barriers to maintain their identity and support for each other” (Pyati 2013: 16).
- “The development of informal settlements in urban areas in Solomon Islands, as with other Melanesian towns, is strongly linked to ethnic groupings. Settlers live and behave according to the norms and values practised in rural villages” (UN-Habitat 2012b: 20).

As discussed in section III, “The Evolution of Settlements Types,” village-like settlements typically termed informal and squatter settlements continue to flourish in ever-increasing numbers. Despite being classified as illegal, unplanned, and a deviant urban form, they have become central to urban growth in the Pacific urbanization process. Like native and traditional villages, they have become a defining feature of contemporary town and city growth, strongly associated with individual and collective ethnic subcultures, land, and identity (Figure 9). Not surprisingly, practitioners such as Mecartney have described the entrenchment of the wider urban village phenomena as “denoting the cross-road of modern and traditional, the formal and informal, and the homogenous and heterogeneous” (Mecartney 2014: 2).

In this setting, it is important to clarify the defining elements that influence how settlers organize and use their village-like settlements in urban settings. In other words, what are the inherent qualities that bind and hold together village-like settlements in town and city settings and allow them to be imagined as urban villages? While acknowledging the breadth of urban diversity in the Pacific and its subregions, four overarching elements can be identified as central to village-like settlements being viewed as urban villages:

- place development tied to kinship and ethnicity,
- kin-based social organization,
- land tenure as developed on custom, and
- persistence of subsistence-based activities.

### Place Development Tied to Kinship and Ethnicity

Place of birth and family, kin, clan, tribe, and ethnic group are intrinsically tied to the notion of village, which is primarily rural-based, but increasingly urban as Pacific towns and cities become a permanent home for settlers and generational dwellers. Whether urban or rural,

Figure 9: Land and Identity



This sign is in a maneaba in the village of Eita, South Tarawa, reminding residents of the importance of land and the landowners association of Tarawa (tokatarawa). The maneaba was retained by the British administration as the physical focus around which village life coalesced.

“home” in Pacific economies is invariably the village and locality in which a settler was born and raised. For a range of reasons—including ancestral attachment to land, kin and ethnicity, social and cultural ties such as victories in tribal warfare, linguistic bonds, and government administrative boundaries (such as a province or home island)—a sense of attachment to place of origin as a polity in its own right looms strongly in the mind-set of Pacific residents. This is reflected when islanders meet a newcomer in the urban setting, with the first question invariably being, “Where do you come from? Where is your home village, district, or island?” The response will include a reference to a locality, such as a home village (urban or rural), province and/or island, and usually a kin grouping, such as a clan or tribe. In town and city settings, residents also remain strongly conscious of their roots, notwithstanding that the spatial buffer between all forms of settlements has been gradually reduced with population and land use change.

In the public domain of Pacific towns and cities, the importance of place identity as a product of social relationships is on view for all to see. In the Apia urban area, for example, traditional villages are ringed by borders of painted white stones, visually highlighting the traditional village and demarcating its boundaries from neighboring freehold and mixed tenure villages. Noting that all settlement types in Apia are referred to as villages in one form or other (that is, traditional, freehold, or mixed), the boundaries between village types are clear to Samoans. Family, kin, and ethnicity combined with attachment to one’s home



Figure 10: The Multifunctionality of the Maneaba



Newcomers to South Tarawa can live in maneabas specifically affiliated with their home island if they cannot directly access their kin network for accommodation.

village strongly shapes a person's sense of identity and connection to place (Figure 10). Anecdotal evidence suggests this occurs even if a person is not raised in the "home" village. The overarching importance of village is reinforced in state institutions, legal frameworks, and policies of Pacific governments, such as providing public servants with annual leave fares to their home village.

The reinforcement and maintenance of kin, ethnic, and place association in towns and cities of the Pacific are reflected in conscious moves by settlers to congregate in settlements based around kin and ethnicity. Village-like settlements are composed of varying combinations of households, small and large, presented as (i) the more common pattern of enclaves and clusters containing a number of households linked by ties of kinship, clan, and ethnicity displaying basic social structures and organizations with varying levels of cohesion; and (ii) single or small groups of households congregating as a heterogeneous mixture of diverse kin, clans, and ethnic groups. The latter forms of urban villages often have no higher-level kin-based social structure and organizations in place that could be seen as binding them together, though other factors are at play such as religion and church activities (Box 11).

Against a background of diverse village-like settlements, the overarching trend is that, where possible, migrants and existing settlers cluster along traditional clan and ethnic lines, resulting in many village-like settlements comprising kin from a particular locality, region, or mix of localities. Most prominent in Pacific economies in Melanesia, areas within

#### Box 11 Heterogeneous Urban Villages—Kiritimati Island, Kiribati

“A major feature of the settlements as developed in Kiritimati Island is the absence of the ‘unimwane system’ and the intricate social order surrounding the ‘maneaba system’ in the villages in Kiritimati Island. The traditional meeting house in Kiribati called the ‘maneaba’ is more than just a physical structure. It is the center of the social fabric of life in the outer island villages. Each family has an allocated place to sit in the maneaba that is associated with a role, defined by traditions, which is reflected by each family in the ‘maneaba’ and in the village.

“Central to the maneaba system is the ‘unimwane’ (old men) who meet in the maneaba and discuss and make decisions on issues which affect village life on a daily basis. Old men’s decisions on rules and regulations carry a lot of weight and have often conflicted with western laws as they now exist, particularly in relation to sanctions for wrong doings in the village.

“On Kiritimati Island, this important traditional system has been lost in the villages with the surge of population from other islands to these main centers. Those newcomers who arrive recognize no higher traditional authority in the family or village, unlike their own home islands. Families from the islands of Makin and Beru live next to families from Arorae and Maiana within the Kiritimati Island villages. The population is heterogeneous and no overarching social structures, norms and values apply. Social control measures as seen on outer islands in the Gilbert group, for example, have been lost with urbanization on State lands and the emergence of new village forms.

“Church groups (makoro) are fast replacing traditional authority in the villages. An important differentiation is that these church groupings are mostly focused on fund raising and church oriented support which is not as effective as a social control measure. Also, participation in these groupings is voluntary, and one can pull out of the groupings. However, in a traditional village setting, one is a lifelong member and cannot decide to pull out of the village if not happy with the decisions of the old men. The only way out is to move out of the village and move to another village, or move to State lands such as in Kiritimati, Tabuaeran or Teeraina Islands where less restrictive village and family social structures exist.”

Source: ANU Enterprises 2009. *Interim Report for the Integrated Land and Population Development Program on Kiritimati Island (Population Policy)*. 2007. *Technical Assistance to the Republic of Kiribati for Integrated Land and Population Development Program on Kiritimati Island*. Manila. Canberra (September, pp. 20–21).

settlements are often named in a local dialect of the dominant ethnic group, thus reflecting and reinforcing the identity of where they have come from and now live in the settlement (UN-Habitat 2012b). In such varied ethnic settings, the physical features of settlers such as skin color and facial features, combined with cultural symbols such as dress, use of local language dialects, singing, dancing, tattoos and body adornments, local construction types, styles of carving, church affiliations, and related behavioral features all accentuate the identity of kin and ethnic groups and differentiate the character of one village-like settlement from another.

A settlement name, for example, implies connection not only to place and locality, but also to the settlers. Some heterogeneous village settlements have creative names, such as Bangladesh and California in Fiji, Destination in Vanuatu, and Banana and Paris villages in Kiribati. In Nauru, I-Kiribati migrants name their housing enclaves after their home islands in Kiribati, such as Butaritari, Makin, and Marakei. While the native and traditional villages plus village-like settlements may be recognized by their association to place of origin and characteristics associated with what this identity implies—such as fighting prowess, work ethic, social organization, land tenure and housing type, religious affiliation, strictness in adherence to custom, and wider kin and ethnic traits—the village, whether situated in a rural or urban context, remains the paramount communal structure linking settlers at varying levels of cohesiveness.

Village-like settlements linked by kin, clan, and ethnic connections to rural areas and/or outer islands have been argued as being more prevalent in the Melanesian Pacific economies, such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, given their high degree of ethnolinguistic diversity (Jones and Lea 2007). This contrasts with Pacific economies in Micronesia and Polynesia where populations generally reflect greater ethnic homogeneity, noting that these Pacific economies have smaller national populations and fewer towns and cities including settlements. One example of the vast ethnic diversity across the Pacific and especially within Melanesia is PNG, one of the most ethnolinguistically fragmented countries in the world, with more than 800 tribes and numerous local dialects over some 150 islands. Madang Province alone on the PNG north coast has over 173 linguistic groups. Solomon Islands has more than 70 languages dispersed over nearly 1,000 islands. In Vanuatu, there are more than 100 tribes and over 150 languages. Fiji, comprising 322 islands of which approximately one-third are inhabited, also has a unique mix of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians (ADB 2012).

In the Melanesian capitals of Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva, settlements based on ethnic clusters of varying size and composition dominate residential patterns, such as Indian and Fijian settlements in Suva, or the Malaitan and Guadalcanal clusters in Honiara. A high degree of ethnic diversity in PNG means that the most extensive mix of settlements in the Pacific are to be found in Port Moresby. In such societies, where many ethnic groups come from small isolated rural communities where defending one's territory and livelihoods has been a high priority for generations, urban settlements have been described as "cosmopolitan networks of tribal groupings or anarchical sub-cultures, which have been defined by ethnicity and regionalism within an urban context" (Muke et al. 2001: 7). As such, the degree of ethnic homogeneity and heterogeneity within Pacific economies has major implications not only for the number and mix of settlements, but the extent to which the formation of diverse settlement subcultures and customs may encourage and tolerate behaviors that more homogenous societies may find unacceptable.

Where settlements develop and cluster along kin, clan, and ethnic origins as seen in Honiara, Port Moresby, South Tarawa, Suva, and most Pacific capitals, the consequence is twofold. First, they limit residential choice to areas associated with particular ethnic groups, and thus locational choice is restricted and invariably predetermined. Second, the advantage of the latter for many settlers is that settlements are forged as hubs of varying kinship and ethnic support and security. A settlement based on a web-like network of kin, clan, and ethnic groups—some small, some large, some mixed, some homogenous—provides many advantages for settlers, especially those residing in the larger groups of kin and clan members. A network of social ties anchored in a settlement may provide safety in numbers, reinforce kin and ethnic identity, and provide urban security such as night curfews given that law and order can be fragile and unpredictable. It also provides a general safety net of support that includes potential connections to access land, housing, and employment (Jones 2011b, 2012b; Mawuli and Guy 2007). As a general rule, the more heterogeneous a settlement in terms of mix of kin, ethnicity, language, and place of origin, the greater the potential for conflict internally and with adjoining settlements. This is more likely to occur in newer settlements as they establish their physical, economic, and social boundaries on customary and state lands. As seen in the settlements in Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva, smaller marginalized landowning groups (including church groups) selectively let in newcomers to reside on their lands to physically increase their support base as it provides security in numbers.

The location and growth of settlements based on ethnic identity and place of origin has been well recognized in the region's largest city, Port Moresby. In the 1980s, when migration to Pacific towns and cities was increasing and urban land was more readily available, Norwood (1984) observed that, in Port Moresby, migrants' village and district of

origin had a major impact on where they settled. Migrants coming from coastal localities, such as Hula, Kiwai, and Wanigela, sought land fronting the sea in Port Moresby, while faraway Papuan and Highland migrants from Goliala, Gumine, and Kiari, for example, sought elevated ridge top lands. Similar trends continue today, with large migrant groups from the coastal communities of East Sepik and Gulf provinces moving to the large towns of Lae and Madang, and settling in swamp and mangrove areas that provide familiarity for their livelihood survival. Research by Ryan (1985) on the Vabokuri squatter settlement in Port Moresby showed the settlement as laid out in three sections, each associated with a particular village of origin. Social relationships within the settlements tended to be among people of the same village of origin. Settlers formed clusters of like-minded people with similar kin connections. Exchange of goods and services within and outside the group with kin, clan, and ethnic members was a common experience reflecting the ongoing process of social relations in both the urban and rural realms.

In Micronesia and Polynesia, the support provided by familiar kin in the urban context has also long been acknowledged. In Rarotonga in the 1980s, it was observed that migrants arriving in town would “move in with friends or relatives living in one of the squatter areas populated by people from his or home island” (Batchelor 1987: 231). As a general rule, the owners of the customary land on which they settled did not collect rent, with landowners anticipating that the migrants would stay temporarily and move to other localities in Rarotonga or, for some, migrate to New Zealand. Likewise in South Tarawa, migrants from outer islands sought accommodation with kin from the same island who had secured government public service housing or housing from the private sector. In the 1970s, Macdonald observed that migrants coming to South Tarawa would move in with kin and assist in the upkeep of the household until they found work (if at all) and, if possible, move to a new abode (Macdonald 1982). According to practice, it was not acceptable to turn kinsmen away as there was an expectation that food and shelter would be provided to incoming kin relations from the outer islands. “In fact, most people are living together with their sisters, brothers, cousins, in-laws or other relatives” (Itaia 1987: 212).

Similar trends are observed in many Pacific towns and cities including the informal settlements of Port Vila (Chung and Hill 2002). As a result, the physical growth of settlements based around solidarity to kin, clan, and ethnic ties and attachment to sociocultural orders has been a unifying element of settler life on one hand, and a constraint on the other, the latter most prevalent in Melanesia. “Urban social enclaves, often homogenous in their cultural makeup, act as both a secure entry point for migrants but also as impediments to broader urban relationships developing. Urban informal settlements in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, in particular, are marked by distinct ethnic identities and forms of authorities” (UNESCAP and UN-Habitat 2009: 30).

### **Kin-Based Social Organization**

In the Pacific islands, kin-based communal, sharing, and egalitarian values and practices lie at the heart of the social organization and structure of village-like settlements. Like the native and traditional villages, they continue to be adapted and molded to the circumstances of urban life. In rural areas as well as urban settlements, settlers live, where possible, in defined clans and tribes of familiar kin so as to meet their daily needs and help each other in times of need. Traditionally, individual ownership of goods or services was absent, with high value placed on the kin groups working together and sharing the fruits of their collective efforts. This includes events such as bride price payments (common to PNG), compensation ceremonies, tribal fights, funeral gatherings, and ceremonial feasts, which remain the business of a clan,



tribe, or village, rather than the sole responsibility of an individual or family. Lack of respect for social rules and regulations, such as illegal selling and drinking of home-brewed alcohol, and noncompliance with core customs based around egalitarianism and reciprocity were “an invitation to anger, disrespect and ostracism” (Rao 2005: 62). Not surprisingly, islanders generally show a strong understanding of their place in local organizational structures that govern where they live. However, in a region composed of small-scale rural communities and a patchwork of distinctive language groups with local dialects, understanding “local” and context-specific nuances becomes paramount in understanding varying forms of kin-based governance in village-like settlements. This includes relationships that could be described as strong, cohesive, weak, inclusive, or otherwise.



Pig Exchange at a Compensation Ceremony, Mendi, Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea

The nexus between the traditional kin-ordered village society and village-like settlements in the urban context is reflected in features that define the social organization and broader structure of settlements. These qualities underpin the processes of community building, “village making,” and governance being played out in varying manifestations in village-like settlements across Pacific towns and cities and, importantly, define the specificity and authenticity of village character. Some key features can be summarized as follows:

- There are a variety of kin units, such as the nuclear family, extended family, sub-clans and clans, and, for some, tribes, which are expressed in varying organizational combinations and have differing levels of recognition. The family unit normally lies at the heart of these units. In Samoa, for example, the extended family unit (*'aiga*) forms the centerpiece of Samoan social organization, with membership through marriage or ancestry conferring “rights, and obligations on individuals. This includes rights to physical, moral and financial support, the prestige of association with a strong group, and in many cases access to a house site and agricultural land” (Macpherson and Macpherson 2000: 30). In Fiji, it is the clan group (*mataqali*) comprised of closely related family groups known as *itokatoka* that form the basis of the village community (Yates 2011). With structures, rules, and regulations in place based around kin, there is an essential “logic of relationships” that underpins the degree of social cohesiveness in village-like settlements.
- Kin units such as nuclear families, extended families, and clans and sub-clans are overseen by accepted hierarchical social standings, such as elders, chiefs, and appointed and self-appointed leaders, as well as various committees and groups (including the church). In Melanesia, village groups are generally led by the “big men” or male chiefs who have acquired power by inheritance, merit, or nontraditional means such as cash payments. In Fiji, the traditional *vanua* system comprises a hierarchal structure including the family unit (*tokatoka*) and head, the clan (*mataqali*) and clan leader, and the overarching social unit (*yavusa*), which is “managed” by the village chief (Osborne et al. 2012). In Micronesia and Polynesia, leadership systems range from hierarchal chief-based arrangements to egalitarian and consensus approaches. In Samoa, the village *fono* (meeting group) comprises *matai* (chiefs) who are responsible for decisions regarding allocation of resources for their respective *'aiga* including land. It was noted in Apia that the *matai fono* still remains the dominant forum for village governance, retaining greater credibility and relevance than national-level government arrangements (Thornton, Binns, and Kerslake 2013). In Kiribati, major village decisions are made by the *unimane* (respected older leaders) who meet in the village *maneabas* with assigned seating arrangements (Jones 1997). In Honiara, for example, new village-like settlements have been cited as being headed by a chief, reflecting the sociopolitical structure of their traditional rural villages (UN-Habitat 2012b). Thus, village meetings, comprising the leaders of varying kin units and or elected leaders, are the usual conduit for debate and decision-making.
- The leadership structures, comprising representatives of families and kin groups, take on varying levels of importance and responsibility for their kin groups. Roles and functions which are mediated on include the development of rules and regulation for law, order, and peace (including family grievances); land allocation; land disputes; and public and community works. In Apia, the *fono* makes rules and regulations on nearly all aspects of village life ranging from development matters on village lands to social behavior such as curfew times, mode of dress for women, length of hair, and times for youth watching television and videos (Storey 2000). Mausio showed in Fiji, for example, a hierarchy of culturally developed structures of communication known as the “paths of the land” (*sala vakavanua*) that regulated information flow between settlements and the outside world based on long-standing social structures. “Gateways and gatekeepers” based on clan and tribal organizations, such as village headmen and village chiefs situated along information pathways from urban native villages to rural villages, resulted in restricted paths of selective and censored information to villagers (Mausio 2002). In longer-established settlements in Port Moresby and Suva, for example, it has been acknowledged that kin-based social structures worked with and alongside formal state-



and nonstate-based institutions, including village courts (Chand and Yala 2012, Koto 2011) and the church (Thornton, Binns, and Kerslake 2013). The importance accorded to leadership and the effectiveness of kin units will be linked to the strength of ties that exist between kin members and the value placed on their culture as exists in the urban context and nuanced in the village-like setting. Thus, it will vary within and between kin groups and members.

- In the above settings, it is not surprising that high value is placed on systems that perpetuate and sustain social and economic relationships based around the importance accorded to kin groups, language, blood relations, church, village of origin, and other elements embedded by custom over time. These relationships underpin networks that play out in different forms across Pacific economies, such as the *wantok* system in Melanesian countries and *utu* and *bubuti* systems in Kiribati (Jones 1997). In Melanesian Pacific economies, the *wantok* system is a means of mutual obligation and support traditionally based on ties of kinship and ethnicity, but increasingly encompassing other social relationships, such as those forged through friendship and the workplace. With village-like settlements comprising groups of *wantoks* originating from the same village and locality, the system provides many functions, including access to land, housing, and livelihoods. As Schram observes in the PNG context, it creates “familiar relationships in uncertain situations,” providing a key tool linking the sociality of village and town together (Schram 2014: 3). If *wantok* equates to networking and the calling on kin, ethnic, and other connections for reciprocal support, then such systems prevail far and wide across the Pacific operating at one-to-one, group, and urban village scales. However, in all situations, members can be selective in how and when they participate, and who is included and excluded depending on the advantage to be gained at varying levels.

In Fiji, similar kinship arrangements called *viewekani* exist as a network of social protection where individuals and families are cared for by other members of the kin group in times of need. Contribution and distribution are binding forces of the Fijian system (Suguta 1986). In a recent study of urban livelihoods in Honiara, similar trends were observed: “The original and earlier settlers in Honiara settlements usually extended hospitality and space to relatives and *wantoks*. The same pattern continues today, creating clusters of families often related by blood and language, an example of recreating the village in town” (Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA 2009: 27). The extended family ensures that everybody is looked after to varying degrees, thus playing an important role as a source of kin identity and support in the urban setting.

Central to modes of practice built on kinship such as the *wantok* system is the concept of reciprocity. Reciprocity refers to the informal exchange of goods and services, such as practiced in various forms in village-like settlements. This includes support from settlers to settlers, and from settlers to landowners, and from landowners to settlers, with many positive kin-related adaptations seen in the urban settings such as remittances, fund-raising, and neighborly actions after a disaster or crisis. Reciprocity can be of different types: generalized, specialized, or redistributive. Generalized reciprocity refers to the exchange of goods without specific value or time-bound repayment terms. This is exemplified in the *kerekere* system of reciprocity in Fiji. Specialized reciprocity refers to the simultaneous exchange of goods. Redistributive reciprocity is the collective exchange of goods through ceremonial processes, as demonstrated in the Fiji custom (Ratuva 2006). According to Ratuva (2006: 102–103), “traditional forms of social protection exist in various forms such as collective reciprocity of goods and services, ceremonial exchange or even at a level of individual behavioural disposition.” Reciprocal rights, therefore, play a crucial support role for settlers and households experiencing hardship and poverty, either by alleviating and

“capping” hardship levels, or by increasing the burden on families least able to meet the ongoing demands of reciprocity.

Catering to the demands of a range of settlers within the urban setting, including settlers requesting “sale” of customary lands and the granting of occupation rights, invariably means the rights of the family, clan, and tribe, and the stability of organizational structures, may be contested and stability potentially compromised. Smaller ethnic groups in a settlement will have less influence than larger clusters of multiethnic groups through reduced numbers of settlers. In Apia, it was observed in traditional villages that “the visibly poorer and marginal urban villages of Apia are those with the weakest social units and ties to traditional political authorities” (Storey 2000: 86). Yates observed in a study of multiethnic squatter settlements in Fiji that households in settlements with weak community support structures were more innovative and resourceful in finding ways to survive (Yates 2011). Despite the impacts of urbanization and wider globalization, the basic elements underpinning social organization linked to kinship systems continue to persist in the melting pot of settlements in the modern Pacific town and city.

While the elements underpinning traditional kin-based relations may be diluted in the urban setting as settlers adjust and modify kinship systems to their circumstances—for example, by reciprocal *wantok* arrangements being weaker due to the global financial crisis (Feeny et al. 2013), or kin units becoming more selective in membership due to the hardship of day-to-day living pressures (Jones 2011b)—their importance in settlement life remains relevant for survival for many. “Relationships between urban citizens are still determined by village-based ties, and have the same obligations and expectations as in the village. This was the way that social life was understood and enacted in the 1960s and was a vital part of the survival strategy in town” (Ryan 1993: 225). While urban social organization is arguably not accorded the same value, and the respect and authority typical in rural settings is weakened and fragmented in many village-like settlements due to the dilution of the nexus between landownership, kin, and residence, its role in providing a framework by which settlers organize their lifestyles to cope with the demands of urban life cannot be understated.

Interwoven with the above kin-based settlement organization is the important long-standing role of the church, and the impact of other groups such as women’s committees, nongovernment organizations, and state and local council governance arrangements. This includes village courts and settlement leaders as appointed by local councils. The integration of the church with local culture developed over several generations means that most settlers interact in one form or other with a church in their village, or with a nearby church. Depending on the strength of affiliation between the village and the church, church activities can augment social regulation such as youth and women’s groups, leadership styles and approaches, kin relations, mediation and justice systems, demands on reciprocity, and settler behavior generally. Religious connectivity can demonstrate leadership, provide support, and reinforce village and Christian-based principles, including the importance of service, respect for elderly, reciprocity, and egalitarianism.

In some contexts, such as the heterogeneous native village of Bairiki in South Tarawa, the church has been observed as having more influence than village committees in managing day-to-day village and communal activities (ADB 2013a). Where the influence of the church is strong, it can act as a conduit for mobilizing community support for new urban development projects, such as for water and sanitation, or for denouncing use of traditional ways that are inappropriate in the urban setting, such as beach and bush defecation (ANU Enterprises 2009). On the other hand, churches have also been cited as being divisive in village life, such as in Fiji, where some Methodist church leaders argued indigenous iTaukei (people of the land) have an elevated status over nonindigenous groups, such as Indo-Fijians (Yates 2011). The degree of religious “gatekeeping”—for example, the church ministry’s

demands for large cash contributions and cultural obligations—and resulting impacts on hardship vary widely in Pacific economies (Thornton, Binns, and Kerslake 2013).

In summary, traditional and quasi-traditional kin-based organization, combined with varying institutional structures inherited from the colonial and postcolonial era, shape the nature of organizational arrangements playing out in village-like settlements. The common unifying element in such settlements is that the social organization and structures that settlers develop remain anchored on varying attachments to kin, ethnic and customary lifestyles, and norms and values. While new settlers may not be customary landowners, they put in place arrangements that allow them to continue modified customary-based arrangements, such as allocating housing based on kin-based protocols. In the face of increasing heterogeneity in the city, as well as challenges such as unemployment, urban security concerns (especially theft and violence against women), and broader hardship issues (such as land tenure security and food and fuel price increases), association with people of the same kin and clan group within a place-based settlement provides a powerful source of security and support for many.

Despite the potential social insularity that comes with settlers aligning with kin and ethnic clusters, this affiliation provides a supportive framework of adaptive urban relationships for many individuals and groups by which they can organize and carry out their daily lives. This includes contributing to settlement rules and regulations, law and order (including youth), maintaining public spaces, and generally abiding by structures that provide pathways to relative well-being. At a basic level, these provide settlers with a set of entry points for contributing and engaging in urban village life, as well as social and economic opportunities in the wider city. Even for the educated elite who have improved their socioeconomic status and live in the planned areas of the city, the new and old forms of urban villages remain part of their social networks. Observations in Port Moresby and South Tarawa indicate that educated elite kin settlements for relaxation and short stays reinforce their sense of belonging and identity by being knowledgeable about local issues, and show fellow kinsmen their acquired “modern” status. The latter includes assisting kinsmen to navigate their way through government bureaucracies for land claims (such as providing introductions to kinsmen in otherwise inaccessible institutions), plus participating and contributing monies to support local political campaigns, traditions and ceremonies such as compensation and pride price payments, funerals, and feasts.

## **Land Tenure as Developed on Custom**

In the Pacific islands, land tenure can be defined as the way in which people obtain, use, and distribute rights to land (Crocombe 1987). It is well accepted that land has traditionally played a crucial position in all aspects of life, including providing sustenance, symbolizing cultural and spiritual beliefs, and shaping and reinforcing identity through one’s kin attachment to land and place. While there are some exceptions, as a general rule three systems of land tenure exist in the Pacific islands: customary, public (state), and freehold, with customary land tenure applying to more than 80% of the total Pacific land area. Some Pacific economies, such as Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, have large tracts of customary land (PNG, for example, is 97% customary land and Vanuatu 90%), implying that such land is “owned” and managed in accordance with the traditional customs of the indigenous landowners.

Some Pacific economies, such as the Cook Islands and Kiribati, have smaller amounts of customary land, with some of this in remote island locations that are difficult to access.

State lands in Kiribati are also in isolated atoll locations which make communication, transport, and monitoring of settlement growth difficult. For example, approximately half of Kiribati's land is state land, with the majority of these lands in the isolated Line and Phoenix islands located south of Hawaii on the equator. Some small Pacific economies such as Tonga have no customary land held by individual families or groups, with all land being state land distributed by the king to nobles, and from nobles to "commoners." Only males can "own" land in Tonga, not women. Public and freehold land represents only a small proportion of Pacific land area, with most freehold land located in urban centers already utilized for development. In all Pacific economies, customs and laws have been developed to determine who shall have what rights to what land and, in this setting, village-like settlements are no exception to the application of this crosscutting cultural trait. Each societal group has its own written and oral laws and customs concerning land, and these will differ from one group to another.

On customary land, distinct systems of land tenure have evolved in hundreds of different localities, including areas now defined and developed as urban. Although customary land tenure systems are complex and diverse, they do share common features across the Pacific that set them apart from public and freehold systems. Some of the main characteristics of customary tenure systems have been identified as follows:

- Access to land rights stems primarily from a birthright tied to a kinship group, although the needs of others accepted into a group are accommodated, such as via marriage, long-term occupation, or friendship.
- Groups based on kinship or other forms of arrangement are the main form of landholding (or "owning") units, with the main land-using units being the extended family. Land has commonly been held collectively by groups, not individuals, although in some Pacific economies, such as Samoa, laws allow for individual ownership of land, as well as conversion of customary land to freehold.
- The traditional view of customary land was that landowners were essentially the stewards and custodians of land, caring and managing such resources for the next generation.
- Land is transferred within the rules and regulations of existing social and political relationships of kin and clan groups, with men, particularly chiefs, elders, or senior men within the customary group, having the main say in decisions over "ownership" matters. Matrilineal systems do exist, such as in parts of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, but are in the minority in the Pacific islands.
- The means of obtaining, using, and distributing rights of access to land are constantly being adjusted to accommodate changes in group views and memberships, including the need to redistribute land according to demand as reflected in the pressures of urban growth (Australian Aid 2008).

On the other hand, the tenure of alienated land, namely freehold and state lands, is defined by the following:

- rights to the land as set out in legislation or in related documents such as lease agreements;
- the land boundaries are identifiable, usually by surveys with permanent markers placed on the ground;
- the holders of rights to a parcel of land are clearly identified or identifiable, often in paper-based records;
- the tenure to a parcel of land is often protected by a registered title, which implies its legitimacy and rights are supported by the state; and

- legislation provides the titleholder with powers to sell, lease, mortgage, or enter into other dealings in connection with the land in question (Australian Aid 2008).

As much of the alienated land stock within urban boundaries has been developed, new village-like settlements continue to emerge on land held under customary title. The need to meet the varying land and housing demands of settlers and generational dwellers has resulted in a diversity of land tenure arrangements. While some settlers may have secure tenure on state lands, other settlers engage with customary landowners to access land for housing through some form of arrangement not partly or fully recognized by formal government systems. These informal arrangements vary, from sophisticated negotiations with landowners for land rent or “sale” through contributions in cash and kind, to land invasion and occupation. Once land has been secured, new settlers assert their tenure claims to legitimacy of occupation by investing capital in buildings, wells, and fencing structures, and welcoming household and extended family members. This can occur by various means, ranging from political patronage and mutual agreement to the threat and conduct of violence.

The manner in which informal arrangements have evolved on state and customary lands in different village-like settlements is specific to local circumstances. The settlers’ motivation is invariably the same: to gain land tenure security based on household and/or kin arrangements and potential land and housing investments, while acknowledging to varying degrees the rights and needs of the landowners. Despite the existence of preexisting claims on land to be occupied plus threats of violence and eviction, this approach remains highly successful for settlers as evidenced by (i) the continued growth of village-like settlements on customary and state lands; and (ii) the level of investment in infrastructure to support permanent and semipermanent fixed assets, such as housing, home businesses, mini stores, and gardens.

On customary land, the majority of migrants access land through informal or semiformal rental or land “sale” agreements with customary landowners. These agreements are often based on a combination of kinship ties, long-standing trading relationships with the customary landowning group, and increasingly through newcomers requesting lands directly from landowners or via an acquaintance of the landowner (Oram 1976, Norwood 1984, Goddard 2005, Chand and Yala 2012). In Fiji, Naidu and Matadradra cited the example of the Namara (Tiri) squatter settlement in Labasa, where indigenous Fijian settlers approached the paramount chief of Labasa and engaged in customary practices and protocols to secure land. The agreements reached for rent or alternative means of exchange have been referred to as *vakavanua* agreements, with the term *vakavanua* meaning the indigenous Fijian “way of the land” (Naidu and Matadradra 2014: 36). As such, it has been acknowledged that the major drivers of informal settlements on native land are those developed and agreed under the rules and protocols of the traditional *vakavanua* system (Raicola 2011).

In the diverse settlements of Port Moresby, the varied strategies that migrants have used to secure access to customary land for housing have been well documented by Chand and Yala (2012). They found that some migrant groups have signed formal statutory declarations confirmed by the Commissioner of Oaths, while others pay and retain receipts of rental payment to validate their occupancy rights. Those residing in Popondetta settlement established an institutional body, the Oro Development Community, to collect and record payments to the customary landowning group. In some situations, migrants have settled on customary land without the approval of the customary landowning group, or settled illegally on state land, with the latter settlers paying rental or other forms of payment to groups claiming ownership and/or occupation rights to that land (Chand and Yala 2012). Thus, migrants in village-like settlements on customary and state land rely on a mix of



informal and semiformal agreements, often underpinned by social, economic, and political relationships of varying kinds, to secure access rights to land.

In the town of Wewak in East Sepik Province, PNG, a range of tenure agreements have evolved between migrant settlers and customary landowners within informal settlements. Many residents involved in securing the permission of landowners had some prior trading relationship or marriage or friendship ties with the landowning group, with such ties strengthening their requests for tenure. Ongoing occupancy rights and demands for land by new settlers are mediated within locally agreed land tenure frameworks in which personal exchange relationships and respect for the local customs of landowning groups play a key role. As such, in-kind and cash contributions from migrants to landowners for customary expenses strongly assist in validating claims for land occupation and ongoing tenure security (Numbasa and Koczberski 2012). This diversity of arrangements reflects a common theme in Pacific urban centers, where customary landowners continue to modify and adjust their customary land practices to respond to the demands for land and housing. Importantly, such measures are often at odds and outside the boundaries of formal governance plans and processes (Figure 11).

A recurring trend in the dynamics of myriad urban village types is that land conflicts are invariably driven by an uneasy mix of pressures for land development and the need to alleviate poverty and hardship. In terms of land development, recurring issues present themselves in Pacific towns and cities. These include who has access rights to land, who has the “proper” authority to give permission for use, land improvements, the timing and mode of development (such as formal subdivision, servicing, temporary or permanent housing), who shares in the financial returns, and any other agreed exchanges. Increasingly, the members of family landowning groups are challenging the collective rights and interests of

Figure 11: Customary Land Practices Versus Plans of Modern Government



Fracturing of customary landowning groups and their governance around land is common. This group of landowners are opposing formal development and servicing of Taurama Valley, Port Moresby, notwithstanding the dominant clan leadership group's support for the government-funded project.



the wider customary landowner group. What is invariably being questioned is the integrity and strength of the meaning of “customary” in the contemporary urban setting, including the quality of local leadership regimes—from traditional to modern-styled leaders and their motives—to mediate counter claims to land, including land disposal.

Not surprisingly, customary landowners, buffeted by the impacts of urban hardship, are under increasing pressure to “sell” land so settlers can secure plots, build temporary or permanent structures, make road access, and allow service lines and connections where possible. Varying household and sub-clan responses to land requests exacerbate tensions in wider clan governance arrangements, especially factional power struggles centered on members with local leadership and political aspirations. Fragmentation of landowner groups contributes to settlement instability, which is often already fractured due to the inability of modern and traditional leaders to exert authority and maintain group unity and cohesion in village-like settings. This is most acute with newer generations who chose to show a reduced sense of attachment to kin-based organizational structures, including their ancestral lands, which are now “urbanized.”

Unlike newer settlers, traditional urban landowners and their descendants have little or no rural safety net options. Where possible, they use rural connections and/or continue modifying their subsistence ways in the urban milieu to procure cash and goods, including selling kava and betel nut to boost household livelihoods. Where government land projects are proposed, many customary landowners remain skeptical, seeing them as clones of former colonial land schemes. As identified in the 2014 Vanuatu land reform dialogues, being adept in managing land relations within the landowning group, vis-a-vis pressure from outsiders seeking a quick sale of land, has become an essential skill for local leaders in maintaining settlement unity. Pressures of urbanization, including coping with hardship and poverty by taking “quick money” for land, color the complexities of change in village-like settlements as layers of individual and family interests conflict with clan and “traditional” views on the social, economic, and financial costs of land tenure.

In summary, the most visible trend in village-like settlements, plus the native and traditional villages, is that a lack of formal land and finance security has not been an obstacle to economic development. In the Pacific islands, the theory by development agencies such as the World Bank that postulated that formal land titling and land registration were essential prerequisites to access loans and stimulate credit and capital activities has not been proven true (Australian Aid 2008). The issuing of formal property titles was seen as necessary for increasing local taxation funds to improve local services, with the collateral provided to urban settlers by land titling elevating them out of poverty. In the diversity of Pacific urban settings, it has emerged that, despite an absence of formal land titles, property rights aligned with customary land continue to be transferred to meet mutual transaction benefits, including economic aspirations. While the latter are important to some residents for tenure and financial security, including small formal business start-up, the inability to mobilize customary land in an orderly, controlled, formal, and planned “western” manner as recognized in the Pacific in the 1980s (Lea 1983) remains the status quo today. Trading in customary and state lands using formal and nonformal means founded on cultural law adapted to local settings continues to dominate urban growth in towns and cities of the Pacific islands. The latter remains more active than ever, and continues to persist despite issues of overcrowding, substandard housing, environmental decline, and mainstream planning rhetoric that advocates wholesale urban land titling, thus equating customary land to weak and unenforceable property rights.

What is clear is that the nature of arrangements to access and secure rights on customary and state land remains fluid and evolves to meet current circumstances. Settlers and landowners remain flexible and innovative in negotiating and agreeing on mechanisms

to access property rights and provide tenure security for the urban development market. This persistence in developing local responses has, in effect, created concurrent nonformal systems of land and property rights alongside and interspersed with formal systems. Those with access to knowledge and information, such as the urban middle class, professionals, and the educated elite, use formal state institutions—such as the lands, survey, and physical planning departments, land courts, and the police—side by side with informal arrangements. The motives to move in and out between systems will vary, such as the desire to endorse informal land agreements, to resolve tenure security disputes or, for some, to take advantage of those least able to access or understand formal tenure systems.

On customary lands in urban centers, land tenure remains managed by customary groups and their social units, despite the underlying frailties of some settlement communities caused by vexatious leadership ability. On state and freehold lands claimed and settled by illegal occupation, land rights are controlled and regulated by the systems of the occupying kin, clan, or ethnic groups, thus reaffirming their local territorial authority and strength of identity. Thus, dynamic land arrangements remain an all-important social, cultural, and economic element—in effect, the essential building block—in the ongoing development of myriad village-like settlements.

### **Persistence of Subsistence-Based Activities**

Driven by inequities in cash-earning opportunities plus day-to-day living concerns linked to hardship and poverty, settlers and generational dwellers in village-like settlements participate in one form or another in subsistence activities and the wider informal economy. In rural villages, subsistence has traditionally provided almost everything villagers use in their day-to-day lives as sourced from land and water over which they had rights. In the main, food was cultivated from their lands and stored, where possible, for future use; animals were tendered and some hunted; medicines were sourced from plants, shrubs, and trees; ornaments were made from shells, flowers, and feathers; and shelter, canoes, mats, storage containers, and implements were made from timber, clay, and stone cut and mined from their lands and foreshores. Land and labor have been the all-important ingredients for subsistence survival, forming the lifeline for production, plus underpinning ongoing participation in the informal economy by selling or bartering excess subsistence goods and services (South Pacific Commission 1969). However, the advent of urbanization has created far-reaching change to such ways of life, including a preference for nontraditional materials and imported goods that now pervades rural villages.

In the new millennium, land and marine resources continue to provide for a significant share of household needs, although the reality is that only a small number of Pacific islanders are now fully dependent on subsistence for survival. A recent analysis of poverty in Kiribati indicated that subsistence production accounted for 43% of food consumed by the poorest households in rural areas and 60% in the outer islands. This contrasts with the capital, South Tarawa, where subsistence contributed only one-third of food consumed by the poorer urban households (Kiribati National Statistics Office and United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre 2010). Other Pacific capitals such as Apia, Funafuti, Nuku'alofa, and Port Vila reflect a lower share of households who provide for their own food consumption requirements (Table 5). In the urban setting, population increase and expansion of village-like settlements with subsequent impacts on land clearing and the environment have reduced opportunities for food security derived from subsistence and self-production. However, many Pacific urban households still wish to grow their own food, thus providing a proportion of their food needs through subsistence.

**Table 5: Proportion of Own Production in Food Consumption  
(Households in Lowest Income/Expenditure Decile)**

| Samoa              | 2002      | 2008 | % Change |
|--------------------|-----------|------|----------|
| National average   | 45.8      | 48.3 | 5        |
| Apia urban area    | 15.9      | 17.6 | 11       |
| North-West Upolu   | 49.3      | 47.7 | -3       |
| Rest of Upolu      | 57.6      | 57.2 | -1       |
| Savai'i            | 57.4      | 56.9 | -1       |
| Tonga              | 2001      | 2009 | % Change |
| National average   | 20.2      | 32.7 | 62       |
| Nuku'alofa         | 5.55      | 9.2  | 65       |
| Rest of Tongatapu  | 16.9      | 28.3 | 68       |
| Other islands      | 33.6      | 46.5 | 38       |
| Tuvalu             | 2004-2005 | 2010 | % Change |
| National average   | 50.9      | 46.2 | -11      |
| Funafuti           | 16.2      | 9.1  | -44      |
| Outer islands      | 64.4      | 67.3 | 4        |
| Vanuatu            | 2006      | 2010 | % Change |
| National average   | 51.8      | 62.4 | 20       |
| Port Vila (urban)  | 10.2      | 15.8 | 55       |
| Luganville (urban) | 29.7      | 26.4 | -11      |
| Rural              | 66.9      | 70.9 | 6        |

Source: UNDP. 2014. *The State of Human Development in the Pacific - A Report on Vulnerability and Exclusion in a Time of Rapid Change*. Suva (p. 13).

The nature of subsistence undertaken in settlements will be dependent on population size and density, household income, gender responsibility for food collation and distribution, underlying land disputes, pressures to participate in sharing and reciprocal arrangements, including remittance obligations, subsistence skill levels, and importantly, access to suitable land and marine resources. In the low-density urban villages of Kiritimati Island, where resettlement continues unabated from South Tarawa onto state lands, it was noted: "Substantial numbers of urban households have no choice but to practice a semi-subsistence lifestyle because their cash incomes are insufficient, yet land is in short supply and fish stocks are becoming depleted. Crowding is thus having a major negative impact on food security" (ANU Enterprises 2009: 11). In Port Vila, for example, some 60% of the labor force is in the informal economy, with some 60% being women who are self-employed or in collective groups (ADB 2012). In the absence of formal wage income in the urban setting, settlers derive their income either by choice or need through subsistence and informal activities—that is, either self-employment, wage earning, or simply sharing their skills for small monetary reward or in-kind payment—to maintain their livelihoods.

Table 6 reflects the diversity of subsistence and informal activities undertaken in the urban villages of Kiritimati Island, including the potential economic return from each. In Kiritimati Island, subsistence emerges as part of a wider web of activities needed to survive. Subsistence goods and services are either consumed by the household or sold in the markets of the three main urban villages: Banana, London, and Tabwakea. In the Kiritimati Island



Subsistence Economy: Preparing octopus for sale at Tabwakea village, Kiritimati Island, Kiribati

context, many of the items are directly produced from the fruits of the land (roof thatching, coconut oil, and coconut string) or sea (tuna jerky).

A similar diverse range of subsistence-based activities was observed in Four Mile settlement in Port Moresby, a settlement occupied primarily by kin- and clan-based migrant groups from the Southern Highlands region of PNG. Income-producing and or exchange activities in which households participated included “cooked food, drinks including alcohol, marijuana, stolen goods, second-hand clothing, prostitution, animals (raising of dogs, pigs, cats, chickens, and ducks), store food and goods, *buia* and beetle nut, cigarettes, tobacco, fish and crabs, vegetables, fruits, sago, sweets and lollies, gambling (cards, darts, and bingo), *billums* (shoulder bags), string making, coconut brooms, illegal household connections to water and power, land ‘sales’ and allocation, and petty crime” (Jones 2011b: 221–222). As reflected above, settler activities are wide ranging and involve acting as entrepreneurs and trading in “non-informal” arrangements for land. For settlers in Nine Mile settlement, innovation in adapting to circumstances so as to survive in the settlement prevailed. For example, stall sellers may have sold food past the expiration date, goods may have been illegally acquired (especially mobile phones), and goods are sold in individual quantities (such as chicken pieces, for example, rather than in larger packaged quantities as seen in supermarkets).

Reflecting similar trends, a review of settler livelihoods in four informal settlements in Honiara found livelihood strategies comprised a mixture of street vending, subsistence gardening, and other informal business activities to supplement household income from wage employment (Maebuta and Maebuta 2009) (Box 12). Traditionally, the major source of income in the rural provinces of Solomon Islands has been home production, namely, goods and services produced and consumed predominantly by the same household or given as gifts, such as vegetable and fruits grown in gardens and fish from the sea. As seen

Table 6: Subsistence-Based Activities in Village-Like Settlements, Kiritimati Island, Kiribati

| Main Informal Activity         | I-Kiribati Name                         | Estimated Value (A\$) 2008 |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Bread and cake baking          | <i>kariki</i>                           | \$2.00 per loaf (2 halves) |
| Sweets and candy               | <i>kanre</i>                            | \$0.20 per candy           |
| Main Informal Activity         | I-Kiribati Name                         | Estimated Value (A\$) 2008 |
| Block making                   | <i>karao buriki</i>                     | \$1.80 per block           |
| Roof thatching                 | <i>raranga ato</i>                      | \$2.50 per thatch          |
| Money lending                  | <i>tango mwane</i>                      | 10% interest               |
| Cigarette making               | <i>ni moko</i>                          | \$0.30 per local cigarette |
| Toddy                          | <i>timbakatai</i>                       | \$1.00 per cup             |
| Cordial                        | <i>kaimaimai</i>                        | \$5.00 per bottle          |
| Coconut oil                    | <i>karaoan te bwa</i>                   | \$5.00 per bottle          |
| Coconut string                 | <i>te kora</i>                          | \$3.00 per 20 meters       |
| Ice block making               | <i>karao aiti</i>                       | \$0.20 per ice block       |
| Hairdressing                   | <i>arao ira</i>                         | Free/contribution          |
| Sewing                         | <i>te itutu</i>                         | \$2.00 per hour            |
| Fishing products (tuna jerky)  | <i>te ika eg. taari</i>                 | \$1.00 per cupful          |
| Handicrafts                    | <i>karao bwain Kiribati</i>             | \$5.00–\$10.00 for a canoe |
| Vegetables and fruit growing   | <i>te ununiki</i>                       | \$2.00 per cabbage         |
| Street food vending            | <i>kamwarake</i>                        | \$2.50 per plate           |
| Hiring DVD / Burning CD or DVD | <i>tango birim / karaoan te CD, DVD</i> | \$2.50/day, \$5–\$10 each  |
| Boat hiring                    | <i>tangoan te booti</i>                 | \$15.00 per day            |
| Passport photos                | <i>passport tamnei</i>                  | \$2.50 per photo           |
| Secondhand clothes             | <i>kaboan kinikai</i>                   | \$1.00–\$10.00 per item    |
| Copra harvesting               | <i>oro ben</i>                          | \$0.60 per kilogram        |
| Sleeping mats                  | <i>kie ni matu</i>                      | \$50.00 per single mat     |

A\$ = Australian dollar.

Source: ANU Enterprises. 2009. *Interim Report for the Integrated Land and Population Development Program on Kiritimati Island* (Population Policy). ADB. 2007. *Technical Assistance to the Republic of Kiribati for Integrated Land and Population Development Program on Kiritimati Island*. Manila. Canberra (September, p. 28).

in the Honiara context, migrants carry over many activities into the urban areas by the growing of root crops, fruits, or vegetables to sell in street stalls and at the city markets. Another separate survey of informal livelihoods in Honiara that included the informal settlements of Burns Creek, Fulisango, Lord Howe, and Karaina (White River) echoed similar findings: “Many traditional livelihoods, skills and technologies are reproduced in town, providing vital sources of income for people in both urban and rural areas” (Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA 2009: 5). Importantly, the persistence of traditional village ways underpinning livelihood survival in Honiara was highlighted by survey results that found that 49% cooked on an open fire, with some 62% of households using wood or sawdust as fuel. Only 8% used kerosene for cooking purposes. Thus, sawdust and firewood figured prominently as household fuel sources, while for some it provided income generation via the sale of excess goods in the informal economy (Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA 2009).

Thus, affordability and survival issues need to be weighed against the reasons for the persistence of village ways in a non-serviced urban area.





Home Garden Produce in Malaoro Market, Port Moresby

#### Box 12 Livelihood Strategies in the Settlements of Honiara

Based on a survey of four settlements, only 352 (28%) of the total 1,248 household members in the survey were income-generating members. Of these income-generating household members, 115 (32%) were engaged in full-time jobs, 81 (23%) worked in casual jobs, and the remaining 81 (23%) were selling betel nuts and cigarettes. Fortnightly salaries and wages from full-time and casual jobs are the main sources of income for most of the settlers (55.6% of total household members generating incomes).

With an average of six members per household, the data indicates that about two members per household are engaged in income-generating activities while the rest are dependents. These inequalities of income within households are moderated by interhousehold exchanges founded upon village-based clan and kinship relations commonly known in Solomon Pijin as *ful bae*, meaning dependency on the breadwinner of a household for food and other basic needs.

The majority of wage employment comprised insecure casual jobs such as watchmen, minibus drivers and conductors, palm-oil plantation workers, shop assistants, and cleaners. Most household members in this category derive their income as daily laborers. This means that they are often unemployed and that they take any job that comes their way—mainly unskilled manual work.

Informal income-generating activities include obtaining materials from their island of origin or raw materials purchased from elsewhere and selling them in the local market. For example, bakers obtain flour from shops and make their own cakes. Some women in the settlements buy clothes from secondhand shops and resell them to workers at the palm oil plantation. Some settlers also purchase small goods like cigarettes from wholesalers and sell them together with betel nuts in the streets.

Source: Adapted from H. Maebuta, and J. Maebuta, 2009. Generating livelihoods: a study of urban squatter settlements in Solomon Islands. *Pacific Economic Bulletin*, Vol. 24, No. 3. The Australian National University. October.



In summary, subsistence and informality in varying forms continue to play an important role in the economic and social life of settlers in village-like settlements by supporting household livelihoods and wider local domestic consumption and production. This is recognized by Pacific economies at a national level, such as, for example, through the adoption of PNG's National Informal Economy Policy, 2011–2015. Subsistence activities by household members filter throughout day-to-day settlement life, being an integral part of household survival and supporting the microeconomy. This happens in mini stores, canteens, and markets, as well as wider town and city locations that tolerate mobile street vendors, such as high-volume service stations and shopping centers (Figure x). Thus, there is no simple continuum of a dualistic framework of formal or informal economy as many settlers and generational dwellers take on multiple roles to ensure survival. As social and economic differences exist between households, kin, clans, and tribal groups that compose village-like settlements, the degree to which the fruits of subsistence and other activities will be shared will be influenced by the bonds between one's family and clan, affordability concerns, and the social organization of the settlement. In this setting, the products of subsistence fill a role in redistribution and social support with kin, notwithstanding that this can be gender-specific, such as the exclusion of women. All the above remain inextricably linked in the broader urban development of Pacific towns and cities, with subsistence and informal activities remaining front and center in the organizing logic and survival strategy for those in village-like settlements. As noted in Honiara: "Many urban settlements recreate the village in town" (Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA 2009: 99).



"Mining the Urban Environment"—Firewood for Sale in Erima Market, Port Moresby

# Exploring the Notion of Village City

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## Introduction

In the process of Pacific urbanization, kin-based norms and values that shape the lifestyles of village-based groups and their households manifest themselves as persistent and recurring themes in the social, economic, and physical development of Pacific towns and cities. This is not surprising given that the bulk of Pacific populations live in rural villages, and the economic movement and sociocultural connections to towns and cities and vice versa remain strong. Importantly, the former colonial practice of reordering customary landowners from their kin-based clusters to centralized native and traditional villages, where physical town and local settlement boundaries were clearly defined and rules were enforced, has now been abandoned.

As discussed in section IV, “Viewing Village-Like Settlements as Urban Villages,” a major result of the above is the continued emergence of a plethora of new village-like settlements based on myriad kin-based arrangements and modified customary lifestyles. These are now a major form of urban growth in all Pacific towns and cities. Where strong emphasis is placed on kin and tradition as reflected in the array of urban villages and other features, this contributes to the notion of village cities, a concept pronounced in the towns and cities of Melanesia (Box 13). Arguably, the notion of village city exists across all Pacific urban settings in varying degrees where kin and tradition remain strong and embedded in defining customary lifestyles. In this context, enclaves of urban villages are one of a number of more visible stages where components of the notion of village city play out.

### Box 13 The Concept of Village Cities

**“Village cities:** in the Pacific context, these are towns and cities characterized by an urban structure in which squatter and informal settlements dominate the urban form. Village cities are now the emergent urban form in the towns and cities of Melanesia, and, to a lesser degree, Micronesia. Village cities will increasingly define both urban growth and urban development in Pacific towns and cities over the coming 10–15 years.”

Source: ADB. 2012. The State of Pacific Towns and Cities, Urbanization in ADB's Developing Member Countries. *Pacific Studies Series*. Manila: (p. xii).

The existence of a type of village city has been implicitly and explicitly recognized for some time. In the greater Suva–Nausori urban corridor, it has been observed that “Suva has become a huge urban village where the increasing number of squatter settlements is giving rise to a situation where these squatters actually operate as small villages, complete with headmen and henchmen” (*Islands Business* 2007). In the Fijian traditional *vanua* system, the village headman (*turaga ni koro*) is a representative of the village (*tikina*) and acts as a conduit on village development issues between formal government and the *vanua*, namely, the land area or village that one identifies with (Osborne et al. 2012). In other words, even with the continuing rise of village-like settlements meshed with the existing pattern of native villages as governed by their residents through millennia, the features of traditional kin-based systems continue to strongly influence societal processes that shape the modern town and city. In this context, the concept of contemporary Melanesian towns and cities comprising many types of urban villages that coalesce to form a wider village city defined by physical and translocal sociocultural characteristics provides an alternative way of interpreting and understanding the workings of town, city, and wider urbanization processes.

In the ongoing proliferation of village-like settlements, it has become clear that not only do people identify and connect with their own village, urban and/or rural, but the city takes on the character of a village, or village city. The governor of Port Moresby, Powes Parkop, succinctly observed when discussing change in Port Moresby, “Many of us are probably migrants from the Province to the City but the City has now become our home and our village” (Parkop 2012: 2). In other words, despite the town and city comprising many people of different ethnic origins and diverse cultural backgrounds from all parts of the country, the city takes on its own identity as one large village. With urban villages nestled throughout the wider formal structure of towns and cities such as Apia, Lae, Port Moresby, Port Vila, South Tarawa, and Suva, the shift in scale from “local” to “city” does not preclude residents from seeing themselves as part of a larger village or village city.

In the new millennium, the role of towns and cities in the Pacific is increasingly diverse, ranging from providing housing for all types of city residents in various spatial patterns, to servicing urban consumers with a variety of goods and services, to acting as local, regional, and national trade centers. Collectively, these provide urban settlers the potential to experience and participate in relationships, affiliations, and interests beyond their immediate kin and clan village settings that may otherwise constrain a settler to the behavioral roles characterizing his or her urban village. At the same time, settlers can connect with related settlers elsewhere in the city who have the same or similar place of origin and identity, while retaining connections of varying strength to their ancestral village in rural areas (such as by remittances or by mobile phones). Settlers in the city, for example, can still act like they do in rural areas, such as wearing distinctive clothing, walking barefoot, and eating certain foods. In this setting, the town and city have now become home for settlers who may have moved temporarily and stayed permanently, and for generational descendants born and entrenched in the lifestyles playing out in village-like settlements, native and traditional villages, and the wider village city.

The Pacific village city offers opportunities for increased engagement in social and economic activities, making urban village, kin, and ethnic boundaries less local and territorial. Urban living provides access to wider choices of employment, health care, and education, and greater opportunities for sustaining livelihoods. With diversity in the city comes an increase in demand for variety, with social and economic change driven by settlers wanting to experience new shopping centers and specialized markets defined by ethnic types, and specialist goods (fish, agriculture, and secondhand clothing, for example). There is also engagement in school, church, and sports activities, such as rugby and soccer. In

other words, the large urban stage offers greater choice for engagement in both the formal and modern systems, as well as what is termed informal.

Collectively, these opportunities bring settlers together on a citywide basis, diffusing subcultural norms and values grounded in urban villages and rural settings on one hand, but at the same time potentially elevating their perceived importance. The latter may occur in both minority and more dominant and distinctive subcultural groups over local and regional issues such as land and housing which may lead to ethnic violence and intolerance. In the new millennium in Dili, Honiara, Nuku'alofa, Suva, and many Papua New Guinea (PNG) towns and cities such as Mt. Hagan, Lae, and Port Moresby, simmering ethnic tensions driven by different sociocultural norms and values boil over, leading to violence, rioting, and killings. As noted in the Dili context and commonly seen elsewhere in the Pacific, “an ‘urban’ manifestation of violence is often fundamentally connected to grievances in rural areas, and vice versa” (Muggah, 2010: 11). Like the individual urban villages themselves, the town and city have become the stage for expressing kin and ethnic commonalities, as well as sociocultural differences.

Against this background, if there is an increasing number of urban villages pervading the form, structure, and character of Pacific towns and cities, then how can one best understand and conceptualize a city comprising many urban villages anchored on kin-based sociocultural orders as a village city? Regardless of the physical extent of urban villages, what fundamental elements embed the persistence of kin, tradition, and “village world” values and practices in the contemporary Pacific town and city that would enable them to be imaged as village cities? There are three overarching elements central to exploring how the notion of village city could be constructed and imaged, noting such features vary in all Pacific economies, and especially in those comprising Melanesia:

- the underlying patterns of native and traditional villages,
- the utility of the prevailing sociocultural orders, and
- the fusion of traditional and formal realms of governance.

### Patterns of Native and Traditional Villages

As noted in section III, “The Evolution of Settlement Types”, a unique feature of Pacific urbanization and urban growth is that towns and cities have physically developed around a patchwork of native or traditional villages on customary land. With the exception of Tonga where land remains allocated by the king, most Pacific towns and cities are varying mosaics of land fragmentation within which sit patterns of native or traditional villages on customary land now expressed in their contemporary manifestation (ADB 2012). Aided by the decline in the overall urban condition, the borders and boundaries between village-like settlements, native and traditional villages, and formal planned areas are increasingly blurred and indiscernible to the outsider. While clusters of village-like settlements in Pacific towns and cities may merge into each other and suggest a lack of physical, social, and territorial clarity, the boundaries of native and traditional villages for local settlers and residents mark and confer special meaning to places of identity and sociocultural encounter.

To reflect the status of native and traditional villages now physically frozen in the urban milieu, such areas and their constituents have been acknowledged in rules and regulations as set by local and national governments. However, in reality, most village affairs are managed by customary landowners in accordance with the village chiefs, “big men,” or executive committee in accordance with their sociocultural orders as founded on kin, custom, land, and identity. As a result, where formal urban local government exists, such as in Fiji, Kiribati,

and PNG, these villages are excluded by legislation from the local government area in which they are located. In other words, while their distinctiveness as the original custodian of the land is recognized, they are not subject to formal local government rules and regulations that apply to the wider urban area in which they sit.

In Fiji, for example, there are some 1,171 iTaukei villages—that is, native Fijian villages comprising customary landowners—of which approximately 35 lie within defined urban boundaries. While these native villages including those in peri-urban localities are urban in character, they are managed by a messy web of institutions. This includes central government, provincial councils, rural authorities, local urban government (where agreement has been made for service provision), plus their own self-regulating processes of management. The complex and often outdated institutional arrangements in place to address the existence of native and traditional villages within formal urban boundaries invariably mean many villages fall between the cracks in terms of effective government support, thus relying heavily on the utility of their own kin- and community-based village arrangements for survival.

In Fiji, the provincial councils act as the main vehicle for the administration of the development of rural and more recently the peri-urban iTaukei villages. Within urban boundaries, local councils, with the approval of the Fijian Affairs Board, may make by-laws concerning the manner in which native villages may be more formally incorporated into the municipality in which they sit. Such by-laws are made with the intent of effecting garbage collection, the setting of building and planning standards, and rate collection. However, such initiatives have rarely been carried out, one issue being the sensitivity of enforcement with customary chiefs and landowners on ancestral lands often tied to sacred sites, memorials, meeting houses, and broader norms and values that dominate the way of life. Parallel to the layers of formal government arrangements is the *vanua* system, which is based on the traditional authority of chiefs and the application of customary protocols, rules, and regulations in the running of village life. Like other native and traditional village systems elsewhere in the Pacific islands, the *vanua* system oversees the preservation and management of traditional culture and ways of life in iTaukei villages, invariably nuanced in varying local contexts. This includes law, order, and the issue of *vakavanua* agreements to allow the use of native land in the contemporary context.

Similarly, in Port Moresby there are 8 Motu Koita native villages, with some further 29 settlements of varying heterogeneity existing on customary land owned by the Motu Koita clans (National Capital District Commission 2006). The Motu Koita native villages come under the control of the local government authority in Port Moresby, the National Capital District Commission, and are the only villages in the city to have elected councilors. In addition, their long-standing status as native villages means their land interests are also considered under the auspices of the separate Motu Koita Assembly. As in other Pacific economies, the Motu Koita native villages are managed by formal government systems, arguably ineffective in addressing long-standing concerns such as loss of customary lands, absence of business opportunities centered on land, and inadequate compensation (UNESCO 2001).

Such trends are not unique to Melanesia, as this patchwork effect anchored by native or traditional villages is pronounced in other towns and cities of the Pacific islands. In Apia, there are approximately 50 villages, each within its own *fono* and *matai*, which are the focal points for village leadership and administration (Storey 2000). Termed traditional villages rather than native villages in the Samoa context, these villages comprise extended families or the *aiga*, which are overseen by a *matai* or chief representing each family and who participates in the village council or *fono*. The latter is the overall decision-making body responsible for village affairs and development. The *fono* comprises all of the *matai* within the village and carries out the administration of village affairs such as land use planning and





The Native "Stilt" Village of Koki, Port Moresby

development. Such activities include, for example, the use of plantation lands, allocation of land for schools and churches, construction of access roads for villagers to work plantations, village beautification, waste disposal, and peace and order.

In contrast, settlements on freehold land, which represent approximately 70% of land tenure patterns in Apia, comprise individual land parcels whose owners are generally from other villages and planned settlements. Government representatives (*sue o le malo*) monitor and facilitate programs in these settlements. There are also mixed village communities, namely, pockets of freehold lands within traditional villages that are headed by the village *fono* due to ties to customary land. However, this practice varies within each village. Due to the presence of freehold lands plus reduced levels of household kin ties in the mixed community villages, the *fono* can only exert limited influence regarding village planning and development, including social order and control. In contrast to customary lands, which can only be leased from their landowners, freehold lands can be sold, subdivided, and leased, and thus have greater utility.

Links between traditional villages and government are formalized, but vary in effectiveness. In Apia, for example, each *fono* chooses a *pulenu'u* or a mayor to head the village council who is confirmed for a 3-year term by the responsible national ministry. In the absence of formal local government entities in Samoa, the role of the *pulenu'u* is important as they represent the village at the formal government level, bringing different community concerns to government while relaying government's response back to the village *fono* for debate and consideration. In this context, it would be incorrect to assume that there is no form of local government in place as accepted systems, based on the paramount role of the Samoan way, the *faa' Samoa*, are part and parcel of everyday life.

In summary, indigenous landowners existed in varying locally driven forms of settlement for thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans. With the advent of European



practices, the notion of living within the confines of a centralized small settlement—namely, a village—was introduced. One major consequence of the above in Pacific towns and cities was the demarcation of confined native and traditional village boundaries on customary lands, where both indigenous landowners and recent newcomers were required to reside. Formal planned development on freehold and leased lands, plus increasing numbers of village-like settlements, have now leapfrogged native and traditional villages, partitioning them off in the urban milieu. In the urban setting, the native and traditional villages as they survive in Pacific urban areas still provide villagers with the “color” of their individual and collective identity. Arua acknowledges this nexus in the context of the Motu Koita clan who are the traditional landowners upon which Port Moresby has developed and whose native villages remain today, notwithstanding they are fragmented, overcrowded, and display high levels of poverty. “Motuan society is built on the kinship social structure through the clan, culminating in the village as the final communal entity” (Arua 2011:49).

Depending on the Pacific context, the legacies of native and traditional villages sprinkled throughout Pacific towns and cities have become entrenched via policy, institutional, and legislative measures into the myriad planning, land tenure, and governance systems that make up the town and city. Sitting within and alongside native and traditional villages as well as in other parts of the city is a plethora of other village-like settlements, all collectively reinforcing the permanency of new and old urban villages as well as the notion of a larger interconnected village city at work. Many of the native and traditional villages are now heterogeneous in character not only in their ethnic population mix, but by the increasing numbers of squatters who have overtaken their lands. As such, the social and physical boundaries between native and traditional villages and the plethora of new village-like settlements remains fluid and dynamic. Settlement types in the Pacific region, therefore, must not be seen as fixed but in a state of transformation and evolution—from being to becoming.

Not surprisingly, Pacific towns and cities reflect, to varying degrees, an urban morphology that constitutes the original native and traditional villages on customary lands interspersed among a checkerboard of development on freehold and state land (also once customary lands) (Map 4 and Map 5). The result is enclaves of native and traditional villages embedded in the history of Pacific towns and cities, with the indigenous landowners, their descendants, and other new settlers now a manifestation of the modern urban village and underlying DNA of the village city. Understanding the socioterritorial patterns of native and traditional villages in Pacific towns and cities and their histories, plus those of newer infill and edge village-like settlements often forged by ethnic clusters, goes a long way toward explaining the current fragmented patterns of urban development. The fluidity of settlement types also highlights the difficulties faced in implementing more formal planning and urban management systems that may be based on totally different sociocultural norms and values.

## The Utility of Sociocultural Orders

Central to the nature of urban villages and the notion of village city is the concept of sociocultural orders and their enduring utility in the urban setting. In the Pacific islands, sociocultural orders consist of those shared elements that bind and underpin islanders, their households, and kin, ethnic, and other societal groups in the operation and organization of their day-to-day social, economic, and governance relationships. In contrast to a set of discrete factors, sociocultural orders are anchored in social and cultural relations, which emphasize traditional social protocols founded on custom and a strong affiliation to kin, ethnicity, and subsistence living (Hooper 1993, Jones 1997). At a practical level, they are the means by which the places and spaces comprising urban villages are produced and

reproduced. They provide Pacific islanders with their sense of identity and links to their ancestral past, thus reflecting where they come from and explaining the “why” and “how” of their daily lives.

Local sociocultural orders in the Pacific can be viewed as comprising more or less coherent translocal sets of

- values and norms,
- practices and attitudes,
- aspirations and ideologies,
- rules and regulations, and
- institutions and systems spanning modern and traditional realms (Jones 1997).

As outlined in section IV, “Viewing Village-Like Settlements as Urban Villages”, there is strong utility in the use of social and redistributive practices based on custom and affiliation

Map 4 Native Villages and Squatter/Informal Settlements—Part of the Greater Suva Area, Fiji



Source: Author and Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and the Environment, Fiji. February, 2016.

A map of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, illustrating the spatial distribution of native villages and squatter settlements. The map includes a north arrow, a scale bar (0 to 4000 meters), and a legend. Native villages are marked with red areas, and squatter settlements are marked with green areas. Key locations labeled include Waijani Swamp, Garahu, Waijani, Tokorara, Goroka, Airport, 6 Mile, 4 Mile, 8 Mile, Murray Barracks, Town, Badi, Koki, Gabori, Vaka, Talakame Barracks, Marubede Is., Soolives Bay, Dage Is., Gemo Is., Port Moresby Harbour, Under Construction, Kapeke, Fairfax Harbour, and Bonana. The map shows a high concentration of squatter settlements in the central and northern parts of the city, while native villages are more scattered, often along the coast or in specific pockets.

In the Pacific islands, sociocultural orders lie at the heart of the way in which settlers participate and express themselves as they go about their daily lives. As a general rule, settlers learn and retain local knowledge, skills, norms, and values through kin-based activity, which by its nature is practiced and reaffirmed in place-based villages across space. In this context, the notion of translocalism is important, as it advocates that, regardless of physical location, settlers participate in multiple social fields across space (Petrou 2015). With increasing mobility, communication, and technology, sociocultural orders are tempered, expanded, and

adjusted by the experiences of the wider village city environment, including cross-cultural contact with other kin and ethnic groups as well as the influences of the modern realm. As such, local sociocultural orders remain resilient and adaptive to contemporary social, economic, and political change, shifting in their utility over generations and space so as to be functionally relevant to individual, family, and group needs and opportunities.

The manner in which sociocultural orders express themselves as part of the Pacific urbanization process has been termed the “cultural permeation of urban areas” (Jones 2012b, Jones and Kep 2014). This concept was developed in the diverse urban settings of PNG to explain how traditional norms and values embodied in rural village-based clans and tribes permeate the urban setting in varying local manifestations. As sociocultural orders transcend the places in which settlers and urban residents live, the notion of cultural permeation is fundamental in understanding issues associated with the diverse and nuanced character of myriad urban village types, the notion of village city, and the state of the urban condition generally. These urban issues include (i) settlers’ attitudes toward public property, personal and group retribution, law, and order; (ii) the relevance of formal state institutions in settlers’ lives; (iii) the boundaries of reciprocity and obligations, such as requests to family, kin, and friends for cash and goods (which often have little chance of being repaid); (iv) the physical form and structure of settlements, including attitudes toward maintenance; and (v) understanding and appreciating what it means to be a “responsible urban citizen,” including attitudes toward caring for the environment. The cultural permeation of urban areas and the role of sociocultural orders as they became modified over time determine the shape, form, structure, and character of towns and cities and the wider processes of Pacific urbanization. “This permeation of culture has provided social solidarity, protection, legitimacy, order and cooperation” (Office of Urbanisation 2012: 13). (Figure 12).

Pacific urban settings remain mired in rapid social and economic change. With formal Pacific governance, institutions, and formal policy unable to play a major role in the day-to-day lives of settlers, the settlers’ emphasis remains focused on the utility of kin, family, and collective arrangements in maintaining, adapting, and reshaping their sociocultural orders to the circumstances at hand. Using the lens of translocalism, it is not surprising that the social and economic concerns and issues emanating in town and city settings, including urban villages, are not necessarily generated by the spatial, physical, and social conditions of the village city and villages themselves. Their source lies in other deep-seated spheres of sociocultural influence, which filter through and define the character of rural village life, and which importantly form part of the wider “village world” that increasingly defines town and city settings. It is the features of this wider village realm that continue to shape the complex physical, social, and economic character of towns and cities in the Pacific islands, including the nature and condition of urban villages. Such sociocultural diversity is also a key reason why governments and other stakeholders are wary of large-scale intervention and support of urban villages, such as the growing numbers of informal settlements. “The cultural complexity of many settlements adds to the reluctance of government and service providers” (PRIF 2015: 7).

## **The Fusion of Traditional and Modern Realms of Governance**

Two defining features of the notion of village city are the persistence of traditional approaches to governance finetuned in local kin-based sociocultural orders, and the incorporation of such approaches into the rules, regulations, and ways of modern state governance at a citywide level. In the Pacific islands, urban governance has been defined as “the conduit by which residents and groups—including government—voice their concerns, exercise their legal



Figure 12: Cultural Permeation of Urban Areas: Tribesman Displaying their Identity and Strength at the launch of the PNG National Urbanisation Policy



Tribesmen from the town of Mendi in the PNG Highlands travelled 180 kilometers to the town of Minj to celebrate the launch of the National Urbanisation Policy by the Honourable Peter O'Neil, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, 17 May, 2012. The multiplicity of ways by which sociocultural orders filter through day to day life at many scales, is essential to the diversity and richness of Pacific urban life.

rights, debate, resolve their differences, and fulfill their obligations” (ADB 2012: 61). Under this definition, the modes of urban governance are all encompassing, and include a variety of stakeholders and processes that span the modern, formal, traditional, and other accepted “legalities.”

Modern and traditional systems of governance, their interrelationships, and their actors—such as leaders of native and traditional villages, government institutions, the church, nongovernment organizations, civil society, and donor organizations—all fall within the realm of urban governance. Despite modernity and tradition being positioned as separate entities, these two spheres of relationships continually overlap, intersect, and play out in the ever-changing Pacific towns and cities. Modern or formal urban governance is based on state systems underpinned by national bureaucracy and public administration, such as court systems, which are necessary for achieving the social, economic, and environmental development objectives of formal government. By implication, these state activities make assumptions about the sociocultural practices, beliefs, and behaviors of their respective Pacific populations and how cultural contexts and behavior will be altered and modified in the quest for development. On the other hand, modes of urban governance based on traditional, informal, and arguably nonformal systems gain their validity from sociocultural orders and strength of linkage to indigenous kin and ethnic groups, and their adaptation in the urban (and rural) settings. By definition, such adaptation includes structures and processes that (i) have their roots in custom, kin, and social connections to family and landowning groups; and (ii) importantly, have been borrowed over time from modern government to address issues that are relevant to sustaining settlers’ lives.

Across the Pacific, it is generally acknowledged that current-day state institutions and wider urban governance arrangements—modern and traditional—have been overwhelmed by the pace, scale, and diversity of Pacific urbanization. As a result, the urban governance environment in which settlers engage is complex, messy, and muddy. Issues and concerns are rarely black or white as settlers navigate their sociocultural orders, including the realms of formal and traditional governance as weighted by local conditions and circumstances (Figure 13). Consciously and unconsciously, settlers use different elements adapted from modern and traditional forms of governance to suit their circumstances and needs. Delineating urban governance as simply traditional or modern spheres of influence blurs their complexity and understates the intersection of their boundaries. It also underplays the intricacies of how different groups have operated and evolved according to different rules and in different local contexts at varying times in Pacific towns and cities.

In the Pacific, both systems comprise elements of the other in a dynamic relationship. What may be accepted in traditional systems as legitimate and acceptable, for example, may be illegitimate and not acceptable practice in the formal modern systems, as seen in the operation of customary systems in Vanuatu (Forsyth 2009). Local decision-making based on custom may be supported by national efforts of government for certain matters, while traditional governance may contain elements of western contact including the state and the church. As Laking argues: “The interaction of custom and formal political systems in Pacific countries can have a significant influence on the quality of governance. However,

**Figure 13: Navigating the Form and Language of Modern Plans and Policies**



This “big man” in the PNG Highlands is talking to clan members about the formal plans of the government for settlement expansion. Many settlers are illiterate and have little or no understanding of government concepts and western ideas as they relate to land use and the wider planning of their towns.



customary authority and social closeness can be much more forceful in social and political relationships than the formal institutions of government” (Laking 2010: xi). As discussed in section III, “The Evolution of Settlement Types,” contemporary governance in urban villages comprises systems that have been modified and derived from the colonial period, such as policing, the local village court system, and the beliefs of the church all blended with custom. This process has been observed in Solomon Islands and seen across many Pacific economies: “A deliberate undermining of and gradual incorporation of local justice systems into the state was a feature of colonial pacification” (Allen et al. 2013: 7).

Village governance in the form of committees, elected chiefs, and other leaders is mixed with formal government systems, such as in the election of local members of Parliament and town or city councilors.

Vanuatu’s Municipalities Act, for example, allows for chiefs to be represented on local councils. Land rights of traditional landowners are embodied in most Pacific constitutions. At the local level, settlers in Pacific economies call on police for help with domestic issues. On the other hand, the state system is heavily reliant on the customary system; for example, local land disputes generally are resolved at the family and local levels, and the police liaise with community and local leaders on matters of crime, violence, and community vigilance. Similarly, many Pacific state institutions allow staff to employ friends and family members, thus prioritizing family and ethnic connections over formal government needs. Taking extended absences from formal government work to attend to kin-based issues, often without formal approval, is tolerated as part of the Pacific way of life. Thus, there is separation on one hand, yet participation and acknowledgment of the hierarchy and plurality of governance systems on the other.

Multiple dispute management and governance systems have been integrated since the colonial period. In the former British Pacific economies, for example, the colonial administration overlaid policing, justice, and land laws on traditional ways as they thought best to “regulate” the indigenous populations. In Fiji, the former Native Lands Trust Board, now the iTaukei Land Trust Board, was established in 1940 to oversee orderly development of indigenous iTaukei lands and to safeguard landowner’s interests. In Kiribati, formal local government consists of local councils, such as the Betio Town Council and the Teinainano Urban Council which comprise urban South Tarawa. Operating alongside and overlapping with the formal local government in Kiribati are various forms of traditional governance based around local practices and structures, such as the *unimane* (old men), *maneaba* (village meeting place), and groupings of landowners (such as the landowners association of Tarawa—tokatarawa).

The postcolonial state has seen such institutions and practices associated with regulating custom persist in regulatory systems as Pacific economies define their own development paths. In PNG, for example, 1,000-plus urban- and rural-based village courts are required to apply custom in accordance with the Village Courts Act and related statutes, problematic though the definition of custom remains (Evans, Goddard, and Paterson 2010). In Monson’s study of peri-urban settlements in Honiara (2010), it was noted that disputes on customary land must be submitted to chiefs for adjudication and recommendation before the matter is taken to the local courts. The hearings by chiefs have formal protocols and are presided over by male chiefs. The local court hearings have evolved to include formal, Western-style rules, which include decisions being appealed to the Customary Land Appeal Court and the High Court on matters of state law or procedure in contrast to customary law. As such, custom, customary law, and western law find ways to work together if and when required. On the other hand, depending on context, traditional systems are seen by many as more practical and relevant.

In the new millennium, the reality is locally based decision-making systems tied to tradition and customary ways that have evolved over centuries, overlaid with more recently introduced state and other systems (Monson 2010). The latter effectively represent a mix of selective sociocultural norms and values expressed in national policy, institutions, and regulatory settings, many of which are a legacy of the colonial “top-down” era. In this setting, there is mutual assimilation and nurturing in shaping conduct and behavior, with both interspersed among a multiplicity of processes and stakeholders, such as the church. The inherent diversity of urban villages means engagement will occur in different forms and intensities and with different written and unwritten rules and regulations as governance and political mobilization remain intrinsically connected to sociocultural contexts. The use of traditional village systems remains complex, yet fluid and flexible to resolve urban (and rural) disputes (Forsyth 2009). In this context, tradition and culture are tools of governance in the village city, with continual adjustments in the relationships between city residents and institutional processes (though often at the cost of social justice). This sociocultural flavoring rather than physical patterns alone is what defines the production of the Pacific village city. While elements of formal state institutions may be important for some in the mix of governance arrangements, for many settlers they are not necessary for their survival in urban villages and the wider village city as they fall outside their sociocultural world guiding day-to-day survival (Jones 2016b).

# Managing the Diversity of People and Places in a Pacific Urban World

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## Situating the Meaning of Urban Villages

The manner in which urban villages are explained, imaged and interpreted from different points of view and perspectives has become central to explaining and understanding Pacific urbanization processes and outcomes. There are a number of key messages to consider in positioning the concept of urban villages and their relevance in better understanding and managing towns, cities, and urbanization in the Pacific islands.

- The term urban village, as evolved in the Pacific islands, embodies a contradiction of different times, motives, norms, values, and ideologies. The term village was imported from a European setting and associated with close-knit rural and agricultural communities. Urban, on the other hand, is a more recent term encompassing the towns and cities as originally planned and laid out by the colonial administrations. With the advent of rapid urbanization in the Pacific, including many unplanned forms of village-like settlements, the term urban village recently has become mainstream, replacing and/or being used synonymously with other popular terms such as native and traditional village, and informal and squatter settlements.
- The use of the term native and traditional village reflects how European decision makers and those in positions of power in the late 18th and 19th century, primarily the British, conceptualized planning of new and emerging towns and cities. Explorers, missionaries, colonial administrations, and other newcomers introduced words, language, and concepts common to their own cultural contexts to make sense and order of unfamiliar foreign ways, as well as to indicate how they perceived the indigenous population and wished them to be organized. In this setting, early terminology and language was both imposed and socially shaped by the culture of the dominant European class. It was also socially shaping by articulating the role and place of indigenous Pacific islanders as well as the Europeans and their institutions, policies, and legislative frameworks.
- Current popular usage and application of key terms such as native and traditional villages in a town setting—that is, the original urban village—are, therefore, legacies of the colonial discourse on development and its underlying ideologies. Set against a background of “civilizing and educating” indigenous peoples, many of these villages were established by the colonial administrators as discrete self-contained settlements of indigenous landowners. In some Pacific economies, some indigenous landowners were forced or coerced into moving from their kin-based settlements into nearby centralized villages partitioned off from other settlement types. Government officials, missionaries, and traders considered this necessary to maintain order and to ensure the “best use” of the residual urban land. Resettlement from large tracts of land to

small plots and standardized house designs was to have long-lasting and far-reaching impacts. This included demoting the role of geography and land as central elements in shaping local sociocultural orders and the way islanders went about their lives. From many perspectives, the villages as created by Europeans were

- a cultural identity and social class construct aimed at keeping “uneducated” indigenous populations, including growing numbers of migrants, segregated from the benefits of European-planned towns. In their most basic form, they were a physical manifestation of imposing a dominant European regime of colonial order and control.
- to be treated socially and economically different from the European-planned trading and administration towns within which the native and traditional villages were located or adjoined. This reflected the colonial logic of spatial segregation as reflected in zones, clear borders, and boundaries and the village entity itself, as based on ethnicity and class lines.
- to follow land, housing, and building rules and regulations that were part of the wider regime of control and order in health, education, law, and public protocols, including enforcing attitudes toward work and employment. These rules were created to erode the role of indigenous landowners and the influence of clan, kin, and subsistence in determining the size of extended families and the placement of dwellings, as well as to fragment land ownership.
- After Pacific economies gained independence, these European ideologies and values persisted as aspirations by the newly educated indigenous elite and small middle class. This occurred notwithstanding that the urban majority, including urban villagers, led vastly different ways of life. In today’s Pacific towns and cities, the term urban village takes on multiple meanings, ranging from the confined meaning attributed to the original native and traditional villages now containing local indigenous landowners and newcomers, to a range of hybrid settlement forms in distinct spatial patterns incorporating village-like features. The term urban village remains malleable and complex, shifting in meaning and application over time according to the diversity of external influences, country contexts, and the historical circumstances in which they have emerged.
- In their most basic form, urban villages in the Pacific islands can be seen as sociospatial territories composed of small and large clusters comprising residences developed by individuals and groups. They are both heterogenous and homogenous in their kin, ethnic, and religious mix. Whether termed a native village, traditional village, urban village, or squatter or informal settlement, they can be conceptualized as meaningful places and communities where inhabitants seek varying levels of order, structure, and familiarity based on mutual interdependence and support founded on attachment to kin, tradition, and underlying sociocultural orders. Residents may be active or passive members in their social and governance arrangements, either by choice or exclusion. They are effectively communities of interest that provide members with a shared common view of how to activate, manage, and adapt their social and physical space in different contexts and at local village, town, and city scales. As such, contemporary urban villages are the product of very particular kinds of sociocultural orders undergoing continuous change. This is the essence of what defines the urban village and gives the concept validity and authenticity in the contemporary Pacific town and city.

In the Pacific, the shackles of the colonial policy that regulated, subordinated, and broke down the influence of kin, ethnic, and land affiliations in determining how indigenous settlements should be planned and designed are long gone (though the legacies remain). The

arrival of the postindependence era was important as it provided the platform for informal activities and processes to flourish, such as the growth of new forms of urban villages. This has allowed the resurgence of kin-based sociocultural orders and their importance in providing the glue for like-minded individuals and groups to develop and live in meaningful village-like settlements—that is, urban villages. Urban villages and their activities based around proximity to kin and ethnic group are flourishing according to fluid localized household and community-based rules and regulations, invariably sanctioned implicitly or explicitly by the state. While the state, church, and other cross-cultural influences have worked their way into shared norms, values, attitudes, and aspirations to varying degrees, the overwhelming preference is for settlers, the urban elite, and the middle class to live their lives using various traditional norms, values, and practices.

Unlike the colonial era, when administrations created centralized villages and tampered with kin-based living arrangements, the current process of recalibration is being driven by indigenous settlers. Individuals and groups in village-like settlements seek continuity and order, rather than wholesale change imposed by outsiders. Kin- and ethnic-based relationships and customs and their “cultural permeation of urban areas” have emerged as the major drivers in shaping the myriad urban village forms expressed in Pacific towns and cities. What is clear is that settlers in native and traditional villages plus the newer forms of urban villages continue to reflect an enduring capacity to adapt and innovate in adjusting their sociocultural orders in place-based urban settings. While the legacy of the colonial era lives on, the adaptation to the circumstances at hand—that is, settlers borrowing and adapting what they need and abandoning what is no longer relevant in their lives—is what Pacific residents have been doing from generation to generation over thousands of years, and more recently in urban settings. As such, one way to conceptualize the nature, scale, and proportion of the growth of Pacific urban villages is to view them as part of an ongoing process of shedding the legacies associated with the rigid colonial style of control and order. The latter contrasts with modern Euro-American-centered urban planning approaches which perpetuate a certain kind of “formal” logic which prescribes how settlements should be planned, structured, and formed.

In the new millennium, there is increasing recognition that, despite the creation and use of “ideal” settlement types, the nature, composition, and form of urban villages continue to change as individuals and groups adapt their rules and regulations to cope with the demands and stresses of urban life. For generational dwellers living in urban villages, sociocultural ties holding their village together may be more town- and urban-centered generated over many years. For settlers who are recent arrivals and living in one of the many types of urban villages, their cultivation of local links and interest in urban village place making is likely to be influenced by the sociocultural attributes of both their new urban village and their village of origin. In other words, the drivers of urbanization shaping village life are complex and will transcend urban village boundaries and invariably traverse wider town, city, and rural settings. The construction of the “urban” identity is, therefore, multifaceted extending far beyond the notion of the physical qualities of a specific “ideal” urban village type within the city.

Most discernible in Melanesia, the notion of village city is reinforced through the interplay of formal policy, legislation, and institutional settings combined with the strength of informality, such as subsistence-based livelihoods, being played out by multiple stakeholders. In the postindependence era, the boundaries between formal and informal, and traditional and modern, have become ambiguous, with much flexibility in what behaviors and practices are considered acceptable, unacceptable, legitimate, and not legitimate. The embedded socioterritorial patterns of native and traditional villages on customary land, plus newer village-like settlements in infill and edge locations, all anchor an infused imprint of a village city and a unique kind of Pacific urbanization.



Like the precolonial era, traditional landowners are now asserting their authority in how the physical and social forms and structures of their settlements, namely, urban villages, should evolve and develop. The persistence of urban villages is also, in effect, a product of the state, in that the state mirrors to varying degrees interpretations of a multitude of sociocultural orders as expressed in prevailing national institutions, policies, and legislations, either modified and/or as left intact since the colonial era. As such, it is not surprising that the state and the systems and processes that manage it tolerate the presence of urban villages, despite the anti-urban rhetoric and negativity that surround them. In this context, the coexistence of modernity with customary ways underpins a unique form of urbanization in Pacific economies that requires not only recognition, but also appropriate policy responses.

### Rethinking Approaches to Urban Management and Urban Development

With a web of agencies, departments, and regional and international donors involved in formulating and implementing urban and national policies, the challenges in managing Pacific urbanization and its consequences remain daunting. As outlined in section II, “Revisiting Drivers and Responses to Pacific Urbanization,” the reasons for caution in addressing urban reform in Pacific economies are complex and varied, including sensitivity of land issues, the divergent mix of customary landowning groups, the “localization” of governance, and the lack of political champions to tackle cross-sector medium- to longer-term challenges. There are also the day-to-day tensions that urban planners and policy makers face at the local and national levels when dealing with a multiplicity of stakeholders. At a wider level, the budget and absorptive capacity of Pacific governments constrains integrated and straightforward assessments of their urban condition and how to move forward. This also includes an absence of regional and Pacific qualitative and quantitative data on informal and squatter settlements, a basic omission in development planning that has been recognized globally (UN-Habitat 2015b).

Within this setting, the reality is that, despite different perspectives on how urban villages can be explained and conceptualized, their ongoing expansion means they remain front and center of Pacific urbanization processes. By implication, they also remain integral to solutions for improved urban management and national development outcomes. With their continued growth, primarily in Melanesia, concurrent with the intermittent promotion of an antisettlement stance based around law and order, health, and environmental concerns, a quantum shift in the urbanization development discourse is well overdue. Otherwise, urbanization and management of urban villages remain “business as usual,” with urban villages positioned as a problem to be fixed and disengaged, with many inhabitants stigmatized and rendered “inappropriate” in an urban world conceptualized by the dominant minority. This all adds to the complexity of why urban reform has not been uniform across the Pacific.

For many Pacific economies, especially those in Melanesia, Micronesia, and to a lesser degree Polynesia, the paramount urbanization challenge is one of learning to live together in a harmonious and secure environment where (i) the diversity of development and place-making processes by individuals and groups are recognized and acknowledged; and (ii) the basic urban development ingredients of water, sanitation, governance, and other essential public infrastructure and services are provided. These are national and regional challenges given that access to land, housing, services, and infrastructure are basic human rights, which is increasingly being acknowledged in Pacific constitutions, such as in recent changes to the 2013 Fiji Constitution. The issue is not whether there should be adequate and accessible levels of public services, infrastructure, and urban development—this



The Face of the Pacific Future—Children from Tabwakea Village, Kiritimati Island, Kiribati

should be a given (ADB 2013c). The question to be posed is what is the minimum design standard required to achieve equity for all in urban villages and wider Pacific towns, cities, and national settings.

In terms of development processes, there is a need to mainstream and build on the reality that there are many development processes, rules, and codes that characterize the development of urban villages and wider urban form in the Pacific towns and cities (Table 7). The activities at play in ordering and creating urban villages are often the inverse of those promulgated, adhered to, and sometimes enforced (or ignored) by the top-down formal planning systems. These rules and regulations are seen, for example, in the formal policy, institutions, and legal frameworks that underpin local government authorities in Port Moresby (by the National Capital Development Commission), Port Vila, South Tarawa, Suva (by the Suva City Council), and other Pacific capitals. To put it another way, the processes embedded in formal planning systems in Pacific towns and cities bear little resemblance to what happens on the ground for many of its urban residents and especially those in urban villages. Residents in urban villages acknowledge the existence of formal government systems, but keep an arm's length from them as they have little relevance in adding value to their day-to-day lives. This is compounded by an absence of political will to change colonial-derived regulations to meet capacities and existing urban realities.

What emerges in Pacific urban villages is an alternative order where land occupation and buildings come first, with tenure security, services, and infrastructure following later, if at all. While the sequence varies in Pacific economies, typical development steps are based on

- staking of land claims and occupation;
- establishing physical housing and boundary presence;

- reinforcing tenure, plot security, and dwelling occupation; and
- expanding availability and access to basic services and infrastructure.

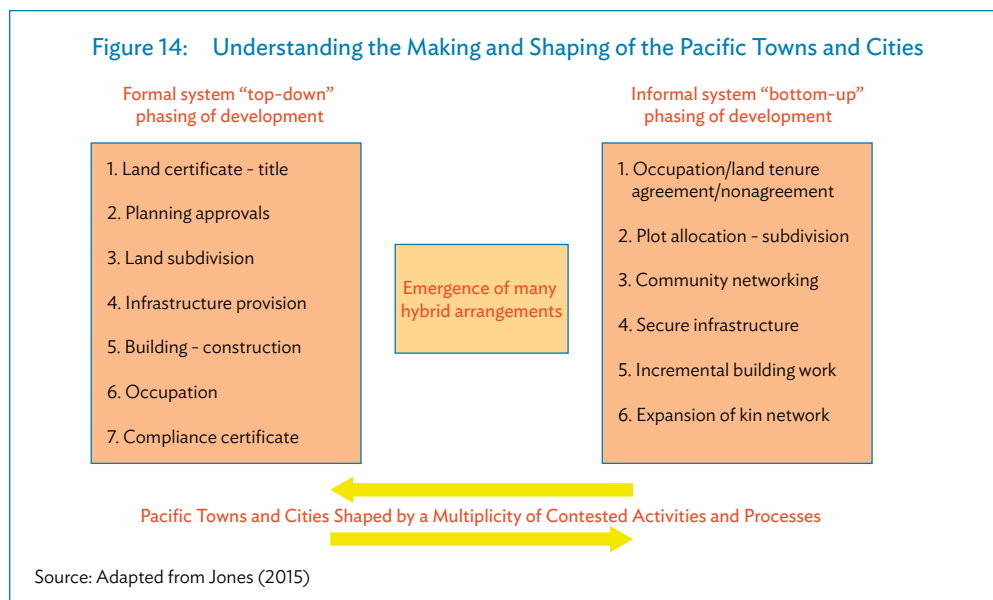
The process of intensification in urban villages means that housing construction is “stop-start,” spaces tend to be highly utilized (including for subsistence), access ways accrue from use of residual “left over” spaces adjoining houses and land boundaries, and government imposition and control are minimal or absent. Hybrid processes invariably emerge using elements of both processes, for example, in government-led projects where some level of formality may be introduced, such as securing land titles in long-term established urban villages. Alternatively, educated professionals who live in urban villages will use their knowledge and networks to seek court endorsement of their land tenure arrangements. As such, the “ad hoc, chaotic, and disordered” spatial form seen in urban villages is an expression of the multiplicity of development responses to particular needs by a diverse range of individuals, families, and groups using different rules and regulations (Jones 2015) (Figure 14). In this context, practices based on mainstream forms of land supply and title, land use separation, and the supply of services and infrastructures—which are central tenets of formal planning and urban development processes—will have little traction in the spatial forms and social processes that underpin and create urban villages and the wider Pacific towns and cities. The apathy and reluctance of service and utility providers to pursue nonmainstream solutions for water and sanitation in informal settlements were reinforced in the recent Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility assessment of such settlements in Melanesian Pacific economies (PRIF 2015).

A major implication of recognizing all development processes, practices, and systems at work in the modern nation-state by differing stakeholders, institutions, and their underlying ideologies is that new ways need to be negotiated and tested in providing for

Table 7: Concurrent Planning and Urban Development Processes Defining Pacific Towns and Cities

| Formal Planning Processes Seen in Planned Areas of Nadi, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva  | “Hybrid” Planning Processes Characterizing Urban Villages in Nadi, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva   |
|---|--|
| Land and buildings purchased or leased in formal legal transaction; land searches, discharge of mortgage; registration  | Land and buildings identified and occupied based on kin, extended family, and ethnic connections; local knowledge a major influence in decisions; occupation may include invasion or negotiation by cash or in kind  |
| Development application lodged for planning consent (use and development such as subdivision), separate building application lodged after development application, etc.   | Land and buildings occupied with or without landowner or occupier consent; extra-legal agreements in place to provide security of tenure   |
| Planning and building consent with or without conditions  | Densification and fragmentation of land and buildings by kin (or agreement among occupiers); subletting of rooms to newcomers; flexible allocation of land use   |
| Use and development of land and buildings by certified builders and tradespeople in accordance with approved local, metropolitan, and national plans and policies; compliance and occupancy certificates issued   | “Stop-start” development based on availability of resources; physical improvements often undertaken by family or kin connections; local community protocols for law and order observed   |
| <b>Summary:</b> Formal, top-down, hierarchical planning and development process led by the government; orderly procedural stages of implementation utilizing different levels of government and budget conditions | <b>Summary:</b> Planning and development based on community, individual, or group needs; bottom-up consensus process utilizing individual and group resources; government involvement minimal or absent; services and/or infrastructure may follow development |

Source: Adapted from Jones. 2016a. *Unpacking Informal Urbanism—Planning and Design Education in Practice*. Penerbit, Bandung: ITB University Press.



services and infrastructure, including land and housing. The existence of robust bottom-up approaches to developing new and existing urban villages, where the focus is on individual and collective needs at the urban village scale, requires new ways of thinking about how to meet basic human development needs, such as through services and infrastructure. While there has been development and implementation of squatter upgrading programs and national housing policy in some Pacific economies, including Fiji (such as the Town Wide Settlement Upgrading Programme), PNG, and Kiribati, policy makers remain overwhelmed in coming to terms with growing numbers of underserved urban villages and their physical permanency. In summary, the urban agenda remains muddled and sensitive. In this setting, the recent Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility (PRIF) review on water and sanitation and ADB’s fragility assessments in informal settlements in the Pacific are steps in the right direction in looking behind the formal labels given to settlements and elucidating the nature and importance of urban villages, including how best to provide basic services (ADB 2013a, 2013b, PRIF 2015).

The important role urban villages, their inhabitants, and the nonformal realm play in the making of Pacific towns and cities will continue to struggle for acknowledgment in the mainstream development debate unless there is change. The preoccupation with interpreting urban reality through “ideal” urbanization development models, theories, and concepts conceived by developed countries, many of which were integral to the colonization process, means the status quo is not questioned in any depth by many Pacific national and urban policy makers. Reflecting on practice and recent ADB publications, some of the key policy lessons in addressing demand for land, housing, and basic infrastructure and services in the myriad Pacific urban village forms include the following:

- a shift from the “one size fits all” approach to localized targeted interventions where the timing of stages in the project cycle allow for project innovation such as local settlement pricing and subsidies for services and infrastructure;
- adoption of multi-actor and cogovernance approaches from conception and design through to management;

- recognize that the provision of basic services and infrastructure for all are basic human rights.
- a balance between top-down and bottom-up consensus-based approaches—which, as far as possible, should be low cost, appropriate, and culturally aware; utilize technology that is easy to maintain; and promote local livelihoods and private sector start-ups—that offer cost-effective solutions. Multiple alternatives should also be explored and tried where possible.
- physical solutions that recognize custom and, as far as possible, do not involve housing resettlement. Where they do, options should reflect the nature of the residents' current attachment to place, and what this means in sociocultural and economic terms for both the residents and the projects.
- upscaling programs from pilot infrastructure projects that are judged to be effective, including understanding what works and what does not work, and why. The latter is required to appreciate the formal and informal institutional policies and processes that must accompany a systematic national upscaling (rather than just upscaling standalone projects with no wider sustainable support).
- continued exploration of appropriate and changing “entry points” particular to each Pacific economy to allow infrastructure and service provision and support for the urban agenda generally, such as land, housing, climate change, etc. The concept of finding common ground on suitable entry points was well discussed in ADB's 2012 Pacific urbanization report.
- addressing the problematic areas of capacity building, coordination, and strengthening of institutions, processes, and people. This includes how to incorporate longer-term commitment to the shifts required, such as via setting regional and Pacific targets, rewarding innovation in service and infrastructure coverage, quantifying the social and economic costs of change (including, for example, costs of continued settlement exclusion in infrastructure and settlement planning), and the pivotal role of leveraging champions and leadership in influencing behavioral change; and building the Pacific economy and regional evidence base by collecting baseline data on settlement types and broader typologies. The latter needs to be overlaid with contextual variables such as seeking clarity on length of settlement occupation, governance arrangements, levels of provision of basic infrastructure and services, waste management arrangements, existing programs, and basic tenure security types.

In conclusion, if a major objective of urban development is to improve the living conditions of residents, then there is an urgent need to reconceptualize approaches to Pacific urbanization and the way we frame and explain the urban realm in the Pacific. If development agencies, practitioners and researchers look at the Pacific town and city through different lenses, then a whole range of alternative policy and practice approaches to urban management present themselves. Viewing Pacific towns and cities through a broad perspective that recognizes urban villages as meaningful local socioterritorial entities operating as part of wider village cities provides an opportunity to critically question current approaches. This includes asking who really builds Pacific towns and cities, what processes are used, and how they can be best supported and managed in urban development in a more equitable manner.

Importantly, such support does not lie in “formalizing the informal,” as this would continue to perpetuate current practices and approaches such as eviction, relocation, and for some their eradication. In the context of strong sociocultural orders in the Pacific, the emphasis needs to be on support for bottom-up pilot projects that show that satisfactory layout design, housing construction, basic services, and governance outcomes can be

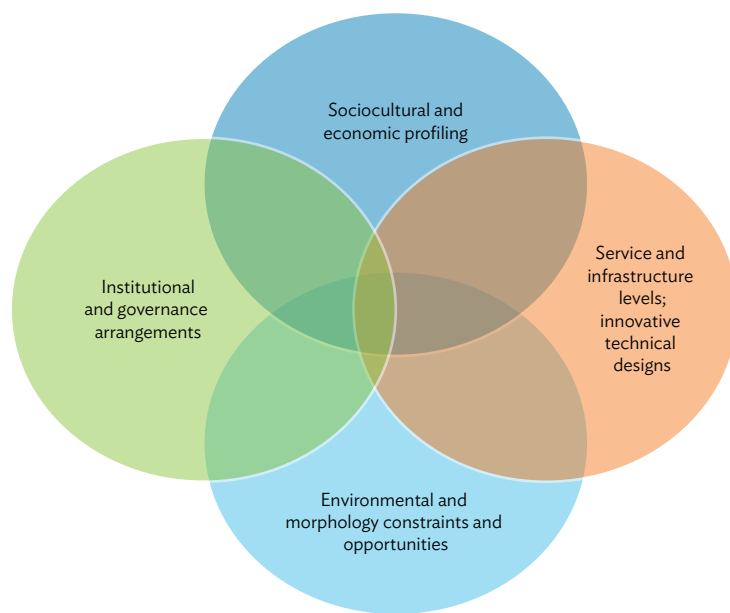
achieved (ADB 2013c). This means accepting that urban villages are not “unplanned” at all—they are produced and reproduced by Pacific residents through a set of locally grounded rules and codes to which little credence has been given to date in the Pacific. This begs the following question in many Pacific economies where economic growth remains sluggish and poorly managed and political will is minimal:

*Is it possible to achieve project gains centered around adaptive infrastructure and services that are context- and settlement-specific and can be replicated and scaled up at country and regional level?*

The recent PRIF water and sanitation assessment of informal settlements in Melanesian Pacific economies reaffirmed the policy principle that solutions need to respond to the individual circumstances that define the identity of each settlement (PRIF 2015). Evidence indicates that integrated urban development outcomes should be the ideal, where the social, physical, and environmental aspects of development, including assessing natural hazards and climate change risks, are seen as central to improved standards of urban living. This means deconstructing the “one size fits all” approach at the national, city, and local levels with potentially longer project cycles as specific settlement issues are identified and resolved based on varying stakeholder interests and constraints. In reality, this will be challenging, as the geographic aspects of settlement morphology—that is, their location in mangroves and tidal areas, on hillsides, and under service easements—mean addressing potential difficulties in service catchments, technical solutions, and unclear social and physical boundaries. This integrated approach to analyzing myriad Pacific urban villages is shown in Figure 15.

Under the above approach, the emphasis shifts to a deeper understanding of the production of urban space and places, the relationship between social decisions and physical outcomes, the meaning of urban and modern, the dynamics of urban-based

Figure 15: Conceptual Approach to Analyzing Urban Villages



Source: Author.



local sociocultural orders, and what is deemed acceptable and not acceptable in different Pacific urban contexts (and why). Importantly, who really wins, loses, and is excluded in the unfolding of the Pacific urbanization process, the management of which remains problematic? If such concerns and their dimensions are not seriously addressed via regional planning and equitable Pacific urban development plans and policies, then the duality of managing towns and cities comprising the “haves” and “have nots”—that is, the growing urban divide, Pacific style—will continue unabated. Importantly, such continuation will only reinforce mainstream explanations and conceptualizations detached from the realities of dire Pacific human development realities.

The concept of urban village in the Pacific, however conceptualized and constructed, remains fundamentally important to developing a more robust discourse on urbanization and development in Pacific economies and the region. This includes better understanding local notions of equity and social and spatial justice. Confronting the diverse nature and growth of urban villages, including the “how and why” of their development and their role in forming towns and cities, along with acknowledging that a “one size fits all” approach excludes increasing numbers of residents and settlements, is an overdue urban and national development challenge.

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## **The Emergence of Pacific Urban Villages**

### *Urbanization Trends in the Pacific Islands*

This publication seeks to explain the nature of settlements termed “urban villages” as set within the context of growing levels of urbanization in contemporary Pacific towns and cities. It investigates the meaning and conceptualization of myriad forms of urban villages by examining the evolution of different types of settlement commonly known as native or traditional villages, and more recently squatter and informal settlements. It views village-like settlements such as squatter and informal settlements as a type of urban village, and examines the role these and other urban villages play in shaping and making the Pacific town and city and arguably, the Pacific village city. It presents key actions that Pacific countries and development partners need to consider as part of urban and national development plans when rethinking how to conceptualize the ongoing phenomena of urban villages while achieving a more equitable distribution of the benefits of urbanization.

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