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# **Civil Society and Development: Pacific Island Case Studies**

A dissertation presented  
in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in Development Studies  
at Massey University,  
Palmerston North,  
New Zealand.

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**1999**

## ABSTRACT

This enquiry set out to examine the role of civil society in economic and social development, and the relationship between the state, the market and civil society, in the island nations of the Pacific. The study also explored the notions of progress and development and identified the impact of the dominant development paradigm on traditional Pacific Island communities, cultures and economies. Case studies were undertaken of three segments of civil society in the Pacific Islands. A village community in Samoa, a non-government organisation in the Solomon Islands and a Pacific-wide social movement were the subjects of this enquiry.

The study found that state-led and market-driven approaches to development have led to significant development failures in the Pacific Islands and a neglect of civil society. It is argued throughout this study, with supporting evidence from the three case studies, that civil society can and does make a significant contribution to the economic and social development of Pacific Island nations but that contribution has largely been neglected. This thesis argues that the state, the market and civil society all have important complementary roles to play in the development of a nation and, by working together in a coordinated manner, they have the capacity to improve the quality of life and create good change for people of the Pacific and their communities.

It was concluded that civil society needs to assume a higher priority in development planning and practice, and that the participation of indigenous people, on their own terms, is central to good development practice. Furthermore, an explanatory model of the relationship between state, market and civil society was advanced. This model has the capacity to assist development education, policy formulation and programme planning. This study contributes to the discourse on civil society and alternative development and advances a range of proposals to improve development practice.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the life and work of Luamanuvao Winnie Laban  
and to the memory of Margaret Ellen Swain (1917-1999).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the product of a decade of work in the island nations of the Pacific. I acknowledge the insights, learning and wisdom I have gained from the hundreds of Pacific Islanders I have worked in partnership with, in many different settings. You have given me inspiration and hope for the future. You have much to teach us about sustainable development. Thank you.

*Fa'afetai i le aigapotopoto i Samoa. Fa'afetai tele lava i le Afioga a Patu Aivalu Tunupopo mo le alofa, ma le agalelei. Fa'afetai tinā pele Emi mo lau tofa mamao ma le fa'autaga. Fa'afetai Nu'uiali'i Mulipola Ma'ilo Saipele ua maliu. Fa'afetai fo'i toea'ina le Susuga ia Tupo Tunupopo. Fa'afetai i le Ali'i tusi tala le Susuga ia Professor Alapati Wendt.*

My thanks to Abraham Baeanisia, John Roughan and the staff of the Solomon Islands Development Trust, particularly Walter Ben Taurasi, Roland Batarii, Jennifer Wate and Sister Donna. My thanks also to David Gegeo who encouraged me to explore the notion of an indigenous epistemology.

During the last decade I have worked, with Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, as Coordinator of Consumers International's South Pacific Consumer Protection Programme. I acknowledge the support of Consumers International and the opportunity the South Pacific Consumer Protection Programme has given me to work, and be part of the development of the consumer movement, throughout the Pacific Island nations.

I acknowledge, with gratitude, the support, guidance and wisdom of my supervisor, Professor John Overton, Institute of Development Studies, Massey University.

Two sections of this dissertation were published previously. Sections of an early draft of Chapter 2 were included in a paper presented to the Aotearoa New Zealand International Development Studies Network Inaugural Conference by John Overton and published as: Swain, P. and J. Overton, 1998. 'The Changing Face of Civil Society.' In *ANZIDSN Conference Proceedings*. Auckland: ANZIDSN: 18-22. Aspects of the material on consumer legislation in Chapter 6 were published in: Swain, P. 1995. 'Developing Consumer Law in the South Pacific.' *Consumer Directions*, October: 10-11.

I declare that this dissertation is my own work, except for those sections explicitly acknowledged, and that the main content of the dissertation has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other university. I assert the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

P.M.S. June 1999.

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## GLOSSARY OF SAMOAN TERMS

<i>afakasi</i>	a person of mixed parentage (lit. half-caste).
<i>aiga</i>	family or extended family.
<i>ali'i</i>	<i>matai</i> , high chief or sitting chief.
<i>'aumaga</i>	the untitled men of a village.
<i>aualuma</i>	the (young) women of a village.
<i>fa'alavelave</i>	event (funeral, wedding etc.) requiring <i>fa'asamoa</i> .
<i>fa'alupega</i>	record of titles, ranks, ancestry (oral or written).
<i>fa'asamoa</i>	the Samoan way, custom, tradition, culture.
<i>faife'au</i>	church minister.
<i>fale</i>	house.
<i>fale o le faife'au</i>	church minister's residence.
<i>fale fonofono</i>	meeting house.
<i>fale o'o</i>	small house for meeting and resting.
<i>fale talimalo</i>	large village meeting house.
<i>faletua</i>	wife, wife of chief.
<i>faletua ma tausilua</i>	women's committee, wives of chiefs and orators.
<i>falesā</i>	church building
<i>fono</i>	meeting, village council.
<i>gafa</i>	genealogy.
<i>lotu</i>	prayer, church, spirituality.
<i>Malo</i>	the government, state.
<i>matai</i>	chief ( <i>ali'i</i> or <i>tulafale</i> ).
<i>meaalofa</i>	gift as part of customary exchange

<i>nu'u</i>	village.
<i>palolo</i>	seafood delicacy, worm of living coral.
<i>papalagi</i>	European(s) (lit. skyburster).
<i>pule</i>	secular authority of chief.
<i>pulenu'u</i>	village council, leader of fono, national village council.
<i>sa'ofa'i</i>	ceremony to bestow <i>matai</i> title.
<i>talanoaga</i>	conversation, a talk, discussion.
<i>taule'ale'a</i>	young man, leader of 'aumaga.
<i>tausi avā</i>	to support, wife of untitled man.
<i>tausi ali'i</i>	husband or wife of <i>matai</i> .
<i>taupou</i>	ceremonial village maiden, virgin.
<i>toea'ina</i>	elder, male.
<i>tulafale</i>	<i>matai</i> , talking chief, orator.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDAB	Australian International Development Assistance Bureau.
ANGOC	Asian Non-Government Organisation Coalition.
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development (formerly AIDAB).
CAC-PNG	Consumer Affairs Council of Papua New Guinea.
CASI	Consumers Association of the Solomon Islands.
CCF	Consumer Council of Papua New Guinea.
CI	Consumers International (formerly IOCU).
CI-ROAP	CI Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.
CUENB	Consumers Union of East New Britain.
DFTCA	Department of Fair Trading and Consumer Affairs (Fiji).
FBCA	Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs (Australia).
GAD	Gender and Development.
IMF	International Monetary Fund.
IOCU	International Organisation of Consumers Unions.
LDC	Least Developed Country.
MTM	Mobile Team Member.
NGO	Non-Government Organisation.
NKDT	<i>Nasional Kommuniti Developmen Trust</i> (Vanuatu).
NZODA	New Zealand Overseas Development Assistance.
OBCA	<i>Ofis Blong Consuma Afeas</i> (Solomon Islands).
SAMOA Inc.	American Samoa Consumer Rights Organisation.

SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust.
SPAKS	<i>Sosaiete Puipuia Aia Tatau Konesuma Samoa.</i>
SPC	South Pacific Community (formerly South Pacific Commission).
SPCR	South Pacific Consumer's Report.
SPCPP	South Pacific Consumer Protection Programme.
SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.
TNC	Transnational Corporation.
VAGST	Value Added Goods and Services Tax.
VDW	Village Development Worker.
WID	Women in Development.
WIP	Women's Initiative Programme.
WTO	World Trade Organisation.
UN	United Nations.
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme.

## PREFACE

This dissertation begins with the assertion that the 'development project' (McMichael 1996) has failed in most Pacific Island communities and lays some of the responsibility for that failure at the feet of state-led and market-driven development and a neglect of civil society. The three case studies presented here demonstrate that a vibrant civil society can and does make a significant contribution to improving the quality of life for many Pacific Islanders. I argue that the state, the market and civil society each have important and complementary roles to play in the economic and social development of Pacific Island nations, and that civil society should be accorded a greater priority. My thesis involves description, analysis and prescription.

I have worked in the island nations of the Pacific for the last decade. For me the failure of the development project is not an abstract, distant event but a daily reality. Development failures have a profound impact on people throughout the region, including members of my extended family. In Samoa, for example, our elders die young of non-communicable diseases, our children sit with seventy others in a classroom taking instruction from an ill-trained teacher, our water supplies are irregular and unsafe and corruption is endemic. The consequences of the failure of development may be seen throughout the island nations of the Pacific. Many of these failures are avoidable. The development project, that promised so much to newly independent nations, has not been realised.

This enquiry is not only an academic study of the role of civil society in development, but a report on the day-to-day work of a social movement, a village community and a non-government organisation. The study of the South Pacific Consumer Protection (SPCPP) is a first-hand account of the development of a new social movement in the Pacific Islands. I have been coordinator of the SPCPP, along with my wife Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, since 1990. The case study is our story of work to create safe, fair and informed marketplaces in the island nations of the Pacific. Luamanuvao is a

*matai* from the village which was the subject of the case study of the *fa'asamoa*. In part, it is a story of our family. We have also worked closely for some years with the Solomon Islands Development Trust, the subject of the third case study. These are narratives written by an insider, stories about real people and their struggles for a better quality of life.

I have attempted to ground the abstract notions of civil society and development in the day-to-day experience of Pacific Island people. I have been deeply involved in each of the social organisations under study, and my close involvement has the potential to lead to bias and subjectivity. In the chapter on research methods I go into some detail to explain the means I employed to avoid these pitfalls. One method was to be transparent from the outset about who I am and my involvement in each of these organisations. This preface is part of that process of transparency.

I am a fourth generation New Zealander married to a Pacific Islander. I have a deep and abiding commitment to the development of Pacific communities. My background and work experience assisted the research project in many ways, as I was familiar with the case study sites and had already established rapport with many participants in the study. On the one hand my passion for the Pacific, provided me with the motivation and energy to complete this lengthy research project. On the other hand, my commitment, and familiarity with the subject and participants of this study had the potential to introduce bias and subjectivity.

Subjectivity is not always a weakness in research. Employing subjectivity is not a naïve, uncritical, idiosyncratic approach to research, but a valid research strategy. Case studies, written without some subjective human dimension, often appear sterile. I have attempted to bring some life to the case studies in this dissertation though putting some human flesh on the bones of what could have been dry narratives. I have aimed to inject some of my experience, empathy and passion for the people of the Pacific into this narrative.