

Oceanic imaginaries in film and development: lenses of collaboration and practice

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Abstract

Cultural expression and culture have informed the formulation of development outcomes and processes, with varying success. Historically, this has occurred incidentally to mainstream development priorities such as primary education and health, and food security. In recent decades have, however, international institutions have come to recognise the importance of culture to development both as an area of development as well as something which informs development planning and processes. Often, the cultural development agenda, where driven by institutions, has been largely for instrumental purposes. Thus far, there has been an emphasis in research on the relative absence of culture from development definitions and processes.

This thesis investigates the ways that film and film-making processes are contributing to a range of social and cultural outcomes in Oceania, and how these processes could be envisaged as contributing to a broader cultural development agenda. Using qualitative methods, this research examines how the regional imaginary is being practiced in different ways by film communities by drawing on several film projects across the region. This is couched in a discussion which examines the role of indigenous film as part of the global decolonisation agenda. It also highlights the importance of film as a means of decolonising identities and social practice.

This research reveals the diverse motivations for collaborative kinships in film. These in turn demonstrate how understandings of relationships between individuals and communities can be enable horizontal development. This demonstrates the tension between dominant understandings of development and regionalism. This research also highlights how film kinships, informed by regional connections, are collaborating to grow film-making in Oceania.

Using an intersectional framework drawing on scholarship from post-development theory and Pacific Studies, this research seeks to broaden the way that development is framed and practiced. While it is critical of some mainstream development tendencies – in policy formulation and practice – this research seeks to highlight how diverse and numerous approaches are important. This research draws together an analysis of collaboration in film practice and endeavours to address inequalities in voice and representation of Oceanian

peoples in film. It shows the contribution that film can make to expansive understandings of development in Oceania.

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Glossary

<i>Whakapapa</i>	Genealogy
<i>Palagi</i>	European
<i>Kaupapa</i>	Purpose, goal
<i>Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, Te Moana-nui-a-Kiva</i>	The Pacific Ocean
<i>Pākeha</i>	European
<i>Manaakitanga</i>	Hospitality
<i>Tangata whenua</i>	People of the land, host community
<i>Rangatahi</i>	Youth, young people
<i>Tuākana</i>	Older sibling
<i>Teina</i>	Younger sibling
<i>Kiwa</i>	Ancestor of the Pacific Ocean
<i>Aotearoa</i>	Land of the long white cloud, New Zealand
<i>Taonga</i>	Treasure

List of Acronyms

MFF	Māoriland Film Festival
MACFEST	16 th Melanesian Arts and Cultural Festival
TOL	Through Our Lens
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nations
MIRAB	Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy
SPC	Pacific Community
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
COPAC	Council of Pacific Arts and Culture
PC	Pacific Connections (Community Film-making for Gender Equality in the Pacific)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Historically culture and cultural expression have struggled to find an important place in the global development agenda. As a substantive area of development, cultural expression has tended to occupy the margins, largely because it is not seen as a development priority. Instead, development has been predominantly concerned with areas such as primary health, sanitation, and good governance. Culture has rarely been seen as a space that facilitates development. This is despite research which demonstrates the value of culture to notions of well-being (Melchionne 2017; Leckey, 2011; Oishi and Schimmack, 2010). Although attention was drawn to the relationship between culture and development in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly during the UN Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997), the relevance of culture has not achieved broad uptake by development agencies (Neverdeen Pieterse, 2010; Apthorpe, 2005).

Culture is acknowledged to be important to development for a number of reasons. Firstly, it can inform processes of development so that development practice accounts for local ways of doing and knowing. Secondly, there has been global acknowledgement of the importance of cultural practices (including cultural expression) in the development agenda (World Commission, on Culture and Development, 1996). There has been increasing attention to the preservation of heritage and performative cultures (Basu and Modest, 2014; Musteata, 2018; Lenao and Saarinen, 2015; Gordin and Matetskaya, 2011) and growing interest in cultural economies (Keser, 2016; Greeffe, Pfliger and Noya, 2005; Throsby, 2015; Beauregard, 2018). Some of this attention has been more focused on the instrumental impact of culture in development. Such broadening of the development space to include creative and cultural expression remains marginal, however, and has not seen significant changes in development practice and planning (Apthorpe, 2005; Clammer, 2005; Da Costa, 2010). In some instances, creative expression such as theatre or film has been used to communicate development messages, such as about sexual and reproductive health (Baxter and Low, 2017; Nwadike, 2012).

Film-making, as will be explained further, is an increasingly significant example of a cultural development practice. The growth of film-making in Oceania has seen not only an increased production of films (SPC, 2016) but also the proliferation and expansion of film festivals in the

region including the Nuku'alofa Film Festival, Pasifika Film Festival and Pollywood Film Festival. These festivals promote and screen content by and about Oceanian people and cultures. In addition to the growth of Oceanian film spaces, there is a growing appetite for Oceanian films. This is evident in funding and production of feature films, such as *Vai* (2019), *One Thousand Ropes* (2017) and *The Orator – O le Tulafale* (2011), that circulate through high-profile international festivals and in the attention paid at those festivals to films from the region. In 2019, for example, the NATIVE series in the Berlinale Film Festival (BFF) highlighted narrative and documentary films from Oceania.

Oceanian film-making spaces are developing, however, in diverse and uneven ways. This is partly due to the general lack of state support for film-making by the governments of Pacific Island nations. Support for film-makers (outside of Australia and New Zealand) comes instead from both collaborative cross-border projects and from international development organisations. Collaborative projects are fuelled by various motivations, including to carry out capacity-building in film-making and grow film communities in the region. Development institutions have recognised the potential for film to enable development through instrumentalising story to facilitate dialogue and action on social and environmental issues. While there has been a growth in film-making spaces, driven by individuals, institutions and horizontal networks of film-makers, the policy environment remains largely ambivalent towards Oceanian film-making.

These observations reveal some important but largely unanswered questions about film-making in Oceania. Firstly, it seems apparent audiences have a desire for Oceanian film locally, regionally and internationally. However, film remains an area that is largely underfunded and under-resourced, whether by film institutions or otherwise (SPC, 2016). How can institutions better support film-making in Oceania? Secondly, there is a growing desire in Oceanian communities to make film (SPC, 2016). While issues of technical capacity and access to filming and editing equipment are certainly barriers to growing film-making in the region, film-making is occurring nonetheless. How and why is film-making currently taking place in Oceania? Thirdly, the policy environment within which film-making takes place, does little to account for different approaches to film practice or to connect film-making communities across a vast region with many rich stories to share. What is already happening in film practice that might be insightful for policy-makers in cultural development? This thesis

sits at the intersection of these questions. It examines film-making spaces in Oceania and how these speak to current approaches to cultural development policy and practice. It analyses the reasons for their existence and the kind of films that they produce. These observations feed into critiques of reductionist development discourses and into arguments for a more expansive development field, able to also engage with questions of culture and identity. My research seeks to answer, at least in part, these questions.

My central research question is:

What is the power of indigenous film-making in Oceania and how does it contribute to development in the region?

To answer this overall question I have addressed the following sub-questions.

Why are Oceanic kinships being formed in the regional film-making community?

What are the motivations for forming such kinships?

What kinds of contributions do such kinships and film practice make to development in Oceania?

To carry out this research, I undertook fieldwork through a variety of sites that are demonstrating important regional interconnections that support Oceanian film-making. These are:

1. Māoriland Film Festival
 - a. Through Our Lens programme
2. Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival
3. Pacific Connections (Community Film-making for Gender Equality in the Pacific)
 - a. Centre for Samoan Studies *Film Challenge*
4. *Vai* (2019 feature film made collaboratively by Pacific women film-makers)

I have provided detailed descriptions of each site of inquiry in chapter three.

This research is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the ongoing discussion about existing definitions, planning and processes of development, particularly in Oceania. Secondly, my thesis adds to the discussion on cultural development. While there has been a proliferation of literature in the last three decades on culture and development,

contemporary film-making in Oceania is relatively unexplored in the literature. This research explores how film practice as driven by institutions, film communities and individuals, is contributing, in different ways, to development. Thirdly, this research highlights the dynamism of collaborative film-making practices and how they are reflective of, and contribute to, an Oceanic regional imaginary. In doing so, I add to the growing literature by Oceanians on Oceanian development.

Chapter outline

The second chapter of this thesis discusses the literature relating to four areas which are key to framing my research questions and theoretical approach to the research. It draws on the intersections of Pacific Studies and Development Studies scholarship not only in a methodological sense but also their respective critical approaches to research; the agency and empowerment of Oceanian peoples as part of such research; and a reclamation of knowledge and story. Chapter three discusses the range of qualitative methods I used in my research and its epistemological foundation. It also highlights the lessons I learnt as an independent researcher and how developments in my research shaped both my methods and findings.

The fourth chapter looks at the growth of global indigenous cinema and opportunities for indigenous film-makers globally. It also examines how Oceanians have responded to the challenges raised by indigenous film-makers relating to power and representation, particularly their presence or absence behind the lens. Chapter five analyses how and why Oceanian film-makers are collaborating across the region, and the film policy environment within which they operate. I argue that their reasons for collaborating are reflective of an Oceanic imaginary as articulated by scholars such as Albert Wendt (1976) and Epeli Hau'ofa (1993, 2008). The next chapter analyses findings from chapters four and five in relation to development theory. It draws on post-development and Pacific Studies scholarship to challenge mainstream development priorities and approaches and argues for the importance of film in and to Oceania. It highlights the significance that the regional imaginary could have for development in Oceania. This in turn challenges narrow definitions of development by drawing attention to the importance of expansive understandings thereof which account for relationships between communities and local contexts.

The final chapter of my thesis summarises my core findings, discusses the power of film-making in Oceania, and the power of kinship collaborations; and outlines some suggestions for ways for policy-makers to support these practices. I also offer some final reflections from my research journey.

Terms

I have specifically chosen to employ the term kinship in this thesis, to describe connections observed in film-making communities. While a network speaks to connections between individuals and communities, it does not fully capture the kinds of relationships that this research highlights and speaks to. The term kinship in my thesis is a means of understanding particular kinds of relationships between individuals, communities and organisations. It is often understood as meaning familial relationships between individuals and/or clans. However, I am using it in a broader sense. Sahlins (2013, p.) characterises kinships by “mutuality of being”, as people connected not necessarily by biological links but by time, place and culture. This is consistent with the kinds of kinships I have observed in my research, which were grounded in shared ancestry, shared geographical and cultural spaces and shared kaupapa.

I also mostly use the term Oceania rather than the Pacific. Our ocean was named by Ferdinand Magellan during his circumnavigation of the globe because of its apparently peaceful waters (Gould, 2013). Oceania as opposed to the Pacific speaks to the power exerted by European explorers and colonial masters, in naming various parts of Oceania.¹ In my literature review chapter, I discuss the discursive use of Oceania and the compelling arguments made by Wendt (1976) and Hau’ofa (2008) in particular to reimagine the Pacific. The importance of using this term will become particularly evident when I outline my theoretical approach to my research and analyse discourses of development. The agency of Oceanians and the use of language that is empowering – rather than reductive or essentialist – have been integral to my research. The use of the term Oceania by scholars within the region means that there is a sense of ownership over the name. This sense of ownership is not necessarily homogenous across the region.

¹ Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia are names given to sub-regions of Oceania, the origins of which are colonial in nature. I largely do not use these terms in my thesis but they can be helpful for situating things across nation-state boundaries but within a smaller area in Oceania.

It is my hope that the use of such terms in this research pays homage to the dedicated work of Oceanian film creatives in the region and the whakapapa of work that has led to such a hopeful film-making space. If, as I argue throughout my thesis, we are to find approaches to development that put people, place and context at their centre – then it seems only fitting that we find and use the appropriate language to articulate such an approach.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review focuses on the intersection between development in the Oceania and the place of culture within, and arguably outside of, the development agenda. It is divided into five sections:

1. The relationship between culture and development
2. Conceptions of the Oceanic regional imaginary
3. Cinema Pasifika – the relationship between people and place of the Pacific, and film-making
4. Post-development discourse and a Pacific Studies lens

These four sections will be drawn together to reveal a gap in the literature – which this thesis seeks to address in part.

The importance of film-making kinships and film festivals within the Oceanian context requires an understanding of literature from both Development Studies and Pacific Studies disciplines alongside the uses of film and film-making processes by indigenous communities globally. These intersections are important because, whereas the development agenda has largely been driven by a desire for tangible outcomes usually in the spheres of education, health and economic development (reflected, for example in the Millennium Development Goals), the Pacific Studies agenda seeks to understand and challenge narratives of the Oceania and how they feed into power structures generally. This work aims to address this schism and find constructive engagements between development and the indigenous narratives that arise from Pacific epistemologies.

The first section draws on literature from intergovernmental and international institutions as well as from academia, to highlight the (often marginal) spaces occupied by culture in development policy. The second section examines conceptions of Oceania as a region. From Pacific Studies I will draw on literature that articulates the significance of regional cultural imaginary, and connections between Oceanian peoples across the region and its diaspora. I then go on to examine the literature on festivals and how they might be understood as a means of connecting Oceanian communities through celebration of performative and material culture. Literature on film and Oceania – in particular the relationship between film

and film-making processes and Pacific communities; issues of representation and the colonial legacy of film – are also central to an understanding of the importance of film to the region as a part of the broader cultural development agenda. I draw on literature which examines the importance of indigenous film to the decolonisation agenda. The last section draws on literature from Development Studies on cultural development policy approaches and canvasses ideas from hopeful post-development which enable broader understandings of development that account for the political realities which shape how we define and pursue definitions of development.

The challenge for culture and development

The relationship between culture and development has often been fraught, with development seen as a technical project in which culture either has no role or, at worst, is seen as an impediment to ‘progress’. This, intertwined with issues of Pasifika voice and representation in film, brings attention to the *wero*² laid down by Hau’ofa in his essay “Our Place Within”:

“It is therefore essential for us in Oceania, that the creative arts and other forms of cultural production take up what our formal educational institutions have marginalised as nonessential in the world of the twenty-first century. For us they are necessary tools for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy within a homogenising global system. Our social, economic and political institutions are woven into the larger world system; any free space within will have to be established through creative cultural production. And this is what the present and rising generations of Oceania’s growing and widely dispersed intelligentsia are furiously involved in today. From their far-flung bases in Guam, California, Hawai’i, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Australia, and increasingly elsewhere within and beyond the Pacific Basin, they are connecting through the Internet and face-to-face encounters to discuss and work towards a culturally creative and free Oceania.” (Hau’ofa, 2008, p. 81)

This articulation by Hau’ofa is central to this thesis because it questions the ways that Pacific cultures have been colonised and undervalued through political integration into ‘a homogenising global system’, and it argues for the vital cultural agency of creative practice, as a space freer from those homogenising forces, with the capacity to connect and inspire kin across the region. It also highlights the implications for the way in which development that

² Te Reo Māori term for challenge.

has failed to account for Oceanian culture, so that it often lacks meaningful engagement with Oceanian contexts and ways of understanding.

Political understandings of what it means to be free might entail visions of decolonising states, of referenda for independence from imperial rule. The kind of freedom that Hau'ofa (2008) and Wendt (1976) speak of is that from the colonial construct of who we are as Pacific Islands, and our way of being as Pacific Islanders. This literature review will help to unpack this articulation by examining literature that speaks to these themes. While these separate sections address distinct bodies of literature, their intersections highlight important questions regarding culture and development in the region.

Culture and development

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defines culture as 'the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group' which also includes 'not only the arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs' (UNESCO, 1982, paragraph 6). The World Commission on Culture and Development (the Commission) defines culture as "ways of living together" (World Commission on Culture and Development, 1996, p. 14). These definitions are helpful for understanding the way that institutions have framed culture, particularly in policy terms. That such definitions draw attention to the importance of creative practise and cultural heritage is important because they combine broad anthropological definitions with cultural expression.

Institutional recognition and support for culture in the development agenda saw a turning point in the 1980s with a flurry of events and policy documents which reflected growing support for and recognition of culture's place in mainstream development. UNESCO instituted the Decade for Culture Development from 1988-1998. The purpose of the decade was to draw attention to cultural dimensions of development and in turn promote more holistic approaches to development (Stupples and Teaiwa, 2017). Some important shifts occurred, including the emergence of normative standards such as: the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989), the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and

the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) (Ibid). During this decade, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the publication of the Human Development Report. This recognised the broadening of choices as an important aspect of human development.

Critical to this period was the establishment of the World Commission on Culture and Development (the Commission) in 1992. Its purpose was to review the relationship of culture to development. The Commission's report *Our Creative Diversity* is still considered an important and relevant contribution to the debate on culture and development (Stupples and Teaiwa, 2017). Among some of its radical approaches is the recommendation to "oppose tendencies toward cultural homogenization" (Margolin, 1996, p. 131). It promotes diversity by arguing for "[a] multi-ethnic policy, a multi-language policy, a policy representing different religious points of view" (World Commission on Culture and Development, 1996, p. 214). The Commission also began the first "World Culture Reports" to 'survey trends in culture and development, monitor events affecting the state of cultures worldwide, construct quantitative cultural indicators, highlight good cultural practices and policies and analyse specific themes of general importance accompanied by policy suggestions' (UNESCO, 1998, p. 5). These reports, along with others such as *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* (UNESCO, 2009), and the *Creative Economy Reports* (UNCTAD, 2008; 2010; United Nations, UNESCO and UNDP, 2013) signal ongoing international engagement with the culture/development nexus.

The end of the UN Decade for Cultural Development was marked by the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development took place in 1998 in Stockholm. The purpose of this was to find ways to translate the *Our Creative Diversity* report into practice. This report recognised cultural diversity as essential for development, highlighting the value of cultural pluralism and creative diversity. The conference resulted in the publication of the *Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development* (UNESCO, 1998). This publication called for financial and human resource support to be made available for cultural development (Ibid, p. 6).

These developments show that the institutional support for culture in development has increased significantly over the last three decades. The establishment of the Commission, the UN Decade for Cultural Development and review mechanisms; the publication of global state-

of-the-field reports and policy documents indicate that the international development community has been serious about pursuing cultural development outcomes and processes. *Our Creative Diversity* (1995) highlights the need for diversified understandings of and approaches to, cultural development. It also shows the Commission's recognition of culture as important to the development agenda not only as a substantive area but also to the way that we 'do' development. However, while there is agreement amongst scholars that culture ought to feature in the development agenda, questions remain about how it should be incorporated (Desai & Potter, 2008, p. 50). Claims about how culture has been operationalised in development planning and practice have been met with some scepticism about how genuine such attempts are and how likely they are to yield any meaningful outcomes in development practice (see Apthorpe, 2005; Clammer 2005; Da Costa, 2010; Nederveen Pieterse, 2010).

There has been some literature on the reasons why institutions have failed to integrate culture meaningfully into the development agenda. Apthorpe (2005) argues that culture and development are incommensurable because of the tendency of development to be positivistic; and that the traditional development model fails to account for actors and their agency (p. 135). Vlassis (2017), referring specifically to the creative industries as one strand of cultural development, argues there are three primary reasons for their marginalisation. The first is that the strategies of the leading organisation UNESCO are fragmented and that its top-down approach lacks a connection with targeted communities. Secondly, that developed countries are indifferent about the cultural development agenda and are therefore unwilling to sufficiently fund such projects (see also Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Ingebritsen, 2002). Thirdly, cultural and arts-focused NGOs do not have the funding nor the capacity to lobby nationally and internationally for cultural development as a priority. Since the inception of the SDGs, there has been a greater level of international integration and promotion of the value of cultural and creative industries. However, it continues to be in the same top-down manner that has occurred historically (Vlassis, 2017). Nederveen Pieterse (1995) has criticised what he calls the "add culture and stir" approach in development. He argues that this approach does not actually address the issue with the development machinery – which is that the machinery itself does not account for culture, for the local (p. 184).

Cultural and creative industries

In recent years, attention has shifted from broader attempts to integrate culture and development to a more economically focussed approach which centres around ways to build cultural and creative industries (CCI) (Stupples, 2014).

CCI are “sectors of organised activity whose principal purpose is the production or reproduction, promotion, distribution and/or commercialisation of goods, services and activities of a cultural, artistic or heritage-related nature” (UNESCO, 2017).³ CCI falls within a lexicon of terms that deal with the commercialisation of cultures, technology innovations and systems of goods and services. It is “a complex system that derives its ‘economic value’ from the facilitation of economic evolution – a system that manufactures attention, complexity, identity and adaptation through the primary resource of creativity” (Cunningham, Banks and Potts, 2008, p. 17).

The *Creative Economy Reports* (published in 2008, 2010 and 2013) have analysed the increasing value and growth of the creative economy, and particularly drawn attention to their economic potential for poorer countries. The first two reports (published by UNCTAD) place a great deal of emphasis on creative economies as a key area for development, “[d]eveloping countries can further integrate into the global economy by nurturing their creative capacities and enhancing the competitiveness of their creative goods and services in world markets, provided that appropriate public policies are in place at the national level and market imbalances can be redressed at the international level” (UNCTAD, 2008, p. 5). The distinction between artistic creativity and economic creativity suggests that the non-economic benefits were not valued as highly in those first two reports. In the 2013 *Creative Economy Report: Widening Development Pathways* there was a notable shift which highlighted the benefits of the creative economy to human development. These benefits are categorised into three domains. Firstly, that cultural expression allows for people – whether acting individually or collectively – to create and use platforms from which they can and do effect social and political change (UNDP and UNESCO, 2013, p. 40). The second is the importance attached to tangible and intangible cultural heritage as means of cultural memory-making and showing ways of relating to people and environment (UNDP and

³ This definition of CCI broadly covers all areas of the arts and cultural sectors, there are three terms which have been used – sometimes in a distinguishable manner and at other times interchangeably.

UNESCO, 2013, p. 44). Thirdly, urban planning and architecture enables well-being – both for individuals and groups (UNDP and UNESCO, 2013, p. 47). This important shift from the solely economic focus of the first two reports, draws on the extensive earlier work undertaken by the World Commission and the *Action Plan on Cultural Development Policies* (UNESCO, 1998).

Building on this body of literature by UN agencies, in December 2015, the International Confederation of Authors and Composer Society (CISAC) commissioned a report on the state of CCI across the globe. This report, titled *Cultural times – the first global map of cultural and creative industries* (“*Cultural times*”), calculated the total global value of CCI at US\$2,250b (CISAC and UNESCO, 2015, p. 15). The Asia-Pacific (APAC) region which includes Central Asia and Caucasian countries is the world’s biggest CCI market, generating US\$743b of revenues and 12.7 million jobs (EYGM Limited, 2015, p. 16). While the APAC region, according to *Cultural times* has the largest CCI sector – in both revenue and employment – the inclusion of large economies such as China, Australia and Japan obscures any meaningful data on CCI in the islands of Oceania. Perhaps most importantly it gives recognition to the vitality of digital technologies to the growth and trajectory of CCI. *Cultural times* and its endorsement by UNESCO reflects the global appetite for the growth of CCI and its potential as an area requiring attention, particularly as part of diversified and sustainable development agendas.

Although economic arguments in favour of CCIs have the strategic role of drawing attention to the sector and its possibilities, this also means that the creative industries are valued more highly than the broader cultural sector (without accounting for the relationship between the cultural sector and creative industries), and that those industries are primarily valued for their capacity to generate income. The trajectory of development policy in relation to culture has moved from ignoring culture in development policy, to a broader engagement with the importance of culture context for the success of development projects, to a narrower approach where culture is valued in development policy only insofar as it can generate income.

Critiques of this view – not only the commodification of culture and creativity but also the integration of such a view into public policy – have emerged, particularly in the last two decades. Culture in development is problematic because it requires actors to demonstrate the productivity of cultural practice (Apthorpe, 2005). This in turn necessitates models that monitor and evaluate the ‘success’ of creative economy. However, if we are to agree with the above arguments that culture can be transformative, socially beneficial for individuals and

communities then the question arises to how we measure such outcomes. Even prior to the publication of the Creative Economy reports there was institutional recognition of the incommensurability of creative economy projects with typical monitoring and evaluation mechanisms:

“In a world of commodified culture, however, creativity is too often taken for granted or dismissed. Perhaps this is because it is not always understood and is difficult to measure. This is especially true when its expression is not an individual but a collective act...Active participation in cultural expression by the people remains undervalued. Whether it is expressed by the amateur artist or community efforts, creativity as a social force is often neglected.” (World Commission on Culture and Development, 1996, p. 23).

The complexity of quantifying the benefits of practicing, growing and exchanging culture also makes it hard to put into policy and practice. It is difficult to state with certainty whether creativity and culture are undervalued *because* their value is hard to quantify or whether they have always been undervalued *and* measuring their value is problematic. Even in spite of efforts to recognise the value of culture, whether economic, social or otherwise, the incorporation of culture into development policy in a way that is not merely “putting new labels on old bottles” has remained elusive (Stupples and Teaiwa, 2017, p. 4).⁴ There remain questions about the homogenising nature of mainstream development practice and the difficulty of engaging with local understandings of culture in ways that are meaningful for local communities.

The only way, it seems, that creative industries may be valued in the development context, other than for economic return, is if they are used instrumentally as a mechanism to communicate development messages. A significant example of this in Oceania, is donor support for film and television production by the Vanuatu-based NGO *Wan Smol Bag*, which creates highly successful edutainment programmes on issues such as gender-based violence, HIV transmission, and other public health issues like malaria prevention. The NGO has been funded primarily by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for over 10 years.

⁴ See also Aphthorpe, 2005; Clammer, 2005.

This section has reviewed the literature on the global trends in culture and development. It shows that the importance of culture (as it informs development processes) and cultural expression (as a process that facilitates development outcomes) has been recognised. It also highlights, however, that they remain largely marginalised by mainstream development priorities and processes. The next section discusses how regional policy approaches have incorporated or framed culture and its importance to development.

Growing the cultural sector in Oceania

Articulations of Pacific regionalism have not only been made in respect of geo-political cooperation but also in terms of cultural understandings. For organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Pacific Community (SPC) culture, while sharing similarities across the region, has largely been associated with the nation-state. Thus, while Pacific regionalism has fostered cooperation at the governance level, this has not, at a regional policy level, translated to a recognition of a regional culture or creative imagination. This is reflected in the way that PIF has formulated and negotiated its regional policies. Its primary strategic policy document is the *Pacific Plan*.

In the *Pacific Plan* culture has only appeared as an element of sustainable development, “[d]evelopment of a regional plan to maintain and strengthen Pacific cultural identity through regional agencies, including relevant studies” (Pacific Plan, 2007). The strategic objective was to “[r]ecognise and protect cultural values, identities and traditional knowledge” and proposed two specific initiatives for the first three years (2006-08):

- i. Develop a strategy to maintain and strengthen Pacific cultural identity
- ii. Create an institution to advocate for and protect traditional knowledge and intellectual property rights

There are no definitions within the plan of culture, Pacific culture or cultural identity. While the notion of the “Pacific Way”, made famous by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara the then, Prime Minister of Fiji at the United Nations in 1970, seemed to reflect a regional consciousness united by cultural similarities and understandings – this aspiration was not realised in the formulation of the *Pacific Plan* nor in other cultural policy.

The regional leadership taken by SPC and COPAC have encouraged national governments to set goals and engage with local stakeholders with a view to formulating policy (Teiawa and

Huffer, 2017). Efforts have also been made to establish policy frameworks for heritage culture. This occurred following the ratification by many island states of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005) and the Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage (UNESCO, 2003). The latter also sparked efforts to increase the number of Pacific World Heritage Sites (Teaiwa and Huffer, 2017). Earlier this decade, one of the SPC's primary goals for structuring culture within national policies and creating national policy frameworks. This was supported by funding from the European Union grant of 713,474 EUR and occurred from 2010-2013 (Ibid, p. 71). The focus for these initiatives is heritage or tangible cultures that are often associated with the "traditional" (Ibid.).

In relation to culture and development the key policy document for the Oceanian region is the *Regional Culture Strategy: Investing in Pacific Cultures 2010-2020* (RCS). The RCS is currently in its second phase. After having reviewed the first phase of the RCS implementation,⁵ SPC and COPAC made some important observations about the direction of culture within the development agenda for the region. An area of emphasis is the potential for economic benefits to the region if investments are made in the cultural sector:

"Cultural industries and cultural tourism are creating new opportunities and development pathways for producers, communities and countries. Although there have been significant developments in the cultural industries in certain countries, there is still a need for continued focus on regulatory measures and an enabling environment for stakeholders. Cultural tourism is a new focus of the tourism industry regionally and nationally in many countries, and it is important that its parameters are clearly defined and that its development ensures shared benefits." (SPC and COPAC, 2018, p. 4).

This indicates the growing perception, which is consistent with other global perspectives, of the potential within the cultural sector to diversify and grow economies. In 2014, a new project – Cultures + - led by the European Union (EU), in partnership with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) was also set up to help national governments establish policy environments that would enable and encourage the growth of cultural industries – both nationally and regionally (Teaiwa and Huffer, 2017).

⁵ The review was not published as a separate document.

Hau'ofa (2008) wrote about the importance of creativity and the arts in Oceania. In contrast to the notion of culture for commodification and economic growth, he states:

It allows our creative minds to draw on far larger pools of cultural traits than those of our tiny individual national lagoons. It makes us less insular without being submerged in the amorphousness of the global cultural morass (p. 87).

This discourse speaks to the strength of creativity in Oceania and its practice as an important way to resist globalising and homogenising cultures. What Hau'ofa and his colleagues at the University of the South Pacific (USP) aimed to achieve with the Oceanian Centre for Arts and Culture (OCAC)⁶ was to expand the art and culture spaces to include contemporary arts such as dance, fusion forms of visual arts, music and dance (Teaiwa and Huffer, 2017).

What this literature highlights is an uptake by regional institutions of some of the dominant discourses which reinforce economic value as the most important driver of development policy and practice. It also highlights efforts within the region to grow many forms of cultural expression.

[Regional connection through festivalisation](#)

Despite national governments providing relatively little in terms of support for the cultural sector or for cultural practices, the performance of culture at regional festivals is an important aspect for the articulation of both national and regional identities. The significance of this has been recognised in recent years, by a proliferation of literature which examines the importance of festival spaces to cultural expression, practice and exchange in Oceania (Kornelly, 2008, Mackley-Crump, 2011). The growth in such festival spaces has been called 'festivalisation' (Mackley-Crump, 2011). Such work has provided insight into how Oceanian communities living in the diaspora connect to their 'homelands' and highlights the importance of festivals spaces as places of regional connection.

The Festival of the Pacific Arts (FOPA) is a highly significant regional festival, held every four years. It was conceived by the Conference of the South Pacific Commission (now the Secretariat of the Pacific Community or SPC) and began in 1972. The purpose of the FOPA is to celebrate the cultural diversity across Oceania and to stop the erosion of the traditional practices by sharing and exchanging culture at each festival (Teaiwa and Huffer, 2017). This

⁶ Now known as the Oceanian Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies.

exchange includes performative cultures, navigational practices, visual arts and traditional healing practices among other examples of indigenous practices (Henry and Foana'ota, 2015). It is held every four years and is hosted by a different Pacific Island state which is a member of the Council of Pacific Arts and Culture (CPAC). The last FOPA in 2016 was hosted by Guam and 27 delegations from Pacific Island countries and territories were in attendance.

Film and Oceania

Film has been part of these festivals for several years, despite a lack of state support for production and distribution. The agency of film-making by Pacific peoples is particularly powerful given the colonial history of film in the region: which framed the 'exotic' Pacific through a reductionist and stereotyping colonial gaze. As such, the agency of film-making in the region is tied to arguments for indigenous film-making globally as a space to reclaim narratives, for decolonising the screen and asserting screen sovereignty.

There has been significant growth in indigenous film production in the last three decades (Wood, 2008). The motivation for such growth is borne from wider struggles with the colonial legacy (Pearson and Knabe, 2014; Wilson and Stewart, 2008). Indigenous film, as a practice, seeks to address and reclaim stories of indigenous communities. Māori screenwriter and director Barry Barclay theorised indigenous film as 'Fourth Cinema' (1998, 1990, 2003), arguing that indigenous people must have control of the lens where indigenous story-telling on screen is concerned. He also wrote of his concern for indigenous film and its relationship with the "commercial imperative in cinema" (Milligan, 2017, p.2), stating "...if we as indigenous story-tellers become hell-bent on satisfying the mass audiences and the commercial barons...we may cease to be storytellers for our own people" (Barclay, 2003b, p. 15). Merata Mita, the first indigenous woman in the world to solely direct a feature length film, also echoed the importance of screen sovereignty (Lamche and Mita, 2008; Reeves, 2007; Britos, 2003). Discussion of indigenous film-making is couched in terms of control over indigenous narratives and is seen as an important part of the global decolonisation agenda (Pearson and Knabe, 2014; Wilson and Stewart, 2008).

In Oceania, much film about or situated in the region has been for historical purposes (and often undertaken by a colonial power) or for the pursuit of anthropological studies (Ballard and Landman, 2010). Most of these films have been made by non-Pacific Islanders.

Commercially successful films such as *Once Were Warriors* (1994) and *Boy* (2010) have tended to address Oceanians as socially marginalised within the diaspora (Landman & Ballard, 2010), and generally covered themes of “hybrid or traumatised identities, migration and diasporas” (Landman & Ballard, 2010, p. 7).

Landman and Ballard (2010) also argue that film has been used as a colonising tool, as a means of accessing and framing ‘other worlds’. While not all films that are about Oceania and its inhabitants are documentaries, documentaries make up the largest body of films (Landman & Ballard, 2010). Film and television creative Justine Simeit-Barton has argued that Pacific peoples reclaiming the lens was an important way to address the “powerful accumulation of images and attitudes about the Pacific that constitute one of the most enduring legacies of colonialism” (1997, p. 73). Not only does this reclaiming of the lens apply to issues of representations of Oceania and Oceanian peoples, but it also addresses the ‘authenticity’ of the stories that are told. While questions around authenticity can often be “slippery” (Simeit-Barton, 1997, p. 4), they are still important ones to ask.

Zalipour (2019) argues that Jo Smith’s (2011) notion of “Oceanic consciousness” as a means to resist settler colonialism’s tendency to delineate cultural groups along nation-state lines, is one useful way to analyse film and film-making.

Moana

Disney’s animated film *Moana* (2017) is one recent example which highlights some of the complexities about defining films in ways that represent diverse peoples, communities and stories in Oceania. The film follows the journey of a young woman who, against her father’s wishes, sets out to restore the heart of Te Fiti which had been stolen by Māui, the demi-god. Successfully doing this would in turn, restore her island of Motunui to equilibrium.

The film itself was well-received globally, and was nominated for many awards, including a Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture – Animated and Oscar for Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures (IMDb, 2017). It was lauded by reviewers for portraying a female protagonist as a hero in her own right rather than a Disney princess in need of saving by a man (Brew, 2016; Kermode, 2016; Grierson, 2016). Some drew parallels between the plight of Motunui and the greater Pacific as we battle with the consequences of climate change (see Canavan, 2018; Kermode, 2016). *Moana* was significant for Oceanians globally because it

essentially put one of our stories on the big screen. It told a story that was significantly different to the stories of other Disney princesses. It seemed evident by some accounts that some of the film-making team had undertaken research and consultation during the film-making process (Tamaira and Fonoti, 2018).

However, there has also been significant criticism from prominent Oceanian scholars and film-makers. Some raised questions about the authenticity of the story, including about the depiction of Māui (see Roy, 2016; Timeout, 2016; Tupou, 2017), the asexual nature of the characters (Tamaira and Fonoti, 2018; Hereniko, 2018) and about the commodification of Oceanian stories and ancestors (Grandinetti, 2017). Hereniko (2018) summarises these criticisms:

“It is decidedly not okay that Disney appropriates and commodifies our stories, our gods, our mana; and certainly, as scholar-activists like Tina Ngata have made clear, it is abhorrent that this appropriation made plastic will only add to the great garbage patches clogging the oceans - our oceans - that support life. There is a lot to be critical of here, including the lack of Pacific and female representation in the film's crew of writers and directors, its Polycentricism, and the messianic narrative that would single out one chiefly Polynesian girl from her community as its savior, even if Moana doesn't do it alone. Disney's work, ultimately, is not a call for humanity to responsibly steward our oceans; we understand it as a capitalist dream machine. The loloma/aloha we feel in response to this story is in echo to our own reflections and reflections of our beloved Oceania. For more, we must look to our own work” (p. 228)

This reflection is an articulation of the importance of representation, voice and respect in creating and producing film that tells Oceanian stories in a manner that is culturally appropriate and empowering for Oceanians. The responses to *Moana* are not simply polarising; they are more complex than that. The quality of the animation and presentation a part of Pacific imagery; the reverence of navigation across the Pacific Ocean and its origins; and music that showcases some of the enormous talent here in Oceania – these are all things to be celebrated. However, the issues of voice, agency and power discussed above remain. This debate highlights the political and cultural importance of growing film-making in Oceania to ensure that stories are told and shared with the kind of authenticity that is not compromised by a global capitalist agenda.

The discourse about culture and development demonstrates recognition of the importance of culture and cultural expression to aspects of human development and a contribution to wider understandings of development. While this discourse is not in direct conversation with

the regional imaginary that Wendt (1976) and Hau'ofa (2008) advocate for, there is a significant overlap. That lies in the agency of communities and the specificity of context – especially place. These agendas and their overlap are narrowed down significantly by aims to produce commercial outcomes from the creative industries. The relative lack of engagement with film and CCI by governments in Oceania, in spite of some important work done by the SPC and the political power of film (as shown by indigenous communities) demonstrates that institutions in the region have not recognised the value of film.

Conceptual framework

This section draws together scholarship from Pacific Studies and Post-development, the intersection of which will be used as the conceptual framework of this thesis. The first section discusses what Pacific Studies is and why I considered it vital in my approach to my thesis, as a Pasifika student exploring creative practices resonate strongly with political articulations that emerge from Pacific Studies. I then go on to explore the meaning of the term “Oceania” and its importance to my research on kinship collaborations among film-makers in the region. Lastly, I discuss post-development, as a space that allows for practices that carry social, cultural and political agency beyond mainstream development frameworks, and then how the two disciplinary approaches to both scholarship and practice intersect.

Pacific Studies

The history of research in Oceania and about its peoples, as carried out largely by those who do not have Oceanian heritage. This has led to the disempowerment and marginalisation of indigenous knowledge and narratives. Countering the long history of colonial knowledge production, Pacific Studies provides a situated, contextualised alternative way of studying things Pacific beyond a geographical sense. This section outlines some of the methodological influences of Pacific Studies as well as key ways that regional identities have been theorised. The rationale for incorporating a Pacific Studies approach is that it not only provides a methodology, but it also theorises about agency, representation and culture in the region, all of which are key concerns of this thesis.

A Pacific Studies approach (Teaiwa, 2010; Wesley-Smith, 1995; Whimp, 2008) is one which draws on some of the otherwise global aspects of postcolonial theory. Three ‘pillars’ of Pacific Studies are interdisciplinarity, indigeneity and comparitivity (Whimp, 2008).

Interdisciplinarity requires the selection and amalgamation of theoretical tools and methods from a range of disciplines as appropriate to the research. Comparativity means that the research seeks to compare people, places, processes and things – whether locally, nationally, internationally or otherwise. Indigeneity places indigenous voice and perspectives in a central role, decolonising Pacific scholarship which has long been dominated by external agendas. These pillars encourage researchers to interrogate spaces and in doing so highlight how the agency of Oceanians is being exercised (or not) in ways that are not limited by the boundaries of academic disciplines. Pacific Studies, as it relates to this thesis goes beyond the geographical relevance. It also means understanding film practice and development in the region as processes that connect and affect communities. Employing a comparative approach means that spaces in the region do not become laboratories in which a single area, community or context is the site of a singular study. Instead, practising comparativity means maintaining a sense of perspective and not carrying out scholarship in an insular manner.

In order to produce research that is useful and empowering, we must understand different ways of knowing and being. Oceanic identities are tied to people and place, including the ocean. This means that Pacific Studies scholarship must account for this both in research process but also outcomes. The next section looks at definitions of Oceania as a region. This is particularly important in the pursuit of Pacific scholarship that moves beyond Eurocentric perspectives of the region and its diverse knowledge systems.

[Articulations of Oceania](#)

The use of the term “Oceania” can be traced discursively to Albert Wendt’s essay ‘Towards a New Oceania’ (1976) and Epeli Hau’ofa’s essay ‘Our Sea of Islands’ (1993, 2008) – both of which have been influential in the proliferation of literature centred on the term (Te Punga Somerville, 2012). Wendt’s (1976) essay argues for a reclaiming of Oceanic identities through creativity, which accounts for the fraught historical relationship between culture and colonisation in Oceania. He describes his journey to the elusive Hawaiki, a place which is such an integral part of Polynesian mythology:

“In our various groping ways, we are all in search of that heaven, that Hawaiki, where our hearts will find meaning; most of us find it, or, at the moment of finding it, fail to recognise it. At this stage in my life I have found it in Oceania: it is a return to where I was born, or, put another way, it is a search for where I was born” (Wendt, 1976, p. 50).

Whimp (2010) argues that this return to Oceania was not a physical return but instead a return to activities which served as a metaphorical return; a return to the kind of writing that would contribute to the decolonisation of the region. Wendt's reimagination of the Pacific as a region – as Oceania – was rather revolutionary. This is in part because of the mere fact that a Pacific Islander was now writing about the Pacific, as opposed to (yet more) *palagi* writing about the Pacific and Pacific Islanders. An Oceanic imaginary moves away from a colonised view of the Pacific; one that fails to account for the agency of Pacific communities and actors within those communities; one that fails to account for the fluidity and continuity of Pacific, or Oceanic ways of being. It also highlights the importance of a regional imaginary – one linked, not necessarily by a cultural monolith but by shared histories and kinship. These ideas are helpful in conceptualising the power of Pacific film-making and filmic collaborations that I encountered in my research.

Epeli Hau'ofa's *Our Sea of Islands* builds on this perspective of the Pacific Islands. He posits that the way the Pacific Islands have been conceptualised and subsequently placed within the development paradigm has been one which strips Pacific Islanders of agency and is characterised by deficit-thinking – where the Pacific Islands are seen as tiny (and dependent) islands separated by vast Oceanic spaces. He argues that rather than seeing ourselves as an area in need of external help, incapable of resolving our own issues we ought to see the Ocean as a connecting force within the region.

The notion of regional cooperation is not a novel concept. As discussed above the establishment of organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the South Pacific Commission suggest a decades-long history of fostering and encouraging regional integration – particularly by the former colonial powers. However, this kind of regionalism is bound up with geographic and political ties, largely borne out of colonisation – as opposed to the kind of regional identity grounded in people and place as Hau'ofa has suggested. He argues that the Oceanian Centre for Arts and Culture (OCAC) serves as an example for the practice of a regional identity, and OCAC is in fact a part of the University of the South Pacific (USP). OCAC is a “hub for the creation of a unique blend of contemporary Pacific island arts” (University of the South Pacific, 2018) and is now home to a number of programmes aimed at growing Oceanian cultural expression. However, its establishment is not bound to the colonial history of institutions like the PIF and the Secretariat for the Pacific Community. Hau'ofa's later work

The Ocean in Us (2008) argues that we ought to conceptualise ourselves as a region because of the common ground that we share in our worldviews – many of which are deeply tied to the Ocean. This regional identity which is rooted in people and place is one that could be significantly transformative for Oceania, if it were recognised by international and non-governmental organisations as a means of connecting communities to one another.

James Clifford's *Indigenous Articulations* (2001) provides a foundation for understanding the messiness of the ways in which we understand and articulate our connections – with the Pacific. Clifford argues in his application of Stuart Hall's articulation theory to understandings of Pacific natives, that binaries such as of inside/outside, native/non-native are not helpful. Rather articulations of indigeneity and native-ness are complex understandings of identity are not necessarily limited by time and place but are instead understandings that are fluid and in part, shaped by past and memory. This thesis will draw on this sense of 'articulation' and what it means to be an Oceanian.

Aotearoa in Oceania

In framing Oceanic connections, it is important to consider the relationship of indigenous peoples in settler-colonial states like Aotearoa and Australia. This is important for this research because creative collaborations between film-makers in the region include those between Māori and Pacific Islanders, with some Māori film-makers actively articulating their kinship to film-makers in other parts of Oceania.

As indigenous to Aotearoa, Maori had been marginalised in many ways – by historical processes.⁷ This distinction between Pacific and Māori as being separate, comes from their relationship with the nation-state of Aotearoa, as Te Punga Somerville (2012) argues. In contrast, her work draws on numerous examples of ways in which Māori have articulated themselves and have been articulated as belonging within the Oceanian community, particularly in literature. For example, in 2009 Tate Pewhairangi described the seventy fifth anniversary of the Te Hono ki Rarotonga, a meetinghouse opened in 1934 as evidence of connections between Rarotonga and Tokomaru Bay, "We are honoured that our 'cousins' from Te Moana Nui a Kiwa attended the festivities. Our reo is similar, and our tikanga and ancient stories are also very similar" (Kokiri, 2009). This is an example of the many ways in

⁷ For important discussion on Māori history see Orange, 2013; O'Malley, 2016.

which the relationships between Māori and Pasifika peoples have been articulated in a way that positions Māori as Oceanic kin too.

Using literature and historical interactions Te Punga Somerville articulates the separation of Māori and Pasifika as a construction of the diaspora:

“these configurations of Māori connections with Pacific do not merely describe historical links but also engage ongoing connections between “relatives”. Although Māori are ethnically Polynesian and Aotearoa is clearly a part of the Pacific region within the New Zealand national space, Māori and Pacific colloquially refer to those migrant communities from elsewhere in the region” (Te Punga Somerville, 2012, p. xvii).

The literature on regional networks as well as connections between Māori and Pasifika communities, both geographic and genealogical, create a sound rationale for conceptualising Māori and Pasifika within this thesis as part of Oceania. This is not to say that Māori and Pasifika communities (both of which are diverse in and of themselves) ought to be lumped into one group – merely that there are connections that blur the dividing lines between Māori and Pasifika that we have become accustomed to using in Aotearoa.

Post-development

Modern development practice, established following WWII with the founding of the Bretton Woods institutions, in the context of growing geopolitical polarisation associated with Cold War, has received a great deal of criticism, particularly from the developing world. Much of this criticism has focused on the discursive framing that homogenised and reduced the ‘Third World’ as a place in need (Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1992; Crush, 1995 and; Rahmena and Bawtree, 1997), and in need of intervention by a powerful but apparently beneficent ‘First World’. Consequently, many became disillusioned with development policy, seeing it as a form of neocolonial control that maintained rather than addressed inequalities (McGregor, 2009; Ziai, 2004). Post-development critique posits that development is not a neutral process but instead is entrenched in social and political interests (Escobar, 1995, p. 10). This way of thinking, while helpful in problematising development as a global project and recognising how fraught such a project might be, was in some cases a rejection of development altogether (Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 1992; Esteva and Prakesh, 1997; Rahmena, 1997; Latouche, 1986; Sachs, 1992a, 1992b).

Post-development theory repoliticises development. It questions development agendas, power relationships between the developed and developing worlds, and the ways that these relationships influence the production of knowledge, and how that knowledge feeds into the formulation of the development project (Gibson-Graham, 2008). In this way, post-development theory sees inequalities as a political product rather than through a technical lens (McGregor, 2009). It seeks to undermine reductive approaches to development and find alternative approaches to development grounded in people and place, in context (Ibid.).

Post-development has received a great deal of criticism for dividing development discourses into unhelpful binaries – modernity as bad and anti-modernity as good, for example – while neglecting the positive aspects of modernity and development (see Corbridge, 1998; Pieterse, 2000). Along this line of argument, post-development theorists have been criticised because many have done so from their ivory towers, within the academy (Klein et al, 2011) and much of the early post-development theory did not offer an alternative solution (see Pieterse, 2000; Schuurman, 2000).

Nustad (2001, p. 479) argued, however, that post-development's lack of instrumentality, does not mean that it ought to be dismissed altogether.

“The postdevelopment agenda is not, as we see it, anti-development. The challenge of postdevelopment is not to give up on development, nor to see all development practice – past, present and future, in wealthy and poor countries – as tainted, failed, retrograde; as though there were something necessarily problematic and destructive about deliberate attempts to increase social wellbeing through economic intervention; as though there were a space of purity beyond or outside development that we could access through renunciation. The challenge is to imagine and practice development differently” (Gibson-Graham, 2005)

The challenge as articulated by Gibson-Graham is one that seeks to address the most wanting criticism of post-development – that it lacks a programme or pragmatic dimension. While there is a part of the post-development critique that advocates against development entirely (for example Sachs, 1992), there are other, more hopeful approaches to post-development. These may include a development approach which accounts for culture in a meaningful way, seeks to politicise relationships between development stakeholders and focuses on people and place. This thesis explores the possibilities for film-making to be seen as a form of hopeful post-development practice.

In addition, hopeful geographies (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Macgregor, 2009), the turn of “well-being development” and its various conceptualisations (UNDP, 1990; Deneulin, 2014; Chambers, 1997; Gasper 2007; White, 2016), as well as the growing literature on indigenous epistemologies (Gegeo, 1998; Tuwere, 2002; Huffer and Qalo, 2004) are helpful starting points for reimagining development.

Conclusion

There is a significant literature on culture and its relationship with development. This has traced the changes that have led to the establishment of important institutions like the World Commission on Culture as well as publications like *Our Creative Diversity* (1995) which have given recognition to the importance of culture to and in development. Culture remains an area of development which informs both development processes and outcomes. The growing interest in creative economies (including film) as a development tool indicates the potential for film to realise mainstream development priorities.

Development in Oceania has largely been constrained to such mainstream development priorities such as primary health, education and governance. It has viewed familial connections across nation-state boundaries as economically beneficial because they enable flows of money from places such as New Zealand and Australia to the Pacific Islands. However, the growth of literature on indigenous or alternative notions of development serves to challenge mainstream conceptions of development. It also shows the importance of worldviews in shaping what development might look like. This is consistent with post-development theory which challenges mainstream development and its processes as political and shaped largely by the agendas of global powers.

The relationship between Oceania communities and film echoes many of the struggles that other indigenous communities have had, in dealing with the colonial legacy of film and the film-making process. The last three decades have seen a growth in indigenous film and indigenous literature on film. This has challenged the way that indigenous people and stories have been framed and presented to audiences elsewhere.

The intersection of these areas of literature lie in understanding the agency of the regional imaginary as articulated by scholars such as Wendt (1976) and Hau’ofa (2008). This imaginary highlights the importance of place and context, the vitality of creativity and culture, and the

imperative of decolonised approaches to policy and practice, all of which are also potentially characteristics of post-development practice.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

My research seeks to examine the ways that film-making collaborations are taking place in Oceania and how these can be considered contributions of a hopeful form of post-development. This chapter discusses the indigenous epistemologies that inform this research and the range of qualitative methods I used. It begins with a brief explanation of my sites of inquiry. Although diverse, these were chosen because of the innovative practices of collaboration and articulations of Oceanic connection that I identified in each of them. I discuss my epistemological influences, followed by a discussion of methodologies and methods. I also explain in detail the ethical considerations that I had to consider in my research. The chapter ends with my reflections about my positionality as an Oceanian woman and how this influenced my approach to research.

Māoriland Film Festival and Through Our Lens

Māoriland Film Festival (MFF) is an indigenous film festival based in Ōtaki, Aotearoa. It has been running on an annual basis since 2014 and is directed by Libby Hakaraia.⁸ The intention of the festival is to become the Sundance festival of the South Pacific (L. Hakaraia, personal communication, July 16, 2018; Māoriland, 2019) and to screen indigenous films⁹ from around the globe (Māoriland, 2019). It is networked with other significant indigenous film festivals around the globe, such as Canada's ImagineNATIVE. In its first festival, MFF brought indigenous film to Ōtaki locals for the first time bringing an audience of approximately 3,500 (Māoriland, 2019). Twenty international indigenous film-makers travelled from Canada, the United States, the Pacific Islands and Australia to celebrate the inaugural festival.

In 2016, the Māoriland Charitable Trust (MCT) was formed to “facilitate the operation of the festival and its growing programme of year-round activities” (Ibid.). The purpose of MCT is to “improve the social, economic and educational opportunities to the community of Ōtaki by means of screening indigenous films and organisation activities such as film-making workshops” (Ibid.). Its key focus is MFF and in recent years, the Māoriland Hub to “enable the development, education and encouragement of the creative arts” (Ibid). In 2017, MCT

⁸ Libby is Māori and descends from Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Kapumanawawhiti. She is a producer and director of television and film.

⁹ The definition of an indigenous film will be discussed further in my fourth chapter.

opened the Māoriland Hub in the Edhouses building in Ōtaki Village with a view to converting it into a multi-purpose arts, cinema and performance space (Ibid).

I attended the fifth MFF which took place from 21-25 March 2018 which screened 102 films from 65 indigenous nations. The programme also included the *NATIVE Minds* section which brings film-makers together to engage in discussion about issues affecting indigenous people and film. I also interviewed Libby in her capacity as director of MFF and a key facilitator of the Oceania-focused film development programme Through Our Lens (TOL).

TOL is a project under MFF which ran for the first time in 2017. It took 14 rangatahi film-makers aged 13-24 to Samoa, Hawai'i, Rarotonga and Tahiti to work with indigenous youth to tell film stories. TOL worked with 47 rangatahi across these countries to create nine short films which screened at MFF 2018. TOL ran again in 2018 and took five Māori rangatahi film-makers to Rarotonga to participate in film-making workshops. The aim of the project is "to create new Māori film leaders who will connect and collaborate with their peers in the Pacific, Indonesia and worldwide" (Māoriland, 2019). This project was an important example of emergent trans-Oceanic collaborative film-making.

Melanesian Arts and Cultural Festival

The 6th Melanesian Arts and Cultural Festival (MACFEST) took place in Honiara, Solomon Islands in from 1st- 10th July 2018. The theme of the festival was 'Past Recollections; Future Connections' and it sought to create a space in which the histories and cultures of Melanesian peoples would be celebrated as well as connecting them "as one people in diversity for a brighter connected future" (ICHCAP, 2019). The Festival was made up of five components: performing arts, traditional and contemporary arts, visual arts, literary arts and, workshops/symposiums/forums.

I attended the film component – which fell under the visual arts banner. The film component of MACFEST was significantly smaller than MFF. Films screened included *Wolsera Justice* (2016), directed by Llane Munau (Papua New Guinea) and *My Mother's Blood* (2017), directed by Katherine Reki (Papua New Guinea) as well as *Nidoish Naisseline* (2017) and *Imulal, des raciness et des rêves*¹⁰ both directed by Nune Luepack (New Caledonia). After the screenings,

¹⁰ Imulal, a land, roots and dreams. Imulal is the term for a hut. The film follows six New Caledonian students who migrate to France for education and their aspirations for New Caledonia's future.

the film-makers and audience members engaged in discussion around the film-making process, inspiration for their stories and why they chose film as the medium to tell that story.

Pacific Connections (Community Film-making for Gender Equality in the Pacific) and the Film Challenge

Pacific Connections (Community Film-making for Gender Equality in the Pacific) (*PC*) is a research project funded by the EU and was established to address gender issues in the Pacific through film. It follows on from a reporting project in 2014 which sought to collect data on the state of gender issues in the region. The first phase of *PC*, which was completed in July 2018 was a regional scope of the appetite for countries to take up film as a tool to address gender issues in development. This scoping exercise took the international team (from Scotland, Papua New Guinea and Samoa) through Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Niue and Samoa. It was in the Solomon Islands at MACFEST that I met the *PC* team. The team comprised of Tony Crook,¹¹ Neil Montgomery,¹² Togialelei Safua Akeli Amaama,¹³ Galumalemana Steven Percival,¹⁴ and Fiona Hukulua,¹⁵ and Llane Munau.¹⁶ Although led by Scottish academics (working in Pacific Studies), this project brought together a significant group of film-makers and academics in the region.

Alongside the Pacific Connection project was a short film competition in Samoa called the *Film Challenge (FC)*, that centred around the theme of gender inequality. It was organised by the CSS at National University of Samoa. Initially, it began as a film competition open to those with less than two years of experience in the film industry (Centre for Samoan Studies, 2018). The purpose of the competition was “to build not only the capacity of emerging narrators and film-makers through workshops but to facilitate opportunities through which work can be viewed by regional film makers, potential sponsors and the public” (Ibid).

The challenge was originally set to run from 13th June 2018 with several workshops taking place culminating in a film screening 2nd October 2018. However, personnel changes and the *PC* scoping exercise meant that the submission dates were pushed out. CSS hosted a workshop supported by the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) over three days from

¹¹ St Andrew’s University, Director of Research, Social Anthropology.

¹² Film-maker, Scotland.

¹³ Director, Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa.

¹⁴ Film-maker, Samoa.

¹⁵ National Research Institute, Papua New Guinea.

¹⁶ Film-maker, activist, Papua New Guinea.

27th-29th September which provided film training to individuals interested in submitting a film for the challenge. The six films that were submitted screened on 30th November 2018. I interviewed Togialelei Safua Akeli Amaama in her role as part of *PC* and the *FC*.

Vai

Vai (2019) is a portmanteau feature film written and directed¹⁷ by nine women who whakapapa to various Pacific Islands but who hold New Zealand citizenship. It was filmed in seven different Pacific countries: Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Kuki Airani (Cook Islands), Samoa, Niue and Aotearoa. It follows the journey of a central female character called Vai, played by a different actress in each of the Pacific Island countries. The film was produced by Kerry Warkia¹⁸ and Kiel McNaughton.¹⁹ *Vai* was funded by Te Tumu Whakaata, New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC). It premiered at the Berlinale Film Festival in January 2019 as part of the *NATIVE* series.

The range of sites I examined reflect the diverse ways that film-makers connect across Oceania. Film-making driven by institutions, which are in turn directed and influenced by international agendas and priorities, are facilitating film-making differently to those concerned with increasing Pacific representation behind the lens and on the screen. Examining a film festival (MFF) was important because it illustrated the multiple forms of engagement and agency that take place, serving as a space for people to engage in dialogue relating to film-making, the politics of film production, and the kaupapa of indigenous film. Examining a sub-regional festival (MACFEST) was significant in the same way, but also gave a sense of how film fares in broader cultural festivals in the region, and in a context with no government support for the arts. *Vai* demonstrated both the possibilities for collaborative film-making in Oceania (and the international interest in film from the region) but also ongoing inequalities in the region in terms of access to funding and resources. It was supported by an institution dedicated to growing film-making, albeit in Aotearoa, which also the role of government support for stories on screen from Oceania.

¹⁷ The directors are: Nicole Whippy (Fiji), 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki (Tonga), Matasila Freshwater (Solomon Islands), Amberley Jo Aumua (Samoa), Miria George (Kuki Airani), Marina Alofagia McCartney (Samoa), Dianna Fuemana (Niue), Becs Arahanga (Aotearoa).

¹⁸ Kerry has produced a number of television and web series. She also founded Brown Sugar Apple Grunt Productions in 2006 with her husband Kiel McNaughton.

¹⁹ Kiel acted in the opera series *Shortland Street* for five years. He has also directed television and web series. He founded Brown Sugar Apple Grunt Productions in 2006 with his wife Kerry Warkia.

While these sites are not connected by institutional support or a particular kind of film-making, they provide insight into the diverse ways that film-makers in Oceania are connecting and collaborating. I discuss the significance of these sites independently and as inter-related phenomena, contributing to the growth and promotion of film in the region. These insights in turn shape my arguments about the relationship between film and (post)development, as well as the promise film-making might hold for cultural (post)development practice in Oceania. This multi-sited approach is also consistent with comparativity required of Pacific scholarship by Pacific Studies as a field. It allows for comparison not only between places but also scale and purpose of the film-making projects.

Epistemology

In my previous chapter I discussed the conceptual framework that structures my research. Pacific Studies and post-development share concerns about the specificity of place and context and encourage an approach to scholarship and practice that is particularly conscious of how language can shape discourse and, therefore, realities. I have chosen post-development theory because it requires a more critical examination not just of what we do in development, but also how we go about doing development. This thesis aligns itself to what Gibson-Graham (2008) terms “hopeful geographies”. This is essentially an approach that accounts for some of the unequal power relations, some of the assumptions that are devoid of context and where, in practice, the local becomes integral to development planning and programming. It also emphasises communities’ capacities rather than the kind of deficit thinking that has become characteristic of development intervention planning. Gibson-Graham’s articulation of post-development presents a number of intersections with Pacific Studies. Firstly, Hau’ofa’s (1993; 2008) reimagining of the region which emphasises connectedness rather than smallness and focuses on community capacity. Secondly, a post-development take on the MIRAB model (Bertram and Watters, 1985) would argue that individuals and families within and across nation-state borders are doing more than merely contributing to economic growth. Families are also ensuring social and cultural connections through practices such as *fa’alavelave*²⁰ and performative cultures. Thirdly, engaging with communities in a way that is respectful of localised understandings of development is aligned

²⁰ Refers to the process of giving a contribution, whether in money or kind, for important family events such as weddings and funerals.

with the notion of indigenisation (Teaiwa, 2010) and indigeneity (Gegeo, 1998). This is not about delineating researchers and practitioners along whakapapa lines but about finding ways for people and communities to collaborate respectfully – whether in spaces of research or practice. Such an approach also encourages a reimagination of the Pacific region beyond historical perspectives of smallness, dependence and MIRAB economies. Arguably these two forms of reimagination ought to go hand in hand. By focusing on the resources and agency of expansive and connected communities rather than a lack thereof, post-development provides a meaningful way to engage critically with development discourses while providing a pragmatic approach.

My research is not centred around a single epistemology. I have, however, drawn on a number of epistemological influences which have shaped my thinking about the production of knowledge. The points of convergence of these epistemological influences provide a useful perspective from which to analyse my data.

The work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has been seminal in informing my understanding of the ways in which processes of knowledge production have historically, and in many ways, continue to, marginalise ways of being and knowing. She argues that the extractive nature of research, particularly in disciplines such as anthropology, undermines the agency of indigenous peoples who have established and developed ideas and practices (Smith, 1999). This body of work positions indigenous ways of seeing and being as integral to the pursuit of research that is decolonised and seeks to decolonise. The importance of people, relationships and the knowledge systems produced by such interactions directly relates to the scholarship on Pacific epistemologies.

Within the growing literature on alternatives to Western-centric research methods there has been an emergence of Pacific scholarship, dedicated to articulating various Pacific epistemologies. I use this term Pacific epistemologies to denote a body of works that is geographically situated in Oceania but that is not in any way representative of a single Pacific epistemology. For example, Gegeo (1998) outlines some key differences between indigenous understandings of rural development for the Kwara'ae people in the Solomon Islands. They posit that a definition of development by the indigenous community of Kwara'ae village is not grounded in outcomes but instead in values such as love and hospitality (Gegeo, 1998, p. 298).

Richardson et al (2019) argue that notions of well-being in Oceania are shaped by an outlook that is significantly different to Western understandings of well-being. Drawing on commonalities from the work of Gegeo (1998), Nabobo-Baba (2006), Cox (2006) and Meo-Sewabu (2015), Richardson et al (2019) argue that well-being in Oceania values a holistic understanding:

“Together these concepts of well-being encompass shared ideas about fulfilling communal obligations, prioritizing collective well-being, and practicing reciprocity – all sustained by local knowledge. Well-being is fulfilled through meeting spiritual, psychological, and physical needs and is underpinned by cultural values such as kin love and kindness, sharing and hospitality, and honesty and humility.” (p. 4)

This articulation highlights that while the diverse epistemological understandings of Oceania cannot be defined by one framework, there are some significant commonalities. Other epistemology and methodology frameworks include *Kakala*²¹ (Thaman, 1993) and *Fa'afaletui*²² (Tamasese et al, 2005) and *Tivaevae*²³ (Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges, 2019) and *Vanua*²⁴ (Nabobo-Baba, 2008). These examples do not purport to provide a single epistemology that informs all Pacific research. Rather, they serve as evidence that knowledges are viewed differently in specific Oceanic contexts. They also highlight the challenge of framing Pacific epistemologies.

Importantly, a point of convergence for these epistemologies is the importance of people, particularly relationships, and place in the way that knowledge is generated. These were important considerations in analysing how people were talking about film, collaborative aspirations and practices, and the role(s) that film plays in different places. My research is underpinned by these epistemological ideas which, while located in a specific time and place, are grounded in the idea that knowledge is a product of place, people and time. The range of

²¹ A method of research and practice modelled on the Tongan process of making *kakala* (garlands) see Thaman, 1993.

²² A methodology of “weaving together knowledge from within the houses of relational arrangements” which represent “different levels of knowledge frames from within the ‘houses’ of collective representation” (Tamasese et al, 2005, p. 302). See also Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014.

²³ A methodology which draws on the unique Cook Island practice of *tivaevae* or artistic quilting, as a way of understanding “past, present and future integration of social, historical, spiritual, religious, economic and political representations of Cook Island culture” (Te Ava and Page, 2018, p.1).

²⁴ An indigenous theoretical approach grounded in Fijian ways of seeing the world and knowing; “it gives power and recognition to things Fijian, as research and knowledge accumulation in its broadest sense is deeply connected to power” (Nabobo-Baba, 2008, p. 143).

places from which these various works originate and their diversity shows the importance of place and context to the way in which knowledge is created and transmitted.

Conduct

These considerations shaped my outlook on the way that I conducted research. Trying to establish reciprocal relationships in which I could bring something to the table was important. This is not only because I try to conduct myself this way in all my relationships. It was important because it meant that I was avoiding the very kind of extractive research practice that Smith (1999) is critical of. Bringing my whole self to the research instead of attempting to maintain an objective position was also critical for my research. I shared things about myself, my family, and my interests with my interviewees and fellow participants at film festivals. I saw it as important to make myself accessible to participants so that they felt they could share their opinions and feelings with me.

Most importantly, I made it a priority to be respectful of people's ways of doing things. In a Māori context, this meant adhering to tikanga such as greeting new people with a kiss on the cheek, removing shoes when entering certain indoor spaces and waiting for karakia²⁵ to be done before eating food. *Fa'asamoa*²⁶ shares some similarities with tikanga – for example almost always one should remove shoes when entering people's homes and never eat food before it is blessed. Turning down food or drink, particularly when being hosted by a family that is new to you – is usually seen as rude. This is largely because it is seen as a rejection of hospitality - something that Samoan people pride ourselves on. These contexts are not new to me. Having had many experiences interacting with and in Māori and Samoan spaces, I did not find it particularly difficult to conduct myself in the appropriate manner for a young woman. The Solomon Islands, however, where MACFEST was hosted, was a completely new context for me and I felt that it required a great deal of care. My knowledge of the country, and more specifically Honiara was very limited. While there were some similarities with how I was expected to behave in Samoa, there were also some important differences. I quickly learned from friends made through the festival that making direct eye contact was seen as rude. While I was never reprimanded for making eye contact with people when conversing (something I found difficult to avoid), it did explain my initial uneasiness when talking to

²⁵ Te Reo Maori term meaning prayer/blessing.

²⁶ A Samoan term literally meaning the Samoan way of doing things.

various people who would not look me in the eye. In a Western context, avoiding eye contact is seen as “shifty” behaviour, which tends to indicate dishonesty or at the very least an awkward encounter. This lesson was a good reminder of the importance of practicing cultural humility and remaining open to different understandings of what respectful behaviour looks like.

Methodology

This research employs Pacific Studies and post-development methodological approaches. The three pillars of a Pacific Studies approach to research, as explained in chapter two are: interdisciplinarity, comparativity and indigeneity. Interdisciplinarity allows for methods to be drawn from various disciplines but also for methods to be developed which are appropriate for the context (Lach, 2014).

Post-development (see chapter two) pays attention to spaces considered outside of mainstream development, yet that carry significant meaning and possibility. Film-making is one of those spaces. In addition, post-development places emphasis on understanding systems and norms as political constructions. Such an understanding requires an untangling or deconstruction of phenomena, from a position located in place, people and context. This means not only deconstructing the kind of language that people employ when talking about film and development, but also using language in a deliberate way. Underlying this is an understanding that language (and discourse) plays an important role in shaping realities. Using post-development as a methodology also meant critically interrogating development policy and practice. I analysed my data, therefore, with awareness of the politics that influence and shape development.

Methods

This research employed mixed qualitative methods. It required me to observe the films that were screened at the festivals and their reception by the audience, and the motivations of film-makers and organisers undertaking the work that they did. I carried out a mixture of participant observation, semi-structured interviews informed by *talanoa*, and textual analysis. The next section describes in more detail these methods.

Participant observation

Participant observation has ethnographic roots and has been employed by researchers to help them learn perspectives held by study populations (Jorgensen, 1989). It is usually couched in an objectivist epistemology – where a researcher can and must maintain distance between herself/himself and the community being studied. The kind of participant observation that I undertook during my research was less about studying the reactions of various individuals and more about an immersive experience as an audience member and a listener. I did not ask any questions, but observed and listened. There are more dynamic methods of participant observation,²⁷ where the researcher might participate in and observe community activities to varying degrees. However, those kinds of processes were not appropriate in my research because I was not a film-maker but an audience member. In my research I used participant observation as a method of observing and reflecting on the discussions that took place in various fora at MFF and MACFEST as well as gathering information on general attendance and interest by audience members during film screenings. I recorded my observations in narrative form through notes during the interaction and soon after the observation.

I am aware that one of the limitations of using participant observation as a method is that the research is always subjected to observer bias. My observations were inevitably shaped by some of my understandings and assumptions about film, film-making processes and ideas of culture and representation. I have had to engage in reflexive writing from time to time throughout the research project to ensure that I am critically aware of how those biases and perceptions may have shaped and influenced my research.

At MFF and MACFEST there were question and answer sessions which provided opportunities for discussion between audience members, industry creatives and panellists. Film creatives were able to share what their priorities were in their film-making processes and how their experiences might feed into the wider kaupapa of indigenous or Oceanian film. While some of my findings from the events are based on discussions and the film content, they were also based on observations about the audience reactions. This is consistent with Glaser's (2001) argument that "it is not only what is being told, how it is being told and the condition of its

²⁷ For example, focus groups allow for researchers to elicit data from a group in an informal environment using a semi-structured. See Merton, Fiske and Kendall, 1990.

being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told" (p. 145). In this sense, my data was limited to what I could observe as an audience member. In many instances I sat alone, rather than immediately next to other audience members. This allowed me to focus on the discussions that were happening.

Document and media analysis

This research also required analysis of various film projects that were screened at MACFEST and MFF. The filming techniques used, themes and stories being told are important to this research because they provided insight into the types of films being made in Oceania and what they aim to communicate. While this research is not in Media Studies research, it was essential that I understood film as a media tool and the ways it is being used.

In addition, I conducted analysis of various documents such as festival programmes, programme strategies, and vision statements. These documents are important to the research because they articulate the rationale for the festivals and projects, as well as provide background on film-makers and their films. Such documents contribute to the discourse on film and film-making in Oceania. The data gathered from these documents also supported and extended what participants said during interviews.

Interviews and *talanoa*

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews influenced by *talanoa*. Using interviews allowed me to obtain a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives on issues affecting film-making processes, motivations for engaging in film projects and the importance of festival spaces.

Talanoa is a qualitative research method which sets out to centre what might be termed Pasifika world views at the centre of the research inquiry (University of Otago, 2011). *Talanoa* is a 'cultural synthesis of the information, stories, emotions and theorising' and this facilitates the production of 'relevant knowledge and possibilities for addressing Pacific issues' (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 21). It assumes that the researcher cannot claim an objective standpoint from which s/he can obtain findings without the influence of his/her positionality. This method allows for gathering of more authentic data for Pasifika research when compared with data derived from other methods of social research (Ibid.). Sualii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014) argue that *talanoa* methodology is one approach to decolonising research in a meaningful way that

provides legitimacy in both the Pacific and academic worlds (p. 336). It allows for the negotiation of power and is closely related to the oral traditions and verbal negotiation which has roots in many Pacific cultures (Kahn, Finnegan and Orbell, 1996; Poyer, Finnegan and Orbell, 1997).

My research did not specifically use *talanoa* methods because of time constraints. My interview participants did not have the time required to undertake a full *talanoa*. However, my approach to semi-structured interviews was influenced by *talanoa*— particularly its informal and flexible nature, and its cultural responsiveness to various Pacific perspectives.

I had to spend a great deal of time and energy becoming acquainted with my interviewees. Although I had made connections with some prior to interviewing them, these connections were only brief. Thus, I had to spend some time building a rapport with them, practising *whakawhanaungatanga*,²⁸ or relationship-building. For most interviewees this meant discussing our *whakapapa*, where we each come from and some of our background beyond what might be discussed in a formal interview. While the line of questioning was largely dependent on which space each individual was operating within – film-making and or capacity-building, funding or film festival organising, the structure of the questions were all similarly guided by questioning motivations for action, challenges to those paths of action, and ways that each individual thought those challenges might be overcome (see Appendix 2).

The interviews were sorted based on keywords and phrases into four main themes. These were: indigenous film, collaboration, capacity-building and agency. My analysis chapters are guided by these themes and have been divided accordingly, with my discussion of agency spanning all three analysis chapters.

Positionality: insider or outsider or other?

The dichotomy often drawn between insider and outsider in research is one that rests on the assumption that an individual either belongs to a culture or community, or s/he does not. The notion of positionality recognises that the ways in which people relate to cultures and communities is far more complex. Aguilar (1981) argues that 'all cultures are characterized by internal variation' (p. 25) and as such the question of who is an 'insider' ought to instead be modelled on the 'multiplicity of social and cultural characteristics of a heterogeneous

²⁸ Maori term - a relationship established on family/kinship connections or shared experiences

population' (Ibid). Villenas (1996) wrote that 'as researchers, we can be insiders and outsiders to a particular community of research participants at many different levels and at different times' (p. 722). She made this observation while exploring the relationship between her Chicana cultural background and her relationships with both her Latino community of study and the English-speaking community of power and authority. Similarly, Clifford's (2001) argument about the plurality of 'articulated sites of indigeneity' (p. 472) raises questions relating to the increasingly blurred line between homelands and the diaspora. This question of insider/outsider is particularly pertinent to where I situated myself within my research. The following section describes my positionality and how it influenced my research.

I am Tokelauan and Samoan. My paternal grandparents are both from Fakaofu, Tokelau. My maternal grandmother is from Saleimoa, Samoa and my maternal grandfather is from Atafu, Tokelau. I also have connections to Faleasiu, Samoa through my step-grandfather. My mother was born on Nukunonu, Tokelau and brought up on Atafu, Tokelau. My father was born and brought up on Fakaofu, Tokelau. My parents migrated to New Zealand from Tokelau when they were both ten years old as part of the scholarship scheme which began in the 1950s. They both went through secondary and tertiary education in New Zealand. My parents have spent most of their lives in New Zealand, apart from a one-year stint in Tokelau back in 1999, they had not returned to work for Tokelau, until a couple of years ago. I was born in New Zealand and am educated. I am the eldest of their two children. I have one younger brother. I grew up speaking largely English, mostly because of my reluctance as a young child to learn Tokelauan and Samoan. The little Tokelauan and Samoan I did learn was to ensure that I could have conversations with my grandparents.

My education and upbringing comprise an important and influential aspect of my research. I was, for all intents and purposes, brought up to succeed in a *palagi* world. This meant that while some aspects of my Tokelauan and Samoan cultures are central to my being – the importance of faith, family and community – others such as *fa'alavelave*²⁹ are less so. I am simultaneously inside and outside the communities with which I engaged during my research. I share whakapapa ties with interviewees in an Oceanic sense. At times this meant that I also shared familial ties through our village connections; at other times, this meant that we shared

²⁹ Samoan term meaning significant life event which often requires financial and other support from kin.

understandings of what it means to be a part of a 'village'. I have told my parents' story because it is an important part of my reason for doing research with Pasifika communities. I have always had an ambition to make some meaningful contribution to Oceania – whether through work or research.

I initially thought that my positionality as an Oceanian put me in good stead to do ethical research because I had a sense of shared understanding of how we see and carry ourselves in, the world. I think what I realised is that my Oceanian heritage might make it relatively easier to build rapport with some of my interviewees. However, instead what it meant was that the sense of responsibility I felt and continue to feel even after I have finished conducting it, is a personal one.

Reflections

I made connections with all my participants prior to interviewing them. I approached them all and had conversations with them at a film festival, or other events. Initially, I was apprehensive about approaching potential interviewees. This was largely due to my anxiety around doing independent research for the first time. My first interview, while productive, did not flow as I had imagined it would. I felt tightly bound by the questions and felt uneasy about following a thread of questioning that was not scripted. However, after that first interview and with some reflection I reminded myself that the point of *semi-structured* was to allow for flexibility in questioning. Thus, in later interviews I was less scripted with my questioning. While I was sure to ask the questions that I had initially set out to ask, I was less anxious about unpacking a point where I thought it might add relevant insight to my research.

Most of my interviews were carried out at the office or workplace of the participants. I had initially envisioned that I would “host” the interviews in a neutral space, I was also keenly aware of the time constraints that my interviewees were working under. Most of the interviews took place during their work days. Holding interviews at their workplaces meant that we could maximise the interview time and avoid using part of their time getting to an interview venue.

Ethics

The basic principles of ethical research - autonomy, responsibility and accountability - underpinned my research. The principle of autonomy requires that research participants are

able to take decisions freely during the research process. I had to establish a dialogue and provide information on my research project to ensure all participants understood the research process. I was responsible for ensuring that participants had all the information they needed to make an informed choice about whether to participate (see Appendix 1 for information sheet on research). I acquired informed consent from my participants (see Appendix 2 for participant consent form). Privacy and confidentiality may, at times be required in order for research to be deemed ethical. However, the nature of my research was such that I was unable to conceal the identities of most of my participants. My participants agreed to be named. The size of the film industry, and specifically those who are Māori and Pasifika and are involved in the film festivals and programmes that I was interested in, meant that participants could be identified based on details of their work. However, the transcripts, recordings and field notes have been stored in a safe place to restrict access. Personal contact details have remained private. The harm principle requires that researchers do and cause no harm (Wiles, 2013). I was careful not to relay details of institutional or other criticisms between participants where they arose in interviews or during the course of conversations at film events.

Ethics of Pasifika research

Prior to beginning the research process, I felt a sense of doubt about doing Pasifika research. I knew from prior study about the fraught legacies of social and cultural research in Oceania.³⁰ I also felt that undertaking to do Pasifika research as someone who descends from Oceania was even greater because of the kind of understanding of some of worldviews that people have.

“If researching ethically is about respecting human dignity, then it is critical that the process is culturally appropriate for the participants. It is imperative that Pacific research ethics (protocols) emerge from Pacific world views in order to keep synergy with the methodology and to protect the integrity of participants as Pacific cultural beings” (Vaiotei, 2006, p. 29).

When conducting my research I was keenly aware of this responsibility that Vaiotei talks about. As a Pacific researcher I had to ensure that my methodology and methods were appropriately tailored to suit those I would be engaging with. While this meant bringing my

³⁰ For example Margaret Mead’s (1928) “Coming of Age in Samoa” and subsequent commentary (Freeman, 1983, 1999; Shankman, 1998, 2013).

whole self – not only knowledge and experiences but also my whakapapa and upbringing – to my interviews, it also required me to confront some rather fraught issues. Questions arose around what it means to do Pacific research as a researcher with Oceanian heritage and how my heritage might influence a process that is ‘culturally appropriate for the participants’ – something Vaioleti emphasises as an important part of ethical research. My positionality places me, in some respects, relatively "close" to the research.

Beyond the basic principles of ethics, I was also required to be reflexive. Reflexivity as defined by England (1994) requires constant self-conscious scrutiny of self as a researcher and the research process. It means "acknowledging rather than denying your own social position and asking how your research interactions and the information you collect are socially conditioned" (Dowling, 2010, p. 37). Questions that I regularly asked myself during the course of my interviews and participant observation were questions such as:

- What kind of power dynamics do I expect between myself and my participants?
- In what ways am I an insider and/or outsider in respect to the community/communities that this person is a part of?
- How might my perceptions of this person and his/her work influence my interpretation of his/her statements?

Almost all of the participants were older than me. This often meant that I sub-consciously placed myself in a position of lesser power. Because most of them were prominent figures in the local film industry or festival space, I also felt a sense of deference towards them. I do not think that all researchers in my position would have felt the same way. My upbringing as a Pasifika person prompts me to treat elders with the utmost respect, not simply because of their age, but because of the knowledge and experience they have acquired. My relative inexperience as a researcher but also as a newcomer to the film space meant that, interviewing my participants sometimes felt daunting. Self-talk and reassurance from my supervisor helped quell my doubts as a new researcher in a new (for me) space. While this no doubt impacted my interviews, I think that my data collection was carried out in an ethical manner. The data is being securely kept in electronic drives until April 2020.³¹

³¹ It is being kept for a relatively long period because my thesis is part of a bigger Marsden project "Stretching the celluloid ceiling: women in the Pacific film industry" which finishes in April 2020.

Conclusion

This research is underpinned by epistemologies which feed into critical work on knowledge production, and in particular the significance of people and place to systems of knowledge. I have drawn on the influences of Smith (1999) and Gegeo (1998) among other scholars to form an epistemological base. This is not reflective of a single Oceanian epistemology, however, it brings together some critical elements such as the significance of place and relationships.

Research methods must be formulated in a way that allows for meaningful data collection. This multi-sited study focused on networks and connections in places like film festivals and cultural festivals. These sites were selected for their diversity, and the space they provided for Oceanic collaborations. Examining these sites enabled me as a researcher to delve into the diverse ways that Oceanic kinships are formed between film-makers and film-making communities, and how those kinships enabled film-making and exchange. This required honest and constant reflection on my research questions. It has been and will continue to be a learning journey as an independent researcher.

Chapter 4: Behind the lens – decolonising the screen

In September 2018, *Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen* premiered at the New Zealand International Film Festival. The film, directed by Merata Mita's youngest child, Heperi (Hepi) Mita marked a significant milestone for indigenous film, and for women indigenous film-makers, for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is the first film about the life of Merata Mita, who is one of the early leaders of indigenous film. She was an advocate for Māori creative control of film-making and documented landmark moments of protest and division in Aotearoa. Merata is the first Māori woman to solely direct a feature length film³² and is the first indigenous woman to do so globally (Sundance, 2016). She was uncompromising about voicing Māori concerns and the kaupapa of addressing the lasting damage of colonisation. In this sense her activism reflects arguments made by Pasifika film-makers like Justine Sime-Barton (1997) about the agency of indigenous film-making. Merata argued:

“The revolution isn't running out with a gun. If a film I make causes indigneous people to feel stronger about themselves, then I'm achieving something for the revolution” – Merata Mita, 2007

The revolution she speaks of is the struggle to decolonise not only Aotearoa but all colonised peoples. Hepi's film documents his mother's life from his perspective, weaving intimate interviews with archival footage of his mother and family, as well as excerpts from a number of her films. Sharing this story with the world sheds light on the struggles that indigenous people of Aotearoa have faced, particularly during the 1980s when Merata filmed three of her most well-known works: *Bastion Point – Day 507* (1980), *Patu!* (1983), and the feature film *Mauri* (1988). The documentary *Merata* also provides a contrast with contemporary indigenous film-making, highlighting the changes that have taken place, particularly in the greater reach of indigenous films.

The international recognition received by *Merata* is also significant. It featured in the programme for SXSW, Sundance and BFF film festivals in 2019. SXSW film festival “celebrates raw innovation and emerging talent from both behind and in front of the camera” (SXSW, 2018). The Sundance Film Festival, founded by Robert Redford and hosted by the Sundance Institute, is the “premiere forum for independent film” (Sundance, 2018). The Sundance

³² Ramai Te Miha Hayward's co-directed *To Love a Maori* (1972) with husband Rudall Hayward.

Institute has been a leading institution in creating spaces for facilitating the growth of indigenous film (Wilson and Stewart, 2008).³³ The BFF is one of the three most prestigious international film festivals (along with Cannes and Venice). It prides itself on being “a place of intercultural exchange and a platform for the critical cinematic exploration of social issues” (Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin, 2018). The *NATIVE – A Journey into Indigenous Cinema* series has been part of the Berlinale since 2013. It focuses on a different region every two years and is a dedicated space for cinematic storytelling by indigenous communities. In 2019, the focus was on countries and islands of Oceania. These film festivals are important international platforms for sharing film and for giving global recognition to film-makers. They signal not only an appetite in the market for indigenous films but importantly a willingness to facilitate growing film-making spaces and listening to indigenous film-makers. Merata argued that building a community of indigenous film-makers was important for developing stories and film-making skills (Reeves, 2007). This is being realised in a number of spaces almost 40 years after the completion of *Mauri*.

One of the recurring themes in my research is the notion of indigeneity and how it is used to define indigenous film. This is important because it brings into question the relationship between film and indigenous communities (see Pearson & Knabe, 2014). For Oceanians, the camera bears a colonial history which has limited our agency not only as subjects of stories but also as storytellers using film in our own right (Pearson, 2013; Barclay 1990).

This chapter explores articulations of indigeneity and how they have served as frameworks for defining who is indigenous and who is not; what is an indigenous film and what is not. I also address responses by various Oceanian film-makers to the fraught legacy that Landman and Ballard (2010) have written about in terms of the colonial history of film in Oceania – issues of ownership over story, sovereignty on screen as subjects of stories (Pearson, 2013), and questions of who controls the lens and why (Sime-Barton, 1997; Barclay, 1990). It draws on MFF, MACFEST and the film project *Vai*. These examples demonstrate both the importance of having film-making spaces specifically for indigenous but also how difficult defining and delineating such spaces can be. While my thesis focuses on film-making in

³³ The Sundance Institute’s indigenous programme is also supported by Oneida Indian Nation, Surdna Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, SAGindie, New Zealand Film Commission, Indigenous Media Initiatives, Felix Culpa, Sarah Luther, Pacific Islanders in Communications, and Susan Shilliday (Sundance, 2018).

Oceania, this analysis is couched within the broader discussion on global indigenous film and its place in the decolonisation agenda.

Indigeneity and film

The relationship between the camera and indigenous communities has historically been problematic (Landman and Ballard, 2010; Barclay, 1990). This relationship has become far more complex because of global efforts to decolonise spaces. This section discusses how indigenous film has developed since the 1920s in ways that have shifted the focus of the camera from indigenous peoples as subjects of film, to drivers of indigenous storytelling and “fourth cinema”. I also discuss how contested articulations of indigeneity have made defining indigenous film increasingly difficult. These discussions are important given the increasing profitability of “the indigenous” (Wilson and Stewart, 2008).

Ethnographic film has dominated the way many indigenous communities have been represented. *Nanook of the North* (1922) is “seen as a point of origin: it has been called the first documentary film, the first ethnographic film, as well as the first art film” (Rony, 1996, p.99). Ethnographic film’s purpose has been to document, ‘preserve’ or share cultures. Films about Oceania which are consistent with this kind of film-making include *First Contact* (1983) *Moana* (1926) and more recently *Te Eitei. The Banaban Story* (2007). Such films are problematic because they necessarily mean that indigenous peoples are portrayed according to the frame of the (usually non-indigenous) director. In recent decades efforts have been made to regain control of narratives in and about indigenous communities.

Collaborative film-making between Inuit and non-indigenous since the 1920s has fostered what Pearson and Knabe (2014) describe as a “recuperation of Indigenous agency” (p. 4). They are referring not only to the growth of indigenous film practice but also attempts to address the way indigenous peoples had been represented on screen. Representations of indigenous peoples have usually been based on the dominant culture’s perception of them. The reversal and revision of this is a means of what Gerald Vizenor (1999) calls “survivance”. This describes the process of survival of indigenous people without minimising their agency as hapless victims of colonisation. Prins (2004) argues that the reclaiming of power through control of the camera as a means of reversing the colonial gaze is a way for indigenous communities to “tell their stories on their own terms” (p. 518). *TOL* is a space that celebrates

and promotes the collaboration of indigenous communities in Oceania. The project is described as a collaboration between youth to “tell stories of identity, the effects of colonisation and challenges they face from the perspective of young people in the Pacific” (Māoriland, 2019). It frames the initiative within *Te Ao Taketake* meaning indigenous realities. This shows, despite the newness of *TOL*, the pervasiveness and influence of global trends in indigenous film-making in the region and ongoing efforts to indigenise film spaces.

In resistance to film which disempowers indigenous peoples and positions them only as subjects, indigenous communities across the globe have used film as a means of reclaiming story and agency (Wilson and Stewart, 2008; Simey-Barton, 1997). Documentary has proven the most accessible film genre in terms of film-making for indigenous communities (Pearson & Knabe, 2014, p. 9) because of its relative simplicity. Unlike dramatic feature films, it only requires a camera, some film processing technology and some editing skill. Nune Luepack’s films which were screened at MACFEST use the documentary form to share and inform from an indigenous perspective. *Nidoish Naisseline* (2017) is a documentary portrait of Nidoish Naisseline, an activist in the Kanak independence movement in New Caledonia and a founding member of the “Red Scarves”.³⁴ He reflects on his career as an activist and politician and his vision for Kanaky independence. *Imulal, une terre, des racines et des rêves* (2011) follows six New Caledonian students pursuing further education in France and their journeys to fulfil aspirations for their homeland. Both of these films are excellent examples of documentary-making that demonstrates and celebrates the story and agency of indigenous perspectives.

In contrast, indigenous dramatic features have not seen the same uptake. Any kind of dramatic feature requires a great deal of resources – script development, designers, actors, lighting, and other industrial apparatus. This largely explains the relatively scant numbers of indigenous dramatic features. Wood (2008) counted fifty-one indigenous feature films worldwide. Pearson and Knabe (2014) estimate another 50 films were produced in the five to six years following or were not included in his survey (p. 9). Despite the difficulties of resourcing, however, the number of indigenous feature films continues to grow. Most indigenous films tend to show the effects that colonisation has had and continues to have on

³⁴ The *Foulards Rouges* (Red Scarves) refers to the political movement formed in June 1970 in radical resistance to the continuation of French rule over New Caledonia. See Henningham, 1992.

indigenous communities (Ibid). In doing so, indigenous film can be a means of articulating and redressing historical trauma that has occurred in the process of colonisation. In trauma theory this is known as abreaction³⁵ and is a reversal of what E. Ann Kaplan (1987) termed the “imperial gaze”. The “imperial gaze” is a post-colonial concept where the observed are defined according to the privileged observer’s framework of values (Ashcroft, 2000). Thus, film has an ability to heal but also to share knowledge and experiences, so that it can be a force for connecting indigenous communities. This is not because the experiences of all indigenous peoples are the same but rather because “the effects of history mark contemporary Indigenous lives and cultures in very particular ways – ways that are shared among Indigenous peoples and at the same time locally specific, for not even the experience of residential schools was the same for everyone everywhere” (Pearson and Knabe, 2014, p. 13). Film has been one way of addressing some of the harm done to indigenous communities because it provides a means of challenging dominant narratives of the politics of identity and representation.

Fourth cinema

Michelle Raheja (2011) argues that indigenous film “has its roots in specific indigenous aesthetics with their attendant focus on a particular geographic space, discrete cultural practices, notions of temporality that do not delink the past from the present or future, and spiritual traditions” (p. 16-17). In contrast, a rather different definition of Māori film is offered by Barry Barclay (1990): “a Māori film is one made by Māori...A Māori film might have nothing whatsoever to do with what both Māori and Pākehā are pleased to think of as ‘the Māori style of life’ – communal attitudes, a respect for the elders, a love of the land” (p. 20). Barclay (1990) theorised the importance of what he called “fourth cinema” in which indigenous film-makers have sovereignty over their image as framed on screen. As a trailblazer in indigenous cinema in Oceania, and as Māori, his work has significance for the region. Broadly, he advocated for indigenous film-makers to occupy spaces of power behind the lens. His writing has made a seminal contribution to literature on global indigenous film. However, the issue of defining indigenous film remains a potentially prickly question – despite his relatively straightforward definition.

³⁵ See Chang, Donohoe and White (2010).

“The issue of Fourth Cinema as a taxonomic category becomes even more complex when one considers the interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous film-makers and the difficulties of deciding exactly who is, and who isn’t, indigenous.” Pearson & Knabe, 2014, p. 15.

Films such as *Whale Rider* (2002), *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), *Skinwalkers* (2007) and *A Thief of Time* (2004) were either written or directed by an indigenous person but are not regarded as indigenous films. Pearson and Knabe (2014) argue that this is not necessarily because of the substantive story of the films but rather because of the creative involvement of indigenous people in the film-making process.³⁶ Indigenous films do not necessarily require indigenous people to be in all key creative roles however these examples highlight that defining what is and what is not an indigenous film is a political process in and of itself. The arguments that commentators and practitioners like Barclay make, have direct relevance to the Oceanian context because they speak to the historical issues around power over indigenous narrative.

Claiming indigeneity?

Surveying definitions of indigeneity around the globe could be the subject of an entire thesis. I do not purport to answer the question of what it means to be indigenous in the detail that it deserves. However, my analysis requires a brief outline of some important definitions to position Oceanian film-making within the broader discourse on indigeneity, indigenous film and what it means to reclaim the power that comes with being “behind the lens”. This is important because it speaks to the power and significance of indigenous film in Oceania.

Clifford’s (2001) discussion of indigeneity advocates for an understanding of native-ness that accounts for its messiness and complexity. This articulation accounts for the many roots that connect people across the globe. It also reflects, in part, our complex understandings of place and community, and how such connections are created, maintained – and in some cases – lost or erased. Indigeneity is a fluid concept which, in today’s increasingly globalised world is contested.³⁷ Clifford’s (2001) understanding of indigeneity as fluid and complex is helpful in theoretical terms. It accounts for the forces of globalisation and technological development

³⁶ *Whale Rider* is based on the novel of the same name by Witi Ihimaera (1987) was written and directed by Niki Caro who is non-Māori.

³⁷ For important discussions on this see: Gegeo, 2001; Merlan, 2009; Ndlovu, 2019; Venkateswar and Hughes, 2011.

which have seen movements of people beyond their “homelands”. It also moves away from a reductive understanding of native-ness as solely rooted in blood quantum,³⁸ language or place. These are helpful ways to think about how not to define indigeneity.

Definitions of indigeneity pose difficulties in relation to Oceania because in many of those island-nations even if the colonial legacy endures, the coloniser no longer has a physical presence. Thus, differentiating between indigenous and non-indigenous within island states is not a norm, though there are certainly exceptions.³⁹ Instead the norm is to differentiate between one’s nationality and *palagi*⁴⁰ or in terms of sub-national loyalties to island or tribe. In Aotearoa indigeneity continues to be contested and discussed. The issue of blood quantum and indigeneity is still a topic of discussion (see Kaipara, 2017). The notion of “how Māori” an individual is, is often articulated in terms that reflect how Māori your whakapapa is, or how “diluted” your claims to Māori heritage are. In some cases, it is cited as a reason for no longer honouring Crown obligations to Māori under the Treaty of Waitangi.⁴¹ A similar example is that of Hawai’i where blood quantum is highly politicised in Hawai’i because it has been used as a colonial tool to dispossess indigenous peoples of their lands (Kauanui, 2008; Lindsey, 1996). This thesis does not seek to define indigeneity, and this discussion has highlighted some of the complexities of doing so. Instead, I highlight the difficulties of defining it insofar as it relates to Oceanian film and film-making processes. This is particularly so when the question arises as to what makes a film indigenous, or more specifically, what characterises a Oceanian (or Pacific) film.

The film *Vai* (2017) is one example of a film which demonstrates the complexities of defining indigenous film in an Oceanian context. As previously discussed, it is a collaborative film which follows the journey of the central character Vai across seven different Pacific countries, as she ages and tackles various life stages. Its significance goes beyond the status that might

³⁸ Blood quantum refers to a method of quantifying indigeneity. It was often used by colonial settler governments as a means of defining indigeneity and justifying approaches to policy (see Kauanui, 2008; Villazor, 2008; Takahashi, 2009).

³⁹ Hawai’i continues to be occupied by the United States of America and has a significant palagi population. Fiji continues to deal with race-based politics as a result of indentured labour migration of Indian populations during British colonial rule.

⁴⁰ An outsider not of that nationality. It is a term that originates from the Samoan language meaning “popped from the sky”.

⁴¹ The Treaty of Waitangi is an agreement between Maori and the British Crown. It has historically governed relations between Maori and the British Crown and is an important constitutional document.

follow “making it” to an international film platform like the BFF. It also shows how Oceanian film fits within a discourse of indigenous film. The Berlinale NATIVE programme runs biannually as part of the BFF. It is dedicated to “the cinematic storytelling of Indigenous peoples around the world with a focus on a different region every two years” (Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin, 2019). This year, the region of focus was “countries and islands in and around the Pacific Ocean” (Ibid). As discussed in the previous chapter, the notion of indigeneity is not part of everyday discourse in many parts of Oceania. However, placing a film such as *Vai* in this category not only makes space in indigenous film fora for Oceanian films and film-makers, it also demonstrates how the framing of indigeneity by institutions and those in industry, can impact on how indigenous films are delineated.

Vai is directed by nine women who have Oceanian heritage but are New Zealand citizens. To argue that indigeneity requires being born in the “homeland” is obviously problematic because it immediately excludes familial connections of those in the diaspora. For Oceanians, this is particularly so, given that many Oceanians live in Aotearoa and elsewhere. However, the film has been labelled and promoted as a Pacific-made film, not only to audiences in Aotearoa but across the globe.

Support for indigenous film

The way indigenous film is supported provides some insight into the ways that policy can and has helped to grow indigenous film. However, defining what it means to be indigenous and how we might delineate indigenous film from other types of cinema is a complex task, (see Pearson and Knabe, 2014; Wood, 2008; Wilson 2008). Some have argued that it is also about representation and agency of indigenous people on screen as well as behind the camera (Rony, 1996; Reeves, 2007). Defining indigenous film, despite some of the complexities, raises a number of important questions which requires grappling with the politics of identity and representation. Such definitions have implications for the way film is funded and supported. In Oceania, where there is relatively little support for film, the ability to categorise a film as indigenous in places such as Aotearoa and Australia have important implications for the types of films that get funding and why. This is important because it could inform any discussion on potential policy and funding models in the region.

Increasingly, there is film funding and strategic support in various settler-colonial states for indigenous film, although such support is far scarcer in independent Pacific island states. The

National Film Board of Canada (NFB) launched its first three-year Indigenous action plan in 2017 (NFB, 2017).⁴² This sets out how NFB will take equitable measures to ensure adequate indigenous representation as a place of work. It also sets objectives to diversify its opportunities for indigenous film-makers and production (NFB, 2017). This shows not only financial support for indigenous film-making but also institutional support for ensuring that the production processes are carried out appropriately. Screen Australia, which oversees film funding and development nationally, also has a department which provides support to indigenous film-makers (Screen Australia, 2018). Similarly, Screen Australia's Indigenous Department offers support in the development, production and distribution stages of film-making.

In Aotearoa, the NZFC established Te Rautaki Māori Strategy which aims “to champion Māori film and film-makers, in partnership with the Māori film industry, to Aotearoa and the world” (NZFC, 2018). The objectives of this strategy are:

REPRESENTATION Promote authentic representation of Māori characters, stories, places, history and culture and support high quality films led by Māori creatives.

PROTOCOLS Partner with experts and advisors in matauranga Māori to develop a Māori partnership plan and explore industry frameworks and guidelines for engagement with Māori stories.

CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY Build internal capacity at Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga to engage with Māori and their stories. Support capacity development in the Māori film industry by supporting and developing initiatives that address barriers and increase connections and communication.

These objectives reflect some of the important shifts that have been discussed earlier in this chapter. This is a clear acknowledgement from a settler-colonial government-mandated institution of the importance of Māori leading Māori storytelling on screen. There is recognition of the importance of Māori knowledge and world view, which is accounted for by the second objective. An undertaking to work in partnership with key people in Māori communities shows a willingness to step outside of dominant ways of doing things. That

⁴² The National Film Board of Canada has had a long history of working with indigenous communities with various programmes and collaborative projects. This is the first strategic document setting out direction and objectives for the NFB both as an employer and as an organisation engaging with indigenous communities.

“authentic representation” is a priority shows an understanding of the harmful impact that negative (and some argue incorrect)⁴³ representations can and have had on Māori.

This policy development also reflects increasingly visible support for Pacific film in Aotearoa. This is reflected in the funding for films such as *The Orator – O le Tulafale* (2011), *Sione’s Wedding* (2006), *One Thousand Ropes* (2017) and *For My Father’s Kingdom* (2019). This strategy is one important step to dealing with issues of agency and representation that have historically plagued the relationship between indigenous peoples and the camera. A strategic document may not change anything per se. However, it shows a recognition and commitment by the state to enable and support indigenous film-making. This is an important step in redistributing power within film-making circles in Aotearoa.

Indigenous film spaces

In the context of film festivals there are criteria relating to the indigeneity of those in creative roles in the film-making process. MFF, as do other festivals such as ImagineNATIVE, Pasifika Film Festival (PFF) and Wairoa Māori Film Festival, has selection criteria that reflects the primacy of indigenous representation both on screen (in cast and theme) – and behind the lens in the film creative team. PFF requires that eligible films must be “a representation of Pasifika people, culture and stories” (Pasifika Film Festival, 2018) and – amongst other criteria – that “one of the key creatives must identify as being of Pacific heritage” (Ibid), including writers, producers, directors and leading cast members. For MFF the selection criteria are based on:

- A key member of the creative team (director, writer, producer) must identify as Indigenous. Consideration will also be given to films that have strong Indigenous representation in cast and theme, however, this will be at the discretion of the selection panel.
- The relevance of the work to the Indigenous community and to general New Zealand audiences as a whole.
(Māoriland, 2018)

The first of the criteria only requires that one of the key film creatives identifies as indigenous. Libby is uncompromising about using these criteria to select films for the festival. That the film has to have relevance to indigenous communities also signals the importance of sharing and exchanging stories amongst indigenous peoples. This is consistent with Merata Mita’s

⁴³ See Anne Salmond (2016) for commentary on the film *Once Were Warriors* (1994).

argument for the value of community amongst indigenous film-makers (Reeves, 2007). Libby is determined to ensure that she and her team run a festival that is primarily for tangata whenua but also operates in concert with other indigenous communities from around the globe.

“With our programming and with our criteria we’re really clear about what it is, what the criteria is around how our submission process works. Who has control of the lens? Who has control of the camera? Does the person who is submitting or has made the film, does that person identify as indigenous?” (L. Hakaraia, personal communication, July 16, 2018).

The clarity of the kaupapa of MFF – that it is about the agency and power, the representation and voice of indigenous peoples around the globe – shows a strong commitment to the indigenisation of the screen.

These are but two examples of a growing interest in sharing films in which indigenous peoples – and mostly Oceanians in these cases – significantly influence the shape of the story, the film. The use of film festivals as spaces of exchange and collaboration echoes Mackley-Crump’s (2011) argument that festivals operate as spaces where networks and kinships are formed, maintained and strengthened. These festivals not only assert a sense of belonging but also provide people and communities spaces to negotiate and celebrate their cultural identities. These arguments extend to film festivals because of the kind of sharing and learning that these film-makers and their communities gather to celebrate. This desire for films made by “us”, for “us” shows that film, and film-making processes continue to be sites of struggle for decolonisation of the imagination. It also speaks to the importance of ownership over representation of images in and about Oceania. The uptake of film by indigenous communities shows a reclaiming of agency both on the screen and behind the lens.

Building whakapapa of indigenous film

Recent decades have seen a proliferation of literature on indigenous media and film in both a localised and globalised sense (see Pearson and Knabe, 2014; Wilson and Stewart, 2008). This agenda has informed the kaupapa of the work of events such as imagineNATIVE which is the world's biggest platform for sharing indigenous screen content (imagineNATIVE, 2016):⁴⁴

Solemn Declaration

We the Indigenous screen storytellers

United in this northern corner of our mother, the earth

In a great assembly of wisdom we declare to all nations

We glory in our past

when our earth was nurturing our oral traditions
when night sky evoked visions animated in our dreams
when the sun and the moon became our parents in stories told
when storytelling made us all brothers and sisters
when our stories fostered great chiefs and leaders
when justice was encouraged in the stories told

We will

hold and manage Indigenous cultural and intellectual property
be recognised as the primary guardians and interpreters of our culture
respect Indigenous individuals and communities
nourish knowledge from our traditions to modern screen appearance
use our skills to communicate with nature and all living things
through screen storytelling heal our wounds
through modern screen expression carry our stories to those not yet born

And thus through motion picture make the invisible visible again

we vow to manage our own destiny and recover our complete humanity in pride

In being Indigenous screen storytellers

(Sundance institute, 2011)

This declaration was born out of the first indigenous film conference in Kautukeino, Norway which is home to the indigenous Sami people. It is evidence of a strengthening interest and visibility within the global indigenous community in film as a medium for reclaiming sovereignty, not only over storytelling and the screen, but also over indigenous knowledges, cultures and spaces. This declaration is important because it shows a commitment by

⁴⁴ This Declaration has been reproduced elsewhere with slightly different wording (see MFF, 2018).

indigenous film creatives to a global kaupapa which, while grounded in context and place, ultimately aims to decolonise and indigenise the screen.

The work that the global indigenous film community has undertaken, to establish spaces and events specifically for indigenous film has impacted Oceania, to varying degrees across the region. Māori and Pasifika film is particularly strong in Aotearoa because there is significant resourcing and state support compared with other countries in Oceania. This global whakapapa of indigenous film has also contributed significantly to the growth of a community of indigenous film-makers. While specificity of place and context must be respected, there is clearly a kinship amongst many indigenous film-makers. Such a community is important if indigenous communities are to make films on their own terms. Growing and strengthening the global indigenous film community provides spaces for film-makers to hone their craft and their skills in ways that are reflective of their respective worldviews. Barclay (1990) argues that indigenous film-making spaces enables film-makers to assert cultural confidence:

“I see it as asserting a cultural confidence so that, if we shape things our own way, we shall come to make images that will be attractive to those humans on the planet who wish to enjoy them. I am not talking about minority programmes directed at a minority. I am talking about a minority being confident enough to talk with its own voice about whatever it chooses and as it does so, having a feeling that the talk will be of interest to others who wish to drop in.” (p. 78)

This is convergent with Smith’s (1999) argument about the importance of being able to share knowledge and experience between indigenous communities. Of course, Smith was referring specifically to research. This argument seems equally applicable to film practice because it concerns the decolonisation and indigenisation of a means of knowledge production. Film has grown out of networks of indigenous peoples who have shared their experiences of film-making and storytelling with other indigenous communities, and who have fought for representation within settler-colonial societies. Such a global network is important because it allows for recognition of an alternative that stems from non-Western values. It also offers support for those trying to get funding or legitimisation from a national government or film commission that may be dominated by settler-colonial expectations or criteria. While it might be that some film is born out of a series of commercial relationships, there is also a great deal of community and independent film that is not primarily commercial – whether made by indigenous or non-indigenous film-makers (Wilson and Stewart, 2008).

Reclaiming story and screen

Colonisation has occurred not only with respect to land and sovereign rights but also through culture, language and knowledge. Film is one way to reclaim sovereignty over narratives, for several reasons. Firstly, it can take back ownership of stories that have previously been appropriated and told by non-indigenous peoples – whether for commercial or documentary purposes.

“As we reassert ourselves as Māori and as tangata whenua and we begin to tell our stories, we’re getting out from under the thumb of other people telling our stories. We’re getting out from people looking at our stories as if it’s purely a way of controlling or seeing us through their lens. It’s our lens.” (L. Hakaraia, personal communication, July 16, 2018)

The struggle for power in film-making spaces is not merely about reclaiming power. It is also about the subversion and reclamation of a tool that has been used to marginalise indigenous people through essentialist and reductive representations. These filter out diverse voices and layers that shape stories. The telling of indigenous legends, for example, by non-indigenous peoples distorts indigenous realities because there is often a “a total lack of understanding, a mere interpretation in a European framework” (Lamche and Mita, 1984, p. 4). Indigenous people taking up positions behind the lens is a powerful means of reclaiming stories and the knowledge they express and share.

Secondly, film is seen as a medium which has the power to reach across communities. Pragmatically, it does not necessarily require literacy. During MACFEST, film-maker Llane Munau (PNG) stated that the ability of film to traverse literacy and even language differences enabled communities to connect with the story on screen (L. Munau, personal communication, July 8th, 2018). A single film can be screened to an audience of many while a book, newspaper or academic article is a more individual experience and cannot be shared as easily and as instantaneously. The appeal of film as a medium is clear. It enables communities to share knowledge and connect with each other through stories on screen.

Thirdly, the screening experience can often provide a platform for discussion of important issues.

“...it’s film, a shared experience of watching something together and then the buzz that happens when people discuss what they’ve seen and that sense that we’ve experienced something, you know a moment, shared a moment of watching

something and are able to talk about it.” (L. Hakaraia, personal communication, July 16, 2018).

The act of sharing a film with a community goes beyond merely screening a film to an audience. In the appropriate space, this screening experience can lead to conversations about issues that are significant to the community.

Conclusion

Stories are important. For indigenous peoples they often tell us where we come from or how we came to be. This knowledge in turn shapes how we interact with our environments and each other. Using film to tell stories means that stories can be shared not only within communities but also between different communities. In an era where indigenous peoples are imagining what a decolonised and indigenised world looks like, film presents an opportunity to practice agency and reclaim stories that might have been exploited or marginalised in the past.

The growth of indigenous films and platforms for sharing them indicates the increasing interest of bringing stories to screen. It also shows the importance of growing a community of indigenous film-makers. Much of this reflects a shift in recent decades from indigenous people occupying spaces in front of the camera, merely as subjects of stories, to also taking up positions of power in key creative roles. Growing spaces particularly in film policy and festival spaces, which enable indigenous film-makers to gather and share ideas is a means of establishing alternative systems of story-telling that are resistant to western modes of film-making. The uptake of film by Oceanian communities is convergent with the trajectories of indigenous film-making globally. This is important for understanding the context within which film-making kinships have developed and operated in Oceania.

Chapter 5: Oceanic kinships and collaborative routes

Oceanic kinships are being articulated, embodied and shared on screen through current film practice and film festivals in Oceania. Although the specificities of each film are linked to the context (including resourcing available) from which they emerge, there are conscious attempts to work across ‘borders’ and to rebuild some of the connections disrupted by the imposition of the colonial nation-state. Film’s ability to travel also means that they can reach wide and diverse audiences. This chapter explores articulations and practices of Oceanic connection through film. Two questions seemed particularly pertinent in thinking through the relationship between kinships and film-making. Firstly, how and why do Oceanian film-making communities connect across vast Ocean spaces? Secondly, how do such connections foster active communities of practice that enable different forms of agency? This chapter is set out accordingly.

Kinships

The relationships between Oceanians have been articulated by a number of disciplines. Historians and anthropologists write of the way the Lapita people migrated from Taiwan and spread through the Oceania (see Sheppard, Thomas and Summerhayes, 2009; Kirch, 1997; Pearce, 2010). The growth and spread of the Austronesian languages – which are thought to have begun with the Lapita people – reflect the ways in which we are connected by ancient migration patterns (Hanlon, 2017). Arguably these shared ancestors connect all Oceanians to some degree despite geographical (and relational) distance. This genealogy is one way in which people are connected throughout Oceania. It forms an integral part of my thesis because it is perhaps the most important basis for the establishment and strengthening of relationships through which collaborative film practice takes place.

How Oceanians relate to land or *whenua/vanua/fenua* (and its many other linguistic variations) is another point of connection. Jolly (2007) states that the “...relation between people and place is posted not as “ownership” or human possession but as mutual possession. This imbrication of body and land is palpable in language and in corporeal practice.” (p. 515). For Oceanians the connection with land is typically for life (Gegeo, 2001; Finnegan and Orbell, 1995; Patterson, 2000; Armitage and Bashford, 2016;). It is often accorded life-giving character because of the resources we draw from it (Arthur de la Maza, 2012). I have

highlighted these commonalities because it is but one layer of the connections between our islands and communities in the region.

The notion of connectedness between Oceanic kin has been articulated by scholars such as Albert Wendt (1976), Epeli Hau'ofa (2008), Alice Te Punga Somerville (2012), James Clifford (2001) and Lana Lopesi (2018). These articulations play an important role in the way I later conceptualise development in the Oceanian context. They are grounded in connections between people, place and genealogies. Hau'ofa and Wendt's articulations of Oceanic kinship are aspirational and signal a rather novel approach to regional identity. The region is not constructed solely on the basis of geographical proximity, though that is certainly important. Instead their articulations are grounded in the ocean, its power to provide for and connect people across space and time. Te Punga Somerville (2012) uses literature to trace the connections between Aotearoa and the islands in Oceania. Lopesi (2018) argues that globalising technologies allows Moana peoples to connect in ways that resonate with Hau'ofa's and Wendt's regional imaginaries. Clifford's (2001) fluid conception of indigeneity provides us with a way of understanding practices of identity outside of the "homeland". This is a rather brief (and by no means complete) whakapapa of scholarship which layers connections between individuals and communities in Oceania.

This scholarship has not developed without criticism. Margaret Jolly (2001) points out that Hau'ofa's oceanic imaginary presents the perspective of a "world traveller"⁴⁵ which may be convergent with the experiences of Tongan, Samoan, Niueans, Cook Islanders and those who live between or often traverse state borders. She argues that this perspective fails to resonate with the experiences of many in the region, particularly the larger Southwest Pacific Islands, who "travel in trucks or light local plans but do not board jumbo planes" (Jolly, 2001, p. 420). In a related vein, any argument for regionalism invites criticism for "flattening" or homogenising a hugely diverse region and the experiences of its people (see Lopesi, 2018). However unevenly this perspective may apply, I think it is a useful means of understanding how people have connected and continued to connect, and also the power of the aspiration

⁴⁵ Epeli Hau'ofa was born in Papua New Guinea to Tongan missionary parents and undertook his education from various places around the Pacific: Fiji, Tonga, Canada and completed his PhD in Anthropology at Australian National University (Macpherson, 2009).

to connect. The many layers of connections between oceanic communities have played and will likely continue to play an integral role in the growth of film-making in Oceania.

Film as collaborative practice

Film-making is an inherently collaborative practice. However, there is limited discussion on the influence of collaborative practices on film-making in Oceania.⁴⁶ This thesis does not purport to cover all collaborative approaches to film-making in the region, only those observed through my research.

“The failure of most film scholars to look beyond the creative impact of the director represents an unwillingness to examine more closely the circumstances behind the production of films...This focus on the director avoids having to examine the complex patterns of interaction among the large number of artists and technicians who collaborate on any given film.” (Beach, 2015, p. 2)

Film-making usually requires input from a number of individuals because of the range of skills needed to put a film together. As Beach (2015) argues above, there are many roles required to complete a production, not only those in key roles such as the director and actors – but also writers, technicians, editors and the like in post-production.

Why and how are Oceanian film-making communities connecting across vast ocean spaces?

This section examines different forms of collaboration in film and the reasons for such collaborative practice, as observed through my research sites. Firstly, I will explain the methods of collaboration that these film-making projects have undertaken. Secondly, I will analyse how various film-makers have articulated their motivations for collaborating with other Oceanic film-makers. Finally, I will consider how such practices resonate with and even embody the creative imaginary offered by Hau’ofa and Wendt.

I begin with TOL for two important reasons. Firstly, in the region, Aotearoa can be considered a tuākana for indigenous film-making. The work of figures such as Merata Mita, Barry Barclay and more recently, Taika Waititi and Tusi Tamasese, has largely taken place in Aotearoa with a significant amount of institutional support from NZFC. As such, it serves as a good starting point for seeing how Oceanic communities in Aotearoa position themselves and practice collaborative film-making as tuākana in a region where film-making by Oceanians is a

⁴⁶ Given the relatively recent release of films such as *Waru* and *Vai*, as well as the recent uptake of film as a tool for development (see chapter six) it seems likely that there will be a growth of literature in this area. Current writing includes Zalipour, 2019.

relatively new practice. I then go on to discuss PC as a project that spans many of the islands in Oceania but is localised in Samoa through the *FC*. I examine these sites as examples of collaborative practice as supported by government and non-government institutions. The last case study, is the collaborative feature film *Vai* (2019). I discuss the implications of *Vai* as a means of modelling film-making kinships in Oceania and its importance as a film gaining international attention.

Through Our Lens

TOL connects young film-makers across Te Moana-Nui-A-Kiwa to facilitate film-making between communities. They develop short films over a period of just a few days that move from script development to a community screening. The aim of the project is “to create new Māori film leaders who will connect and collaborate with their peers in the Pacific, Indonesia and worldwide” (Māoriland, 2018). To date, it has taken place between young film-makers from different parts of Oceania. TOL takes filming and editing equipment with them, and the productions, once cut and edited are screened to the local communities. This approach creates opportunities for Oceanian youth to explore their passion for film and use equipment that they might not otherwise get access to. It also allows them to connect with youth from elsewhere in the region to script and film stories. TOL ran again in 2018 but travelled solely to Rarotonga in partnership with Motone Productions,⁴⁷ most likely because of the challenge of finding ongoing financial support.⁴⁸ This model of collaborative film-making is about establishing a sustainable, reciprocal learning experience for all the young people involved (L. Hakaraia, personal communication, July 16, 2018). It forms connections between communities which sees film-making as an important way to share stories and experiences.

The deep connection to Kiwa, as an ancestor of Oceania, is described by the programme’s organisers as one of the strongest motivations for the TOL programme. They describe a sense of a shared kaupapa between film-making kin which values sharing story, experience and knowledge with film-making communities across the region – not purely for the sake of capacity-building – but because participants and their respective work, are seen a connected through Kiwa, the ocean ancestor of Oceania. Libby Hakaraia, the director of MFF is clear about her motivation for undertaking such an ambitious project:

⁴⁷ A creative production company based in Rarotonga, Kuki Airani and Wellington, New Zealand.

⁴⁸ UNESCO provided funding for the first TOL I but not for TOL 2018.

“We know that our kids have been taught and know that they are part of a whakapapa that extends through the Pacific. So, it is as much our responsibility to share what we’ve got, what we know with our cousins.” (L. Hakaraia, personal communication, July 16, 2018).

This one of the most explicit articulations of kinship among film-makers that I came across in my research. For TOL, the reason for connecting and collaborating is because of a sense of familial responsibility borne from a shared Oceanic identity. TOL is as much about rejuvenating and living those kinship connections, as it is about making films. Libby articulates the ocean as a connecting force between film-making communities, rather than one which isolates film-makers in the region (L. Hakaraia, personal communication, July 16, 2018). TOL is a manifestation of Hau’ofa’s Oceanic expansive, creative imaginary. The programme sees communities in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa as connected by the ocean, rather than divided by nation-state boundaries. Hau’ofa (2008) argued that such a perspective could and should be part of an expansive creative practice on the part of the region’s artists.

Pacific Connections (Community Film-making for Gender Equality in the Pacific)

PC was a regional scoping project that the potential of film as a means of addressing gender issues in Oceania. I met the PC team⁴⁹ at the MACFEST in July 2018. Alongside the PC project the CSS at the National University of Samoa (NUS) held the *Film Challenge* in November 2018 in partnership with Australian Aid, PACMAS, the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, and the Australian High Commission. As part of the FC, in September 2018, PACMAS facilitated a three-day workshop which provided basic training on short film production, with a focus on gender equality issues in Samoa. Safua Akeli Amaama, the director of CSS spoke with me about the importance of fostering a connection between film-makers as an effort to build skills and experience.

“I think if there is a network of people who are interested in film I think that will help break down some of the barriers around what film-makers do. I mean I don’t want people to feel isolated.” (S. Amaama, personal communication, July 2018)

She described capacity as one of the biggest challenges in film-making in Samoa given the range of skills needed to put a production together. The FC was one way to ascertain what interest and skill there was in film-making within the Samoan community:

⁴⁹ See chapter three for full description of Pacific Connections and the team.

“So the platform of the film contest is for us to see what is the landscape? Who is out there? What are they doing? And can we link up and get that support around telling these stories?” (S. Amaama, personal communication, July 2018)

This highlights the importance of film-makers knowing where they can access knowledge and training for film-making. As Safua articulated, this enables film-makers to build networks of knowledge and skill that they might be able to draw on for support in their film-making projects. However, the *FC* was not purely about building capacity for film-making in Samoa and sparking dialogue around gender issues. CSS stated that the purpose of the *FC* was also to “...build not only the capacity of emerging narrators and film makers through workshops but to facilitate opportunities through which work can be viewed by regional film makers, potential sponsors and the public” (CSS, 2018). The scope of the *FC* was relatively narrow because it was pitched at providing a platform for enabling dialogue around a sensitive issue, however it is apparent from this framing that CSS recognises the value of film as a storytelling medium, rather than just an education or development tool. Thus, the purpose of the *FC* in tandem with *PC*, is to build capacity and scope interest in film as well as explore what ways film could be used as a medium for social change.

Remembering that the overarching purpose of *PC* was to investigate how film might be used as an educational tool and that it is led by individuals who applied for funding from large institutions, a number of important observations can be made in relation to kinships and film. In contrast to *Vai* and *TOL* both of which are led by individuals and organisations that prioritise growing film-making in and of itself, this project aims to build capacity and instrumentalise film as well as grow film-makers in Samoa. These multiple purposes mean that the nature of the project is inherently different to *TOL* and as is later explained, to *Vai*. The connections forged by the *PC* team as it travelled through Oceania were done so largely through government and education fora. The use of film as an education tool might be criticised as reductive because the scope of storytelling requires film to be transformative – whether by spreading a message or encouraging conversation about particular issues. However, the *FC* as it is framed and promoted by CSS shows recognition by a local institution of film’s potential as a means of sharing narrative. Criticising film-makers for making films that are not primarily or solely for storytelling purposes unfairly essentialises what it means to make an Oceanian (or more broadly indigenous) film. Different approaches to film-making undoubtedly produce different films. Thus, the value of exploring *PC* alongside my other sites of research lies in its

multiplicity of purposes – exploring its usefulness as an education tool and building capacity of film-makers. The importance of this realisation becomes particularly pertinent in my last chapter which analyses the contributions of the work that current film-making kinships are making to development in Oceania.

Vai

International attention to Pasifika film-making is relatively new. I would suggest that our presence is yet to be felt on a scale that represents the magnitude of our artistic potential and spirit articulated in *The Ocean in Us* (Hau'ofa, 2008). *Vai* marks a hugely significant shift in Oceanian film-making. It is one of few Oceanian films that has had international acclaim and is available to the general public in mainstream cinemas as well as smaller cinema houses. It also involved nine Pasifika and Māori women directors working collaboratively, giving voice to a diversity of experience and culture. Films from Oceania that have made it to mainstream cinema and television in Aotearoa have more often than not been comedies.⁵⁰ Examples include *Sione's Wedding*⁵¹ (2016), *Three Wise Cousins*⁵² (2016) and *The Breaker Uppers*⁵³ (2018). While these have been celebrated for entertaining audiences in New Zealand they do not necessarily reflect the diversity of stories that could be and are told. While having Pacific films in mainstream cinema and television is important because it is *some* form of visibility, enabling films like *Vai* to be made and screened is significant. It shows institutional support for voices and stories from Oceania. The fact that this film was made on various Pacific islands is important in more ways than one. Firstly, the global audience was able to glimpse parts of Oceania that largely have not been visible beyond the region, whether through ethnographic film or otherwise. Secondly, most of the cast were local first-time actors. Their exposure to film and the production process is not an opportunity that they would likely have had access to in their island community. This of course, speaks volumes about the relative scales of production available in the region. The funding and technical support available to the

⁵⁰ Films such as *The Orator: O le Tulafale* (2011) and *One Thousand Ropes* (2017) by Tusi Tamasese are important exceptions.

⁵¹ A feature length comedy about four friends who must find girlfriends to accompany them to their friend's wedding.

⁵² A feature length comedy about a young Samoan man living in New Zealand who goes to Samoa to learn how to be a "real" Pacific Island man in order to impress his crush.

⁵³ A feature length comedy about two women who provide a "break-up service" for people wanting to end a relationship.

directors of *Vai* is far beyond that available to film-makers in the island communities where production took place.

Interestingly, during a Q&A session in the Berlinale NATiVe programme, the director of the Samoa vignette, Marina McCartney articulated the collaborative practice of *Vai* in the following terms:

“This is true nature of the collective. This is Moana cinema.” (McCartney, Berlinale NATiVe 2019)

Vai shows collaboration in an obvious sense. Nine women came together and each directed a vignette, which when put together, formed an 80 minute feature film. However, the nature of collaboration goes deeper. Communities on each island were involved to some degree, with almost all of the main characters being played by actors with little or no experience.⁵⁴ Further, the ability to link each vignette by water speaks to its essence in each of the places where the stories unfold. McCartney uses the term *moana* – which is commonly used in Polynesia for the Pacific Ocean. Arguably, this is a literal projection of Hau’ofa’s challenge to see the ocean as a force that connects us all in Oceania. Of course, the creative genius of the women who wrote and directed this film, and the producers who conceived *Vai* must be credited for producing such a successful film. The visceral feeling captured by the film is one that transcends nation-state boundaries and the physical distance between the many islands of Oceania. *Vai* is certainly a film to be celebrated. Though of course it is not representative of the diverse experiences and feelings of women in the region, it captures some of the essence of what it means to be an Oceanian woman. Perhaps it is the beginning of a wave of Oceanic film that enables the sharing of diverse and rich narratives.

[Institutional support for film in Oceania](#)

This section outlines the policy environment within which Oceanian films are currently being made. This is important for understanding the extent to which policy informs and enables growth in film-making. I begin by outlining current institutional support in Aotearoa for Oceanian film-making as the nation-state with one of the longest histories of institutional support for film in the region. As has been mentioned, and will be briefly reiterated, there is very little in the way of government or institutional support in film-making elsewhere in Oceania. This will be addressed below.

⁵⁴ Fiona Collins, who plays Vai in the Samoa vignette, is the only actor with any previous experience in film.

Te Tumu Whakaata – New Zealand Film Commission

NZFC is the government-mandated organisation which provides funding and support to film-makers in Aotearoa. Its role is to grow, promote and support the country's screen industry. In 2017 NZFC released its statement of intent which sets out the strategic direction up until 2021. One of the commitments it makes is to “help culturally significant films get made” (NZFC, 2017). These are further defined as those which “celebrate the unique and distinctive cultures of New Zealand” (Ibid). Specific support is provided to Māori and Pasifika film-makers through He Ara (Māori and Pasifika film pathways). This funds film-makers with Māori or Pacific Island heritage to create feature films by supporting (NZFC, 2019, p. 2):

- Increased development of culturally diverse, outstanding New Zealand projects and talent
- The freedom to use Māori and/or Pacific Island development frameworks
- Screen practitioners of Māori and/or Pacific Island heritage gaining clarity on the target audience and market engagement for their films

He Ara Plus is another initiative which accelerates strong projects so that they can be pitched in the domestic or international marketplace and proceed to production (NZFC, 2017, p. 23).⁵⁵

In addition to the above, NZFC launched *Te Rautaki – NZFC Māori Strategy 2018-2021 (Te Rautaki)*. NZFC also appointed Senior Executive Pou Whakahaere, Karen O Te Kahurangi Waaka-Tibble ensure effective implementation of *Te Rautaki*. In 2018, NZFC went on to announce a new funding opportunity for Pacific or Asian New Zealand film-makers to develop a one-off feature length Pasifika or Asian New Zealand story for primetime screening on TVNZ (NZFC, 2018).⁵⁶ There is currently strong support for both indigenous and Pasifika film in Aotearoa. However, it remains that these opportunities are only open to New Zealand residents. This demonstrates the importance of colonial nation-state boundaries and how they can limit the connections that exist between Oceanians (Te Punga Somerville, 2012). These observations are important because they demonstrate the extent to which institutions and their policy frameworks engage or converge with understandings of cultural, linguistic, ancestral connections with Oceanians beyond Aotearoa.

⁵⁵ He Ara Plus supported films such as *Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen* (2018) and *Waru* (2017).

⁵⁶ This funding was announced in light of NZ On Air's 2018 Diversity report which showed that Pasifika and Asian producers are underrepresented onscreen (NZFC, 2018).

Regional approaches

This section canvasses policies in the region (beyond Aotearoa) related to film and film-making in Oceania. Film policy, where it exists, tends to fall within the area of cultural/cultural development policy.

SPC is the organisation that oversees regional development through programmes and services “designed to reflect the strategic direction set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the regional priorities identified in the SAMOA⁵⁷ Pathway and the commitments in the SDGs” (SPC, 2015). The policy literature that has been published by SPC is based on region-wide engagement between national and regional staff.

COPAC consists of the heads of culture of all the PICTs and the Ministers of Culture (SPC, n.d.) and is a subsidiary organ of SPC. It is charged with three jobs (SPC, n.d.):

1. Supporting the development of the culture sector throughout the PICTs
2. Integrating culture across other development sectors
3. Managing FESTPAC

In 2012 the *Regional Culture Strategy 2010-2020* (RCS) was published and endorsed by ministers for culture from throughout Oceania in the Solomon Islands. The purpose of the RCS was to provide a medium-term strategy in which culture would drive and support sustainable development and economic growth in the region. In 2018 SPC in partnership with COPAC released the second phase of the RCS (SPC and COPAC, 2018) which also incorporated the findings of a review of the first five years of the RCS.⁵⁸ The review found that while the RCS itself was a milestone in the harmonisation of cultural development priorities with the global and regional frameworks for sustainable development, many of the goals were not met. Firstly, for the RCS to be successful, the institutions that were responsible for implementing it required considerable strengthening themselves (SPC and COPAC, 2018, p. 1). Secondly, resource mobilisation was not adequately accounted for and the strategy needed to be properly communicated to national governments to enable planning and appropriate funding. The recommendations of the review were:

1. Reduce and re-prioritise the strategy goals and objectives;
2. Develop SMART indicators;

⁵⁷ Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action.

⁵⁸ The findings of the review of phase one of the RCS have not been published in a separate document.

3. Develop and review the operational aspects of the strategy, including capacity-building for the culture sector at national level; and
4. Develop a communication and resource mobilisation strategy. (Ibid).

Notably, the theory of change (TOC)⁵⁹ approach was adopted as a result of the review (see SPC and COPAC, 2018, pp. 4-5). TOC places emphasis on the outputs of a program or intervention and maps a path from input to output to intended impact based on logical thinking (Gugerty and Karlan, 2018). Much of this kind of thinking is often driven by objectivist assumptions that development processes can be mapped and implemented in a rational (and therefore fair and desirable) manner. There is a great deal of literature which challenges such an approach, it is not the purpose of this thesis to canvas those critiques. This signals the kind of approach that SPC and COPAC are currently taking to culture and development in the region – one that is driven by processes of cultural development that are perceived as neutral and free of political influence. I contest that this view of development is appropriate or effective basis upon which policy should be formulated in chapter six.

In 2016 SPC, in partnership with Commonwealth Writers, produced a report which reviewed the policy environment for narrative film and television production in the Oceania region. This review highlighted a number of challenges facing the region in the film-making space. The review states that institutional backing – whether from regional, national groups or governments – is one way of fostering the development of the film industry. The review presents a range of options available to governments: the establishment of a government agency dedicated to facilitating film production; provision of film funding through an established agency or broadcaster; tax rebates and other funding incentives (SPC, 2016, p.10). These institutional approaches, while centred on policy and funding are backed by the argument for creative industries (see Chapter 2, UNESCO and UNDP, 2013; EYGM, 2015). Film production can, if produced and distributed appropriately, yield economic benefits. That however, also requires an understanding, on the part of film-makers, of the business of independent film production so that they can develop viable proposals which would allow them to access funding. The review recommends establishing a regional film and television association which could connect business and creative people to develop concepts;

⁵⁹ A methodology for planning, participation and evaluation often used in government sectors to promote social change. See Brest, 2010.

incentivise opportunities to raise funds through a range of avenues ie donors, private sponsors and international funding opportunities; create a platform to promote local talent and content through television and film festivals (SPC, 2016, p. 20).

This report carries some discursive power in framing film as an important medium for the region – for storytelling, development and potentially commercial enterprise, its recommendations for greater institutional support have not translated into actual support in either capacity-building or financing. Despite the efforts of SPC, there remains no government support in Oceania (save Aotearoa, Australia and Hawai'i) for film-makers.

There has been recognition by SPC of the inherent importance of culture, not only because of its economic value but also its social value. However, this recognition and support has not yet translated into growth in the cultural sector generally, let alone in the film sector. It seems that most Pacific governments do not see sufficient value in the film sector. Despite international push for creative industries and significant work by SPC in terms of regional cultural policy, film is not seen as a priority. Therefore, film-makers are often working without institutional support. In this context, the collaborative practice as described above, has an important role to play in growing and strengthening film-making in Oceania.

Pragmatically speaking, horizontal forms of collaboration – whether in Oceania region or internationally – are essential for producing film that not only tells stories for diverse audiences and give voice(s) to film creatives. This kind of film-making potentially restores agency to communities by reclaiming ownership and control of stories told through film. It enables access to equipment and capacity-building, particularly in technically difficult areas of the film-making process such as lighting, sound and post-production. This is important because growing film-making spaces will not happen without providing budding film-makers with opportunities to share and learn with and from others. The drive towards a collaborative approach to film-making in Oceania that I have encountered through this research is not merely for the practical reasons of sharing resources and skills, although that is important given inequalities in access to resources across the region. It also stems from a deeper sense of connection to kin across the region. The motivations, as articulated by Libby and Safua, and most recently by some of the film-makers of *Vai*, for collaborating go beyond the financial difficulties that come with pursuing film-making as a career, or the challenges of capacity in creating or producing film.

Enabling kinships and collaboration

“... much of the welfare of ordinary people of Oceania depends on an informal movement along ancient routes drawn in bloodlines invisible to enforcers of the lands of confinement and regulated mobility” (Hau’ofa, 1994, p.156).

This discussion suggests the need to reimagine a view of and approach to cultural policy and acknowledge the “informal movement” that is already happening within the region. If we agree that Aotearoa and Australia are a part of Oceania; and that there are kinships that span the region – through shared ancestry, cultural ties and shared kaupapa, then a regional approach that draws on those connections might be beneficial for cultural policy and practice. Drawing on kinships and these ancient routes, industry connections, as well as professional networks, allows for an expansive approach to development practice. Such an approach would require a move away from programmes of scale, top-down, expert-led development and instead towards a kinship or community-based approach that is context specific – whether that context is couched in terms of place, language, or “specialisation”. Hau’ofa’s oceanic imaginary might seem difficult to put into practice because of its aspirational quality and lack of programme direction. However, I have argued that this imaginary is already in operation.

Film-makers across Oceania are collaborating in a largely horizontal⁶⁰ fashion. The motivations and processes for the different types of collaboration vary from project to project. However, the very fact of that collaborative practice signals some important considerations that policy-makers in the region ought to take into account.

Firstly, *TOL* was established and continues to operate, because of MCT’s and MFF’s commitment to the kaupapa of growing film-makers in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa. This is a clear example of a horizontal approach to growing film-makers in the region. It may not yield immediate success on the big screen in the popular or economic sense. However, it grows a sense of whanaungatanga and reciprocity that may sustainably provide opportunities – whether participants and organisers call them by those terms or not. Further, this project provides an opportunity for young people to make films – one which might be difficult for on-island youth to come by because of access to resourcing. Articulations of collaborative film practice in Oceania demonstrate the significance of an Oceanic imaginary. Its horizontal

⁶⁰ I use this term in contrast to “top-down”, a label for institutionally driven planning and practice.

nature empowers film-makers by enabling them to simultaneously teach and learn from each other. This is important because it shows how practices of reciprocal capacity-building can help to grow film and film-making in the region.

Festival spaces, such as MFF and MACFEST provide a means of growing opportunities for cultural development beyond heritage and performative culture(s). While each festival receives different levels of institutional support and has a different purpose, they do have commonalities. They are excellent examples of spaces where film-makers (and creatives) can gather to collaborate, share experiences and knowledge. Such spaces are also important for enabling conversations between film-makers and community audiences. The significance of such dialogue will be explored at length in the next chapter.

This thesis suggests that the growth of film-making in Oceania is occurring through multiple trajectories, even if some of these projects and strategies are not highly visible on the national or regional agenda. It seeks to reinforce the relevance and importance of what might be termed “alternative” or “other” understandings of ‘networks’, reorienting our understanding of the way relationships are formed and how they can be productive for growing film in the region.

Conclusion

Collaboration is essential to film practice. Film creatives in Oceania are collaborating for two main reasons. The first reason is that the constraints on film-making capacity within many Oceanian nations are such that it is difficult for a single person, group or island community to produce a film alone. Collaboration allows for the sharing of equipment, skills and knowledge. The second reason speaks to the regional imaginary that scholars like Hau’ofa, Wendt and Te Punga Somerville write about – building on the deeper connection that exists between the people of Te Moana-Nui-A-Kiwa or the Pacific Ocean. Such connections continue to play a vital role in the establishment and growth of film-making in the region. These kinships are growing storytelling skills through film, sharing knowledge within and beyond the region, as well as developing spaces which could yield economic benefits. Despite the successes that these kinships have yielded, I argue that they have not been adequately recognised as sources and means of cultural practice. The challenge then for institutions is not only to recognise the “merits” of what might be seen as alternative ways of doing ‘development’, but perhaps even to adopt such methods. That is not to say that

national or regional organisations should co-opt the projects that I have outlined above but instead to find ways support them. The absence of supportive (or any) film policy in Oceania has seen communities of film-makers take it upon themselves to share and learn from each other to enable the growth of film practice and story-telling in the region.

Chapter Six: Film matters

Introduction

So far in my thesis I have made relatively few references to development and its processes or outcomes. I have instead talked about agency, representation and collaboration as they relate to indigenous and Oceanian film. My fourth chapter discussed the political significance of growing indigenous film and how this has occurred. My fifth chapter analysed the diverse methods of collaboration amongst Oceanian film-makers and the reasons behind these collaborations. It also discussed the existing policy support for film in Oceania – of which there is very little. What I have yet to make explicit are the ways that Oceanian film and film practice can contribute to a range of social, cultural, political and economic outcomes that ought to be recognised as cultural development. These practices of film-making and the framing of such kaupapa should, I argue, have greater resonance in policy platforms in the region.

Film, like other artforms, is simultaneously a process (of collaboration) and a product. This means that throughout the production process and in screening, there are spaces for learning and practicing technical skills and dialogue around creative decision-making. Beyond the technical side of capacity-building, an important part of this collaborative practice is the decision-making about representation, language and framing. These are political discussions which are important because they challenge paradigms of film-making which have disempowered indigenous communities (see chapter four) and connect to a broader political agenda of self-determination. Additionally, there is a tangible product that can be shared, whether as a learning resource, an audio-visual narrative or a mixture of both. There are also many ways for individuals and communities to engage with film. In film circles however, the notion of development as we might know it from a mainstream, institutional perspective is not an important focus. While there is some attention globally to films for social action, film's transformative value is not usually framed in development terms. My final chapter of analysis draws together my previous chapters and argues the valuable contributions that film is making in Oceania. I also make some recommendations as to how the kaupapa I have investigated might help realise some of the ends of a broader understanding of development. I discuss the implications of using film 'for development' and how such practice might be

reconciled with some of the obstacles to the production of film in the region, at different scales.

Value of film

Film's value to Oceania, I argue, lies largely in its ability to support social and cultural change as well as facilitate a regional expressive practice that is agentic and innovative. This section discusses the significance of film as a site of possibility for: enabling screen sovereignty; socially transformative change; building collaborative kinships and capacity.

Social change

One of the findings, unsurprisingly, that has come out of my research is the utility of film as a means of spreading an educational message. This is not new, given the work of organisations such as Wan Smol Bag⁶¹ and the Centre for Creative and Social Media⁶² as well as more recently, *PC*. This kind of film-making feeds directly into mainstream development by facilitating education around what has been termed social development. Films that deal with gender-based violence and maternal and sexual health issues enable education of and for communities that might otherwise rely on workshops, training programmes and the dissemination of material that requires literacy in a particular language. This becomes problematic when working with communities across a range of languages and dialects or those who do not have the literacy to understand such material.

Wan Smolbag is an NGO, established in 1989, which uses theatre and film as media to create “awareness, dialogue and empowerment in a range of areas from governance, development, health and wellbeing, and resource management” (Wan Smolbag, 2018). Some of their work includes the multi-series television show *Love Patrol* (2007-present) which is intended to educate audiences about AIDS and other social and health issues; and *Like Any Other Lovers* (1992) which was produced to stimulate dialogue and education about HIV. Such productions continue to get international funding from organisations such as the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The documentary series *Pawa Meri* (supported by the Centre for Creative and Social Media at the University of Goroka, PNG, and all written and

⁶¹ *Wan Smolbag* is an organisation which uses theatre and film to raise awareness and create dialogue about various issues in Vanuatu (Wan Smolbag, 2018).

⁶² The Centre for Social and Creative Media a research centre established by the University of Goroka focused on using media and communication for individuals and communities to voice concerns relating to social justice and indigenous values (University of Goroka, 2017).

directed by PNG women film-makers) also has the aim of creating change, through profiling a range of inspiring women leaders in PNG. One of the films, *Sister Lorraine* (2016), tells the story of Sister Lorraine Garasu, whose efforts towards peace and reconciliation both during, and following, the Bougainville crisis have been highly significant. These films are important because they are being made locally but also because they demonstrate the importance of film as a medium for communication and sharing. In illiterate communities and in circumstances where intervention by “outsiders” is not necessarily welcome, being able to present stories on screen with and from your own people can be a powerful means of stimulating dialogue.

PC has supported the use of film as a means of addressing gender-based issues in Oceania (see chapter three for full description). The rationale for the project, while articulated in instrumental terms, does emphasise the importance of context in both its planning and practice:

“With PNG and Samoan film-makers' recent development of culturally effective participatory methods and ethnographic evidence that Pacific gender differentiates relational roles not biological difference, this international research network opens a new space for dialogue in which academics and non-academics can collaborate in re-thinking the current paradigms in development policy and practice” (UKRI, 2016).

This project has highlighted the power of film as a means of broaching sensitive but important discussions of issues affecting communities.

“Because of the sensitive nature of some of these issues it seems that film looks to be a useful medium or a tool for people to be open about some of the challenges and some of the work that people are doing around gender.” (S. Amaama, personal communication, July 23, 2018).

This shows the utility of film as a means of starting conversation around gender-based issues – an area which remains a development priority for organisations such as UNDP and UN Women.⁶³ Safua is quite clear that this project looks to address gender issues and therefore forms part of development practice.

“This is an alternative to perhaps a more mainstream approach to gender issues. There have been challenges at the higher level where we’ve been in discussions with UN management and they’ve sort of dismissed film-making as irrelevant...that’s a challenge

⁶³ *Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa* was a project led by UNDP in partnership with the Samoan government. It aimed to increase the participation of women in national Samoan politics during the 2016 general election.

when these are people who are designing programs and rolling them out in the Pacific.” (S. Amaama, personal communication, July 23, 2018).

In an environment like Samoa “where sometimes the youth don’t feel their views are heard” (S. Amaama, personal communication, July 23, 2018), film is one way that youth and groups who may feel like they have not been listened to, can share their stories as they relate to gender issues. Similar remarks were made by Papua New Guinean film-maker Diane Anton about the film *Aliko and Ambai* (2017) which she co-directed with Mark Eby. *Aliko and Ambai* is a feature film about two young women who each face issues as they grow up in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Challenges include “tribal conflict, poverty, bullying, domestic violence, and forced marriage” (filmfreeway, ND). When asked about the impact of the film in her community she says:

“It is changing a lot of things. The ingredient in this film that we’ve done is that we’re not hiding away. We want to show that this is the issue and people need to take ownership, not just men but our women as well. It’s causing a lot of impact in the community. The production has gone and it’s big in Papua New Guinea. Also, men are talking about this – what they’ve been going through. And some of them have admitted “oh yeah it’s true, I’ve been going through some of this and I need to change this” or “I know of other men who are doing this”. It’s not about pinpointing men, it’s targeted to everyone.” (RNZ, 2019)

These are excellent examples which show how film can be used to engage communities in discussions about their own societies. Here the end is to work with communities to actively discuss and challenge the detrimental effect of gender-based issues. Using film to tell a story, whether fictional or based on true events, can enable dialogue between audience and film-makers alike. Film’s ability to travel within and between communities has implications for development practice using film. Access is already made easier by increased cellphone ownership (L. Munau, personal communication, July 8th, 2018). As high-speed internet becomes more readily available, film and its message(s) can reach more communities.

While creative input is important for maximising the impact of a story, arguably, using film for purely instrumental purposes might marginalise creative agency of film-makers because it limits the types of stories that can be told. This does not make film any less valuable to development. It simply means that measures must be taken to ensure that there are also spaces beyond mainstream development education for film-makers to tell stories of their choosing.

Building capacity

Another advantage of using film as a development tool in Oceania is that the process of film-making itself (not just the product) can be used as a capacity-building platform. Teaching individuals and communities how to use a camera, record audio, think about story-lines, and edit programmes develops skills through which young people may then be able to tell stories of their own choosing or gain employment in the creative industries or in journalism and media.

TOL is an excellent example of capacity-building in the film-making space. For Libby *TOL* is not about making films that are convergent with development priorities, although its processes inevitably develop intercultural knowledge, group facilitation, and technical skills. Instead the emphasis is more on youth sharing skills and experience in film-making with other youth in the region:

They realised that the opportunity that they've been given in terms of being able to have access to cameras and you know, learn techniques through film...that they needed to share that stuff. It's neat watching kids teach other kids because they're so quick. (L. Hakaraia, personal communication, July 16, 2018).

Providing individuals with skills to create and share their stories can be an empowering experience. Enabling individuals and communities to voice their stories through film is one way of creating space for expression. In addition, such training and opportunities might enable pathways into the film and media industries. Indeed, many of the film-makers I met were employed in the media or in communications using their skills.⁶⁴ Generally, exposure film workshops would be prohibitively expensive because of the lack of institutional support. There is, of course, a monumental leap from film-making in a community and/or development capacity to film-making for the purpose of screening to international audiences (see SPC, 2016). However, with the appropriate funding and training pathway, there could be scope for film-makers to pursue gainful employment in the creative industries.

⁶⁴ Diane Anton (director of *Aliko and Ambai*) works for Oxfam PNG in their communications team; Regina Lepping is at UNDP Solomon Islands working in youth development and communications; Jojo Lepping is a journalist for the *Solomon Star*; Gina Kaitipllel is Production Coordinator for Further Arts Nesar Studio.

Creative industries

Globally there is a growing interest in Oceanian film. This is indicated by the reception received by recent films such as *Vai*⁶⁵ (2019), *Waru*⁶⁶ (2017), *One Thousand Ropes*⁶⁷ (2017) and *Out of State*⁶⁸ (2017). If there is an appetite for Oceanian film, then it seems clear that there is scope for creative industries – specifically film-making – to grow with the right support in training, production and distribution. The SPC review of film and television in the region also identified the potential of film as an industry (SPC, 2016, p. 1). However, the review also identified that lack of funding and institutional support from national governments in Oceania were significant barriers to the growth of the film (and television) industry (SPC, 2016, p. 10). There is still a great deal of work to be done in order to build a film industry that is self-sustaining and can produce a return on investment. Options for supporting film in the region are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Using film as a development tool has importance. However, film-making also presents important opportunities to engage creatively in sharing audio-visual narrative; to tell and share stories in ways that have not been done before. I argue that it could and should have an active role to play in producing outcomes that are consistent with a more expansive understanding of development. This argument will become more apparent in the sections that follow.

Oceanic imaginary

Film used for educational purposes and growing economies is certainly important but what this section also shows is that film's transformative power goes beyond addressing social issues through education and dialogue, and growing industries. In chapter five of this thesis, I argued that some of the film-making practices operate outside policy spaces. This section highlights how the relationships and connections in film-making practice that I have observed

⁶⁵See chapter three for full description and chapter five for more discussion. *Vai* screened at the Berlinale Film Festival 2019, South by Southwest Film Festival 2019 and Māoriland Film Festival 2019 (NZ on Screen, n.d.)

⁶⁶ Directed by nine women indigenous to Aotearoa. In 2017 *Waru* screened at the New Zealand International Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival, imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival (opening night film). (NZ on Screen, n.d.)

⁶⁷ Directed by Samoa-born Tusi Tamasese. In 2017 the film screened at: Berlinale, Māoriland Film Festival, Heartlands Film Festival, Adelaide Film Festival, BFI London Film Festival, Stockholm International Film Festival; in 2018: Palm Springs International Film Festival, Asian Film Festival Barcelona, Spain, University of Iowa - Bijou Film Board.

⁶⁸ Directed by Ciara Lacey (Hawai'i, United States of America), awarded Special Jury Award for Artistic Vision, Portland Film Festival, 2017, winner 2017 Liberty Bell Award from the Hawaii State Bar Association's Young Lawyer's Division.

are reflective of post-development. In the context of Oceania little research has been carried out in the development theory and practice spaces about the influence of kinship connections as I have analysed, aside from writing about remittances and labour movements (Bertram and Watters, 1985; Stark and Bloom, 1985). What my research has shown is that kinships, as they are forming and operating in Oceania, continue to be spaces where a range of outcomes are created. There is recognition of the importance of practicing and exchanging *performative* and *material* culture in the region (see for example SPC and COPAC, 2018). This has not extended however, to This section summarises the various ways that film-making projects engage with and reflect the Oceanic imaginary, as envisioned by Wendt (1976) and Hau'ofa (1993, 2008).

Through Our Lens

TOL engaged directly with film-making organisations on each island they visited and were invited by those organisations to carry out the film-making workshops with *rangatahi*. The horizontal nature of engagement – from one film-making kin to another – reduces the kind of power imbalance that is inherent in top-down development, and that inevitably reduces the agency of development “subjects” or “target communities”. Communities are engaging in ways that are respectful of the agency that each person has – as an individual and as part of communities of their own. This kaupapa builds on shared interests where the work of each partner is understood and valued. This goes some way to reducing power imbalance often inherent in development processes – particularly between donors and development organisations, and recipient communities.

Film-makers travelling to other islands in Oceania also has implications for how power may be perceived. After all, access to the resources and equipment in Aotearoa, whether you are in the film industry or not, is much easier than elsewhere in the region (with the exception of Australia, and to a lesser extent, Hawai'i). However, Libby is adamant that TOL is underscored by the notion of reciprocity where film-makers are brought together to learn from each other. Within the tuakana/teina relationships that emerge in TOL, Libby has stated that the rangatahi see themselves as teina when they travel to another community, and are focused on learning, as well as sharing skills. The horizontality of the relationship between organisations is important. It signals respect for all communities, and the knowledge and skill they bring.

The basis for such practices is far from the modernist thinking centred around economic development that has historically shaped development. That kin relationships and whakapapa are integral to these project sites, is instead, largely in opposition to the neoliberal agenda that has driven development in recent decades and which posits the market as a neutral regulatory force able to address development needs.

Māoriland Film Festival

MFF plays an important role as probably the most significant indigenous film festival in Oceania.⁶⁹ It enables the growth and strengthening of relationships between film-making communities in the region. For Libby Hakaraia and the team at Māoriland, being able to share and experience indigenous films with indigenous communities from around the globe is paramount. Within this space, both the act of watching the film in a shared space and the fact that those stories are told by indigenous film-makers are both of central importance. In addition to this MFF hosts fora for discussion including Q&A sessions, *NativeMinds* public talks as well as other workshops for industry members. The question and answer sessions following some of the film screenings present opportunities for film-makers and audiences to engage in discussion about the film-making processes, inspiration behind the film, and how it might relate to their own communities. *NATIVE Minds* is a “series of interactive discussions that examine how indigenous thinking shapes our existence, and our view of the world” (MFF, 2018).

Vai

Vai brought together women film-makers with heritage linking them to various islands in Oceania. It is an extremely important film in terms of representation (both within the region and globally) of the lives of Pacific women. However, film-makers had to be New Zealand residents, in order, presumably, to access financial support from NZFC. On one hand, therefore *Vai* gives visibility to Oceanian women film-makers and the stories that they have to tell, in Aotearoa and beyond. On the other hand, however, the directors all seem to occupy relative positions of power and privilege when compared with film-makers on other island nations in Oceania. Individuals and communities from Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, and Aotearoa could be a part of the storytelling and film-making processes as actors, but not in key creative roles. Although kinships may emerge from that film-making process

⁶⁹ Excluding Australia.

that create further opportunities, *Vai* demonstrates the unevenness of access to resourcing and institutional support that persists within the region, and that, therefore, impacts the ability of some to tell their stories. This means that while film practice is one way of enacting agency that is consistent with regional imaginaries, it too, is a process within which striations of power may form.

Pacific Connections (Community Film-making for Gender Equality in the Pacific)

PC demonstrates a different politicised process. It shows how connections between film-making communities forged through institutionally driven projects can produce outcomes that resonate with mainstream development policy and practice.

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is one example of film being directly instrumentalised for development outcomes. *PC* was focused on fostering film-making in the community to produce visual stories that would become a part of a dialogue on gender-based issues. This project was driven and funded by development, government and education institutions.⁷⁰ It funded workshops and the *FC* to encourage aspiring film-makers to participate and create their own films. This challenge also facilitated the film-making kinships in Samoa. This is important because it shows how development practice can aid or accelerate relationship-building processes. Enabling connections also provides spaces for people to collaborate and exchange experience in film-making. To an extent, this is problematic. Development is intervening to create communities of film-makers while imposing creative restrictions – such as messaging around gender-based issues – in order to produce mainstream outcomes. However, these individuals and communities are still making films that tell stories and represent their voices. To diminish this film-making process because film is used for instrumental ends would undermine the agency of those film-makers who have chosen to tell their story for a particular end.

The collaborative approaches that I have discussed above often build new connections between film creatives or draw on those connections which have already been forged. This perspective is consistent with and arguably a manifestation of Hau'ofa's Oceanic imaginary, which defines Oceania as a sea of islands connected, rather than separated, by the ocean. Oceanians assume agency as people with knowledge and experience to share with

⁷⁰ See chapter three for full description of *Pacific Connections*.

each other across the Pacific Ocean. It also articulates and embodies personal and professional connections that defy the colonial borders of nation-state, instead drawing on a shared whakapapa and kaupapa to bring people together. This is a key part of this thesis because it informs our understanding of Oceanic network building at a horizontal level.

The use of kinship reflects an expansive understanding of community as limited by physical or geographical proximity. The literature about the role of kinships – beyond the village or national level – in the implementation of development across the region is rather limited with the exception of the MIRAB model (see Bertram & Watters, 1986) of development and New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) (see Stark & Bloom, 1985). The focus of these models is on the *economic* consequences (Bedford, 2001) for both families and at a higher level, nation-states. Emphasising the ways that film-makers connect and share with each other highlights their respective agency and how they exercise that. This challenges the dominance of the universal or global approaches and ends of mainstream development by highlighting the value of connecting communities with, from and to others within the region.

Development often operates at such a large scale that often the agency of communities can be obscured. Perhaps utilising kinships as both drivers of development and contexts of development would not be the “rational”⁷¹ choice. Arguably the lines of accountability may prove difficult where working with groups which are not necessarily aligned with national interests. Perhaps the complexity of factoring in people and relationships is seen as too difficult or too risky in development planning and practice. However, this kind of thinking “is associated with a neglect of the values and principles that inspire action and with neglect of promotion of agency” (Frediani, Boni and Gasper, 2014, p.2). The clash between “rational” development planning and practice and the messy realities of life has been interrogated by a number of scholars (see Mowles, Stacey, and Griffen, 2008; Moser, 1993). Lastly, emphasising the connectedness across time and space, rather than the geographic distance between individuals and communities across the region subverts many of the development narratives about the Pacific and small island developing states (Hau’ofa, 2008).

⁷¹ Rationality in development has become increasingly important as a project-oriented approach to development has become the norm (see Frediani and Gasper, 2014).

This uptake or reclaiming of the lens and storytelling is consistent with hopeful post-development. Recognition of film and its history as the product of political struggle enables people to “untangle” indigenous stories from the medium and method which has, for so long, marginalised indigenous communities – and choose to tell stories on their own terms.

Supporting role: development policy

Film presents a number of opportunities for Oceania as a region because of its versatility as a tool and creative process that can facilitate capacity-building, social change, and greater screen sovereignty. Some of the institutional approaches, led by organisations like UNESCO and SPC do aim to foster cultural development in Oceania, however, these are still largely strategic in nature and have yet to be fully implemented (SPC and COPAC, 2018). All but one of the spaces or events that I interrogated in my thesis were led by a film-based organisation rather than a development organisation. Further, the way that these spaces or events were organised were not bound by overly bureaucratic processes. This is important for several reasons. Firstly, it highlights how integral industry-based organisations are to the growth of creative industries as opposed to development organisations which tend to overlook the creative industries. Secondly, that government support has, in many places, been and continues to be crucial for growing industries. This has certainly been the case in Aotearoa with the NZFC and NZ On Air supporting the growth of New Zealand’s film industry. A lack of support elsewhere reflects an apparent reluctance on the part of governments to invest in ways that might be needed to develop a film industry. Thirdly, the processes that are taking place in the region fall within more expansive understandings of development.

However, the spaces where Oceanic film-making and film sharing is growing are not spaces that are led or created by institutions. *PC* is the only project which, while in its infant stages, is driven by individuals from relatively large institutions and funded by a European institution (refer to chapter three). *Vai* was funded by the NZ Film Commission and driven by established Māori and Pasifika producers Kerry Warkia and Kiel McNaughton. The MACFEST is part of a wider regional agenda to nurture cultural exchange amongst Pacific nations and is focused largely on performative and heritage cultures (SPC and COPAC, 2018). Individuals such as Libby Hakaraia, Llane Munau and other film-makers from the region did not use development language such as “outputs”, “sustainable development” or even the word “development” in

their discussion on film. Instead their kaupapa were driven by their respective desires to tell stories; facilitate social change in their communities; and grow local film and film-makers.

The discussion above highlights the strengths of film-making and film networks as they are currently being used in the region – to tell and pass on stories, to share knowledge, to facilitate dialogue, and perhaps more marginally, to grow opportunities for film-makers. My previous analysis has highlighted that cultural development policy has done little, as yet, to aid the growth of film in Oceania. There is a cultural development policy framework which focuses largely on heritage and performative arts as a means of attracting tourism, and which discusses how culture can play a more integral role in the way development policy is formulated generally. However, this policy framework does not necessarily account for the diversity of film-making methods and projects in the region. This section outlines some recommendations for film or cultural policy in the region.

Growing kinships

I argue that more attention needs to be paid to the kinships which already exist within and between communities of film-makers in the region. The tuakana-teina model that is used in Through Our Lens programme; the collaborative approach undertaken to produce films such as *Vai*; the relationships created informally between film creatives in film festivals and other spaces are not usually the kinds of spaces where development planning and practice occurs, yet they are clearly generative and enabling on many levels. Consideration ought, therefore, to be given to how development policy and funding can be used to support growing such opportunities to connect with each other (while being careful not to co-opt these spaces). While the reasons for collaborating vary, there is little offered by development and cultural policy organisations across the region which encourages collaboration in the creative industries beyond nation-state borders. *Vai* is unique in that sense but was still restricted to film-makers who held New Zealand citizenship or equivalent working rights, to receive that funding and support.

Regional film support

A regional film fund which enables and strengthens connections between film-making kinships across Oceania would clearly be beneficial for growing Oceanian film, particularly to support film-makers with no state support and for enabling bigger productions. The recently established Arctic Indigenous Film Fund (AIFF) is one example of a regional film fund that supports the growth of indigenous film-making which might serve as a useful model for creating institutional support for film in Oceania. The goals of the AIFF are set out below (AIFF, 2019).

Arctic Indigenous Film Fund will:

- Support development of indigenous film projects in the whole Arctic
- Invest in all film productions that enhance the indigenous peoples cultures and languages
- Encourage co-production by building a sustainable film industry in the Arctic with special emphasis on indigenous peoples cultures.
- Build competence in the Arctic film region by strengthening collaboration between film institutions, companies, producers and universities.

The AIFF is funded by Sundance Film Institute⁷² (United State of America), Canada Media Fund⁷³ (Canada), Greenland Film Makers⁷⁴ (Greenland) and Archy – Promotion and Film-making in Yakutia⁷⁵ (Russia). It is also funded and will be established under the International Sami Film Institute⁷⁶ (Norway). It provides support to film-makers in all stages, from screenwriting to production and marketing (AIFF, 2019). The AIFF goes some way to creating financial bridges to enable indigenous film-makers in the region to tell their stories on screen. It rationalises its existence in the following terms:

⁷² Institute established by Robert Redford dedicated to independent film. See chapter four for more.

⁷³ A not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to guide “Canadian content towards a competitive global environment through fostering industry innovation, rewarding success, enabling a diversity of voice and promoting access to content through industry and private sector partnerships” (CMF, 2017). It receives government funding and contributions from Canada’s cable, satellite and IPTV distributors (Ibid.).

⁷⁴ The purpose of Greenland Film Makers is to promote film content from Greenland and create opportunities within the North Atlantic region for film-makers to share their experiences with each other (FILM.GL, 2016).

⁷⁵ No information available on this organisation.

⁷⁶ Sapmi is the region which is home to the indigenous, Sami people. It stretches over the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and part of Russia. The International Sami Film Institute is an organisation dedicated to growing Sami film by providing opportunities for film-makers in all stages of film-making (ISFI, 2018).

“There is much economic and cultural potential for the region, also for indigenous film and arts. The goal is to have Arctic broadcasts covering the entire region for all the indigenous communities. Within the various broadcast companies there are co-operations, but they have small funds depending on governmental or regional support. There is a lack of laws and regulations within the different countries to stimulate finance co-operation...For this reason there is an urgent need for the indigenous arctic artists film-makers to work together since they have common interests and stories to tell and they also have the right to be heard and to express themselves also in a more global context.” (AIFF, 2019).

The motivations for establishing the AIFF resonate with Oceanian film-makers’ articulations of their desire to grow film in Oceania. Its importance is not purely as a means of stimulating economic growth but also to grow representation and voice of indigenous communities behind the lens and on screen. This model is consistent with that proposed by the SPC’s (2016, p. 2) review of film and television in the Oceanian region. With a clear vision and development plan, a mandated organisation would aid the growth of film and film-makers in the region. This would broaden opportunities for collaborative film in Oceania for a range of purposes.

Conclusion

It is my contention that my sites of inquiry are driving cultural development both in terms of questioning *how* culture is produced but also the kinds of cultural *products* that are created in film-making spaces in Oceania. The approach taken by COPAC places regional and national institutions in the “driver’s seat” of development because it has formulated and implemented development policy. Though development driven by national-level institutions is not undesirable per se, my research highlights that it is not the only way to “do” development. That there are also a number of projects which are yielding the kinds of successes that might be hailed as cultural development – despite them occurring in spaces that might not typically be associated with development. Notions of agency and representation are often included as part of the dialogue about democratising development. This, of course, is important because it goes some way to addressing the power imbalance that often exists between local communities and development organisations. Film is another means of adding to this practice of democratising development by enabling communities to actively engage in film-making and narrate their own stories.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Post-development has been criticised for failing to provide alternatives or solutions to the problems that it highlights. If development is an inherently political process which privileges certain groups and systems of knowledge and practices, then the role of post-development proponents is to imagine development differently (Gibson-Graham, 2008). This requires not only rethinking the outcomes of development, but also how we go about doing it. The idea of 'hopeful geographies' (Gibson-Graham, 2008) promotes going beyond simply recognising that development has caused some damage. It seeks to empower voices and worldviews that are often rendered less visible by development processes and to come up with solutions. McGregor (2009, p. 1692) summarises the role of post-development research:

“If ‘words make worlds’ post-development researchers are increasingly seeking to articulate alternatives to encourage spaces where what was once dismissed as irrelevant or non-existent are highlighted and can be discussed, find support and shape futures. Such approaches provide powerful means of re-imagining places in terms of capacities and opportunities rather than in terms of needs and limitations.”

McGregor's challenge urged me, during my research to be particular with some of the terms I chose to employ. If post-development is about challenging the definitions of development as determined by Western frameworks then the language too must also be challenged.

I have, throughout my thesis employed terms such as kinships and Oceania. I have used these terms because they reflect relationships between individuals and communities which are grounded in people and place. I have used the term Oceania because of the history that “Pacific” bears (refer to chapter one). Additionally, the growing body of scholarship which uses the name suggests that there is strong support for its use.⁷⁷ The term kinship has a familial or relational dimension that other terms, like network, lack. The ancestral and epistemological connections are beyond a seemingly neutral and ahistorical term like network or association. Using language like this renders more visible, not the existence of kinships in the region but the way that they are and have been forming. It also draws attention to the work they are doing and how they do it.

Post-development and Pacific Studies have played seminal roles in my interrogation of film and its contributions to development in Oceania. They have enabled me to deconstruct and

⁷⁷ See for example Te Punga Somerville, 2012; Lopesi, 2018.

analyse development in ways that are conscious of context. This disciplinary intersection is valuable in development research because it seeks to question and challenge the knowledge and systems that have generally determined the trajectory of development theory and practice. Moreover, this intersectional approach does so in a way that is informed by Oceanian scholarship and aspirations.

This final chapter goes on to summarise the findings of my research and highlights the important ways that film and development are interacting in Oceania.

Power of film

One of the most repeated sentiments that came out of my interviews and observation of film festivals and spaces, was the “power of film”. Safua remarked on the ability of film to encourage discussion of sensitive issues, but not purely because it provides something for individuals and communities to speak to. It also conveys themes and stories in ways that words cannot.

“You know our people are very visual and I think through film and people expressing their own stories, I think that’s always moving for people.” S. Amaama, personal communication, July 2018).

Film’s power lies in the screening experience as a means of audiences engaging in viewing, not being mere recipients. Barry Barclay (1990) argued that sharing in the storytelling experience with others was an important part of how indigenous film is shared. This tended to come up in the discussion on film as a medium or the reasons why film-makers got into film in the first place. For them it was as much about a fascination with moving image as it was about using film as a tool for telling stories and spreading a message or messages. One of the common threads was the power it had to transform, by highlighting or invoking social change.

It is well-known that knowledge transmission in Oceania has been heavily reliant on an oral tradition (Finnegan & Orbell, 1995) whereby stories, whakapapa and sacred knowledges have been passed down through storytelling, chanting or performative culture. The nature of such practice varies across the region and has not happened uniformly across islands. Film is one way of documenting and to a certain extent, preserving stories or knowledge. There is a scope and degree of utility to film for documenting history for indigenous populations (see Pearson and Knabe, 2014). One of the issues that arises out of this proposition that film might be used

as a tool for documenting history is that such films can be criticised for failing to account for the multi-dimensional complexity inherent to all histories. Of course, film is always framed and so is never simply a recording of the “real”. If the camera is used in a way that is driven by Oceanians in a respectful manner then film-making becomes less about telling the story of *the other* and instead about sharing stories with *each other*. This is consistent with Smyth’s (1992) argument that film enables communities to “rewrite history from the bottom up” (p. 206). Film provides a channel through which people can share knowledge, and experience.

Indigenous film

My research has highlighted the political significance of indigenous film. Defining indigeneity and what makes an indigenous film remains a task fraught with difficulties. Self-identification as indigenous by a film-maker or a key creative on a film and adopting a film-making process that is conscious of indigenous worldviews and tells a story from such perspectives, are important elements of indigenous film. However, indigeneity as practiced outside place of origin, and the involvement of non-indigenous in key creative roles can complicate what might seem like simple criteria. As cultures and stories become more globalised through increasingly pervasive sharing practices, the process of delineating indigenous film from non-indigenous film becomes an increasingly complex process.

Examining the contributions of indigenous film-makers around the globe, provides a useful understanding of the political significance of indigenous film globally. The agency of indigenous film comes partly through redressing some of the inequities borne out of ethnographic film-making and the misappropriation of stories and cultures of indigenous peoples. Establishing a platform for indigenous communities to share and learn from others’ experiences of colonisation has been gaining momentum with the proliferation of festivals and platforms for indigenous and independent film. There is a sense of solidarity amongst indigenous film-makers as people who have experiences rooted in a shared history of subjugation by colonial powers. Efforts to engage in meaningful and authentic storytelling to address these experiences, and also for indigenous film-makers to create narratives on any subject matter of choice, are part of a wider decolonisation agenda. The reclamation of the lens and consequently of narrative results in ownership of story which in turn is an exercise of agency.

Oceanic kinships

This research found that kinships are being formed between communities of Oceanian film-makers through common connections to each other – through the ocean, through whakapapa, through a shared passion for storytelling. Film-makers throughout parts of the islands of Oceania have expressed an understanding of regionalism that is not based solely on geographic proximity. Instead, it is based on ancestral connections and shared historical experiences of colonialism and some similarities in world view.

Institutions and organisations have contributed to building Oceanic kinships with film projects such as *Vai* pulling together Pacific industry professionals with up-and-coming film-makers to bring together a production that has been screened to mainstream audiences around the world. This is financially supported by government-mandated institutions and thus largely along nation-state lines. Opportunities to connect and collaborate with other film-makers, as in the case of *Vai*, are not as available to everyone across the region. Some of the other film projects in the region led by institutions have an instrumental component but contribute to the growth of stories on screen led by Oceanians. Film festivals also present important opportunities for film-makers to connect with each other. These opportunities are often available to those who have funding available to travel to festivals. Kinship-building among film-makers is occurring in different types of spaces and, like most processes, happens unevenly. These kinships are important to film-making because they provide links to communities with skills and knowledge with each other.

Expansive development

My thesis highlights the importance of continuing the challenge to reimagine development in Oceania. I have demonstrated how employing an intersectional framework from Pacific Studies and Development Studies can be used to interrogate the ends and processes of development. Questioning how we frame development is pivotal if we are to find different ways of thinking about and doing development in Oceania. I have found through the application of ideas from post-development theory that much of what is happening in film spaces in the region is beneficial for communities. Building and strengthening kinships; growing indigenous film and conversation about the issues that indigenous communities face; reclaiming agency and story – these are all forms of empowerment which contribute to well-being in a broad sense. If we moved beyond mainstream development priorities and facilitated spaces that allow for sharing, exchange and learning in ways that may not fit tidily

within the “logic” of project management, or bureaucratic processes, then perhaps we might be practicing a hopeful kind of post-development.

Limitations

This research is limited by the scope of projects that I was able to explore. That is necessarily the case with all research. My analysis employs the regional or Oceanic imaginary. In doing so, I am trying to highlight connections across vast waters and communities occurring, being strengthened and articulated through film practice. While I argue that the notion of a regional imaginary can and does have powerful implications for the way we conceive of, plan and practice development, my application and analysis has been limited to the Eastern Pacific (largely Polynesia) by virtue of the types of projects and festivals that I focused on. An examination of a wider range of film projects from communities such as Papua New Guinea in the East and Federated States of Micronesia in the West and the discourse around their projects might have helped bolster my argument for a notion of development underpinned by the regional imaginary. My research must be carefully qualified by stating that the notion of the Oceanic imaginary may not capture how many across the region conceptualise their place within the Pacific Ocean. Instead, this notion likely has uneven applicability because of the diversity of communities and their connections, spiritual or otherwise, to the ocean.

Another limitation is the limited number of interviews I was able to carry out. When my research began, the funding for *Vai* had just been announced and within a year the film had premiered. This meant that there was very little opportunity to arrange interviews, much less engage with the film-makers for the purpose of my research. Had I been able to engage with one of the directors or producers in an interview, I would have been allowed a depth of insight that might strengthen my argument about the importance of regional connections between Oceanian film-makers. A corollary of this time constraint is that I was unable to include much of the reception and outcomes of the film projects. *Vai* had yet to be toured around the Pacific island communities who were a part of the film-making process; MFF was in the process of establishing a film-making residency; *FC* was in the process of presenting lessons learned from the competition and figuring out the next steps. While the events or projects themselves can be seen as finite in temporal terms, their impacts are not necessarily so limited.

Future directions for research

Any future research would be best placed to cover a wider range of film projects, especially in geographic terms. As discussed above, my research was largely centred around Polynesian communities. However, in order to convincingly argue that the regional imaginary can and does inform film practice at a truly regional level, one would have to carry out qualitative research in many parts of Oceania. Following the trajectories of film-makers who participated in *TOL*, *Vai*, *FC* and *MACFEST* would allow for longitudinal-type analysis of the effectiveness of kinships and the regional imaginary in growing film. Lastly, an extension of this research would be to conduct further qualitative research in partnership with policy-makers on the ways that these kinships might be supported and mobilised in development spaces in ways that are constructive for film-makers, communities and government.

Going forward

This is an exciting time in Oceania for film-makers. Never has the technology been available for communities to collaborate with each other in ways that they have been in recent years. While film-making remains a relatively new practice in the region, the projects that I have discussed in this thesis indicate that there is a growing interest and passion for creating and sharing stories on screen.

One of the greatest needs in the region, if film and film-making is to grow here, is resourcing. Money alone will not eliminate all the barriers to film-making in the region such as access to equipment, and training in all stages of film development – whether in script development, production or post-production. It is, however, a necessary component. As suggested in chapter six of my thesis, a funding structure like that of the Arctic Film Fund, in Oceania, could be very significant. It could encourage collaboration amongst film-makers across the region and support some of the ways that film-makers already connect with each other.

Film festivals such as MFF are hugely significant spaces for film-makers in the region. They enable learning, sharing and dialogue between film-makers and audiences that are seldom generated in other spaces. These are not only crucial for film-making but also for communities who are able to see themselves and their stories represented on screen. Providing more opportunities for film-makers to engage in such spaces is important for growing film-making.

Policies aimed at growing film in Oceania need to account for the diverse film-making methods that already exist. This includes accounting for the contribution that kinships make

to growing film and recognising the importance of those relationships. If film is to play an increasingly significant role in development – whether for facilitating social change through dialogue and education; as part of a wider decolonisation agenda; or to grow culture and creative industries, then institutions must support diverse methods of film-making.

Final reflections

During the course of my research I realised (as many researchers do), that the apparent direction of my research had shifted significantly. I originally thought that my thesis would do one of two things: either, it would produce a number of recommendations for institution-led cultural development, using film as a medium; or it would condemn development institutions and their agenda for marginalising film practice in cultural development. I quickly realised that more often than not, research is almost entirely about the spaces in between. What I thought were mutually exclusive choices between development paradigms were really different ways of doing and seeing things. Perhaps the steepest learning curve I encountered during my research is the ongoing importance of making space for *many* ways of seeing and doing things. It was then, that I realised that the value of this research lies in the diversity of spaces and projects that I interrogated.

This research adds to the literature that challenges mainstream definitions of development which are often limited by Western understandings of progress and modernity. It seeks to highlight the ways that collaborative film practice and development policy in Oceania, intersect but also talk past each other. In doing so, I have highlighted spaces where communities in Oceania are making and growing spaces for creative cultural production through film – the very kind of spaces that Hau’ofa (2008) argued as necessary for the “freedom” of Oceania. Projects such as *TOL*, *Vai*; spaces such as MACFEST and MFF enable the growth and strengthening of collaborative kinships in film. These are integral to continued efforts to “the maintenance of autonomy with a homogenising global system” (Hau’ofa, 2008, p. 81). That these kinships are borne out of connections to and through the Pacific Ocean and strengthened over a period of time makes their cultural and creative work more sustainable. This research has revealed only *some* of the film practice taking place in the region and indicate that the prospects for the future of film in Oceania are exciting.

Appendices



Pacific Diasporic Communities and Cultural Connection

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, thank you for considering my request.

Who am I?

My name is Melanie Puka and I am studying toward a Master of Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. Dr Polly Stupples is my supervisor on this project. This research project is supported by the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund.

What is the aim of the project?

This project explores the ways that the Pacific diaspora and Pacific communities on island collaborate to create and share film and film-making techniques. It focuses on the film industry as this is an area of growing visibility and importance in development, but it also is an industry where Pacific creatives are not often written or talked about. It aims to understand the challenges and opportunities that Pacific film-makers in the region encounter.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee [Approval Number _____].

How can you help?

If you agree to take part I will interview you at your place of work, or at another venue (like a café) that we both agree on. Alternatively we may talk via Skype. I will ask you questions about the potential of the film industry in the Pacific and your understanding of the impact of networks and the collaboration between . The interview will take between half an hour and an hour. I would like to record the interview and write it up later as this helps me to recall the details of our conversation. You can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any point before March 2018. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

What will happen to the information you give?

This research is confidential. This means that the researchers named below will be aware of your identity but the research data will be aggregated and your identity will not be disclosed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation unless you expressly give permission to name you. However, you should be aware that in small projects your identity might be obvious to others in your community.

Only my Supervisor and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and 2 years after the research ends.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used to develop my Masters' thesis and potentially publication for an academic journal.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study before October 2018;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of your interview recording;
- read over and comment on a written summary of your interview;
- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Principal Investigator:

Melanie Puka

Student, Master of Development Studies

School of Geography, Environment, and Earth
Sciences

Email: tmelanie.puka@gmail.com

Phone: +64 21 884872

Supervisor:

Dr Polly Stupples

Lecturer, Geography, Victoria University of
Wellington

School of Geography, Environment, and Earth
Sciences

Email: polly.stupples@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.



Pacific Diasporic Communities and Cultural Connections

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

This consent form will be held for up to 2 years.

Researcher: Melanie Puka, School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study at any point before October 2018 without giving any reason, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- The information I have provided will be destroyed 2 years after the research is finished.
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor. I understand that the results will be used for academic articles and a summary report, and a summary of the results may be presented at conferences.
- My name will not be used in reports, nor will any information that would identify me.
- I would like a copy of the transcript of my interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a summary of my interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below. Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of participant: _____

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____

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