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Pacific Geographies

Research | Notes | Current Issues from the Asia-Pacific Region

COP 23
Gender Equality and Climate Change

Indonesia's Fire Crisis 2015
A Twofold Perturbation on the Ground

Book Review
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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

Pacific Geographies #49 offers fascinating articles about a wide and interdisciplinary range of topics.

First we'll take our readers to the Jambi province in Indonesia with an article framing how the devastating peat and forest fires in 2015 generated national policy that has had the unfortunate effect of reinforcing an already vulnerable population of farmers. The authors – Flora Hartmann, Jennifer Merten, Michael Fink and Heiko Faust – show that the application of new regulations is maladaptive e.g. concerning sinking ground water table.

Two contributions deal about the United Nations Climate Change Conference that occurred in Bonn (Germany) from 6-17 November 2017. For the first time in history, a Small Island Developing State (Fiji) assumed the Presidency of a UN Climate Change Conference. In their research note, Oliver Hasenkamp and Elisabeth Worliczek ask how successful Fiji was in making COP23 a "Pacific COP" and to what extend the country was able to forge "islandised" outcomes. Struck-Garbe observes a positive shift towards an integration of gender justice and human rights in the context of the UN Climate Action Plan.

Also in Fiji, researchers Sarah Reimer and Burkhart Brielmaier undertook empirical work to develop a methodology to survey mangrove biomass in two river deltas. The young researchers include insights to and appreciation for the socio-cultural aspects they experienced with their fieldwork.

Two book reviews complete the present issue of Pacific Geographies. Trang Schwenke-Lam analyses "InVisible. Vietnamese-German realities" a interdisciplinary anthology of writings about Vietnamese immigration to Germany. Britta Schmitz takes us through the multilayers of the Pulitzer Prize winning "The Sympathizer", a Vietnamese spy novel.

We sincerely hope you enjoy your readings of these geographical, historical, anthropological and political insights.

The managing editors, Michael Waibel & Matthias Kowasch

Pacific Geographies

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In order to uphold scientific standards, the PG is implementing a peer-review process. Articles marked as „scientific papers" have been peer-reviewed by two external reviewers. Articles marked as „research notes" have been peer-reviewed by one external reviewer and a member of the editorial board. All other articles have been reviewed by the editorial board. Scientific papers and research notes receive a Digital Object Identifier (DOI).

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Association for Pacific Studies (APSA e.V.), in cooperation with the Department of Geography
University of Hamburg
Bundesstrasse 55
D-20146 Hamburg
Germany

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Indonesia's Fire Crisis 2015
A Twofold Perturbation on the Ground

Flora Hartmann[1], Jennifer Merten[2], Michael Fink[3] & Heiko Faust[4]

[1-4] *University of Göttingen, Division of Human Geography, Goldschmidtstr. 5, 37077 Göttingen, Germany*

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Abstract: Wildfires in tropical rainforests and especially peat fires have abundant and wide-ranging negative effects on the economy, ecology and human health. Indonesia has large areas of peat swamp forests that recurrently burn. The use of fire is the most common method for land clearing in Indonesia. As a reaction to the devastating fire events of 2015, the provincial government of Jambi reimposed a more stringent version of the prohibition of burning land, delegalizing this land clearing method for smallholders. From a local perspective through qualitative research at the village level it becomes clear that this regulation is maladaptive as the underlying cause making land prone to fires, the sinking ground water table, remains unchanged by the ban. Further, the impacts of the new regulation vary for different groups of the local population, with severe land management restrictions for food crop farmers. The application of a framework on the political and material dimension of vulnerability reveals that the national policy unintentionally causes economic hardship and landscape changes at the local level. Hence, smallholders have experienced a two-fold perturbation caused by the fires' impacts and the reinforced ban on burning land.

Keywords: Indonesia, peat fires, vulnerability, maladaptation, governance

[Submitted as Scientific Paper: 12 January 2018, Acceptance of the revised manuscript: 15 February 2018]

Frequently, uncontrolled large-scale peat and forest fires in the tropics pose a threat to the affected regions' integrity regarding ecology, economy and human health (Alencar et al. 2006, Cochrane 2009, Gross 2015). As the resulting toxic haze contains an enormous amount of fine particulate matter (Koplitz et al. 2016) and does not stop at national borders, tensions between nations are likely. With the 1997 fire events which "blanketed" (Frankenberg et al. 2005: 109) large areas in South East Asia, the issue attracted attention from public, scientific and political actors for the first time (Carmenta et al. 2017, Davies & Unam 1999, Fanin & van der Werf 2017, Lin et al. 2017). Supranational institutions such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) reacted to the risks of fire and associated pollution and haze and have urged their member states to prevent fire events as with the 2002 Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (Lin et. al. 2017). Nevertheless, large scale peat and forest fire events still occur, especially in Indonesia. Most recently, the fire events of 2015 caused the burning of 2.6 million ha of Indonesian land (World Bank 2016). Each day, the emissions caused by the fires in 2015 surpassed the daily emissions from the whole US (Carmenta et al. 2017). Ecosystems suffered (Lee et al. 2017) and the economic loss is estimated at USD 16.1 billion to Indonesia alone (World Bank 2016). The 2015 fire event coincided, like the one in 1997, with a strong El Niño Southern Oscillation, ENSO (also referred to as El Niño), that causes a prolongation of the dry season and a reduction in annual rainfall (Fanin & van der Werf 2017, Koplitz et al. 2016). Monsoonal winds carried the pollution haze to Malaysia and Singapore. Consequently, around 69 million people were exposed to an extremely high particulate pollution (Crippa et al. 2016) which led to the premature death of approximately 100,300 people (Koplitz et al. 2016). National and international pressure forced the Indonesian government to adopt adequate measures to prevent the burning of land. In Jambi province, one of the hotspots of the fires, a new regulation was issued that banned the burning of any land and imposed a penalty of up to ten years imprisonment.

Against this backdrop we claim that the prohibition on burning land is an insufficient attempt in the long-term prevention of large-scale fires in Indonesia. This article

builds on an in-depth qualitative case study. Its conceptual approach follows the basic idea of political vulnerability, which describes the translation of materialised harm into measurements undertaken by politicians. The ban on fire as an agricultural tool demonstrates how susceptibility to harm caused by change in the biophysical sphere is linked to political change. This change, in turn, is an example for a mismatch between its intention to reduce the local population's, and biophysical spheres' susceptibility to harm, and its outcome as it does not address root causes thus fostering unintended land use change. As a starting point, we analyse the effects the exceptional 2015 fire events had on income and health, referred to as material vulnerability, followed by the impact of the fire ban, and people's adaptation to it.

Maladaptation through Disconnected Scales in Policy Making

Our study of the fire events in 2015 builds on elements of vulnerability assessment literature. Within vulnerability research the focus is on socio-environmental relations, which we enrich with the concept of material and political dimensions of vulnerability (Simon & Dooling 2013). From this perspective human-environmental interactions are the core of the creation and manifestation of vulnerabilities. A widely adopted definition of vulnerability was developed by Adger (2006) who considers vulnerability as *"the state of susceptibility to harm from exposure to stresses associated with environmental and social change and from the absence of capacity to adapt"* (ibid. 268). Such an environmental or social change that forms a spike in pressure exceeding ordinary variability has often been referred to as perturbation (Gunderson 2000; Tomimatsu et al. 2013, Turner et al., 2003). An example of a perturbation is a longer than usual dry period.

Taking a context-oriented approach to vulnerability, we consider vulnerability as a recursive process that is dynamically formed through the combination and interaction of social, ecological, economic, and political structures and conditions (Adger 2006, O'Brien et al. 2007, Räsänen et al. 2016, Ribot 2014, Turner et al. 2003). Simon & Dooling (2013) have taken another important analytical step in vulnerability research by stating that it is not sufficient to discuss vulnerability in the singular but rather to distinguish between material and political vulnerability. The material vulnerability refers to material conditions that may be lived and experienced by local communities. The political vulnerability then represents its translation and interpretation by complex governance arrangements. This political response can take any form and can be e.g. a measurement, or even no action at all. Disconnections between the material and the political vulnerability may reduce the efficacy of formal policy and community responses and even lie at the heart of maladaptive outcomes. We understand maladaptation as outcomes of intentional adaptation policy that exacerbate peoples' conditions of material vulnerability (Juhola et al. 2016). Oftentimes, these are the result of non-representative and inequitable governance structures (Lynch 2012) across different scales. We regard this distinction as a means for pointing out the disconnection between the material and political vulnerability as it enables the identification of the underlying causes for vulnerability. In this paper, scales are not regarded as fixed levels or natural entities but as socially constructed (Anssi 2004, Hein et al. 2015). In our case study we consider the individual, household, provincial, national and global level as relevant. Perturbations and the impacts of adaptation measurements may arise from one scale and may manifest themselves in another one.

Introduction to the Study Site and Applied Methods

Field research was conducted in the village Seponjen in Jambbi province, situated in the south-central part of the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. An

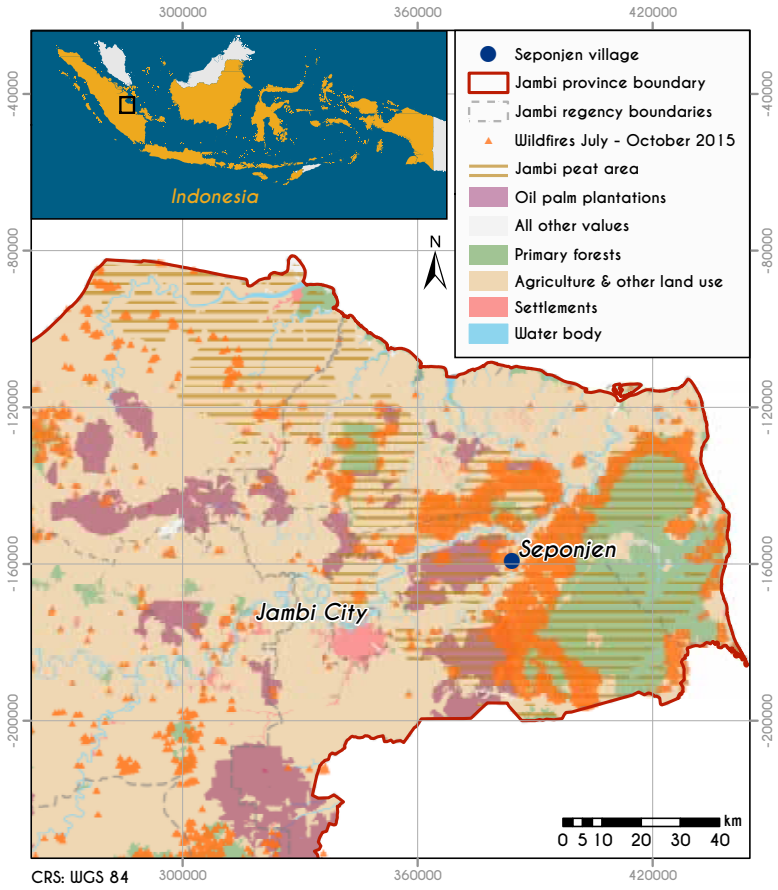


Figure 1: Localisation of the research village and forest fires 2015 in Jambi province.

Source: Local villager.

Figure 2: Haze during the day, September 2015

overview of the village's location is displayed in Figure 1. Jambi Province was chosen as a research region due to its comparatively rapid agricultural transformation processes. For the past 30 years, vast forest areas of agroforestry systems have been converted into oil palm plantations (Clough et al. 2015). In 2016, oil palm plantations extended over 474,000 ha (BPS Provinsi Jambi 2017), and rubber plantations over 664,000 ha (BPS 2017). Staple crop cultivations (rice, corn, soybean) in 2015 were only grown on 136,000 ha (BPS 2015) and are increasingly being replaced by more profitable plantation land use systems. The coastal areas in Jambi province are characterized by vast peat areas (Miettinen et al. 2016). The transformation of peat swamp forests into land suitable for agricultural purposes accords with the trend in Sumatra, Borneo and Papua Island. Formerly regarded as marginal agricultural land, peat land has experienced an increase in exploitation for plantation systems which is accompanied by drainage and degradation (Carmenta et al. 2017). The scarcity of land in Jambi Province has driven state promoted resettlements (Kunz et al. 2016), large-scale issuing of concession areas (Kunz et al. 2017) and spontaneous migration of independent smallholders seeking a better future in the plantation sector (Hein 2016; Kunz 2017). During the fire events burning from June until October 2015, 123.000 ha of land burned in Jambi province (World Bank, 2016), which lead to persistently hazardous levels of smoke (Koplitz et al., 2016), causing an economic damage of 866 million USD. Hereof, 210 million USD account to losses in agriculture (ibid.). An impression of the fire events in Jambi can be gained from Figure 2 3 and 4.

As can be seen from Figure 1, most of the fires occurred in Jambi's vast peat lands. Peat is an organic soil. It consists of partly decomposed plant remains holding less than 20-35% mineral content (Turetsky et al. 2015). The key regulator of peat accumulation and peatland decomposition is water-table depth. If the depth of the water-table is lowered, aerobic conditions stimulate decomposition; thus, peat carbon is released to the atmosphere (ibid.). Deforestation and drainage generate "*favourable conditions for the fires and amplify the hydrological drying processes in the aboveground fuels and the underlying organic soil*" as they influence the groundwater table (ibid. 1). Due to a high moisture content, the peat swamp forest in its pristine state is *"naturally protected from burning"* (ibid. 11), whereas large scale degradation by drainage makes peat flammable (Couwenberg et al. 2010) and transforms peat from a carbon sink into a carbon source (Carmenta et al. 2017). Considering the thickness and thus the volume of peat measured, Indonesia holds 46 Gt and 65% of all tropical peat mass (Page et al. 2011).

One distinctive reason why fires were so intensively combustible in 2015, distinguishing it from all preceding El Niño years with prolonged droughts, is the advanced degradation of peatlands and the ongoing change in land-use. Taufik et al. (2017) link the hydrological drought to the fire-proneness of the humid tropics in Jambi.

The village Seponjen was selected for our case study due to its proximity to several hotspots of the 2015 fire events. The dominant soil type in the village are peat soils with a depth of up to four metres, however there are scattered fields on mineral soil or thin peat layers that are already degraded. The village is populated by different ethnic groups, the native Malay people, immigrated Bugis from Southern Sulawesi and other migrant groups from Java. The main income for local households is derived from agriculture. While most farmers focus on oil palm business, some also cultivate maize which became popular in the village with the arrival of the Bugis people in the late 90s and is still dominantly grown by them. Illegal logging of nearby peat swamp forest was a major source of income until the early 2000s. An industrial oil palm plantation concession borders the village; here villagers offer their labour power (interviews with villagers during February and March 2017).

During a two-month field stay in Jambi province we conducted thirty semi-structured and unstructured interviews in February and March 2017 with villagers in Seponjen. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and translated with the help of a field assistant. To acknowledge the heterogeneity of the village population we interviewed a variety of villagers, from village leader to the head of customs to common farmers of different ethnicities and landless families. The main topic discussed during the interviews was the prevailing impacts of the fires to local livelihoods and people's adaptation strategies to prevent future fire outbreaks. During the field visit it became apparent that apart from immediate impacts of the fires, the new provincial regulation on the prevention of forest and land fires had major impacts on local land management strategies. Hence, these dynamics became a second and unforeseen topic of research. All interviews were recorded, partly transcribed and documented in detail. Interview data was further supported by participative

observation, photographs taken by our respondents, as well as a review of government regulations.

Results: Ground Perspectives on Pertubations

The first Perturbation: Immediate Impacts of the Fire

As the agricultural sector is the main income for villagers of Seponjen, economic losses caused by the fires largely manifested there. This situation was intensified by low crop yield of the forgone months brought about by the outstandingly long drought. Without exception, all oil palm smallholders reported their fruits had become trek, an expression that describes the phenomenon when fruits of the fresh fruit bunches become lighter and smaller. However, the impacts on plantation productivity differed depending on farmers' management practices as well as whether plantations were only impacted by drought and pollution haze or also suffered tree loss due to fire. A lower production was reported to have had lasted up to three months after the fire incidents. Such losses in income put smallholders under financial pressure. These circumstances were intensified by extra expenses mitigating adverse effects of the drought and fires. Additional costs included spending on medical treatments and clean water for washing, bathing and drinking. Natural water resources, usually serving these purposes, were polluted by dust and particles, and wells ran dry. The severity with which the income losses affected the households varied widely from simply a shortfall in savings to a need for actions such as gaining additional income from other sources and cutting expenses. The most popular method to compensate for the income losses was to gain income as a day labourer on either another farmers' or companies oil palm plantations. Along with the endeavour to counterbalance the losses, cutting on expenses stands to reason. Most popular was cutting down on food costs by a change in nutrition habits, a reduction in quantity of food and a forego of non-vegetarian sustenance. Further, a common strategy among parents was to consume less, thereby leaving enough food for their children. Chemical fertilisers generally required for the management of oil palm plantations were often intermitted during the 2015 fire events due to their high cost, causing further decreases in productivity of the palm trees in the following months.

Source: Jennifer Merten 2015.

Figure 3: Reduced visibility due to the haze, August 2015

Health issues proceeded from people's exposure to the pollution haze and smouldering peat which contained high concentrations of Particulate Matter (PM) with diameters of less than 10 and 2.5 µm, also referred to as PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ (Koplitz et. al 2016). From the beginning of September 2015 until the end of December the same year, air quality in Jambi's peatlands regularly reached very unhealthy or even hazardous levels according to measurements of the Pollutant Standard Index (PSI) (see Crippa et al. 2016 for more details). Every respondent experienced breathing problems; all experienced sore eyes, some suffered from psychological trauma. Additionally, a decline in water quality lead to several cases of diarrhoea. Exposure of and sensitivity to the pollution haze and smouldering peat and access to coping were largely determined by three factors: (1) age (2) time spent exposed to the pollution haze and (3) economic background. Young and elderly people, as well as those with pre-existing lung or heart diseases, are a high-risk group as they are particularly susceptible to harm (WHO 2013). The duration people spent exposed to pollution haze varied, so did awareness and knowledge of associated health risks. Further, profession and economic background mattered as different occupations involve outdoor activities, such as being a farmer. As most people of Seponjen are farmers they were under economic necessity to work on their fields and plantations or to guard them, thus enduring exposure to pollution haze. Given the fact that economic resources determine the amount of money available for quality

Source: Jennifer Merten 2015.

Figure 4: Smouldering fire, August 2015

Source: Local villager.

Figure 5: Maize cultivated on land cleared by fire

construction materials, people with less financial capital tend to live in houses made of wood compared to wealthier people living in houses made of concrete. These types of houses differ strongly in their efficiency to exclude outdoor air as the houses made of wood have a high number of interstices between the wooden boards forming the walls and the floor. Less tangible is the phenomenon of psychic trauma, which were relived in cases where people had experienced losses caused by burnings of their fields and plantations in previous times. Hence, the individual's exposure and sensitivity towards perturbations varied.

The Second Perturbation: The Prohibition on the Use of Fire

As a reaction to the fires, the provincial government of Jambi issued a regional regulation which specifies penalties for burning land and forests (Peraturan Daerah 2-2016). The regulation defines the exact modes of the implementation of the national laws No 41/1999, No. 32/2009 and No 30/2014, and goes further as it prohibits burning any size of land, although national law actually states that a person is allowed to burn land of up to 2ha (UU 32/2009). The ban on fire as an agricultural tool to clear or prepare land was introduced in Jambi in March 2016, shortly after the fires had stopped. This ban is a major interference with the farmers' custom, as burning is an integral element of their land-clearing practice. A major problem for the smallholder that comes along with the ban is the disposal of organic material, for which they know of no alternative to burning. That problem concerned seasonal crop farmers immediately since it was their method of preparing their fields every year prior to a new growing cycle. The government proposed collecting organic material manually and then burning it in a barrel as an alternative to clearing the land with fire. The disadvantages to this proposed method are (1) it is very time consuming, (2) is lacks accuracy, and (3) the loss of the fertilizing function. According to villagers interviewed, before the ban on fire one person could manage to clear 2-3 ha of field on his or her own, but without the use of fire in the same time one could only manage 0.5 ha. By reason of the lessened accuracy of land clearing an increase in pesticides was predicted by the smallholders. Commonly used pesticides are glyphosate and paraquat, with paraquat being banned throughout the whole European Union (ECCHR, n.d.). Further, the temporarily fertilising function of clearing land by burning is lost, too. One respondent freely shared his documentation of the maize growth which can be seen in Figure 5 and 6, his proof of the fertilizing function of burning above-ground biomass. The maize seedlings in both figures were planted on the same day, but only one field had been cleared with fire. While farmers highlight the fertilizing and pH-buffering function of burning organic matter on organic and peat soil, this practice contradicts scientific evidence. The fertilizing effect of burning the above-ground biomass which impels a rapid release of nutrients into the soil is only temporarily (Glaser et al. 2002). The burning of peat soil is also problematic as it creates unfavourable conditions for cultivation on the already nutrient-poor soil in the long term and causes peat oxidation (Dikici & Yilmaz 2006; Hirano et al. 2014).

In the villagers' opinion, the law is a heavy burden for smallholders and highly impracticable. Out of fear, the majority of the respondents stated they will, nevertheless, obey. Well known is the case when a farmer of a neighbouring village used fire to clear his land, whereupon he was sought by the police but ran off. His land became state property. In spite of this story, some villagers admitted planning to burn secretly due to a lack of alternatives. In general, opinions on the law among the villagers interviewed were deeply divided.

In 2014, Seponjen was the largest maize production site in the district Muaro Jambi (interviews with villagers during February and March 2017). Where the land for maize cultivation, carried out primarily by Bugis farmers, must be absolutely clear and follow a strict schedule as it can only be planted once a year in Seponjen, oil palm smallholders are more flexible in their proceeding and the oil palm's requirements concerning the clearness of the land are lower. An advantage of burning land is the rapidity and thoroughness which cannot be achieved via manual weeding. The timeslot when maize seedlings have to be planted is very short. Usually, cultivation starts in May when the annual flooding is over. If weeds are cut manually and planting is then postponed, the harvest may fail as monsoon starts and the fields are frequently inundated. Hence, it is not just the accuracy in land clearing that is a major problem for maize cultivation but the timing which is gravely hampered by the ban on fire. As explained by some farmers, this is a reason why the ban might have an influence on crop choice and even

trigger land-use change from maize to oil palm. Another concern about a side effect of the law were raised by some interviewees. Attempts in cultivating maize despite the given circumstances or the transformation of maize fields to fallow land might lead to an increase in available organic fuel which plays an essential role in the uncontrolled spread of fires.

After the reinforcement of the ban in 2016, around 20 people cultivated 60 ha of maize. Prior to the ban, about 80 people cultivated 200 ha maize. These numbers only refer to maize farmers organised in farmer groups who may apply for free seedlings from the local government. At the time of our research in March 2017 one farmer group of Seponjen had already withdrawn their proposal for maize seedlings, as it was likewise considered by another farmer group. Individuals had already resigned from maize farmer groups. Other farmers wanted to wait and see whether the prohibition of burning land would be altered again in the coming season and, if the prohibition was unchanged, stop cultivating maize. It is expected that the land formerly used for maize cultivation is either transformed to fallow land or changed to another crop like the oil palm. A change to another seasonal crop like watermelon or pineapple with less organic waste production is not an option as knowledge on how to cultivate other crops and profitable land use options is not a given. Other crops are rarely cultivated as there is a long history of private and state-owned oil palm companies in Jambi where farmers often received training. Also, farmers would incur high investment costs for other seedlings as maize seedlings are governmentally funded for members of farmer groups, although these costs vary depending on seedling and fertilizer quality chosen.

Similarly to the impact of the first perturbation, villagers are affected differently. The degree to which the law disadvantages smallholders is explained in the village's specific cropping pattern. Especially affected are maize farmers, more precisely the ethnicity of the Bugis as they are the main maize cultivators in Seponjen. Hence, the law causes unintended dynamics leaving foremost maize farmers, and thus most Bugis the worst off.

Source: Local villager.

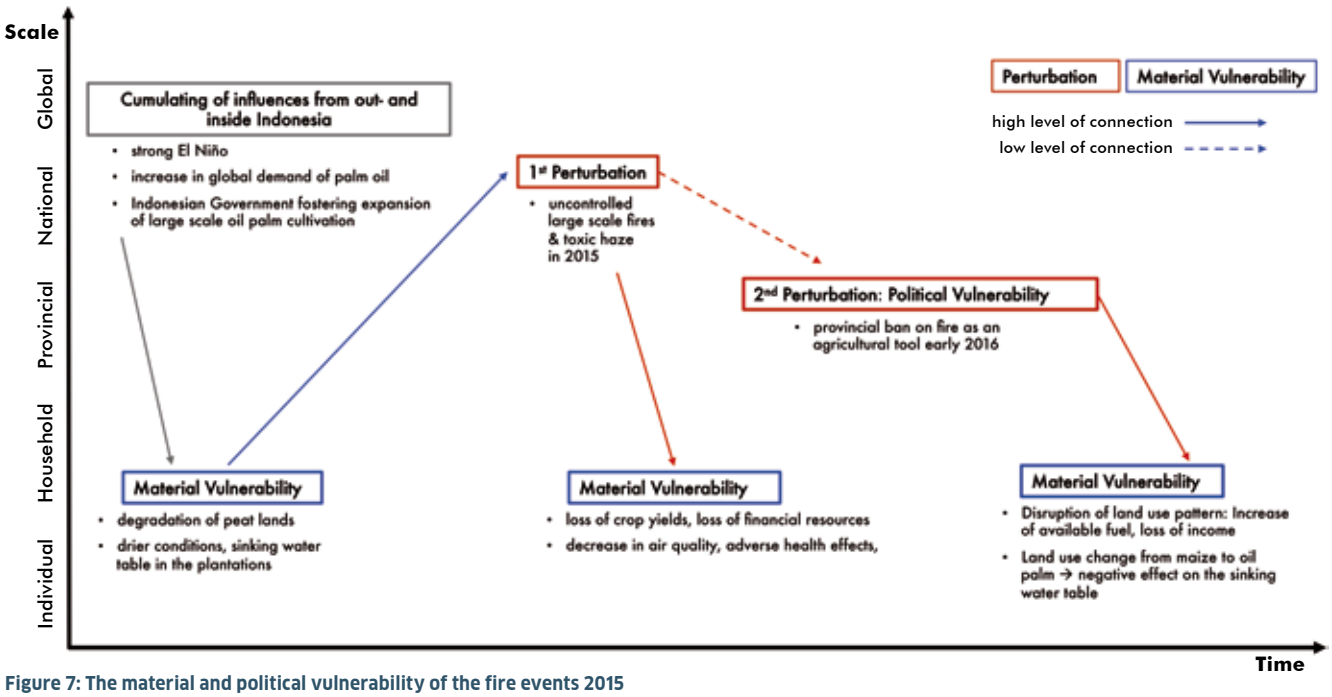
Figure 6: Maize cultivated on land not cleared by fire

Discussion

So far, analysis of the ecological, economic and health impacts of the fires 2015 remained on a national or regional scale (World Bank 2016, Lee et al. 2017, Crippa et al. 2016), leaving a blind spot on how the impacts manifested themselves on the ground. The drying of peat soil has been associated with the creation of conditions that favour the spread of fires (Turetsky et al. 2015, Couwenberg et al. 2010), but has not yet been considered with regard to fire policy. Only with the knowledge of both an understanding of the changes the law brings about in the village and an awareness of characteristics of peat soil can the significance of the ban become clear and demonstrates how it fails to address the underlying causes for the outbreak of fires. To reiterate, a combination of influences out- and inside the village area, namely the expansion of oil palm monocultures on peat land caused the degradation of peat swamp through drainage, fostered by, among others, the Indonesian national government due to land scarcity and a growing global demand in palm oil. Private plantations in Seponjen and an oil palm concession bordering the village on peat soil are an outcome of these influences. These conditions created on the local scale an environment that favoured the outbreak of fires, as dry peat is easy flammable. The dryness of the peat is intensified by the phenomenon El Niño which manifested itself as a prolonged drought. These changed environmental conditions are the Material Vulnerability in Figure 7. How the twofold perturbation of the fire crises in 2015 is fostered by and connected to influences out- and inside the village is depicted in Figure 7. This figure is a timeline connecting a simplification of the events on the household/individual scale to the local and provincial/national and global scale. The arrows connect the different events, the arrow's line informs about the quality of the scales' connectedness. Whereas an unbroken line illustrates a high level of connectedness, a broken line indicates inconsistencies. If an ideal connectedness is a given, the political translation of the material vulnerability meets the aim to reduce vulnerabilities, hence the material vulnerability is mitigated.

In consideration to the given evidence, it is apparent that the major cause making land prone to fires – the sinking ground water table through drainage – is not corrected by the regulation on not burning organic matter on land. Thus, the fires are the driver of the first perturbation the local population went through. This first perturbation is the direct cause for the Material Vulnerability at the household and individual scale which manifested themselves as the explained adverse effects.

The reaction on the regional scale the ban on the use of fires as a political



Source: Own design.

Figure 7: The material and political vulnerability of the fire events 2015

translation of the material vulnerability is highly disconnected from the local reality. The ban does not tackle the changes that made the land so prone to fires – the sinking ground water table in peat lands through drainage. It is clear that without any kind of compensation or further assistance the ban is highly impractical, hence it is titled as a second perturbation to the villagers as it brings about adverse impacts on their income and makes them more susceptible to economic shocks. A further consequence of the ban is its potential to drive the change from seasonal crops to oil palm. However, this change does not provide a solution to all the villagers' problems as it is not financially viable for everyone and the pressing issue of the disposal of organic matter is not eliminated but adjourned. Maize farmers in particular are hindered by the regulation as their organic disposal comes in high quantities. If the ban on fire is to be successful, the needs of the people on the local scale must be addressed as there is currently no known alternative in land clearing methods. The potential magnitude of future fires is also affected by the varying acceptance of the ban among the villagers. While some plan to obey, others state they will ignore the law as they recognise no danger in burning their land beyond the disadvantages associated with the regulation. Exactly here lies a danger. If the ban is obeyed only by a few people, more dried organic matter remains on the fields or fallow land which is, in case of an uncontrolled fire, easily flammable fuel.

Hence, vulnerability has increased in terms of (1) susceptibility to economic shocks for the local people and (2) susceptibility to fire due to an increase of available fuel. As the ban also fails in tackling root causes that make the land so prone to fire, the ban on fire-clearing as an agricultural tool is a maladaptation.

Conclusion

The reality at the local level, and policy making on the national level, are highly disconnected in terms of the Indonesian fires of 2015. Further, the roots of components of the complex set of factors that make Indonesia so prone to fires are inscribed in its recent past. Identification of the dynamics on different scales that have created and will create the current and future situation offers an answer to some whys and hows of Indonesia's fire problem.

The next El Niño phenomenon will certainly happen, and the frequency of the occurrence of extreme El Niño events is predicted to increase due to global warming (Cai et al. 2015). Thus, the Indonesian fire issue is even more pressing. An avoidance of a repetition of the Indonesian fires 2015 is of global significance, as the impact's scope reaches everyone, may it be through positive radiative forcing, economic losses or adverse health effects. However, a ban on fire as an agricultural tool is not the ultimate solution. The given example of a two-fold perturbation shows that the discourse in vulnerability is in need of political approaches that recognize how vulnerabilities arise due to a disconnection of local realities and political measurements, as well as how vulnerabilities are created that constitute the initial situations prone to perturbations.

Acknowledgements

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Corresponding Author: Flora Hartmann [F.Hartmann3@stud.uni-goettingen.de] is a graduate of the study program B.Sc. Geography at the University of Göttingen, Germany. The presented paper is based on research she conducted for her Bachelor Thesis.

COP23: A "Pacific COP" with "islandised" outcomes?

Oliver Hasenkamp[1] & Elisabeth Worliczek[2]

[1] *German Pacific Network & United Nations Association of Germany, Zimmerstraße 26/27, D-10969 Berlin, Germany*
[2] *Center for Global Change and Sustainability, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Borkowskigasse 4, 1190 Vienna, Austria*

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Abstract: Fiji presided over the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 2017. This was the first time a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) assumed the Presidency of a UN Climate Change Conference. Considering the dramatic consequences of climate change for island states, this article examines to what extent Fiji was successful in making COP23 a 'Pacific COP' and forging 'islandised' outcomes that can be considered a success for those most vulnerable to impacts of climate change. The article also looks at the difficult circumstances of Fiji's Presidency in light of the announced withdrawal of the United States of America from the Paris Agreement and the fact that the international community is far from achieving its targets to limit temperature rise to well below 2°C or even 1.5°C. It also links COP23 to Fiji's geopolitical aspirations that go beyond climate change.

Keywords: Fiji, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Climate Change, COP23, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

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In November 2017 the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place in Bonn. Fiji presided over COP23, the very first time for a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) to take the role of President of a United Nations Climate Change Conference. Never before, the conference was chaired by a country as vulnerable to climate change as Fiji. Considering the dramatic consequences of climate change for Fiji and its neighbouring island countries and the long marginalisation of the Pacific Islands Region in international politics, this step was long overdue and an important way to draw greater attention to the needs of the most vulnerable states and people.

However, COP23 took place under difficult global circumstances. After many years of unsuccessful negotiations, the parties to the UNFCCC finally agreed on the Paris Agreement in December 2015 (United Nations 2015). The Paris Agreement beat the records as the global treaty moved into force most quickly: not even one year after COP21 in Paris, it was signed and ratified by as many states as was needed to move it into force. After the initial euphoria subsequent to the adoption of Agreement and its quick ratification, the focus shifted to more complicated questions of the implementation of the Agreement. The world is facing the reality that the international community is currently far off the track to reach the goals set in the Paris Agreement. The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by the parties to the Paris Agreement are not sufficient to limit the average global temperature rise to well below 2°C or even 1.5°C as agreed in Paris. Furthermore, the announced withdrawal of the United States of America under President Donald Trump from the Paris Agreement can be considered a major setback for the climate change negotiations and generated the fear of 'ripple effects' by further countries bailing out (e.g. Guardian 2017).

The goal to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C is vital for the Pacific Island countries. Many of the smallest and most low-lying islands nations like Tuvalu or Kiribati consider a temperature rise of more than 1.5°c as the threshold of climate change that will make their islands uninhabitable over the next decades (Benjamin/Thomas 2016). Enele Sopoaga, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, consequently proclaimed that the outcome of the 'Pacific COP23' under Fiji's Presidency needed to be 'islandised'[1]: Fiji and its neighbouring Pacific Island countries should push for outcomes that clearly bear the signature of small and vulnerable island states.

Looking back at COP23 and its outcomes, this article examines to what extent Fiji was successful in making COP23 a 'Pacific COP' and forging 'islandised' outcomes that can be considered a success for the most vulnerable to impacts of climate change. In analysing the outcomes of the conference and Fiji's success, this article gives reference to the uneven distribution of power in the climate negotiations and the numerous criteria that influenced both the decision-making at COP23 and Fiji's Presidency. It also considers the very diverse expectations towards Fiji's Presidency. Next to an assessment of the decisions taken by COP23, the article also draws on media analysis especially in the Pacific region and numerous exchanges of the authors with various actors during COP23. In order to analyse the outcomes of COP23 and Fiji's influence on the conference, it is important to understand the circumstances of the COP23. Therefore, this article will also look on the current status of the global climate change negotiations, the vulnerability of the Pacific Island countries as well as Fiji's increasing activities in international politics and its motivations.

The results of COP23

COP23 took place from 6 – 17 November 2017 in Bonn. More than 25,000 people from around the world participated in the conference, including delegates from the parties to the convention, observers from international organisations and civil society, and journalists. For the first time, a COP was conducted in two different zones: the negotiations took place in the so-called 'Bula Zone' with access only for the representatives of the parties and a limited number of observer delegations, while most of the side-events took place in the so-called 'Bonn Zone' with access for all registered delegates. In the Bonn Zone there were also numerous pavilions at which states, the UN system and other organisations presented their work on climate change.

Source: Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit.

Figure 1: 'Bula Spirit' in Bonn, Germany: performance by Fijian warriors at COP23.

This section looks not only at the formal outcomes of the COP23 negotiations (which have been analysed extensively elsewhere, e.g. Obergassl et al. 2018), but also gives reference to the promotion of Fijian ideas in the context of the formal outcomes. In further chapters, more consideration is given to the indirect outcomes of the conference – including the Fijian 'Bula Spirit' that was brought to Bonn – and Fiji's relationship to other actors.

Rulebook for the implementation of the Paris Agreement

The expectations regarding the outcomes of COP23 have been rather low prior to the conference. According to the time frame of the international climate change negotiations, the main task of COP23 was to draft a rulebook for the implementation of the Paris Agreement to be adopted by COP24. The rulebook is meant to address some of the uncertainties of the Paris Agreement and aims to produce comparability and verifiability of the implementation. While the negotiations on the rulebook are technical, they are nonetheless very important for the process of implementation of the Paris Agreement. As the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by the parties to the Paris Agreement are voluntary commitments, the parties seek to establish standards for these commitments to make them verifiable and the successes in the implementation measurable.

By compiling a text collection for a rule book on the implementation, COP23 delivered on the relatively low expectations. As the rulebook will only be adopted by COP24 in Poland this year, its success remains to be seen. Some of the smaller and most vulnerable Pacific Island countries had argued to adopt the rulebook already in Bonn to advance the progress and to use the momentum of Fiji's presidency to make progress – an ambition that was not shared by a critical number of countries.

Talanoa Dialogue

Fiji left its footprint on the UNFCCC process: one of the major Fiji-driven outcomes of COP23 is the so-called *Talanoa Dialogue*. *Talanoa* is a concept widespread in different Pacific Island countries:

"*Talanoa* is a generic term referring to a conversation, chat, sharing of ideas and talking with someone. It is a term that is shared by Tongans, Samoans, and Fijians. *Talanoa* can be formal, as between chiefs and his or her people, and it can be informal, as between friends in a kava circle. *Talanoa* is also used for different purposes; to teach a skill, to share ideas, to preach, to resolve problems, to build and

maintain relationships, and to gather information." (Johansson Fua 2014:56)

In this sense, its non-confrontational nature and the emphasis on skills like listening and exchanging may make *talanoa* an appropriate tool for climate change negotiations. *Talanoa* as a concept for the climate negotiations was promoted by the Fijian presidency as a means of open, inclusive and transparent exchange of views. Fiji's Prime Minister and COP23 President Voreqe Bainimarama explained the idea of the dialogue by stating: "[…] we will not be negotiating. We will be talking to each other. And we will be listening. This is the perfect setting for adopting the *talanoa* spirit that is so much a part of what Fiji brings to the presidency" (Fiji Times 2017e).

The international climate change negotiations are highly uneven. Like negotiations in other policy fields, UNFCCC and its climate change negotiations are characterized by asymmetrical power relations between its parties (Medalye 2010, Stevenson/Dryzek 2014).[2] While island states have been considered a moral voice in the negotiations, they are disadvantaged due to their modest capacities in negotiations with actors that inhibit more power (Shibuya 2013, Barnett/Campbell 2010). For Fiji and other small and vulnerable states, *talanoa* offers the benefit of taking a different approach to the negotiations, providing an opportunity to break through the highly uneven power dynamics of the climate change negotiations.

During COP23, the Fijian presidency and other civil society stakeholders adopted the concept, attempting to bring together diplomats and experts to have an open and transparent exchange at eye level across differences in opinion. At Bonn Zone, a *Talanoa Space* was established to provide a platform for diplomats, observers and non-high-level participants of COP23 to engage in *talanoa* by sharing their own experiences or personal stories. *Talanoa* sessions, e.g. at the Fijian Pavillon at COP23, were used to bring together different stakeholders, including e.g. diplomats and representatives from the youth. This played an important role in creating a Fijian Bula Spirit (see further explanations below) and a positive atmosphere, especially in the Bonn Zone.

More importantly, the idea of *Talanoa* will continue to have an impact beyond the conference as COP23 agreed on a *Talanoa Dialogue*, a facilitative process that is to start in spring 2018. In the run-up to COP24 it aims at providing a platform on the basis of the *talanoa* principles on the status quo of the existing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) on the reduction of CO2 emissions. Furthermore, it aims to explore the scope of further action needed in order to reach the goals set in the Paris Agreement. The idea of such a facilitative dialogue format was already agreed upon at COP22 in Marrakech in Morocco. The governments of Morocco and Fiji want to push forward this process that is now called *Talanoa Dialogue* together after the parties agreed on the general conditions of the process at COP23.

The basic notions of *talanoa* seem to be in line with the concept of the Paris Agreement and the international negotiations in recent years that strongly focus on voluntary commitments and self-obligations. *Talanoa* is still regularly used in the Pacific in regional or national politics, but some of its components are rather in contrast to the traditional patterns and strategies of the Pacific Island countries at the UN climate negotiations who traditionally argued for legally binding CO2 emission reduction targets and more obligatory mechanisms (Barnett/Campbell 2010) than provided by the *Talanoa Dialogue*. While *talanoa* is a Pacific infusion to the climate change negotiations, it also shows that Fiji confronted the reality of uneven power in the climate change negotiations by turning away from the traditional strategy of the Pacific Islands on climate change.

The Ocean Pathway and Fiji's Presidency over the UN Ocean Conference

For Island States, healthy oceans are naturally a matter of utmost importance. Next to an economic dependency on fisheries and other marine resources, oceans also play a vital role for the global climatic system. The critical role of a sustainable management of the oceans including a sustainable use of ocean resources as well marine protection has been highlighted at the 1st United Nations Oceans Conference on the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal No. 14 that took place in June 2017 under the Presidency of Fiji and Sweden in New York. As a follow-up to the presidency, Fiji drafted a COP23 'Ocean Pathway Initiative' (Ocean Pathway, 2017).

The initiative, pushed by Fiji and like-minded countries including other Pacific Island and Scandinavian countries, aims to affirm the Call for Action adopted a the Ocean Conference, in order to establish healthy oceans as a UNFCCC agenda item until COP25 in 2019, to further the insertion of oceans into NDCs and to release climate change funding for projects to support marine ecosystems (Ocean Pathway, 2017). The argumentation of the document recognises "the significance of their [Small Island Developing States] role as Large Ocean States with more than 90 percent of their national boundaries made up of ocean" (Ocean Pathway, 2017), a notion that increasingly gains popularity among small island countries to turn the focus from "smallness" to the great potentials of their exclusive maritime zones.

Making oceans a formal UNFCCC agenda item is no completely new endeavour and was already discussed at COP21 in Paris. However, it gained new momentum at COP23 with discussions among like-minded countries about establishing a working committee and a secretariat in Fiji's capital Suva in order to coordinate the efforts. COP23 also featured an 'Oceans Action Day', during which further countries signed the so-called 'Because the Ocean' Declaration (2015) that was signed by the first states during COP21 and aims at the inclusion of oceans in NDCs.

Despite these efforts, there was some disappointment within Pacific delegations that Fiji did not push the issue even further. Tuvalu's Prime Minister Sopoaga stated at a side event that "the absence of Ocean and climate change in the COP23 agenda is a disappointment and this needs to be addressed in COP24 and the way forward."[3]

Gender Action Plan & Platform on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Facing pressure from civil society, COP23 also adopted two decisions that pay special attention to groups that are particularly vulnerable to climate change, namely a Gender Action Plan and a Platform on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In many regions affected by the consequences of

climate change, women are suffering the most. A frequently used example to illustrate this particular vulnerability refers to the fact that getting water is still a job usually done by women. In the face of climate change, the distances women have to travel to the next well with clean drinking water can increase significantly.[4] Another group that is particularly vulnerable to climate change is indigenous peoples. Despite criticism from indigenous groups, so far there has been no UNFCCC mechanism to ensure adequate participation by indigenous peoples. The Platform on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was created by the Paris Agreement, but only at COP23 the parties agreed on the principles of operation to bring the platform into action. It is supposed to concentrate on three main functions, namely to provide indigenous groups with knowledge on climate change, with capacity for engagement in the climate change negotiations and to support them in the development and implementation of climate change policies and actions.

Source: Oliver Hasenkamp 2017.

Figure 2: The 'Pacific Climate Warriors' (first row) present their HaveYourSei-Declaration to Pacific leaders, including the Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), Francois Martel, and the former President of Kiribati Anote Tong (second row).

Loss and Damage & Climate change-induced displacement

For vulnerable island countries, loss and damage, including the demand for compensation, is another important subject. Even though the official time frame of UNFCCC did not anticipate loss and damage to become a major issue of COP23, the Fijian Presidency managed to initiate discussion on loss and damage. Naturally, positions vary strongly between countries in terms of financial interest; the discussion on loss and damage raises questions about the 'polluter pays' principle. As Steffen Bauer from the German Development Institute outlines, this includes an international expert dialogue at the margins of the intersessional UNFCCC meeting in May 2018 and, for the first time and despite opposition from Australia and the US, an explicit reference in the perambulatory text to "the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related disasters" (Bauer 2017). Bauer concludes in his assessment of COP23:

"While this may appear somewhat trivial, achieving such progress in the procedural miniature of multilateral climate policy should not be underestimated. It is safe to assume that this will be referenced from now on in future rounds of negotiations. And this would probably not have been achieved without the symbolic clout of Fiji's Presidency" (Bauer 2017).

Various side events at COP23 also pointed to the question of how to deal with displacement of people as a consequence of climate change. Climate change induced displacement is not just a future horror scenario anymore, but a dramatic reality for many people in the Pacific region. This includes cases of cross-border migration as well as internal displacement. Fiji, as one of the bigger Pacific countries, may be concerned both by internal migration as well as a host country for immigration from other SIDS in the Pacific (Sutton 2013:376). However, so far, the international community has failed to agree on any qualified legal protection and recognition of people displaced as a consequence of climate change.

Despite the ongoing discussions about this issue at the margins of COP23, the conference has not been able to deliver any pioneering success on the protection of the people most affected. Tuvalu's Prime Minister Sopoaga announced that his country was preparing a treaty to be introduced to the UN on the status and rights of climate displaced persons, but more details are yet to come and it seems that amidst the global refugee crisis with more people on the run than ever before who are protected by the United Nations Refugee Convention, most states are reluctant to deal with the climate change dimension of migration

Vulnerable Pacific States: Fiji and its Pacific neighbours

The Pacific Island States are amongst the most vulnerable nations to the effects of climate change in the world. While their contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions as catalysts for climate change is very little, they suffer most from the severe effects, especially of sea level rise and extreme weather events.

Some of the states of the region, including Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands, are threatened in their mere existence. As small, low-lying atoll nations with islands only a couple of metres above sea-level, their habitability and future depend heavily on sea-level rise (or rather the minimisation thereof). Some politicians like the former President of Kiribati, Anote Tong, even argue that limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C or less will not be enough (Fiji Broadcasting Corporation 2017, Bowers 2017). Climate change has advanced so far that there are irreversible effects that will result in great shares of the populations having to be resettled in a near future.

In the run-up to the conference, Fiji as the President of COP23 clarified that it was pushing the particular challenges and needs of the Pacific Island countries in the focus and was

Source: Oliver Hasenkamp 2017.

Figure 3: The Prime Minister of Tuvalu Enele Sopoaga (left) and the former President of Kiribati Anote Tong (right) discuss with the moderator Phil Glendenning, Director at the Australian Edmund Rice Center, at the Interconnection Zone of the German Institute of Development Policy.

acting on behalf of the entire Pacific Islands Region. In doing so, Fiji created great expectations among its Pacific neighbours towards the outcomes of COP23. However, Fiji was in a conflict of interest. On the one hand, like its neighbour countries, it needs to see urgent action to mitigate climate change and desires to promote itself as a leader of the Pacific States and Island States in general. On the other hand, Fiji has increasing geopolitical and strategical aspirations that go far beyond the issue of climate change. These aspirations can be in contradiction with taking the lead in defending the interests of SIDS in climate change negotiations, since good political and economic ties with big countries defending another line of interest are delicate and important.

Climate Change and Fiji

Even though island states like Fiji are among the larger ones in the Pacific region, they are still micro-states from a global perspective and face climate change as a reality already today strongly impacting the lives of its citizens, as Fiji clearly stated by in the run-up to COP23.[5] While Fiji and other non-atoll Pacific Island States are partly quite mountainous, most of the population lives at the coastline. Many Pacific Islanders have shared emotional personal stories on the effects of climate change on their families during COP23, including e.g. the reigning Miss Pacific Islands from Fiji, Anne Dunn. Together with other young Pacific Islanders from the Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Samoa, Dunn was selected to participate in COP23 for the project "Pacific Voices in Unison". The aim of the project, initiated by the German Development Co-operation Agency (GIZ), is to empower Pacific youth to demonstrate to the world how they build resilience to climate change. Dunn's story illustrates the great importance of land in the Pacific cultures:

"My family is from Toguru settlement in Navua, Fiji, where my paternal ancestral burial grounds are being clawed away by rising sea levels. Climate change to me means my family and I could not use these burial grounds to bury my late father and uncle who passed away this year" (Fiji Times 2017a).

The term *vanua* in Fijian, and similar terms in other Pacific languages (e.g. *fenua, whenua, honua*) describes the close relationship between people, their ancestors and their land[6]:

"It (*vanua*) does not mean only the land (*qele*) area one is identified with, and the vegetation, animal life, waters and coasts (*qoliqoli*) and other objects on it, but it also includes the social and cultural system. The people, the traditions and customs, beliefs and values, and the various other institutions established with the aim of achieving harmony, solidarity, and prosperity within a particular social order. Its social and cultural dimensions are a source of security and confidence and it provides a sense of identity and belonging. To most Fijians, the idea of parting with one's *vanua* or land is tantamount to parting with one's life." (Ravuvu 1983:70)

This centrality of land and its relevance to people's identity demonstrates the cultural impact of climate change. Consequently, Dunn continues her message by stating that "[t]hose like us around the globe dealing with the changing climate are losing our traditional knowledge, resources, and our culture. We value what we have inherited from our ancestors. We defy reliance, we strive in our resilience" (Fiji Times 2017a).

Apart from rising sea levels, extreme weather patterns associated to climate change including storms and droughts are impacting the Pacific Island countries. In February 2016, Fiji was hit by Cyclone 'Winston', the strongest cyclone ever recorded to make landfall in the Southern Hemisphere (Johnston 2016). The severe tropical cyclone killed at least 42 people, ten thousands of people were cut off from the outside world. Cyclone 'Winston' is only one of many heavy storms to hit the Pacific Island countries in recent years. In March 2015, Cyclone 'Pam' killed at least 24 people in Vanuatu and destroyed 90 percent of the infrastructure in its capital city Port Vila.

Cyclone 'Winston' even made it into the logo of COP23, which does not only portray a wave, but at the very same time can be understood as the eye of a cyclone. Cyclone 'Winston' also played a significant role in the self-conception of the Fijian society after 2016 and for Fiji's delegation at COP23. It was an important narrative for Fiji to remain confident and build up new confidence. The announcement of Fiji's *Ministry of i-taukei Affairs* (Fijian Affairs) of the intention to spend 35,000 Fijian Dollars (approximately 14,200 Euros) for a welcoming party for the COP23 delegation provoked heavy protests by climate activists and civil society in Fiji. They criticised that the reconstruction after the cyclone should be a priority before spending money for parties. The unusually open criticism even in the media pushed Fiji's government to cancel the party in its original format (Fiji Times 2017b, 2017c). This shows how relevant the cyclone and the

ongoing reconstruction still are for Fijian society.

A Pacific COP – Long overdue

Considering the vulnerability of the Pacific Island states to climate change, Fiji's presidency of COP23 was long overdue in respect to rebalancing the unheard voices of states most impacted by climate change. It can be considered as an important signal to finally give more relevance to the most vulnerable and most affected states and people in general and to the Pacific Island countries in particular. Pacific Island countries have been largely marginalised in international affairs for many years. Until a few years ago there was little attention given to island states and their particular needs in general. With many of the Pacific Island states gaining independence and entering international organisations like the United Nations comparatively late and having very limited capacities for international affairs, there was little experience in influencing global decision-making processes or even making one's own voice heard.

Yet the activity of the Pacific Island states in international climate change politics has provided them with increasing experience in global negotiations over the last years and finally resulted in greater recognition and slowly rising visibility in international affairs. Backed by its good relations with China, Fiji was able to push the United Nations in 2011 to rename its Asian regional group to 'Group of Asia and the Pacific Islands' to accommodate the fact that over a fifth of the group's members were Pacific Island states and assumed chairmanship of the Group of 77 (G77) in 2013 (Hasenkamp 2014; Herr/Bergin, 2011). In 2014, Samoa hosted the 3rd United Nations Conference of Small Island Developing States.

In 2015, several negotiators from the Pacific region played a key role in forging a so-called 'Alliance of the Ambitious' to bring together like-minded states from different regions and break through the traditional blocs of developed and developing countries, paving the way for the adoption of the Paris Agreement. This included the late Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Marshall Islands Tony de Brum who has been honoured at COP23 by a remembrance session and the denomination of a negotiation room as 'Room de Brum', and Kiribati's former President Anote Tong.

Source: Oliver Hasenkamp 2017.

Figure 4: Young delegates and observers engage in a talanoa session and drink cava, while the Prime Minister of Fiji and COP23 President Voreqe Bainimarama stands in the back.

Offering to host a UN Climate Change Conference was thus the next consequent step for the Pacific Islands countries in raising their profile. However, their limited capacities made it difficult to host an international conference of these dimensions in the Pacific. Fiji's offer to host COP23 came as a surprise for many, some argue even for its Pacific island neighbours (Fiji Times 2017d). It is likely that Fiji's offer was fuelled by the absence from offers by other states from the Asian-Pacific region which was due to host COP23, and the readiness of Germany to logistically host the conference in Bonn.

The 'Bula Spirit' at COP23

As COP23 did not take place in Fiji, it was one of the challenges for the Fijian Presidency to bring a Fijian 'Bula Spirit' to the conference nonetheless. It was supported in this endeavour by Government of Germany, which made clear that despite its role as logistical host, COP23 was a Fijian and not a German conference. The Fijian term "Bula" literally translates to 'life' or 'good health' and, as the abbreviated version of the more formal "Ni sa bula vinaka" ('wishing you happiness and good health'), is most commonly used as a word of greeting. However, in a broader context the word nowadays is, similarly to the Hawaiian term "Aloha", used as an expression of 'Fijiness' and the Fijian way of life more in general.

Most of the delegates, especially those who have spent their time in the 'Bonn Zone', agree that Fiji was successful in infusing COP23 and the city of Bonn more generally with a Fijian 'Bula Spirit'. Fiji did not only participate with a huge national delegation, but the presence of Fiji and the Pacific was also reinforced by the participation of many non-governmental observers from the Pacific region. By bringing Fijian artefacts to the conference venues, organising numerous cultural activities and side events, and infusing the conference with Fijian concepts such as 'Bula' and 'Talanoa', Fiji as the host of the conference was very visible.

Probably never before had so many people from the Pacific Islands gathered in one place in Germany and so many people from around the world enjoyed the opportunity to experience the vivid Fijian culture. This in itself may be an important success for Fiji and the Pacific Island countries. In the best case, one of the consequences of COP23 may be that leading diplomats from around the world will have a different attitude when hearing about Fiji and the Pacific Island countries in other contexts the next time. Only time will tell if this hypothesis is confirmed and if Fiji left a lasting memory presiding over a COP.

Other Actors and Strategic Considerations

While every country has its own agenda at the COP and would deserve to be analysed in detail, two countries

were given particular attention at COP23 – apart from Fiji, whose role has been discussed above:

Germany's role in COP23

Since Fiji was reluctant to host COP23 in Fiji due to limited logistical capacities, Germany offered to logistically host the conference in Bonn. This apparently altruistic support provided by Germany most likely, at least partly, had strategic reasons. Germany aims to be elected as a non-permanent member to the United Nations Security Council in 2018 and counts on the votes of island states. Furthermore, Germany is still perceived as cutting-edge in climate change policy. Arguably Germany hoped to stabilise its image as a global leader on climate change, despite recent criticism that it is going to lose this role due to setbacks in its own national climate policy. However, after the elections in Germany in September 2017, the transition government was visibly constricted. This complicated the situation for Fiji's Presidency, because Germany virtually dropped out as an important ally; its transition government was paralysed by the ongoing exploratory talks for government negotiations.

For Europe, and Germany in particular, Fiji's presidency and the logistical support provided by Germany was a historical opportunity to give more recognition to the Pacific region and strengthen its political as well as cultural ties with the region. But with Germany's reluctant policy at COP23 and current focussing on the formation of a stable government, it seems that this was a missed opportunity.

The US at the climate negotiations

The concept of talanoa which was promoted by the Fijian Presidency during COP23 also can be understood as an attempt to keep on the dialogue between actors regardless of heavily diverging opinions, including with the United States of America. There is great disagreement on the future engagement of the United States between different Pacific stakeholders. The popular Pacific Climate Warriors of the organisation 350.org, for example, who had numerous joint contributions with leaders from the Pacific at side events at COP23 even call in their *Have Your Sei Declaration* to "Kick the big polluters out of the climate talks" (Have Your Sei Declaration 2017) – a demand that is not only contrary to the *talanoa* approach, but to the whole idea of the UN climate negotiations.

In fact, the role of the US at COP23 was highly anticipated by observers. There was the concern that other countries could join the US in trying to slow down the climate negotiations or even follow the US in announcing their withdrawal. The fact that this did not happen is maybe one of its most important results of COP23. In contrast, with Syria announcing to join the Paris Agreement, the US are isolated as the only country in the world that will be not part of the agreement, once its withdrawal becomes effective (New York Times 2017). Indeed from an international law perspective, the earliest date when the withdrawal of US from the Agreement can take effect is in November 2020. Consequently, the United States are still considered a party to the Paris Agreement and therefore participate not only in the general elements of the COP to the UNFCCC, but also in the sessions explicitly focused on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. There has been a very visible unofficial US delegation, composed of governors, mayors and climate activists, who underlined the important role the Federal States and cities can play in the United States to continue climate change policies and that there are many forces in the US opposing the policy of US President Trump. While Fiji did avoid to openly criticize the US delegation during COP23, the Presidency together with the UNFCCC Secretariat strongly supported the unofficial US Climate Action delegation e.g. by inviting them and meeting with prominent critics of the climate policy of US President Donald Trump.

Anti-coal alliance

Next to the official decisions by COP23, one other outcome sparked the attention of the media. Under the lead of the United Kingdom and Canada, 20 countries announced to join forces in a so-called "Global Powering Past Coal Alliance" aiming to end the use of coal for power generation before 2030. Next to the United Kingdom and Canada, the alliance also includes important industries like France and Italy as well as a number of other European Union countries, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal. They are joined by Angola, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland and the Pacific Island countries Fiji, the Marshall Islands and Niue. In addition, six US and Canadian states signed the declaration. The initiating countries hope that by the time of COP24, more than 50 states will have signed the declaration (BBC 2017; Deutsche Welle 2017; Powering Past Coal Alliance Declaration 2017).

However, important countries with a lot of power generation by coal did not join the alliance, including the United States of America and Germany. Especially Germany was criticised for not joining the coalition. This was partly due to the limitations of manoeuvre by the German interim government in place during COP23, but also because when considering the larger picture of the anti-coal alliance, difficulties arise from a German perspective: Unlike Germany, all countries that joined the alliance only produce a small share of their power supply from coal; the large countries who have joined the alliance all have a great share of nuclear energy in their energy mix. In contrast to Germany, they do not plan to reduce the share of nuclear energy, but even want to further increase nuclear power generation.

Despite these reservations, the anti-coal alliance can be considered as a success from the Pacific perspective. Reducing or even better completely banning power generation by coal as one of the major drivers of climate change has been one of the main issues, not only discussed by the official delegates of the Pacific Island countries in Bonn, but also by civil society organisations. In fact, the Pacific Island countries already agreed in 2016 at a meeting of the Pacific Islands Developing Forum (PIDF) in the Solomon Islands to consider the drafting and the adoption of the world's first treaty to completely ban fossil fuels from their region (Guardian 2016). The anti-coal alliance may at least partly be a response to civil society activities in many countries: The most vulnerable countries have called for a ban on coal energy for many years, and the massive civil society activities against coal during

COP23 have been supported by civil society representatives from the Pacific – actions which may have pushed the countries involved in coal to form the alliance.

Fiji's Strategic Interests

To understand Fiji's motivations to host COP23 and to strengthen its role in international diplomacy in general, it is important to understand the country's regional role. While from the global perspective Fiji is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), it perceives itself as regional leader. Geographically, Fiji is located in the centre of the Pacific Islands Region and is host to the secretariats of most important regional organizations, embassies and regional institutions like the University of the South Pacific. Even though Fiji was not the first Pacific Island country to gain independence in 1970, it was the first one that joined the United Nations in the same year and regarded itself as a "spokesman" of the entire region (Fry 1980). Unlike many other Pacific Island countries, which only started to get interested in the United Nations when climate change got relevant, Fiji has a long history of engagement in UN Peacekeeping.

As mentioned before, the Pacific Islands Region has been marginalised as a global actor in international politics for many years. Only in recent years the region and particularly Fiji as a regional leader gained greater recognition within global institutions (see Hasenkamp, 2016b; Ratuva, 2016). Fiji's striving for greater involvement in international politics is closely related to internal political struggles. In 2006, today's Prime Minister and COP23 President Voreqe Bainimarama overthrew the elected Fijian government in a coup d'etat after the government announced an amnesty for those involved in a civilian coup d'etat in 2000. In 2009, Australia and New Zealand enforced Fiji's suspension from the most important regional organization, the Pacific Islands Forum, after a deadline for democratic elections in Fiji lapsed. As a consequence, Fiji shifted capacities from regional cooperation to the international level and encouraged its neighbouring Pacific Island countries quite successfully to prospectively pursue international cooperation more independently from Australia and New Zealand (Hasenkamp 2014, 2016a). Fiji's objective to split the Pacific Island countries on the one hand side and the traditional regional hegemons Australia and New Zealand on the other hand side, and its desire to establish itself as a new regional leader, most likely was facilitated by the great frustration of many Pacific Islands countries with Australia's reluctant climate change policy (Barnett/Campbell 2010).[7]

Source: Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit.

Figure 5: Opening of the Talanoa Space at COP23 with the Fiji's Minister for Environment Lorna Eden, the German Federal Minister for the Environment Barbara Hendricks, Fiji's High Level Climate Champion Minister Inia Seruiratu and the Mayor of Bonn Ashok-Alexander Sridharan (from left).

Even after the democratic election of Bainimarama as Fiji's Prime Minister in 2014 and attempts by Australia and New Zealand to relax the tensions with Fiji, Fiji continued its opposition against the two countries e.g. by setting up own regional institutions to counter Australia's and New Zealand's influence in the Pacific Islands Forum. Fiji's international activities are consequently also a means to establish itself as a leader in the Pacific region independent from Australia and New Zealand, while at the same time pursuing closer ties to China and other Asian states. One could argue that Fiji has a broader vision of 'islandising' – or 'Fijianising' – international politics that goes far beyond COP23. While there is no doubt of the significant role of climate change to Fiji and the countries true desire for urgent actions, COP23 not only allowed for Fiji to push forward the negotiations, but also the country's desire of playing a more powerful role in international relations in general. Fiji's international activities peaked in 2017, when Fiji was not only President of COP23, but also co-chaired the United Nations Ocean Conference and Fiji national Peter Thomson presided over the United Nations General Assembly from September 2016 to September 2017, before he was appointed the first United Nations Special Envoy on Oceans.

Fiji's regional and global activities also fulfil the function of legitimising the Fijian government in domestic politics. While there was hardly any discussion on the military background of Fiji's current regime or accusations of human rights violations against Fiji at the global stage during COP23, it remains arguable and needs further research whether COP23 was a success for Fiji domestically. Even though it remains very likely that Fiji's Prime Minister Bainimarama will be re-elected with a huge majority in the elections later this year, it is striking that there were unusually open and controversial discussions about its COP23 Presidency and especially the related costs in Fiji, as for example the outcry over the planned welcome party for Fiji's COP23 delegation.

Conclusion: Was COP23 a success?

Looking back at COP23, it is not easy to assess the success of the conference and Fiji's Presidency, because many different criteria need to be considered. Next to the difficult global circumstances this particularly includes the very diverse expectations, ranging from scepticism whether a small country like Fiji would be capable of chairing the conference to almost hope of a revolution of global climate change politics by finally giving the Presidency to a most vulnerable island state.

Without any doubts, Fiji proved that it was capable of chairing COP23 and it successfully made the parties stick to the – yet not very ambitious – time frame by drafting a collection of texts for a rule book to be agreed at COP24.

However, the demand of Tuvalu's Prime Minister Sopoaga and others to 'islandise' the outcomes of COP23 must have been largely disappointed.

On the one hand, Fiji was successful in infusing the conference with a Fijian "Bula Spirit". There was a lot of discussion about the issues of particular importance to the Pacific Island countries especially in the Bonn Zone. Not only Fiji, but also other Pacific Islands have been well represented at panels and podiums of side events. Policy- and decision-makers have been made aware of the challenges in the Pacific Islands and left the conference informed about the Pacific. This in itself can be considered a success for Fiji, considering the long marginalisation of the Pacific countries. On the other hand, the decisions taken at COP23 are by no means pioneering in delivering actions on climate change that are so desperately needed by island states. The discussions at COP23 and also its outcomes, particularly the Ocean Pathway, recognize and address the particular challenges of island states. However, the outcomes are only first steps and it remains open how they will be implemented by the member states.

Steffen Bauer from the German Development Institute summarises the outcomes of COP23 as "not great, but good enough", underlining that Fiji met the basic requirements of warranting "an organised run-up towards COP24" and that COP23 "delivered significant and adequate progress" (Bauer 2017). While he compliments Fiji for some of the successes of the conference including the debate on loss and damage and the *Talanoa Dialogue*, he also notes that "the cumbersome nature of the Bonn round of negotiations hardly give cause for exuberance" and "[m] any civil-society organisations and climate advocates had hoped for more, especially given that COP23 was the first under the Presidency of a small island state that is particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change" (Bauer 2017).

Clearly, one of the major successes of the Fijian Presidency is the *Talanoa Dialogue*. While the basic notion of *talanoa* is somewhat contrary to the traditional strategy of the Pacific countries to call for binding and authoritative solutions on climate change, the new format can provide a platform for open exchange about the serious deficits in global climate change policy and in a brutally honest way illustrate what further actions are necessary to reach the goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. Furthermore, talanoa as a concept for the climate change negotiations offers the benefit to island countries that the open and transparent exchange at eye-level can even out some of the asymmetric power dynamics of the negotiations. Consequently, the *Talanoa Dialogue* may be a good vehicle for Fiji and other island states to continue sharing their stories and pushing for urgent actions on climate change without the usual limitations of formal rules.

Even though there were great aspirations among Pacific countries and in the civil-society for the first SIDS Presidency, it is hardly surprising that Fiji could not fulfil them all. The small progress made cannot be considered as given. The Presidency of COP23 gave Fiji some influence in setting the agenda and especially pointing to the particular challenges of island countries, but, of course, the role as President also came with some limitations. Fiji was very keen to be seen not only as a vulnerable state that wanted to 'tell the others where to get off', but also as a moderator capable of meeting the international expectations of the Presidency of a big international conference. In regards to its efforts to further climate action on oceans at COP23, Fiji explicitly notes in its Ocean Pathway strategy the importance of "maintaining the neutrality and effectiveness of the Presidency" and therefore the need "to form a partnership of countries and stakeholders that can lead on various opportunities where the Presidency role is limited" in order "[t] o implement an effective pathway that will strengthen the role of the ocean in the UNFCCC" (Ocean Pathway, 2017).

Fiji had numerous motivations for presiding over COP23, ranging from a real need to address climate change to geopolitical aspirations, the desire to consolidate its role as a Pacific leader and the need to steady the standing of the Fijian government internally. From the global perspective, Fiji has demonstrated its capability of taking global responsibility and strengthened its position. There has been hardly any discussion about Fiji's democracy and human rights deficits during COP23. It is very likely that it will be regarded as the 'Pacific leader' in future by the outside world. In contrast, some of Fiji's Pacific neighbour states have been rather disappointed with the outcomes of COP23. At least partly, this is a result of Fiji actively raising the expectations towards COP23 among its neighbours. However, Australia and New Zealand have not been able to present a valid alternative to Fiji's regional leadership on climate change. Considering the unusually open discussion over the costs of Fiji's COP23 presidency, it is interesting and requires further analysis that it is not obvious whether Fiji was successful in bolstering the regime's standing internally.

To summarise, COP23 came with mixed results both for Fiji and the Pacific Islands Countries. COP23 may not have been "the year we saved Tuvalu and saved the world" as Tuvalu's Prime Minister Sopoaga demanded (Samoa Observer, 2017). However, it was a step forward for the Pacific Island countries who received greater recognition for their challenges at COP23 than ever before and can hope that the outcomes of COP23 can provide for a continued debate about how to address these challenges in the future.

End Notes

[1] Enele Sopoaga made the comments at a side event called "Our People, Our Land and Our Future" co-organised by the Tuvalu Action Network (TuCAN) and the Australian Edmund Rice Center's Pacific Calling Partnership at Interconnection Zone at the German Development Institute in Bonn during COP23 on 10 November 2017. Further information on the program at Interconnection Zone is available at: https://www.die-gdi.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdfs/veranstaltungen/2017/20171103_InterconnectionsZone_Broschure.pdf (accessed: 28 January 2018)

[2] For a broader analysis of asymmetrical power relations between the Pacific Island countries and larger states, also see Holtz (2016).

[3] Enele Sopoaga made the comments at a side event called "Our People, Our Land and Our Future" co-organized by the Tuvalu Action Network (TuCAN) and the Australian

Edmund Rice Center's Pacific Calling Partnership at Interconnection Zone at the German Development Institute in Bonn during COP23 on 10 November 2017. Further information on the program at Interconnection Zone is available at: https://www.die-gdi.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdfs/veranstaltungen/2017/20171103_InterconnectionsZone_Broschure.pdf (accessed: 28 January 2018).

[4] For more information on the Agenda Action Plan: see article by Marion Struck-Garbe in this volume

[5] Site of the Fijian Presidency of COP 23: https://cop23.com.fj/fiji-and-the-pacific/how-fiji-is-affected-by-climate-change/ (accessed 12.03.2018)

[6] For more in-depth information on the concept on vanua see for example Tuwere (2002) or Lin (2015).

[7] Australia is one of the countries with the highest CO2 emissions per capita in the world and continues to invest in coal mining as one of the country's most important industries. Australia refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol agreed by the parties to UNFCCC in 1997 until 2008 and has also declined all requests by Pacific Island Countries to give guarantees to accept climate change-induced migrants from their countries (see e.g. Barnett/Campbell 2010).

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Corresponding Author: Oliver Hasenkamp [oliver.hasenkamp@pazifik- netzwerk.org] is Chairman of the German Pacific Network (www.pazifik-netzwerk.org) since 2015. He works as an officer for public relations in the fields of climate policy and sustainable development for the United Nations Association of Germany (www.dgvn.de). He is Political Scientist (M.A.) and specializes in regional cooperation in the Pacific and the strategies of the Pacific Islands States at the United Nations.

COP 23:
Gender Equality and Climate Change

Marion Struck-Garbe[1]

[1] *Asia-Africa Institute, Hamburg University, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, 20146 Hamburg, Germany*

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Abstract: The World Climate Conference 2017 (COP 23) yielded the adoption of the first United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Gender Action Plan (GAP). This is a positive shift towards an integration of gender justice and human rights in the context of the UN Climate Action Plan. GAP necessitates importance granted to gender-equal climate policy and therefore, must be integrated into national climate action plans (programs). The first progress assessment will be conducted at COP 25 towards the end of 2019. However, while GAP recognizes women's roles and importance with regard to climate change, it does not reach out beyond this. For instance, development policy measures that likewise play an important role have been excluded. In the Asia-Pacific the specific role of women as livelihood providers has received minimal attention and resultantly there has been little implementation of concrete measures. There are still many steps to be taken before deeper and more fundamental changes are reached.

Keywords: World Climate Conference, Gender Justice, Gender Action Plan, Pacific Islands

"The Paris Agreement cannot be implemented if we ignore 55 percent of the world population" (El-Haite, 2016)

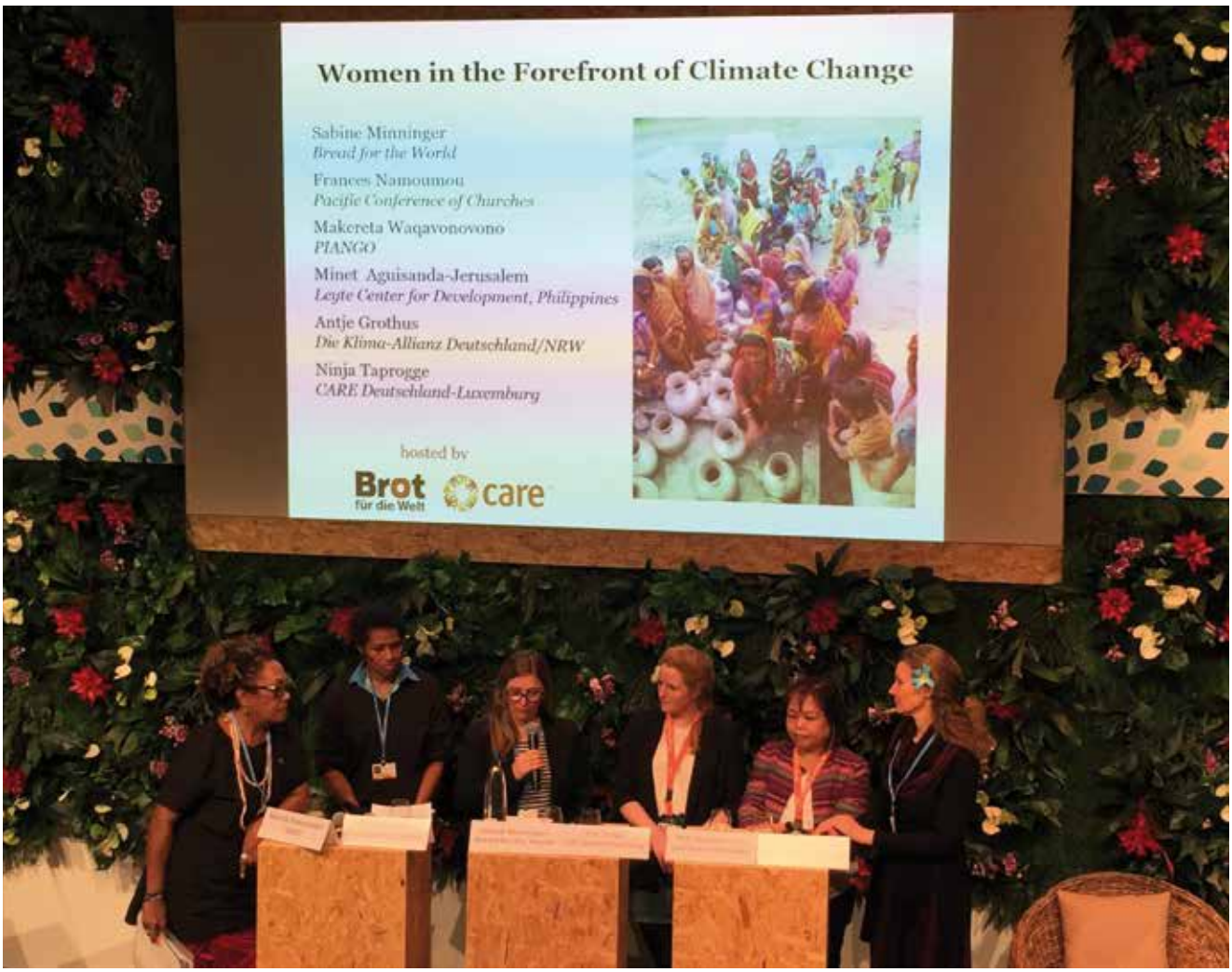
The World Climate Conference 2017 (Conference of the Parties: COP 23) in Bonn yielded no significant resolutions. A significant gap remains between intended claims and on-ground realities regarding planned contributions to reducing CO2 emissions. However, a positive element was the passing of the first United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Action Plan (GAP). By reaching this decision, the need for a gender-equitable policy was recognised on all levels of climate change adaption and mitigation activities, and relevant measures for the next two years were agreed upon. This is a significant step forward towards an integration of equity and human rights in the context of UN Climate Action Plan.

Climate change has variegated impacts across regions, states, communities, households and individuals. While it is recognised that women in the global south are more seriously impacted by climate change, this is not reflected in the relevant programmes and policies. Women do not share the same advantages as men particularly in societies where women are economically and socially unequal. This power disequilibrium also influences opportunities to react to climate change in an anticipating and active way.

In planning processes, women's circumstances are not adequately considered. Comparative to their male counter parts, they often lack access to information, institutions and financial support including (land-)ownership and assets. This results in weak preparedness to confront potential disasters. Because of climate change they are more seriously impacted by productive and reproductive workload increases. These include extended walking distances to acreage and/or fresh water supplies as well as negative impacts on farming and related economic opportunities from changing precipitation. In addition, they face further intangible impacts rooted in existing gender inequalities. Yet, women are not given equal platforms in the political sphere or during expert debates. Their perspectives are consequently disregarded or insufficiently considered in global and local plans, and in decisions on adaption and mitigation.

Requests for incorporating these gender-specific facts and considerations into the UNFCCC process have taken significant time to be heard. In Doha 2012, a decision was reached on equal gender ratios within the UNFCCC process. But it was only in Bonn at COP 23 that this was actualised, after requested action plans and financial support were formalised in Marrakesh 2016 (Women Gender Constituency, 2017).

In the run-up to COP 23, multiple emphases were placed on the need to establish the participation of women in climate change issues. The establishment of the Gender Action Plan (UNFCCC, Gender and climate change, 2017) on 13 November 2017 marks a significant success on the path to gender equality in the global dealing with climate change issues. The GAP states that under any conditions specific importance



Source: Oliver Hasenkamp 2017.

Figure 1: COP23 Panel about the role of women in fighting climate change

must be given to gender-equal climate policy. Its goal is to promote a gender-equal climate policy while prioritising this perspective in the Agreement's implementation and in the work of all stakeholder groups. Furthermore, the GAP strives to advance the entire and equal participation of women in the negotiations and regulates the implementation of its settlements in national climate programmes.

The GAP's contents are divided into five categories. The argumentation however exclusively relates to equal gender participation in climate negotiations, financing and adaption programmes. Gender equality, albeit closely related, is not addressed in any aspects beyond a narrowly defined climate change framework. Exemplary, development policy measures that likewise play an important role, also in national climate plans, had been excluded

The GAP that was passed at COP 23 aims at the following (Aguilar and Verveer, 2017):

- Improved access, on local and national level, to gender-equal education and technical training in all climate protection and adaption measures, which have been agreed upon in the UNFCCC context, including the Paris Agreement
- Provision of means to support the participation of women in national delegations
- Creating capacities for the integration of gender aspects in climate protection and to achieve balanced gender equality
- Gender-equal access to financial means as well as gender-equal budget planning by the governments in the implementation of climate protection measures
- Evaluation of the implementation of the agreements

The first progress assessment report of the integration of GAP in national action plans is being expected at COP 25 in November 2019. It will be interesting to see whether changes of the current situation will in fact already be noticeable by then.

Fiji had the chair at COP 23 and because of this climate change impacts in Oceania were given the strongest visibility. Pacific Island countries are already facing the effects of climate change related extreme weather and other forms of ecological damage such as rising soil and water salinity. In most of these countries cultural practices and identity of the indigenous populations is intrinsically tied to land and sea. Damage or loss of ecological systems will have a strong impact on their way of life. In such cases women are often responsible for the sustaining livelihoods. They are often the guardians of knowledge regarding farming and localised natural resource use. In such situations key opportunities exist for women to find solutions to climate change. However, even where adaptation programmes already utilise such opportunities, they have been rarely implemented.

Source: © UNclimatechange 2017.

Figure 2: Women from the Pacific during the welcoming ceremony of the conference

As expected, under the COP chairmanship of Fiji, the smaller Island States, have urged for the rapid establishment and implementation of a planned fund for the financing of adaptation measures and financial compensation related to the damages caused by climate change. They not only seek adaptation and compensation for material damages but also cultural losses occurring for issues such as resettlement. They argued that payment for mitigation of such existential restrictions had to be covered by the major industrial nations responsible for it. However, the specific role of women as livelihood providers and cultural guardians barely received any attention. This fact is not surprising since significant Pacific region climate related data are still inexistent, particularly with regard to gender relations.

If a change towards gender equality is to be achieved, attitudes and behaviours across the society need to be confronted by men and women. Only then can gender-specific inequality through climate change be reduced. The Pacific region has a lot of catching up to do in terms of such changes, as it is clearly at the bottom of the league when it comes to gender equality.

Hilda Heine, incumbent President of the Marshall Islands, showed optimism in Bonn with regard to the GAP. She wrote, "In the next two years, the plan will aim to increase the number of female climate decision-makers, train male and female policymakers on bringing gender equality into climate funding programmes, and engage grassroots and indigenous women's organisations for local and global climate action." (Heine, 2017)

The COP 25 will offer by the end of 2019, the first opportunity to examine which goals have been incorporated into the national action programmes and implemented. Furthermore, it will show to what extent positive changes are noticeable, and whether women can play an active role in the fight against climate change.

Hint: Research Report

A long version of the report was developed in the context of the course 'Gender, Environment and Climate Change in Asia-Pacific' in winter semester 2017/18 at the 'Asien-Afrika-Institut', University of Hamburg; jointly by Naelil Quincke, Julian Huesmann, Paula Hennings, Joelle Bavoux, Christian Otto, Elisa Imanuwarta, Sophie Grobe, Vanessa Sembiring and Sarah Veil.

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Corresponding author: Marion Struck-Garbe [marion.struck-garbe@hamburg.de] is a lecturer at Asia-Africa Institute at University of Hamburg since 1987. She holds a master in Socio-Economics and Social Anthropology, with focus on Oceania. In the 1990s, she lived for five years in Papua New Guinea specializing in gender studies. She is a member of the German Pacific Network where she had been chairperson of the board for nine years. Since 2001, she works at Greenpeace Hamburg.

RESEARCH REPORT

Development of a methodology for biomass: an assessment in two river deltas in Fiji

Sarah Reimer[1] & Burkhart Brielmaier[2]

[1-2] Department of Wood Science, University of Hamburg, Leuschnerstraße 91A, 21031 Hamburg, Germany

Abstract: This is a report of empirical work in the context of a Master thesis at the University of Hamburg in cooperation with the German "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)" as part of the regional REDD+ program "Forest protection in Pacific Island Countries".

Keywords: mangroves, inventory, REED+, carbon stock, Fiji

Source of all pictures: Brielmaier & Reimer.

Figure 1: Group picture of the fieldwork team

The consequences of global climate change are more threating than ever. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) developed the REDD+ mechanism (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries) to foster activities in tropical forest countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the forest sector, e.g. by reducing deforestation rates.

To enable countries to participate in REDD+ they must have a thorough knowledge about the carbon that is stored in the biomass of their forest ecosystems. In this context, the purpose of our study was to conduct a biomass survey in the mangrove forests of Fiji to determine their carbon content. While the measurement of mangroves is not unusual, it is difficult to obtain reliable data due to their growth habit. „Interlaced shrub" would roughly describe the forest structure.

Before explaining the methodological details, we want to put our work into the socio-cultural context of Fiji. Here social aspects and communal life are of high importance in order to establish a fruitful collaboration and working environment in Fiji and with Fijians. Fiji oftentimes is described as a big family or a big village. It is important to mingle with people to recognize and learn the habits and traditions. During the four months we lived in Fiji, we gained a deep insight into the social structures, the tremendous importance of the family and the friendly interactions amongst people. During the time that we were not camping in the mangroves, we lived together with a German and a Fijian family in the capital city Suva. Dr. Wolf Forstreuter, native of the "Lüneburger Heide", has lived in Fiji for 27 years and has built a reputation in the field of remote sensing for the South Pacific. He shared his home with us and the Fijian family also gave us a warm welcome. `Aunt Sera`, the center of the family, taught us a lot about Fijian conventions and her four grandchildren, girls aged from one to seven, always brought life into the house.

Fiji has a mangrove forest of approximately 46.000 ha. Common among all types of mangroves is that they are saltwater tolerant plants (halophytic plants) and therefore grow on coastal shores and riversides, standing in water at high tide. Mangroves play a very important role in protecting these riparian zones by anchoring the landmass and therefore avoiding erosion or by reducing the force of storms. Also, mangroves play a very important role in marine ecosystems, e.g. as a breeding ground for many species of fish and shellfish. Furthermore, mangroves are part of many traditional practices of the Fijians.

Mangrove species are divided in red mangroves (Rhizophora spp.) and black mangroves (Bruguiera gymnorrhiza). These represent around 76% of the mangrove forest. In addition, white mangroves are forming the forest between mainland forest and mangroves. For our survey we considered the woody above-ground biomass of red and black mangroves occurring in the two largest river deltas in Fiji (Rewa Delta and Ba Delta) on the main island, Viti Levu.

The primary goal of our research was to develop a methodology for inventorying the mangrove forest. Especially Rhizophora spp. form a very overgrown shrub and do not explicitly form a trunk. A conventional inventory, as deployed for other forest types worldwide, based on measurable parameters such as diameter at breast height (at 1.30m height) and tree height was determined to be not feasible for our study. Another important goal of the study was to identify if the biomass of the mangroves can be related to other parameters. This would allow for estimating the overall biomass and carbon stock of Fiji's mangrove forests without the need of destructive sampling.

The method was developed jointly by the Head of the Institute of World Forestry, Prof. Dr. Köhl, employees of GIZ and the Fiji Forestry Department. The actual inventory was implemented along transect with a length of 162 meters (transect = sample plots along a given line). In each transect four 3x3 meter sample plots are located with a spacing of 50 meters between each plot. Over a period of 65 days, we surveyed 40 plots. On every plot, a destructive sampling of the existing vegetation took place. A destructive sampling includes the complete collection of the biomass and the measuring of several other parameters. For this purpose, the occurrence of the two dominant species (Rhizophora spp. and Bruguiera gymnorrhiza) was documented first. Next, the entire

Figure 2: Doing fieldwork

Figure 3: Doing fieldwork

biomass inside the plot was sampled destructively and weighed on the spot to obtain the green weight (i.e. weight of woody biomass including water content). Afterwards, samples of various tree components (roots, trunk, branches, leaves) were transported to the laboratory of the project partner 'Pacific Community' (SPC), where the samples were kiln dried (i.e. absolutely dry without water content) and weighed again. Hereby, the biomass of the mangrove species can be determined and put into relation to the fresh weight measured in the field. The results allow estimating the above-ground biomass and respectively the carbon content of the mangrove forest in Fiji. Under REDD+ a value based on the total quantity of stored carbon can be assigned to the forest.

Before the fieldwork could start, we first had to enquire an entry permit from the "Chief" of the village. This happened with a ceremony known as "Sevu- Sevu" where we explained our intentions to the Chief and gave a kava root (piper methysticum) as a present. Kava has an important traditional value in Fiji as it is used in a variety of social contexts. It is prepared by finely grounding the root and washing the powder out with (river-)water. The kava potion is then drunk in a traditional ceremony. Kava is said to have a calming and relaxing effect. While the consumption of the river water poses no problem to the locals, in our case it caused rather uneasy effects. After the chief has accepted the kava root and the ceremony has taken place, the enquirer belongs to the village and can implement his project. Adding to this, usually a fisherman from the village was assigned to our team to get access to the mangrove areas with his boat.

Entering the mangroves and accessing the plots was often only possible at high tide. However, most of the work was only feasible at low tide. Therefore, we had a period of four hours every day to work efficiently. This period changed every day by 50 minutes. Getting up early is a common habit in the Fijian culture as most people go to church before starting their work. Thus, we were already in the mangroves with the first rays of dawn. Working and living with our Fijian colleagues was always cheerful. A day without laughing is a lost day and there was no such day. We camped regularly in the respective study areas and cooked together with our Fijian colleagues, who quickly became our friends. The Fijian cuisine can be described as quite natural and starchy. Many roots, such as Cassava or Dalo are an important part of Fijian dishes. Fijians have a very close relationship to nature and so many groceries, e.g. tea, nuts, crabs, fish and clams were collected in the mangroves and prepared later.

Our survey team was comprised of employees of the Fiji Forestry Department, a Fijian student and a forestry apprentice. In addition to the energetic support during data collection and fieldwork our colleagues also became familiar with the inventory method enabling the Fiji Forestry Department to conduct a national mangrove inventory independently in the future.

Beyond our personally enriching experience, working on the project and with our Fijian colleagues, our goal is to share our valuable survey. With this project we hope not only to make a statement about methods for biomass collection and CO2 storage but also to substantiate the importance of the mangroves ecosystem in Fiji and to sensitize people to its importance with regard to climate change.

Corresponding Authors:

Burkhart Brielmaier [burkhart.brielmaier@gmail.com] was born in Tübingen in 1989. 2015 he received his B. Sc. from the University of Hamburg. From 2015 to 2017 he was scientific assistant in the sector of wood physics. In 2017 he worked for the GIZ in Fiji. Currently he is in its final throes in his Master degree in wood science.

Sarah Simone Reimer [sarah.reimer@studium.uni-hamburg.de] was born in 1992 and grew up at the lake Chiemsee in Bavaria. From 2012 to 2015 she studied wood technology at the University of Salzburg. In 2013 she spent one semester in Limerick, Ireland. In 2015 she started her master studies in wood science at the University of Hamburg. In 2016 she spent one semester in Curitiba, Brasil. Now she is preparing her master thesis based the mangrove inventory in Fiji.

BOOK REVIEW

"UnSichtbar. Vietnamesisch-Deutsche Wirklichkeiten"

"InVisible. Vietnamese-German realities."

Of the diversity of Vietnamese immigration to Germany

Trang Schwenke-Lam[1]

[1] *Universität Hamburg, Institute of Intercultural and International Comparative Education, Von-Melle-Park 8, 20146 Hamburg, Germany*

Abstract: This scientific anthology about the past and present of Vietnamese immigration in East Germany and West Germany is the first of its kind. The editoral team of the Documentation Centre and Museum of Immigration in Germany (DOMiD) worked in collaboration with the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation to depict the diversity of Vietnamese immigration to and in Germany. The anthology covers a range of interdisciplinary contributions and provides space for oral history contributions that live up to the diversity of Vietnamese-German realities.

Keywords: Vietnamese immigration and re-migration, oral history, intercultural education and upbringing, transcultural psychology, transnational networks

For some the keyword "Vietnam" evokes in their mind's eye horrible images of the Vietnam War, while others draw up picturesque bays, green fields of rice and white sandy beaches. And at some point, the view turns towards the Vietnam which is part of the history of a once divided Germany. May it be, the immigration of Vietnamese refugees ("boat people") after Vietnam War to West Germany and the recruitment of Vietnamese contract workers to the former GDR in the 1980s. Or the much praised Vietnamese pupils who are being regarded as the figurehead of successful integration.

The editors of "UnSichtbar", third anthology from the "Edition DOMiD – Migration im Fokus" line, aim to depict the disregarded immigration history and current reality of more than 176,000 people of Vietnamese descent in Germany. Being a scientific anthology, it contains academic contributions from the humanities, natural and social science. Additionally, the book gives space to oral history contributions of former "boat people", contract workers and re-migrants. This combination allows readers with little previous knowledge to gain quick access to the issues put forth. Because of the broad spectrum of topics, I will focus on four outstanding articles which deal with the experience of discrimination and racism, education and upbringing and with psychotherapeutic care for Vietnamese immigrants.

In honor of the 25th memorial day of the pogrom of Rostock-Lichtenhagen, where a house for asylum seekers, inhabited solely by Vietnamese, was set on fire, the theatre director and writer Đan Thy Nguyễn ("Das Sonnenblumenhaus") aims at coming to terms with the horrors of the past from a Vietnamese point of view. In his article "Far-right violence, the GDR and the Reunion" he reflects on continuities of far-right violence. He pleads for settling with history and an active remembrance culture, which has not yet taken place in politics or the Vietnamese community adequately.

Diametrically to the experiences of discrimination in the aftermath of the German reunification, Aladin El-Mafaalani's – Professor for Sociology – and Thomas Kemper's article "Educational success despite unfavourable conditions" illuminates the current perception of Vietnamese pupils as a "model minority". Using official statistics and the current state of national and international research, they document the outstanding educational success of Vietnamese pupils in the German education system: The numbers of Vietnamese pupils attending the grammar school ("Gymnasium") and finishing it with an university-entrance diploma ("Abitur") is even higher than that of German pupils without an immigration background. They do so despite empirically proven social and economic risk factors, that should normally adverse educational success. The article can't answer the question of what conditions exactly lead to

the "Asian miracle". But it does show possible explanatory indicators that are yet to be researched and elicits research desiderata whether the educational success continues in the tertiary education sector and the phase of starting professional careers.

The issue of intergenerational conflicts as a result of migration-related experiences is brought into focus by Birgitt Röttger-Rössler - Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology - in her article "Germans with parents from Vietnam". She writes that on the one hand, the educational success of Vietnamese pupils is being rated as consistently positive throughout society, but on the other hand, it is barely known what intergenerational conflicts the education gap and language barriers leaves in the parent-child relationships. The generation of children, driven by their parental zeal for education, has meanwhile arrived in the German education system and in local society. The generation of parents instead, still struggle with the German language and customs and entirely depend on the communication skills of their children. The traditional Confucian-influenced parent-child role is interchanged in the integration process. It collides with the strict hierarchical principle of seniority, according to which, younger people are obliged to obey their elders completely. The perseverance of traditional patterns of parental behavior no longer aligns with life in Germany such that family conflicts seem inevitable. These affective distances of parent-child relationships may lead to mental stress disorders, which can threaten and shatter families. The establishment of intrafamilial dialogues is proposed here as a solution for the rapprochement between the generations. These mental stress disorders often can't be resolved without professional support, but many immigrants will only have a little access to culturally sensitive counseling and therapy services due to lack of adequate language skills. This psychotherapeutic and psychosocial care gap is addressed in the article "Mental stress disorders, support and treatment options for Vietnamese immigrants in Berlin" by the medical team of Eric Hahn and Minh Tâm Tạ and their research group. Even after many years in Germany, Vietnamese immigrants are influenced by the stigmatization of mental stress disorders in their culture of origin. Unfavourable factors for mental stress disorders are the loss of protective social capital, a lack of knowledge of the German language or experiences of discrimination.

Source: © DOMiD-Archiv, Köln.

Vietnamese contract workers before leaving for the GDR, at Nội Bài airport, Hà Nội, 1988.

The article gives insight into the work of the psychiatric-psychotherapeutic network for the "Mental Health for Vietnamese Immigrants" in Berlin, which has built up a unique language- and culture-sensitive offer in Germany

The illustrated case studies and presentations of the various treatment options represent an attempt by the team to counteract the stigmatization of mental stress disorders in the Vietnamese-German community.

Conclusion

The strength, and at the same time potential weakness, of this anthology lies in the thematic breadth. The contributions are schematized in three thematic blocks: the immigration to West Germany, the immigration to East Germany or to the former GDR and a "residual area" of other topics. If one considers the content density, each of the three blocks would have deserved its own anthology, while at the same time, the interdisciplinary approach, from a variety of perspectives, is the strength of this project. The anthology provides a scientific platform to come to terms with the intertwining of Vietnamese immigration and the East and West German history.

Recommended not only for an academic, but also for those attempting to look behind the facade of common stereotypes which situate Vietnamese as a homogenous community between small-scale ethnic business ownerships and model pupil existence. The voices in this book are a chorus that resound with the diversity of Vietnamese communities.

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Trang Schwenke-Lam [trang.lam@uni-hamburg.de] was born in Hanoi, Vietnam and grew up in East Germany. She is now a PhD candidate and research assistant at the Institute of Intercultural and International Comparative Education at the University of Hamburg, Germany.
Her research focuses on extracurricular educational investment-strategies of Vietnamese families, the role of heritage language use and ways of using multilingualism as a resource of learning and teaching in the intercultural development processes of primary schools in Germany.

BOOK REVIEW

The Sympathizer

A Vietnamese spy novel and the attempt to de-americanize our view on the war

Britta Schmitz

"The month in question was April, the cruelest month. It was the month in which a war that had run on for a very long time would lose it limbs, as is the way of wars. It was a month that meant everything to all the people in our small part of the world and nothing to most people in the rest of the world."

1975, the Vietnam War has just ended, but the cold war and the clash of ideologies are still going on. This would of course be the perfect background for some run-of-the-mill thriller written by a white American for a Western audience. And without knowing anything further, we might first think that The Sympathizer, which was recently translated into German and marketed as a "thriller" and "spy novel", would be just one of those. However, things and people are all too often not what they seem to be – an adage which has never been more true than in this story.

Far more than simply a thriller, it is also a political novel, a satirical story, refugee literature and a critique of modern mass media, all interspersed with discursive passages and spiced with literary references and aphorisms.

Furthermore, the author is not a white American. The Sympathizer is the debut novel of Vietnamese-American Viet Thanh Nguyen, which won him the Pulitzer Prize in 2016 along with a great many other awards. Nguyen was born in Vietnam and grew up in the USA from where he experienced both cultures and had insight to both perspectives on the Vietnam War. He is a Professor of English and American Studies and Ethnicity primarily focused on "Americanization", how the American perspective continues to dominate film, literature and pop culture. His book is a critique of this prevailing view and includes the issues of acculturation and identity crisis of immigrants, along with the importance of loyalty and relationships (or the lack of those).

The narrator and protagonist of the story is a man who has no name and is only referred to as "the captain" throughout the book. We encounter him fleeing Saigon, accompanying a general of the South Vietnamese army, we know already that he has a secret. In the very first lines he reveals that he is a sleeper agent and actually working for the Viet Cong and spying on the South Vietnamese military and the CIA. The captain's narrative, which is the novel, is actually a confession; a confession addressed to the commandant of a communist re-education camp.

Readers are drawn into the multi-layered story with many flashbacks that take us back into the captain's childhood, youth and study years abroad. We learn that he is the illegitimate, but very talented child of a French priest and his young Vietnamese maid setting him up as an outsider from the very beginning of his life. Being of so called "mixed blood" he is literally bearing duality in his body and also in his mind. He is a torn person, not really belonging anywhere. His father neglects him and does not seem to care much about the young mother; he just continues his hypocritical life as a catholic priest, keeping his family secret. This is the stuff Greek epics are made of (minus the catholic church, of course). Nguyen goes even further here and created a main character that can be seen as a metaphor for Vietnam itself and its relationship to its foreign conquerors.

But his background and upbringing are also quite literally the reasons why our protagonist became what he is: a mole, a spy, a secret agent. Being intelligent and with the ability to see everything from two sides, he worked his way up inside the South Vietnamese military and security establishment from where he reports to the Communists, living a life full of duality and at times even contradictions. The only two people he is really able to relate to after the death of his mother are his childhood friends and blood brothers Bon and Man. But the ideological gap also runs deeply through their friendship and the borders between friend and foe eventually become blurred.

Soon after their arrival in the USA it becomes very clear that America is far from being the Promised Land and that whatever the refugees had before - their status, their ranks, and all the battles they fought - no longer count. Nobody in the US is waiting for these former allies and they have no other choice than to settle down for a most unglamorous life - in Hollywood of all places. And thus we see the former general opening up a shabby liquor store, selling cheap booze and fighting shoplifters instead of the Viet Cong.

The captain on the other hand manages to secure a clerical position at Occidental College. There he is constantly confronted with the more or less subliminal racism from the head of the department, who sees him as a study object and constantly lectures him on what "the Orientals" are like. But the professor is hardly the only

Figure 1: Viet Thanh Nguyen with his mother in South Vietnam, early 1970s

Figure 2: Viet Thanh Nguyen in Berlin, August 2017

Picture left: private archive; picture right: © Kodion Leibhausen

racist the captain encounters. Another splendid specimen is a foreign-policy expert, Dr. Richard Hedd, who in his book "Asian Communism and the Oriental Method of Destruction" delivers the "academic reasoning" for the war; his main thesis that Asians do not value life as Westerners do and therefore have to be combated. Interestingly enough, Dr. Hedd is not an American but an Englishman and thus some kind of meta-colonialistic spin doctor. Characters like Hedd and the professor are of course near-caricatures. However, reading the novel you might get the feeling that you have met all of those types in real life.

One of the key scenes unfolds when the narrator is hired by an American director who is shooting a kind of "white-heroes-fighting-the-yellow-peril"-movie. The captain takes the job with the intention to "de-Americanize" the story of the film and to bring in some genuine Vietnamese input. However, he is being outsmarted by the director and epically fails. From there on things deteriorate even further for the captain. The war is far from being over in the refugee community and the ideologies demand more victims. The captain gets even more deeply entangled into a net of treachery and deception, eventually becoming a killer himself. Finally, he finds himself back in Vietnam on a suicide mission together with a ragtag troop of former South Vietnamese ready to reconquer the motherland. This ends of course in a fiasco and the captain finds himself in captivity where he is forced to write down his confession.

The book culminates in a finale of interrogation and self-interrogation, confronting the captain with some fundamental questions of being human and accusations which widen the split of his mind until, at last, driving him insane. As he regains mental clarity it becomes evident that there are no easy answers of what is right and what is wrong. In that sense it is just logical that this novel can't be an easy and straightforward read. Furthermore, the very descriptive way of narrating is sometimes a little bit too overwhelming. Many times passages take on a stream-of-conscious-like flow where one has to focus extremely carefully in order to not miss an important detail. Some might find that this will disturb a smooth reading flow such that The Sympathizer is not a light read for lazy Sunday afternoons. The German translation by Wolfgang Müller transports Nguyen's prose quite well and is mostly very accurate (nitpicky persons will for example observe that Müller quite rightly chose the Lord's Prayer's original catholic translation into German). Only a few things get lost in translation between English, Vietnamese and German; for example when the Vietnamese "anh oi" is suddenly whispered by a male lover instead of a female one as one would expect ("Anh oi" means "Oh honey" in reference to a man).

The book has so many layers and dimensions, which reaches beyond its historical context and open up so many more questions, exceeding the frame of this simple book review. I would suggest that you read the book yourself and see how much you can actually sympathize with the protagonist. Nguyen has stressed in many interviews that he is not writing for a white audience, that his books speak more to Vietnamese readers. However, with The Sympathizer winning the Pulitzer Prize, his audience will definitely widen and that is a very good thing because the world needs more people, who can see everything from at least two sides.

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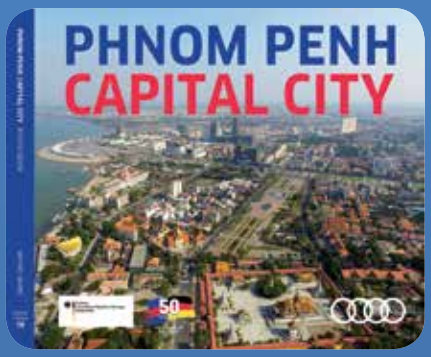
Britta Schmitz [schmitzbritta@gmx.de] loves languages and books and is fascinated by all places where different cultures meet and create something new. She also knows Asia quite well with a Master in Modern China Studies and more than 10 years of living, studying and working in China and Vietnam.

Waibel, M. (ed.) (2017) Phnom Penh: Capital City. Photo Book. 1st edition. Book series PAZIFIK FORUM of the Association of Pacific Studies; Volume 19, APSA e.V. Publishing House, Phnom Penh: 208 pages. ISBN: 978-9924-9151-0-2.



Greeting of Dr. Ingo Karsten, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Kingdom of Cambodia:

Every day we observe the rapid changes in Phnom Penh. We are both fascinated and overwhelmed by the developments. We see well-appreciated buildings and homes disappear. Questions have to be answered on what should be preserved and what should move and be replaced in order enable development and improve living conditions. This is a challenge faced daily in most cities around the globe. The built environment - the space in which we live and work every day - is one of the key features of our cultural identity. The preservation and strengthening of cultural identities is considered as one of the most important objectives of the German External Cultural Policy. By being aware of what makes up our cultural identity we are better able to preserve it.

Therefore, I am very happy that this book, which shows us everyday people in their everyday environment in Phnom Penh as well as changes which have taken place over time, has been published. I would like to invite you to join me on this exciting visual visit of the city and its inhabitants.