Weaving Niche Production into Pacific Economies

The Social, Economic and Environmental Impacts of FIJI Water on Local Communities

CATHERINE JONES

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Table of Contents

	Abstract	iv
	Acknowledgements	v
	List of Figures	vi
	List of Plates	
	Glossary	
	Map of Fiji Showing Key Locations Mentioned in this Work	
1.	Introduction	1
	Weaving the Vakabati	
	1.1 Research Aim and Questions	
	1.2 Cultural Understanding	4
	1.3 Vakabati	
	1.4 Thesis Outline	5
2.	Talanoa and Positionality	7
	Uprooting the Voivoi	
	2.1 The Complexity of Talanoa	7
	2.2 Vatukaloko Talanoa	
	2.3 Positionality: Being Me	9
	2.4 Summary	
3.	Rationale, Methodology and Reflections	
	Preparing the 'i sele'	
	3.1 Rationale for Location and Study	
	3.1.1 Why Fiji?	
	3.1.2 Why FIJI Water?	
	3.2 Selection of Field Study Location	
	3.2.1 Primary: Vatukaloko Villages	
	3.2.2 Secondary Location: Suva	
	3.3 Reflection Diary	
	3.4 Carrying Out Research: Use of Mixed Methods	
	3.5 Literature Review	
	3.6 Collection of Quantitative Information	
	3.7 Collection of Qualitative Information	
	3.7.1 Focus Groups	
	3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interviews	
	3.8 Analysis of Data	
	3.9 Reflection upon the Fieldwork Process	
	3.9.1 The Absence of FIJI Water	
	3.9.2 Anonymity	
	3.9.3 Bits of Paper'	
	3.9.4 Knowing Too Much	
	3.9.5 Health Issues	
	3.10 Summary	
4.	Pacific Economies, Neoliberalism and Prospects for Niche Produ <i>Cutting the Voivoi</i>	ction38
	4.1 Defining Neoliberalism	
	4.2 The Pacific and Neoliberalism	
	4.3 Liberalisation of Pacific Agricultural Industries	

	4.4 Niche Production in the Pacific	
	4.4.1 Neoliberalism or a New Glocalised Alternative?	
	4.4.2 Advantages of Niche Production in the Pacific	
	4.4.3 Disadvantages of Niche Production in the Pacific	
	4.4.4 Nature of Niche Production Literature	
	4.5 Summary	47
5.	The Global Success of FIJI Water	49
	Stripping the Voivoi	
	5.1 The Pursuit of Niche Production in Fiji	
	5.1.1 Economic Perils of the 2006 Coup	
	5.1.2 Fiji's Agricultural Sector and Niche Production	
	5.2 An Introduction to FIJI Water	
	5.3 FIJI Water's Marketing Success Story	
	5.3.1 Endorsements	
	5.3.2 Tropical Discourse	
	5.3.3 Health Benefits	
	5.3.4 Philanthropy	
	5.4 FIJI Water and the Global Economy	
	5.4.1 FIJI Water's Economic Success	
	5.4.2 Destination of FIJI Water Exports	
	5.4.3 Dominant Market: The United States	
	5.4.4 Minor-Markets	
	5.5 Summary	
\mathbf{c}	Critical Deres estimas en EIII Waterla Clabel Success	(0
6.	1 5	
	<i>Hanging and Driving the Voivoi</i> 6.1 Environmental Nightmare	60
	6.2 Advertising	
	6.3 'Puts Lipstick on a Junta'	
	6.4 Tax Recall	
	6.5 Local Ethical Concerns	75
		77
	6.5.1 Clean Water	77 78
	6.5.1 Clean Water 6.5.2 Employment	77 78 79
	6.5.1 Clean Water	77 78 79
7.	6.5.1 Clean Water 6.5.2 Employment 6.6 Summary	77 78 79 79
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water 6.5.2 Employment 6.6 Summary The Local Impacts of FIJI Water 	77 78 79 79
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water 6.5.2 Employment 6.6 Summary The Local Impacts of FIJI Water Platting the Voivoi Strands 	
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	77 78 79 79 81 82 83 83 83 83
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	77 78 79 79 79 79 79 81 82 83 83 83 85 87 95 95 95 101 104
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	77 78 79 79 81 82 83 83 83 83 85 95 95 95 101 104 105
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	77 78 79 79 81 82 82 83 83 85 85 95 95 95 95 95 101 105 105
7.	 6.5.1 Clean Water	77 78 79 79 79 79 81 82 83 83 83 85 87 95 95 95 95 101 105 105 106

8.	Discussion and Analysis of FIJI Water's Presence at a Local Scale 109
	Painting the Pattern
	8.1 Westernisation
	8.1.1 New Ownership
	8.1.2 Social Disintegration
	8.1.3 Work Ethic
	8.1.4 Limits of Monetisation113
	8.2 Washing with FIJI Water114
	8.2.1 Greenwashing114
	8.2.2 Aidwashing
	8.3 Dependency116
	8.3.1 Who is Responsible?
	8.3.2 Unsustainable Development
	8.4 Vulnerability
	8.4.1 Employment Vulnerability
	8.4.2 Switching Resources
	8.4.3 Smallness
	8.5 Moving Towards a Glocalised Alternative
	8.6 Vatukaloko Solutions
	8.7 Summary
	6.7 Summary 127
9.	Conclusion
	9.1 Central Conclusions
	9.1.1 Macro Questions
	9.1.2 Micro Questions
	9.2 Imperfections and Further Research
	9.3 Final Conclusions
Re	ferences
A	152
Ap	pendix I: Plates and Figures
	Plate A.1: Aerial Photos
	Figure A.2: Constant Value of Fiji's Water Mineral Exports by Country 154
	Figure A.3: Quantity of Fiji's Mineral Water Mineral Exports by Country 155
	Figure A.4: Projects Sponsored by FIJI Water156
Ap	pendix II: Forms
I ² .	Consent Form
	Participant Information Sheet
	Sample of Semi-Structured Interview Questions
	Sample of Focus-Groups Questions
	Sample of Focus-Oroups Quesuons

Abstract.

This research explores the pursuit of 'economies of niche' in the Pacific region and the local social, economic and environmental impacts it entails. In the 1980s, Pacific nations adopted the neoliberal ideology as a means to stimulate economic growth and rehabilitate their vulnerable economies. However, this has brought significant challenges. Among other things, Pacific nations face problems regarding the tyranny to distance markets, lack of economies of scale, and the scarcity of investment. Niche production has been recommended as a way to counteract such problems. By adopting the niche model, Pacific Island nations are encouraged to craft products based on the region's unique imagery as a means of achieving a distinctive market position based on geographically differentiated production.

Although Pacific nations have been encouraged to pursue economies of niche, the influence and impact of this method, particularly at a local scale, remains critically unexplored. To address this, the case-study of Fiji and one of its most 'successful' globalised niche exporters FIJI Water – a multinational bottled water company – will be explored. This work critically explains and criticises the global success of FIJI Water at the macro-scale. Through village based case-studies of the social, environmental and environmental impacts of FIJI Water's export success an analysis of the local implications of niche production in the Pacific is also offered.

Key Words: Neoliberalism; Niche Production; Fiji; FIJI Water; Vatukaloko; Local Impact.

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List of Figures.

Figure 3.1: A Visualisation of Methods and their Relation to Research Questions.	.20
Figure 3.2: Nature of Focus Groups	.27
Figure 3.3: Vatukaloko Semi-Structured Interviews	.31
Figure 3.4: Suva Semi-Structured Interviews	.31
Figure 4.1: Scale of Neoliberalism	.41
Figure 4.2: National and Local 'Linked' Spheres	.41
Figure 5.1: Nominal Price and Volume of Mineral Water Exports from Fiji	.61
Figure 5.2: Fiji's Major Exports 2000-2010	.62
Figure 5.3: Mineral Water Exported from Value and Quantity	.63
Figure 5.4: Quaintly of Mineral Water Exported from Fiji by Country	.63
Figure 7.1: Vanua Vatukaloko Five Years Strategic Plan	.97

List of Plates.

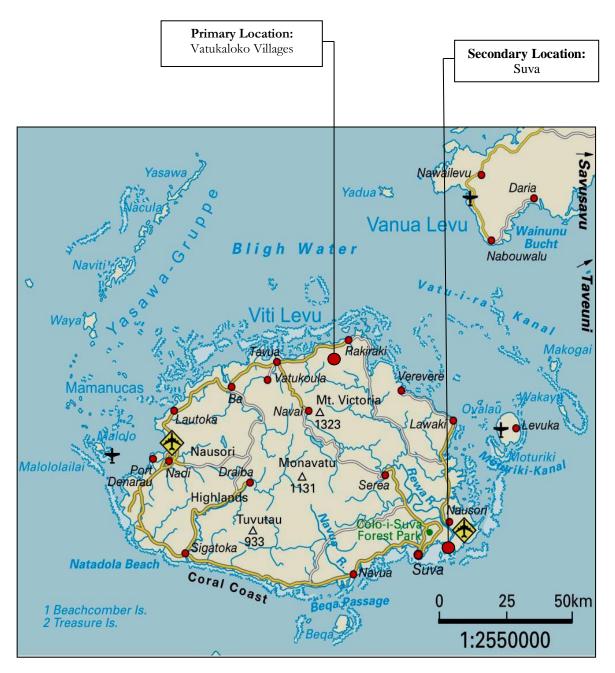
Plate 3.1: Map of Vatukaloko Villages	
Plate 3.2: Kava Brought for Sevusevu Ceremonies	23
Plate 3.3: Personal Drawing of Focus Groups	
Plate 5.1: Local Market, Suva	51
Plate 5.2: FIJI Water Bottle	52
Plate 5.3: FIJI Water Bottling Plant	53
Plate 5.4: Celebrities with FIJI Water	55
Plate 5.5: FIJI Water Bottle Design	56
Plate 5.6: Every Drop is Green Campaign and FIJI Water Charity Sign	59
Plate 5.7: FIJI Water in New York	64
Plate 6.1: FIJI Water's Environmental Campaign	71
Plate 6.2: Landscape Surrounding the FIJI Water Bottling Plant	73
Plate 7.1: Mango Trees along the Yaqara River	
Plate 7.2: Women Selling Crab	
Plate 7.3: Naseyani Primary School	
Plate 7.4: Broken Bridge to Naseyani	
Plate 7.5: Vatukaloko Secondary School New Block	90
Plate 7.6 Water Tanks at Vatukaloko Secondary School	90
Plate 7.7: Drauniivi Borehole Supplied by FIJI Water	91
Plate 7.8: Electricity Polls in Nananu	
Plate 7.9: Tui Vatu's House and a Sub-Standard House in Drauniivi	94
Plate 7.10: Inside Drauniivi Church and Drauniivi Community Hall	94
Plate 7.11: Sacks of FIJI Water Bottles in Drauniivi	106

Glossary.

i sele	Machete.
Itaukei	People of the land
Kaivalagi	European Foreigner.
Kerekere	Traditional system of 'I owe you'.
Meke	Song/Poem.
Namuamua	A place where two positions meet and become one.
O nil lako mai vei?	Where are you from?
Sevusevu	Welcome ceremony where kava is presented.
Tagane	Male.
Talanoa	To tell a story.
Tamata	A Human being without reference to gender.
Tui Vatu	Chief.
Vakabati	Traditional Fijian Mat.
Voivoi	Fijian Flax.
Wai ni tuka	Water of immorality.
Yalewa	Female.
Yaqona	A dried root that is crushed and mixed with water; also known as kava. Is commonly at the centre of traditional Fijian ceremonies.

Map of Fiji Showing Key Locations Mentioned in this Work.

(NB. Dots denoting locations are not indicative of settlement size)



(Hot Map, 2012)

"450 years ago, there was a rain shower on island of Viti Levu in Fiji. The rain fell onto the highlands and pristine tropical forests. Slowly, it began its long and purifying journey through the earth to the natural aquifer that would become its home. Here in this aquifer on this island in the middle of nowhere, it would be protected from the pollutants of civilization. It would remain pure from its beginning to its bottling. Taste the softness and purity of Fiji Natural Artesian Water. Drink it regularly and see how good you feel. We're sure you'll agree it was worth the 450 year wait" (FIJI Water, 2000: 3)

Chapter One: Introduction Weaving a Vakabati¹

This study explores the pursuit of 'economies of niche' in the Pacific region and the local social, economic and environmental impacts it entails. Various Pacific nations have been encouraged to concentrate on developing niche products as a means to sustain their economies. However, the influence and impact of this method, particularly at a local scale, remains unexplored. To address this, the case-study of FIJI Water – a multinational, Fijian based bottled water company – will be examined. By unveiling this topic, an understanding of how the niche model operates, effects and alters lives of Pacific communities is offered.

Pacific Island Countries (PICs) face significant challenges in the neoliberal market due to their small size, remoteness and vulnerability. Although the region was late to accept neoliberalism, it currently dominates "rhetoric, ideology and economic policies" (Firth, 2000: 900). PICs were encouraged to the paradigm as a method to stimulate economic growth and rehabilitate their vulnerable economies. But as PICs have gained independence, the perils of neoliberalism have started to emerge. The distance to major markets, lack of economies of scale, and the scarcity of investment are just a few problems compromising the sustainability of Pacific economies. To counteract such challenges, recently PICs have been encouraged to concentrate on 'economies of niche'.

Niche production can be described as a "process of carving out a small business sector by specialising" (Shani & Chalasani 1993: 58). To achieve a distinctive market position and encourage differentiation, PICs are advised to craft niche products that specialise on regions unique imagery building "uniqueness in a saturated global market of increasingly homogenised products" (Murray, 2010: 3). By specialising on the Pacific's 'exotic' place it has argued to stimulate both local and sustainable development (Marsden & Smith, 2003). Yet, Murray (2010) and Overton (2010) have raised concerns over this claim suggesting a greater understanding on current attempts of niche products in the Pacific needs to be scrutinised.

¹ A Vakabati is commonly known in English as a traditional Fijian mat.

To obtain this greater understanding, FIJI Water provides an interesting insight. FIJI Water is a niche product built upon the exotic and tropical imagery of Fiji. The company famously purports its beverage as "uncontaminated, uncompromised, and untouched" (FIJI Water, 2011). With such a lucrative and carefully articulated marketing strategy, FIJI Water has fast become one of Fiji's most global industries (Connell, 2006). While the company has achieved economic success, it has not remained free of criticism. In recent years, a plethora of literature has emerged criticising the company's activities in particular to its treatment of the environment, Fijian government and people (Lenzer, 2009). But these debates are largely preoccupied with viewpoints from a national and global scale leaving dormant local opinions.

To unearth this unexplored local voice, this thesis engages² with three Vatukaloko villages: Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani. These villages neighbour FIJI Water's bottling plant and are the *itaukei*³ of the land and aquifer the company leases. As such, these villages have become caught up in everyday practices of FIJI Water, but little is known if this relationship has been positive or negative. By drawing upon my fieldwork experiences and conversations with local Vatukaloko residents, an understanding on how FIJI Water has impacted the social, economic and environmental dynamics of their everyday lives can be discerned.

1.1 Research Aim and Questions

In line with the above discussion, the underlying rationale of this study is to offer alternatives to the corporate and macro scale narratives that have dominated the analysis of FIJI Water's impacts and niche products in general. Accordingly, the overall aim of this research is to:

 Assess the local social, economic and environmental impacts of FIJI Water's global success.

² I have chosen the word engage, as it suggests a more collaborative and participatory relationship with myself and the local Vatukaloko villages. In essence, I want the reader to acknowledge that the local people had as much of a right to select me in this research process, as I did them. Therefore, the power to carry out this research was in multiple hands.

³ People of the land.

In order to achieve the aforementioned aim, I will answer four questions that are addressed at two scales: the first is a macro perspective that examines the global and national impacts; the second is a micro perspective that explores local outcomes.

Macro-scale Questions:

- 1. How can the global economic success of FIJI Water be explained?
- 2. How can the global economic success of FIJI Water be criticised?

Micro-scale Questions:

- 3. What are the social, economic and environmental impacts of FIJI Water at the local scale?
- 4. On balance, has FIJI Water's presence at a local scale been positive or negative?

1.2 Cultural Understanding

"Culture is an important aspect of development and will affect development and whatever we do. If we do not take culture into account and understand the interplay between it and development, we cannot move as surely as we should" (Kavaliku, 2005: 25-26)

Guided by Kavaliku's advice this thesis, wherever possible, infuses aspects of Fijian traditions. Throughout my research journey, I experienced more than just the exchanging of words with those I crossed paths with. I built various relationships and by doing so I came to familiarise myself with Fijian culture in terms of its values and practices. So whilst I gained research knowledge, I concurrently gained cultural understanding. Throughout this thesis I want to acknowledge this acquisition of cultural knowledge by incorporating Fijian values, practices and language (Bau dialect). Some of these elements are found in the form of a *vakabati* analogy (both visually and descriptively), the use of *talanoa* (story-telling) and privileging local voices. By threading elements of Fijian culture I endeavour to link this study not only back to Fiji itself but to the people who shaped this research.

1.3 Vakabati

To begin interweaving Fijian culture, each chapter and its introduction throughout this thesis represents and incorporates a stage in the process of constructing a *vakabati* (these stages are attuned in the thesis outline (1.4) below). There are two reasons for this metaphorical structuring: personal experiences and cultural significance. During my field research, the *vakabati* was the place I would meet, eat, drink *yaqona*⁴, converse and establish friendships with participants. I would often be led into a community hall, somebody's house or even outside to discuss with participants on a *vakabati*. They were a central component to where my research was conducted and also how it was conducted. The *vakabati* was frequently woven by various participants and I was often privileged to hear the cultural significance embedded into each one. Conversing on these mats allowed participants to feel comfortable and at-home during the interview process. Hence, in my write-up I wanted to acknowledge the significance of the *vakabati* as they became a tactile and symbolic focal point to collect my research. As a result, this thesis is structured to work symbolically through the chronological processes of crafting a *vakabati*.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided as follows: **Chapter Two (uprooting the voivof**) honours the traditional Fijian storytelling process: *talanoa*. Here, the Vatukaloko *talanoa* and my response through the lens of my positionality will be explored. By doing so, a contextual understanding of the Vatukaloko villages and how my position influenced the nature of this research is provided. **Chapter Three (preparing the** *i'sele*⁶) deconstructs the research design exploring three concepts: subject/location rationale, methodology and reflections on the fieldwork process. As such, an understanding of *why and how* this research was conducted is presented. **Chapter Four (cutting the voivoi)** critically explores the idea that niche production in the Pacific offers a sustainable alternative to neoliberalism. **Chapter Five (stripping the voivoi) and Six (hanging and drying the voivoi)** assess FIJI Water's global economic success story reflecting on its roots and critiques respectively. These two chapters address the first two, or macro, questions that the work poses. **Chapter Seven (platting the voivoi strands)** addresses the micro tier of this study, focusing

⁴ Fijian beverage made from dried roots mixed with water. Often shared in traditional Fijian ceremonies. ⁵Fijian Flax.

^{· 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 2}

⁶ Machete.

on a primary investigation of the impacts on Vatukaloko residents. Local perspectives on how FIJI Water has socially, economically and environmentally impacted their livelihoods are examined. Focusing solely on local voices this chapter addresses the third question posed by this thesis. **Chapter Eight (painting the pattern)** offers evidence as to whether FIJI Water's practices are, on balance, beneficial or problematic answering the final question of this study. Finally, the concluding chapter (**Chapter Nine – woven vakabati**) assembles the key themes identified throughout this research and readdresses its core aim and questions.

Chapter Two: Talanoa and Positionality Uprooting the Voivoi

"*Talanoa* is a point of intersection, like a passage in a reef, through which currents and waves whirl with rising and receding tides" (Havea, 2010: 11)

When I first engaged with the local Vatukaloko villages in Fiji, our first point of discussion concerned our *talanoa* – a story exposing our identities. Once settled on a *vakabati*, conversation or more-so the storytelling of our 'positions' began. This *talanoa* process occurred during sevusevu ceremonies where I was privileged to listen to the histories of the Vatukaloko villages. Once their story was told "my interpreter looked towards me and said: you have to speak now Catherine, tell them who you are, they need to know who you are" (2011 Reflection Diary, 14 June). This involved me replying to their *talanoa* by exposing fragments of my positionality and 'uprooting' my ancestry. This process not only exposed our identities but eroded our position as 'strangers'.

Sharing my *talanoa* was an important experience in my research journey, and with this chapter I want to pay respect to the tradition. To achieve this, I firstly define *talanoa* and its meaning within this study. From here, I present the Vatukaloko *talanoa* through their recorded history – a story consumed with their ties to land and colonialism. It further provides my response to their *talanoa* through the 'lens' of my positionality and reveals how 'Being Me' contoured the nature of this research. By adopting this *talanoa* framework a contextual baseline is also achieved for subsequent chapters. As such, *talanoa* is a useful practice for social research as it provokes reflection, an in-depth exploration of participant's identities and analysis of one's self.

2.1 The Complexity of Talanoa

In academia the meaning and use of *talanoa* has been redefined. In its original form *talanoa* refers to the "telling of a story" (Capell, 1991: 215). However, Otuska (2006: 2) coins the term as a Pacific methodology that creates an opening for "researchers to establish a good interpersonal relationship and rapport with ethnic Fijian participants" (Otuska, 2006: 2). Instead of its original 'story-telling' meaning, *talanoa* has been transformed into a research instrument for establishing relationships with Pacific communities. While I understand the importance of this methodology, I

believe the true meaning *talanoa* has become distorted. Here, I align with Havea (2010: 11) who urges researchers "to distinguish *talanoa* from what many people from the West understand" and stresses the term refers "to the content (story) *and* the act of telling, unpacking and unravelling (telling) that content, *and* to the event of engaging, sharing and interrogating (conversation)". Therefore, while *talanoa* is a "complex affair", removed from its academic complexity it can be used as a gateway to express our "path of life" (Ibid). With this definition in hand, from here the Vatukaloko and my *talanoa* will be explored as a means to understand and informally engage with two main parties that contributed to this research.

2.2 Vatukaloko Talanoa

The Vatukaloko *talanoa* starts in the 19th century, when land sovereignty belonged to the Vatukaloko villages. It was said that the slopes of the Kauvadra Mountain Range in the Yaqara Valley were home of the most important God in Fiji's old religion – Degei, who was considered the origin of all people. Within this mountain range it was believed to contain *'wai ni tuka'* (water of immorality) which was consumed by Fijian warriors to *"induce invulnerability"* (Kaplan, 2007: 686). Yet this spiritually-centred land has now become a product of colonialism.

The Vatukaloko villages became famous in the Pacific as one of the few clans to resist the British colonial movement. This resistance was headed by Navosavakadua, a Vatukaloko oracle priest, whose ideological perspective was based on the old religion of Fiji. However, violence followed this movement with Navosavakadua and his Vatukaloko supporters being labelled as fierce, "disaffected and dangerous" (Kaplan, 2007: 689). Fijian colonial administrators suppressed this resistance and banished Navosavakadua and his people "to the island of Rotuma in 1886 and his followers were deported to Kadavu" (Kaplan, 1995: 113). Whilst banished from their land, British commissions travelled Fiji to register kin groups and traditional land holdings. With the absence of the Vatukaloko, their claim as *itaukei* went unregistered. As such, the 14,000 acres of Vatukaloko territory became the property of British settlers.

After exile, the Vatukaloko made various unsuccessful attempts to claim back their territory. The land they once owned had become highly profitable for the British colonisers and various sugar farms where created. With Fiji obtaining independence

in 1970, the land was then returned to the government who orchestrated a lease with the Yaqara Pastoral Company Limited. While the Pastoral Company occupied the land for a short while, the government made a deal to cease their contract, so FIJI Water could effectively takeover (Ibid). Unlike previous companies, however, FIJI Water in their effort to secure a traditional blessing and support, verbally agreed with the Vatukaloko *Tui Vatu*⁷ to help provide assistance for the indigenous landowners. So while the land was FIJI Water's property, the company promised to respect them as *itaukei*.

This *talanoa* has revealed that Vatukaloko residents have a spiritual relationship with the land and despite being converted to Christendom, many still hold onto this connection. With this understanding of the past in hand, this thesis views how the current relationship with FIJI Water has impacted their everyday lives and by doing so, continues their *talanoa*. While the Vatukaloko *talanoa* presented here is brief, much more will be revealed about their identities, everyday lives and relationships with outsiders in subsequent chapters. By doing so, I hope further mirror *talanoa* tradition where "the story is supposed to be carried on" (2011 Reflection Diary, 12 June).

2.3 Positionality: Being Me

In Fijian culture "O nil lako mai vei?" (Where are you from?), is the first question put forth to an 'outsider' to encourage their *talanoa*. The response to this question provides a framework for Fijian communities to establish what type of relationship they will hold with the 'outsider' and how to interact with them. The question does not only ask for one's birth location but also invites a discussion on ancestry, cultural and religious ties. This traditional storytelling technique is also used by development researchers and referred to as expressing one's positionality.

In definition, Elizabeth Chacko (2004: 52) aligns with feminist theory who suggests positionality "refers to aspects of identity in terms of race, class, gender, caste [and] sexuality". By understanding my positionality, a platform to scrutinise the nature of my research and how *Being Me* affects its course and outcomes, can be achieved. Reflecting on my position requires me to examine and reassess large areas of my life:

⁷ Chief.

my intentions, how I perceive myself and how I relate to others (Chacko, 2004). The untangling of positionality can be a momentous and complex task. To obtain an achievable scope on the concept I have decided to privilege three elements of *Being Me* and how they affected my fieldwork experience. In this respect, when asked the question "*O nil lako mai vei?*" this involves discussing: *Being a Kaivalagi[®]*, *Being a Young Female* and *Being a Christian*. By exploring my positionality, here I provide my response to the Vatukaloko *talanoa*.

Being a Kaivalagi in the research field presented various challenges. Although my lineage is from Britain, I was born and raised in New Zealand thus consider myself a New Zealander. Living in New Zealand exposed me to various cultural backgrounds, in particular those of the Pacific. This has allowed me to "to adjust to unexpected situations and competent juggling of diverse identities in varied situations" (Chacko, 2004: 52). While growing up in a multicultural society and being aware of cultural flexibility, I was not automatically immune to the challenges presented in cross-cultural research. Respectively, two issues moulded my research journey: colonisation and intrusiveness.

Mahina and Nabobo-Baba (2004: 203) argue the "pervasive processes of Western imperialism and colonialism" has formed Pacific perceptions of Kaivalagi. Whilst conducting my research, I recognised perceptions of Kaivalagi in Fiji were still sculpted by this historical colonial legacy. Thus, "what was inscribed in colonial times on the uncompleted slate of gendered white heteronormative middle-class identity still shows through" (Heron, 2007: 92).

This colonial footprint influenced the way I was perceived in Fiji. My character was often pre-judged and aligned with stereotypes of being privileged, powerful and prosperous. These generalisations were further heightened by my access to provisions (transport, education, and healthcare). Consequently, I felt placed on a pillar for being Kaivalagi and for the first time began to feel overtly different because of my physical identity. I was treated differently in a cultural landscape I originally thought I was familiar with. In New Zealand my networks, education and upbringing created a platform for me to infuse a wide range of Pacific customs into my everyday life. However, in the field I found that people had the same culture as

⁸ Kaivalagi is a term used in Fiji to generally describe foreigners of European decent.

those I had grown up with, but treated Kaivalagi differently. Though I was prepared for this issue to arise, it was the first time I experienced being the 'visiting outsider' within Pacific culture. The combination of these elements in the field also made some individuals afraid to converse and be open with me out of fear of judgement on my behalf. In spite of my best intentions, I acknowledge that it was impossible to rid myself completely of ethnocentric assumptions and the vestiges of colonist discourses that clung to me (Chacko, 2005).

Being a Kaivalagi 'outsider' also brought about a sense of intrusiveness. During my village visits I noted in my research diary:

"This research feels like a collision of two cultures. I have hired an interpreter and tried my very best to remain true to Fijian protocol, but somehow I still feel intrusive, like a Fijian should be doing this work, not me! Do I have the right to be here?" (2011 Reflective Diary, 10 June).

These thoughts etched at the back of mind throughout my research journey. Other researchers have also sensed this issue whilst working cross-culturally as Higgs and Schech (2000: 391) exhort: "why are we uncomfortable? Because we see the traps of the Missionary trope catching at our feet". Although my experience was not 'uncomfortable' per-se, I could not help but perceive myself as a neocolonial tool using indigenous knowledge for my own devices. I was constantly reassured by various academics and individuals in Fiji that this was not the case, as I orchestrated my research with a translator and was doing everything in my power to follow Fijian protocol. Yet, I still could not escape the ever-looming guilt of extracting information from a foreign place. I further reflect:

"Perhaps someone who knows the people, culture and landscape intimately could better conduct this research other than me! They could do it in better style and more sensitively than I ever could. They can understand the cultural authenticity and because of this perhaps escape this guilty emotion that I am feeling" (2011 Reflective Diary, 13 June).

This overarching sense of intrusiveness and doubt shaped my research journey and consequently created a hesitant atmosphere during some interviews. I was constantly trying to escape from what Bonacich (1989: 100) describes as a "suffocating blanket of white domination". Yet while delicately trying to avoid falling into the delicate trap of researching through imperial eyes, I potentially lost a chance to dig deeper into some issues. At times, I became felt uneasy asking participants certain questions

out of fear of 'stepping-over-the-line'. Conversely, whilst I cannot side-step my Kaivalagi identity I found such reflection in the field emotionally healthy as it created a void for me to become acutely aware of my actions and the way I positioned myself.

Being a young female in the field was both a positive and negative experience. When conducting my research, I was 22 years old and held (and still hold) a feminist conception on women's role in society. I align my ethos with Haggis and Schech (2000: 388) who describe the contemporary women: "as free-born and independent, unconstrained by the bounds of domesticity, respected and help-mates in male endeavours". Being a young female, with this position, was a unique experience in the field.

Heron (2007) agues Kaivalagi women in the field can be boxed into two categories being perceived as either a 'nurturing' or a 'desired' figure. Being a young female I was slotted into the 'desired' box. Some researchers have utilised the advantages of "being constructed as an object of desire" to further their research objectives (Cupples, 2002: 383). But and perhaps naively, I did not expect to be perceived as a 'desired' object. Yet, this perception had a profound influence on my research collection.

Within the Fijian chiefly structure men hold dominant "social and political status" (Toren, 1990: 41). While all participants treated me with the upmost respect, I was often in a position where I was the only female in a room of 10-30 men and for long periods of time. Being in such a position shifted my behaviour significantly. I became self-conscious and easily intimidated and this was further heightened by the language barrier. Not understanding the groups 'banter' and continually being informed that I "don't need to know what they're saying" increased my insecurity (2011 Reflection Diary, 13 June). The combination of being the gender minority with a 'desirable' ambiance made me increasingly acute to how I presented myself. I avoided eye contact, kept my head low and restricted discussions on my positionality. Chacko (2004: 60) stresses the need "to answer their queries about my personal life in an honest and open manner", but being the only women, in a room full of men, made this task increasingly complicated. Accordingly, the 'desire'

construction that can be placed upon Kaivalagi women greatly impacted my persona with men.

Whilst this issue emerged, being young also had its advantages. In Fijian culture, status within the village "is said to be in terms of seniority" (Toren, 1990: 41) and "knowing ones place with elders, showing humility and respect in terms of rank is expected at all times" (Filipo, 2004: 180). As such, seniority and respect towards one's elders is at the pinnacle of the village life. Being young then relinquished me as being the dominant controller of knowledge, a facade that is often placed on the 'visiting researcher' (Chambers, 2005; Sanderson, 2010; Robinson, 1994; Gibbs, 2001). The Fijian custom to respect, listen and learn from the older generation consequently aided the fluidly of conversation with older participants.

Being a Christian became an essential cultural vehicle. Today I describe myself as a liberal Christian and in Fijian society the church is the heart-beat of everyday life. While I was apprehensive on revealing my faith due to the links between Christianity and colonialism, by sharing this part of my identity I became closer to participants. Christianity forms the overarching ideology of "Fijian society, around which village life centres, and to which people constantly refer" (Ryle, 2005: 58). Sanderson (2010: 9) suggests commonality in religion brings together two relational spheres whereas "emotional engagement and spiritual engagement with research participants occurs simultaneously". Henceforth, my Christian 'lens' allowed me to appreciate the importance of the church and when religious activities occurred, I could act accordingly. Sharing the same religion also created a stepping stone to 'bridge the gap' of difference. It created a platform for me to comfortably share a piece of my positionality on more intimate level with some participants establishing a sense of "connectedness, engagement and participatory consciousness" (Bishop, 1996: 238). Through this I was able to break the 'researched'/'researcher' barrier and by doing so, created a common ground which allowed friendships and respect for my persona to eventuate.

2.4 Summary

"Though 'the researcher is free to leave the field at any time and is generally the final author of any account', the experiences during fieldwork have a significant impact on the researcher and the research product. Our minds are still preoccupied with, and our memories alive with, fieldwork experiences" (Thapar-Björkert and Henry, 2004: 377)

By incorporating *talanoa* I have aimed to keep alive my fieldwork experience. When collaborating cross-culturally with Fijian communities, it is tradition for locals and outsiders to firstly provide a *talanoa* in order to understand each other's identity. The Vatukaloko *talanoa* revealed their relationship with land and its spiritual significance. Although brief and primarily historically centred, their current *talanoa* is continued and explored in-depth in ensuing chapters. In regard to my response, an understanding of my identity as a researcher was presented which "sets the tone" of this research (Chacko, 2004: 54). As such, it located my position as an "observer in the world [...] attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 4-5).

Chapter Three: Rationale, Methodology and Reflections *Preparing the 'i sele'*

Having previously outlined the aim and questions in Chapter One, it is necessary to map out how these will be achieved. This chapter is divided into four sections: firstly a discussion on the rationale for my location and study subject; secondly a comprehensive examination of my research locations; thirdly an breakdown of the methodology employed in the field; and finally a reflection on the field work process primarily engaging with problems and ethical issues that emerged in the field. Similar to preparing the *'i sele'*, by understanding the tools used in this research a greater clarity towards my findings and discussion can be granted.

3.1 Rationale for Location and Study

3.1.1 Why Fiji?

Initially, my rationale for carrying out research in Fiji stemmed from my personal interest in the Pacific region. Throughout my academic journey I have focused on exploring the eclectic cultures that encompass the Pacific. I have studied intently within the field of Pacific education, history and development in an attempt to holistically appreciate the region. Thus, my academic leanings in combination with my past experiences with Pacific culture presented a tangible springboard to begin my research. Equipped with this background, from my perspective, the relative 'smallness' of Pacific nations allows intricate ideas to be explored on an achievable level. With this idea in the forefront, I thought it would be apt to explore the nature of niche production in Fiji; a complex process that has been absorbed by a relatively small nation.

Investigation into the niche phenomena in Fiji has also been well documented (Connell, 2006; Murray, 2011; Kaplan, 2005). As Chapter Four will explain comprehensively, Fiji has produced a string of niche products over the past 10 years in an attempt to rejuvenate a fleeting economy (Murray, 2010; Overton, 2010). Thematically, these examinations provide blueprints to guide and uncover where my research can contribute.

Finally, the ability to select Fiji as my research destination was fashioned by preexisting personal and professional connections. The University of the South Pacific is an institution which is based in Suva whereas many students and lecturers have crossed paths with Victoria University of Wellington. Consequently, I had relatively easy access to my research site, training on cultural norms and academic support. It was a logical decision to pin my research in Fiji as it meant the possibilities of obtaining information and setting up a realistic field project were favourable.

3.1.2 Why FIJI Water?

FIJI Water⁹ was selected as the case-study for a variety of reasons. Firstly, an abundance of niche products have emerged in Fiji but within recent years FIJI Water has become the most internationally recognised (Connell, 2006). The company has become a key pillar for the Fijian economy as other fundamental agro sectors have started to diminish. With such success, it was assumed that social, economic and environmental impacts of FIJI Water upon localities were likely to be highly visible. Secondly, FIJI Water unlike other Fijian niche products has been subjected to controversy on both an international and national scale. Prior to my field-work, I was aware of the ever-increasing pessimistic online commentary and literature that attacks the ethical morale of the company (Ulrich, 2009; Quraishi, 2011; Lenzer, 2009). Accordingly, FIJI Water has decided to take a secretive stance on these negative claims that have been put forth to them. It is here, I believe further academic rigour is required to establish whether these criticisms are factual or rumours.

3.2 Selection of Field Study Location

Upon arrival to Fiji, it soon became apparent my research would take place in two locations: the Vatukaloko villages and Suva. The Vatukaloko villages are the essence of this study that unearths the micro impacts of FIJI Water. Comparatively, whilst I was residing in Suva I seized my chances to gather information from a variety of institutions as a strategy to enrich my macro understanding on FIJI Water's global success. Henceforth, Vatukaloko villages can be described as primary location, while Suva can be described as my secondary location.

⁹ An in-depth overview of the company will be provided in Chapters Five and Six.

3.2.1 Primary Location: Vatukaloko Villages

For my research I aimed to engage with localities that were closely interwoven into the everyday life of FIJI Water. I decided to follow advice from Fijian academics in Suva who suggested FIJI Water was the most active in Vatukaloko villages as they were located in the Yaqara Valley in the province of Ra (Plate 3.1); the same location as FIJI Water's bottling plant. The Vatukaloko is comprised of six villages: Drauniivi, Nananu, Naseyani, Rabulu, Togovere and Navunitivi.

It was decided that in order to form the basis of comparison, multiple study locations would be required. Although engagement with all six villages would have been ideal, due to time and financial limitations I condensed my research to just focus on three villages: Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani. Out of the villages, Drauniivi is the most populous (over 500 families) and chosen due it's chiefly status¹⁰ and large working force for FIJI Water¹¹. Nananu (47 families) and Naseyani (59 families) although smaller in size were predicted to present a diverse and wider perspective on FIJI Water's activities; as well as being relatively accessible and geographically close to the water plant. Comparing impacts across these villages allowed a space for stories could be cross-fertilised and as such, reduced bias. Therefore, engaging with these communities meant comprehensive and in-depth understanding of FIJI Water's impact could be unearthed.

¹⁰ Drauniivi is the paramount village in the Vatukaloko. Although each villages has their own chief/s, overall authority belongs to Drauniivi.

¹¹ FIJI Water claim that 75 percent of its 400 people workforce are from the Vatukaloko region and with Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani being the closest to the plant, it was assumed workers would more than likely be found in these three villages (FIJI Water, 2011).

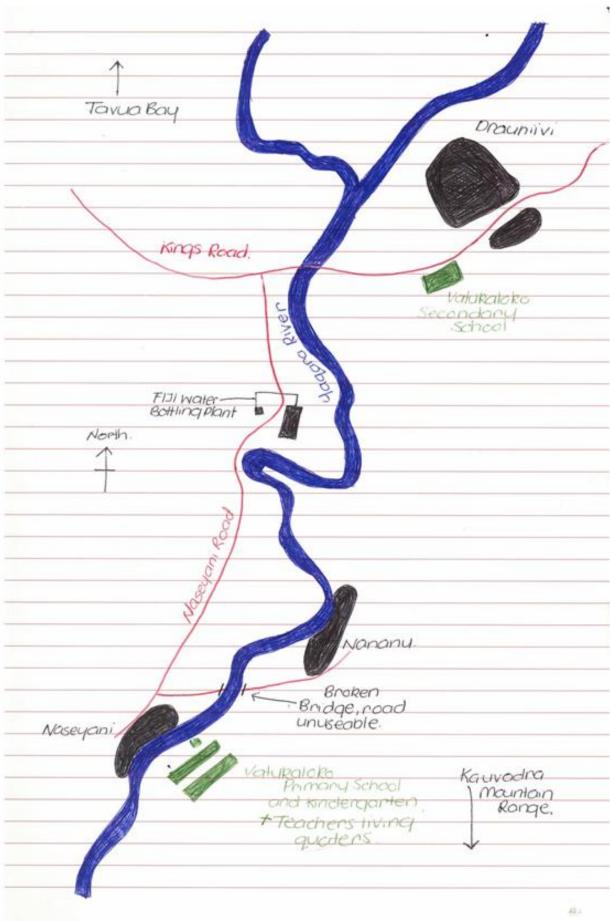


Plate 3.1: Map of Vatukaloko villages – not to scale (2011 Reflection Diary, 10 June)

3.2.2 Secondary Location: Suva

My secondary location, Suva, is the central hub for Fiji's government, academic and non-profit organisations. The urban metropolis of great Suva with population approaching 180,000 is located on the south east of Fiji's main island, Viti Levu. Throughout my time in Fiji, Suva became my home base as it was only six hours by bus from Vatukaloko villages. Whilst residing in the capital, it was evident Suva was the centre point for Fiji's politics and administrative matters creating an opening to obtain a macro perspective of FIJI Water's impact. Although Suva is the secondary location of this research, it was included to provide an insight into the global success of FIJI Water. Obtaining views from government officials, academics and nongovernment organisations (NGO) also created an opening to compare and contrast views of Vatukaloko residents.

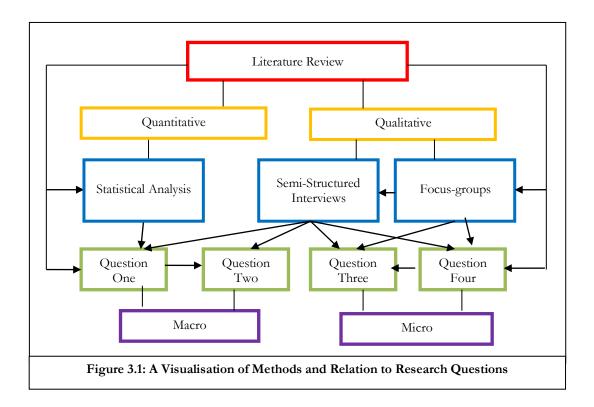
3.3 Reflection Diary

As already drawn upon in Chapter Two, in the Vatukaloko villages and Suva I made regular entries into my reflection diary as a method to keep track of my thoughts, experiences and feelings. Throughout this chapter and the rest of this thesis, quotes from this diary will be woven through to enrich my analysis and discussion. Although they are informal in nature, these reflections provide a personal insight into the data collection process. Accordingly, weaving in my own experiences is my attempt to break holes in the "fenced boundary between emotion and intellect" inherent within academia (Behar, 1996: 86).

3.4 Carrying Out Research: Use of Mixed Methods

Development Studies is concerned with "a broad range of social, cultural, political and economic phenomena it is in a sense inherently interdisciplinary and has, since its inception, drawn on wide variety of methodologies" (Gamlen, 2012: 468). In this sense, with a variety of disciplines at play, it has had a long tradition of 'mixed methods research' (McKendrick, 1999). Due to its flexible scope, mixed methods became the selected framework to guide my research. The pragmatic technique allows quantitative and qualitative methods to work in harmony which encourages exchange and cross-fertilisation of information (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007, Gamlen, 2012). With its relatively broad nature, I reflected: "Mixed-methods is sort of like a theory basket. Once I have a feel for the participants' environment, social norms and personalities, I could then look into 'the basket' and see what methods fit the context" (2011 Reflection Diary, June 12).

In this respect, my research was characterised by flexibility and when certain methods were deemed unsuitable I could easily switch techniques to fit the context. Armed with this bifocal lens, I could utilise all information about my subject, no matter what form it presented itself (Willems & Raush, 1969). The use of this multidimensional approach was essential to answer each question this thesis has set out to explore, as Figure 3.1 exhibits. Whilst in the field from May to June 2011, I drew upon three techniques commonly found under the mixed methods umbrella: statistical analysis, focus-groups and semi-structured interviews. I selected these methods as they were the most appropriate to explore my research questions and because I thought they would triangulate well together.



However, post-modernists argue qualitative and quantitative methods are incompatible together and "objective reality can never be captured, triangulation is not a tool or strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation" (Voeten, 2006: 18). Although I am aware of such criticism, I align myself with Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005: 291) who suggest "by having a positive attitude towards both techniques" researchers are "able to combine empirical precision with descriptive precision".

3.5 Literature Review

As outlined in Figure 3.1, the literature review formed the basis of the research process. This included gathering journal articles, scholarly books, newspaper editorials, online blogs, and policy documents. These sources provided key primary and secondary information. Equipped with this information, I was firstly able to understand the eventuation, impact and process of niche production in the Pacific – and by doing so, establish the gap within literature and how this study can fill this void. Establishing this opening further informed the selection and appropriate use of quantitative and qualitative methods to aid filling this gap. Secondly, scoping a wide range of literature provided valuable resources to unearth the impact of FIJI Water's global success. A majority of this literature was collected at the University of the South Pacific, Pacific Collection. Various government and academic institutions¹² in Fiji were also visited where information was either photocopied, hand-written or arranged to be sent via email.

3.6 Collection of Quantitative Information

The primary quantitative component of this research was statistical analysis. This method shed light on the economic success of FIJI Water in the global market. When in Suva, I managed to obtain data from the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics revealing Fiji's value and volume of water mineral exports by country. However, I made the mistake of not overlooking the data *in Fiji*. Whilst in the field I was ecstatic to obtain such statistics and trusted the numbers would 'stack-up'. But, this naive attitude eventuated into problems later on. Back in New Zealand, upon inspection of the data I came to the realisation that the numbers lacked coherency and were presented in locked PDF documents. Yet, once the data was untangled, a concrete perspective on where and to what volume Fiji's mineral water is exported to could be measured, as Chapter Five will illustrate.

¹² Due to the intimidating persona of FIJI Water in Fiji, these institutions will remain incognito in this study.

In addition, quantitative information further emerged from the most unlikely sources. My accommodation in Suva became a hub for other researchers. In turn, nightly conversations about our topics led to swapping of data or recommendations of certain material that could help further our studies. They also informed me of what government departments to communicate with and who would provide the most coherent data. Being surrounded by like-minded people who could direct, criticise and understand what I was aiming to achieve was surprisingly beneficial for my collection of quantitative information in the field.

3.7 Collection of Qualitative Information

The use of focus-groups and semi-structured interviews were utilised to collect the qualitative component of this research. The use of these methods were essential for two reasons: to understand the direct micro impacts FIJI Water has had upon local communities and to understand at a macro level Fiji's global success. The use of focus-groups was only employed in the Vatukaloko villages while semi-structured interviews were exercised on both a macro and micro scale. This section will firstly decode the process of focus-groups in the Vatukaloko villages. The latter part of this section will discuss the process of semi-structured interviews in both Suva and the villages.

3.7.1 Focus Groups

Focus-groups were the chief method to obtain qualitative data regarding the local impacts of FIJI Water. The technique allows a wide range of opinions, ideas and experiences to be heard concurrently and the discussion element allows people to build on the ideas off others (Hennink, 2007). The nature and complexity of these focus-groups will be discussed in detail below. It is also important to understand, that focus-groups did not play-out to 'text-book' perfection (Rossmanic & Ralis, 2003). Rather, they acquired a life of their own.

Formal Permission and Sevusevu

In Fiji, social networks are intricate and various protocols need to be exercised before entering a village. Foreigners are forbidden to spontaneously turn-up and walk freely around villages. To avoid 'walking in' on the Vatukaloko village's two key protocols were obligatory: formal permission from the Provincial Council and premeetings through *sevusevu* ceremonies. Having already established contacts in Suva, my ability to meet such requirements was relatively straightforward. It more or less involved various friends in Suva personally contacting the provincial officers on my behalf. These contacts informed the officers of my plans to visit the area and to start making initial contact with the Vatukaloko villages. Within two weeks, formal permission from these offices was granted. From here, I started to plan my first engagement with the Vatukaloko villages. This involved a *sevusevu* ceremony which was centred on the sharing of *yaqona* (dried root made into a beverage – Plate 3.2) and as Turner (1987: 209) notes:



Plate 3.2: Kava Roots for Sevusevu Ceremonies

"Through the presentation of yaqona, the visitor acknowledges the authority of the chief and by formally accepting the yaqona, the chief accepts responsibility for the visitor"

In each village, one man armed with a speakerphone would announce my arrival and encourage those interested to make their way to the community hall to take part in the *sevusevu*. The *sevusevu* would usually take two-to-three hours and provided a space for me to tell my *talanoa*, reveal my intentions and formally ask if they wish to be involved in my study. In these ceremonies I also employed an interpreter to ensure I was ethical and respectful to Fijian traditions (discussed in more detail below). Fortunately, all three villages expressed interest and granted me verbal consent to carry out my research a week later.

Interpreter and Researcher Relationship

Prior to engaging with the Vatukaloko villages, I was informed an interpreter¹³ was pivotal. Although English speakers are common throughout Fiji, in the Vatukaloko villages the level of English spoken varies from person to person. Banks (2006: 278) suggests "language is of overarching importance because it is a fundamental medium through which ethnicity and cultural" identities can be appreciated. To ensure I could conduct my research in a culturally respectful manner I hired an interpreter who fluently spoke the local Bau language. Accordingly, when participants preferred

¹³ The name of the interpreter will remain anonymous and wherever possible his identity masked, the only known trait about the interpreter was that he was a male.

to speak Bau or found me difficult to understand, the interpreter could effectively intervene.

Surprisingly, my interpreter further aided to the sculpting of my research design. Before engaging with Vatukaloko residents, various meetings occurred between my interpreter, Fijian academics and I. During these initial meetings discussions on both my research design and the role of the interpreter occurred. Originally, I planned to only conduct semi-structured interviews in the Vatukaloko villages however, I was confronted over this decision and encouraged to adopt focus-groups. One on one interviews were criticised as they could potentially become intimidating and controversial for those involved¹⁴. Instead focus-groups were suggested to create an "environment comfortable and enjoyable, which is likely to impact on their contribution to the discussion [...] allowing replication of people's natural social interaction" (Hennink, 2007: 6). I agreed with the arguments put forth to me and although highly stressful at the time, made apt changes to my research design. While I was disappointed such changes had to occur, it speaks particularly to issues of cultural understanding in the field and the need to use grassroots methods. It further highlights the complexities of fieldwork, the importance of engaging emotionally with social research, and being aware about "what feels right and doesn't" when we are in the field (Letherby, 2003; Evans, 2010: 12).

Employing an interpreter was also multipurpose as he was not only a language hybrid but also a cultural one. Leslie and Storey (2003: 131) argue interpreters not only help with the "nuts and bolts" of data collection but also "with the more intangible aspects of fieldworks such as facilitating your acceptance into the research community". Consequently, interpreters have unique positionality that shapes the course of research (Temple & Edwards, 2002: 18). Methodological literature often focuses on the positionality of the researcher however, Ficklin and Jones (2009: 110) reiterate: "the relationship between the researcher and the interpreter is a complex negotiation of meaning embedded in personal and professional positionalities". Therefore, the embodiment of two differing positionalities has proven to have consequences on research, and with my experience it was both beneficial and problematic.

¹⁴ Within the village dynamics, people may get offended if I privileged a small group of people, thus with focus-groups I could willingly invite all whom were interested in the project

Beneficially, the infusion of my interpreter's positionality allowed my research to reach a wider scope of people (Ibid). The interpreter, being equipped with local cultural knowledge could effectively mediate where *Being Me* was insufficient. Along with Heyer (1992: 206) I also found that having a male interpreter offered me more protection in awkward situations and, at times, counterbalanced the fact I was a woman conducting fieldwork. Accordingly, my interpreter helped prevent embarrassing or even costly faux pas moments in the field. Alternatively, I could step in when *Being Him* collided with the ethos of participants. This usually involved conversing more intimately with women or obtaining a neutral stance on the issues at hand. This relationship created what is known in Fijian as *Namuamua* – a place where two positions meet and become intertwined to move forward together. Harnessed with our differing positions, we could converse and build rapport with a wide variety of individuals.

Conversely, there were instances when our personal perspectives conflicted. I was determined to include both men and women in my study to reduce gender bias. However, after conducting one male based focus group my interpreter suggested women would add nothing new to my research. But I was determined to talk to women, not only for research purposes but also for moral ones. Accordingly, I addressed my interpreter (away from participants to avoid displaying certain power hierarchies) about this issue and requested the importance of capturing the Vatukaloko women's stories. Being courteous in nature, he respected my wishes and accordingly followed through with the focus-groups.

Additionally, male participants at times would have lengthy conversations with the interpreter in focus-groups and not inform me of their discussions. Leslie and Storey (2003: 132) argue local interpreters have the "potential to dominate the form of data collected". Generally, the interpreter would lead male based focus-groups whilst I would lead women based ones (rationale for this decision is provided below). Although, I am aware that 'men talking to men' created a more comfortable atmosphere, I felt I was losing ownership of my research as I was not unsure if these discussions where just 'guy talk' or relevant to my research. To obtain ownership back was also tricky, as I did not want to fault him on building friendships or exercise power over him. Instead, I came to the realisation to be culturally competent I had to trust my interpreter and share ownership over my research. As

such, I relied on our one on one meetings where he would fill me in on any grey areas I had.

Original Focus Group Plan

From the first *sevusevu* sessions, I was introduced to a number people in Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani whom were interested in discussing my research. Here I was asked: *"Who do you want to talk to Miss Catherine?"* I expressed my interest to conduct three focus groups in each village that would be separated into: women, younger men and older men. This categorisation was suggested to be: "following best practice for focus groups. If men and women are mixed in groups, men tend to dominate discussions" (EurIslam, 2011). I was further instructed by an academic in Suva to *"be informal, and make sure none of the chiefly family are not there, the family will bave been positively affected by FIJI Water, but there are those who have not"* (Tamata Four, Personal Comm. May, 2011). All villages agreed with this format, and were more than willing to call upon people to take part in the focus-groups. Apart from this request, I clarified that I was willing to talk to anybody who was free, but a maximum of six people would be preferable. But although this plan was discussed, village life fashioned a very different outcome.

The Reality

As already alluded, the carrying out of focus-groups in the Vatukaloko villages was not without its challenges. Whilst in Suva I drew on various methodological literatures (Chambers, 2008; Morgan, 1997; Goss & Leinbach, 1996) to adequately prepare myself for conducting focus groups. Despite this preparation, I conducted seven focus-groups with 67 participants¹⁵ and as Figure 3.2 demonstrates it was far from a clear or coherent process (none of these participants worked for FIJI Water – rationale for this is in section 3.8.1 and an understanding of participant's identities is explored in-depth within Chapter Seven).

¹⁵ The exact number of participants in each focus group and the day I visited each village will remain incognito to help mask their identity – reasoning for this anonymity is further explained in section 3.9.3.

Figure 3.2: Nature of Focus Groups					
Focus Group	Main Facilitator	Audio Recorded	Detailed Notes Taken	% of Time of Me Present	% of Time Interpreter Present
Drauniivi					
Tagane ¹⁶ (Older and Younger) Focus Group	Interpreter	No	Yes	50%	100%
Yalewa ¹⁷ Focus Group	Me	Yes	Yes	100%	0%
Nananu	Nananu				
Older Tagane Focus Group	Interpreter	No	Yes	20%	100%
Tagane Focus Group	Interpreter	No	Yes	100%	100%
Yalewa Focus Group	Me	Yes	Yes	100%	10%
Naseyani					
Tagane (Older and Younger Focus Group)	Interpreter	No	Yes	10%	100%
Yalewa Focus Group	Me	Yes	Yes	100%	0%

Although I believed literature would prepare me for the task ahead, as Murray and Overton (2003: 32) suggest "each field experience, like the places in which they unfold will be totally different". This feeling was clearly evident in my diary:

"My initial thoughts were that I had to follow the blueprints of past scholars. But as time went on, I realised the communities were shaping my research and I should let it take its course. *I have to be flexible*" (2011 Reflection Diary, June 20).

When I started to engage with Vatukaloko residents, I realised my methods had to be refined, and, in some cases, let go of original plans often at very short notice. I learned to think on my feet and most importantly "not give up" as numerous challenges emerged (Murray & Overton, 2003: 35). While I initially engaged with the villages with a stringent framework, I had to adapt and re-draw my methodological map in order to respect participants. The following four points were key 'shifters' in my research and facilitated the need to revise my original plan:

Firstly, some focus groups would be set up simultaneously and even in the same room (due to the availability of participants). This left my interpreter and I to conduct focus groups solo, and one without audio recording equipment – see Plate 3.3 for group layout. These cross-overs combined with my stance of including women in my research resulted in the interpreter mainly facilitating the male based focused groups, whilst I would monitor the female groups. Being absent from some focus groups, my interpreter would instead take notes on my behalf and afterwards a

¹⁶ Male.

¹⁷ Female.

meeting would occur to further extract ideas. Accordingly, the data collected became a mixture of written notes and audio recordings.

Secondly, and in connection with the above predicament, when conducting focusgroups solo, language issues would emerge. On occasion, I would speak too fast or use English words unknown to participants. Thus, I would often rely on one member of the focus group who was fluent in English to help facilitate the discussion and become my Fijian 'voice' as Plate 3.3 further illustrates.

Thirdly, our planned visit to Naseyani was rescheduled due to regional activities. We were informed a day prior to our visit that a festival was taking place on our initial arrival and we were requested to arrive earlier. This involved the challenging task of completing Naseyani and Nananu's focus-groups on the same day.

Finally, the passing around of *yaqona* was also a common occurrence. Especially in regards to the male focus groups, I questioned whether they were there to discuss their opinions, or for socialising and the *yaqona*. This was further heightened as people would often walk in and out of the group without contributing to discussions. Conversely, the prompt of *yaqona* also kept conversation flowing and provided a relaxing environment for participants.

With these events, I learnt cultural dynamics significantly contoured the nature of my focus-groups. The arrangement of focus-groups became progressively shaped by the Vatukaloko culture characterised by "*me rawarawa na yalomu ena qaravi tavi*" (openness and flexibility) (2011 Reflection Diary, June 13). While literature provided a framework, focus-groups acquired a life of their own - a Vatukaloko life. Consequently, I had to learn the appropriate methodologies through participating and learning (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Sidaway, 1992). Before leaving Fiji, my supervisor informed me to 'stay flexible' and more colloquially 'go with the flow'. Accordingly, I diffused his advice into my focus-groups by letting the Vatukaloko people do it their way and relinquished my power over decision making regarding the timing, location and selection of participants. It was with some trepidation to 'hand over' the reigns of my study but my instincts suggested trying to flex control would have been highly disrespectful and potentially harmful establishing relationships in the villages (Seidman, 2006).

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Plate 3.3: Personal drawing of focus groups (the number of x's is not a true representation of participant numbers) (2011 Reflection Diary, June 13)

Despite the complex nature of focus-groups, an in-depth perspective into my research was unearthed. Auspiciously, all three villages were passionate about discussing their relationship with FIJI Water, so encouraging conversation was usually effortless. However, all participants wished to remain anonymous (rationale in section 3.9.2). Each focus group was presented with questions that aimed to encapsulate the social, economic and environmental impacts FIJI Water has presented on their lives¹⁸. Naturally conversation in each group led into different directions where some questions were more applicable than others. When all questions had been asked, I would then further circulate aerial photographs¹⁹ of the villages prompting participants to mark them or tell me where changes had mainly occurred. The activity was adapted from McKinnon and McKinnon's (2010) model that involved inviting a group of community members to construct a map to encourage further discussion and ignite dormant ideas. The aerial photos, which were taken in 2003, gave the participants the chance to show visually FIJI Water's movements. The combination of these two strategies provided a platform to understand how FIJI Water has sculpted their everyday lives.

3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

In Vatukaloko villages and Suva, 'semi-structured' interviews were employed to further gain an in-depth perspective. The questions exercised in this method were essentially an expansion upon the questions presented in focus-groups, however were structured slightly differently depending on the participant's employment or personal status²⁰. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted solo and audio recorded (unless not granted permission) as English was fluently spoken by each informant. All participants I interviewed asked for their identities to remain anonymous and are accordingly referred to as *Tamata*²¹.

With Vatukaloko residents, three semi-structured interviews (Figure 3.3) were conducted. Although they were originally opposed during my time in the field, I was approached by three *Tamata* (who did not participate in focus-groups) who wished discuss my topic in private as they had more controversial opinions on FIJI Water's

¹⁸ See Appendix II for a sample of questions

¹⁹ These photos are found in Appendix I: A.1. They are only of Nananu and Naseyani as they were the only two drawn on in the field during discussions.

²⁰ See Appendix II for a sample of questions.

²¹ Tamata is the Fijian phrase for a "human being, without reference to male or female" (Capell, 1991: 216) as a word for participant or informant is not available in the Fijian language.

activities. But being one on one in combination of these interviews taking place in their workplace or home, created an atmosphere for more emotional dialogue to emerge. These interviews will be discussed in Chapter Seven along with the focus group answers.

Figure 3.3: Vatukaloko Semi-Structured Interviews									
Tamata	Month of Interview	Audio Recorded	Notes Taken						
Tamata One	June	Yes	Yes						
Tamata Two	June	Yes	No						
Tamata Three	June	No	Yes						

In Suva, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted: two with government officials, five with NGOs workers and two with academics – Figure 3.4. In regards to government officials, because of recent coup (discussed in Chapter Four) interviews were, at times, tense and certain questions were reshaped to avoid friction. Given this context, I assumed government officials would primarily hold a conservative stance towards my research. But surprisingly, with the acknowledgement that their opinions would remain anonymous, most government officials were highly informative and eager to discuss all questions put forth to them. On the other hand, interviews with NGO team members and academics were more fluid and lively which gave space for more controversial topics to be discussed. Usually before and after these interviews, I would further informally 'hang-out' with the informants which would prompt conversation and lead to the setting up of other interviews through their personal contacts. These interviews will be drawn upon in Chapters Five and Six.

Figure 3.4: Suva Semi-Structured Interviews									
Tamata	Month of Interview	Audio Recorded	Notes Taken						
Tamata Four	May	Yes	Yes						
Tamata Five	May	Yes	No						
Tamata Six	May	Yes	No						
Tamata Seven	May	Yes	Yes						
Tamata Eight	May	Yes	Yes						
Tamata Nine	June	Yes	Yes						
Tamata Ten	June	Yes	Yes						
Tamata Eleven	June	Yes	Yes						
Tamata Twelve	June	Yes	Yes						

3.8 Analysis of Data

In regards to literature, to distil the core themes I categorised excerpts according to initial topics, as I read through them. To achieve this, I wrote themes on *Post-It* notes and then arranged them onto a mind map to help me decide how to draw them together (Evans, 2010). Such mapping provided a visual conceptualisation of the main themes and also revealed how they linked together.

Statistical analysis, as already mentioned above, was problematical. Once collated and coherent, I could then code the data. My aim was to classify and group the data sets in order to make sense of them, thereby reducing their complexity. With this systematic approach, an array of tables and graphs were created to analyse FIJI Waters value and export volume movements.

Data produced through focus-groups and semi-structured interviews were all transcribed back in New Zealand²². In regards to focus-groups, I transcribed audio recordings verbatim however, I removed the "umms" and "ehhs" to increase the clarity of quotes. Along with Evans (2010: 25) I envisaged "this to be an easy, almost mechanical task". But interviews often occurred in community halls or in participant's homes where outer sounds occasionally compromised the audio's quality. These outer sounds with the usual challenge of multiple parties talking over one another made the transcribing process difficult and lingering.

Conversely, semi-structured interviews were typically recorded in quiet spaces and could easily be transcribed. However, these interviews often constituted large descriptive components of the individuals and their organisations. Accordingly, I omitted these sections, and other parts that I feel did not speak to the nature of this research. DeVault (1990) and Evans (2010) argue this move flexes the power of researchers and their ability to decide which part of participants stories are acceptable or appropriate. Some researchers view this kind of editing as betrayal of the unity and integrity of what was said. However, Malkki (1995: 57) urged researchers to be "explicit" rather than "silent or apologetic" about editing decisions as having power over the transcription process and selection of quotes is evitable as

²² When time was scheduled in the field to transcribe, I became ill. This is further reflected upon in the next section (3.9 Reflection upon the Fieldwork Process).

a researcher. So in this vein, due to privacy and coherency reasons, I only selected transcribed fractions of semi-structured interviews (Evans, 2010).

Once qualitative transcripts and written notes from qualitative methods were compiled, I preferred to crystallise themes manually. I favoured a more organic process, so paralleling the literature analysis I employed mind maps to guide the assemblage of core ideas. Because my research questions were categorised into social, economic and environmental impacts, themes from transcriptions were organised under these headings. With these transcriptions in hand, I started the 'writing-up' phase.

The 'writing-up' phase has often come under scrutiny by academics. Mikkelson (1995: 277) argues "we must take care to 'prevent spoiling the field" with Stevens (2001) further adding that accountability becomes harder to achieve with the passing of time, particularly when the 'write-up' generally occurs away from the field (Evans, 2010). Therefore, as time passes we can "compromise our arguments or evoke inappropriate understandings" (Cupples & Kindon, 2003: 233). To dilute the severity of such issues, I employed two main tactics to retain the organic nature of my research. Firstly, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, I employed the use of a reflection diary. This diary encompassed a range of notes including dates, events and my emotions/reactions. Tracking my thoughts was valuable way of making sense of my time in the field and further created a way to cross-check certain ideas. Secondly, when arriving back in New Zealand, the first two weeks where dedicated to transcribing and analysing qualitative and quantitative data. Prioritising the data coding process allowed me to draw upon my time in the field with a fresh mind which reduced the risk of romanticising data. Although these measures were executed to un-tarnish the inevitable problems that cling to the 'writing-up' phase, I acknowledge I cannot completely rid myself of the issues Mikkelson (1995) and Stevens (2001) raise.

3.9 Reflection upon the Fieldwork Process

3.9.1 The Absence of FIJI Water

In this research, I originally aimed to include FIJI Water. This would have involved conducting semi-structured interviews with local staff and individuals connected to

their FIJI Water's philanthropy work. In New Zealand I was forwarded details of individuals who worked for the company from personal connections but formal permission from FIJI Water's head office was needed. With this in mind, I accordingly phoned, emailed and visited FIJI Water's main office in Suva numerous times to see if a meeting was possible. After two weeks attempting these means, I managed to get through by phone. The conversation, although abrupt, suggested I email my interview questions for them to review. Previously, FIJI Water has signified they would allow reporters, such as Anna Lenzer (2009) to discuss their concerns:

> "It's unfortunate that the reporter did not have the opportunity to speak to any one of the thousands of local people whose lives have been impacted in a very positive way because of FIJI Water. Had we known she was in Fiji, we would have been happy to escort her [...] she could have visited one of the villages surrounding our plant" (Lenzer, 2009)

With this statement in mind, I thought FIJI Water may consider my request for an interview. Yet, I was informed the likelihood of an interview would be slim as the company was restructuring its charities. I was also strongly advised that there 'was no need to study this subject' and was urged to choose another company as there was 'nothing to investigate'. Shortly after the email was sent, I was denied an interview as FIJI Water were 'not in a position to answer' my questions. Thereby, I was prohibited to not only discuss my research with head office but with anybody currently working at the FIJI Water plant. In this respect, I reluctantly ceased all contact with FIJI Water and its workers. Despite this hurdle, I kept an open mind and continued to pursue my research on FIJI Water without its personal contribution. Instead, I have referred to the company's website, monthly newsletters and media releases as an attempt to incorporate its 'voice'. By not gaining their personal insight however, I acknowledge my research is biased towards Vatukaloko residents.

3.9.2 Anonymity

Prior to leaving Fiji I was granted ethical approval from Victoria University's Ethical Committee (8th May 2011) and located on the consent form, participants were given the choice to remain anonymous. To my surprise, all participants asked to remain unidentified. To follow ethical guidelines all quotes extracted from these qualitative methods will remain anonymous throughout this thesis. However, with all informants strongly opting to obtain an anonymous status, I started questioning *why*

this was occurring. The reasoning for this anonymity can be attributed to the controversial temperament of FIJI Water in combination with Fiji's complex political situation. Hence, Fiji and FIJI Water have created a delicate platform for local opinions and stories to be heard. Throughout this thesis, particularly in Chapters Five to Seven, reminders of this anonymity are woven through reiterate the ethical importance of separating participant's identities from their opinions. As such, the numbers of participants in focus-groups, the date they occurred, their names and even aspects of their character have been masked to avoid the unveiling of their identities.

3.9.3 'Bits of Paper'

In the Vatukaloko villages I started to question the step-by-step ethics procedure needed to conduct field research. I felt I was imposing on Vatukaloko communities a Western construct of what I thought was the 'right way' to ethically collect research. Before each focus group I would read over and hand out to participants consent forms and information sheets (see Appendix II for forms). But some participants became intimidated by the formality of the process and preferred to give me verbal consent or only have one representative of the group sign the form. They openly voiced that they were confused about signing 'bits of paper' to 'just sit and talk'. Here, I felt the collision of ethical guidelines and Fijian tradition. For me, having those bits of paper signed was paramount for my research yet to the local communities their verbal consent was worth more than their signatures. I began to feel uncomfortable asking them to sign forms out of fear of offending their traditional way of granting consent. Fortunately, my interpreter created a hybrid in this ethical dilemma and was able to explain in detail the importance of written consent in Kaivalagi research. From this experience, I discovered ethics procedures need to be flexible and reshaped to fix different cultural contexts. If I engaged with the same or similar communities again, instead of written consent I would opt for verbal consent. This would involve reading out the information sheets with a translator then verbally record their consent rather than signing 'bits of paper'.

3.9.4 Knowing Too Much

A further ethical concern emerged in the form of knowing too much. As already stated above, whilst in brief contact with FIJI Water I was informed their charity work in Fiji was being restructured and decreasing its presence in Fiji. Being exposed to such information placed me in a privileged position, as nearly all participants, at the time, were unaware of such restructuring. I aimed throughout my research to follow Tolich and Davidson's (1999:73) advice to "never harm the people involved in your study". So based on my own judgement I chose to retain the information about FIJI Water's restructuring and only discuss the topic if informants raised the issue. Informing participants of such information may have created a negative ambiance that may have been absent originally. While I knew this information could potentially reshape the nature of my research, I saw disseminating this material as counterproductive and contradictory to my philosophy to 'do no harm'. Having this knowledge is also important in terms of my positionality. It reveals that by *Being Me*, I had the resources and the ability to obtain such knowledge. But concurrently, I built relationships with participants while keeping this information a secret where I felt burdened by not being completely honest in my discussions.

3.9.5 Health Issues

Leslie and Storey (2003) advise "getting comprehensive immunisations, preventing mosquito bites and drinking clean water are all basic forms of prevention that can go a long way toward a healthy field-work experience" (Ibid: 85). Despite taking the above precautions, upon leaving the villages I was violently ill due to a waterborne disease. While I had readily access to clean drinking water, during yaqona ceremonies, at times, river water was used and bare hands would handle both the yagona and water. To deny a bowl of yaqona or food from my hosts would have been culturally offensive and potentially tarnishing towards establishing relationships. I was aware of the risk of consuming the yaqona but decided the potential for falling ill was preferable to offending my host. Fortunately, my symptoms did not emerge until I was out of the villages and in Suva where I could seek professional medical advice. But contracting the disease meant I could not work coherently for a week and was advised to slow down. My original plan was to spend four days reflecting and analysing interviews upon leaving the villages yet my declining health made this task impossible. With interviews lined up back-to-back after these four days and until I left Fiji, I had no choice but to surrender decoding my interviews until I returned New Zealand. So ironically, while studying about bottled water I became ill from a waterborne disease that made me readdress my priorities.

3.10 Summary

Within this chapter, I have explored my fieldwork experience through four concepts: rationale for my study location and subject, description of case-study locations, methodology and reflection on the field work process. These four concepts reveal the foundations to my research and not only highlight how I came to answer my questions but the dilemmas and dynamics that occurred during its process. I believe my rationale, location and methodological decisions were appropriate to the aims, ethics and spirit of my research. Eclectic mixes of both quantitative and qualitative techniques were carefully selected to answer certain objectives. Although original mapping of certain methods were restructured in the field, they became shaped by the characteristics of participants which created a respectful ambiance and created the grounds for a flexible approach to contour my research. While some would view such restructuring as a hurdle, upon reflection I value this challenge along with the many others that eventuated as an opportunity to grow as a researcher.

Chapter Four: Pacific Economies, Neoliberalism and Prospects for Niche Production *Cutting the Voivoi*

This chapter 'cuts into' contemporary debates surrounding neoliberalism and its fashioning of 'economies of niche' in the Pacific region. To do so, I have divided this chapter into four sections: defining neoliberalism, exploring the ideology's diffusion into the Pacific, reviewing the liberalisation of the Pacific's core industry – agriculture, and analysing current debates on niche production. By exploring these concepts, an understanding of how niche products are being woven into Pacific economies can be achieved. I conclude this chapter by arguing there is a need to gain greater awareness of the niche model and how it is impacting the Pacific on a local scale.

4.1 Defining Neoliberalism

Like many intricate ideas, the term neoliberalism has assumed many meanings (Harris & Seid, 2000). In acknowledging this complexity this thesis will define neoliberalism by using Geographer David Harvey's (2005: 2) definition:

"Neoliberalism is in the first instance is a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade [...] If markets do not exist then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State intervention in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum, because, according to theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions for their own benefit"

By drawing upon Harvey's definition, neoliberalism can be perceived as an ideology that is premised on economic deregulation, promotion of *laissez-faire*²³ and "the rolling back of the state" (Potter et al., 2008: 94). Ultimately, control is transferred from the public to the private sector under the principle it will produce a more efficient economy and smaller government (Cohen, 2007). Accordingly, the ideology believes power should devolve from the state and into the hands of the 'free market'.

²³ In development economics, the term *laissez-faire* describes transactions between private parties who are free from state intervention, including restrictive regulations, taxes, tariffs and enforced monopolies.

4.2 The Pacific and Neoliberalism

Neoliberal theory was introduced to the Pacific Islands much later than elsewhere in the developing world, yet it now exclusively frames the "regional and state policy agendas, and is profoundly restructuring economies and societies across the region" (Murray, 2000: 355). Since the 1980s, PICs have altered their approach to development to embrace the requirements of neoliberalism and submit to the reductions and conditions of international aid and pressures (Wartho & Overton, 1999). Therefore, "salvation for the economies of the region lies in opening themselves up to international forces" and parting from the MIRAB model²⁴ (Firth, 2000: 185). Accordingly, New Zealand and Australia who are leading aid donors to the region, vocalised to Pacific leaders "that neoliberalism is not only the simplest neutral solution to Pacific 'problems' but is inevitable anyway" (Bargh, 2001: 252). This neoliberal model was argued to stimulate foreign investment and economic success, and once prosperity was achieved at the top-level it would trickle down to localities (Slatter and Underhill-Sem, 2009).

PICs adopted neoliberalism "with few, if any, questions or reservations" (Emberson-Bain, 1994: ii). However, the full effect of the ideology only started to surface in the early 1990s when concerns about its appropriateness emerged. Firth (2000: 186) has previously noted that the Pacific "should fear the full effects of open global competition and understand the implications for the people of the region of what is happing". Despite this advice, the ideology was continually infused into the region. Today the negative effects predicted by Firth (2000) have started to dominate contemporary literature where problems concerning the Pacific's fragile, vulnerable and dependent economies are commonly discussed (Connell, 2010; Naidu, 2009). As a result, a majority of literature has acquired a violent rhetoric towards the neoliberal model, as the following two debates emphasise:

Firstly, neoliberalism has arguably led to the development of unfair and unsustainable export systems. Currently, PICs are facing significant challenges when competing and trading in the global market due to their isolation to major markets,

²⁴ In the mid-1980s, Geoff Bertram and Ray Watters (1986) began to draw on the 'MIRAB model' to describe the nature of Pacific economies. The theory is based on the elements of Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy that characterized some Pacific states.

lack of economies of scale²⁵ and the scarcity of local innovation (Slatter, 2006). With these challenges, PICs have been steadily producing 'enclave economies' where an overreliance on one industry (commonly tourism) is occurring. With these enclave economies, unemployment and marginalisation are two characteristics that are becoming an increased threat (Connell, 2003).

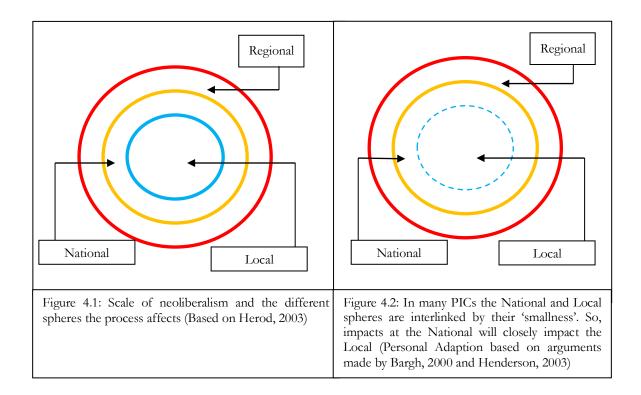
Secondly, Nabobo (2002) argues PICs struggle to intertwine old traditions with new neoliberal frameworks. Within this tension, Western constructs can often overpower and at times, erode indigenous epistemologies. Pacific researcher Bargh (2001: 252) further echoes Nabobo's argument, suggesting that neoliberalism is a branch of neocolonisation:

"These neoliberal policies and agendas are inadequate for the Pacific in various ways. They are inadequate because the values and ideals underpinning neoliberalism contribute to narrow perceptions of Indigenous peoples in the Pacific as incapable of properly governing themselves and of Indigenous cultures as obstacles to 'development'. These perceptions often continue to be expressed overtly, but are also newly articulated and govern through Indigenous structures and identities"

As such, neoliberalism has been labelled a 'cultural eroding process' that favours Western business practices and fails to incorporate Pacific traditions (Ibid). This is evidenced by neoliberal attitude towards land and social structures. In PICs, it has been argued that more than 75 percent of the population have semi-subsistence livelihoods, based on traditional communal land-owning systems (Fairbairn et al., 1991). Neoliberal agendas have increased the pressure to reform land structures from traditional communal ownership to private property tenure (Overton, 2000). Rather than embracing traditional and often spiritual connections, Pacific nations have been advised to transform their landscape to maximise capital investment. In regards to social structures, neoliberal policy demands the 'rolling back of the state'. Yet in PICs, the line between state and society is often blurred due to the islands 'smallness' and social togetherness (Figure 4.1 and 4.2). Hence, when transferring power to foreign influence - an influence often not connected or educated in traditional Pacific ways - potential for conflict and corruption can emerge (Bargh, 2001). Neoliberal reforms are primarily determined and facilitated by outside agents who have a vested interest in exploiting the region (Henderson, 2003). Therefore,

²⁵ Refers to the cost advantages that an enterprise obtains due to expansion (Koshal, 1972).

neoliberalism can fail to "perceive any activity beyond that which takes place in the market place" as the economic interests primarily lie with foreign investors rather than the local people (Bargh, 2001: 261).



Largely, the acceptance neoliberalism in the Pacific has resulted in an overwhelming plethora of literature that acknowledges the progressively negative temperament of the ideology. Policymakers and government officials in favour of neoliberalism aim to counteract these arguments by suggesting the above problems exist because the region has not yielded the full potential of globalisation (Kiley & Marfleet, 1998). Yet such explanations have remained both theoretically and morally questionable (Murray, 2006). At present, PICs are at a juncture in their economic development. The process of neoliberalism cannot be reversed but its impacts are proving to be increasingly negative and it has been predicted the further the region becomes immersed in the ideology, more problems will proliferate (Firth, 2000). Such problems with neoliberalism illustrated here are clearly evidenced in the Pacific's core industry, agriculture.

4.3 Liberalisation of Pacific Agricultural Industries

The agricultural industry is central to many PICs economies. Although numerous PICs have high rates of urban migration, populations within the region remain

predominately rural based. Within these rural communities, agricultural production is both of a subsistence and fiscal value. It has been estimated that about 70 percent of the region's population relies on subsistence farming which cultivates a wide range crops including taro, cassava, coconut, sugar, *yaqona* and mangos (UNDP, 1999: 79). These communities are dependent on this sector for income generation, the distribution of social amenities, and the generation of foreign exchange. Although subsistence farming is central to many Pacific communities, it is a "form of activity often not regarded as being 'real' production by neoliberals²⁶" (Bargh, 2001: 261).

To transform the Pacific's agriculture sector into a 'real production' model, foreign neoliberal policymakers advised local farmers to replace subsistence farming with monoculture production of cash crops for external markets (Storey & Murray, 2001). This overhaul of the agricultural sector encompasses four core principles: (1) have the region work together in order to maximise future opportunities, (2) to improve efficiency and productivity by deregulation and privatisation, (3) successfully administer land that is owned by indigenous groups, (4) and encourage and support the private sector to take the lead in developing the agricultural industry (Ibid). With these measures, neoliberal policymakers hoped to generate fiscal prosperity and transform Pacific economies to be "commercially active in a Western sense" (Skully, 1997: 32; Bargh, 2001).

In theory liberalisation of the agricultural sector *should* have aided economic growth in PICs. Although, the industry was sculpted with much promise by neoliberal policymakers, today the meagre agro-export industry of these nations has failed to deliver on their expectations:

> "The transition from subsistence based island societies to monetised growth-orientated economies has not proved to be a smooth one resulting in fundamental changes to the structure of Pacific societies without the establishment of self-sustaining economic growth" (UNDP, 1994: 11)

²⁶ Neoliberals in this study can be defined as government officials or foreign policy makers – primarily from New Zealand and Australia – who have aimed to integrate neoliberalism into mainstream rhetoric in the Pacific Islands.

The underlying failure of the agricultural industry has been traced to the attempt to insert local sectors into the global economy without the competency to compete efficiently within larger markets. Subsequently, issues relating to being uncompetitive with the external competition, the reduction in protective tariffs, misunderstandings of the global market and lack of a common-front approach have plagued PICs agricultural industries (Connell, 2010; Slatter, 2003; Overton, 1999). Additionally hitherto successful key agricultural industries have also succumbed to the problems introduced by neoliberal restructuring, where state intervention and tariffs that once protected key agricultural industries, such as the Lome Convention²⁷, have been removed (Ibid). With these key trading agreements being dissolved, the safety-nets that once provided the protection to agro-exports have left PICs vulnerable in the Accordingly, the reshaping of Pacific economies has proven global market. challenging and perhaps 'over-adventurous' for these small-scale economies. The failure of core crop industries such as Tongan squash pumpkin, Cook Island passion-fruit and Niuean Taro, are just a few monocultures that have been characterised by the above issues (Murray, 2001). To overcome these ever-emerging problems associated with the liberalisation of agricultural industries, PICs are being encouraged to focus on the commoditisation of niche products.

4.4 Niche Production in the Pacific

As neoliberalism proves to be less favourable to the Pacific, new strategies in order to bolster the region's economic buoyancy have been suggested. One of these strategies is niche production (Kemp et al., 1998). Mirroring the definition presented in Chapter One, niche production can be defined as: "a process of carving out a small business sector by specialising" (Shani & Chalasani, 1993: 58). Because neoliberalism encouraged PICs to become outward orientated economically, specialising was suggested as a means to obtain comparative advantage and transform agricultural sectors into high quality and valued agro exports; and by doing so reduce vulnerability and further simulate sustainable economic growth (AusAID, 2009).

²⁷ The Lome Convention is an international aid and trade agreement between ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries and the European Union. It is aimed at supporting the 'ACP states' efforts to achieve comprehensive, self-reliant and self-sustained development (University of East London, 2011).

Geographic writings, pioneered by post-developmentalists Gibson-Graham (2002) and Barker (2008), delve further into this discussion suggesting that niche production is a form of 'glocalisation'²⁸; where two tendencies (local and global) work in tandem and what is considered local, is produced within and by globalising discourses. Hence, niche products can be argued to be founded on both a hybrid of local and global traits. Being glocalised, it is evident that 'place' or 'locality' becomes an essential component of the niche marketing strategy (Connell, 2006). As Overton (2010: 5) notes "the creation of these niche markets commonly involves stressing local environmental conditions, as well as factors such as traditional or artisanal means of production and local heritage". Thus, 'place' becomes a means to "package and promote putative qualitative characteristics of a product" (Ibid). As a result, the stereotypical imagery associated with a certain 'place' can be optimised to perceive taste, distinctiveness and quality (Connell, 2006). Within the Pacific this technique has been executed to stabilise fragile economies from the accelerated intrusions of global neoliberal forces.

4.4.1 Neoliberalism or New Glocalised Alternative?

Niche production can be scrutinised as a contemporary strand of neoliberalism or as an alternative glocalised version – being a new economic paradigm in its own right (Murray, 2010). This polarisation has been characterised by the diverse methods that are used to manufacture niche products. Niche products can either be produced by large multinational companies such as American owned FIJI Water or facilitated by localities as with Nonu Juice from Samoa. Accordingly, there are two existing frameworks in regards to niche production. In regards to FIJI Water, the company clearly works within the neoliberal framework. The company mirrors the core characteristics of neoliberalism from foreign investment, privatisation and the rolling back of the state (Connell, 2006). Yet it optimises on local discourses by using Fiji's tropical imagery to promote its brand. Conversely, locally produced niche products, such as Samoan Nonu Juice are relatively free of neoliberal agendas but still actively participate in the global economy. They are usually family operated, cultivated on communal land and are based on an indigenous work ethic (Cretney & Tafuna'i, 2004). By doing so, the branding and full operation of the product is owned at a

²⁸ Glocalisation describes the complex interaction between globalising and localising tendencies (Dicken, 2000). Such a term helps us to appreciate the "interrelatedness of geographical scales and, in particular, the idea that while the 'local' exists within the 'global', the 'global' also exists within the 'local'" (Ibid: 459).

local level. With these two cases it is evident niche production can be scrutinised within the neoliberal model but also within an alternative glocalised framework.

4.4.2 Advantages of Niche Production in the Pacific

The advantages of niche production can be condensed into three arguments: (1) simulation of economies (2) connection of rural communities to the global market and (3) increased product value.

Firstly, the development of exotic niche products has been argued to restimulate economic development. Thematically, the model encourages consumers to pay premium for a 'slice' of a commodity that provides a quality exclusive or considered exotic to the consumer. AusAID's (2009: 34) *Pacific Economic Survey* further reinforces that niche production is:

"increasingly important for commodity exporters. Identifiable, highquality commodities attract higher prices at market. Product differentiation, through branding, certification programs and valueadding, offers potential for improving returns to farming communities. Exporters are also finding success by using agricultural products in new and innovative ways"

The rationale behind this niche marketing strategy is to increase the resilience of the PICs economies. This is achieved by creating a product that is competitively positioned in the global market and encapsulates a quality that other products fail to embrace. Arguably, by producing successful and unique niche products characterised by the Pacific's exotic 'place' it would attract foreign markets and investment. Once niche product businesses gathered economic momentum, it was predicted that this new fiscal prosperity would eventually "promote diversity and reduce the need to obtain economies of scale" (Murray, 2010: 2). This is particularly evident in companies such as Samoan Virgin Coconut Oil, who have managed to occupy a unique gap in the market and globalise their product contributing significantly to the nation's economy - for instance, in 2008 the company contributed just over ST\$1.8 million to the Samoan economy (AusAID, 2009; Fordey & Naidu, 2008; Samoan Central Bank, 2011). Products such as these are rapidly growing in demand throughout Europe, North America and Australasia due to their exclusivity (Cottingham & Winkler, 2007). By generating such wealth, niche products can become significant contributors to their nations' economies.

Secondly, 'TNCs in the Pacific can work along rural communities usually disconnected from the global market. Producers commonly require local agricultural skills and labour. By working with these rural communities or drawing on them to provide manual labour, it can help to inject a new lease of wealth into areas struggling to obtain such opportunities. In particular, women have been known to weave baskets for the beauty-care company, Pure Fiji, earning them an independent income by relying on their traditional skills (Cretney & Tafuna'i, 2004). Additionally, the creation of one niche product can have a domino-like effect where other local and rural industries such as transport systems can benefit from their presence.

Finally, niche production can increase the market value of products, particularly if they are certified as organic. The use of pesticides in the Pacific is usually too expensive but this has proven to be an advantage for Pacific niche producers. Having this chemical-free stance allows producers to obtain organic certification allowing their products to increase in fiscal value by an average 20 percent (Cretney & Tafuna'i, 2004). But while these positive impacts exist, literature suggests there is an increasingly adverse side to this niche product phenomenon.

4.4.3 Disadvantages of Niche Production on the Pacific

On the contrary, Overton (2010) proposes niche production will suffer from similar ramifications as the liberalised Pacific agricultural sector suggesting specialising is not necessarily 'a way out' of this intricate neoliberal status quo. The varieties of problems associated with niche production have been pinpointed to:

"vulnerability associated with dependence on rapidly evolving external customer tastes, the anti-development social-economic and environmental consequences of rapid commercialisation, and the outflow of profits given the often associated foreign capital investment and the fact products are generally processed externally" (Murray, 2010: 2)

Further problems include, *increased competition* from competitors who may start to sell similar items to the same market, capturing customers and driving prices down; *overproduction* resulting in increased environmental damage and saturation of the market; *lack of entrepreneurial skills* associated with Western business practices; and *top-down development* where fiscal prosperity at a top-level does not 'trickle down' to local communities (Mundy & Mathias, 2010). PICs are also encouraged to place all their efforts or only have enough resources to stabilise one niche product, which in turn

minimises the diversification of their economies. As such, this focus on one core product results in vulnerability and dependence. This dependence is further exacerbated with the Pacific region's vulnerability to natural disasters and cropdiseases which can devastate crops, communities and infrastructure overnight (Rapaport, 1999: 360). With these arguments it is evident there are areas where "pitfalls of non-sustainability that exist" in the niche production model (Murray, 2010: 3).

4.4.4 Nature of Niche Production Literature

Finally, it is critical to pay privilege to the nature of literature presented in this review. Current debates on niche production primarily focus on the models impact at a top-level. Therefore an exploration of niche production, on a local scale, is currently uncharted in literature. Over the past decade an abundance of niche products have emerged in the Pacific that optimise on the imaginative discourses of the region. Policymakers, donors and lenders throughout this period have continually promoted niche production as a tool for sustainable economic development, despite academics exposing flaws in the models potentially harmful nature (AusAID, 2009; Overton, 1999). Recently, Murray (2010) and Overton (2010) have readdressed such concerns, proposing that a greater understanding on the attempts to promote niche agro-exports is needed – in particular their social, economic and environmental impact on a local scale. By exploring this gap, I aim to "keeping the conversation going" in this topical yet complex field (Bennett, 2009: 249; Evans, 2010).

4.5 Summary

This chapter has examined the nature of neoliberalism in the Pacific and the more recent shift towards 'economies of niche' given the shortcomings of the neoliberal ideology. Neoliberalism has fundamentally altered economies in the PICs, forcing relatively small markets to participate in a competitive and complex global economy. By doing so, various challenges have emerged for Pacific economics largely concerning distance markets, lack of economies of scale and scarcity of investment. This neoliberal shift has also proved largely devastating for the Pacific's largest industry, agriculture. To counteract these problems precipitated by neoliberalism, PICs turned towards niche marketing to differentiate their products and attract global markets. Scholars have vigorously debated the effectiveness of this approach revealing there are both costs and benefits that have eventuated. Yet, while these arguments have surfaced, they are primarily preoccupied the global or national success of any given product. Virtually no work has been conducted on the model's impact at the local scale; it is this gap to which this thesis is oriented.

Chapter Five: The Global Success of FIJI Water Stripping the Voivoi

"Niche products can be relied on to help fill the export gap for Fiji. They are the low-hanging fruits" (Cromwell, 2011)

To explore how niche production impacts the Pacific today, FIJI Water provides a useful case-study. This chapter is dedicated to 'stripping' back the company's global success and by doing so, will achieve a macro understanding of the company while concurrently answering Question One of this study. To understand how the company emerged, this chapter firstly examines pursuit of niche production in Fiji as a means to counteract the perils of neoliberalism. From here, it unpacks FIJI Water's economic success through three sections: firstly an overview of FIJI Water; secondly an outline of the company's lucrative marketing strategy; and finally an insight into its trading trends²⁹.

5.1 The Pursuit of Niche Production in Fiji

To analyse FIJI Water's global success, it is important to understand Fiji's acceptance of neoliberalism and its contemporary reliance on niche marketing. Fiji, endowed with forest, mineral, and marine resources is one of the more robust Pacific Islands (Fijian Embassy, 2010). Fiji was one of the first Pacific nations to restructure its economy to the neoliberal template (Slatter, 2006). Struggling to compete in the global economy, the Fijian government was forced to accept a number of structural reforms, including export-orientation, the privatisation, public sector cut-backs and encourage foreign investment (Overton, 1999) in exchange for loans to rejuvenate the crippled economy. The acceptance of this restructuring initially brought prosperity to the island nation where for brief period industries such as *yaqona*, sugar, and the garment industry thrived. However, this economic growth was short-lived. In the early 2000s, problems that commonly trail neoliberalism have started to filter through the Fijian economy. Such problems have been pinpointed to Fiji's small, open and narrow based economy and that struggles to effectively capitalise on the benefits of trade liberalisation and globalisation (Prasad & Tisdell,

²⁹ To further reiterate section 3.9.3 in Chapter Three, participants who contribute to the ideas expressed in this chapter requested to remain anonymous and are therefore are referred to as Tamata (Figure 3.3 and 3.4).

1996). These economic difficulties, however, have been further compounded by repetitive coups.

5.1.1 Economic Perils of the 2006 Coup

Since 1987, Fiji has gone through a transition of four coups which have not only orchestrated political strife but also provoked economic instability. While all four are fundamental and definitive contributors Fiji's history, in regards to this study, the 2006 coup is the most significant. The 2006 coup, which placed the government that is still in power today, has defined contemporary economic and political discourse. Unlike the 1987 and 2000 coup – that were preoccupied with land and ethnic issues - the 2006 overthrow was provoked by Fijian politicians making decisions stemming from displeasure with the government (Firth, 2009). This was primarily geared towards a string of contentious bills concerning land and the treatment of past coup facilitators. But, perhaps the most significant of these was the RTU bill, which would grant an amnesty to some of those involved or being investigated for their involvement in the coup of 2000, including those, who at the time, were elected (Firth & Fraenkel, 2009). Consequently the military, lead my Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama did not agree with such legislation and with the government unable to meet their demands to retract the bills, on the 3rd of December 2006, Fiji experienced its fourth consecutive coup.

This fourth coup has instigated primarily adverse economic effects, as the nation continues to run under this regime and reject democratic law. Such effects include a reduction in development aid (from then key donor partners – Australia and New Zealand), declining trading relationships and a suspension from the Commonwealth. With this reduction:

"Fiji's economy has been in a decline since the 2006 general election and was made worse by the military coup. The Reserve Bank of Fiji has announced that the economy will shrink two to four per cent in 2007 and that the range of decline has been aggravated by this latest political crisis" (Hargreaves et al., 2010: 126)

With this economic turbulence, New Zealand and Australian aid agencies have suggested the "primary responsibility for Fiji's economic future rests with the Fiji regime [and] for the good of Fiji, the military must return to the barracks and let the people of Fiji, with the help of the international community, participate in a democratic election and start the process of recovery and reform" (New Zealand Aid Program, 2011). Today, Fiji's governance is still under the rule of the regime with little sight of democratic law being restored. However, Fiji still draws upon neoliberal characteristics to sculpt their declining economy but in combination with the nation's current military junta, a questionable economic future for the island nation remains.

5.1.2 Fiji's Agricultural Sector and Niche Production

Despite political unrest, Fiji remains dependent on agriculture exports not only at a national level but also at a local level – Plate 5.1. The sector has been predicted to employ over 70 percent of Fijians (Narube, 2008). But since neoliberal policy restructured the Fijian economy, traditional core industries such as sugar and *yaqona* which were once successful, have started to decline primarily due to subsidises and protection measures from the European Union, Australia and New Zealand dissolving (Woods, 2008). For instance, in 2005



Plate 5.1: Local Market, Suva

sugar generated over FJD\$223million for the nation yet, in 2010 only managed to reach FJD\$70million (Fiji Trade and Investment Bureau, 2011). Such drastic declines in decisive industries have instigated the search for new methods and products to encourage sustainable economic growth. Accordingly, Fiji has turned towards niche production to gain a comparative advantage, diversify and integrate into the global market. In an interview with Fiji's United States ambassador Jesoni Vitusagavulu, Cromwell (2011) managed to get a glance into the nation's perceptions on the niche production initiative:

"What Fiji needs to do is niche marketing. This is the route we should be following. We need to develop more organic products. Fiji is very pure. Fiji should be selling products for which people will pay top dollar, because of their value. That message has to go out from Fiji: that the way forward is to brand our niche products"

Over the past decade, Fiji has conformed to the niche production phenomenon where the imaginative geographies of the islands have been constructed as marketing tools (Connell, 2006). Commodities such as Pure Fiji and Black Pearls Fiji are just a few products that have been tailored under this marketing strategy. Such products draw upon the Fiji's tropical and isolationist discourses to convey images of purity and rarity.

5.2 An Introduction to FIJI Water

Despite various economic constraints, one successful niche product has emerged from Fiji: FIJI Water. Effective global competitiveness is rare in the Pacific Islands, yet FIJI Water has become Fiji's fastest growing industry (Connell, 2006). FIJI Water is a U.S-based business and brand of bottled water which is derived, bottled and shipped from Fiji. The water comes from



Plate 5.2: FIJI Water Bottle (FIJI Water, 2011)

three artesian aquifers located in the Yaqara Valley of Viti Levu. The unique sellingpoint about the water is its purity and the intricate process to keep it pure from extraction to the consumer. The company's state of the art bottling facility has been pinpointed to the company's ability to tailor this pure image, as they state:

> "no human hands are allowed to touch it. In fact, the facility was built directly on top of the FIJI Water aquifer, where a completely sealed delivery system draws the water up from the protected chamber and places it directly into our iconic square bottles" (FIJI Water, 2011).

This purity factor is further proliferated by Fiji's geographically isolation where FIJI Water markets its beverage as "untouched by man" or "uncompromised by 21st century air" (Ibid). Therefore, this relatively bland commodity has been "linked to an 'exotic' place, and sold to elite consumers, as a form of cultural capital" (Reddy & Singh, 2010: 342). Consequently, FIJI Water has used Fiji's stereotypical lucrative characteristics to differentiate itself in the competitive global market. Such marketing characteristics are further explored in-depth in section 5.3.

FIJI Water's story began in 1995, when Canadian hotelier David Gilmour noticed clients at his hotels where drinking imported water, when he believed a unique and purer source could be found in Fiji (Connell, 2006; Kaplan, 2005). With geologists from Gilmour's mining company Barrick Gold, they located a bore-hole previously drilled by the British government (Plate 5.3):

"The initial water source was not for FIJI Water, it was for the people [...]but later business man *(sic)* heard the borehole was there but, that was not the original intention of the British funding" (Tamata Seven, Personal Comm. May 2011)

Despite these original plans, Gilmour convinced the Fijian government to transform the borehole into a water bottle business venture and in 1996 they committed to a 99 year lease (Connell, 2006). To further aid Gilmour's investment, the Fijian government offered favourable business conditions in tune with the countries neoliberal framework including "access to cheap and temporary



Plate 5.3: FIJI Water's Bottling Plant

labor, corporate-friendly policies such as tax-holidays, subsidies, and unregulated access to abundant natural resources" (Ulrich, 2009: 9). With such conditions, Gilmour obtained favourable blueprints to begin his FIJI Water empire.

While Gilmour started to fashion this successful business, in 2004 FIJI Water was sold for a reported US\$63 million to North American billionaires Stewart and Lynda Resnick – owners of global company: Roll International Corporation³⁰ (The Sunday Morning Herald, 2004). Although this changing of hands occurred, FIJI Water has remained one of the "most successful economic products to leave the Fijian Islands" using a multitude of marketing approaches to charm customers; as the below discuss will unveil (Tamata Four, Personal Comm. May, 2010).

5.3 FIJI Water's Marketing Success Story

One participant expressed: "it must have been something that made FIJI Water stand out as something different, financial advisors just seem to wonder about it" (Tamata Twelve, Personal Comm. June 2011). This 'something' has commonly been pinpointed to FIJI Water's marketing strategy which has been a key contributor to the company's global success. On-top of its purity factor, FIJI Water's marketing strategy involves four core elements: endorsements, tropical rhetoric, health benefits

³⁰ Roll International Corporation also own other water based industries in New Zealand and the United States in addition to large businesses such a Teleflora and POM Wonderful.

and charity campaigns. Using these elements the company has further fashioned its brand to reflect ideas about luxury, ethicality and rarity.

5.3.1 Endorsements

Like many of the emerging iconic brands "of this century, FIJI Water eschewed major advertising campaigns (too mainstream), direct marketing (too tacky) or sales promotions (too commoditising)" (Ritson, 2006). Instead, FIJI Water relies on celebrity endorsements, free product placement "and the subsequent buzz to build its appeal" (Ibid). The first public appearance of the beverage was in 1999 in 'The Thomas Crown Affair" by former James Bond star Pierce Brosnan and, like all the celebrity endorsements that have followed, the brand's inclusion was not paid for but was, "instead, the natural outcome of its premium position" (Ibid). Since its first appearance, a multitude of celebrities are now spotted unique blue-topped square bottle; with a website - Coolspotters - even dedicated to capturing celebrities holding or drinking the beverage (see Plate 5.4). Product placement is further evident on everyday television programmes with shows including Keeping up with the Kardashians, Friends and The Big Bang Theory; where the bottle is often strategically placed in the full view of the audience (The Sunday Morning Herald, 2004). Gilmour's contacts also orchestrated dealerships with other well-known corporations such as hotels (Trump International and Four Seasons) airlines (such as NetJet and Air Pacific) and restaurants (Nobu Sushi and Bei restaurant). With the collection of celebrities, television programmes and businesses endorsing FIJI Water, the company has managed to obtain free marketing and concurrently create an elite perception of their product.



Plate 5.4: From top-left anti-clockwise. US President, Barack Obama; Actress, Emma Watson; Actor, Hugh Jackman; Television Series, Friends; Pop Singer, Britney Spears (Coolspotters, 2011)

Perhaps a most rigorous illustration of the elitism noted above can be pinpointed to Elizabeth Taylor's 33.5 carat diamond ring being compared to "a drop of FIJI Water" (CBS, 2011). With this example, it is evident Gilmour has managed to tailor a commodity that has connections with ideas of exclusivity, luxury and indulgence. Endorsements from celebrities and top businesses has consequently allowed the product to take on a "life of its own as a desirable object" and has been paralleled to a fashion accessory "like a perfume, but far less expensive" (Kaplan, 2007: 695). Thus, by simply consuming FIJI Water:

"people are making statements about their lifestyle, taste, and status; they show that they do not need to drink tap water and can afford to pay the high price for bottled water [...] and vicariously live a high status lifestyle for a few moments" (Ulrich, 2009: 30).

5.3.2 Tropical Discourse

FIJI Water has developed a highly successful branding strategy based on the imaginative tropical discourse of Fiji as its website elaborates:

"The island nation of Fiji is a cluster of green jewels set in the endless blue of the Pacific. In fact, the very name 'Fiji' has become an icon of beauty, nature, simplicity, and remoteness – and when it comes to drinking water, "remoteness" is a critical blessing" (FIJI Water, 2011).

Evidently, FIJI Water has used the idyllic imagery of 'Fiji' to market the perceived taste, distinctiveness and quality of their water. To portray this topical image to the consumer, FIJI Water utilised the power of packaging to its advantage (McMaster & Nowak, 2002). The bottle plays on the nation's tropical stereotypes (Plate 5.5) from the gold inscription of FIJI with a colourful arrangement of hibiscus with either a cascading waterfall or *voivoi* ferns as a backdrop. As a result, the product has a "topical mystique associated with Fiji and its purity, underpinned



Plate 5.5: FIJI Water Bottle Designs

by the slogan 'untouched by man' [which has] struck a chord with consumers' nostalgia for an authentic, exotic and wholesome drink" (McMaster & Nowak, 2009: 5). In the bottle water industry, FIJI Water is also the only brand that comes

from a tropical paradise – not a cold, mountainous region. With this exclusive tropical image and ability to play on Fiji's isolation, FIJI Water has successfully individualised itself in the competitive water bottle market. Overall, FIJI Water uses tropical imagery to offer the "taste of paradise" to consumers and by doing so claims to be the "next best thing to a trip to Fiji" (FIJI Water, 2011).

5.3.2 Health Benefits

Connected with the tropical discourse of FIJI Water are the proposed life-changing health benefits of the drink. Consumers from high income countries are becoming progressively health conscious and with an increasingly trend for water to "be more pure than tap water" (Ulrich, 2009: 31). FIJI Water (2011) has been capitalising on this ever-growing anti-tap movement stating:

"We all make assumptions. For instance, most people assume that bottled water is better than tap water. But is it? The short answer is Yes"

To prove its beverage is healthier than tap-water, FIJI Water emphasises on its natural and anti-ageing properties. Each bottled is argued to contain minerals including fluoride, magnesium, calcium and silica. Out of these minerals, the high silica content of each bottle has been a core focus for FIJI Water as they describe on their website:

"When the Fijian rains fall over the Yaqara Valley, the rain water filters down through layers of ancient volcanic rock over many years. Along the way, our water gathers silica (also known as silicon), an important mineral that some believe may improve skin and make joints more flexible. Generally helpful in managing the effects of aging, silica may also help strengthen the skeletal system and support bone health. Dietary intake of silica varies between 20 and 50mg per day. With 91mg of silica per litre, FIJI Water is a smart and delicious way to get it" (FIJI Water, 2011).

Such health benefits have provided FIJI Water with a link into an accelerating market for healthy products obtaining headlines such as: "models drink FIJI Water for Perfect skin" and "silica in water may reduce Alzheimer's risk" (Lifeofamodel, 2011; FIJI Water, 2011). By stressing the natural health benefits of water, FIJI Water has effectively 'tapped into' an ever growing health conscious market.

5.3.4 Philanthropy

FIJI Water have rigorously (but indirectly) used its philanthropic work as a vehicle to promote its water. FIJI Water's commitment to "charity stewardship has always been part of the company's DNA" (FIJI Water Foundation, 2011). In this respect, the company has pioneered its own aid assistance organisation: the FIJI Water Foundation. Launched in 2007, the FIJI Water Foundation has become one of the largest charities operating in Fiji. Although Chapter Four revealed this foundation is currently stagnant, the foundation previously focused on three priority areas: (1) improving access to and quality of health care; (2) creating and advancing educational opportunities (3) investing in clean water, sanitation, and infrastructure projects to improve quality of life (FIJI Water Foundation, 2011). To achieve this, the company sponsors a range of NGOs throughout the Fijian Islands to carry out environmental and humanitarian projects³¹.

Along with healthy products, there is an increasing global conscience for 'green products' (Connell, 2006). FIJI Water has tapped into this marketing strategy promoting its product as being 'carbon negative', 'every drop is green' and '1% for the planet' (FIJI Water, 2011). To achieve these claims, FIJI Water has established fiscal relationships with Conservation International and World Wildlife Fund. Through these connections, FIJI Water successfully promotes itself as an environmentally-friendly product, and to prove such status most bottles and boxes wear a green drop to publically display their meeting of specific environmental clauses – Plate 5.6. Concurrent with this strategy, the foundation is also known for its contributions to humanitarian philanthropies to provide education, clean water and health care to local communities throughout Fiji (Salzman, 2010). With this development work, it has been argued that:

"FIJI Water sees if these people are taken well care of, the productivity of Fiji will increase, I hope FIJI Water will continue with their work because there are people out there who really need their need there service, NGOs are doing other things but FIJI Water is doing great things, especially in the education part" (Tamata Eight, Personal Comm. June 2011)

Along with the foundation, FIJI Water has provided assistance to the neighbouring Vatukaloko villages through the Vatukaloko Trust Fund (VTF). As the *talanoa*

³¹ The amount spent on their charity work remains undisclosed to the public.

revealed in Chapter Two, although the land originally belonged to the Vatukaloko people, colonialism stripped them of this title. As such, FIJI Water was not required to provide assistance to the Vatukaloko villages, as legally they are no longer the landowners. Despite this, Gilmour wanted to pay his respect to and obtain spiritual blessing from the Vatukaloko people by providing their own charity fund. Henceforth, the VTF was agreed on an initial term of 10 years starting in 2000 with three main fiscal benefits: a one off FJD\$175,000 payment, an annual royalty of 0.13-0.15 percent of net revenue annually and employment in ancillary opportunities (Trust Deed³², 2001). This agreement was overseen by a handful of individuals from the Vatukaloko villages known as the *Vanua*³³. Accordingly, a small and select group of men mainly from the chiefly village of Drauniivi were selected to become part of this *Vanua* who oversaw project developments and managed the fiscal arrangements with FIJI Water.



Plate 5.6: Every drop is Green Campaign and FIJI Water Charity Sign

FIJI Water further publicise its charity efforts in three ways: (1) in its monthly newsletter 'the soul of the water' (2) regular updates on its website (3) signs built all over Fiji to publically mark where they have been active in their charitable efforts (Plate 5.7). Overall, with this wide variety of charity work, FIJI Water has successfully purported its beverage as 'sustainable and guilt free' (FIJI Water, 2011).

³² A copy of the trust deed was given to me in the Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group.

³³ The term *Vanua* has a complex meaning. However, in the context of this study, *Vanua* takes on the meaning of a village political unit. As such, it is a small group of individuals who are known to be 'protectors' of the land and have been handed the responsibility to guard it for future generations.

5.4 FIJI Water and the Global Economy

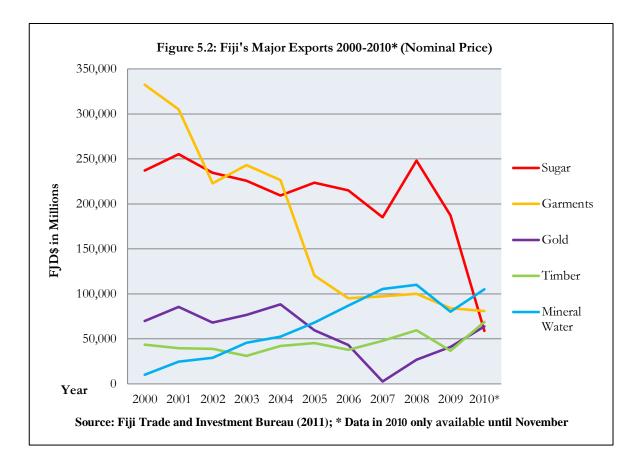
While the data presented in this section provides a window into trading nature of FIJI Water, it should be treated cautiously as it was not published by the company itself. The only applicable data available about the company's economic trends is mineral water data only from various Fijian government departments. As such, these statistics include all bottle water companies and water aid. They further vary across government departments making a coherent representation of mineral data difficult. Despite these issues, such data is still useful as a proxy measure of FIJI Water's activities given that: (1) Fiji's low proportion of water aid (2) FIJI Water being the only internationally active bottle water company in Fiji until 2006 (3) comparatively other Fijian bottle water companies have significantly lower export rates (estimated at FJD\$1 million annually) and (4) FIJI Water is the only company with the equipment, expertise and connections to produce and export bottled water on such a large scale (Connell, 2006). Therefore, the graphs and tables displayed can provide an indirect snapshot into the fiscal and export position of the company. While the data is not a perfect representation, the company's international trends can still be ascertained.

5.4.1 FIJI Water's Economic Success

Over the past 15 years, FIJI Water has achieved phenomenal economic success. FIJI Water is one of the many companies in a fast-growing global beverage industry valued at over US\$35billion in 2009 (Reddy & Singh, 2010). In 2004, more than 2,900 brands of bottled water were produced in over 115 countries (Connell, 2006). Within this competitive market FIJI Water has thrived and has become the new status-symbol constantly competing with Evian for the top water bottle spot. FIJI Water started exporting in early 1997 targeting audiences largely in the U.S and Europe. Since the product started exporting sales have continued to amplify. From 1998 to 2000 production escalated from 10 million bottles to 25 million bottles (Ibid). Fiji itself mirrored a similar growth pattern with sales increasing from 90,000 cases in 2001 to 250,000 cases in 2003 (Ibid). With this promising start, FIJI Water has continued to override expectations and has grown into a highly profitable business venture, with exports continually growing as Figure 5.1 suggests.

Figure 5.1: Mineral Water Exports from Fiji by Value and Quantity								
Year	Mineral Water Exports (Nominal FJD\$ Million)	Increase/Decrease Between Years (FJD\$ Million)	Litres (Million)					
1997	1.1	0	N/A					
1998	2.4	1.3	N/A					
1999	5.9	3.5	N/A					
2000	15.5	8.8	1.2					
2001	24.5	14.6	2					
2002	28.8	4.3	2.5					
2003	45.6	16.8	3.9					
2004	52.3	6.4	5.5					
2005	67.9	15.6	9.2					
2006	86.9	19	11					
2007	105.4	18.5	13					
2008	109.9	4.5	15.6					
2009	80.2	-29.7	N/A					
2010*	105.5	25.3	N/A					
Source: Fiji Trade and Investment Bureau (2011); * Data in 2010 only available until November								

As Figure 5.2 below will further illustrate, mineral water has become Fiji's core export industry, out-competing other prominent sectors such as sugar and garments. Accordingly, FIJI Water is now responsible for 20 percent of Fiji's exports and three percent of the nation's GDP (Bloxham, 2011; BBC 2008). While this success has been relatively upward, Fiji's mineral water industry and FIJI Water itself revealed a brief decline in sales in 2009 as a run-off from the 2008 recession (Lenzer, 2009). Despite this fluctuation, the industry has successfully recovered yielding similar success to pre-recession times. In regards to FIJI Water, two key economic strategies have aided its success in this turbulent economic climate: elite pricing and a 13-year tax-holiday (this tax-holiday is discussed in-depth in Chapter Six). In 2011, for one litre of FIJI Water in the United Kingdom retails at £1.95, in Australia AUS\$5, in the United States at US\$3.90 and even in Fiji at FJD\$3.50 - "significantly more than you would pay for the same amount of milk, beer, petrol or even Evian" (Daye & Brad, 2008). Such premiums on prices in Fiji and internationally communicate exclusivity, amplifying brand equity and delivering large operating "profits to boot" (Ritson, 2008).



5.4.2 Destination of FIJI Water Exports

Globally, FIJI Water can be purchased in a myriad of destinations from supermarkets in the U.S, luxury hotels in the United Arab Emirates to five-star restaurants in France. On the company's website, they claim to export to five main regions which include the Americas, Asia, Oceania, Europe and the Middle East as Figures 5.3 and 5.4 illustrate on the next page (FIJI Water, 2011). As the tables show, among these regions, the Americas is the company's dominant market and this largely consists of the U.S. However, in 2005 FIJI Water started venturing into new markets. There has been notable growth in both Asia and Europe, whilst Oceania (which includes both New Zealand and Australia) has seen slower growth. The Middle East has only recently emerged as a market, but shows considerable promise as is discussed below where each of the margin regions is considered.

Figure 5.3: Nominal Value (FJD\$) of Mineral Water Exported from Fiji by Region											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
Americas	12,014,825	24,430,499	27,787,574	41,408,513	49,522,090	65,499,332	79,193,557	100,110,281	101,985,579	74,778,745	97,094,804
Asia	950	50	715,763	37,060	7,680	45,760	886,569	1,800,700	4,536,635	1,975,289	2,027,446
Oceania	67,331	86,238	258,199	2,898,152	3,029,466	2,017,953	5,130,444	2,706,869	2,827,374	3,085,130	1,935,648
Europe	390	1,800	1,500	1,249,837	856,817	321,762	1,664,988	856,686	513,517	811,238	3,702,438
Middle East	Middle East 55,119 253,606									253,606	
Total	12,083,496	24,518,587	28,763,036	45,593,562	53,416,053	67,884,807	86,875,558	105,474,536	109,863,105	80,705,521	105,013,942
Source: Statistics Fiji (2011) for break down by country see appendix; * Data only gathered until November 2010											

Figure 5.4: Nominal Quantity (Per Litre) of Mineral Water Exported from Fiji by Region											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
Americas	579,592	17,450,355	18,525,486	23,074,900	33,014,724	40,628,782	45,203,281	49,124,846	77,655,980	87,401,906	123,513,933
Asia	610	35	47,856	20,588	5,120	35,199	609,042	1,200,464	1,786,560	2,079,860	2,437,804
Oceania	48,901	60,068	172,125	1,683,575	1,299,631	1,631,480	3,420,288	1,804,578	1,131,209	3,066,106	2,203,352
Europe	556	1,284	100	712,884	553,963	238,298	1,092,302	515,977	205,406	1,261,288	6,339,975
Middle East										8,400	363,373
Total	629,659	17,511,742	18,745,567	25,491,947	34,873,438	42,533,759	50,324,913	52,645,865	80,779,155	93,817,560	134,858,437
Source: Statistics Fiji (2011) for break down by country see appendix; * Data only gathered until November 2010											

5.4.3 Dominant Market: The United States³⁴

The backbone to FIJI Water's economic success can be attributed to its market in the U.S. In 2008 alone, the U.S collectively consumed US\$8.6 billion worth of bottled water, with FIJI Water activity taking part in this ever-growing water industry (Royte, 2008). Connell (2006: 343) notes over 97 percent of FIJI Water is exported internationally with a staggering 90 percent of this figure dedicated to the U.S. Such statistics are further backed by Fiji's mineral water data where in 2010 alone, over 121 million litres (out



Plate 5.7: FIJI Water in a New York, U.S. Deli. Retailing at US\$3.00 for 1 litre

of the 134 million in total exported that year) of mineral water was exported to the U.S; and within this figure "it's relatively only FIJI Water exporting to the States [from Fiji] there might only be a tiny fraction from the other companies" (Tamata Five, Personal Comm. May 2011, Statistics Fiji, 2011).

Within the U.S itself, the coverage to which the drink is purchased is uneven. For instance, New York and Los Angeles are relatively over-represented as there are substantial more stock lists in these cities alone than in the whole of Alabama, Arkansas and West Virginia (Connell, 2006). This geographical exclusivity reveals that the brand appeals to certain demographic groups who are captivated by the brand and also seek elitist or fashionable imagery due to their relatively high disposable income (Ibid). Despite this uneven converge, FIJI Water has successfully tapped into the U.S water craze leaving Fijians perplexed by its success:

"They shocked, somehow FIJI Water, they just did it, in the U.S market it shocked some of the big water companies that have existed for a number of years" (Tamata Twelve, Personal Comm. June 2011)

FIJI Water was launched in the U.S market at the right time coinciding "with the rapidly changing consumer preferences" (McMaster & Nowak, 2009: 5). From 1990 to 2010, consumer trends have been recorded to be moving away from traditional beverages and toward 'New Age' products, such as bottled water (Ibid). As a result of these changes, per capita consumption of bottled water in the U.S has grown

³⁴For individual breakdown of each country in regard to Fijian mineral water exports see Appendix II: Plates and Tables – A.2 and A.3. From here onward, when an individual country is discussed this data can be found in the Appendix.

exponentially and evidently FIJI Water has capitalised on this shift in consumer's tastes.

5.4.4 Minor Markets

Over the past ten years new markets for FIJI Water have been developing. Excluding the U.S, Fijian Mineral Water is now exported to over 40 countries worldwide (FIJI Water, 2011). Since 2008, FIJI Water made public its interest to invest in other foreign markets as the U.S dollar began to wade and the need to find secure exporting partners eventuated (Ibid). Consequently, this coincided with a significant rise in FIJI Water's exports to periphery markets. From here, a breakdown of these 'new' minor markets will be explored:

In the Americas (excluding the U.S), FIJI Water has started to make its mark. While not as prominent as the U.S market, nations such as Canada and Trinidad and Tobago have started gain momentum on the FIJI Water craze. As the company has grown in success, "FIJI Water has expanded to Canada and the Caribbean, where the brand's iconic square bottle is increasingly visible at leading on-premise and retail establishments" (Ely, 2009). This expansion is clearly visible in Fiji's mineral water data, where Canada's export value has risen by a staggering 13,610 percent from 2009 to 2010, and Trinidad and Tobago by 167 percent during the same period (Statistics Fiji, 2011). Accordingly, Fiji's mineral water success in the U.S has started to pour into neighbouring nations.

The Middle East is a relatively new export venture for FIJI Water. The company's Director, David Roth, stated in 2008 that FIJI Water was "now looking at markets in the Middle East" to add to its global bottled water empire (ConnectMe, 2009). True to this statement, in 2009 FIJI Water started trading with Middle Eastern countries such as United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar primarily selling FIJI Water to hoteliers (Fine Waters, 2008). Although the Middle East is currently FIJI Water's smallest and youngest purchaser, the region is one of the fastest growing in the water bottle trend where from 2009 to 2010 it experienced a 332 percent rise in Fijian mineral exports (Statistics Fiji, 2011).

Asia is one of the more developed minor markets of FIJI Water's global endeavour. In recent years, the company designed new and simpler bottlers to appeal specifically to

the Asian market. These bottles instead of the cascading waterfall are replaced simply by a silhouette of a fern with single a hibiscus flower. Today the product can be found in cafes, restaurants and supermarkets in Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan (Tabureguci, 2007). Roth has publically voiced the company's desire to expand into Asia, particularly re-entering the Japanese market as it "is not a new for FIJI Water, as we have enjoyed success there in past years" (FIJI Sun, 2009). This expansion is further reflected in Fiji's mineral water exports which have grown immensely over the past ten years valuing at just over FJD\$45,000 in 2000 to FJD\$2 million in 2010 (Statistics Fiji, 2011). Such interest in the FIJI Water brand has been pinpointed to the company's ability to promote a pure and clean product in a region where pollution is becoming an overt issue.

Europe has always been on FIJI Water's radar where the commodity is commonly sold in upmarket restaurants and hotels across the continent. But interestingly, the European market is sporadic in comparison to other sub-markets. This trend is particularly evident in Iceland and the United Kingdom which are Fiji's core mineral water importers in the region. For instance, Iceland imported over 5.1 million litres of mineral water from Fiji in 2010 but only previously imported 900,000 litres in 2006 (Ibid). It is currently unclear why such large and irregular quantities of mineral water are shipped to Iceland as FIJI Water has expressed minimal interest in exploring trading relationships with the nation. Conversely, in the United Kingdom (U.K) FIJI Water has now a common sight in high-end department stores such as Selfridges, Waitrose and Harrods. Yet, FIJI Water has recently received negative publicity in the United Kingdom particularly through BBC (2008) documentary Panorama: Bottle Water - Who Needs It? which aimed to expose the controversial nature of the company. Coinciding with the airing of this program along with the recession saw a dramatic drop in volumes Fijian mineral water to the U.K with only 205,000 litres exported to the nation in 2008 (Statistics Fiji, 2011). Despite this negative press, FIJI Water has started to once again gain momentum from 2010 shipping over 1.1 million litres to the U.K (Ibid). The company has also increased its promotional campaigns in the U.K partnering with organisations such as such as London Elite Model Management and Le Cool London who are currently working alongside the brand (FIJI Water, 2011). Overall, FIJI Water's venture into the European market has been sporadic but recently, and more specifically in the U.K, has the company seen increased in their brand.

Oceania's trade trends are more complex to analyse. Overall, the region has experienced substantial growth in mineral water exports from Fiji; with a 4,460 percent rise in sales from 2000-2010 (Statistics Fiji, 2011). To understand such an increase, this section has been spilt into two sections: Pacific Islands and Australia/New Zealand. The Pacific Islands, as a collective struggle with water shortages. Consequently, water aid has a major influence on the volume of mineral water being traded in the region³⁵. When water has been traded as part of the water aid program, it can be identified by a relatively low sale price. But while water aid makes up a majority of export trade data, it is also important to take into consideration FIJI Water has established tourist businesses in the Pacific. For instance, islands such as Tonga and Samoa have consistent demands of Fijian mineral water imports at a high value mirroring the export movements of FIJI Water; but in comparison, Nauru and the Solomon Islands, who experience chronic water shortages, have sudden and sporadic demands for mineral water exports at a low value.

Australia and New Zealand have diverse relationships with FIJI Water. In regards to Australia, exports of Fijian mineral water have significantly risen from AU\$794,000 in 2003 to AU\$1.9million in 2009 (Statistics Fiji, 20111). This has been due to FIJI Water:

"Debuting in select hotels and restaurants before becoming available in gourmet retailers, delis and independent convenience stores. Australian restaurant and resort of note serving FIJI Water include The Pier of Sydney, Nobu of Melbourne and Hayman Island Resort of Brisbane" (FIJI Water Australia, 2006).

To date, FIJI Water is also the only mineral water company with the manufacturing ability and connections to export to Australia. As such Fiji's mineral water data can be primarily traced to FIJI Water's trading relationship with the country- which continues to rapidly grow whereas in 2009 exported over \$FJD1.9million from FJD\$690,000 in 2006. In comparison, New Zealand is clearly a significant importer of Fijian mineral water but, this can rarely be pinpointed back to FIJI Water. The beverage is an uncommon sight in New Zealand and only found at selective bottle water stores in Auckland as the Resnick's own another water bottling plant – Spring Fresh in Tai Tapu – located on the South Island of New Zealand (NZPA, 2010). Accordingly the Resnick's focus on the promotion of Spring Fresh in New Zealand, rather than market under their FIJI Water brand.

³⁵ Again, refer to Appendix A.2 and A.3 for country-by-country breakdown of data.

5.5 Summary

With Fiji's economy becoming increasing vulnerable to the perils of neoliberalism, the nation has increasingly adopted the niche production model to stimulate economic growth. FIJI Water has played a major role in this restructuring. This chapter explored in-depth how FIJI Water has achieved this global economic status. It analysed the company's innovative marketing campaign where the beverage has become a symbol of luxury evoking images of unspoiled natural beauty and purity. Such imagery has been achieved through endorsements, drawing upon tropical discourses, health benefits and its charity work.

This chapter further examined FIJI Water's export trends. The company entered the global market from a position of strength whereby the Fijian government offered a 13-year tax holiday and relatively free and exclusive access to the aquifers it draws from. With this foundation, today the beverage is exported five regions: the Americas, Middle East, Asia, Europe and Oceania. After initial success in the U.S market, the company entered other markets, benefitting from spill-over effects in celebrity-related media and leveraging the product's popularity (McMaster & Nowak, 2009). Although FIJI Water has obtained enormous global success, criticisms and controversies about its activities have surfaced as Chapter Six will expose.

Chapter Six: Critical Perspectives on FIJI Water's Global Success Hanging and Drying the Voivoi

"There is no need for us to have bottled water, there is no need there, it somehow represents a distortion of needs, the manufacturing of wants, the illustration of gross inequalities in the world" (BBC, 2008)

Beneath the glitz and glamour that is FIJI Water various studies have started to divulge an unfavourable light on the company's actions. As Nirman (2007) argues "there's a dark side to our new water craze and in many ways, FIJI Water optimizes the self-destructive insanity of consumer culture". While FIJI Water's CEO Lynda Resnick claims her brand is "transparent, authentic and honest", the company's secretive manner has ignited a plethora of criticisms where concerns about the company's ethicality and ability to leave Fiji 'high and dry' have surfaced (Newmark, 2011). This chapter explores the critiques laid out against FIJI Water and offers material to answer Question Two of this research. These controversies can be condensed into five themes: the environment, advertising, tax recall, supporting a dictatorship and local ethical concerns voiced from outsiders. To examine these debates, I draw upon both primary (interviews conducted in Suva³⁶) and secondary (literature and online commentary) data to obtain a macro perspective.

6.1 Environmental Nightmare

FIJI Water's environmental management has been "surrounded by controversy [with] its sustainability firmly in question" (Ali, 2010: 1). This can be attributed to the bottles' extensive journey that environmentalists view as a "tragic annihilation of mother earth" (Salmon, 2007). The journey begins when high-grade plastic used to make the bottles is transported from China to Fiji. When the empty plastic bottles reach Fiji, they are then filled with water at the company's bottling plant in the remote Yaqara Valley. This factory has been reported to "rely on diesel generators, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week" (Fishman, 2007). From here, the bottles are then packed into cardboard boxes (which coincidently are made from South Pacific rainforest cardboard), then loaded onto trucks to a sea cargo terminal in Lautoka (Ibid). Once reaching the port, the bottled water is then shipped on fossil-fuel-

³⁶ Here, it is important to once again reinforce the level of anonymity in this study; as such all participants will be referred to as Tamata.

powered freighters to the U.S Pacific Coast. When the bottles have finally reached the shores of the U.S, they are further packed into trucks then driven to prospective buyers and hence forth consumers. In total:

"Fiji Water's carbon footprint (a measure of the exclusive global amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases emitted over the full life cycle of a product or service) was 85,396 tonnes CO₂eq in the base year 2006 – 2007 for all bottles produced. 72 percent of those emissions came from manufacturing raw materials, bottling and ocean freight. Overall, the average energy cost to make the plastic, fill the bottle, transport it to market and then deal with the waste would be like filling up a quarter of every bottle with oil" (Lenzer, 2009).

FIJI Water's annual water extraction rate has also come under scrutiny from environmentalists. It has been estimated that the level of extraction is "around 55 million litres of water annually" (Tamata Seven, Personal Comm. May 2011). FIJI Water claims this extraction rate is sustainable and will "take every measure to protect and cherish" its aquifer (FIJI Water, 2011). Despite this public declaration, environmentalists argue that the company's extraction rate is currently 'unsustainable', 'environmentally degrading' and 'ethically questionable' (Lenzer, 2009; Salmon, 2009). The BBC (2008) documentary *Panorama: Bottled Water* further revealed the Fijian government was also concerned about FIJI Water's scale of operation with Ministry Mineral and Lands official Malaka Finu stating: "the aquifer could be damaged beyond repair and we could lose a valuable resource particularly in that area, we are concerned about that". Accordingly, FIJI Water's mass extraction has been accused of being an:

> "unsustainable business model because this water is an almost nonrenewable resource, I say almost because while groundwater is theoretically replaceable it would take centuries to replenish the supply. And whose problem will it be once the fresh water is inevitably depleted?" (Justine, 2011)

In a 2003 interview with FIJI Water's former CEO David Gilmour advised the London Times that: "the world's water is being trashed day by day" (Ibid). Ironically, Gilmour also owns Barrick Gold, a Fijian mining company that uses billions of gallons of water to produce gold via a toxic cyanide leaching process (Lenzer, 2009). The company's practices are so damaging that after an environmental review, the Norwegian government announced last year that it would divest itself of

approximately US\$200 million in Barrick stock (Ibid). These activities and Gilmour's past neglect for the environment have generated many questions pertaining to FIJI Water's green ethic:

"We're being sold a fantasy. A moment in Fiji. A Taste of Fiji. But the insane reality is we're shipping water across an ocean and continent, to a region that already has the world's most abundant reserves of some of the best water on the planet. This behaviour is killing the planet. And the places our designer water comes from, such as Fiji [...] are among the most vulnerable environments susceptible to the ravages of global warming" (Nirman, 2007).

Since the above accusations have been made, FIJI Water has scrambled to reinvent its image for the environmentally conscious. On top of its environmental charity work in 2008, FIJI Water launched a US\$5 million promotional campaign to become carbon negative by 2010 by reducing its packaging size and exploring various recycling opportunities – as Plate 6.1 illustrates (FIJI Water, 2011; Lenzer, 2009). To achieve this, FIJI Water



Plate 6.1: FIJI Water's Environmental Campaign (FIJI Water, 2011)

committed to meet three specific targets: reduce CO_2 emissions by 25 percent,; have 50 percent of its energy sourced from renewable sources; and invest in reforestation and renewable energy projects (Ulrich, 2009; FIJI Water, 2011). FIJI Water hoped these techniques would silence an ever-growing network of protests against the company. However, environmentalists and critics have seen this tactic as a rather egregious example of greenwashing:

> "Greenwashing is related to the word whitewashing, it is exaggerating the good environmental things you are doing, so going overboard, so FIJI Water obviously uses diesel fuels, long journeys by truck, huge amount of carbon associated with FIJI and they say every drop is green, is an exaggeration, they plan to plant trees and so on, but there are no plans to switch over solar power or electricity or something else, so greenwashing is about trying to pull the wool over peoples' eyes by pretending you have a safe environmental product and exaggerating all the good you are doing for the environment but in reality you're not doing those things you claim so, they are trying to put a spin on their activities and make them look a lot bigger than they are" (Tamata Five, Personal Comm. May 2011)

Subsequently, environmentalists suggest the company's environmental marketing is just an opportunity for FIJI Water to sell more bottled water, and although "it's clever the company could encourage other bottle water companies to follow in their footsteps, which doesn't make it very green" (Dunn, 2008).

This accusation of greenwashing was further heightened in a lawsuit against the company's deceptive 'carbon-negative' strategy. The lawsuit was headed by American, Desiree Worthington accused FIJI Water "of using a practice known as 'forward crediting': essentially giving yourself credit for carbon reductions that haven't happened yet" (Quraishi, 2011). Worthington argues she paid more for the product because she expected the company to already be carbon-negative. However, under the "forward crediting model, the offsets do not need to be currently occurring; they can simply be anticipated actions" (Ibid). Scott J. Ferrell, who lead the counsel for the class-action suit voiced:

"We want Fiji Water to stop distorting its environmental record to push sales of overpriced bottled water. It is unconscionable for Fiji Water to charge double the price of its competitors by convincing consumers that drinking Fiji Water helps the environment, when in reality the opposite is true" (Quraishi, 2011)

6.2 Advertising

In sync with the varying environmental issues, there are also concerns relating to the legitimacy of FIJI Water's advertising. FIJI Water plays heavily on the stereotypical tropical characteristics of Fiji. Salmon (2009) parallels FIJI Water to vodka as "a commodity which can be distinguished only by means of clever marketing which is nearly always based on some exotic country of origin". However, the problem behind this marketing stratagem is that consumers think of Fiji "as a brand not a country – and thereby gloss over the fact they're drinking water" from a developing nation in the Pacific (Ibid). While some elements of Fiji fit FIJI Water's clichéd tropical theme, realistically the company is located in the Fijian highlands. While the company suggests it is located far from "farms to compromise our water's purity", in reality FIJI Water is not sourced from a topical landscape overflowing with colourful flowers and glistening golden beaches but on an old cattle ranch; surrounded by the Kauvadra mountain range which have experienced years of deforestation (FIJI

Water, 2011) – Plate 6.2. Consequently, FIJI Water's glamorous packaging bears little resemblance to the environmental reality that surrounds its source point.



Plate 6.2: Landscape surrounding the FIJI Water bottling plant

FIJI Water has also pursued rival bottlers who use the country's name (Fiji) for marketing purposes. The FIJI (in capitals) name along with its associated pristine imagery has been trademarked by FIJI Water in numerous countries, including the U.S (Deskins, 2011). FIJI Water's extreme protection measures to have sole rights to the FIJI name has resulted in overt threats towards other water bottling companies, including those based in Fiji (Deskins, 2011). Aqua Pacific owner Mohammed Altaaf, has been vocal regarding this suppression, suggesting: "it would have cost too much money for us to fight in court [over the brand]; it's just like branding a water 'American Water' and denying anyone else the right to use the name America" (Lenzer, 2009). FIJI Water has trademarked the 'FIJI' name and ironically on current promotional literature advertise "We are Fiji" on posters across the island. According to critic Anna Lenzer (2009), the slogan is almost "eerily prophetic" as "the reality of Fiji, the country, has been eclipsed by the glistening brand of Fiji, the water".

6.3 'Puts Lipstick on a Junta'

FIJI Water has come under criticism for allegedly assisting to legitimise Fiji's militaryled government. Lenzer (2009) famously raised the question: "how did a plastic water bottle, imported from a military dictatorship thousands of miles away, become the epitome of cool?" Ever since Lenzer shed light on this issue, opinions on the matter have propagated. Primarily activists focus on the suppressive and unethical ethos of the military regime suggesting "each time you drink Fiji bottled water YOU are supporting a junta" or FIJI Water is a "product of a brutal military regime" and "puts lipstick on a junta" (Ibid). During the 2006 coup, Lenzer further argued the Fijian government let FIJI Water stay and "get a pretty cushy deal because it's great for Fiji's public profile at the time when the regime could do with help, it's a matter of mutual exploitation" (Ibid). However, FIJI Water has fiercely argued that it should not take any responsibility for the political situation in Fiji, even though Fiji is crux of their business activities. The company was established in 1990s, long before the coups eventuated and have affirmed they "cannot and will not speak for the government and we will not back down from our commitment to the people, development, and communities of Fiji" (Friedlander, 2009).

Other critics however, have polarised Lenzer's (2009) argument suggesting the company and government have an unpredictable relationship. Such debates have been centred on FIJI Water's U.S Executive David Roth being deported from Fiji in 2010 for allegedly interfering in the nation's domestic affairs, which debunks this 'regime-supporting' bond. Callick (2010) reported on the issue noting:

"Speaking from China, Commodore Frank Bainimarama said American David Roth "had been acting in a manner prejudicial to good governance and public order by interfering in the domestic affairs and governance of Fiji [...] It is unfortunate that David Roth saw it fit to engage in activities outside of his work-permit conditions," he said, but he did not explain the nature of such actions."

Evidently, criticisms of the company's relationship with the government has resulted in two debates (1) that FIJI Water is supporting the military dictatorship and (2) conversely the relationship between the Fijian government and FIJI Water is disintegrating. This latter argument is further proliferated by FIJI Water's actions in regards to their tax recall discussed below.

6.4 Tax Recall

As discussed in Chapter Five, a reason for FIJI Water's success can be pinpointed to its 13-year tax-free status granted by the Fijian government. Before launching his bottled water venture, Gilmour already has a string of contacts established within the Fijian government who were more than willing to provide him with the tax-holiday – a temporary reduction of tax on extracting water – to boost his business and "not have to give much back to Fiji" (Tamata Seven, Personal Comm. May, 2011). In a true neoliberal fashion, the Fijian government granted FIJI Water a 13 year tax-free period from 1995-2008 to provide a space for the company to grow and develop receiving a:

> "Fair deal as far as I'm concerned, especially with the corporate tax arrangements, a policy that was to boost foreign investment into the country, and David Gilmour started up FIJI Water and FIJI Water became big, they have fixed market which is great for them, they got tax concession here, the only tax to our government was with duties and shipping duties and so forth, the levies are also laid-off when they bring in the large equipment, they really facilitated FIJI Water to go global" (Tamata Twelve, Personal Comm. June 2011)

Therefore, FIJI Water was granted relatively free and unregulated access to one of Fiji's purest water sources. Fiji allows foreign investors a 10-13 years tax free to provide a space for companies to expand economically (Tamata Six, Personal Comm. May 2011). Once the deal terminates, companies are then expected to pay the government a monthly stipend. For FIJI Water, this exclusive deal was scheduled to expire in 2008, and the Fijian government planned to increase FIJI Water's export duty from FJD\$0.008 to FJD\$0.20 per litre. However, FIJI Water refused to comply (Lenzer, 2009). The company called the tax a "draconian" and this resulted in various disputes between the company and Fijian government, resulting in legal cases, impounded shipments and an industry-wide shutdown of FIJI Water (Ibid). To overthrow the government's decision, the company argued that local communities would be the worst impacted by the tax recall:

"When FIJI Water was under a lot of attack by the Fijian government, when they got that FJD\$0.20 a litre tax, FIJI Water did a lot of lobbying to try and get community support to overthrow the tax, they were successful, it was overturned but it cost them a lot of money to advertise all most every day for three to four [days] and it had ads in the Fiji Times, it had radio ads and television ads saying quite accurately all the things about the community and the jobs it generates and environmental help and so forth" (Tamata Four, Personal Comm. May 2011) Although the government wanted to implement these tax policies due to overt economic threats and potential harm to localities, "Fiji's cabinet yanked the idea" (Lenzer, 2009). But in December 2010 the government once more decided to tackle the issue and imposed a tax duty, less than the original figure, at FJD\$0.15 per litre for all companies extracting over 3.5 million litres of water per annum; and by all companies the Fijian government primarily meant FIJI Water, who are the only bottled water business in Fiji with the ability and expertise to extract over this threshold (Government of Fiji, 2011). Comparatively, bottlers who extract less than 3.5 million are only expected to pay FJD\$0.011 per litre (Ibid). Once again, FIJI Water felt discriminated against and decided to close production:

"This new tax is untenable and, as a consequence, FIJI Water is left with no choice but to close our facility in Fiji, effective Monday, Nov. 29, 2010. We are saddened that we have been forced to make a business decision that will result in hardship to hundreds of Fijians who will now be without work. We consider the government's current action as a taking of our business, and one that sends a clear and unmistakable message to businesses operating in Fiji or looking to invest there: The country is increasingly unstable, and is becoming a very risky place in which to invest" (Schwart, 2010).

In the wake of the "closure announcement, Bainimarama issued a stinging statement — and his first public attack on the company — as usual, Fiji Water has adopted tactics that demonstrate that Fiji *(sic)* Water does not care about Fiji or Fijians" (Lenzer, 2010). Consequently, "an interesting game of chicken" ensured between the government and FIJI Water (Kahn, 2011). The Resnicks threatened to shift production to their backup hydration source in Tai Tapu, New Zealand, while Bainimarama threatened to sell the water to other "international tenders [from China and Japan] from credible and reputable private sector companies to extract this valuable resource" (Ibid). With this threat to sell the aquifer to another company, FIJI Water soon announced its intent to resume operation and accept the new tax levy:

> "FIJI Water will re-open its bottling plant, effective Wednesday morning, Dec. 1 2010, at its regular start up time of 8 a.m. Through our discussions, we have also agreed to comply with Fiji's new water tax law. Moving forward, FIJI Water is committed to working with the Fijian government, and remains dedicated to helping the country's economy and its people" (FIJI Water, 2011).

With the Water Resource Tax imposed, today Fiji has earned over FJD\$78 million in revenue within the first four months of 2011 from local bottle water companies (Nand, 2011). In comparison, the total amount in water taxes collected in 2009 and 2010 was only FJD\$ 295,000 and FJD\$469,000, respectively (Ibid). But, clearly these events did not waiver FIJI Water's determination for fiscal success.

Despite reconciling their differences, today this 'game of chicken' has supposedly created a turbulent atmosphere between FIJI Water and the Fijian government. Although the relationship between the two parties was originally positive, the threat to close the plant twice has created a deep sense of distrust:

> "the current [government] has been trying to push FIJI Water out because of this tax duty and all the things they are trying to impose on them [...] the government doesn't want them to stay, the government feels they are taking a lot but giving less back to Fiji" (Tamata Four, Personal Comm. May 2011)

> "I'm sure the Fijian government will say thank you for your time and doing business with us, this is the case. I think FIJI Water have lost a lot if their creditability, they have made the boreholes, they have threatened to close, I think they lost a lot of creditability and dignity, if FIJI Water decide again to change their mind to close their operations tomorrow, they have lost a lot of trust, I can say though that most people are proud of FIJI Water and they bring so much here but, when the problems came to public, when we actually knew what was happening there, it changed the view of most people" (Tamata Eleven, Personal Comm. June 2011)

As the above statements highlight, recent events have created a sense of disloyalty of the company towards Fiji and vice versa, forcing both parties to readdress how to best manage their relationship. Today, the future of the company in Fiji is unpredictable, but as one participant suggested: "there is no point pushing FIJI Water out to breaking point, that's not going to help the government, is it?" (Tamata Five, Personal Comm. May 2011). But, putting such turbulent and dramatic events aside, evidently "FIJI Water is here to stay. For now" (Colville, 2010).

6.5 Local Ethical Concerns: A View from the Outside

"They don't have a ton of options for economic development, but bottled water is one of them. When someone buys a bottle of FIJI Water, they're buying prosperity for the country. Without FIJI Water, Fiji is kind of screwed" (Thomas Mooney, Senior Vice President of FIJI Water in Lenzer, 2009). As explored in Chapter Five, this 'prosperity' FIJI Water argues to provide for Fiji is often presented in the form of local charity projects. However, Lynch (2010: 6) criticises the company's efforts suggesting: "Fiji Water has clearly not heavily invested in improving the lives of people right next to their plant, despite boasting about their philanthropic efforts in the region". Accordingly, FIJI Water has been argued to be operating a reverse Robin-Hood effect (Borg & Borg, 2007) whereas the company is reaping the rewards of its economic success, yet at the expense of Fiji's local economy, society and environment. This statement is particularly evidenced in criticisms regarding clean water and employment in local communities. In what follows, voices from outside the case-study villages are drawn upon to illustrate concerns regarding the local impacts of FIJI Water.

6.5.1 Clean Water

Over 35 percent of Fiji's population is said to be living below the poverty line and nearly one third having no access to clean drinking water (Waterway, 2008). Thereby, FIJI Water is changing the face of water itself from a natural entitlement to a commodity (Ulrich, 2009). The product is ironically sold at expensive restaurants throughout the globe while local communities struggle to obtain the provision (Lenzer, 2009). This exportation of water from Fiji has been described by critics as a "consumerist irony in the cruellest sense; Fiji supplies the world with one of the world's highest-end bottled water brands, yet is unable to provide more than half of its citizens with safe, clean drinking water" (Merchant, 2010). Therefore, by supporting FIJI Water to compete in the global market Fiji ends up "forsaking the wellbeing of its own population, for a nation [U.S] with an ample supply of clean water" (Ibid).

FIJI Water has aimed to counteract these concerns through the charity stewardship that focuses on improving access to clean water, but these development projects have also received criticisms. Locally, the FIJI Water Foundation has been known to support local NGOs that provide water tanks, pumps and boreholes across rural Fiji to increase access to clean water. Yet, such development efforts have been argued to be insignificant in comparison to its economic power:

[&]quot;All the income and expensive *(sic)* are in the FIJI Water team, there is none outside and everything that is being out of FIJI Water is peanuts, it's peanuts" (Tamata Eleven, Personal Comm. June 2011)

"[money] is not actually being filtered down to the people that need it most, so yeah, it's sort of development that is only benefitting a few and not the majority" (BBC, 2008)

6.5.2 Employment

A further ethical concern is the treatment of local workers. FIJI Water claims they are one:

"of the highest-paying employers in Fiji, with over 350 Fijian employees who comprise over 95 percent of the local workforce and include senior leadership in finance, quality and operation. Committed to long-term employment and development of our employees, FIJI Water provides training, education, and internal promotion opportunities [...] Economic benefits to local residents include a reliable income source and sufficient wages to support families and extended relatives, all in an area where other opportunities are scarce" (FIJI Water Foundation, 2011).

Yet, workers have been regularly impacted by the company's quarrels with the government. For instance, in 2008 and 2010 FIJI Water ordered its entire 400-person workforce to be dismissed immediately, due to the tax threats by the government despite the fact the tax threat would not have taken affect until the following years (Lohan, 2010). Furthermore, it was most recently reported in October 2011 jobs of local people have once again been placed in jeopardy as Chaudhary (2011) noted:

> "Recent technical improvements have significantly streamlined operations at the FIJI Water plant and company executives are now reviewing staffing requirements throughout the business. This review is expected to result in a reduction in staff numbers"

Therefore, while FIJI Water states on its website that it is committed to long term employment, their actions over the last five years have arguably suggested otherwise.

6.6 Summary

In recent years, FIJI Water's global economic success has received numerous criticisms. Debates have suggested that FIJI Water has been operating on a 'reverse Robin-Hood effect' whereby the company becomes progressively privileged while certain groups in Fiji have become increasingly disadvantaged (Borg & Borg, 2007). These national and global viewpoints targeted FIJI Water's environmental strategy, advertising, relationship with the Fijian government and local communities. Having explored critiques and opinions of those surrounding the industry this thesis now turns to those directly impacted at the local level by FIJI Waters activities.

Chapter Seven: The Local Impacts of FIJI Water *Platting the Voivoi Strands*

"[FIJI Water] do so much for these sort of forgotten people. They live in paradise, but they have a very, very hard life" (Lynda Resnick in Lenzer, 2009).

Here, I engage with local stories, perspectives and opinions shared with me on various *vakabati* in the Vatukaloko villages of Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani. In exploring these narratives, the chapter firstly provides a glimpse into the everyday life of the Vatukaloko villages. It then deals with the local social, economic and environmental impacts of FIJI Water's activities. While these three strands have been separated, they interact and at times can be 'platted together' like the symbolic *vakabati* weaving process. This chapter continues the Vatukaloko's *talanoa* begun in Chapter Two and provides material to that addresses Question Three, the first micro component of this research.

This chapter further draws upon the argument (Oliver et al., 2005) to privilege participants' experiences. As previous chapters unveiled, there is a wide range of opinions concerning FIJI Water's impact on Fiji. Yet little is known about what locals think of their practices. In the village of Drauniivi, one resident articulated: "[we have] been crying out for a long time, to tell the truth about was FIJI Water has done" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). To privilege local discourses³⁷, this chapter gives precedence to participants' stories and aims to keep 'outsider' opinions to a minimum³⁸. I have, however, incorporated four 'outside' voices including Riggs (2007)³⁹, Ulrich⁴⁰ (2009), FIJI Water's media releases and my reflection diary. The inclusion of these sources provides context and elaborates certain themes. With some residents' experiences I have also paraphrased their wording, but I

³⁷ Similar to participants in Suva, residents from the Vatukaloko villages preferred that their opinions remained anonymous. Therefore, locals are referenced by their respective focus group and women are referred to as *Yalewa* and men, *Tagane*.

³⁸ Here, I recognise my positionality coats participant's opinions. As reflected upon in Chapter Three (Section 3.8), Evans (2010) argues researchers have the ability to decide which part of participants stories are acceptable or appropriate. Throughout this chapter, I have aimed to remain true to participants words. But, I acknowledge being in the position of 'researcher' I am subjected to how their opinions are constructed and represented.

³⁹ Riggs (2007) provides the framework to explore the everyday lives of the Vatukaloko people.

⁴⁰ Ulrich also conducted research on FIJI Water but, in mainly in the Rakiraki township. However, she did briefly visit the Vatukaloko region examining the Drauniivi Secondary School and also draws upon some employment issues that mirror those opinions of participants in this study.

was granted permission to do so in order to gain an additional layer of anonymity. Accordingly, this chapter moves away from a macro perspective on FIJI Water and towards the crucial micro insight that is absent in studies.

Riggs (2007) stresses it is essential to understand the character of those who contribute to research. Being faithful to his argument, this section will provide a summary of the "everyday geography" of Vatukaloko residents (Ibid: 1). I originally used the question: 'could you explain your typical day to me?' as a conversation prompter. Yet, I found this action enriching, it broke 25 the researched/researcher binary and precipitated familiarity. By exploring their everyday lives I hope to highlight that this research was produced and written "from the perspective of someone's life and in the context of someone's emotions" (McEwan & Egan 1995, viii):

> "We all live in the village from morning to morning we just woke up in the morning to do our house work, house duties, prepare the kids to go to school, do our laundry, just house work, domestic duties work" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)





Plate 7.1: Mango Trees along the Yaqara River



Plate 7.2: Women Selling Crab (FJD\$5 per line)

"We are mothers, we cook food, just do the washing, just working at the farm, when the time, when the time come we get our money from mangos here, mango time" (Nananu Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June 2011)

"Washing, cooking, catch fish [...] also to catch crab, do the washing in the river, carry their clothes to the river" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June 2011)

In regards to Tagane (male) participants, their everyday activities were centred on either subsistence farming (including mangos, cattle, cassava, pine-trees, peanuts, rice and sugar) or working in urban areas for companies located in Suva or Lautoka⁴¹. Because of preferred anonymity of participants, only limited information describing their livelihoods, without revealing their identities, could be drawn upon.

7.2 Social Impacts

FIJI Water's social impact on the Vatukaloko villages can be separated into three themes: shifting relationships, changes to social structure and grassroots development. Such themes reveal the structural and also cultural influence FIJI Water has had within the Vatukaloko.

7.2.1 Shifting Relationships

"Now I feel like a discounted-landowner" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

During 2004, Gilmour sold his bottle water empire to Lynda and Stewart Resnick, the pioneers of Roll International. Since this change, its relationship with the Vatukaloko also shifted. As the *talanoa* in Chapter Two highlighted, land sovereignty in the Vatukaloko region has a complicated lineage. Nevertheless, when FIJI Water moved onto once-owned Vatukaloko land, Gilmour drew up the Vatukaloko Trust Fund agreement (VTF) (explored further in 7.2.1) to pay his respect:

"How they respect the landowners is what they have done, like the school and the borehole and the water tank, although it was different, but they are different, they knew we were indigenous people of this land that's why they keep *(sic)*. Gilmour knew we were the eye of the land" (Tamata One, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

But this positive relationship was short-lived. Although Gilmour "was better before the current owner", respect for the traditional landowners had deteriorated over the transference of vendors (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011):

> "Is different, Ian was there, was good, Ian visited the other villages, the others we don't see, Resnick came here in 2008, they came to our house. This man not like David Gilmour. Ian was a good man, most time he come to the village, his character, he was a Fijian man, his

⁴¹ Here, it is also important to reinforce that I was not authorised to discuss my research with FIJI Water's workers, as the company did not grant me permission. I respected their wishes and have only discussed my research with participants, who were not hired by the company in June, 2011.

character, when he come here, he knows us. They never come to the village, we don't know where they stand, no relationship. That time Ian, the previous manager of FIJI Water was, Ian, he usually come to the village, most times he come and drink grog [*yaqona*] have a conversation with us [...] today, it's not like before, because today the manager, the manager of FIJI Water today Paul, never come to the village to visit us like Ian had done before" (Tamata One, Personal Comm. June 2011)

"He has come through, but now we don't know. We don't know, we don't now what's happening inside there. We only knew from Ian from Gilmour, well from Gilmour through Ian and the agreement from Gilmour and Ian was that to build everything, electricity, borehole and eh kindergarten, with the agreement was year by year. We signed it but they don't make it [...] they continue to support us but never came like that" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June 2011)

As the above quotes highlight, two names other than Gilmour and Resnicks were repeatedly drawn upon during conversations: Ian Lincolne and Paul Davis. To engage and establish rapport with local communities, FIJI Water hired Ian and Paul to act as the company's representatives. Ian was hired during Gilmour's tenure and was according to the locals "one of us, he was a Fijian, came into the village" (Tamata One, Personal Comm. June, 2011). The dynamics of this relationship altered significantly with the take-over of Roll International. One Drauniivi local suggested Ian was "sacked because he became too friendly with the landowners" while Paul Davis, an Australian, became his replacement (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Consequently, Paul has yet to build a rapport with the villages in the same fashion as Ian making relations "not like before" (Tamata One, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

This changing ownership has resulted in a less cooperative relationship between the villages and FIJI Water. While participants in Nananu and Naseyani were more placid, stating: "we are grateful for the development done thus far, improvements *(sic)* in relations is needed" (Nananu Older Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011) on the contrary, Drauniivi expressed feelings of confusion, bitterness and anger towards the company:

"FIJI Water has been very poor with its community relations with Drauniivi Village and thus bred a very bitter feelings of the people towards them [...] change in ownership of FIJI Water that led to the complete change in the management with the company, the new regime abandoned them all" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011) Overall, the Resnicks' held (and still hold) a very different philosophy on how to interact with the Vatukaloko people in comparison to Gilmour. Ian's cultural and communicative sensitivities were instrumental in maintaining the relatively harmonious relationship between the two parties. Conversely, the Resnicks' and their new representative Paul has orchestrated an emotionally distant relationship, with residents stating they "don't know what goes on in there" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

7.2.2 Changes to Social Structure

With FIJI Water's ever increasing presence in the Vatukaloko villages, a new social pattern has emerged. This pattern has fundamentally altered the social structures of the Vatukaloko villages where society is becoming increasingly fractured due to the 'old ways' being pushed-aside for 'new ones'. As such, social togetherness and trust among residents has become increasingly difficult:

"I'll be honest it was a difficult village to start off with, because of the set of social problems. I think now it's even more so enhanced, especially with people coming and people get frustrated that a lot people outside the village are there and influencing decisions in current village structure" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June 2011)

As alluded in the above quote, locals argued that 'outsiders'⁴² working for FIJI Water have been a core influence in changing the villages social construction. These outsiders usually live within or neighbour the Vatukaloko villages and by doing so have infused their own traditions, lifestyle and beliefs into resident's everyday lives:

"We now have a lot people from outside the village living in the village because they are employed by the company, a lot of young teenage pregnancies within the village, a lot of marriage break ups because as soon as they paid they start drinking and so there is sort of a social breakdown, a lot of extra marital affairs within the village [...] its social structure is at threat, in terms of the traditional social structure, the families, the fact there is a lot of extra marital affairs, because they give money to partying, the sense of social, the respect for marriage does not seem to be there" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June 2011).

Further conflict with the Vatukaloko lifestyle was also discussed in the form of blasphemy. Christianity is paramount to the Vatukaloko cultural identity. But, as FIJI Water provides such a rare and unique employment opportunity, many employees

⁴² Outsiders is a term used to describe people working at FIJI Water but do not belong to a Vatukaloko village.

choose to comply with the company's production requirements and work on a Sunday, despite being counter to their religious conviction. While participants hailed it as "illegal to work these 12 hours' shifts *(sic)*" and that Sunday's days are "ticked off", they are scheduled to work regardless (Drauniivi Yalewa and Tagane Focus-groups, Personal Comm. June, 2011):

"Every Sunday they work, for them when the bus came, they work on Sunday, FIJI Water want them to work on Sunday we cannot, long shifts I think, 12am-8am, 8am-4pm and eh, 4pm-12am, eight hour shifts" (Tamata One, Personal Comm. June 2011)

Therefore, while working on a Sunday is against the religious prerogative of many locals, due to FIJI Water's 24-7 schedule they have "no choice" but to work those hours (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

FIJI Water has further "reinstated cultural hierarchy, for instance only the elite in the village benefit, not the villages, targeted the elite" (Drauniivi Focus Group, Personal Comm. June 2011). With FIJI Water hiring a selected number of individuals and only communicating with the elite, only a few benefit within the villages and commonly "people who work for the plant do not share their income, they keep it for themselves" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June 2011). As such, social rank has become distorted as wealth now plays a distinguishing role in determining the elites in society.

Outside of the confinements of the Vatukaloko villages, other Fijian communities have associate FIJI Water employees with wealth:

"FIJI Water set up a yard in Ikabula, Lautoka [drivers were from the Vatukaloko villages]. Drivers were asked [by FIJI Water after the closure of the Trust Fund] to pay for housing and transport benefits were removed. Therefore, housing allowances were removed after six months of working. Landowners [in Lautoka] then began asking for FJD\$600 a week on housing because they knew they were employed by FIJI Water" (Nananu Younger Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

Accordingly, employees for FIJI Water are automatically stereotyped as 'wealthy' within and outside the Vatukaloko confinements. With this prosperous position, employees of the company were typically expected to contribute financially to a

greater extent in their village. While this is a cultural expectation it is reported many have deviated from this practice (Ibid).

While FIJI Water's presence has primarily hindered the Vatukaloko social structure, a few locals did praise FIJI Water's attempt to appreciate their culture. They disclosed a more optimistic view towards the company, expressing that: "cultural dynamics have been enhanced because FIJI Water has been following *itaukei* [traditional land owner] protocols" and they "followed the right cultural channels, [and have] not been interfering" (Nananu Older & Naseyani Tagane Focus Groups, Personal Comm. June 2011). A particular case was drawn upon by all three villages where in 1998, FIJI Water's borehole dried up and in "Gilmour's time, [they] followed traditional forgiveness rituals from the landowners, landowners at the time accepted, right after the presentation water came back up, all three villages confirmed, for three days the basin dried up" (Nananu Older Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). So while negative consequences dominated discussions, in 'Gilmour's time' there was respect for the old ways.

7.2.3 FIJI Water and Grassroots Development

"[FIJI Water] have had some good development projects in the villages, [...] but some of the projects they started off in the village were incomplete" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

In Vatukaloko villages, FIJI Water has supplied various amenities through the company's two charitable trusts: FIJI Water Foundation and VTF. Both charitable strands have been received enthusiastically and simultaneously with heavy criticism. The VTF was geared towards the Vatukaloko community "to promote, undertake and oversee economic development" (Trust Deed, 2011: 3) but projects under this fund ceased in 2006 (reasons for the ceasing will be explored in 7.3.1). As a result, the benefits received by the Vatukaloko people through the trust fund were merged back into the company's larger charity, the FIJI Water Foundation. Accordingly, all projects after 2006 were coordinated by the FIJI Water Foundation. However, the ramifications of this merging resulted in many participants being unable to distinguish between the two charities:

"We have no idea about the FIJI Water Foundation and its dealing *(sic)* except others benefit apart from the Vatukaloko people" (Nananu Older Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

"Whatever projects done in the village are thought to be part of the foundation fund, all committee members are from Drauniivi" (Nananu Younger Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

Particularly in the smaller villages, confusion as to the activities of the VTF and FIJI Water Foundation was evident and commonly all projects were generalised under the one charity⁴³. As such, distinguishing project sponsorship became impossible to detangle, yet despite the murky understanding, it is evident a range of projects⁴⁴ have been undertaken in the villages. Out of these projects, the core changes seen in the villages were related to education, water sanitation and infrastructure.

For FIJI Water, developing sustainable education systems is a core pillar for its charitable work. They have been known to fund four education facilities in the Vatukaloko villages including: Naseyani Primary School and Kindergarten, Vatukaloko Secondary School and Drauniivi Primary School. In between focus groups, I was escorted by two men and my translator to visit the schools to obtain tangible perspective of the projects. I was firstly taken to Naseyani to examine the Primary School and Kindergarten (Plate 7.3). I found the classrooms to be adequately equipped with tables, chairs, water tanks, books, teacher's quarters and colourfully decorated walls with posters made by the students (2011 Reflection Diary, June 10). Both education facilities, in my opinion, were deemed positive learning environments (Ibid). Most recently, participants where proud to announce:

"they make a new building, concrete building a new block for flush toilets and most of the books and also books and kids, what you call it, books, library, kids toys, pay for own uniform though, the last project they have, this, is the secondary, the primary school and the secondary school [...] every year they provide more books and toys for the children" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

⁴³ Furthermore, in Nananu it was surprising to discover that FIJI Water was not the sole charity provider to the village, but an American based NGO, Global Works also provided assistance. To date, Global Works has provided footpaths and infrastructure improvements to the village; while FIJI Water has also been active in the area. As a result, Nananu has received an extra layer of charitable support which in turn, lessened their dependence on FIJI Water (Naseyani Focus Group, Personal Comm. June 2011).
⁴⁴ See Appendix A.4 for full list of projects.



Plate 7.3: Naseyani Primary School

In Nananu, residents expressed that they were "grateful for the work done thus far" yet, two concerns emerged (Older Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). The first being the company previously provided the two kindergarten teachers with scholarships but:

"They have two teachers, two scholarships, already they have been taken, they have been gone, transferred" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

The second was the bridge connecting the school and the village of Naseyani has been damaged for 10 years due to a storm and therefore, students now wade through water to attend school every day - Plate 7.4 (Naseyani Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Residents have enquired with FIJI Water to fund its repair but have yet to obtain a response. From here, I was then lead to examine Vatukaloko Secondary School and Drauniivi Primary.



Plate 7.4: Broken Bridge in Naseyani

The largest project to date by FIJI Water is the Vatukaloko Secondary School and Drauniivi Primary School. Before the secondary school was built in 2007, students from the three villages commonly travelled to Rakiraki or Tavua for their education. Ulrich (2009: 72) also visited the school in 2008 and discussed with the local principal that "by 2011 we will be offering more education, more classes". Since then, FIJI Water has donated FJD\$100,000 to support the government's refurbishment of the schools providing a new modern block, education resources, flush toilets and water tanks (Plate 7.5 and 7.6) (FIJI Water Foundation, 2011). On first impression, both schools looked particularly impressive and as noted in my reflection diary "the schools are some of the best buildings in the area" (2011 Reflection Diary, 12 June).



Plate 7.5: Vatukaloko Secondary School New Block

Yet, while these new buildings and teaching resources are available, locals vocalised their struggle to pay for books, uniforms and school fees:

"Development is the ability for families to send all their children to school to get a good education and then become self-reliant whereas now we still have to support some of our relatives [...] because most of them cannot afford to send children to school [...] the school is still new and we have to see if anybody graduates" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

This financial struggle has resulted in "the number of school dropouts is just increasing every year" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). When locals asked FIJI Water to assist with the scholarships, they "got refused" or VTF "cancelled the funds before they got the scholarships" (Ibid). Furthermore, FIJI Water promised to provide uniforms for students attending the school, but "nothing was paid therefore [the uniform suppliers] are threatening legal action, the locals have to pay over FJD\$18,000 to cover the debt" (Nananu Younger Tagane Focus



Plate 7.6: Water Tanks at Vatukaloko Secondary School

Group, Personal Comm. June 2011). FIJI Water aimed to provide a positive educational environment but, it was suggested FIJI Water should direct its charity

towards fees and teachers, rather than providing blocks and equipment they cannot afford to use. Therefore, questions have emerged as to whether FIJI Water's fiscal contributions have been appropriately targeted within the villages.

On FIJI Water's (2011) website the company states: "that Fiji is home to the best water on the planet, and the people of Fiji should be able to enjoy it as much as the rest of the world". In the Vatukaloko villages, health problems related to unsanitary water was a concern for the company. To address this critical issue, FIJI Water provided financial assistance to dig boreholes (also paying for the electricity to run them), buy water pumps and tanks (Plate 7.7). Residents in Nananu expressed they "now have good water" and



Plate 7.7: Drauniivi Borehole Supplied by FIJI Water

that "life is easier" (Nananu Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Conversely, in Drauniivi and Naseyani, participants indicated that a number of problems regarding their water resources. FIJI Water undertook all the water projects using their own technicians. Once completed, training for locals on how to maintain is the equipment was not offered, therefore each village had to "call on FIJI Water to come and fix it" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). This inability to fix problems independently created an extra reliance on the company, who reportedly were not always able to respond in timely fashion:

> "When it breaks down, we have to go to them to fix it [the borehole], but it can take up to two or three weeks to be fixed" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June 2011)

Additionally, reports of pipes breaking and the company not paying for the electricity pump on time were also brought to light (Ibid). As a result, many residents reverted back to the river and dam for potable water, which reintroduced health issues to Drauniivi and Naseyani:

"Out of the 53 villages in this area, five villages have been proven by the Health Department to have typhoid in the village, one of them to have typhoid in the village, was this village" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

"In the rainy season, this village mud everywhere, after that rainy season, more and more sick community, sick people, we receive scabies, typhoid and diarrhoea, from the children, big rains season that comes, so dam becomes dirty, now water filthy smell, overflow and run down the river [...] FIJI come and dig this dam, big dam, the last time Gilmour, he was here, he dug one, one just beside our houses down there, that big hole used to fill with water, overflow that water, fifthly, dirty, smell, overflow, went down into the river, down the river most of our houses are down there, where we do out swimming, their washing in the river, even bathing down there [...] we don't know how these things affect us, the children always play around there" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

FIJI Water has supplied Drauniivi and Naseyani with access to sanitary water provisions aimed to reduce typhoid. Despite these intentions, boreholes and pipes – that are the lifeline to these communities water supplies – are continually breaking down, and today, "typhoid cases and other diseases are present" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Originally, FIJI Water's solution to eradicate typhoid "was to close the dam [as it spread the disease] but that's the only source of water because the bore-hole was not enough to supply sufficient water to each household" (Ibid). Therefore, locals had no choice but to return to unsanitary water supplies – the source of their original problems.

In terms of infrastructure, FIJI Water has provided electricity and the upgrading of houses, churches and community halls. As Nananu and Naseyani are not located on the main road, the Fijian government does not provide electricity to the villages. Accordingly, in 2008 FIJI Water installed 7 kilometres of power lines to schools and churches. Therefore, "after a lifetime of living by lantern and candlelight, the villagers in Naseyani, Nananu, and Viti *Vanua* Indian Settlement will soon be able to illuminate their houses, churches, and school rooms with the



Plate 7.8: Electricity Polls in Nananu

flick of a switch" (FIJI Water, 2011). This electrical aid was enthusiastically received by the local Vatukaloko:

"The only major changes are electricity, when we have electricity that's a big one we have a better chance for our kids to studies, many things change in our household"

Catherine: Do they pay for the electricity? "No, only pay for the borehole, we pay for our own but, for the opening of the electricity they give us FJD\$2 free, our kids can see at night and do their homework" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

As plate 7.8 exhibits – power lines today are not only connected to the church and school, but to individual homes, which has allowed many to move away from kerosene lights and the use of electrical appliances such as televisions, lamps and cooking utensils.

In addition to providing electricity, FIJI Water has upgraded housing, community halls and churches in all three villages. In Drauniivi improvements to infrastructure were the most evident. As plate 7.9 and 7.10 demonstrate, the community hall, church and Tui Vatu's house were all renovated by FIJI Water. Through these upgrades occurred, when touring the village a number of incomplete house upgrades were noted. I was further escorted into the community hall and church to review the work that had been undertaken. While in the community hall, however, I was asked "does this look like it cost FJD\$300,000?" - the amount the locals were informed had been spent renovating the hall (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). The hall reportedly received an extension for new paint and cooking amenities. However, Drauniivi Tagane vocalised the 'upgrade' was not anywhere near the value claimed by FIJI Water. From here, I was led into the church, where participants revealed chipped tiles, broken fans and peeling paint (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). I was advised that such infrastructure upgrades were also made to just please the elite of the villages, with most residents still living substandard housing - Plate 7.9. So while some upgrades have commenced, they were of variable quality and FIJI Water had exaggerated their monetary value. In regards to Nananu and Naseyani, they described they are still waiting for FIJI Water to commence their community hall upgrades, but paint and pews have been provided to the churches.



Plate 7.9: Tui Vatu (Chiefs) house and a Sub-Standard House in Drauniivi



Plate 7.10: Inside of Drauniivi Church and Drauniivi Community Hall

To enable neighbouring villages to upgrade their homes independently, FIJI Water "freely gave cardboard boxes and plastic sheets" (Nananu Older Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Previously, old pieces of corrugated iron and sheets of plastic could be gathered by the surrounding villages and used as building materials. This free access to building provisions is "not anymore, now [we] have to pay" (Ibid). This action of providing waste materials further puzzled certain participants as they expressed: "waster from the plant used for housing materials? Is that what you call development?" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

FIJI Water entered the Vatukaloko villages with a 'good intent' on improving their quality of life by providing education, clean water and infrastructure. But, while these projects have improved some aspects, there are significant shortcomings to FIJI Water's projects. Their efforts have been described as "simply 'peanuts' comparing to the billions that FIJI Water has gained" and it is:

> "physically the housing standards, health, sanitation, education is really pathetic [...] very few developments have been undertaken through the Trust Fund" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

7.3 Economic Impacts

Initially when FIJI Water began production, the surrounding villages experienced various economic benefits from the company's charity work and employment opportunities. While these economic opportunities were positively received, recent developments have led to numerous problems where locals highlighted their increased vulnerability and turbulent relationship with the company.

7.3.1 Vatukaloko Trust Fund

"Knowing what the village is like though, it's a bit hard to blame everything on FIJI Water, there are many politically minded people within the village that do not have a united vision to develop the villages properly. I would not completely blame FIJI Water; there are a lot of factors" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June 2011).

FIJI Water, in its "effort to secure the traditional blessing and support of the *Vanua*⁴⁵ Vatukaloko, verbally agreed with the former Tui Vatu and Elders in 1996 that it will" (1) contract for paid ancillary services and (2) a royalty to assist with village developments⁴⁶ (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). However, the VTF initial implementation was met by various challenges. During the 2000 coup, youths in the Vatukaloko villages overheard the discussions "around the *yaqona* bowl about broken promises and the company taking people from other regions in work" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Overhearing these problems, the youth decided to initiate their own plan to expedite negotiations as they viewed agreements by FIJI Water and the *Vanua* where being unnecessarily prolonged leading to their identity as landowners being stripped (Ibid).

To retain sovereignty, the young men of the Vatukaloko villages "took over the factory" and "took the key" (Ibid). With FIJI Water ostracised from their water plant, the *Vanua* were called upon to "quickly agree on the trust and control the temper of the village youth" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). In the mist of mayhem, the VTF was hastily agreed upon for initial term of 10 years from

⁴⁵ To reiterate the definition in Chapter Four, the *Vanua* is a small group of individuals who are known to be 'protectors' of the land and have been handed the responsibility to guard it for future generations.

⁴⁶ This was a one off FJD\$175,000 payment, a recurring FJD\$0.20 per bottle yearly royalty and additional annual funding of 0.13 percent of the net revenue of the Company from 2000 to 2003, and thereafter 0.15 percent until 2009.

2000 to 2009 to support the six Vatukaloko communities. With the confirmation of this agreement, "the *Vanua* got the plant back and the key" (Ibid).

However, in 2006 FIJI Water decided to abruptly cease the agreement. Since the funds termination, it has become enshrouded with controversy where two polarised stories can be teased out of conversations with participants. The first focuses on the external relationship the *Vanua* Vatukaloko have with FIJI Water and the problems that emerged with these two parties. The second takes into consideration internal village politics moving away from blaming the company for the trust's termination and focusing on the issues that are embedded within the *Vanua* itself.

Story One: External Dynamics

Prior to the termination of the trust fund, participants suggested the *Vanua* Vatukaloko started to develop a Strategic Plan for 2007 to 2011, stating "this is one of the greatest achievements for the *Vanua* to start thinking strategically" – Figure 7.1 (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). The main purpose of the Strategic Plan was to enable FIJI Water to visualise the full utilisation of the trust fund and more so the returns and betterment it will have for the *Vanua* and the villages. However, this vision became "shattered by the decision of FIJI Water to unceremoniously terminate out Trust Fund and Business Contract" (Ibid):

"In its own volition, without any consultation with the Vanua FIJI Water terminated the Vatukaloko Natural Water Trust Fund in 2006 or thereabout, for the reason that they are establishing a National Trust Fund for the whole of Fiji and Vatukaloko can access to it. Fiji Water had wilfully breached a legally enacted agreement and therefore constituted a criminal act" (Ibid)

While it was agreed that the VTF would be active for 10 years, the company decided to 'illegally' terminate the fund leaving the *Vanua* bankrupt:

"Cancelled the trust fund and established the FIJI Water Fund, alternative to the trust fund, when they now want a project, local villages have to go to the FIJI Water Foundation, whole of Fiji in the charity, Yaqara should be a priority!" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

"FIJI Water thought it appropriate, again without consulting the *Vanua* to cancel the business contract that was granted to the Vatukaloko Trust Fund ab-initio. This led to the company becoming bankrupt and all its assets reposed by the Merchants Bank of Fiji and

sold to pay for its debts. However, there is still balance in the debts" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

A further layer of culpability was attributed to the overpowering Western business ethic of FIJI Water:

"Vanua Vatukaloko not yet equipped with the relevant resources to run a business. No business acumen and experiences to manage a business. No time given to make phase in institutional strengthening in terms of Human Capital Development and no good preparations time. Instant involvement of the Vanua Vatukaloko in such international company is likened to a young boy thrown into the water to swim for his life without being taught how to swim. Consequently Vatukaloko sinks rather than swim [...] There was no real support of FIJI Water to the VTF due to the Western style of entrepreneurship, hence the nonappreciation of our *itaukei* culture and traditions and also the lack of insights into the indigenous business ventures" (Ibid)

Rather than being slowly introduced to the company's business ideology or incorporating Vatukaloko cultural protocols, FIJI Water quickly adopted:

"divide and rule tactics, to undermine and totally disregard our *Vanua* development structure" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

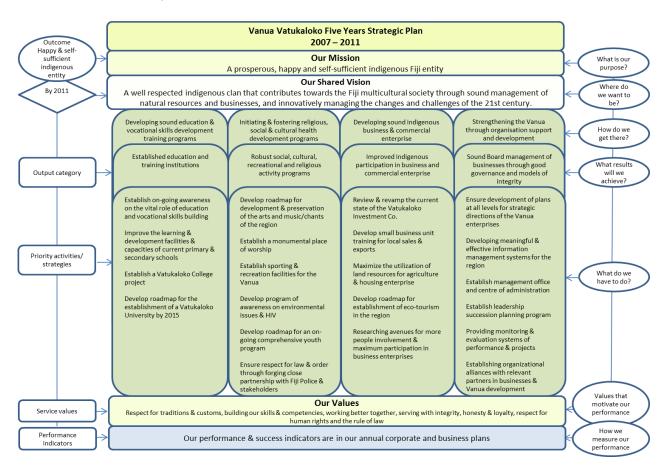


Figure 7.1: Strategic Plan (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

Therefore, rather being nurtured into FIJI Water's business agenda, the *Vanua* had to comprehend a new economic framework for which they were ill prepared to manage. With two differing epistemological structures at play, misunderstandings over fiscal arrangements (which were not elaborated upon in focus groups or interviews) meant confrontation between the two groups emerged. Despite FIJI Water's Western approach, one participant reiterated that if the company truly wanted to work alongside the *Vanua*, avenues to establish a solid working relationship could have been explored:

"You need to prepare the landowners for the culture shock that is going to come with the opening of the company, but it was not well dealt with. You have to reach out as much as possible to stakeholders if you want it to work" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June 2011).

Today, the VTF was seen as a "quick fix solution and just a lip service to government in terms of social responsibility" (Ibid). As such, the agreement between the *Vanua* Vatukaloko and FIJI Water that was hastily agreed to in the mist of the youths uprising in 2000, is now viewed as a measure to cool the temper of the Vatukaloko people and seen as an agreement "with no heartfelt intention to assist us" (Ibid). Consequently, due to VTF tension an antagonistic atmosphere between FIJI Water and the *Vanua* Vatukaloko has materialized.

Story Two: Internal Dynamics

"The village is already politically instable; it's got its issues and with FIJI Water coming in it has enhanced that conflict" (Personal Comm. June, 2011)

As highlighted in Chapter Three, I was instructed by a Fijian academic to *"listen to the gossips"* within the villages (Personal Comm. May, 2011). With these 'gossips', a very different story to the one presented above was offered. This story focuses on the internal dynamics of the *Vanua* and how their actions resulted in the termination of the trust fund. Although all six villages are upheld in the contract, I found only a handful of participants outside of Drauniivi who were aware of its dealings and supposed benefits. These few who were aware of the dealings expressed that the VTF had closed for two reasons: misused funds and conflict within the *Vanua* circle. These stakeholders perceived miscommunication, corruption and money mismanagement as the underlying issues. While exploring these stories, the name of

the village will be absent to provide an additional level of anonymity, as participants requested me to be extra cautious with this topic.

Firstly, participants argued that the Vanua "misused the fund which caused FIJI Water to back out of the agreement" (Personal Comm. June, 2011). Therefore, the fund had "gone bankrupt" and "the committee⁴⁷, they misused the money [...] they robbed" (Personal Comm. June, 2011). The rationale behind the misuse of funds was pinpointed to the Vanua's prioritisation of transport resources. Instead of using the monies for economic development several participants voiced the Vanua paid for transport resources, not only for themselves but also for employees in the villages. However, "bad debts incurred on maintenance costs which FIJI Water has to pay" (Personal Comm. June, 2011). Thus, the money in the trust fund was not utilised efficiently whereas FIJI Water, in 2006, paid off the debts that accumulated over time and simultaneously decided closed the fund. This financial mismanagement revealed that the Vanua had minimal formal work experience and exposure to good business governance processes resulting in the ineffective management of the VTF. Nonetheless, while this internal conflict was brought to light, one participant expressed that I should be weary of rumours that often surrounded the nature of the Vanua:

> "We even got to a point where they claimed some people had received millions of dollars from FIJI Water and invested it in some company overseas in the World Bank. This kind of rumours are floating around the village, I guess a lot of information is not going back to the landowners, in terms of transparency" (Personal Comm. June, 2011)

The second rationale for the VTF closure was attributed to the tension that existed between the *Vanua* themselves. This tension arose from FIJI Water "targeting the high chief and neglecting the voice of the *Vanua*" (Personal Comm. June, 2011). Bypassing the *Vanua* and dealing solely with the high chief has reportedly lead to him obtaining greater prosperity over the Vatukaloko people as "Tui Vatu [the chief] is now in the company's payroll and enjoying some of the benefits given to employees and more" (Ibid). It was suggested the company provided Tui Vatu with a concrete house, free bottled water, a whale tooth and mobile phones (Ibid). But this relationship was short lived:

⁴⁷ The Vanua are also known as the Vatukaloko Investment Committee.

"FIJI Water brushed aside the Vatukaloko Development Advisory Committee [Vanua] and dealt directly with the current Tui Vatu. Evidently there has been a collusion between Fiji Water and Tui Vatu that led to the abolishment of the Trust Fund [...] Fiji Water taking advantage of Tui Vatu ignorance and lack of education " (Personal Comm. June, 2011)

"When it started off it was well distributed and was working well, but then that stopped because of some conflict that arose, but there was no follow up to try and solve it and now the landowners don't get that deal anymore and I guess I'm disappointed in the fact that there was no effort in trying to solve that issue so that agreement could continue" (Personal Comm. June, 2011).

Through these opinions, it was expressed FIJI Water had (and still is) undermined the *Vanua* and opted to recognise and privilege the Tui Vatu. It was further voiced that FIJI Water has been active in seeking discussions with the *Vanua* and Tui Vatu:

> "came two months ago to meet the Vatukaloko people at Drauniivi and asked the people to have regular meetings to discuss what they needed from them. They are still waiting on Tui Vatu and the advisory committee to call these meetings" (Personal Comm. June, 2011)

While these meetings have been called for, the *Vanua* are yet to organise such negotiations and as one resident stated: "it can be difficult for FIJI Water to negotiate with a group of people who are already in conflict" (Personal Comm. June, 2011). Therefore, the *Vanua* and Tui Vatu's progress in forming a new alliance with FIJI Water has been halted due to this internal conflict occurring.

Synopsis of Story One and Two

The above two stories identify possible motivations for terminating the VTF. These stories have some omissions that could have been addressed if the participants had been prompted further. However, with such a delicate and controversial subject, pushing participants to discuss their opinions further than what is presented above, would have been abusing my position as a researcher and going against my philosophy of 'doing no harm'. Although the two stories can be contradictory, they both reveal external and internal dynamics are at play– and somewhere in the middle of this spectrum perhaps lies the truth about its termination. While both stories revealed various parties can bare the blame, one local vocalised:

[&]quot;if FIJI Water really wanted to keep it sustainable and to really involve the landowners they would have looked at other avenues of trying to make things work and also the landowners because it was given to one

person [...] communicated with the landowners as much as possible, give them information, landowners have rights and they have a responsibility to do certain things, if you put in enough effort you can do it, and this is something I feel FIJI Water has not done because they're a business" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

7.3.2 Employment

Employment at FIJI Water's bottle factory has been described by local Vatukaloko as "the best job in the area" (Nananu Older Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Reportedly, those who work for FIJI Water earn some of the highest wages in the country, from FJD\$5-\$7 an hour (compared to the national average of FJD\$2.50 minimum wage) (Tamata One, Personal Comm. June, 2011). While FIJI Water provides favourable salaries, job security has become an overt issue.

Vatukaloko Trust Fund: Employment Agreement

Rather than being directly employed by FIJI Water, previously the VTF allowed the *Vanua* to contract workers for the company. Before its termination, the agreement allowed people from the villages to provide ancillary services such as cleaning, cooking, transport and security. But, as of May 2009, a FIJI Water representative informed researcher Ulrich (2009: 106):

"since [the VTF's] bankruptcy, the company has positions incorporated into FIJI Water; unfortunately this means that although they still have jobs, because they are no longer contracting from FIJI Water, some stakeholders have lost an important opportunity to gain experience and profit from running their own business".

FIJI Water, at this point, declared they would merge these ancillary services back into the company, yet participants' stated:

"2009, I was asked to retire from the job, they were asking us to make our own licence, to cook the food and do the laundry, but we didn't have the money to pay for the licence for the cooking, so that was the end of our cooking [...] we asked for the job, they say no, but before there was an agreement between the company and the village. About employment, the agreement was about our five villages working in FIJI Water, in 2009 argument with company, they turned people away, money from America is gone down, sent people home from there, it changed everything! That's the problem of living here, our children want a job but no chance for job now" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

"Everything is done in the village, that way we earn some money, most women in the village, they have husbands and sons to get an income, but before they had their own income but they come and take it away. They make no difference, they can turn around to fire anybody, they make no difference!" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

Subsequently, the dissolving of the VTF compromised local employment opportunities, despite reports of their jobs being merged back into the company' and although workers were not terminated immediately, gradually the jobs were lost. For Yalewa (women) in particular, the opportunity to cook and clean for the plant provided monetary independence from their husbands. However, in 2009 many were asked to 'retire' resulting in the end of their employment and financial autonomy (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Therefore, women then reverted back to their:

> "husbands and sons to get an income [but] when they work, they never think about these ladies they just run and keeping with their own mates" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

Accordingly, being hired by FIJI Water empowered Vatukaloko women. But, since arrangements with the company has altered they once again rely on their male counterparts and "as soon they paid they start drinking" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). A handful of men also provided assistance with transport and security but, their jobs like the women, were also tenuous where on-the-spot dismissals became increasingly common: "terminated quickly breadwinners of the family overnight lost their jobs" and "rules and regulations were not clear therefore when broken, no second chance was given and then was sacked" (Drauniivi Yalewa and Tagane Focus Groups, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

One participant further elaborated that terminations occurred due to "claims the services had not been consistent with meals, security and laundry" (Tamata Three Personal Comm. June, 2011). However, managers of FIJI Water expected employees to adapt to a Western business framework which was not complementary to their traditional ways of living (Ibid). As such, local residents were asked to work on eight-hour rotating shifts which were vastly different from their traditional subsistence farming routines (Tamata One, Personal Comm. June, 2011). With no training or capacity building to meet the needs of FIJI Water's Western business ethos, many employees found adapting to this work ethic difficult.

Being Vulnerable: Working for FIJI Water

Outside of the VTF agreement, various Vatukaloko residents were independently employed by FIJI Water primarily in manual labour positions. However, in December 2008, the company suspended all of its 400 employees. As a result, all employees were sent home but *with the promise that their jobs would be waiting once production resumed*:

"A big slap down in FIJI Water, slap down, yeah, they send people home, yeah, in 2008 [...] they said that the main problem was production, demand was less from the other side of the world they said the company was going slowly, they said only thing they can do is terminate some of the employees" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

The company temporarily ceased production in 2008 in protest against the Fijian government wanting to end the company's tax-holiday, but once the issue was resolved and production increased, former employees found they were not recalled to resume work. Therefore, "at its whim they laid off the majority of employees [...] during its redundancy exercise and never recruited them back as promised" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). While employees believed their jobs were waiting for them, FIJI Water only hired back a "handful of people" leaving the majority permanently suspended, with no-warning or references to find other work (Naseyani Yalewa and Drauniivi Tagane Focus Groups, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Here, participants vocalised this move was "un-fair" and "broke the trust" they initially had with the company (Ibid).

Concern was also expressed of the company's preference to employ 'outsiders' rather than local people. Locals communicated they were "disappointed" and "confused" over this action (Nananu Younger, Naseyani and Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Today, FIJI Water workers are now reportedly coming from outside the village from other townships. Consequently, "those who were working there [FIJI Water] for some time and are experts in their field have been swapped for inexperienced but highly qualified people" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011):

"Yeah they bring people from Lautoka, even from Rakiraki. Agreement was inside our five *(sic)* villages, so they made an agreement about employment. The drivers, most of our brothers and sons in the village they have drivers licences, they are not given the job, they hire people from the outside, no not give them a chance" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

"Most of the people at the top at FIJI Water are not from the village, mainly because they are not qualified and we need to qualify people at tertiary level and get life skills, it will not solve the village's problems but I wish they done something just to help out and help them help themselves" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

Since jobs have been awarded to outsides the economic climate of the villages has been compromised. With FIJI Water making its mark in the Vatukaloko area, those living around the plant have become increasingly "dependent on that one company [and] don't have a vision to [be] employed elsewhere outside of the company" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June, 2011). This strain to find other employment opportunities has also negatively impacted the economic flexibility of many households, where people now "struggle to buy food" and many live in "substandard lean-to housing" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). A further consequence from this employment vacuum has been traced the increased migration of youth from the villages in search for more prosperous employment in urban centres decreasing financial contributions to families (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). One participant pleaded: "all we ask, please can all our children in our villages have a job at FIJI Water" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). The combination of limited jobs and high numbers of youth migrating, the ability for the villages to be economically stable is becoming ever-increasingly compromised.

While FIJI Water continues to unjustly terminate employees locals vocalised "they are still wanting to work because no other job opportunities are available" because there is "no choice, if a job opportunity arose at FIJI Water whether casual or permanent – they will take it" (Nananu Older/Younger and Naseyani Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). FIJI Water has created a vulnerable employment setting yet today, Vatukaloko residents are still yearning to work for the company as it provided greater financial opportunities when compared to traditional occupations.

7.3.3 Magic Mountain

In the villages of Nananu and Naseyani, residents have discovered they can access the same aquifer used by FIJI Water (and is outside of the 180 hectares of land leased by the company). Since this discovery, there has been increased interest from Chinese and Japanese entities – which have equally sophisticated marketing and development strategies on par with FIJI Water – keen coordinate bottled water ventures with Vatukaloko resident's participants in Nananu communicated:

> "starting up own spring Water Company, as well as Naseyani, FIJI Water trying to block in fear water will run out, tried to sue them but lost. Name of new drink is going to be called Magic Mountain" (Nananu Older Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

This ability to tap into the same aquifer as FIJI Water has caused concern for the company. One participant elaborated that in 2010, David Roth was expelled from Fiji for interfering with Fiji's domestic affairs and aimed to: "cut off other water companies, ask to leave because he was trying to suppress economic growth in 2010, tax-time as well, government wanted more investment and FIJI Water tried to suppress that" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Accordingly, while FIJI Water pioneered the water bottling business in Fiji, other international companies are starting to catch on the idea and are eager to use the same water source as FIJI Water. However, while pondering on this conversation on the bus back to Suva, I noted in my reflection diary (and regret not asking in focus-groups): "the question remains (and maybe someone else can research this gap) how will these companies treat the local people and vice-versa, to avoid the predicaments that have arisen with FIJI Water?" (Reflection Diary 2011, 14 June).

7.4 Environmental Impacts

Environmentally, FIJI Water has been active within the Vatukaloko villages through two main efforts: recycling and deforestation through their environmental partner Conservation International.

7.4.1 Recycling Efforts

Employees of FIJI Water are entitled to two cartons of free water on pay-day, every fortnight. However, locals argued this has led to an "accumulation of empty bottles around the villages" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). To overcome this problem, residents were:

"told, by the people who were working [at FIJI Water] to bring the sack [full of FIJI Water bottles], who said if we fill it, they will buy our children's primary school books and pens, like that' [...] recycle all the bottles, we get money, cash" (Nananu Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

With this incentive, locals collected the empty FIJI Water bottles in bags provided by the company in the belief they would receive FJD\$50 and school supplies for their efforts. But, while this promise was made, as Plate 7.11 reveals, these sacks of empty water bottles remain in the middle of the villages and FIJI Water:

"have (sic) not coming to collect them" and "when they come to the village, they [come to] collect the empty bottles for recycle, but they leave it there" (Drauniivi Tagane/Yalewa Focus Groups, Personal Comm. June, 2011).



Plate 7.11: Sacks of FIJI Water Bottles in Drauniivi

7.4.3 Conservation International⁴⁸

Along with discussing the recycling efforts in the villages, criticisms surfaced towards FIJI Water's partnership with Conservation International. The NGO has worked with FIJI Water since 2007 to develop "an ambitious multi-benefit carbon offset plan as part of FIJI Water's Sustainable Growth Initiative" (FIJI Water Foundation, 2011). Therefore, FIJI Water funds Conversation International (funding amount is unavailable to the public) to carry out a range reforestation efforts with Fijian landowners.

Prior to FIJI Water's settlement in the Yaqara Valley, one local admitted the landscape was: "already severely degraded before FIJI Water had opened, that area [is] an area called the dried forest, already taking it out for the sugar industry way

⁴⁸ Conservation International is a 'non-profit' environmental organisation based in the United States.

back when there [were only] are a few old agricultural officers" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June, 2011). To help restore the Kauvadra Mountain Range rainforest, FIJI Water with Conservational International, hired local Vatukaloko residents to assist in planting trees. In return, each village was "granted FJD\$2,500 a week for their labour efforts to plant mahogany trees around the mountain range" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). But, this selection of trees has been met with apprehension locally. It was suggested mahogany trees are an invasive flora and the government is "against the planting of the trees" and if they continue to sow "near [the] river and native trees [they are] going to destroy native vegetation and in the long run is damaging" (Ibid).

It was also suggested that FIJI Water were only planting the trees as "a safeguard to their water" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). FIJI Water also works with Conservational International in the Sovi Basin where similar reforestation work is occurring, but again, locals questioned its integrity as the basin reportedly "flows into the aquifer" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). So by preserving the Kauvadra Mountain Range and Sovi Basin is "all for their benefit to maintain their marketing" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Additionally, residents reported FIJI Water has been continually increasing their water extraction rate without notifying the government and are now harvesting "way above their limit" and "that's why they are looking at the Sovi Basin and reforestation" projects (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). The company claims heavy rainfall allows the aquifer to sustainably replenish, yet participants have noticed a distinct change in the Vatukaloko's geography:

"They used to have a lot of native trees and mango trees, they used to jump off the bridge into the water and look at the water now" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

Here, residents further criticised the nature of the NGO itself. I was informed by a source seeking anonymity, that FIJI Water's CEO Stewart Resnick is also a member of the Board of Directors at Conservational International (Incognito Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). As such, locals suggested FIJI Water has been using the charity as a facade to maintain their environmental-friendly image. Therefore, instead of being genuine about its environmental work locals argue: "it's all political and controlling using them [Conservational International] as a marketing gimmick"

(Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June, 2011). While locals "thought they [FIJI Water] wanted to do capacity building and teach the land owners the value of planting trees [...] it was all a marketing ploy" (Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Overall, instead of following through with promises or being genuine with their efforts, the company's environmental charity is perceived as a smokescreen to obtain their green credentials.

7.5 Summary

Whilst sitting on the various *vakabati* in Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani an understanding of FIJI Water's social, economic and environmental impacts on the Vatukaloko villages was captured. By prioritising their discourses this chapter has offered an unusual and authentic testimony. Such perspectives suggest while FIJI Water has been partially constructive with its development efforts (such as infrastructural upgrades and providing clean water), problems largely exist. These problems were centred on the restructuring of social frameworks, miscommunication, broken promises, vulnerable working conditions and misleading environmental campaigns. Overall, the financial success of FIJI Water has been offset by the range of problems associated with its production.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and Analysis of FIJI Water's Presence

at a Local Scale

Painting the Pattern

"While natural resource industries are incredibly material, visceral industries – they make big holes and big messes, utilise lots of machinery and throw huge amounts of money around – much of the developmental 'work' of such operations is in the realm of words" (Banks, 2009: 57)

In this chapter, I discuss and analyse narratives of Vatukaloko residents in order to assess if FIJI Water's presence has been positive or negative. It is of my opinion that on balance, FIJI Water's presence in the Vatukaloko villages has been primarily negative patterning common problems associated with transnational corporations (TNCs) in the Pacific region. To support this claim I explore four concepts: Westernisation, greenwashing, aidwashing, dependency and vulnerability⁴⁹. Accordingly, this provides the answer to Question Four, the final micro element of this study. To end this chapter, solutions based on a 'glocalised alternative' and from local perspectives are offered.

8.1 Westernisation⁵⁰

"Outboards are replacing outriggers; Coca Cola and consumerism are becoming alternatives to coconuts" (O'Reilly, 2008)

As noted in Chapter Four, a number of authors have argued that there is a range of problems associated with introduction of Westernisation in the Pacific region (Bargh, 2001; Dixon, 1998; Rocco, 2006). FIJI Water's business practices are based on Western concepts and the company has brought these principles into the social structures of neighbouring communities. This infusion has ignited issues, considered below, regarding new ownership, social disintegration and work ethic.

⁴⁹ I have aimed to reduce repetition from the previous chapter (Chapter Six) but in some cases this is inevitable.

⁵⁰ Westernisation in this study is defined as a process where societies adopt Western culture, politics, economic and lifestyle (Potter et al., 2008).

8.1.1 New Ownership

Initially, FIJI Water did not display Western neocolonial characteristics. The company's previous owner, David Gilmour worked in the Fijian business environment for over 20 years and understood Fijian culture and the need to work harmoniously alongside it. With Gilmour's knowledge, the relationship between the Vatukaloko villages and FIJI Water had a sense of social cohesion that was further enhanced by Ian Lincolne – the company's local community liaison manager. Ian was described by participants as "one of us" respecting the *itaukei* traditions, regularly visiting the villages and partaking in *seruseru* ceremonies (Tamata One, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Gilmour aimed to mediate with landowners to ensure respect between the two parties was created and maintained. With these elements, the company fashioned a relationship based on participatory procedures.

When FIJI Water acquired new owners - the Resnick's - it was then, Western neocolonial characteristics emerged. Participants voiced their concerns over this new ownership suggesting: "everything changed with the swapping of the companies" and now the relationship is based on a "top-down" model where local "landowners have no say" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Today, FIJI Water has shifted from its previous culturally appropriate model to a Westernised approach. Thus the sense of cohesiveness that was once evident between the two parties has slowly disintegrated. This can be attributed to the Resnick's business approach that is based on the neoliberal ideology that Corbez (2006: 2) describes as an environment were "all cultures and ideas are becoming 'modern' and 'global' through a process of neocolonialism and Westernisation in which the 'West' elides the rest". As such, FIJI Water has been encouraging locals become "commercially active in a Western sense" either through employment, VTF or development projects (Bargh, 2001: 261). However, such activities have been plagued by confusion due to the misunderstandings of their process or function. Consequently, Vatukaloko residents have struggled to intertwine their 'old traditions' within this 'new neoliberal-Western' framework FIJI Water is based upon (Nabobo, 2002; Ross, 2009).

8.1.2 Social Disintegration

Wealth has been distributed throughout the Vatukaloko villages via two channels: charity funds and employment. In the Vatukaloko villages, the traditional Fijian

custom of communalism – sharing, giving and *kerekere³¹* – is a key foundation to the village's social framework. Yet, since FIJI Water has injected this new wealth without regulation, issues of individualism have emerged. Because of the communal nature of the villages, those who receive benefits from FIJI Water are expected to contribute more to society, but FIJI Water has arguably targeted the elite circle "who do not share their income" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). By facilitating this divide through wealth, FIJI Water has indirectly facilitated the infusion of individualism into the Vatukaloko villages. Prior to FIJI Water, the Vatukaloko villages relied on subsistence farming and the *kerekere* system to sustain their livelihoods. But when the company began its operations in the area, wealth on a relatively large scale was inserted into the villages, whose members had minimal exposure to the capitalist system. Once exposed to the system, and as Taylor (2005) has warned, the individualistic and materialistic characteristics that commonly cling to economic prosperity have permeated through.

An additional tier to this individualism is gender differentiation. In the villages, women assisted FIJI Water by providing cooking and cleaning services and "had their own income, but they come and take it away" (Ibid). Currently, a majority of women are now stay-at-home mothers, so their ability to receive benefits from FIJI Water is solely through their male family members. But men have been reported to use this financial prosperity on alcohol and partying rather than spending time "think[ing] about these ladies" (Ibid). Such an articulation is in line with Cookson (2010) who argues economic power – particularly in developing countries – with women is more beneficial as females have a tendency to spend money on family and the community. Yet, within the Vatukaloko a unique blend of Western individualism and Fijian 'old traditions' has collided. As such, men are viewed as the breadwinners but are increasing using their new financial prosperity in a 'Western sense'.

Another vessel for Westernisation can be attributed to rural to resource migration. Banks (2009: 43) suggests one of the most destructive processes for local communities neighbouring TNCs is the influx of migrant workers as:

⁵¹ Kerekere is a traditional system of 'I owe you'.

"pre-existing local social structures, relationships and identities are fundamentally reconfigured, often causing severe social dislocation for the original community"

Such change is occurring in the Vatukaloko. FIJI Water has increasingly hired outsiders to work in the bottling water plant, commonly from urban centres such as Suva or expats from the U.S, Australia and New Zealand. These outsiders live within or on the fringes of the Vatukaloko villages and by doing so, have introduced social problems commonly associated with Western culture including drinking, divorce, teen pregnancies and blasphemy. With this social erosion, it has been suggest the Vatukaloko villages and "Fiji, like any other non-Eurocentric ethnic culture, faces the very real prospect of losing its ethnic identity in favour of the invasive and seductive culture of the West" (Taylor, 2005: 121).

8.1.3 Work Ethic

FIJI Water's Western framework further characterises its work ethic. London and Hart (2004: 2) suggest foreign TNCs, while operating in a different country, have a tendency to maintain their "imperialist mindset". FIJI Water has displayed such characteristics where working at the water bottle plant is associated with strict deadlines, structured schedules and fast-paced production requirements to ensure maximum efficiency. This imperialist model however, conflicts with the Vatukaloko lifestyle. Because FIJI Water is located in rural Fiji, for many employees it is the first time they have worked for an hourly wage or for an organisation. Typically, employees perform structured, low-skilled repetitive work, vastly difference to previous generations who relied on subsistence farming and fishing for a living (Ulrich, 2009; Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Traditional types of employment in Fiji change seasonally, and are locally or family owned that also intertwine cultural practices into normal work practices as opposed to the regimented schedules of FIJI Water (Ulrich, 2009). Rather than adjusting the factory to a more Fijian style of work ethic and as Macnaught (1982: 32) argues "harmonize development to maintain the relaxed way of life", factory managers, who are typically foreign, have imposed a Western and corporate based model of efficiency that is unfamiliar and conflicting to Vatukaloko principles (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011).

FIJI Water's Western work ethic has further influenced the VTF. The VTF, while well intentioned, was an economic investment based upon Western stewardship. Thus, the Vatukaloko *Vanua* had to adopt FIJI Water's business model to comprehend its dealings. Therefore, FIJI Water expected the *Vanua* to manage the funds in a Western sense – without external intervention or support. Such issues are not new within development theory where "it is naively assumed that masses of the population of the culturally marginalized will passively accept [Western] transformation" (Murray, 2006: 240). However, in the Vatukaloko *Vanua* struggled to grasp the work ethic of FIJI Water and as such the fund became susceptible to conflict, confusion, misinterpretation and misappropriation. Evidently, the *Vanua* and FIJI Water have a relationship "characterised by one-way culture [and in this case, Western] traffic" (Ibid: 247).

8.1.4 Limits of Monetisation

Here, I propose that money alone is not a solution to the Vatukaloko's problems. With the VTF, FIJI Water provided over FJD\$175,000 to the Vanua. This method of charity has been defined as the "West's approach to foreign aid" where aidorganisations and TNCs alike, "throw around foreign aid" and are commonly "missing the target" in regards local needs (Kjollesdal & Welle-Strand, 2010: 3; Nunnenkamp & Ohler, 2010: 1704). Although FIJI Water is not an aid organisation, with its development efforts they have been 'missing the target'. While FIJI Water provided money to the villages as a selfless or strategic motive (or both), the company implemented aid through a Western framework that did not harmonise with the practices and values of the Vatukaloko. Little is known as to how FIJI Water distributes its aid or if they draw upon development consultants to provide advice on its charity work; despite this we do know aid was presented in the form of economic development and that it resulted in significant negative social consequences (such as erosion of traditional social frameworks, vulnerability and dependency). Marshall (2010: 318) suggests "money is a Western concept" therefore, to appropriately utilise the monetary resource can be difficult for cultures outside the Eurocentric framework. Overall, economic development in international aid circles is continually being prescribed to improve social conditions in the Pacific; but as FIJI Water and the Vatukaloko villages exemplify, such development through a Western economic 'lens' can fashion an array of problems.

8.2 Washing with FIJI Water

TNCs are becoming increasingly aware of Corporate Social Responsibility⁵² (CSR) as a means of meeting the expectations of a growing ethically conscious market. FIJI Water has aimed to capitalise on this trend by carefully marketing itself as an ethically aware brand. Scholars Duska (2007) and Kennedy (2003: 7) argue businesses are not required to make charitable donations and by doing so are merely being "good corporate citizens and giving something back to society". FIJI Water proudly promotes its 'genuine' charitable efforts however, the authenticity of these projects can be questioned where issues concerning 'greenwashing' and 'aidwashing' have emerged.

8.2.1 Greenwashing

In 2009, Lenzer famously stated: "FIJI Water is indeed a rather egregious example of greenwashing". While Chapter Six explored this issue from a macro perspective, locally issues of 'greenwashing⁵³ were also evident. In 2012, FIJI Water (2012) claimed on their website:

"Independently, the FIJI Water plant has set up collection depots and implemented recycling programs in surrounding villages, creating economic incentives and establishing otherwise non-existent waste management and recycling infrastructure within local communities"

To begin with, these recycling efforts were enthusiastically received by the Vatukaloko, particularly as a FJD\$50 incentive was presented to collect and bag bottles. But today bags of empty bottles are still in the villages awaiting collection: "we just fill it, and ask for the money, but we didn't get they still owe us money from seven sets" (Nananu Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Here, FIJI Water has used its website to portray itself as environmentally ethical, using their recycling efforts to publically purport its genuine regard for communities and their ecology. But, by not collecting the bottles and paying the agreed incentive, such efforts from FIJI Water can be argued as greenwashing. As such, the company has used its website to declare its environmental efforts in the Vatukaloko but, are yet to follow through with their promises.

⁵² Corporate Social Responsibility is where a business ensures its compliance with the spirit of the law and ethical standards (Guptais & Srivastava, 2011).

⁵³ As a reminder from Chapter Six, greenwashing is an act of over-exaggerates one's environmental efforts as a means to gain ethical accreditation.

In the Vatukaloko villages, greenwashing tactics further relating to FIJI Water's environmental partner Conservation International (CI) – surfaced. _ Environmentalists argue CI's relationship with FIJI Water, via its reforestation and Sovi Basin efforts, are a rigorous example of greenwashing where the company is: "trying to pull the wool over people's eyes" (Tamata Five, Personal Comm. May, 2011). Vatukaloko locals further supported this macro argument, describing the CI projects in the area as a "marketing ploy from FIJI Water" with FIJI Water "using them as a gimmick" and instead using their reforestation efforts with FIJI Water as a method to "safeguard their water" (Tamata Two and Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). In addition to these points, it was further elucidated that the director of FIJI Water, Stewart Resnick is also a "member of the board of directors at Conservational International" and has accredited himself, not earned, the 'green drop' that certifies his brand as environmentally friendly (Ibid). This conflict of interest brings into question the credibility of FIJI Water's environmental credentials. Such concerns over CI are further expounded by researcher Levitt (2011) who discovered the activity of the NGO:

> "has been accused of corporate 'greenwashing' after a senior employee was secretly filmed by undercover reporters discussing ways in which the organisation could help an arms company boost its green credentials. Options outlined by the representative of Conservation International (CI) included assisting with the arms company's green PR efforts, membership of a business forum in return for a fee, and sponsorship packages where the arms company could potentially invest money in return for being associated with conservation activities" (Ibid)

As such, Vatukaloko residents supported the wider suspicions about CI and FIJI Water's greenwashing tactics.

8.2.2 Aidwashing

FIJI Water's humanitarian efforts can also be criticised as a form of aidwashing. For FIJI Water to further promote its brand as ethical, the company has funded an array of humanitarian projects across the Fijian Islands. However, in the Vatukaloko villages, FIJI Water's charity work – while generating some positive change – has failed to meet local needs. Residents described FIJI Water's projects as "really pathetic" and "simply peanuts" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2010). As stipulated in earlier chapters, schools were built but many residents "cannot afford to send children to school", boreholes breakdown and "can take up to two or three weeks to be fixed" and health problems such as "typhoid are in the village" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group and Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2010). Despite these problems, FIJI Water continues to promote its charitable efforts on their website and portray itself as a caring and compassionate operator with the local communities (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group and Tamata Three, Personal Comm. June, 2011). In short, I perceive such actions by FIJI Water as a rigorous example of *aidwashing*. Today, the concept of TNCs over-exaggerating their charitable efforts is not uncharted in empirical literature (Richey & Ponte, 2011) but, a term to summarise this increasing trend remains undefined. Here, I present my definition of the aidwashing as a means to coin this pattern:

"A form of spin in which a company uses its philanthropic work to deceptively promote the perception that their policies, activities, products or services are ethical"

By practising aidwashing, two organisational benefits can commonly be extracted. The first, as discussed by Richey and Ponte (2011: 149), is that by marketing their charity work they can potentially achieve "double capitalisation". Secondly, Potter et al. (2008: 364) further alludes that companies that are acting unethically use aidwashing as an "attempt to protect themselves from external criticism which could be potentially damaging to their business operations". With FIJI Water, aidwashing has aimed to achieve both benefits. As Chapter Six explored, FIJI Water has come under heavy criticism from activists and academics for taking water from a nation where nearly one third have no access to clean drinking water (Waterway, 2008). To counteract such criticism, FIJI Water has invested in a variety of humanitarian efforts, but more-so in its bias marketing of these efforts to come across as ethical. In doing so, FIJI Water has tapped into a "yeaning and increasing market where people aim to connect things that will give meaning to their lives" (Richey & Ponte, 2011: 149). Consequently, Vatukaloko stories do not match with FIJI Water's 'idyllic' portrayal of its humanitarian aid efforts as detailed on their website. Evidently there are clear discrepancies between FIJI Water's claims and their actions.

8.3 Dependency

With FIJI Water providing project aid and employment opportunities to Vatukaloko residents, a cycle of dependency has concomitantly surfaced. Such dependency has surfaced due to the company being the core economic provider to the Vatukaloko

villages. FIJI Water has contributed to the "illusion of development [in Fiji] when actually the country is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign countries, foreign consumers, or TNCs" (Ulrich, 2009: 151). This dependency pattern can be evidenced through the blurred responsibility between the nation-state FIJI Water alongside unsustainable development measures.

8.3.1 Who is Responsible?

"It is worth remembering that all such operations have at their core a critical three-way relationship between States, communities and corporations. In reality, however, this apparently simple *trifecta* is massively complicated by the sets of values, capacities and resources that each of the major players can bring to the makeup" (Banks, 2009: 44)

Within the Vatukaloko villages, the line between government and corporate responsibility has become blurred. This blurring is not an uncommon trend, where Banks (2009: 44) notes there is "natural tendency of both community and State to rely on TNCs to assume many of the 'governmental' roles and operations" (Banks, 2009: 44). In regards to FIJI Water, such confusion between the two agents can be attributed to Fiji's neoliberal reform. By the late 1980s, neoliberalism dominated Fiji's political and economic discourses and by doing so, two key structural changes occurred: decentralisation and the introduction of tax-free sanctions to attract foreign investment. Such neoliberal agendas eroded the sovereignty of the Fijian government but presented FIJI Water with a blueprint to economically prosper (Ibid). With the Fijian government pulling back⁵⁴ and receiving only modest financial returns from FIJI Water, the ability to provide effective services to rural communities became compromised as one participant articulated:

"No support at all provided by the government to help *Vanua* Vatukaloko in sustainably engaging in this multi-million dollar business venture, *Vanua* Vatukaloko was left to fend for itself and the consequences" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

With this rolling-back of the state, FIJI Water has filled this vacuum left by the State however, the danger of this approach:

⁵⁴ This is also in tandem with reduced aid, suspension from trade links and a declining economy because of the 2006 coup.

"is that it does little to build local government capacity and poses even greater problems for communities once the project is finished. In conditions where the very obvious presence of the corporation and its resources is many times larger than a Government presence, the key is to facilitate and improve capacity for service delivery rather than abdicate responsibility for them" (Banks, 2009: 53)

Levitt (1958) a critic of CSR, warned that companies' undertaking ambitious social roles would usurp the responsibilities of government. In the Vatukaloko, residents wanted FIJI Water to provide job opportunities, footpaths, clean water, power and education; yet, these are commodities the government should be maintaining, not FIJI Water. Nainoca (2011: 90) cautions that there is a danger to this relationship, where local communities can view TNCs as the:

"The cash cow for all these different things they [the villages] come up with, so you have to draw the line somewhere"

As FIJI Water has occupied the void left by government, the expectation for them to continue providing, *like a government*, has been created. This dependence also reflects a government that is failing to fulfil its duties to rural villages and is relinquishing them to a TNC (Ulrich, 2009: 54). Therefore, locals perceive FIJI Water as the wealthier and more reliable party.

Since December 2010, however, FIJI Water came to the realisation they were unable to 'buy' the Fijian government. FIJI Water being what Frank (1969) describes as a 'comprador' class⁵⁵ and managed to fend off paying tax on exporting the bottled water. By not doing so, FIJI Water argued they had a greater ability to adequately support local needs and if made to do so, "all the things about the community and the jobs it generates and environmental help and so forth" would be compromised (Tamata Four, Personal Comm. May, 2011). Despite this argument, in 2010 the Fijian government introduced a FJD\$0.15 cents tax per litre, taking no excuses from FIJI Water and threatening to pass on the company to eager Chinese or Japanese entities. But, imposing this tax simultaneously a swift reduction in its CSR efforts occurred, as the company previously threatened. Examples can be identified through reduced presence of the FIJI Water Foundation and the increased number of redundancies of local people when each tax 'threat' was implemented. The decision

⁵⁵This 'class' is dependent on TNC patronage and acts as a conduit for its demands. Such elites will influence national decisions on the basis of what is required for the TNCs rather than the host nations.

to challenge FIJI Water's monopolistic position has started to erode the company's 'iron fist' of control.

To date, little research has been conducted as to the ramifications of this new tax relationship and how the government will fill the void left by the CSR. Thus, FIJI Water and the Fijian government present a unique case that has yet to play out in the context of the Pacific region. As Chapter Six highlighted, the government has earned over FJD\$78million during the first four months of 2011, and if applied on a pro rata basis over the next 8 months would gave generated an annual return of FJD\$312million. While I was in Fiji, this tax imposition was still in its early stages of implementation, therefore the question remains, *will this new lease of revenue trickle down to the local communities or as Banks (2009) argues, stay within the elite political circle?* Here opens an avenue for further research.

8.3.2 Unsustainable Development

FIJI Water aid projects were commonly introduced to instantly fix a problem. But, such measures only provided temporary relief and failed to address systemic issues or encourage sustainable practices. Instead of promoting self-sustaining measures to reduce reliance on the company and encourage alternative livelihoods, FIJI Water fashioned a cycle of dependence. Therefore, projects are "unsustainable since [the] investment and projects are [commonly] short-term" (Potter et al., 2008: 362).

Project aid in the Vatukaloko villages primarily came in the form of provisions. Accordingly electricity, infrastructure and water tanks were provided by FIJI Water and put in place by its own independent contractors. Projects then, can be argued as being 'quick-fixes' or as explained previously, a form of aidwashing. Such projects, while working to achieve a positive change, come with a responsibility for ongoing maintenance and the up-skilling of the Vatukaloko residents, should a self-sustaining model be adopted. As local skills and associated financial costs to sustain these services were unavailable, residents reverted back to FIJI Water for up-keep creating a 'need-dependent' relationship. Brautigam (2000: 1) argues the ramifications tangled with this relationship:

> "continued over long periods of time, dependence on aid may make it more difficult for good governance and better institutions to develop [...] and may reduce local ownership, accountability and democratic decision-making. Large amounts of aid, delivered to communities with

weak institutions *create* some of the institutional problems that lead to ineffectiveness"

While Clemens (2004) argues you have to satisfy both the immediate needs and to work towards long-term goals, FIJI Water has only focused on the here-and-now and failed to think strategically of the long-term prospects. So while the projects are well intentioned, when they break down or remain unfinished, locals have to revert back to FIJI Water for assistance. Therefore, FIJI Water asserts their commitment to 'sustainable development' yet the combination of short-term projects and the termination or stagnation of its charities raises doubt over this assertion.

8.4 Vulnerability

Dependency on FIJI Water has concurrently created a gateway for vulnerability issues. With the Fijian government having less power and international agents having more-so, the Vatukaloko villages have become increasingly vulnerable as the activities of FIJI Water's go largely unregulated. This vulnerability is particularly visible in regards to the company's relationship with employees, particularly in FIJI's ability to 'switch resources' and issues with being the smaller party.

8.4.1 Employment Vulnerability

Due to the unpredictable nature of FIJI Water, ongoing employment with the company has become uncertain. This vulnerability has stemmed from the villages dependence on FIJI Water as Ulrich (2009: 152) discovered:

"If there is no FIJI Water, no work there for me. I will have to go around the urban areas to find job, to look for job, because all this, get money, get paid, good pay from FIJI Water"

Despite this dependency, FIJI Water's production is based on a 'New International Division of Labour' (NIDL) (Gilbert, 2008). This NIDL model primarily entails TNCs siphoning off low-cost and intensive-labour to developing countries (Potter et al., 2008: 76). However, such businesses practices, as Hamza and Zetter (1998: 292) argue make "more and more workers have little job security, fluctuating incomes and little access to services and facilities". With FIJI Water optimising this model, employees overtime have become increasingly vulnerable. In 2008 and 2010, this vulnerability was highlighted when the company made staff redundant as a result of

their disputes with the Fijian government. Despite FIJI Water (2011) advocating that they provide "sustainable business enterprises" for locals, they have often been the first to bear the consequences of the rift between these two parties. With such rapid and extreme changes in employment, lifestyle pressures in the villages were inevitable.

During these two episodes, overnight many local employees lost their income and ability to provide for their families. Various locals have now reverted back to subsistence livelihoods or working as harvesters for Fijian-Indian plantation owners. Work experience at FIJI Water was also "not necessarily beneficial in terms of working conditions or skills enhancement" as locals primarily carried out manual labour with limited opportunities for capacity building (Potter et al., 2008: 363). Therefore, the ability to transfer skills learnt at FIJI Water was limited. Today the livelihoods of the Vatukaloko residents have been altered, where over the last 15 years the locals have been in-and-out of employment with FIJI Water. Regulators of TNCs suggest such enterprises need to be "modified to reflect the political, social and economic realities 'on the ground"' (Florowaski & Nath, 2006: 292). But FIJI Water has prioritised their economic success over the job security of their employees. Such unregulated behaviour has consequently left ex-FIJI Water employees from the Vatukaloko region in a vulnerable position, as the company is still one of the rare job opportunities in the Ba province. Hence the question remains, "how much are the Fijian people really benefitting from the extraction of their natural resources, since the majority of the money FIJI Water spends appears to be on marketing, not on providing local jobs" or capacity building? (Ibid: 154).

8.4.2 Switching Resources

A common trait of TNCs is geographical flexibility. Hence, companies have the ability to switch resources and key operational facilities to different locations in order to maximize profit opportunities and minimize operational threats. In regards to FIJI Water, this resource is local employees (Moore, 2005). When many Vatukaloko locals were made redundant a *promise* was made to re-hire them once production increased when the recession eased. However, they "never recruit[ed] them back", instead FIJI Water decided to seek more educated individuals from outside the Vatukaloko communities (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). FIJI Water shifted the sourcing of its labour to a different

location to increase efficiency. The combination of being unregulated by the nationstate and based on NIDL principals, FIJI Water held (and still hold) the ability to freely 'pick-and-choose' employees to secure "efficient and profitable production" (Potter et al., 2008: 76). Rather than training locals to ensure their practices were sustainable, outsiders were called upon instead to replace their duties. Banks (2009: 47) heavily criticises this character of TNCs insisting:

> "As those communities that suffer the greatest damage to their lives should, I believe, receive greater compensation and access to benefits than those that suffer less, often much less"

Although many TNCs are being criticized by academics about such treatment of labourers, recently FIJI Water has further ignored this advice and has switched to mechanical resources – much to the bereavement of the Vatukaloko locals (Banks, 2009). This 'switch' involved scaling down FIJI Water's once 400 person workforce to 250 due to technological advances. These technological advances also target the most vulnerable in the plant, the manual labourers; who received little in the way of capacity building and are therefore, less valuable to FIJI Water. Accordingly, neoliberal policymakers advocate that foreign investors can be powerful engines of employment creation in developing countries (Lall, 2001) but, as FIJI Water as exemplified:

"Developing nations are facing increasing technological unemployment as transnational companies build state-of-the-art hightech production facilities, letting go millions of cheap labourers who can no longer compete with the cost efficiency, quality control, and speed of delivery achieved by automated manufacturing" (Rifkin, 1997)

Little is known as to whether such action is a result of the tax imposition and FIJI Water's threat to pull back from community development. During my time in the villages, the above introduction of technological processes replacing local employees was news not yet available to the local public. However, in keeping in communication with some participants I was informed of such structural changes to the company via email. Upon leaving the villages, locals were already vulnerable and "struggle to buy food" and still lived in "sub-standard lean-to housing" due to FIJI Water's last redundancy exercise (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm.

June, 2011). I can only predict that these current changes will only worsen the situation.

8.4.3 Smallness

When problems of dependency and vulnerability have arisen in the villages, their ability to effectively retaliate is compromised by their 'smallness'. Here, smallness can be defined as the physical size of the villages and also limited access to resources such as capital (which FIJI Water indirectly controls), knowledge and support. With such smallness, the ability to challenge FIJI Water when problems occur is limited; particularly in absence of the government or other external associations. One participant from Drauniivi elucidated that they did not want to bring the government into their business as they were 'already at war' with the company (Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Furthermore, in small village's employment at a TNC, like FIJI Water, is such a rare opportunity that despite the growing hostility and vulnerability of the villages, if a job opened up "we would take it" (Nananu Tagane, Personal Comm. June, 2011). Vatukaloko residents have little control over their turbulent relationship they hold with the company and although changes are warranted they are hard to initiate. This allows the company to assume a position of dominance and potentially exploit "Fiji for its resources and labour" (Ulrich, 2009: 158).

8.5 Moving Towards a Glocalised Alternative

As Chapter Four touched upon, the theoretical foundations of niche production can be found in the neoliberal framework yet, also within a glocalised alternative. In the context of FIJI Water, the company is a clear example of a niche product that is active within the neoliberal paradigm. FIJI Water is classified as a niche product in the sense its product is localised in a global market place. Although niche production was encouraged in the Pacific:

> "because these forms of development build upon local characteristics and localize development in important ways, they are inherently more sustainable" (Overton, 2010: 1)

Overton further goes onto criticise that within the model there are:

"continual pressure to drive down production costs in order to remain competitive creates a 'race to the bottom' approach which, together with the deleterious consequences, means that this form of rural development is rarely sustainable in the long run, whether ecologically, socially or even economically" (Ibid)

Consequently, FIJI Water is a niche product that engages with "rural dwellers" but as the above argument suggests, is "rarely sustainable in the long run" (Ibid). This can be pinpointed to the way the company has infused 'geographical indicators' into its product. FIJI Water has largely optimised on 'local characteristics' as an extension of its marketing strategy, rather than an instrument to generate local economic development – as evidenced by previous greenwashing and aidwashing arguments. It is my opinion that for niche production to generate grassroots development, the process needs run within the 'glocalised alternative' framework.

The 'glocalised alternative' involves locals and the nation-state being involved in the production and ownership of a niche product, rather than on the periphery. FIJI Water throughout all stages of its operations, apart from manual labour, has managed to keep Fiji at a distance from its activities, using the country chiefly as an export platform (Potter et al., 2008). However with such distance between the Fijian people, the ability for wealth, connections and knowledge to flow down into local communities becomes limited. FIJI Water, being a well-connected and wealthy TNC, also has the ability to cap the success other local bottle water industries in Fiji, who work within the glocalised alternative framework. For instance, since FIJI Water's international economic success bottle water companies such as, Bula Purified Water and Aqua Safe have surfaced in Fiji. Yet, the success of these brands is restricted due to FIJI Water having a tight grip over the bottled water industry in Fiji. As Chapter Six touched on, FIJI Water has established a monopoly on particular branding techniques in Fiji such as the word 'FIJI' in capitals and more recently filed a law suit on their rival company, Island Chill, for using similar imagery:

> "In the suit, which was scheduled to go to trial June 24, Island Chill owner Jay Prakash Dayal asked a federal judge to determine that the company is not infringing on Fiji Water's trademark by advertising its water as being from Fiji and that the company is not engaging in unfair business practices. But the companies settled, and Island Chill agreed to remove the flower from the bottles label, and only reference the waters source, Fiji, on the back of the label" (Fiji Times, 2008)

This case has further repeated itself, when local Vatukaloko wanted to start up its own bottling water plant in conjunction with overseas investors however, like Island Chill, FIJI Water decided to take the matter to court. Evidently, FIJI Water has the economic power and dominance to suppress and out-compete smaller local manufacturers creating a difficult environment for glocalised niche products to thrive.

To overcome this issue, the nation state and local need to become increasingly incorporated into the sculpting of economies of niche. Rahim (2010: 196) suggests nation-states particularly in "developing countries must be entitled to regulate and supervise TNCs operating in their territories". This involves coordinating working relationships where TNCs and localities can work harmoniously. This method encourages business to become transparent in their activities to allow effective communication between parties. Murray (2010: 6) further supports this clause suggesting:

"There can be little doubt that it [economies of niche] has a potentially distinguished future if and only if, the government helps put a framework in place for regional co-operation to sustain development of the sector from within"

Further capability needs to be a local level. Niche products such as Samoan Nonu Juice and Pure Fiji, while not as profitable as FIJI Water, are either owned or operated locally (McMullan, 2009; Frodey & Naidu, 2008). Such companies are managed by locals who are in-tune with the local culture and draw upon traditional farming methods to *create a dependency on the local community* rather than vice-versa. With this dependence, locals thereby have more power and influence over the niche production process – moving from the periphery into the productions core. Therefore, locals need a "chance to move into marketing or management" positions to help direct niche production in a culturally sensitive manner and become a hybrid between the 'global' and the 'local' (Ulrich, 2009: 155).

8.6 Vatukaloko Solutions

"I don't want to leave here with problems just in-toe, I need something, anything as a starting point. I just don't want to be stirring the pot, is there a way I can do this?" (2011 Reflection Diary, 11 June)

To conclude this discussion Chapter, I have chosen to privilege solutions provided to me by various Vatukaloko residents to overcome their direct problems with FIJI Water. I did not want to leave this Chapter without some form of commentary to move forward but, I wanted these resolutions to come from the local people, not myself. As a young, foreign researcher I feel uncomfortable providing solutions to a community I only spent a short period with and where issues are so complex. Instead, I have aligned myself with alternative development methodologies to privilege, listen and draw upon local perspectives to shape this solution section (Pieterse, 1998). Accordingly, to close focus-groups and interviews, I would ask participants: *if given the chance to speak to FIJI Water, what would want to tell/ask of them?* Armed with this question, I aimed to prompt conversation about potential solutions to this ever growing rift between FIJI Water and the Vatukaloko people.

Solutions emerged in two contradictory forms: firstly, for Vatukaloko residents to remove their dependence on the company and secondly, for FIJI Water to follow through with development projects. In regards to the former, one participant argued "I wish they done something just to help out and help them help themselves" (Tamata Two, Personal Comm. June, 2011). So, rather than focusing on projects within the villages, it was brought to light that FIJI Water should instead invest in:

> "capacity building so they can look for alternative livelihoods so they don't depend on the company in the long run and survey and monitor what their own impact is on the village and try to better rather than take and take and not give us feedback [...] development is the ability for families to send all their children to school to get a good education and become self-reliant whereas now we have to support some of our relatives, because most of them cannot afford to send children to school [...] we need to end up in a place where they [can] look after themselves and get into tertiary education where they become selfreliant" (Ibid)

In regards to the latter solution, participants wanted FIJI Water to uphold the promises made to landowners and continue to support the communities. At foremost, the VTF was the core topic of discussion. It was suggested for progress FIJI Water need to "recognise the *Vanua* Vatukaloko development structure, renew the VTF for another 10 years [and] pay back the dues from 2006-2009" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011). If the VTF was renewed, the *Vanua* would then start to exercise their Strategic Plan – refer back to Figure 7.1 – to support various educational, cultural and business developments within the

Vatukaloko villages (Ibid). On a more basic level, all three villages asked for FIJI

Water to follow through with their past promises such as:

(1) Providing permanent jobs, in particular for youth:

"Youth in the village that they have a good chance, want them to work, they used to have people from the village" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

(2) Scholarships for children to attend school:

"Asked for diplomas for boys to study business, agreed to scholarship fund but cancelled the fund before they got scholarships" (Drauniivi Tagane Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

(3) Complete infrastructural upgrades to housing, community halls and churches:

"I heard FIJI Water was given the plans for our community hall, I heard they have been given the plans" (Naseyani Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

(4) Upgrades to amenities:

"We need a lot from them, footpaths, good houses, electrical heat and power, using firewood to cook use to eat, we want stoves in houses to make life easier, water tanks in the community rather than on the hills, or between the houses instead" (Drauniivi Yalewa Focus Group, Personal Comm. June, 2011)

8.7 Summary

This chapter has argued that on balance, FIJI Water's impact on the Vatukaloko villages has been primarily negative. While there have been benefits of FIJI Water's activities, the narratives of Vatukaloko residents attest to problems concerning Westernisation, greenwashing, aidwashing, vulnerability and dependency. These problems have overtones of neocolonialism whereas FIJI Water has occupied the local space and pursued its own interests. In some ways, it has replaced the functions of the Fijian government. But as Banks (2009: 44) suggests, the trifecta relationship between the government, TNC and local communities' is "massively complicated". As such, although FIJI Water has become a powerful neocolonial vehicle simultaneously the Fijian government has started to resist. This relationship is likely to become increasingly turbulent and complex in coming years.

From this analysis and discussion, I conclude that both local communities and the nation state need an increased presence in regards to sculpting economies of niche

within the Pacific. Through this method, a more culturally sensitive and efficient niche production model, I propose, can be achieved. To close this chapter, I drew upon participatory development practices to address solutions to the problems with FIJI Water at a local scale. By drawing on these perspectives, I have aimed to:

[&]quot;end this fieldwork positively and with (perhaps) some potential way to move forward in this situation, instead of 'stirring the pot of problems' that I feel overpower debates concerning the Pacific today" (2011 Reflection Diary, 11 June)

Chapter Nine: Conclusion Woven Vakabati

Throughout this thesis, each chapter corresponded with a process of constructing a *vakabati* or Fijian traditional mat. In Fijian culture, once the *vakabati* is completed, the story behind its construction and meaning continues to be retold. This final chapter mirrors this re-telling process and assembles the key themes identified throughout this research. It firstly provides a summary of my aim and questions and more importantly, how they have been addressed. I then consider the implications of this study and how its imperfections create a gateway for further research opportunities, before offering some final reflections.

9.1 Central Conclusions

In May 2011, I embarked on a two month research journey to Fiji to assess how FIJI Water, a globally successful niche product, has impacted the lives of Fijians at a local scale. By consulting with a wide range of voices through focus-groups, interviews and literature, this study has provided a snapshot into the niche production phenomenon in general. As such, the overarching aim of this thesis was to: *assess the local social, economic and environmental impacts of FIJI Water's global success.* In doing so, four core questions were employed to answer this aim and were further spilt into two scales. The first being a macro analysis of FIJI Water's economic successes and criticisms; the second a micro review of the local social, economic and environmental impacts of FIJI Water. By utilising this two tier approach a holistic analyses of FIJI Water's global success and its local impacts was offered.

9.1.1 Macro Questions

The first question this thesis addressed was: how can the global economic success of FIJI Water be explained? The global success of FIJI Water can be traced back to Fiji's adoption of neoliberalism. Within this framework, Fiji reduced trading barriers, accepted privatisation and embraced free trade. In this context, FIJI Water was offered a 13-year tax amnesty and unregulated access to the aquifer in the Yaqara Valley to support the growth of its business. These benefits in combination with the company's lucrative marketing campaign created the springboard for FIJI Water's global success. This campaign incorporated four main elements: endorsements,

tropical discourses, health benefits and philanthropy. With these marketing strategies, FIJI Water has successfully capitalised on the natural topography and character of the Fijian Islands, portraying an image of purity, luxury and ethicality. This marketing strategy has been a key driver for FIJI Water's global success, with the product now available in five regions: America, Asia, Oceania, Europe and the Middle East. Evidently, unlike previous niche marketing endeavours from the Pacific region that failed to gain international recognition and economic success, FIJI Water has thrived.

To achieve a holistic understanding of FIJI Water's global success however, one must also explore the criticisms (raised by outside commentators) laid against the company. To achieve this, the second question of this thesis examined: *How can the global economic success of FIJI Water be criticised?* While FIJI Water has achieved global economic success, simultaneously a plethora of online commentary and literature has emerged critiquing the ethical nature of the company. When collated, these criticisms can be organised into five themes: environmental degradation, misleading advertising, supporting a junta, tax recall and ethical concerns over its relationship with local communities. These criticisms, as a whole (and to use the phrase coined by Borg and Borg (2001)) has had a 'reverse Robin-Hood effect'; the company is reaping the rewards of its economic success, yet at the expense of Fiji's boarder economy, society and environment.

8.1.2 Micro Questions

With the foundations of the two macro questions discussed, the micro impacts of FIJI Water were explored. The third question this research set out to answer was: *What are the social, economic and environmental impacts of FIJI Water at the local scale?* As this study has reinforced, little is known about how local communities in Fiji perceive FIJI Water's activities. To capture these dormant voices, I engaged with three Vatukaloko villages – Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani. To understand how FIJI Water had impacted their lives, this involved drawing on intensive fieldwork where a range of stories, opinions and perspectives were shared with me on various *vakabati*.

Exploring these narratives provided a unique insight into how FIJI Water impacts the social, economic and environmental dynamics of local Fijian communities. Socially, locals voiced that FIJI Water has introduced Western norms into the villages that have altered social dynamics. In addition, while various aid-projects improved local livelihoods, problems concerning unfinished, incomplete or unnecessary developments also emerged. Economically, participants highlighted their turbulent relationship with the company, largely due to employment issues and the termination of the VTF. Finally, on the topic of environmental impacts it was further noted that FIJI Water was inconsistent with their recycling efforts and questions emerged about their relationship with Conservation International. It was evident that while some positive developments had occurred, overall, a range of complex problems have been created.

With the above Vatukaloko discourses in hand, the final question this study explored was: *on balance, has FIJI Water's presence at a local scale been positive or negative?* Here, I argued that FIJI Water's presence has been largely negative. It is my opinion that at a local scale the company has fashioned problems concerning Westernisation, greenwashing, aidwashing, vulnerability and dependency; which out-weigh any benefits that have resulted. Such problems are overtones to neocolonialism whereby FIJI Water has effectively occupied the vacuum left by the Fijian government and gained substantial control over the locality.

Given all of the above, I finally argued that niche production needs to shift towards a 'glocalised alternative' framework. Within the neoliberal framework, TNCs such as FIJI Water have pursued on niche production as a means of supporting their marketing strategies, exploiting local discourses and strategies in ways that have not "localized development in important ways" (Overton, 2010: 1). Through a 'glocalised alternative', I proposed local sustainable development can be achieved in a way that is culturally sensitive and economically progressive; satisfying both the needs of the local population and national economy.

9.2 Imperfections and Further Research

Prior to embarking on my research journey to Fiji, I discussed my research outline with various Pacific researchers. While engaging in conversation with these researchers, I noted a significant piece of advice in my research diary:

"My research will never be perfect, things will go wrong and I will encounter limitations. But the key thing is, as many Pacific academics have told me thus far, to not be afraid of these implications as they can present a gateway for others to carry out research. *Don't be afraid of imperfection*" (2011 Reflection Diary, 16 May).

Armed with this knowledge, I was prepared for such imperfections to emerge. Yet, instead of viewing my study's imperfections negatively, I regarded them as opportunities for further exploration. By identifying these gaps, potential for other researchers to also "keep the conversation going" in this growing and topical field is presented (Bennett, 2009: 249).

Within the field, the first implication of my study was presented in the form of my positionality. In Chapter Two I state: "I still feel intrusive, like a Fijian should be doing this work, not me!" (2011 Reflection Diary, 10 June). Before exploring the imperfections of my positionality, it is important not to down-play my identity as an outsider. Being Me did place me in a privileged position, as being a foreigner provided a gateway to access certain participants. However, when engaging with Vatukaloko residents, it became evident that many participants felt more comfortable conversing with my translator. While observing him interact and conversing with participants "I couldn't help but feel a Fijian, like him, should be carrying out this research" (2011 Reflection Diary, 14 June). Although I experienced this implication due to my positionality, I do not want to deter Western researchers from studying Fiji or the Pacific, as what is produced through 'our lens' is extremely valuable. However, a local who might better understand the environmental and cultural temperament of villages would command the credibility and authority to do so. With increased coordination or leadership by Fijians, I believe research can be conducted in a more intimate and culturally sensitive manner.

As drawn upon in Chapter Three, FIJI Water decided to not participate in this study. From my perspective, this was the biggest imperfection to my research as Hara (1995) argues having a neutral point of view is essential for an unbiased study. Due to FIJI Water's isolationist stance, the ability to identify opportunities for future research that could potentially include the company is limited. Despite this hurdle, I want to encourage other researchers to continue challenging and exposing the ethical nature of companies like FIJI Water and, indeed, to pursue the company itself. While in the Vatukaloko villages, I was informed that other foreign companies were eager to begin their own bottled water ventures. Chinese and Japanese entities have expressed interest in starting their own water bottling plants in Fiji. In informal conversation with participants, it was suggested that the government's ability to challenge FIJI Water to start paying tax was due to these strategic relationships forming in Asia. Here, further exploration is needed to understand the wider dynamics of Fiji's water bottle industry.

Throughout this study, the term: 'glocalised alternative' has repeatedly emerged. This creates a wide avenue for further research. Within this thesis, I have examined how the theory of neoliberalism has impacted and created an environment for niche production to emerge in the Pacific. However, it is clearly time for a 'glocalised alternative'. While undertaking this study, I was employed as a research assistant investigating niche production in Apia, Samoa. During this time, I engaged with a range of niche based companies who participated in the global market drawing on local characteristics. This 'local way' involved infusing local geographical indicators as well as harmonising with indigenous business practices, work-ethics and epistemologies. Due to the limitations of this thesis, I was unable to compare and contrast the two styles of niche production. Such comparative study is likely to prove fruitful.

Importantly, this study does not claim to have unearthed definitive notions of FIJI Water's relationship with local communities in general but rather how the *Vatukaloko villages* and localities have been impacted by the company. The geographical focus of this study makes any kind of generalisation about FIJI Water's overall impact on 'Fijian locals' as a whole, inappropriate. FIJI Water is well-known for providing assistance across the Fijian Islands, and it is unclear whether the company's social, economic and environmental impacts in the Vatukaloko villages are mirrored elsewhere. Accordingly, further research would be necessary to confirm the overall impact of FIJI Water at a local scale.

9.3 Final Reflections

FIJI Water is an example of a TNC producing a niche product that thrives on the opportunities and spaces neoliberalism offers. Although FIJI Water has prospered in the global market and a range of positive outcomes have been felt in Fiji as a whole

and the Vatukaloko villages in particular, a plethora of problems at a local scale have also been created. FIJI Water draws upon the 'exotic' nature of Fiji to differentiate its product in a competitive global market. Yet the places its imagery is founded upon appear to have received proportionally low benefits; societies and environments have been particularly exploited.

Little is known about the local impacts of niche production yet policymakers and academics continue to advocate for its implementation. I hope the stories, observations and analyses presented here point towards a greater consideration on how these ventures influence local dynamics in the Pacific. It was intentioned that niche production would encourage local and sustainable economic development, counteracting the problems of Fiji's fragile, dependent and unequal economy. The case of FIJI Water, however, seems to have compounded these problems.

Given my desire to privilege local discourses, I wanted a Vatukaloko voice to seal this study. Accordingly, I have selected part of a Vatukaloko *meke* or poem that was documented by historian, Martha Kaplan (2005: 36). This *meke* captures local feelings towards the ever-looming acceptance of colonialism. A process I argue continues today in the context of the activities of FIJI Water:

The old laws will be put away;
 And we will learn new laws;
 Agree to these laws in his name;
 He stood up and issued it out;
 Leave all things behind.

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Appendix I: Plates and Figures

Plate A.1: Aerial Photos of Nananu and Naseyani



		Figure A	2 : Nomi	nal Value	e (FJD\$) o	f Mineral	Water Ex	ports by C	ountry		
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
Countries											
Americas											
Canada		195	522		1,062	154,937	272	195,920	1,434,623	11,005	1,497,800
United States	12,014,825	24,430,304	27,787,052	41,408,513	49,521,028	65,344,395	79,193,285	99,914,361	100,511,897	74,678,468	95,445,943
Trinidad				· · · ·	, , ,		, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	, ,		11,651	21,274
Hawaii									39,059	77,621	129,787
Total	12,014,825	24,430,499	27,787,574	41,408,513	49,522,090	65,499,332	79,193,557	100,110,281	101,985,579	74,778,745	97,094,804
Asia	, , ,	, , ,	, , ,	· · · ·	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	· · · ·				
China							72				507,128
Japan	890		10 0					244,943	29,607	568,477	104,313
Hong Kong			715,534				76,923	434,082	679,934	9 13 ,0 19	518,500
Philippines											109,114
Singapore		50		628		21,457	39,857	198,279	3,628,937	482,058	453,978
South Korea			12.9	36,432	7,680	24,303	769,717	450,750	64,507	732	126,333
Taiwan	60			, .	.,	<i>,</i>		472,646	133,650	11,003	208,080
Total	950	50	715,763	37,060	7,680	45,760	886,569	1,800,700	4,536,635	1,975,289	2,027,446
Oceania				,000	.,	,		3,000,700	.,		_,,,0
American Samoa	2 5 2	32,048	15,748	148,549	1,200,611	127,226	161,892	229,684	128,755	402,948	245,013
Australia	2,716	52,010	10,710	794,248	797,709	1,366,605	690,143	1,641,018	1,889,158	1,984,705	986,974
Cook Islands	680			.,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	17,513	1,000,000	070,110		63,072	18,680	17,631
French Polynesia	000				14,093	42,091	15,856	12,148	05,072	6,429	17,001
Guam					14,095	42,071	15,050	41,688		0,427	11,874
Kiribati	18,852	5,640	22,888	42,558	100,262	66,287	150,548	122,754	224,502	175,768	103,568
Marshall Islands	10,052	5,040	22,000	42,550	150	00,207	150,540	122,734	224,302	175,700	105,500
Micronesia					7,457	4,005					
Nauru	500	4,934	6,263		2,424	4,005			647	620	41,028
New Caledonia	2,304	4,934	0,205		2,424				047	020	41,028
New Zealand	877	2,251	512	1,512,602	587,117	80,695	3,802,917	29,986	54,915	75,513	40,145
PNG	0//	2,231	312	1,312,002	387,117	80,095	5,802,917	29,980			21,993
Samoa			10,600	806	1,079	35,587		46,809	16,941 202	10,598 1,649	21,993
			10,000	800	388	574	1 10 4	60,292	4,570		14.0.15
Solomon Islands					388	574	1,104	60,292	4,570	13,421 57	14,015 85
Tokelau	24.652	26.270	151 170	276 827	170.040	10.4.070	160.000	150.026	112 00 1	57	
Tonga	24,653	36,379	151,179	276,827	172,848	184,070	160,289	150,936	113,991	(7.612	164,768
Tuvalu	8,449	4,061	9,151	29,308	12,934	12,027	13,266	4 1,3 59	32,933	67,613	42,026
Vanuatu	8,048	925	41050	22,214	2,597	14,725	22,967	169,325	201,451	165,710	143,314
Wallis & Futuna	(5.0.0.1	0.6.000	41,858	71,040	112,284	84,061	111,462	160,870	96,237	16 1,4 19	103,214
Total	67,331	86,238	258,199	2,898,152	1,828,855	2,017,953	5,130,444	2,706,869	2,827,374	3,085,130	1,935,648
Europe											
Austria			1.50.0				7				
France	10.5	200	1,500	0.500	20.225	1.10.4	1.52.0				
Germany	195			3,522	28,335	1,184	1,729				
Iceland	10.5	1.50.0					1,406,949				2,862,767
Italy	195	1,500									
Netherland s					ļ	1,152	24,311	87,880			
Spain										13,105	
Switzerland							18,716				
United Kingdom		100		1,246,315	828,482	319,426	2 13 ,2 76	768,806	513,517	798,133	839,671
Total	390	1,800	1,500	1,249,837	856,817	321,762	1,664,988	856,686	513,517	8 11,2 3 8	3,702,438
Middle East											
Iraq					ļ						74
Kuwait					ļ						102,220
Saudi Arabia										11,750	17,129
Qatar											46,405
Ukraine											36,495
UAE										43,369	51,283
Total										55,119	253,606
Overall Total	12,083,496	24,518,587	28,763,036	45,593,562	53,416,053	67,884,807	86,875,558	105,474,536	109,863,105	80,705,521	105,013,942
*Data only gathe	red until Nove	mber 2010									
	Fiii (2011)										

						by Count		
2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
347		708	119,182	18 1	130,613	573,857	2,187	1,926,604
	23,074,900	33,014,016	40,509,600	45,203,100	48,994,233	77,066,800	87,276,933	121,349,708
.,,	- / /		. , ,	-,,	- , ,		14,520	32,998
						15,323	108,266	204,683
8,525,486	23,074,900	33,014,724	40,628,782	45,203,281	49,124,846	77,655,980	87,401,906	123,513,993
, ,					· · · ·			
				47				554,165
66					163,295	11,842	327,600	157,708
47,702				51,281	289,387	271,973	1,053,138	692,795
					,	,		52,844
	348		16,505	26,570	132,185	1,459,570	545,428	598,850
88	20,240	5,120	18,694	53 1,14 4	300,500	25,802	510	116,484
	,	0,1-0			3 15,097	17,373	153,184	264,958
47,856	20,588	5,120	35,199	609,042	1,200,464	1,786,560	2,079,860	2,437,804
.,	- 0,000	2,120	,			-,,	.,,.,	_,,
10,498	92,843	80,406	99,989	107,928	153,122	51,502	396,559	177,133
-0,.70	473,644	53 1,805	1,097,209	460,094	1,094,010	755,662	1,860,974	1,321,079
	,0,077	11,674	.,	,074	1,0 / T,0 IO	25,486	17,614	18,936
		9,395	34,064	10,570	8,098	20,100	21,000	10,750
		7,575	54,004	10,070	27,791		21,000	15,792
15,258	26,406	66,841	55,239	100,365	81,835	89,800	170,765	58,450
15,250	20,400	100	55,257	100,505	01,035	07,000	170,705	50,450
		4,971	3,081					
4,174		1,615	5,081			269	40	47,998
4,1/4		1,015				209	40	47,998
341	840,461	391,410	67,094	2,535,269	19,989	21,965	67,122	43,362
341	840,401	391,410	07,094	2,333,209	19,989	6,776	8,967	26,523
7,066	503	718	29,656		31,206	80	635	20,323
7,000	303	258	478	736	40,194	1,828	8,989	35,343
		238	478	730	40,194	1,020	72	72
100,784	174,017	115,231	152,452	106,858	100,623	45,595	247,059	191,865
6,100	17,445	8,621	10,006	8,850	27,572	13,172	40,729	41,767
0,100	13,883	1,730	12,271	15,311	112,892	80,580		123,259
27.004		,	,			,	83,700	
27,904	44,373	74,856	69,941	74,307	107,246	38,494	141,881	10 1,773
172,125	1,683,575	1,299,631	1,631,480	3,420,288	1,804,578	1,131,209	3,066,106	2,203,352
				4				
10.0				4				
100	1056	10,000	0.10	1.152				
	1,956	18,889	9 10	1,152				5 175 0 50
				937,966				5,175,050
			0.01	16 207	50 50 5			
			886	16,207	58,586		1200	
				10			1,300	
	71 0 0 7 0		000	12,477	1 50 5 5 5		10.50 - 0.1	
10.0	710,928	535,074	236,502	124,496	457,391	205,406	1,259,988	1,164,925
100	712,884	553,963	238,298	1,092,302	515,977	205,406	1,261,288	6,339,975
								10.55
								18,136
								136,404
							17,280	17,280
								67,186
								55,079
							66,720	69,288
							84,000	363,373
8,745,567	25,491,947	34,873,438	42,533,759	50,324,913	52,645,865	80,779,155	93,817,560	134,858,437
8	3,745,567	3,745,567 25,491,947	8,745,567 25,491,947 34,873,438	8,745,567 25,491,947 34,873,438 42,533,759	3,745,567 25,491,947 34,873,438 42,533,759 50,324,913	3,745,567 25,491,947 34,873,438 42,533,759 50,324,913 52,645,865	3,745,567 25,491,947 34,873,438 42,533,759 50,324,913 52,645,865 80,779,155	84,000

Figure A.4: Projects Sponsored by FIJI Water						
Project	Completed	Incomplete	Village Impacted			
Renovations to Drauniivi Junior Secondary School (in combination with the Fijian Government) – New Classroom block, toilets and water tanks	~		Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani			
Renovations to Naseyani Primary and building a Kindergarten – new teachers living quarters, new toilet block, educational resources, swing/slide sets	V		Naseyani and Nananu			
Borehole for Drauniivi Primary and Vatukaloko Secondary School	~		Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani			
Community Hall Upgrade Drauniivi – Extension, deck, kitchen, toilets and paint-over	~		Drauniivi			
Community Hall Upgrade Nananu and Naseyani		×	Nananu and Naseyani			
Church Upgrades – paint, renovation of pews, ceiling fans and tiles	~		Drauniivi and Naseyani			
Electricity Aid – power poles and lines	~		Naseyani and Nananu			
Boreholes – Drauniivi received two (one for the community, one for the school), Nananu received just one for the community	7		Drauniivi and Naseyani			
Water Tanks – Two water tanks at each school. Three water tanks for each village	~		Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani			
Dammed catchment to reduce Typhoid and heart-check ups	~		Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani			
Uniforms for students		×	Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani			
Scholarships – Were given to two kindergarten teachers, who have since moved from the region, but no scholarships have been given to children	V	×	Drauniivi, Nananu and Naseyani			

Appendix II: Forms

Consent Form

Title of Project: Weaving Niche Products into Pacific Economies: The Social, Economic and Environmental Impacts of FIJI Water.

Researcher: Catherine Jones

Bula vinaka, you have been asked to take part in a research study by Catherine Jones from the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand. This study will explore the success of FIJI Water and how this can be sustained for local Fijian communities. The results of this study will be included in Catherine Jones' Master's thesis. It is also anticipated that the findings of the study will be written up for publication. Please read the Participation Information Sheet, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to take part.

PERSONAL DECLARATION:

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project (before data collection and analysis is complete on the 1st August 2011) without having to give reasons or without penalty. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I will have an opportunity to check all transcripts of the interview. I am also 18 years of age or over.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor and the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me, unless I give permission to do so. I understand that the recording of interviews will be destroyed at the end of the project unless I indicate that I would like them returned to me. I also understand that I have the opportunity to obtain feedback when the project is complete.

Please tick the appropriate boxes:

□ I give permission for this interview to be recorded.

□ I give permission for my opinions to be recognized by:

 \Box My name \Box My title (i.e. Employee, Manager) \Box I want to be listed just as 'a participant'

 \Box I would like to be sent feedback once the project is completed.

Name and/or Title of Participant:

Signature of Participant: ______Date: _____

Vinaka, please contact Catherine Jones on +64276350075 or jonescath3@myvuw.ac.nz with any questions or my supervisor, Dr Warwick Murray, at the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington or warwick.murray@vuw.ac.nz.

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Project: Weaving Niche Products into Pacific Economics - The Social Economic and Environmental Impacts of FIJI Water.

Researcher: Catherine Jones

Bula vinaka, I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. As part of this degree I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. The project I am undertaking is examining two core concepts: (1) how/why FIJI Water became so successful and (2) how this success has impacted the social, economic and environmental dynamics of local Fijian communities. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I welcome all people who are over 18 years of age who are impacted by the FIJI Water company to participate in this study. Participants will be asked to have an interview with myself discussing various questions about their relationship with FIJI Water. These interviews will ask the participants to discuss the various social, economic and environmental impacts FIJI Water has had on their lives.

The interviews/focus-groups are all voluntary and should take no-longer than 20-30 minutes. Participants have total power over the interview process therefore, can end the interview at any time and refuse to answer questions. I would like to record interviews so that I can use it for reference while proceeding with this study. However, interviews will not be recorded without your permission. Furthermore, participants have the choice to have the recording played back to them and can review/alter notes taken in the interview until they are satisfied. Should any participants feel the need to withdraw from the interview or any information after the interview has been conducted, they may do so without question at any time before the data is analysed on the 1st August 2011. Just let me know at the time or, if later on, over email/phone.

These interviews will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on a confidential basis, unless I am given permission to use your name/title. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally if you chose to not attach your name or title to your opinions. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Warwick Murray, will see the results of the interviews. All material gained from interviews will also be safeguarded at Victoria University of Wellington. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Recordings and notes from interviews will be destroyed at the end of the project (28th February 2012).

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at <u>jonescath3@myvuw.ac.nz</u> or +64276350076 or my supervisor, Dr Warwick Murray, at the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington or <u>warwick.murray@vuw.ac.nz</u>. *Vinaka*.

Sample of Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- 1. What is your role/what do you do here?
- 2. What is your view on the bottle water industry in Fiji?
- 3. What do you think of FIJI Water?
- 4. How do you think FIJI Water is a global success? How are they going to maintain this success?
- 5. What is the relationship with Fiji and FIJI Water?
- 6. How has the company helped Fiji?
- 7. Have there been any problems?
- 8. Have there been any environmental issues with FIJI Water?
- 9. Do you feel FIJI Water have set a standard for the bottle water industry in Fiji?
- 10. How has FIJI Water helped local communities around its production plant? Have living standards been improved?
- 11. What social, economic and environmental aspects of local communities has FIJI Water been most determined to improve? Have they done so?
- 12. What are the negative consequences of the company being in that area?
- 13. How have other industries benefited from FIJI Water's presence?
- 14. What do you think of FIJI Water's branding strategy?
- 15. How sustainable do you think FIJI Water is?
- 16. Do you think the Fijian economy is dependent on this company?
- 17. Who has benefitted the most from FIJI Water?
- 18. Where do you see FIJI Water's future?

Sample of Focus Group Questions

- 1. Could you explain a typical day for you?
- 2. What do you think of FIJI Water and their success?
- 3. What is FIJI Water's relationship with your village?
- 4. Do you know anybody that works there?
- 5. Do they offer training?
- 6. Has the company been a good employer?
- 7. Have there been employment issues? If so, what are they?
- 8. What are the traditional occupations in the area? Do people still do these?
- 9. What personal benefits have you received from FIJI Water?
- 10. What changes have you seen in the village that FIJI Water has helped with?
- 11. Any changes to the social or economic conditions in the village?
- 12. Have they followed traditional cultural practices?
- 13. How has FIJI Water given back to the whole village?
- 14. Are there any current projects you're excited about?
- 15. How have you benefited from the FIJI Water Foundation?
- 16. How do they communicate with you?
- 17. Do they explain the projects and how it will improve your everyday lives?
- 18. How has the Vatukaloko trust Fund helped your village?
- 19. Do they respect you as itaukei (people of the land)?
- 20. How have the impacted your environment?
- 21. Where do you get water from? Do you have access to clean water?
- 22. Have you come across any problems with FIJI Water?
- 23. If given the chance to speak to them, what would you say or ask them to do?
- 24. What changes would you like to see?
- 25. Anything else you want to talk about?