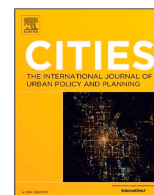
Cities 166 (2025) 106189

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Cities

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/cities



Possessing the Pacific City: Claiming place in urban Melanesia ☆

Jennifer Day [a,*], Barbara Andersen [b]

[a] Faculty of Architecture, Building, and Planning, The University of Melbourne, Australia
[b] School of People, Environment & Planning, Massey University Auckland, New Zealand

This special issue localises the concept of possession as it plays out across the nations of the independent Melanesian Pacific: Papua New Guinea (PNG), Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Fiji. Our papers ask how possession of urban land is understood, claimed, negotiated and enacted under regimes that defy simple labelling as cadastral, codified, or informal. People in urban Melanesia negotiate their place in the city differently than people living in the informal settlements of Calcutta, the edge cities of the United States, or the urban villages of Shanghai. The presence of plural frameworks for establishing tenure in the Pacific opens up new ways to think about possession and dispossession. This plurality has allowed many people to settle with more tenure security than in other parts of the global South where informal settlements are the dominant urban fabric. At the same time, Melanesian cities share elements of the post-colonial experience with world and "worlding" (Ong, 2011) cities located elsewhere: urban change that outpaces governments' capacity to manage it, re-occupation of the city by indigenous people after a period of colonial exclusion, and reassertion of customary ways of managing land.

The commonalities of the Melanesian experience with cities across the Global South will have resonances with people from other places experiencing the similar struggles, while at the same time demonstrating the variety of forms of customary possession that continue to survive in a world that feels increasingly homogeneous in its valorisation of private property. Our authors draw parallels and define distinctions between tenure as practiced in the Pacific islands and West Africa (Day and Missack) as well as East and Sub-Saharan Africa (Kopel). Representation of customary land practices in other places in the world, e.g., West Africa, has the potential to overshadow Pacific practices in international journals, in part because the region is significantly more populous.

Each of the papers in this special issue describes a contemporary manifestation of an historical process brought to the fore as Pacific nations engage in worlding – that is, in the ongoing "art of being global" (Roy & Ong, 2011: 3), of joining the global order and participating in the global flows of people and capital. Each of the special issue papers tells a story that readers can better understand if they understand the region's colonial legacy, non-western forms of ownership, and engagement with world systems of power and resources. Tales from Oceania can often appear as fantastical and other-worldly, or as idealized half-truths biased by European constructions of the South Pacific as "paradise". A purpose of this Introduction is to describe the systems of culture, statehood, and geopolitical positioning that are common to the Melanesian capitals, so that the stories from each of the papers appear perhaps less fantastical, more believable, and relatable as places with rich histories and persistent identities. The Cities Profile contained in this issue provides a geographic overview of the Melanesian cities that our authors analyse, along with an overview of the colonial history of those places. Each of the studies then builds on this background, providing the additional history and background necessary to understand the case.

The South Pacific island nations are currently worlding from their unique position sprawled across the vast Pacific Ocean, which covers a fifth of the Earth's surface (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022). Pacific Island nations are at the centre of a wave of increased international attention to the Pacific in the context of great power competition between the US and China. In 2017, the Australian Government pledged hundreds of millions in aid programming to Pacific islands to fund infrastructure, social programs, military and policing capacity in a "stepping up" of engagement with the region (Australian Government, 2017: 3, 101). The United States has recently opened embassies in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu – after years of minimal presence in the region. Existential threats from climate change (Enari & Viliamu Jameson, 2021) have launched Pacific Islands into major roles in climate advocacy, with Vanuatu for instance, leading a multi-county request that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) clarify the obligations of states for the impacts of climate change (United Nations General Assembly, 2023). Pacific Island nations have also petitioned the International Criminal Court for recognition of ecocide as a crime (Harvey, 2024). Chinese presence has escalated a "superpower rivalry" (Tekiteki, 2024) as the Australian government ramps up aid spending in return for countries like Nauru and Tuvalu rejecting future military agreements

☆ This article is part of a Special issue entitled: 'Possessing Pacific City' published in Cities.

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: jday@unimelb.edu.au (J. Day), b.andersen1@massey.ac.nz (B. Andersen).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.106189
Received 2 May 2024; Received in revised form 11 June 2025; Accepted 19 June 2025
Available online 1 July 2025
0264-2751/© 2025 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

with China. In Pacific cities, rivalry between Chinese and Australian aid has meant a focus on infrastructure that neglects the preliminary urban planning that would make, for instance, road planning more inclusive (Day, 2021a).

1. Forms of possession

This growing place in the international discourse means that Pacific Islanders' ways of understanding, managing, and possessing land are relevant for the international audience. Beyond those options experienced by most Western audiences (renting, buying, squatting), urban Melanesians assert their place in the city by appealing to customary agreements made between current residents and the landowners' ancestors (Day and Missack), or by claiming moral rights to employee housing gained through service in nation-building professions such as nursing (Andersen). Tenure security can be achieved by keeping claims undefined, e.g., by building only temporary houses instead of ones made of brick, so that neither the government nor the landowner has to respond to any claims of permanence (Monson). The result of this diversity of tactics are cities where many kinds of claims can be granted legitimacy (at least in the short- or medium-term), and where those who build and govern the city must respond to these different modes of possession. However, in the current context of extreme pressures on available urban land for development, Melanesian ways of possessing the city are increasingly being put to the test. Customary landowners may feel pressure to lease valuable land to more powerful tenants (Kopel), and settlers may find themselves gradually squeezed out as settlement upgrades and infrastructural developments pass them by (Devi).

Our papers will feel familiar yet different for readers from locations where the state asserts strong influence on the practice of urban development. Some of our work could be set anywhere in the world, where spectacle and social media provide a literal lens for understanding the city (Cummings), or where Euro-Western-derived constructs become how people define their attachment to place (Lindstrom, Day, and Rousseau). Others of our cases require the particular local circumstances of customary land, Pacific constitutions, Pacific nationalism, and weak states to unpack the idea that the state is a guest in the city (Foukona) or that the legal and regulatory environment sits in conflict with people's longstanding land agreements (Day and Missack). How the state loses narrative power to enact control of urban territory is a sub-thread of many of our papers, but is the substance of Foukona's paper.

Our papers are concerned with indigeneity as something that is not a stable point of reference – but rather, is a dialectic between indigenous and introduced. One paper, for instance, demonstrates a re-inscription of land and property as people form new urban fabrics in the bush, far from the nearest city but with ideas about the urban that they have assembled from their experiences with social media and travel to town. Our papers contest ideas of local and indigenous, as opposed to colonial and imposed, from the perspectives of people in Melanesian cities who often have their own way of understanding what is meant by land and property. By living lives in this recombinant space between indigenous and imposed, people may redefine what is meant by indigeneity. Our collection of works demonstrates how ideas of land, property, and possession are still in flux and probably always will be.

2. Positionalities

The authors of the papers in this collection are an interdisciplinary group of scholars working in the Melanesian Pacific. Many of us are white and educated in elite Euro-Western institutions, and moved from graduate school to secure faculty positions in noteworthy universities without significant struggle. Our worldviews certainly reflect the privilege of these positions, including the access allowed to white outsiders in Melanesia. The authors of this Introduction are two members of this privileged class, whose stable university positions have offered us the resources and time to mentor and support emerging Pacific-Islander scholars in the substantial work it takes to produce a special issue. A minority of the special-issue authors are Pacific Islanders, either indigenous or with ancestors brought to the islands by the erstwhile colonial powers to work as agricultural labourers. They have endeavoured here to write in the scholarly tradition of the West while at the same time "indigenising" their scholarship: remaining true to their indigenous worldviews and knowledges, and centering indigenous ways of knowing (Enari et al., 2024). Each of the papers in this special issue describes the specific positionalities of the authors.

Each of us tries to be an engaged scholar (McDonnell, 2023: 20) who has earned the trust of our interlocuters. In many societies of the Pacific, knowledge about culture is closely guarded and only given to certain members of that society, and rightfully so. The practice of "trading the other" (Smith, 1999: 89) has been a major product of academic writing about Pacific people for generations. Much research has been done "on" Pacific people without the participation of Pacific people or centring of Pacific ways of knowing (Enari et al., 2024). Euro-Western Enlightenment traditions enable anyone to ask any question, regardless of their position or preparation, if they have the resources and initiative. Some indigenous traditions, in contrast, sequester knowledge with certain members – giving someone the right to know about certain practices or to have certain knowledges when they have obtained a necessary level of familiarity, background, or trust (Maunakea, 2016). Part of context-sensitive research is to understand when one has the standing and permission to ask certain questions, so as to avoid being "rude, intrusive white people who go where they do not belong" (Trask, 1991: 160).

Not all places, nor all traditions within a place, are closely guarded. The Pacific is a region that covers a third of the Earth's surface (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022), with a wide set of cultural practices. The works in this special issue are studies of land and belonging in cities – places where communities are comprised of people with different backgrounds and traditions, and for whom getting along in the city is less a matter of cultural practice and more a matter of asserting belonging in the place where they live, e.g., Day (2022). For those of us contributors in this special issue who are outsiders, our statements of positionality in the individual papers show how we have attempted to faithfully understand through the worldviews of our interlocutors.

Euro-Western and indigenous alike, our Possessing the Pacific City working group formed during the locked-out and locked-in years of COVID-19, when many Pacific countries closed their borders to protect their populations from the virus. We conceived this special issue from our own lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, from Toronto to Auckland, and from Port Vila to Port Moresby. Our collection began as a group assembled to worry over escalating evictions in Melanesian cities. One of our authors is himself an eviction survivor. Others have watched friends and interlocutors live through dispossession, near misses, or the grinding threat of an eviction that never seems to come. Over time, our conversation evolved from a focus on dispossession, to something also encompassing its converse. Looking around, we realised that we also saw relationship resilience: relational continuity that allowed urban populations to live on customary land owned by others, sometimes over generations. This volume describes the relationships that make the city – those customary tenures, flexible affiliations, and forms of creative place-making that allow people to belong in the Melanesian city, and how those relationships are rearranged, renegotiated, and reneged upon.

A few of us (Day, Missack, Kopel, Cummings) were already thinking about Pacific cities and were processing data from prior fieldwork. All the rest of us cast our gaze on the city from some other focus: gender (Monson), professional groups (Andersen), the law (Foukona), cultural powerbrokers (Minnegal and Dwyer), and traditional village leadership (Missack). This meant that our methodological approaches range from purpose-built methods to repurposed and "retrospective" (Daniele, 2020) ethnographies. The data of Andersen, Lindstrom, and Minnegal and Dwyers's papers, for instance, are the result of years of sustained

engagement with communities of nursing students, Tannese islanders, and people at the margin of a major resource extraction project in PNG who have circular migratory (Bonnemaison, 1985) relationships with their provincial and national capitals. Although all of these works cite interview data, they also draw heavily on knowledge and context that these ethnographers assembled over long periods of time working in their field sites. Others of our group found that the city provided explanatory power to queries they had underway but had not considered from an urban perspective. Monson describes ambiguity as a way to produce security, and Foukona displaces the state as a key actor in tenure security. Both found that their urban settings provided a contrast that they did not see in analysis of rural spaces.

That some of these papers were not primarily the result of express-for-purpose data collection is one of their strengths: the impact of the city came through the data for scholars who had not previously thought about its import in their work, nor designed urban queries into their data-gathering processes. The Possessing the Pacific City collaboration, in summary, provided a reason for scholars working from a diversity of perspectives and disciplines to think together about the assemblage of processes, people, and places that make a city. The group fashioned urban scholars from people who previously did not consider themselves to be concerned with the city, enriching urban scholarship and drawing new voices to our space. This repurposing means that the papers sometimes provide insight on closely-related matters from different disciplinary approaches. For instance, both Lindstrom *et al,* Day and Missack illustrate, in Vanuatu, how people's approach to possess and use urban land has changed over time. Authors Day and Missack describe a particular construct, *pem graon*, and it use as a “gamechanging” social technology that bridged the city between usufruct and capitalist approaches. To do this, they review international scholarship on customary tenancies and the encroachment of rent on traditional societies. There is, then, no need for Lindstrom *et al* to take up encroachment again. Rather, they are able to deepen our readers' knowledge of urban land exchange in the Pacific by showing a spectrum of recent historical conditions of usufruct in Port Vila, including *pem graon.* Lindstrom's deep connections to Tannese migrants shows the negotiation of urban space for the country's largest non-autochthonous cultural group that has taken up residence in Port Vila. Together, the two papers provide a clearer image of urban life over the past few generations.

3. Urbanisation in Melanesia

For the benefit of those interested in the numbers: urbanisation rates in Melanesia are low, and growth is fast. Regional statistics are not compiled regularly, but a 2013 estimate placed urban populations at 51, 24, 20, and 13 % respectively for Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and PNG. Across the four countries, urban population growth in Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and PNG were estimated at 3.5, 4.7, and 2.8 % per year, with Fiji's urban population growing at a more-modest 1.5 %. In three of the four countries, not including PNG, urban population growth was double that of rural growth on a percentage basis (Asian Development Bank, 2013: 12). Data collected between 2017 and 2021 (the Asian Development Bank's publication is not clear on the exact dates) placed the countries at 57, 25, 24, and 13 % urban (Asian Development Bank, 2021: 3). Whether urban population growth rates have changed since 2013 is unclear. Intergovernmental publications continue to cite older statistics on urban population growth rates, e.g., (Asian Development Bank, 2021: 3).

Urbanisation statistics across the region may continue to be unreliable and dated. It is not an uncommon problem for the number of people living in officially-classified urban areas to lag behind actual urbanisation, in the Pacific and elsewhere (e.g. Day et al., 2016). Whether official urbanisation is slowing or accelerating, the technologies and tactics that people use to the possess the city are changing – recombining, as we discuss below, and adapting to the times. Our case studies illustrate the multiple ways people can possess the city, focusing less on the magnitude of these changes, and much more on the quality and character of them. Explaining how people in the Melanesian Pacific think about their cities, we believe, has value regardless of whether the quantum of urbanised population is steady or accelerating. Experientially, as our authors' accounts demonstrate, we can confidently assert that urban life is not on the decline.

Typical features associated with rapidly growing cities in the global South include: the proliferation of slum housing and illegal construction due to non-enforcement of building and zoning regulations; dysfunctional or non-existent planning; piecemeal or decaying infrastructure networks; and large numbers of residents outside of the formal economy, e.g., (Derdouri et al., 2024; Rana & Bhatti, 2018). Customary or “informal” land tenure, broadly conceived, can be found throughout the developing world, often on the fringes of large urban areas (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Zhang & He, 2020). In that sense, Melanesian cities are not unusual. However, the region's colonial and postcolonial history creates unique circumstances for urban dwellers in the contemporary moment.

4. Decolonisation and the Customary City

Cox *et al*'s Cities Profile in this volume provides an overview of the capital cities of independent Melanesia, describing the contemporary physical and historical landscape that has shaped the cities profiled in the remainder of the volume. The colonial impact—relatively recent and uneven, compared to other post-colonial contexts—remains visible in the spatial and social ordering of these capitals. Cox *et al* note several shared features across these four countries that we explore in different ways through the special issue: ambivalence about the “foreign” and “global” nature of the city; urban primacy and overconcentration of services in capitals; “self-made order” and the persistence of customary land rights; and the vulnerability of capitals to sea-level rise and other sequelae of climate change. Each of these features is linked to the governance practices introduced during the region's unique and relatively brief colonial period, and the way that decolonisation unfolded in the Independence period of the 1960s–80s.

Melanesia's capital cities began as trading posts and colonial administrative centres in the second half of the 19th century, and were subsequently shaped by commodity booms, two world wars, and the push for decolonisation in the aftermath of World War II. Unlike the indigenous cities of Latin America and Asia, which predated contact with Europeans, Melanesian populations did not urbanise prior to European influence (see review by Cox *et al*, this volume). Prior to WWII, these capitals were designed as outposts that excluded indigenous people: it was uncommon for Melanesians to be permitted to live in capital cities except as employees of Europeans (Mecartney, 2001). PNG's capital city Port Moresby excluded “natives” from residing in town without a permit until after WWII (Connell, 2005; Oram, 1976).

While urbanisation is new to the region, migration and movement between islands has been documented by archaeologists and in oral histories going back hundreds of years (Salesa, 2023: 5) and probably predates the customary agreements documented by Wilson (2011) in an ethnography of her community dating back to the early 1450s. These pre-colonial migrations, traditional trade routes and political linkages were disrupted by the arrival of missionaries and colonial officers who encouraged people to stay in one place so they could be counted, converted, educated and otherwise governed (Barker, 1996). Despite the best efforts of missionaries and colonial officers, Melanesian cultural forms and values are resilient, and in many cases were revived in the Independence period (Lindstrom, 1993).

By the end of the colonial time, in summary, many indigenous Pacific people were treated as guests on their own lands. Colonisers had claimed not only the land to build national capital cities, but land throughout the islands for plantations and mines, in a context where, prior to the introduction of Christianity, place-based relationships were the ontological ground of shared identity. Throughout the Pacific people and land (and sea) are understood to share a process of co-production, in

which "[p]laces and persons are entangled in a mutual becoming" (Halvaksz, 2020: 173; McGavin, 2016). Linguistically this mutuality of land and people is reflected in terms descended from the proto-Austronesian *banua, found in languages across Maritime Southeast Asia, Melanesia and Polynesia (J Fox, 2006; Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2020; Lin, 2015). Similar mutuality is also found in non-Austronesian Melanesian languages. There is a word in the lingua franca of Vanuatu, Bislama, that signifies the entanglement of people and their land: *manples*. The combination of "man" and "place," this word embodies a symmetry and mutuality of land and people that is absent in Euro-Western capitalism, where land is commodified. A different word, *mankam*, shows this construction. Composed of the words for "man" and "come," this references people who have arrived from elsewhere, who are not autochthonous to the land on which they are living. *Manples* and *mankam*, then, are the ways in which people can be in relation to land (Smith, 2017)—insider and outsider, host and guest, self and other, "citizen" and "foreigner".

Author Day worked on the two evacuations of Ambae island in Vanuatu in 2017 and 2018, due to a large volcanic eruption that threatened life on the island. During this process, where Ambae islanders were relocated to other islands for their safety, she heard the laments of those from Ambae, struggling to come to terms with leaving their island and the possibility that they might never return. The ongoing eruption has not yet resulted in the island-destroying event that was possible, and most of the 11,000 people evacuated from Ambae were eventually able to return home. In the months where people were living in host communities on nearby islands, people in the host communities similarly sympathised with the evacuees, asking who they would be if they had no land to return to. In short, in Melanesia, land is central to personal identity. Belonging somewhere, *manples*, is central to the idea of personhood and citizenship.

This idea of landownership as an inalienable birthright marking independence from colonialism carried over into the push for national sovereignty of the 1960s and 1970s. The national constitutions of all four independent Melanesian countries integrate customary landownership alongside the introduced, Euro-Western traditions around land ownership. In Vanuatu, for instance, Articles 73 through 75 of the national constitution returns virtually all land to the custom landowners, establishes the rules of custom as the basis of ownership and use of land, and grants perpetual ownership of land to Vanuatu's indigenous citizens only. The only land that was not returned to customary ownership was that inside the administrative boundaries of Port Vila and another town, Luganville.

Melanesian capital cities' administrative boundaries have not expanded since independence. The administrative lines established in Vanuatu in the 1980 Port Vila Municipality (Composition of Council and Wards) Order 21 (McEvoy et al., 2017: 47) or at independence for the Solomon islands, are still in place today, even as the cities have doubled or quadrupled in population. To accommodate this additional population, cities have both increased in density and spilled over into the adjacent customary lands. Here, the pressures imposed on urban planning by rapid growth run up against the limits of customary landownership as a legal and political ideology (Filer, 2006). Likewise, the outsized role of aid and development agencies on urbanisation policy means that planning follows "technocratic" logics that "do not translate easily into the context of Melanesian claims to customary land, or practices of relationship-building through migration into urban areas" (Cox *et al*, this volume). In different ways, our papers address this friction.

In this volume, Foukona takes on this idea of the state as a guest. His assertion is that indigenous practices of landownership have made administrative expansion of the city nearly impossible. Cities, then, have grown in population and spatial sprawl, with a heavy reliance on customary tenures (McDonnell, 2021). Customary tenures may now be the dominant type of tenure in Melanesian towns (Regenvanu, 2017). Customary ownership of land carries heavy symbolic weight, even when its legal status is less certain (Varley, 2002). In urban settings such as Port Vila, Vanuatu, much of the population depends on negotiation and relationship-building with custom owners to access land to live on. When these arrangements break down, it is often the courts that intervene, most frequently on behalf of the custom owners. In Fiji and Solomon Islands, residents look to the state to fulfil their needs and expectations for land and services (Devi, this volume). When the state is seen to fail in this role, its legitimacy can be called into question (Foukona, this volume). Melanesian cities thus straddle indigenous and state systems of governance that offer plural and often-competing sources of authority for managing problems stemming from rapid urbanisation. In their contribution to this issue, Day and Missack show a struggle that occurred when customary agreements were unilaterally rearranged by a customary landowner.

5. "Custom" beyond customary land

Although customary land is central to ideologies of nationhood in Melanesia, not all of our cases are set on customary land. We examine a variety of land types, also including municipal land, crown land, and private property. Our papers demonstrate the strong role that notions of custom and indigeneity play in land dealings on all land in Melanesian settings. Concepts of precarity and security have frequently provided the backdrop to aid donor understandings of urban life in the Pacific. We counterbalance this tendency, moving away from a simple equation of informality or customary tenure with insecurity and vulnerability. Our papers argue that the plurality of possessory logics found in urban Melanesia may enhance security, offering multiple avenues for accessing and maintaining connection to land – even on state land (Monson, Devi, this volume). We show the creative ways in which state law is used too in assertions of possession and how the prevalence of custom practices calls into question how fit for purpose the courts are for dealing with everyday acts of possession (Lindstrom, Day, and Rousseau).

Melanesia's traditions of customary land governance offer up a robust set of alternatives to private ownership established through registered title. The persistence of custom as a framework for relationality in the Pacific offers a different way of thinking about possession and dispossession, even on state and private land. The relationships between the different guardians of custom (the state, customary landowners) are shifting with new migrants from remote interiors and outer islands, or with international origins. These practices can replace or occur in parallel with introduced practices such as leasing (Day and Missack), informal practices such as squatting (Devi), and even the displacement of the state as the main powerbroker (Foukona). The mix of cultures and practices imported via the newer Asian influences, older colonial frameworks, and different island customs creates a perfect storm for misunderstandings and new modalities of claims to land.

In this issue, when we refer to customary land and customary governance, we are not talking about informality. This issue will contribute to theory by describing a series of models, called for by (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: Chapter 1), for "how to think about dispossession outside of the logic of possession" – that is, for how relationship-based customary land governance exists for owners and tenants alongside impersonal, Western logics of urban land ownership. We will describe Pacific ontologies and practices in reference to a serious problem in urban studies: possession and its antonym, dispossession.

Applying an ethnographic lens to possession, some of our papers explore the interstices of custom and state processes. We ask for instance, how analogy functions to either strengthen or undermine claims to possession. As Lindstrom, Day, and Rousseau show, transferable concepts of usufruct can facilitate successful land dealings on municipal lands for those used to similar arrangements on their home islands. Day and Missack, however, demonstrate the harm that can occur through misunderstandings of customary concepts. In their example, dispossession is enabled by equating indigenous practice with western models of periodic tenancy.

At play here are differences in the moral framing used to consider the distribution of urban land. As a discipline, urban studies tends to focus more on spatialised, cadastralised data and similarly-modernist approaches – a product of the discipline's close links with architecture and other design disciplines. In Melanesia, as in many societies with enduring shared customary practices and structures, these spatialised ontologies exist alongside non-bounded, relational ideas of ownership that go far beyond cadastral mapping of borders and boundaries (Minnegal and Dwyer). Our papers show the evaluative positions adopted by urban residents (and others) when asserting or negating claims to possession. What does a right to the city look like when rights are considered as relational rather than adhering *ipso facto* to individuals? Who has the right to a future in Pacific cities? This question informs public responses to possession and dispossession, circulating for instance on social media (Cummings). As Cummings demonstrates, ideas of beauty and beautification are brought into discussions of who is or isn't possessing the city in an appropriate way. Andersen's discussion of employee housing, citizenship and class in PNG shows how a similar moral evaluation works at scale: who has the right to a comfortable home in the city? And on what relational basis?

6. Recombining the city

Our volume is not the first collection to query land and property relationships in Melanesia (McDonnell et al., 2017), to describe the transformations in the Melanesian urban landscape as the cities have transitioned from colonial centres to national capitals (Lindstrom & Jourdan, 2017), or to name some of the everyday practices people use to make a home and assert belonging in the Melanesian city (Kraemer & Stern, 2022). Most of these collections have centred the work of cultural anthropologists, whose approach to the study of cities and towns often focuses on the perceived differences between urban life and the agrarian roots of many urban dwellers. For instance, Lindstrom begins the 2017 special issue with a historical timeline of urban anthropology, noting the interests of anthropologists prior to the 1960s because anthropologists of the eras prior, "liked mostly to head into the bush" (2017: 4). McDonnell, Allen, and Filer make a point of noting in their introduction, that urbanisation places a particular intensity of strain on land relationships compared with rural land relationships:

> In the Melanesian political context, it is not possible to separate the land question from the problem of urbanisation, because struggles over access to land are generally more intense in urban and peri-urban areas than they are in rural areas (11).

Deep knowledge of Melanesian village life makes it possible for scholars like Lindstrom, Minnegal, Dwyer, and Missack (this volume) to consider how the city is constructed in the interplay between urban and rural settings. Cities are home to people who transport their cultures and practices to town, and then continue to adapt and change these practices as life goes on. Language to describe this process of making and remaking the city lags behind the descriptions of how urban life is composed and changing. Port Vila, Vanuatu has been variously described, over time, as a site of primarily "circular mobility" (Bonnemaison, 1985), where people come to the city for work but maintain strong rural ties and travel frequently to maintain ties in their places of origin; a "village city" (Jones, 2011) composed of enclaves where people live primarily amongst others from their ancestral islands, and more recently, as host to "mixed communities" with generationally-persistent urban identities (Day, 2022; Kraemer, 2020).

Balakrishnan (2019) offers *recombination* as a term that acknowledges the agrarian origins of many urban dwellers, but also considers the agglomeration of the city as something more than just assemblage and persistent co-location of people from different backgrounds. Cities are recombinant because they do not represent the collapse or abandonment of village ways. Rather, people living in cities preserve routines, practices, and habits in the relationships they make, the institutions they found, and the settlements they build. At the same time, proximity with other people doing the same keeps the city constantly refreshing itself, so that the city that existed five years ago may be less recognisable now. This is perhaps not all that different from the "creolisation" that Lindstrom and Jourdan (2017) describe.

Recombinant cities, then, are the result of all of the processes that happen within them. They are the products of the powers of exclusion, around which McDonnell et al. (2017) narrate their collection. They are the product of colonial land grabs that dispossessed indigenous people from their lands. They are also the product of the attempts made to rectify those decades of colonial expropriation. Significant and necessary attention is paid in the international literature and in the national constitutions of the Pacific, about the ways in which land grabs have dispossessed indigenous people of their lands. Recombination is at work when the state emerges as a guest – that is, when national identities place indigenous landownership at the centre.

Recombination also includes the historical accident of proximity in Pacific cities that enriches some and leaves others out. In studies of economic development, there is often an element of luck that creates privileges for some and disadvantage for others (McCulloch & Suharnoko Sjahrir, 2008). The national constitutions and subsequent customary processes have allocated land across the islands to, generally men, with continuous indigenous ancestry. But the location of this land – and specifically its proximity to the cities that would become centres of trade, commerce, and value – created winners and losers. In Vanuatu, at independence in 1980, the customary landowners of five urban villages were declared to own most of the land on which Port Vila is now growing (Rawlings, 1999). In the Solomon Islands, indigenous people from nearby islands in the same country were brought to work in the colonial administrations and continue to maintain positions of privilege and landownership in the area of Honiara, where they are not autochthonous (Foukona, Monson, this volume). In resource-rich Papua New Guinea, mineral and petroleum discoveries have led to the reification and formalisation of descent groups amongst people that traditionally had highly flexible ways of reckoning relationships to land (Jorgensen, 1997; Stead, 2016; Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997). As a recent volume on inequality in rural PNG shows, uneven or serendipitous distribution of resource rents engenders new forms of inequality in rural areas, mass migration to urban centres, and ethnic, clan, or factional conflict (Beer & Schwoerer, 2022).

So, it has been by historical accident, rather than (only) systematic processes of exclusion, that some people have come to have access to urban land. As the city recombines, processes originally intended to restore customary land to indigenous people and prevent that land from being again alienated and stolen, have had the unintended consequence of concentrating access to urban land in the hands of a proportionally-small number of landowners (McDonnell, 2023). And the people who do not benefit from historical proximity must find a way to make a home in the city. It's a right-to-the-city matter, since national capitals hold national wealth, investment, and opportunity that peripheral rural communities usually do not.

The city that Kraemer and Stern (2022) highlight in their introduction, showcasing technologies and tactics of creating a place of belonging in the city, is a recombined version of the city identified five years earlier by McDonnell et al. (2017) and Lindstrom and Jourdan (2017). In five more years, the landscape will again change. In contemporary geopolitics, the indigenous practices of Pacific islanders may be the field upon which ideological debates are argued, between Chinese and Western models of governance and aid. China's 2022 security pact with the Solomon Islands has upset American and Australian aid hegemony in the Pacific. The "spectacular transition" (Crocombe, 2007: Preface) is occurring as the Pacific islands find their own identities. The recent Blue Pacific strategy (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022) acknowledges the blue Pacific continent as a coherent, interrelated region with a commitment to regional cooperation. The reference to the ocean in the strategy title signals that the people of the

Pacific ocean, which covers 20 % of the Earth's surface, see the sea as constitutive of their culture and values. Migration, movement, and circulation are practices that have been enabled by the sea (Bonnemaison, 1985). Most of our papers in this volume describe how the Melanesian city functions as a site where recombination interfaces with modernity. Day and Missack (this volume), for instance, describe the presumed terms of customary tenures, and the interface with increasing urban land values.

The recombinant Melanesian colonial city now persists, also, with imperial pressures acting upon it. With deep connections to the Euro-West but increasing commercial and diplomatic ties with China, sovereign Melanesian nations must contend with their alliances. With competition in the possibilities for alignment, more than ever before, it is important for aid programming to be responsive to the needs and practices of local people. Some of our authors' previous work has demonstrated how out-of-touch aid programming has been with local models of land ownership (Day, 2020, 2021). McDonnell (2021) and (Day, 2021) have made the important point that customary tenure has not been acknowledged in policy guidance that has been led by international organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration and UN Habitat. Our special issue is important in this context, as it demonstrates some of the ways that possession is negotiated locally, highlighting ways of possessing urban land that are neither cadastralised and codified, nor informal.

Our stories reveal the social relationships that underpin and are created through possession of land. Land dealings are more relational than transactional, as are many types of possession (Strathern, 2020). Our innovation is partly in translating these distinctions from the ethnographic environments of anthropology and the legalist approaches used in scholarship on law, to an urban studies setting. Across the narratives, we explore the nature of the relations that people encounter in possessing and disputing possession of urban land.

7. Climate and movement

Readers of this volume may wonder why we have not centered climate change as a driver of migration and dispossession, since our aim is to explore the relationships that reinforce or undermine possession of land. A major narrative about the Pacific has been that it is sinking, soon to be inundated as sea levels rise, and its hapless, homeless citizens forced to relocate as climate refugees. For instance, the 2022 report, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability,* by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change devotes Chapter 15 to the projected threats to small islands due to climate change (IPCC, 2022). Chapter 15 describes migration as an outcome of increasing uninhabitability (p. 2067) due to cyclones and storm intensity (p. 2046, 2055), inundation, especially of atolls (p. 2046), freshwater stress (p. 2046, 2058), terrestrial biodiversity disruption (p. 2046, 2056), marine ecosystem disruption, including fishing, algae, and mangrove health (p. 2057). Anticipatory ruination (Paprocki, 2019) is a theme that pervades the extinction narratives about Pacific islands and their people (Weatherill, 2023). Pacific islands enter the international imaginary as the climate-change "canary": their sinking and wave of climate refugees will be the prompt for the rest of the world to take climate change seriously (Farbotko, 2010).

It would not be correct to conclude that migration is the only strategy the IPCC recommends for small islands. As the report's title suggests, adaptation and resilience are acknowledged features of small islands' social systems, and there is much to be gained by tuning into local knowledge systems for knowledge about how they have adapted to environmental and weather events:

> Greater insights into which drivers weaken local and indigenous resilience, together with recognition of the sociopolitical contexts within which communities operate, and the processes by which decisions are made, can assist in identifying opportunities at all scales to enhance climate adaptation and enable action towards climate resilient development pathways (p. 2047).

These social systems are where our narratives take place. Our cases describe contemporary social systems that are influenced by climate change alongside the other cultural and political forces that have long been present. Migration, for instance, is not simply an issue of climate adaptation. Pacific people have used movement, mobility, and migration as an adaptation strategy for time immemorial, and those migration strategies reflect cultural features that people still use (Bonnemaison, 1985) and even influence social resistance to dispossession in the contemporary city (Wilson, 2011: 87–94). Reciprocal ties to land across ocean migration paths are a strong feature of Pacific stories and identities (Yates et al., 2023). Our authors, then, treat climate change as a feature of complex social and environmental dynamics, rather than an isolated object of study. For instance, (Cummings's) analysis of urban beautification that came about because of the Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2015. (Monson's) account of land tenure in the Solomon Islands describes how the structure of plural legal systems enables some people to attach themselves to land while resisting the influence of the international aid apparatus via climate-change programming.

Not all island states will be affected equally regarding the impacts on their territories (Reynolds, 2020). The geography of Melanesia features mountainous islands and highland peoples, along with low-lying islands and coastal settlements that are prone to flooding, high winds, and other ocean-exacerbated climate events. Our cases feature sea-level cities and highland settlements, all in countries with access to higher ground and adaptive social systems that incorporate migration and movement. As the IPCC report notes (p. 2068), some coastal communities have already made the decision of relocate due to flooding and other challenges related to weather events. Our cases do not address low-lying islands that could face complete inundation in this century, like the atolls that comprise Kiribati and Tuvalu (IPCC, 2022: 2053).

The papers in this volume, while often centralising movement and international influences in the narratives on urban possession, also do not engage with the substantial Pacific population living outside of their home countries. Migration of islanders remains relatively high – that is, the numbers are low, but the proportions of islanders who migrate temporarily or permanently is high (Voigt-Graf, 2007). Labor mobility schemes in Australia and New Zealand have afforded many islanders opportunities to migrate either for work, usually temporarily, or in response to climate change (Ash & Campbell, 2016; Bedford et al., 2007). The impacts that islanders make in places where they migrate have been and will be important areas of study, especially as more islanders move away from home. Impacts of islanders' international migration in the home place, like remittances and skills development, are important parts of the local economies (Connell, 2015).

Rather than focusing on economic impacts, our narratives focus instead on possession in the home city, and in many cases, these centre how possession is influenced by movement. Cities are sites of intranational migration and international flows of people and capital. (Andersen) in this volume describes how internal movement of medical staff create contested housing expectations. (Monson) describes how colonial movement of an administrative class in the Solomon Islands created conflict that manifests today in how people tell different "property stories" for different purposes and audiences. International flows of money, whether in the hands of locals or, as (Day and Missack) describe in this volume, international investors, do influence how land relationships are created, preserved, and disrupted. But movement is not new for Melanesia, nor even a product of independence, globalisation, or international capital flows. Pacific people always moved freely between islands that eventually became states with territories and borders, maintaining ties to home. Transnationalism as represented by maintenance of kinship networks, economic ties, and social and cultural customs (Lee, 2009: 2, 3). Movement between islands is an intrinsic part of place identity in Melanesia, because some forms of identity are both

emplaced and defined by mobility, e.g., women moving to another village to marry (Bonnemaison, 1985). In a galvanising essay that still resonates with Pacific people in its call to think of Pacific people as connected over large networks maintained over ocean waterways, Epeli Hau'ofa describes the importance of produce and goods moving from places to place amongst Pacific people (Hau'ofa, 1994):

> ….much of the welfare of ordinary people of Oceania depends on an informal movement along ancient routes drawn in bloodlines invisible to the enforcers of 'the laws of confinement and regulated mobility.

The cases in this special issue work with the effects of movement, both as a part of Melanesian culture, as a product of current urbanisation that draws people from the reaches of a national territory, and as an effect of colonial redistribution of population.

8. The papers

The papers in this collection all take an indigenous land issue related to how land is possessed, describe its production in the erstwhile colonial system, and describe a local initiative that challenges that notion of land. Our authors centre indigenous and local voices while also engaging with the literature that places their ideas in the international conversation. Our papers narrate a range of "tactics of possession" (see Cummings, this volume), whereby urban residents appeal to historical relationships, leverage representations of the worlding and aspirational city, and attempt to redefine relationships between land stakeholders. In actuality, none of these categories is mutually exclusive, and our cases all have elements of each.

We have purposefully decided to preserve the disciplinary narrative and analytical forms that our authors use, while allowing the papers to speak to each other across the volume. Thus, papers led by anthropologists (Minnegal, Lindstrom, Andersen, Cummings, Cox, this volume) weave theory with narrative, while papers led by geographers and urbanists (Day, Devi, Kopel, Monson, Foukona) focus more on the analytical setup of the papers. Our methodological diversity produces a volume where some places like Port Vila, Honiara, and Port Moresby get seen from a variety of perspectives. Cox *et al* ties them together in the Cities Profile that accompanies the volume.

There are many possible ways to cast our papers, and themes like the state as a guest, that cut across all of them. For organisational purposes, we organise the cases according to the dominant theme of the paper:

Relational Possession. These cases describe how people appeal to expectations and relationships brokered in previous generations or based on past relationships, including:

- Shared island identity and relationships brokered remotely (Lindstrom, Day, and Rousseau, Vanuatu)
- Mismatched expectations about the continuing validity of relationships brokered between prior generations (Day and Missack, Vanuatu).
- Power differentials between customary landowners and more privileged, wealthy tenants (Kopel, PNG).

Assertive Possession. These cases describe the tactics people use to show their belonging, demonstrating their claims in public forums. People seeking to claim or solidify new rights through the creation of new spaces and forms of the city, including:

- Through social-media spectacle and image-making (Cummings, Vanuatu)
- Through inventing and starting construction of an aspirational city (Minnegal and Dwyer, PNG)

Redefined Possession. These cases show how people attempt to redefine relationships toward securing their place. These cases show how possession does not necessarily imply permanence, but is always negotiated. These papers show how people are actively seeking to think about possession differently, including:

- Avoiding claims of permanence to prevent questioning of the present situation (Monson, The Solomon Islands)
- Health care workers using employee housing options to enable their own social mobility and "transferability" (Andersen, PNG)
- Squatting in an acceptable way (Devi, Fiji)
- Limiting the powers of the state to those of a guest on customary land (Foukona, The Solomon Islands).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Jennifer Day: Writing – original draft, Project administration, Conceptualization. **Barbara Andersen:** Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgements

Benedicta Rousseau helped write the proposal for this special issue, and some of her language has likely carried through to this introduction chapter. We thank her for her contributions. Funders for our research include the Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fund (project title: Housing and Everyday Security in Papua New Guinea, MAU1911, the Australian Research Council (project title: Communities, Kava, Court Orders: The Ways of Possessing the Pacific City; DP220101100), and the National Geographic Society.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

References

Ash, J., & Campbell, J. (2016). Climate change and migration: The case of the Pacific Islands and Australia. *Journal of Pacific Studies, 36*(1), 53–72.
Asian Development Bank. (2013). *The emergence of pacific urban villages: Urbanization trends in the pacific islands. Report*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.
Asian Development Bank. (2021). *Pacific urban update 2021. Report*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.
Australian Government. (2017). *Foreign policy white paper: Opportunity security strength*.
Balakrishnan, S. (2019). Recombinant urbanization: Agrarian–urban landed property and uneven development in India. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 43*(4), 617–632.
Barker, J. (1996). Village inventions: Historical variations upon a regional theme in Uiaku, Papua New Guinea. *Oceania, 66*(3), 211–229.
Bedford, R., Ho, E., Krishnan, V., et al. (2007). The neighborhood effect: The pacific in Aotaearoa and Australia. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 16*(2), 251–269.
Beer, B., & Schwoerer, T. (2022). *Capital and inequality in rural Papua New Guinea*. ANU Press.
Bonnemaison, J. (1985). The tree and the canoe: Roots and mobility in Vanuatu societies. *Pacific Viewpoint, 26*(1), 30–62.
Butler, J., & Athanasiou, A. (2013). *Dispossession: The performative in the political*. John Wiley & Sons.
Connell, J. (2005). *Papua New Guinea: The struggle for development*. Routledge.
Connell, J. (2015). The pacific diaspora. In *Migration and development: Perspectives from small states* (pp. 224–264).
Crocombe, R. G. (2007). *Asia in the Pacific Islands: Replacing the West. editorips@ usp. ac. fj*.
Daniele, U. (2020). Informality and the governance of Roma housing through the lens of an NGO. *Cities, 96*, Article 102426.
Day, J. (2020). Sister Communities: Rejecting Labels of Informality and Peripherality in Vanuatu. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 44*(6), 989–1005.
Day, J. (2021a). The critical need for urban planning around Port Vila's BRI projects. In *International perspectives on the belt and road initiative* (pp. 226–244). Routledge.

Day, J. (2021b). *Ol Man Kam*: Community Associations as part of inclusive urban governance in urban South Pacific. *Development Bulletin, 82*, 119–122.
Day, J. (2022). *Ol Man Kam*: Emerging governance in the urban South Pacific. *Cities, 125*, Article 103603. Published online at https://authors.elsevier.com/a/1eXGRy5jOnH8h.
Day, J., Chen, Y., Ellis, P., & Roberts, M. (2016). A Free, Open Source Tool for Identifying Urban Agglomerations using Point Data. *Spatial Economic Analysis, 11*(1), 67–91.
Derdouri, A., Satour, N., Murayama, Y., et al. (2024). Coastal satellite urbanization in the global south: Dynamics, sustainability dilemmas, and pathways for Martil, Morocco. *Cities, 149*, Article 104981.
Enari, D., Matapo, J., Ualesi, Y., et al. (2024). Indigenising research: Moanaroa a philosophy for practice. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1–10.
Enari, D., & Viliamu Jameson, L. (2021). Climate justice: A Pacific Island perspective. *Australian Journal of Human Rights, 27*(1), 149–160.
Farbotko, C. (2010). Wishful sinking: Disappearing islands, climate refugees and cosmopolitan experimentation. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 51*(1), 47–60.
Filer, C. (2006). Custom, law and ideology in Papua New Guinea. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, 7*(1), 65–84.
Fitzpatrick, D. (2005). 'Best practice' options for the legal recognition of customary tenure. *Development and Change, 36*(3), 449–475.
Halvaksz, J. A. (2020). *Gardens of gold: Place-making in Papua New Guinea*. University of Washington Press.
Harvey, F. (2024). Pacific islands submit court proposal for recognition of ecocide as a crime. In *The Guardian*.
Hau'ofa, E. (1994). Our Sea of Islands. *The Contemporary Pacific, 6*(Spring), 147–161.
IPCC. (2022). *Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability, contribution of working group II to the sixth assessment report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change*. Report, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.
J Fox, J. (2006). *Inside Austronesian Houses: Perspectives on domestic designs for living*. ANU Press.
Jones, P. (2011). The rise of the 'rural village in the city' and 'village cities' in the pacific region. In *Asia Pacific network for housing research conference on 'neoliberalism and urbanization in the Asia Pacific*.
Jorgensen, D. (1997). Who and what is a landowner? Mythology and marking the ground in a Papua New Guinea mining project. In *Anthropological forum* (pp. 599–627). Taylor & Francis.
Kraemer, D. (2020). Planting roots, making place: Urban autochthony in Port Vila Vanuatu. *Oceania, 90*(1), 40–54.
Kraemer, D., & Stern, M. (2022). An introduction to 'Making the city "home": Practices of belonging in Pacific cities'. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology, 33*(2), 85–100.
Lee, H. (2009). Introduction. In H. Lee, & S. Tupai Francis (Eds.), *Migration and transnationalism: Pacific perspectives*. Canberra: ANU Press.
Lilomaiava-Doktor, S. (2020). Oral traditions, cultural significance of storytelling, and Samoan understandings of place or fanua. *Native American and Indigenous Studies, 7*(1), 121–151.
Lin, H.-L. (2015). *Vanua as Environment: Conservation, farming, and development in Waitabu, Fiji*. University of Pittsburgh.
Lindstrom, L. (1993). *Cargo cult: Strange stories of desire from Melanesia and beyond*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Lindstrom, L., & Jourdan, C. (2017). Urban Melanesia (L'urbanisation en Mélanésie). *Journal de la Société des Océanistes, 144145*(1), 5–22.
Maunakea, S. P. (2016). Arriving at an'Āinā Aloha research framework: What is our Kuleana as the next generation of`Ōiwi Scholars? In K.-A. R. K. N. O. E. K. Wright (Ed.), *Kanaka Ōiwi Methodologies: Mo'olelo and Metaphor*. Manoa: University of Hawai'i Press.
McCulloch, N. A., & Suharnoko Sjahrir, B. (2008). Endowments, location or luck? Evaluating the determinants of sub-national growth in decentralized Indonesia. In *Evaluating the determinants of sub-national growth in decentralized Indonesia (November 1, 2008). World bank policy research working paper* (p. 4769).
McDonnell, S. (2021). The importance of attention to customary tenure solutions: Slow onset risks and the limits of Vanuatu's climate change and resettlement policy. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, 50*, 281–288.
McDonnell, S. (2023). *My land, my life: Dispossession at the frontier of desire*. University of Hawaii Press.
McDonnell, S., Allen, M., & Filer, C. (2017). *Kastom, property and ideology: Land transformations in Melanesia*. Canberra: ANU Press.
McEvoy, D., De Ville, N., Komugabe-Dixson, A., et al. (2017). Port Vila, Vanuatu: Social mapping and analysis of ecosystem use. In *Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme*.
McGavin, K. (2016). Where do you belong? Identity, New Guinea Islanders, and the Power of Peles. *Oceania, 86*(1), 57–74.
Mecartney, S. (2001). *Blacksands settlement: A case for urban permanence in Vanuatu*. Sydney: University of Sydney.
Ong, A. (2011). Introduction: Worlding cities, or the art of being global. In A. Roy, & A. Ong (Eds.), *Worlding cities*. Malden, Mass, USA: Oxford and West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, Blackwell Publishing Limited.
Oram, N. D. (1976). *Colonial Town to Melanesian City: Port Moresby 1884–1974. (No Title)*.
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (2022). *2050 strategy for the blue pacific continent. Report, Suva, Fiji*.
Paprocki, K. (2019). All that is solid melts into the bay: Anticipatory ruination and climate change adaptation. *Antipode, 51*(1), 295–315.
Rana, I. A., & Bhatti, S. S. (2018). Lahore, Pakistan–Urbanization challenges and opportunities. *Cities, 72*, 348–355.
Rawlings, G. E. (1999). Foundations of urbanisation: Port Vila town and Pango village, Vanuatu. *Oceania, 70*(1), 72–86.
Regenvanu, R. (2017). Foreword. In S. McDonnell, M. Allen, & C. Filer (Eds.), *Kastom, property and ideology: Land transformations in Melanesia*. Canberra: ANU Press.
Reynolds, J. (2020). A sinking feeling: The effect of sea level rise on baselines and statehood in the western pacific. *Aust. YBIL, 37*, 169.
Roy, A., & Ong, A. (2011). *Worlding cities*. Malden, Mass, USA: Oxford and West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, Blackwell Publishing Limited.
Salesa, D. (2023). Chapter one: The pacific in indigenous time. In D. Salesa (Ed.), *An indigenous ocean: Pacific essays*. Wellington, NZ: Bridget Williams Books.
Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies*. London, UK; New York, NY; and Dunedin, New Zealand: Zed Books Ltd. and University of Otago Press.
Smith, R. E. (2017). *From colonial intrusions to 'intimate exclusions': Contesting legal title and 'chiefly title' to land in Epi, Vanuatu. KASTOM, PROPERTY AND IDEOLOGY* (p. 327).
Stead, V. C. (2016). Becoming landowners: Entanglements of custom and modernity in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. In *Becoming landowners*. University of Hawaii Press.
Strathern, M. (2020). *Relations: An anthropological account*. Duke University Press.
Tekiteki, S. (2024). Superpower rivalry is making Pacific aid a bargaining chip – Vulnerable island nations still lose out. In *The conversation, 15 December 2024*.
Trask, H.-K. (1991). Natives and anthropologists: The colonial struggle. In *The Contemporary Pacific* (pp. 159–167).
United Nations General Assembly. (2023). *ADOPTED RESOLUTION 77/276, Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change*.
Varley, A. (2002). Private or public: Debating the meaning of tenure legalization. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 26*(3), 449–461.
Voigt-Graf, C. (2007). Pacific Islanders and the rim: Linked by migration. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 16*(2), 143–156.
Weatherill, C. K. (2023). Sinking paradise? Climate change vulnerability and Pacific Island extinction narratives. *Geoforum, 145*, Article 103566.
Wilson, D. (2011). *Vete: The emerging movement on Efate, Vanuatu politics and indigenous alternatives. University of Hawaii at Manoa, Thesis submitted for the degree, Master of Arts in Pacific Islands Studies, Manoa*.
Yates, O. E., Groot, S., Manuela, S., et al. (2023). "There's so much more to that sinking island!"—Restorying migration from Kiribati and Tuvalu to Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Community Psychology, 51*(3), 924–944.
Zhang, M., & He, S. (2020). Who feels secure in customary tenure and why? A triangular framework of perceived tenure security in China's small property right housing. *Cities, 107*, Article 102900.
Zimmer-Tamakoshi, L. (1997). When land has a price: Ancestral gerrymandering and the resolution of land conflicts at Kurumbukare. In *Anthropological forum* (pp. 649–666). Taylor & Francis.