

Samting i narakain: reconceptualising change and resilience from the ground up

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Outline

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3. The Project
4. How we are approaching the research
5. What we have found to date
6. Some final thoughts on the project

Introduction

- Reporting on a project that is just underway, 'Samting i narakain'
- Three-year Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fund project,
- Led by myself and a colleague – Professor John Overton – from Massey University
- A multi-country (New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands) team of researchers and students.
- Focus is on knowledge systems across a number of locations in the Pacific as they relate to concepts of change, 'progress', adaptation, 'development' and resilience.

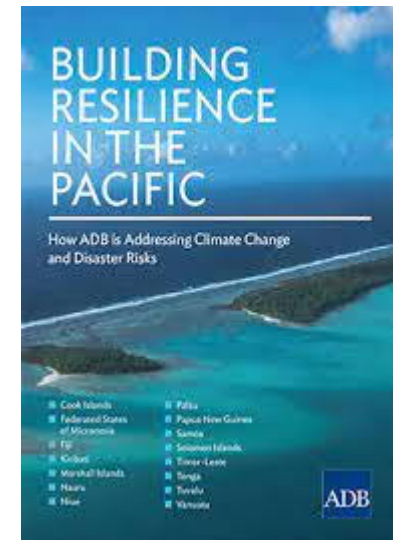
The research 'problem'

- A lot of focus on the Pacific as site of crisis and dramatic transformations
- Climate and disasters prominent
- Discourses of resilience and adaptation dominate
- A deficit framework, and little recognition of history or of agency
- ...so two old white men muttered things like:

... 'the Pacific has been pretty resilient these last few centuries...'

... 'there's more to change in the Pacific than climate and disasters...'

... 'how about getting Pacific islanders to set priorities and do the research...'

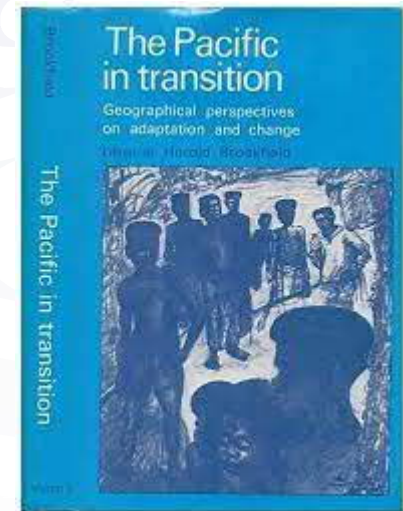


‘Samting i narakain’

- Project focused on doing four inter-related aspects:
 1. Revisiting old field-sites to illuminate local conceptualisations of change, using old and new techniques
 2. Build capacity among the Pacific research community
 3. Explore ways of collecting and curating community accounts of change
 4. Provide an alternative to the dominant external narratives of change

How to do this

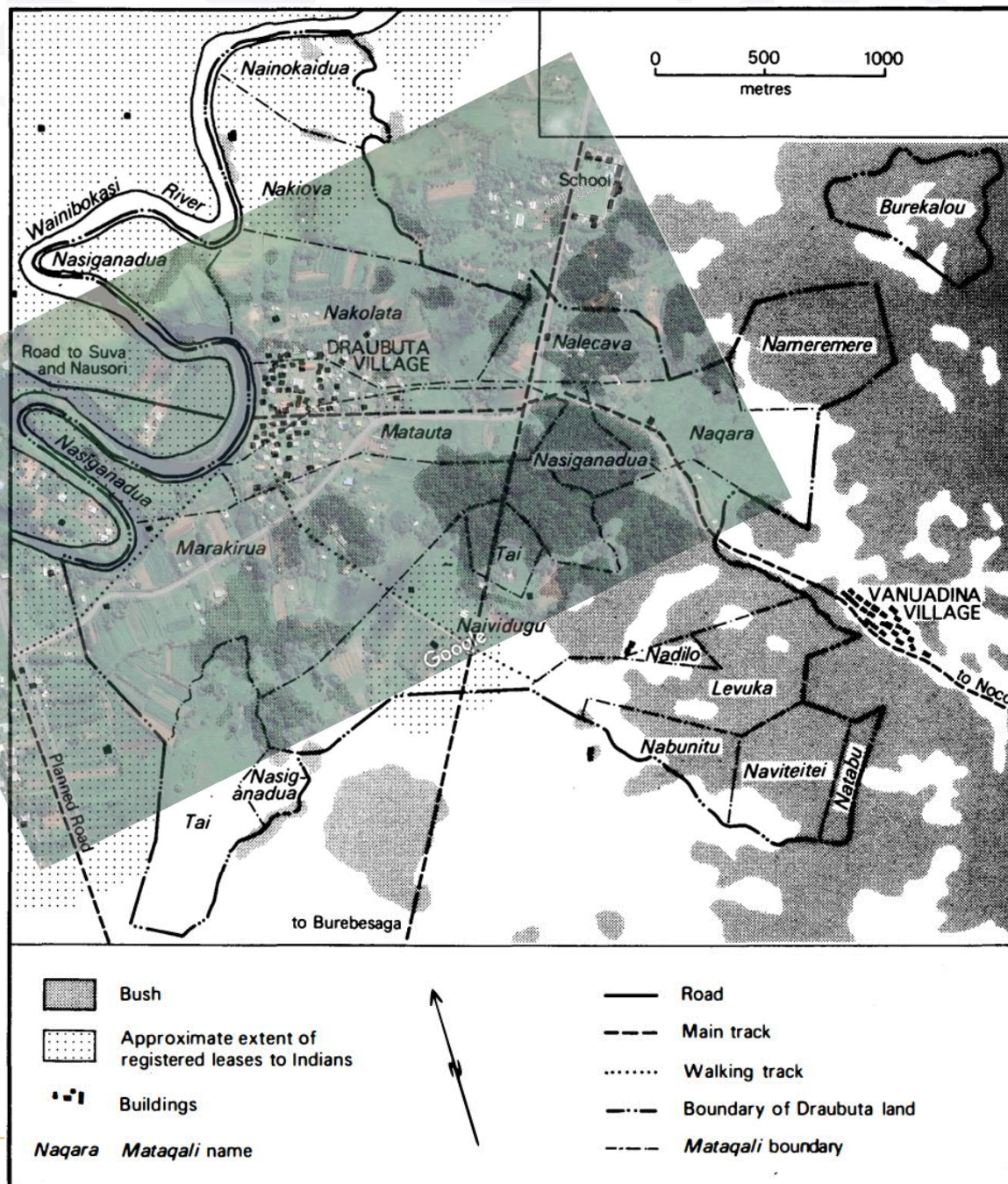
- Started by looking back ourselves – ‘The Pacific in Transition’
- Recruit a stellar team: Dr Gordon Nanau (USP), Dr Hennah Steven (PAU/ Waikato), Clare Kokonai (PhD student), two Pacific Island Masters students
- Revisit of fieldsites – Porgera (Glenn), Rewa (John), Guadalcanal (Gordon), Goroka (Hennah)
- Work with communities across 4 sites
- ‘Co-construction of understandings of change’
- A relational approach to the research



What we have found to date

- Climate change generating some anxiety...
- ... but not the only or even in most cases the most important element of change in people's lives
- Significant elements of continuity in people's lives over the past 30 – 40 years
- Landuse changes apparent in places





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- Landuse changes apparent in places
- Some dramatic demographic changes in communities

What we have found to date (2)

- Relationships central to the experience of change and ability to adapt to change
- Social networks, community cohesion significant to resilience in the face of change
- These inherent within communities – hard to ‘build’ from the outside
- Loss of history/memory within these communities lamented – look to preserve/construct and make available in culturally appropriate ways that provide local control over this knowledge

Final thoughts

- Concerned with ensuring local knowledge systems, narratives and insights able to effectively engage with and respond to dominant and contemporary global discourses.
- We anticipate that the research:
 - will not produce a singular narrative
 - acknowledge and reflect the diversity of Pacific peoples and environments – across cultural groups, between genders and generations, and between individuals.
 - ('The Pacific' is not a country!)
- Believe the project will be well-positioned to:
 - contribute to a richer and more critical understanding of change in the region
 - can better inform external approaches to and internal policy on matters of concern to Pacific island communities