Voices for environmental action? Analyzing narrative in environmental governance
networks in the Pacific Islands

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Abstract:

As climate change pushes against the shorelines of the Pacific Islands, strategies to coalesce power to mitigate for and adapt to environmental degradation become even more relevant. One mechanism employed by the Pacific Islands to overcome conflict is the formation of climate networks that work together to meet the needs of the islands as a region. During this process of networked governance, however, contestations occur between the local and global strategies and knowledges that must be navigated by state and nonstate organizations in these networks in order to achieve their respective aims. In order to gain authority to make decisions and govern on climate issues, these networks employ particular narratives—constructions of the hero, victim, and villain, both human and nonhuman, in the story of climate policy—that both produce and are produced by these local/global contestations. This article explores these issues in the context of the Pacific Island Forum and Pacific Island Development Forum summits leading up to the 2015 Conference of the Parties, and their final climate declarations. Through this investigation, two competing narratives are found—the global technical narrative and the local power narrative. These narratives impacted the deliberations and subsequent climate declarations in these Pacific summits, with both the global technical narrative of the Pacific Island Forum summit and the local power narrative of the Pacific Island Development Forum summit being evident in their final declarations. These narrative constructions have consequences for the representativeness of the decisions made in these networks.

1. Introduction

Transboundary environmental issues—biodiversity loss, water scarcity, sea level rise, and others—are pushing their way into governance priorities at unprecedented rates, ensuring that single states alone cannot accomplish the goals of governing (Biermann & Pattberg, 2012). Due to the nature of these environmental challenges, a decentralization of governance is occurring in which power and authority is distributed across multiple arenas, or ‘spheres of authority’ (Rosenau, 2007) that function between and outside of state boundaries. The spheres of authority include nonstate actors that face very different challenges from states when trying to impact governance.

Networks are growing in prominence as one way of investigating these complex spheres of authority within transnational environmental governance (e.g. Andonova, Betsill, & Bulkeley, 2009; Hadden, 2015; Keck & Sikkink, 1999; Stone, 2008). Wasserman and Faust (1995) define networks as a relatively stable grouping of actors that function through interdependent actions and are marked by their exchange of material and non-material resources. Governance networks have generally been defined loosely in the literature, but Rhodes (1997) emphasizes that, while they include state actors, the

networks themselves can function with relative autonomy from the state. These networks maneuver through multiple scales of governance in efforts to meet the needs of local communities, of domestic policy strategies, and of international policy agreements and requirements for funding. During this process of multi-scalar governance, however, contestations occur between the local and global strategies and knowledges (Jasanoff & Martello, 2004; Hulme, 2010) that must be navigated by state and nonstate organizations in these networks in order to achieve their respective aims. One mechanism by which this navigation occurs is through the narrative of organizations within the networks.

The narrative of a network is the shared structure of the story it tells when working to accomplish its goals. Narrative does productive work within the process of governance in a variety of ways—it determines the goals and problems to be solved, identifies tools to solve the problem, distributes the benefits and burdens of policy and implementation, creates rules for inclusion and exclusion, and generates rationales that legitimate these choices (McBeth, Jones, & Shanahan, 2014). In other words, narrative not only limits what is possible within governance, it also works to create the possible. Identifying the role of narrative provides key insights into the ways in which networks emerge and establish their authority for governance. As networks work across local/global divides, the power of narrative is both a strategy of negotiation in this multi-scalar space and a product of this negotiation. In other words, narrative is used to bolster the authority of networks of organizations as organizations transform the narrative to meet their own ends, and is also a durable product of that negotiation that has been institutionalized into dominant discourses. Therefore, it is informative to study the way in which various actors are employing narratives, as well as how those narratives came to be.

The Pacific Islands provide an excellent case study by which to explore these dynamics of international and multi-sectoral networking. The islands are undergoing rapid biophysical transformation, which is decreasing the productivity of fisheries, reducing the likelihood that communities can subsist off of the land or water, and seeing a rapid loss of land into the ocean (Allen et al., 2014). Each of these aspects threatens the vitality of the Pacific Islands as the effects of climate change become more severe. However, governance in this region faces challenges as many nations are small, isolated, and have had a long history of colonial control, which has left them with reduced governance capacity (Wesley-

Smith, 2013). They have experienced varying levels of success at integrating traditional and Western power structures, institutions, sciences, and narratives within their systems. However, Pacific Island peoples also have a long history of social and environmental adaptation that provides key knowledge to these growing environmental needs (Govan, 2009), thus providing unique opportunities for environmental governance.

During the 21st Conference of the Parties in 2015 [COP21] climate change negotiation preparation, two dominant narratives were employed in the Pacific Islands that distinguished two network constructions for negotiation stances. This paper will further explore what I call the *global technical narrative* employed by many regional intergovernmental organizations that manifested in the Pacific Islands Forum [PIF] Summit's Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Declaration on Climate Change, alongside the *local power narrative* employed by local NGOs during the writing of the Pacific Island Development Forum [PIDF] Summit's Suva Declaration on Climate Change. Through this paper, I will consider the way in which international climate networks are emerging and establishing authority in transnational environmental governance. I will then look to the way that, as organizations network around environmental issues, struggles over local and global knowledges work through the narrative used by these networks. Finally, I will consider the implications of these narrative-networks for climate change governance in the Pacific Islands.

2. International Climate Networks

Power to impact decision-making flows throughout state and nonstate actors within governance networks, in the bureaucracies and secretariats of international organizations (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004; Jinnah, 2010), knowledge-producing institutions (Miller, 2007; Miller & Edwards, 2001), and standard-setting institutions (Böstrom & Hallström, 2010; Cashore, 2002), all of which take part in and form the networks of environmental governance. These organizations produce new ways of knowing about environmental issues including information about processes and procedures, knowledge about the physical and social world, and the limits of what is considered possible and acceptable. These things can help to facilitate cooperation and shared understanding among network members, and at times the global polity. Organizations within these networks have power to impact decision-making at the state level by producing and

sharing information on which state decisions are based (Adler & Haas, 1992; Haas, 1989; Jasanoff, 2005; Keck & Sikkink, 1999; Miller, 2007; Scholte, 2004; Wapner, 1995), providing practical support for program implementation (Abers & Keck, 2013), and producing norms to which states adhere (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Keck & Sikkink, 1999; Rosenau, 2007).

Navigating multi-scalar governance, however, is confounded through the contestations over authority. The participants in governance networks gain authority through their access to practical authority (Abers & Keck, 2013), rational-legal authority (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004), and expert authority gained through the generation, accumulation, and dissemination of knowledge (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004; Carrozza, 2014; Hulme, 2013). This is not a singular event, but rather a continuous struggle as organizations work to authorize their ideas and practices. This authority is challenged as nonstate actors function outside of democratic authority, which makes transparency and accountability more challenging (Biermann & Gupta, 2011; Vaubel, 2006). Transnational governance is semi-private or quasi-public and dispersed through restricted sites, where boundaries are “indeterminate and opaque” (Stone, 2008, p. 22). In other words, the authority held by nonstate actors that work in and through transnational environmental governance networks can shift power away from the, potentially, more transparent and accountable public sphere. Therefore, the basis of the authority held by networked environmental governance organizations must be further explored.

3. Scientific Authority in Multi-Scalar Space

Contestations over authority within environmental governance are intertwined with what is considered legitimate knowledge. One of the primary divides within climate governance comes in the local and global strategies and knowledges and their struggles to be authoritative (Jasanoff & Martello, 2004; Hulme, 2010). Global knowledges tend to emulate what Bocking (2004) refers to as *authoritative science*—knowledge gained through procedures that are unanimous, quantitative, generalized, and conducted according to scientific process. This type of knowledge meets the challenges of scaling knowledge to a global level by collapsing the nuance of local conditions. The objectivity of scientific procedure is used as a strategy to gain authority for decision-making, thus giving scientific knowledge, and those who employ it, the power to shape decision-making. As Turnhout, Dewulf, and Hulme describe it, “Knowledge and power embrace tightly as

globalized knowledge conditions the political imaginary of global environmental governance and vice versa: how one knows constrains how one governs and how one governs shapes what one needs to know” (2016, no page). In other words, the use of global, objective, authoritative science can shape what is perceived as possible within transnational environmental governance.

This type of global scientific knowledge plays a vitally important role in the governance of the climate due to the nature of global atmospheric change. By appealing to authoritative science, however, transnational environmental networks can leave local communities out of environmental decisions that impact their lives, thereby breaking down democratic processes. As Hulme describes it, this type of science makes ‘global kinds of knowledge,’ or “knowledge which erases geographical and cultural difference and in which scale collapses to the global” (2010, p. 559). He gives the example of the way in which the 2°C [Celsius] limit on global warming has been used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] to stabilize normative goals around the climate and delimit the storyline on which the public’s imagination must be built. He argues that this globalizing knowledge may damage local communities as they seek to write their own narratives and pursue their own futures.

With these challenges presented by global, objective, authoritative science in transnational environmental governance, many environmental governance scholars are exploring the authority of local, practical, contextual knowledge. Bocking argues that, “tacit prescriptive commitments embedded in scientific knowledge, especially relating to controlling and transforming nature, may fit poorly with local attitudes that emphasize adaptation and coexistence” (2004, p. 28). In this way, Bocking argues that authoritative science can be used in efforts to reform nature that may be in contrast to the adaptive and coproduced values of local communities in regards to nature. Instead, Lejano et al. (2007) provide an argument for how particular environmental governance efforts may need to undergo contextualization in order to have institutional coherence with the everyday patterns and practices of localities. In other words, governance is to be adaptive to both the environmental and social contexts in which it is being embedded. However, in climate change governance, this local knowledge must compete for legitimacy with global ways of

knowing. This struggle over the authority of knowledge in local and global space is played out in the narrative employed by networks of environmental organizations.

4. Narrative-Networks

Authority within the network can be created and bolstered through the use of narrative strategies, such as is found in advocating the use of global scientific knowledge production and the need for local input. Struggles between the authorities of global and local knowledge production play themselves out through narrative-networks. Previous discussions of networks have focused primarily on evidence of interactions between actors, but how those interactions shaped the actors in the network and how actors shape interactions in the network have been left “black boxed” in much of the literature. Instead, narrative-networks, as discussed by Lejano, Ingram, and Ingram (2013), form as actors write themselves into the larger story of the environmental issue. In a narrative-network, the network is mutually constituted through narrative (Ingram, Ingram, & Lejano, 2015). In other words, a narrative-network is created by the common use of a narrative by actors in the network, and the narrative-network is made possible by the existence of a community that fosters the narrative. This allows for narrative-networks to be understood as produced by both the actors and the narrative.

In the analysis of policy, narrative is the basic underlying storyline on which the legitimation of decision-making relies. Policy narratives incorporate identity, trust, and alterity—or the creation of the “other” that the network must be working against. The use of characterization—heroes, villains, and victims, both human and nonhuman—lends itself to an “us” and “them” that works to strengthen organizational ties to the network. It also prescribes policy morals, where ‘solutions’ are given to the problems at hand based on who is considered the hero, villain, and victim. Additionally, gaps in the conventional narrative are employed by some narrative-networks to offer alternatives to the dominant network. This allows narrative-networks to bridge, integrate, translate, and generate knowledge across various sources and value perspectives, while also allowing for their own narrative to be employed. While nonhumans’ roles in the network are also important to understanding the narrative-network, this paper will focus on the human elements of the network.

Evaluating emergent climate networks as narrative-networks can provide opportunities to trace their narratives throughout the policy process. As they work to impact governance at a transnational level, the narratives of various networks struggle to be represented. Looking to the impact of networks' use of heroes, victims, and villains on transnational policies, one can see where voices were heard, and where they were underrepresented. In the case of the Pacific Islands, these struggles are playing out as local and global voices are being made the hero or villainized to meet particular ends.

4.1 Narrative-Networks in the Pacific Islands

In order to combat the growing threat of environmental degradation, transnational environmental governance networks are emerging that include the Pacific Island nations, regional intergovernmental organizations, civil society, private sector participants, and states that are external to the region (Corlew et al., 2015; Gruby & Campbell, 2013; Pietri, Stevenson, & Christie, 2015). These networks struggle between the 'global kinds of knowledge' (Hulme, 2010) created by agencies in the region and local, contextual knowledge (Lejano et al., 2007) that is a large part of climate change adaptation and mitigation governance. Battles over climate change negotiation stances, the use of traditional knowledges and methodologies, and the inclusion or exclusion of particular voices have caused networks in the region to work to establish their own narrative strategies for authority.

Particularly when it comes to climate governance, dominant scientific narratives have worked to set the parameters of governance under a "problem closure," which Hajer (1995) defines as the process of creating solutions to a set of unquestioned, well-developed problems. In other words, scientific knowing is used politically to limit options available for decision-making, thereby limiting the space for democratic discussion. This has had an impact on the Islands' ability to shape their own future by not allowing them to define the problems they wish to see solved, and construct their own solutions. Barnett and Campbell argue that scientific models of climate change in the Pacific,

have the effect of rendering climate change as an environmental fact against which actors can do little but suffer. They deny the agency of people at risk: to define the problem in their own terms; to apply their own systems of knowledge; to implement the solutions that are appropriate to their needs and values and which

accommodate uncertainty; and to make knowledge claims of equal value to those of science. (2010, p. 2)

Thus, narrative constructions of the challenges presented by climate change—including the scientific models, classifications, and regulations—impact climate governance within the Pacific Islands by producing problem closure.

Even as scientific narrative constructions have gained dominance within transnational climate governance in the region, networks of organizations that favor local constructions of knowledge are resisting the narrative hegemony of this problem closure. While Govan (2009) and Sievanen, Gruby, and Campbell (2013) have demonstrated the ways in which local knowledge construction can bolster the impacts of governance in the region, no work has been done to date to explore these narrative-networks of global/local knowledge and governance within the Pacific Islands. This paper seeks to investigate these narrative-networks as they manifested surrounding the 2015 PIF and PIDF Summits leading up to the COP21.

5. Materials and Methods

In order to gain information on the process of transnational environmental governance in the Pacific Islands, I conducted interviews with 22 key regional players; attended 3rd Annual PIDF Summit, 1-4 September, 2015, that was attended by delegates from 15 of the Pacific Islands, including heads of state; and collected grey papers and other archival data on regional environmental governance in the Pacific in both Apia, Samoa, and Suva, Fiji. I used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to analyze the narrative employed by various organizations in interviews. This type of analysis uses six steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Using this process, I distinguished two narrative themes within the Pacific Islands: the *global technical narrative* and the *local power narrative*. The details of these themes are further explored below.

For the visualization of the network in the Pacific Islands, I used a simple affiliation network of attendance at the PIF Summit and the PIDF Summit in the months leading up to the COP21 negotiations in Paris in December 2015. Participation was weighted using a classification system generated by PIF and PIDF. For PIF, the independent and self-

governing states of the Pacific Islands, along with Australia and New Zealand, held central positions in the Summit, along with the CROP agencies, of which PIF is the political head. Thus, these states and agencies received a weighting of 3 in the network for their central role in decision-making. The territory and collectivities in attendance—French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Tokelau—are described as “associate members” due to their secondary involvement, and thus are given a 2 weighting in the network. A number of intergovernmental organizations and Timor-Leste are listed as “observers” for their background involvement in the Summit, and thus receive a 1 weighting. This is reflected in the weight, or thickness, of the lines associated with these actors.

For the PIDF Summit, all Pacific Island states, both independent and dependent, that were in attendance and involved in discussions around the Suva Declaration on Climate change received a 3 weighting for their involvement. Organizations that have signed memoranda of understanding of cooperation with PIDF—the Secretariat for the Pacific Community, the Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat, the University of the South Pacific, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the World Wide Fund for Nature—were given a 2 weighting for their heightened engagement in decision-making in the summit. Other nonprofits and non-Pacific Island states in attendance were given a 1 weighting within the network.

In the description below, the interview responses were organized based on participation in the PIF and PIDF Summits. For interviewees that were part of organizations that attended both summits, their interviews were associated with the summit for which their organization’s participation was weighted more heavily. For instance, a CROP agency that participated in both summits would be associated with the PIF summit due to their heightened role in that network. No state leader was interviewed for this study; however, statements made by state leaders at the PIDF Summit were included. As the interviews were conducted under the assurance of anonymity, all individual and organizational identifiers have been removed.

6. Pacific Island Climate Policy Networks

Pacific Island regional identity and governance has a complex relationship with the history of colonialism in the region, particularly with United States, Britain, the Netherlands, France, Australia and New Zealand. Efforts for collective regional governance

began in 1947 under the guidance of colonial powers (Fry, 1997). While many Pacific Island states have become independent, those relationships between the Pacific and colonial powers are still in place today and are now embedded in the decision-making and funding of governance in the region. As one interviewee from the PIF network commented, the regional intergovernmental governance represents a “decolonization process that warped into technical assistance.” These colonial relationships are particularly complex within the PIF Summit network of actors.

PIF was established in 1971 under the name South Pacific Forum. The founding members were Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Tonga, and Western Samoa (now Samoa). PIF represents the needs of independent nations in the Pacific and is the political head of the CROP agencies, tasked with the goal of improving functionality of regional intergovernmental governance of the Pacific Islands. The CROP agencies include 10 regional intergovernmental organizations tasked with different areas of governance from fisheries to tourism to power. While each of the 10 agencies plays some role in climate change governance due to the pervasive nature of the topic, three agencies are specifically tasked with climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts—the Secretariat of the Pacific Community [SPC], the Secretariat of the Regional Environmental Programme [SPREP], and the University of the South Pacific [USP]—and PIF is involved with setting the broader political agenda around climate change.

The formation of PIDF, on the other hand, began in 2012 and was led primarily by the Fiji government. PIDF’s emergence has a complex relationship with the requirements of global governance under the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, perceived failures of the regional governance system, and Fiji’s desire to regain power and legitimacy in the region. Fiji had a bloodless coup in 2006 that led to their dismissal from the PIF governing body. While they were readmitted to PIF in 2014 after Fiji held democratic elections, Fiji’s relationship to PIF has remained strained. PIDF has since worked to distinguish itself from PIF by focusing on multi-stakeholder participation, inclusion of multiple local perspectives in decision-making, and not being reliant on colonial powers’ aid which they understand as making them accountable to those colonial powers. As an emerging organization, PIDF is both a product of a transforming narrative-network in the Pacific, and one of the narrative’s most ardent promoters.

6.1 The Road to COP21

The Pacific Islands—through governments, intergovernmental organizations, or civil society organizations—were some of the most highly vocal proponents of a climate change mitigation agreement at COP21 (Carter, 2015). At the United Nations Third Small Islands Developing States Conference in 2014, Enele Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, stated “Pacific negotiators need to be in sync at the UNFCCC”; Tony de Brum, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Marshall Islands, asserted that “there has been a failure of traditional diplomacy at the UN...we need a new brand of diplomacy...one voice diplomacy”; and President Anote Tong of Kiribati argued “we need to establish alliances that are non-traditional, that serve our best interest” (as cited in Carter, 2015). Efforts to speak with one voice were also evident through the 3rd Annual PIDF Summit, with civil society and government leaders emphasizing the “one family” of the Pacific Islands, stating “our lives and our destinies are intertwined” and encouraging one another to be “singing together the same song.” These pledges of collaboration ran throughout the meeting. However, even with these long-standing efforts to speak with one voice, the multiple climate change declarations that came out of the Pacific during the final months leading up to COP21 showed important differences, particularly those that came out of the PIF and PIDF Summits.

While the Pacific Islands have a diverse and comprehensive network of state and nonstate actors, this article focuses on this simplified network of transnational organizations that participated in the PIF and PIDF Summits to demonstrate the differentiation of narrative within climate change negotiation stances. Attendance and level of participation of state and nonstate actors in each of these summits is represented below, with the details of inclusion described in section 5.

Figure 1: Network representation of attendance at the PIF Summit and PIDF Summit in 2015.

Looking at the attendance and participation in the PIF Summit, decision-making was limited to governments and to CROP agencies, with some other international organizations in attendance. Also of note is the strength of participation of Australia and New Zealand—who are considered core members—as well as the lower levels of participation among French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Tokelau—who are only associate members due to their status as territories and collectivities. Recent efforts have been made to make the CROP agencies' decision-making processes more inclusive through the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. Multiple interviewees from this study described the Framework for Pacific Regionalism as a "public policy revolution," where the "black box" of regional intergovernmental prioritization has been opened up to public comment. However, these efforts are still very much in their infancy and do not address participation in negotiation processes, as seen through the limited participation in the PIF Summit (see Slatter, 2015).

The PIDF Summit, in contrast, included representatives from 14 domestic NGOs and 7 international NGOs alongside numerous governmental and intergovernmental organization representatives. Private citizens and university personnel from the Pacific Islands also played key roles in deliberations. While these organizations did not have a vote on the final declaration, their participation was largely considered in transforming the PIDF Summit's final declaration. Australia and New Zealand were in attendance, but not given membership in PIDF, whereas French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Tokelau were given full membership.

The next sections will explore this cross-section of the narrative-networks in the Pacific Islands in more detail. While, again, this network is a simplified representation of much larger networks of organizations surrounding transnational environmental governance in the Pacific Islands, participation in the PIF and PIDF Summits is a useful differentiation for exploring the divergence of narrative-networks in the Pacific Islands surrounding climate change strategies.

6.1. Pacific Island Forum Summit Narrative

Based on interviews and analysis of archival data, those in leadership positions at the PIF Summit, follow what I refer to as a *global technical narrative*. These regional environmental organizations discuss the limited funding, project-based management, and high levels of bureaucracy in transnational governance. In this narrative, the Pacific Island states are the *victim* of environmental or social disaster, and are primarily powerless without the aid of colonial powers. Lack of capacity, resources, and scientific information play the *villain*, causing efforts to achieve sustainability—environmental, social, and economic—to fail. Regional environmental organizations are thus poised to write themselves in as the *hero*, where better science, more resources, and standardized procedural mechanisms are necessary to overcome capacity deficits. This creates a *policy moral*, or policy-driven solution, that pushes for greater regional functionality in the form of increased resources, greater access to information, and greater decision-making capability in the hands of the regional environmental organizations.

Through this narrative, the regional organizations privilege global kinds of knowledge (Hulme, 2010) and authoritative science (Bocking, 2004). Multiple individuals working in the major regional organizations with whom I spoke emphasized their role in

controlling knowledge within the network. They discussed their efforts to “manag[e] the flow of information,” “interpret proposals,” act as “gatekeepers” and a “clearinghouse for information,” in order to ensure “quality control of information.” One of the participants in the PIF Summit stated during an interview:

It's that informal authority with the countries, because we have no authority at all. They have authority over us, but we have a lot of informal authority over them. And respect because we hold so much expertise. And we're a pathway to other sources of help, funding, and success.

Thus, the control over authoritative science and resources is seen as giving regional organizations their authority to hold some power over states. These regional intergovernmental organizations, particularly those involved in climate governance (SPC, SPREP, USP, and PIFs) can thus be described as *boundary organizations* (Cash et al., 2006), or organizations that mediate and facilitate the coproduction of knowledge. They act as scientific authorities, judging the legitimacy of funding proposals and managing the quality and flow of information. Their role as boundary organizations is also tied to the role of colonial states as external funders. Due to their perceived low levels of capacity, they rely on colonial states for resources and in turn provide a space for them in decision-making.

While these boundary organizations can serve important efficiency functions within regional environmental governance, these can also serve to stifle, delegitimize, and displace certain forms of knowledge (Lejano & Ingram, 2009), including the local practical knowledge of populations who actively use environmental goods in the Pacific Islands. These regional boundary organizations make these decisions about inclusion and exclusion through non-transparent processes, such as the selection of particular sciences for management strategies, the recommendations made to decision makers, and the streamlining of funders to approved scientific endeavors. One interviewee described the limitations of local knowledge as, “people know all the high-level jargon, but understanding the basic underlying issues is a challenge...there are serious knowledge gaps.” In order to mitigate for these perceived limitations, interviewees from regional organizations discussed how they would “steer” funders toward proposals that use “replicable data.” These decisions are typically not open to democratic accountability measures, and the decisions may not be representative of the needs and desires of local populations. This is

not to say that other forms of knowledge, such as indigenous or practical understandings of the natural world, are left unconsidered. However, the participants in interviews from regional organizations in the Pacific Islands emphasized the challenges in capturing, recording, and scaling these knowledge sources, and, at times, used these justifications to exclude alternative conceptions of the world from many of their final decisions.

At the 2015 PIF Leaders' Meeting, the *Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Declaration on Climate Change Action* was discussed among Pacific Island leaders, regional organization leaders, and leaders of colonial powers. In figure 2 is a selection of the demands made in the PIF declaration. Those phrases that highlight the global technical narrative are in bold.

Figure 2: Narrative analysis of the *Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Declaration on Climate Change Action*.

The PIF Summit declaration thus focused heavily on the global technical narrative reflected in interview statements and archives. The vulnerability of the Pacific Islands was emphasized, establishing their victimhood to the villain of low governance capacity and environmental instability. While the PIF narrative-network would acknowledge that

prominent greenhouse gas emitters case the environmental instability, systemic issues are downplayed in this declaration. The regional organizations underscored their role as the hero in this narrative by providing authoritative science to inform decision-making. The policy moral, then, demands that regional organizations increase their functionality to accelerate and intensify effective adaptation and mitigation actions through technology, science, and finance. Through this, the global technical narrative that privileges the global over the local is reflected in the PIF *Declaration on Climate Action*.

While not as heavily emphasized, it is important to note that impacts on marginalized populations were also considered. The PIF Summit declaration discussed the “recognition of the disproportionate impact of climate change on women, youth, the elderly, disabled, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable and marginalised groups” and the “acknowledgment of the crucial role women will play in a global solution to climate change.” However, the PIF *Declaration on Climate Action* focused primarily on increased capacity for scientific knowledge and governance, along with heightened functionality of regional organizations. This is in contrast to the PIDF Summit narrative.

6.2. Pacific Island Development Forum Summit Narrative

Those organizations that are highly involved in the PIDF network employ what I refer to as a *local power narrative*, or a storyline that puts local communities at the forefront of decision-making on climate actions. In this narrative, Pacific Island states are the *victims* of environmental and social disaster—similar to other regional organizations’ narrative—and yet they have the power to adapt both their environmental and social strategies to achieve change. They see colonial powers, through funding and positions of power in other regional environmental organizations’ decision-making structures, as being just as much the *villain* as their environmental vulnerability, due to colonial powers’ ability to take the decision-making authority out of the hands of Pacific Island peoples. Instead, the local power narrative advocates for the Pacific Island peoples’ engagement in their own decision-making to act as the *hero*. This left the participants of the PIDF Summit with a *policy moral* of local inclusion in decision-making and governance. This establishes a process for the Pacific Island peoples to regain power in determining their own environmental futures. This is not to say that the PIDF Summit narrative dismisses the role of global decision-making around climate change, such as would be present at COP21.

Rather, it calls for more voices to take part in the on-the-ground decision-making that would empower local communities to take part in their own climate futures.

PIDF's *Suva Declaration on Climate Change*, in contrast to the PIF declaration, was created through an open, participatory process. During the PIDF Summit prior to COP21, political contestation took place among states, nonstate actors, and private individuals to position the Pacific Islands on a variety of climate change issues. Not only was the strength of language debated—legally binding mandates and deep-decarbonization tactics—but also the level of representation the declaration exhibited was discussed. Civil society organizations representing youth, women, and more were given space to express their voices directly to Pacific Island leaders, and were able to advise on how the Pacific Islands should be positioned in upcoming COP21 negotiations. There was not total agreement about what should hold primary importance, allowing stances to be negotiated and discussed (otherwise known as *plurivocity* in the network; Lejano, Ingram, & Ingram, 2013). The goal of the PIDF Summit was described as "providing the space to provide our voices to provide a collaborative solution." In figure 3 is a selection of the demands made in the PIDF declaration. In bold are the phrases that demonstrate the commitment to the local power narrative of the PIDF narrative-network.

Figure 3: Narrative analysis of PIDF's *Suva Declaration on Climate Change*.

The PIDF's *Suva Declaration on Climate Change* reflects the local power narrative, or the desire to put decision-making about local climate actions into the hands of local communities. While this narrative agrees that the Pacific Islands is the victim of environmental disaster, they are not painted as a powerless, vulnerable victim. In this narrative, the Pacific Islands are set in place to begin "a new global dialog" that focuses on deep-decarbonization of the global economy and positions the Pacific Islands to be a leader in environmental innovation. This highlights the power of Pacific Island nations to make a change in their own climate futures. While this narrative also features the need for technological innovation and scientific knowledge, the focus is on these innovations coming

from the Pacific, itself. Additionally, local voices are discussed as vital to climate governance, with a focus on equality of partnership of nonstate actors through making climate governance legible to local communities. This is made possible through making knowledge accessible via both formal and non-formal education, language translation, and others. In other words, the goal is not a central, authoritative science standing alone, but rather a distributed, contextual knowledge that can be bolstered through inclusion of local communities.

Returning again to Lejano, Ingram, and Ingram's (2013) analysis of narrative-networks, the narrative in the PIDF *Suva Declaration on Climate Change* is attempting to bridge, integrate, translate, and generate knowledge to fill in the gaps of the dominant global technical knowledge narrative with discussions of local power. PIDF participants consistently discussed the break from colonial powers seeking to control their climate change agenda (otherwise known as *alterity* in the network; Lejano, Ingram, & Ingram, 2013). The Fijian Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama, stated at the beginning of the PIDF Summit, "It is time for Australia to stop trying to undermine PIDF by urging regional leaders not to attend...Step back from the table and allow us to make our own decisions." Others rejected the "interference from outsiders" and "undue influences" of colonial powers, and decried the "ambition gap" exhibited by climate emitters such as the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand in not doing enough to save them from the effects of climate change. PIDF is thus poised to increase the level of inclusion of voices in climate governance in the Pacific Islands, as well as to incorporate a range of knowledge that includes local, contextual knowledge. This is not to deny the need for broader knowledge about climate issues, as scientific evidence and formal education is also valued, but rather to make space for gaps in the conventional narrative to be filled by local voices.

6.3. Narrative Comparisons of PIF and PIDF Summit Declarations

The contrast between the effects of the global technical narrative and the local power narrative is seen in both the participation of actors in decision-making in these summits, as well as the final statements of these documents. While the PIF Summit did not focus on the inclusion of nonstate actors in climate governance, the PIDF Summit emphasized the equal partnership and high levels of involvement that marginalized groups should have in the climate governance process. Additionally, the PIDF declaration speaks of

“violations of human rights” and “inequality and discrimination,” terms that hold a much stronger connotation than the claim of the “disproportionate impact” on the Pacific Islands seen in PIF’s declaration. By discussing human rights, inequality, and discrimination, those engaged with the PIDF declaration were able to connect the disproportionate impacts of climate change to larger, systemic challenges faced by marginalized populations. While interviews with PIF also brought up the villainization of the states that are sizeable greenhouse gas emitters, this was less evident in their final declaration, potentially due to the role of Australia and New Zealand in their negotiations. Finally, the discussion of “non-formal education” and the use of “national languages” in the PIDF declaration shows that civil society was active in working to ensure that these decision-making processes were open to all—a sentiment not carried by PIF’s call for “capacity building, technology transfer, knowledge and information sharing, and improved access to climate change finance,” that is indicative of the strength of the global technical narrative.

While these are relatively subtle differences, they have powerful implications for future environmental governance. PIF’s declaration leaves the power for decision-making primarily in the hands of governmental and scientific elites within the region. Alternatively, by engaging civil society as equal partners in the battle against systemic challenges through the use of accessible information, the local power narrative of the PIDF declaration brings the authority for decision-making into the hands of Pacific Island peoples. The local power narrative is thus more capable of meeting the democratic needs for representation and accountability, while the global technocratic narrative employed by PIF and other regional environmental organizations is less capable of meeting these needs.

Interestingly, Pacific Island states split the divide of these networks in the process of navigating transnational decision-making space. States employ their status as network bridges to strategically employ these narratives to meet their own ends. Again, while discussions of unity and family among Pacific Island nations was evident in the COP21 negotiations, this emphasis on unity can hide deep disagreements about climate change negotiation stances, the use of scientific or traditional knowledges and methodologies, and the role of particular voices, including civil society and colonial powers like Australia and New Zealand. The emergence of the PIDF Summit network demonstrates attempts by state and nonstate actors to provide a space by which to contest the dominant global

technocratic narrative of PIF, colonial powers, and other regional intergovernmental organizations with their own local power narrative. However, the details of states' navigation of multiple narrative-networks in this case leaves more to be explored at a future date.

7. Implications of Narrative Networks for Climate Governance

The narratives of the networks surrounding the PIF and PIDF Summits draw attention to the global and local dimensions of knowledge production and decision-making surrounding governance. Struggles in the Pacific Islands over climate change governance reflect larger questions about the role of states in shaping their own futures, especially as many of these states are reliant on external project funding. Additionally, contestation between narrative-networks in the Pacific Islands is evident in the struggles over the authority to "know" the Pacific. The procedural closure of environmental decision-making through adherence to objectivity and generalizability can leave much of the political process to the side. The global technical narrative presents scientific research as benignly objective and correct, thus ignoring the situatedness and power inherent in knowledge production (Shapin & Shaffer, 1985). One NGO worker that I spoke with discussed the lack of space for dialog surrounding environmental issues, arguing that any space that did emerge was usually policed by regional organizations. She encouraged me to remember that "engagement is not neutral...it's about power." This description is an overt reminder of the ways in which power can shape the spaces in which decisions are being made, particularly in international governance (Stone, 2008). Authority to speak in those spaces is directly related to who has power to share their voice.

This procedural exclusion through the global technocratic narrative mirrors Barnett and Finnemore's (1999) discussion of the ways in which bureaucratization within international organizations maintains hidden power through classification, fixing of meanings, and diffusion of norms. The global technical narrative classifies authoritative science as a normative good, privileging 'objective' scientific knowledge over localized and practical knowledge sources that the Pacific Island peoples have identified as valued. In other words, the decisions about what is best for environmental governance in the region are made outside of any public input and hidden within the bureaucratic structure, excluding the knowledges of much of the Pacific Island people.

Alternatively, the local power narrative emerging through the network surrounding the PIDF Summit is evidence of resistance to the dominant global technical narrative. The PIDF Summit narrative-network pushed against the prevalence of colonial powers in decision-making in the PIF Summit (alterity), the use of scientific information to dismiss the multiple ways of knowing including indigenous knowledge and contextualized, practical knowledge (encouraging plurivocity, instead), and set up local Pacific Islanders as the hero. The local power narrative demonstrates efforts being made to contextualize knowledge in a place, as well as to put power in the hands of Pacific Islanders to transform their climate futures. By writing Pacific Islanders into the position of hero within the narrative, decision-making and governance is opened up to include multiple voices and knowledges.

8. Challenges in Future Governance

While progress is being made to open up regional environmental governance in the Pacific Islands to more democratic processes, there is still much to be done. Many of the employees of regional environmental organizations that I interviewed discussed how they felt that they wanted more public involvement in regional environmental decision-making, but that by doing so they risked problems of accidental exclusion or being in a situation in which they would not have the time or resources to implement programs. With the series of challenges that the Pacific Islands face, increased levels of inclusion and accountability can have serious tradeoffs in the efficiency of governance in the region. If time and effort is spent ensuring full public participation in decisions, many interviewees felt there would be limited time and resources left for governing. However, while the global technical narrative, the use of boundary organizations, and the privileging of authoritative science may increase efficiency within the network, this efficiency comes at a cost that must be considered. Alternative understandings of the world and goals of environmental governance are dismissed through procedural mechanisms without the approval of the public. Without addressing the needs, knowledges, and capacities of local people, environmental governance efforts are likely to lose their effectiveness, credibility, and authority. The inclusion of nonstate actors, while producing challenges that must be addressed, can help to produce a more inclusive, representative, and accountable environmental governance.

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