Background Paper **14**

Governance, Politics and Development in the Pacific

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![DLP — Policy and Practice for Developmental Leaders, Elites and Coalitions — DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM]

DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Introduction[1]

Overseas aid appears to have made rather limited positive lasting impact on the most pressing development problems in the Pacific. In spite of the vast sums that have been dedicated to improving conditions since the period of independence began in the 1960s, the countries of the region have experienced various on-going problems of political instability, violent conflict, ethnic tension, poverty, inequality and corruption (AusAID, 2003a: 1).[2]

Over the last ten years there has been a growing recognition in the development community that, in order to be truly effective, aid programmes need to take account of and be informed by a thorough understanding of the local political dynamics at work in aid-recipient countries (Wild and Foresti, 2011: iv).[3] This is reflected in the proliferation of analytical tools that have been designed to inform the political dimension of aid programming; including 'drivers of change', 'political settlements' and the various 'political economy' frameworks.

But to what extent has this trend towards politically engaged analysis influenced research and practice around the development problems in the Pacific? Or do analysts and donor agencies assume that poverty, inequality and political instability in the region are problems that can be addressed adequately through technical measures, such as building state capacity or working on the details of constitutions or other formal institutions?

This background paper surveys recent literature on the development problems in the Pacific and asks:
i.   Whether researchers have looked in detail at underlying political processes in trying to explain developmental failures and successes in the region.
ii. Whether aid programmes have been designed on the basis of a politically informed understanding of the conditions for positive developmental change.
iii. What kind of research questions would follow from a more political, as opposed to a primarily technical, approach to these development issues?[4]

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1   I would like to thank Peter Larmour, Chris Wheeler, Sue Ingram, Ulla Keech-Marx and Adrian Leftwich for their vey helpful comments and suggestions. I take full responsibility for any errors or shortcomings that remain.

2   AusAID is the Australian Government's overseas aid program.

3   It is also important to remember that domestic politics in donor countries has a strong influence on the policies and programs of their aid agencies: it is not all strictly 'evidence-based'.

4   AusAID (2011d: 223) defines technical assistance as "the provision of expert consultants, or advisers, to partner countries to assist with policies, programs and projects". Broadly speaking, a technical approach understands development problems to be the result of a lack of resources, capital, expertise, information, technology or appropriate formal institutions (for a detailed account of the background to and key assumptions of the technical approach, see Hudson and Leftwich, forthcoming 2013). By 'political' in this context we refer to a more detailed focus on the structures, relations and configurations of actors, interests, ideas and especially power that interact politically to produce both institutional and policy outcomes and implementations. It is important to bear in mind that, rather than there being a strict division between technical and political approaches to development analysis, policy and practice, there is a broad continuum and mixture of approaches that may include more or less 'technical' and 'political' approaches. And while a largely technical approach had characterized much development policy and practice from the 1960s to the end of the 20th century, there has been an increasing recognition in the 2000s that political processes play a fundamental part in shaping development outcomes and need to be understood and engaged with How to do so has been more problematical. For an excellent survey, see Carothers and de Gramont, 2013.

The structure is as follows:

- Section 1 gives a very brief and partial account of the development state-of-play in the Pacific, outlining some of the more pressing and intractable problems.

- Section 2 provides a general outline of what it means to think and work politically to address development problems. This comprises a concise account of some of the core tenets of the Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) and the political settlements framework of analysis.

- Section 3 surveys recent literature on development issues in the Pacific with a view to establishing the degree to which a) explanations of development problems and b) the design of aid policies have taken into account and understood the political processes that drive or hinder sustainable growth, political stability and inclusive social development.

- Section 4 sketches a series of potential research questions on the basis of gaps and omissions that emerge from the literature survey in Section 3.

- Section 5 provides an annotated bibliography of the recent literature that is most relevant for the overall exercise undertaken in this paper.

- Section 6 summarises the core message of the paper and offers some concluding thoughts.

01

Background to understanding aid and development in the Pacific

1.1 Introduction

The Pacific Islands region is composed of twenty two distinct countries and territories, which are sub-divided into three ethno-geographic groupings – Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.[5] The 7,500 islands that make up the region are spread over roughly 30 million square kilometers of ocean. Prior to the 1960s, the countries of the region were colonial territories of Britain, France, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. In 1962, Samoa became the first to gain independence; most others had achieved that status by 1980 (Fraenkel and Grofman, 2010: 264-265).[6]

It is important to bear in mind that there are profound differences of ethnicity, culture, population size, geography, international political status and internal political and economic structure, both between and within the different states and territories of the region. For example, in terms of demographics, the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) range from Papua New Guinea, the largest with around 7 million people,[7] down to Nauru and Tuvalu, which are amongst the world's most sparsely populated states, with populations of just under 10,000 each.[8]

In terms of international political status, the PICs vary from fully independent states (including Fiji, PNG and Samoa), self-governing associated states (including Cook Islands, Niue and Palua), through to territories that are listed by the UN as non-self-governing (including Tokelau, New Caledonia and American Samoa). The Pacific also encompasses a wide range of political institutions. They range from a constitutional monarchy (Tonga), a state where only customary chiefs can run for office in Parliament (Samoa), and a territory where the cabinet is made up of three Kings and three representatives of the French President (Wallis and Futuna) (Fraenkel and Grofman, 2010: 261). There are various different electoral systems across the region, including first-past-the post (Solomon Islands), alternative vote (Fiji), and single non-transferrable vote (Vanuatu).

These differences mean that 'the Pacific' is a rather blunt category for identifying, analyzing and generalizing about development issues. Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges and constraints that many of the PICs share, or have shared, in common - to a greater or lesser degree. These include:

- Geographic isolation

- Small and in some cases highly dispersed populations

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5   Melanesia comprises: Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Micronesia comprises: Kiribati, Guam, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau. Polynesia comprises American Samoa, Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Pitcairn Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Tokelau and Wallis and Futuna.

6   Tonga was never formally colonised; it was a British protectorate that became fully independent in 1970. The islands Wallis and Futuna are still today part of a French overseas collectivity.

7   http://data.worldbank.org/country/papua-new-guinea, Thursday 20th December, 2012.

8   https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nr.html.; http://data.worldbank.org/country/tuvalu, Thursday 20th December, 2012.

- Poor infrastructure and a lack of essential government services

- High rates of population growth that outpace job creation and social services

- Vulnerability to the effects of climate change, natural disasters and fluctuations in the international market in fuel and food prices

- Poverty (AusAID, 2010a: 4).

Furthermore, the Melanesian countries struggle with high levels of corruption, political instability and ethnic and/or social tensions. Some of the more dramatic instances of the development problems of this area of the Pacific are outlined in more detail in section 1.3 below.

1.2   Aid and development in the Pacific

Each year, the PICs receive a significant amount of foreign aid. Australia is the leading aid donor to the Pacific and works primarily through bilateral partnerships. The United States, Japan, New Zealand and France are also major donors (OECD/DAC: 2012). China and Taiwan both have a strong aid presence in the region, although the precise extent of their contributions is unclear.[9]

A brief selection of official figures illustrates the depth of the commitment of aid in the last forty years:

- Between 1970 and 1999, the Pacific received a total of almost US$50 billion in aid assistance.[10]

- From 1995 to 1999, average per capita aid to the Pacific exceeded that of Sub-Saharan Africa by ten times, and India by 100 times (Brown, 2005: 2, citing Hughes, 2003: 19).

- In May 2012, AusAID stated that its aid assistance to the Pacific region will be increased by around 37 per cent between 2012 and 2016, from approximately A$1.17 billion to A$1.6 billion.[11]

In short, the PICs benefit from some of the largest amounts of aid assistance in the world relative to the size of their economies and populations (AusAID, 2009: 3). Yet the countries of the region have had varied - and in some places discouraging - levels of development:

- With the exception of the Cook Islands, Samoa, Vanuatu and PNG, economic growth since the mid-1990s has been poor, especially in comparison to East Asia (Duncan *et al.*, 2012: 3).

- In 2006, a report by the World Bank found that many of the PICs suffer from widening trade gaps, sluggish economic growth, declining living standards, poor infrastructure and high production costs (World Bank, 2006, cited in Gani, 2009: 112).

- In 2009, an AusAID analysis found that "the Pacific as a whole is significantly off track to meet the MDGs (millennium development goals) by 2015" and that "most Pacific governments are not managing aid as well as they could" (AusAID, 2009: 1).

- In 2010, an AusAID study found that around 2.7 million people in the Pacific – about one third of the region's population – are impoverished (AusAID, 2010a: 5).

- In 2011, the United Nations' (UN) Human Development Report (HDR) found that most of the PICs are located around the "medium human development category". By rank, the highest placing

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9   There is a lack of detailed information on the Chinese and Taiwanese aid programmes in general. China only published its first publicly available official report on its aid programme in 2011 and the document does not include any breakdown of aid spending (Grimm *et al.* 2011: 4). However, a report from an Australian international policy think-tank, the Lowy Institute, states that China pledged over $US600 million in concessionary loans to PICs between 2005 and 2009 (Hanson and Fifita, 2011: 1). Taiwan's current contribution to the PICs is also unclear – one estimate placed it in the region of $US60-90 million in 2009, inclusive of both concessionary loans and grants (Poling and Larsen, 2012).

10   The Development Assistance Committee, Development co-operation reports, 1971-2000. Paris: OECD, cited in Hughes (2003: 20).

11   http://www.ausaid.gov.au/countries/pacific/Pages/home.aspx., Thursday 20th December 2012.

country of the region was Samoa (99), followed by Fiji (100), the Federated States of Micronesia (116), Kiribati (122) and Vanuatu (125). The Solomon Islands and PNG were placed in the "low human development" category, ranking 142nd and 153rd respectively.

1.3   Violence and civil unrest in Melanesia

The most violent instances of development failure in the Pacific have happened in Melanesia.[12] In the last thirty years the region has witnessed military coups, civil unrest and inter-group conflict:

- Between 1987 and 2007 Fiji experienced four military coups.[13]

- New Caledonia saw violent unrest between indigenous pro-independence groups and French colonial authorities throughout the 1980s.

- Between 1988 and 1997, the island of Bougainville was consumed by violent conflict between separatist forces and the PNG government, and by numerous internal conflicts within Bougainville itself.

- Since the cessation of the violence in Bougainville, the PNG army has mutinied three times, most recently in January 2012.

- In 1996, the armed forces in Vanuatu rebelled against the government over a pay dispute, detaining the President and the acting Prime Minister.

- In 2003, a multinational peace-keeping force was deployed to the Solomon Islands to re-establish peace and re-instate the rule of law after the government proved unable to perform core functions in the aftermath of violent civil conflict.

It is clear, then, that the Pacific faces a particularly stark set of development challenges. Given that the best efforts of the international community to assist the region appear to have fallen far short of their hopes and goals, what has development analysis and aid programming overlooked or neglected to take into account with regard to both understanding and responding to the region's problems? Before turning to a review of relevant literature, the following section outlines briefly some of DLP's working hypotheses and methods of analysis, in the hope that these may be brought to bear fruitfully in discerning the causes of, and in suggesting some positive ways of responding to, the development problems in the Pacific.

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12   This is not to suggest that PICs outside of Melanesia are immune to violent social unrest. In 2006, for example, Tonga saw massive rioting in the capital city, Nuku'alofa, over the lack of democratic reforms in government.

13   In 2012, the current military government in Fiji promised that elections would be held in 2014.

02

Thinking and Working Politically

2.1   Introduction

DLP research uses the term 'politics' in a much wider sense than in its common association with the formal machinery of government. For DLP, politics refers to all of the various formal and informal activities of conflict, co-operation and negotiation involved in decisions about the use, production and distribution of resources and the shape of institutions (Leftwich and Wheeler, 2011: 5). If we take this definition as our starting point, what does it mean to 'think and work politically' about development problems?

2.2   Principles for thinking and working politically

Move away from a technical approach to development

- Traditionally, the international development community has tended to take a largely technical approach to development problems.

- This technical approach has often meant trying to promote changes in the formal, state-level institutions and structures in place in developing countries, or recommending the 'right' mix of the 'right' policies.

- Research from DLP and others illustrates that development outcomes are shaped and sustained by both formal and informal political processes that cannot be reduced simply to the operation of formal institutions, policies and state structures. Furthermore, to understand fully the dynamics that drive these local political processes we need to understand something of the context – historical, geographical, cultural, economic, etc. - in which they are embedded.

Re-focus attention on local agents

- While institutions, policies and state structures are important for development, they will only be effective and lasting if they are devised locally and if they are seen to be both appropriate and legitimate by local actors – especially elites and their followers.

- This implies that, in order to be effective and lasting, development analysis and practice must first be informed by a thorough understanding of, and a sensitive engagement with, local political processes.

- It also implies that development problems demand political solutions rather than only technical fixes. Both are essential. But the role of human agency is critical. Institutions, structures and policies are essential but they are built, shaped, maintained (or undermined) by agents – individual but usually collective agents and their organisations - through political processes of negotiation, bargaining

and compromise.[14]

Understand that obstacles to development require political solutions

- Development problems are typically 'collective action problems' – situations that arise when people or groups with different interests struggle to reach an agreement on an institutional arrangement, in regard to some political or economic issue, that will be to their mutual benefit, but which will also involve some immediate restraint (Leftwich, 2011: 7; Booth, 2012).

- Overcoming collective action problems can be usefully helped by the formation of a coalition, and the identification and mobilisation of leaders, elites, networks and organisations.

- Donors need to devote more attention to how to 'work politically' to encourage positive development outcomes by many means, including supporting, brokering and facilitating the activities of particular reform-minded groups, networks, alliances, and coalitions 'on the ground'.

Moreover, an increasing number of development analysts and agencies are beginning to show much interest in the idea of the 'political settlement' when discussing how to think and work politically in developing countries.

2.3 Political settlements

The political settlements framework is still at an early stage. There is no consensus on what political settlements are and exactly what can be done to influence them in a positive direction. Moreover, there are very few empirical case studies of actual political settlements - their provenance, processes and their institutional and political outcomes. Nevertheless, the political settlements framework holds real promise for complementing the move towards a more politically engaged approach to development analysis and practice.

Previous work by the Asia Foundation and DLP suggests that political settlements should be defined as *on-going* and adaptable political processes that include (but are not confined to) specific one-off events and agreements (such as an election or the signing of an agreement or a constitution) (Parks and Cole, 2010; Laws, 2012). Political settlements are best thought of as 'two-level games'. On the one hand there is interaction, negotiation and competition between local leaders and elites; and on the other hand there is interaction between these leaderships and their respective followers.[15] These political processes and underlying power relations are central to explaining the forms and the relative success or failure of policies and institutions in delivering positive development results. Economic growth, political stability and inclusive social development are the product of power struggles and arrangements between elites and their followers (Parks and Cole, 2010: 5). However, political settlements are not always good for development; they may help to entrench a narrow and exclusive ruling coalition that is predatory and/or clientelistic.

To use 'political settlements analysis' means plotting a map of key actors, understanding their interests (political, economic, religious, cultural, etc.) and then looking at the interaction between those interests and the operation of formal and informal institutions (*ibid.*: 28). In short, applying a political settlements approach necessarily requires one to 'think politically' about development processes.

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14   As Leftwich and Sen (2010) point out, institutions are the 'rules of the game' that shape (but do not determine) human behavior. Institutions do not achieve political, economic or social outputs in and of themselves. It is agents (individuals and organisations) who are responsible for following, shaping, implementing, undermining or reforming the rules. Any attempt to build or strengthen institutional capacity in order to achieve better developmental results needs to be aware of the political processes through which individuals and organizations interact with institutions, thereby making them 'work' or frustrating their purpose.

15   The interaction, negotiations and bargains between local leaders, elites and other political agents, on the one hand, and external actors (donors, development practitioners, etc.) on the other, could represent a third level to the game. For a detailed account of how this third level played out in the case of the post-conflict political settlement in East Timor, see Ingram (2012).

The following section surveys recent literature on development and aid issues in the Pacific. The aim is to establish whether (a) explanations of development problems and (b) the design of aid policies have been informed by the kind of political approach outlined above. Or, has development analysis and aid practice in the region tended to follow the more traditional technical approach by recommending changes at the level of formal institutions, government and state structures and organizations, constitutions, and so on?

03

Literature Review

3.1   Introduction

This section is a targeted literature review that looks at academic research, discussion papers and donor agency reports and strategy documents, from 2000 to the present, on the politics of development and aid programs in the Pacific. In terms of donor publications, the review focuses largely on material from AusAID, given Australia's position as a leading donor to the region.[16] The first part of this literature review looks at a range of AusAID papers that were published between 2003 and 2009. Alongside a number of other papers and reports, these documents endorse a primarily technical approach to the development problems of the Pacific. The latter half of this review looks at articles and reports that adopt a more politically engaged perspective. At the very end of the review, a series of sub-sections is given over to discussing a number of AusAID policy documents and strategy reviews that were published between 2011 and 2012. This is to give a clear sense of how and where the evolution of the Agency's current thinking appears to be moving.

This review is structured according to common themes rather than on a country-by-country basis or chronologically. The purpose of this review is to:

1. Understand whether and to what extent academics, analysts and policy makers have begun in recent years to adopt a politically informed approach to i) understanding development problems and ii) formulating aid and development assistance programs in the Pacific.
2. Identify any clear gaps or omissions in the literature.
3. Ascertain what kinds of research issues or questions may need to be addressed to assist in understanding the causes of development problems in the region, and in prescribing action for donor agencies and the international community.

In the course of writing this review, it became clear that while there is a considerable body of academic and donor agency literature on various aspects of politics, economics, culture and society in the PICs (as will be evident from the long list of references in the Appendix, which includes all of the papers, reports and documents that were unearthed in the course of the initial research), there is very little material that bears directly on issues relating to *how political processes shape developmental outcomes* and how aid agencies should or can build such understandings into their policies and programs.

Where academics and donors have addressed the politics of development and of aid in the Pacific, the tendency has been to adopt a rather narrowly technical, administrative and managerial approach, centred on discussing shortcomings with, or changes that should be made to, formal institutions and state structures, governance, service delivery, infrastructure, and so on.[17] There have been few attempts

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16   At the time of writing this review, Australia provides approximately half of all overseas development assistance to the Pacific (AusAID, 2012b: 41).

17   There are numerous definitions of governance in the literature but one of the most commonly cited is the formulation in World Bank (1993: viii), where governance is "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources". From the 1990s onwards, 'governance' has been a key concept in negotiations between aid agencies, banks and

to apply thoroughly the kind of politically informed analysis that was outlined in the previous section. As a result, and for the most part, the primary goal of aid and development assistance to the region has been to build, or reform, the formal structures of government and formal governance institutions. [18]

3.2 Civil unrest, political instability and poverty call for technical strategies to strengthen formal institutions and improve infrastructure

From 2000 up to the present day, a considerable number of academic studies and donor agency reports that try to explain the development problems of the PICs focus on the poor performance of formal institutions and on the need to improve economic infrastructure. For example, in looking at the characteristics of Melanesian countries that account for their shared susceptibility to civil unrest and political instability, Duncan and Chand (2002: 8) argue that the combination of rich natural resources, fragile property rights and limited employment opportunities have acted as a touch-paper for political instability and civil unrest.

They argue that reducing the likelihood of civil unrest in the future centres on the need to build or support certain formal institutions, and this reflects clearly the technocratic mindset of much traditional development theory and practice: "… it appears that unless the institutions essential for modernisation and economic growth are established, these countries will remain prone to such conflict …" (*ibid.*). In their view, what is required is a "political structure that will unite regions/provinces within a viable state" (*ibid.*: 7) and the practical task for development agencies is to help design and implement such a structure.

In terms of overcoming poverty in the Pacific, for Duncan and Chand (*ibid.*) economic growth is a technical challenge that requires the building of secure property rights and contracts, better communication facilities to help foster trade, and greater investment in transport, education and infrastructure in general. These improvements to infrastructure will also help to encourage a sense of shared nationhood through creating greater interdependence between otherwise disparate communities (*ibid.*: 8). In other words, better infrastructure and more robust formal institutions are the key factors in shaping and promoting development progress. The implication is that once these formal institutions and structures are in place, the political and economic behavior of individuals will follow suit.

3.3 Development problems in the Pacific are the result of poor governance and weak institutions – the persistence of an idea

This largely technocratic approach is also expressed in a range of other papers which regard the achievement of better governance as a key factor in the development prospects for the PICs. Writing towards the close of the 1990s, Macdonald (1998: 22) argued that: "The development of a good governance emphasis in aid relationships has not featured prominently in the academic literature on Pacific Islands development". The terrain has changed considerably since then. Virtually all of the research discussed below was found to include some commitment to the idea that there is an urgent need to improve governance in the Pacific if the development problems of the region are to be surmounted.

For those more technically minded analysts, good governance is said to be a matter of getting robust

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developing countries (Larmour, 1998: 1).

18   However, within technical assistance programmes there can be varying degrees of political awareness on the part of outside practitioners and local agents. In PNG, AusAID-funded advisors worked closely with the National Economic and Fiscal Commission (NEFC) to support reforms to the funding of basic services to provincial areas. According to an AusAID case-study report, the success of the process can be attributed to the fact that the NEFC was encouraged to develop locally appropriate reforms with broad ownership on the part of the PNG government. Along with providing appropriate technical assistance, the AusAID-funded advisors were "flexible, responsive and open to different approaches" (AusAID, 2010b: 5). In short, the advisors demonstrated the merits of working politically to encourage development reforms in PNG.

formal institutions in place. Chand (2002) is an example of this line of reasoning. The problems of governance on the Solomon Islands are said to include: "… increasing law and order problems, rising incidences of disregard for rights to property and personal security, increasing abuse of public office including misappropriation of public funds, and widespread allegations of nepotism in the public service" (*ibid.*: 156). These issues are understood to be the direct result of fundamental problems in institutions: "Once the institutions underscoring the stability of society are damaged beyond its ability to self-repair, the system begins to unravel" (*ibid.*).

Chand argued that, in order to meet these political and economic problems, the donor community should look at ways of helping to establish the formal institutions of a "healthy society", which include: "rules in the form of regulations, norms, customs and traditions, together with structures such as the courts, churches and media … to ensure a fluid exchange of goods, services and ideas within the community" (*ibid.*)

Adopting a similarly institutional focus, AusAID (2003a) stated that the key development obstacles across the Pacific nations are:

- Poor fiscal management
- Badly planned public investments
- Inefficient service delivery.

The key to overcoming these problems is said to lie in institutional and policy reform to improve governance (*ibid.*: 7). In particular, there is a need to "implement sound domestic policies, create environments for private sector investment, overcome financial mismanagement and corruption, promote stability, and to provide an appropriate level of services" (*ibid.*: 15).

The implication of this analysis is that the correct mixture of skills, knowledge, planning and experience in government and the civil service will enable the countries of the Pacific to overcome their development problems. Yet we are told nothing about the local agents, groups, coalitions, alliances or organisations on the ground who would be required to bring about these institutional and policy changes, in the first instance, and then work to ensure their continued operation as time goes on.[19]

One particularly notable point to emerge from this review is the persistence and longevity of the technical approach to analysing the development problems in the Pacific. A very similar institutional and governance lens as that put forward in AusAID (2003a) is at the centre of the much later analysis by Gani (2009), in a study that examines the relationship between governance indicators and foreign aid in seven PICs. The paper identifies "weak institutions … as a key impediment to long-term economic progress" (*ibid.*: 113). Gani notes that strong institutions and improvements in governance are the primary goals for the major donors such as AusAID, the European Union and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID), as these goals are seen to be the key to long-term growth and development in the region. In particular, "The need to reduce rising corruption within the public sector, upholding the rule of law and facilitating improvements in voice and accountability are areas that need urgent attention" (*ibid.*: 123).

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19   This underscores the need for development practice to be based on up-to-the-minute and on-going fieldwork. The kind of fine-grained contextual knowledge that is required for development practitioners to 'think and work politically' demands a real commitment from donors to funding inter-disciplinary study that utilises the best insights of political science, anthropology, geography, economics and sociology.

3.4 AusAID (2009) – maintaining a technical approach to governance reform

This same technical perspective on governance in the Pacific has persisted to the present and is expressed, for example, in AusAID (2009) – part of a series of annual reports looking at the progress being made towards the MDGs. The overall position in the paper is that aid has failed to make much improvement to conditions in the Pacific because most recipient governments "are not managing aid as well as they could" (*ibid.*: 1). The report finds that "resources are neither sufficiently coordinated nor prioritised behind effective country and sectoral development plans and strategies" (*ibid.*).

The proposed solution lies in devising a new "development framework" that would include:

- More frequent and higher level dialogue within the region on development issues
- Clear and measurable commitments to improve coordination
- Better integration of development resources through sound national plans and public financial management and monitoring systems
- More effective country leadership
- More innovative ways of working among development partners
- Joint action to improve statistical data in the Pacific (AusAID, 2009: 3).

Excluding "dialogue within the region on development issues" and "more effective country leadership", each of the proposals for aid programming outlined above falls within the technical, top-down school of development. There is no allowance made for the thought that the design, establishment and performance of these institutional and administrative structures may be driven or held back by political factors such as elite power relations and interests, or by the interplay between political and economic interests and incentives at work in aid-recipient countries.

3.5 Haley (2008) – The emergence of a more political aspect of governance reform in the Pacific

For the most part, Haley (2008: 3) continues the technical line of analysis by arguing that poor governance in the Pacific has undermined the prospects for aid to encourage economic reform and growth. The proper response to this situation for donors is to encourage good governance through working to strengthen or build formal administrative, bureaucratic and institutional structures, including:

- Effective law enforcement
- Robust institutions
- Regulatory authorities which seek to monitor and support law enforcement processes (e.g. police, ombudsmen, auditor, attorney-general, and judiciary) (*ibid.*: 4).

However, the paper moves towards a more political and contextual perspective on governance reform in conceding that, alongside the formal institutions mentioned above, the quality of governance is also determined by such factors as "… historical context; socio-cultural context; the political economy of the country; ethnic, racial or religious homogeneity" (*ibid.*: 5). In this vein, Haley (*ibid.*: 6) cites approvingly the claim in Court (2006: 3) that governance reform "is a political not just a technical exercise". So rather than endorsing a one-size-fits-all approach, Haley's argument (*ibid.*: 5) is that the strategies for building better governance "must necessarily vary from country to country, locale to locale, and issue to issue". Imported systems and approaches to governance are only as effective as their adaptability to the local political environment (Haley, 2008: 6, citing Saldanha, 2004: 39).

Despite the recognition of the importance of political factors, little attention is given in the paper to the idea that development is a process that is driven or hindered by political actors and organisations

with different and potentially competing interests. The recognition that 'politics matters' to develop-ment is only made at a superficial level. 'Governments' are treated as homogenous and singular entities (rather than partisan political organizations often composed of contending elites) – as in the claim that "Successful reform requires local buy-in and ownership as well as sustained commitment … and is highly unlikely to be achieved in the absence of government commitment (Haley, 2008: 6, citing Collier and Dollar, 2001: 14). In the same fashion, 'culture' and 'context' are spoken of as if they are brute facts about a country like population size or GDP (rather than themselves the site of political contestation, conflicting interpretation and power-play) - as in the claim, regarding governance reform, that "the success of efforts will be contingent on a wide range of factors, including the prevailing socio-cultural context" (Haley, 2008: 6).

3.6   Earlier AusAID studies note the importance of politics and leadership but still retain the focus on institutions and technical assistance

As shown in the previous sub-section, it is not always the case that authors can be identified exclu-sively with either a technical or a political approach. It is not unusual for a paper, report or policy statement to fall at some point on the spectrum between two extremes and to contain nods in both directions. So, for example, whilst the analysis and prescriptions in AusAID (2003a) are for the greater part technical, one of the conclusions is a politically informed appeal for "increasingly robust dialogue at senior political levels to encourage reform efforts" (*ibid.*: 16). Here we see a gesture to the idea that institutional and structural reforms come about through political processes of dialogue, compromise and negotiation. AusAID (*ibid.*: ii) also acknowledges the importance of leadership for bringing about reform when it states that: "Political will to address governance is central to the Pacific's future but has proven difficult to sustain".

However, little more is offered about how donors might be of assistance in cultivating this kind of leadership initiative, or that there may be a legitimate role for the international community to play in this area. In essence, and despite the growing awareness of the importance of politics and leadership, the problems of the Pacific are seen ultimately as the result of the failure of institutional structures to perform as they should: "the capacity and accountability of core national institutions has deteriorated … if the institutions responsible for governance quality are allowed to wither, social and economic prospects become seriously impaired" (*ibid.*: 6). By implication, the purpose of aid assistance is to shore up those institutions, to: "provide rapid, post-conflict support in infrastructure … build platforms for future growth and support service delivery to the poor" (*ibid.*: 14).

3.7   AusAID's technical assistance to PNG

A further statement from AusAID (2003b), entitled 'Why our aid to the Pacific is so Important', is similarly divided between the technical and the more political approach to aid. On the one hand, the awareness that "outsiders cannot 'fix' countries" but only "help local people overcome some of the constraints and achieve their own objectives" shows sensitivity to the limitations of the technical approach to development. We also see a commitment that aid programs should be agreed upon in partnership with recipient governments through "robust and frank discussions".

However, when outlining the actual concrete measures that aid can be used to support - specifically in the case of PNG - the statement reverts to the language of technical assistance, public sector reform and fiscal management: "Australia is supporting a flexible program of technical assistance aimed at helping PNG address corruption, macroeconomic forecasting, cash management, debt management, budget formulation processes and tax policy" (AusAID, 2003b). The language in this statement suggests

that change and reform in the Pacific has to proceed through locally owned political processes. But the role for donors and Australia is still seen as one of providing technical, administrative and managerial support. This is a theme that we will see repeated in more recent AusAID literature, below.

3.8   Take a technical approach to combating clientelism

Across parts of Melanesia, the ties of clan or kinship group are said to infiltrate governments in a way that often frustrates political stability and inclusive social development. For example, Duncan and Nakagawa (2006: 11) state that:

> "The prevalence of clientelism politics in Papua New Guinea, the resulting lack of genuine political parties, and the high degree of political instability has been attributed to the personal and group (clan) loyalties within this highly ethnically and geographically fragmented society".

Their proposed solution is that electoral systems should be reformed so as to "encourage candidates to seek to win support from a wider cross section of their electorate" (*ibid.*). The implication is that the formal structure of the electoral process will determine the behavior of the agents - the politicians - who work within that structure. In other words, encouraging change in individual behavior to promote positive development outcomes is a technical question of getting the correct institutions and incentives in place. There is no concession made here to the thought that successfully changing formal institutions may depend in the first instance upon the political will, capacities and outlooks of local leaders, elites, organisations and individuals.[20]

Chand and Duncan (2010) also investigate the claim that the roots of political instability in the Pacific lie in the pervasive influence of clientelism. They argue that the explanation for political instability in the Pacific cannot consist just in the fact of clientelism, since all democratic political orders, including those of the more stable and advanced industrialised countries, are to some degree based on clientelism (*ibid.*: 37). What sets Pacific politics apart is the inability of political parties to control the extent of clientelism and the behavior of politicians (*ibid.*: 38). Chand and Duncan follow the technocratic mindset by reasoning that:

> "If the difference between Pacific politics and politics in industrialised countries lies in the weakness of political parties in the Pacific … we should identify the structures in industrialised democracies that enhance parties and those structures in the Pacific that impair parties" (*ibid.*: 38).

The details of their response - which is to recommend technical measures to strengthen political parties in order to police more effectively the behavior of politicians – are less important for our purposes than noting the technical way in which they frame the problem.

3.9   Turning to a more politically engaged approach to development in the Pacific

It should be clear by now that a considerable body of the research that has been conducted into the politics of development in the Pacific region has adopted a technical, administrative and managerial approach. Moreover, the evidence is that aid programming has for the most part been commonly understood and carried out as a technical enterprise to strengthen or build formal institutions and to

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20   Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that the kinds of practices that are sometimes labeled as 'corrupt', 'clientelistic' or 'patrimonial' can also be defined as the operation of informal institutions, practices and processes, which can have a high degree of local legitimacy. There is an interesting discussion of this perspective on Pacific politics in Schoeffel (1997, 4-6). To make this observation is not to bow to cultural relativism, but rather to emphasise the point that without a fine-grained understanding of the local context – cultural, historical and geographical, etc. – in which particular social and political practices and norms play out, it will be difficult for development actors to know how to encourage positive, lasting and locally legitimate reforms.

improve state capacity, service delivery, infrastructure and political and economic governance.

Nevertheless, there has been a growing sense in recent years in some academic and policy circles that the technical school of development theory and practice may need to be expanded into an approach that is more attuned to, and engaged with, local political processes. This trend has not escaped entirely the notice of theorists and practitioners looking at the Pacific. This part of the review begins in the following sub-section by outlining three criticisms of the technical approach from three different authors.

3.10   Three criticisms of the technical approach to development analysis and aid programming in the Pacific

1. Saldanha (2004) offers a political critique of the way in which development agencies have structured their aid programmes to the Pacific. The starting premise for the paper is that "Well-intentioned policies are not worth the paper they are written on if not developed appropriately, with internal ownership, and not implemented effectively" (*ibid.*: 31). Multilateral development agencies have traditionally used 'program lending' or 'conditionality-based lending' to persuade recipient governments in the Pacific to adopt governance and economic reforms. For Saldanha, these measures have proved futile because they are "unable to catalyse any internal, sustained commitment to reform" (*ibid.*: 37). Donors should look for and, where possible, capitalise upon "internal leadership potential and commitment" (*ibid.*: 38). Where such potential is lacking, donors should work politically to "educate, influence and establish constructive dialogue and relationships, and thereby gradually cultivate a core of leadership opinion for reform" (*ibid.*). Donors could start by looking to "identify talented potential leaders and support their professional development, particularly in public management and governance" (*ibid.*: 40).

2. Regan (2005) criticises the rationale for large-scale technical assistance to PNG as set out in a strategy document by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) (White *et al.*, 2004). The document argues that donors should work with the PNG state to build up state capacity and improve service delivery, whilst encouraging greater national unity through such measures as improving infrastructure in mass media and sport.

    Regan argues that these technical assistance programs are unlikely to deliver the desired results. In terms of nation-building, the modern nation-state first emerged in Europe through social, economic and political processes (in tandem with much violence and chaos) that unfolded over centuries. Technical assistance played no part in its appearance and is therefore unlikely to do the job in the context of PNG (*ibid.*: 6). In terms of state-building, previous attempts to strengthen the state through technical assistance – both in PNG and across the developing world – have delivered poor results. In Regan's view, donors working in the Pacific should instead focus their attention on encouraging and facilitating the activities of local individuals, groups and organisations to develop a sense of national identity and to exert their own pressure on the state to perform according to their needs and expectations (*ibid.*: 3, 10).

3. Most recently, the technical approach to development analysis and aid programming in the Pacific has been criticised by Dinnen and Allen (2012). They argue that by privileging top-down state-building measures, capacity-building, and "'technical assistance in the form of international experts attached to local institutions" (*ibid.*: 2), donors have inadvertently undermined public confidence in indigenous community-based service providers such as local police forces. Speaking of the need to develop a new model of policing in the Solomon Islands, for example, the authors argue for

''innovative thinking and forms of engagement that go well beyond the institutional transfer and capacity-building approaches that have so far dominated the liberal peace paradigm'' (*ibid.*: 3).

3.11 Elite incentives and power relations help to explain the poor performance of aid

Hughes (2003) suggests some underlying political reasons as to why overseas aid money spent on improving economic growth, political stability and inclusive social development in the Pacific has performed poorly. She states that the structure of local elite incentives is responsible partly for the persistence of some key development problems. Across the Pacific, ''Entrenched elites oppose any political and economic rationalisation that would reduce the considerable benefits they monopolise at the expense of the rest of the population'' (*ibid.*: 4). The difficulty is that she does not substantiate this claim with any empirical evidence. Nonetheless, the line of analysis that Hughes (2003) develops does support the idea that aid programs could be improved if they were informed by an understanding of the power relations between different local elites, the structure of elite incentives, and how these relations and incentives affect the performance of formal and informal institutions.

3.12 Elites, national identity and higher education

Fukuyama (2008) discusses long-term strategies for state-building in the Solomon Islands and looks at how democratic governance is impeded in some cases by the ties of clan loyalty, which are part of the complex web of kinship, linguistic and geographical relationships that are referred to in the Solomon Islands, PNG and Vanuatu using the broad phrase *wantok* (Pidgin English for ''one-talk'').[21] The analysis here underlines the importance to development progress of a sense of common national identity. Advice is given for international donors on how to support nation-building through politically engaged strategies such as the creation of national secondary schools and a national university, to help develop a ruling elite with a sense of common background and shared identity. The idea in this paper - that an effective state in the Solomon Islands will require the emergence of a network of elites with similar interests, ideas and incentives - echoes the argument, in the political settlements framework of analysis, that institutions must be supported by the structure of elite interests if they are to function effectively. By focusing on the importance of elite interests and power relations, Fukuyama's (2008) analysis moves positively in the direction of a more politically engaged approach to encouraging development in the Pacific.

3.13 Understanding the context for change

One of the earlier more politically nuanced approaches to the development situation in the Pacific region can be found in Cox *et al.* (2007), an AusAID-commissioned assessment of the prospects for positive development change in Vanuatu, using the 'Drivers of Change' methodology developed by DFID.[22] This inquiry is premised on the idea that ''development is a fundamentally political process, and development assistance is more likely to be effective if it is based on a sound understanding of the country context, including political processes and incentives'' (*ibid.*: i).[23] This approach naturally leads to policy proposals that involve a long time frame and greater direct engagement with local individuals

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21 For a detailed discussion of the meaning and significance of *wantok*, see Nanau (2011).

22 Briefly, the Drivers of Change (DoC) approach looks at political change through the complex interaction between structures, formal and informal institutions, and political agents. For more information on the background to DoC and for an account of some of its shortcomings, see Hudson and Leftwich, forthcoming 2013.

23   'Historical awareness' should be added to the list of contextual factors that are important for building a detailed understanding of the prospects for development reform. This is particularly pertinent for countries emerging from comparatively recent colonial administration, as is the case across much of the Pacific. The colonial experience has influenced not only the shape and function of the current institutions in the PICs but also the way in which local individuals relate (or fail to relate) to those institutions. For a very interesting discussion of this point in the context of Melanesia, see Schoeffel (1997, 5-8).

within the political system: "A credible vision for Vanuatu is incremental change, with core government systems being gradually strengthened and donors working in strategic alliance with reform-minded individuals within the political establishment and administration" (*ibid.*: v).

3.14 The emergence of the language of politics in AusAID from 2011

In a series of AusAID strategy and program review documents, published between 2011 and 2012, there is a good deal of emphasis placed on the need to engage with local political actors and political processes in aid recipient countries. Although these documents do not in all cases focus explicitly on the Pacific, they are useful for our purposes in this literature review in as much as they indicate the general orientation towards political analysis and engagement on the part of one of the region's foremost donors.

AusAID (2011a: 1) maintains that Australia will continue to support good governance in developing countries as one of the central strategic goals of its aid program, and that its efforts in this regard "will be informed by political, social and contextual analysis". Improving governance is said to require an understanding of the local context and a willingness to work in close conjunction with local government and leaders (*ibid.*: 2). This represents a step away from technocratic efforts to tinker with the details of formal institutions or structures of government, and embodies the important and increasingly accepted view, internationally, that "development is rarely a straightforward or purely technical process" (*ibid.*: 3).

Nevertheless, when it comes to outlining specific policy priorities, AusAID (2011a) still envisages a central role for technical, managerial and administrative assistance centred on "building effective institutions" (*ibid.*: 3), improving "government efficiency and effectiveness" (*ibid.*: 4) and on supporting a "strong public sector and sound public financial management" in order to contribute "to better service delivery" (*ibid.*) So while the recognition in this document that "supporting governance reforms is not a purely technical matter" but also involves "a political process" (*ibid.*) is to be commended from DLP's perspective, there is still considerable room for adapting and adopting the new thinking for concrete policy commitments. Moreover, while these institutional features are indeed central to development, they will not be sustainable without effective local ownership and without the involvement and endorsement of local leaders and elites.

3.15 AusAID in conflict-affected states: politics and political settlements analysis

AusAID (2011b) sets out guidance for the Agency's staff when working in fragile and conflict-affected regions. The paper acknowledges that many of the development challenges that arise in such contexts are "inherently complex, political and contested" (AusAID, 2011b: 9). In light of this, staff members need to be prepared to adopt a long-term perspective and to acquire a deep understanding of the needs, constraints and opportunities at work in different contexts (*ibid.*). This political and contextual approach means developing strategies and programs based on local needs and capacities, "rather than transferring institutional models from a more developed context which may not be appropriate" (*ibid.*: 25). There is a brief but telling acknowledgement in this document that all development activity on the part of external donors has a political dimension – and therefore cannot be understood just as a technical, administrative or managerial exercise: "The Framework will help AusAID staff … to understand how AusAID activities affect local social and political processes" (*ibid.*: 11).

This document is also notable for acknowledging the importance to AusAID of political settlements

analysis. As outlined briefly in section 2 of this background paper, the political settlements framework holds that development goals like sustainable and equitable economic growth, political stability and inclusive social development are political outcomes that are related to the structure of power relations between local elites and between elites and their respective groups of followers. According to AusAID (2011b: 25), understanding the nature of the political settlement in a fragile country is crucial for understanding how to assist governance reform in an effective way: "Advocating systematic governance reforms without analysing existing political settlements and state-society relations … may result in harmful advice". In other words, donors cannot expect to work effectively without a deep and comprehensive understanding of local political dynamics and elite power relations.

3.16 Politics and policy in AusAID

In terms of translating the importance of politics into concrete policy, AusAID (2011b) is rather more explicit than AusAID (2011a) and suggests that the Agency should work on supporting "mediation and negotiation efforts" (AusAID 2011b: 33) between potentially fractious elites and political leaders. Working politically in fragile contexts implies brokering opportunities for local actors to discuss, debate and (ideally) agree upon the formal institutions that they want to see put in place , "rather than import 'best practice' designs from elsewhere" (*ibid*.: 35). In Vanuatu, AusAID has adopted this kind of approach by working closely in partnership with the Malvatumauri Vanuatu National Council of Chiefs in order to devise locally appropriate strategies for maintaining peace, community stability and development more generally (*ibid*.: 53).

3.17 Reviewing the commitment to technical assistance in AusAID

AusAID (2011c: 3) explains the effectiveness of the development enterprises that performed highest in the AusAID 2009-2010 Quality at Implementation reviews partly by reference to the fact that they incorporated a deep understanding of the nature of local leadership and of local political, social and cultural contexts. One of the core messages of this report is that aid effectiveness depends critically upon domestic ownership and commitment, and that "development is an inherently political process" (AusAID, 2011c: 7). Reforms commonly fail not because of a lack of technical capacity, money, knowledge or resources, but because local agents oppose changes that would upset the *status quo* from which they benefit (*ibid*.). As such, harnessing suitable local networks, coalitions and alliances as spearheads for change is often the best way forward, as is finding ways to help reconstruct and re-shape those local interests and align them with broader public goals and goods.

The suggestion is made that AusAID should reduce its reliance on technical advisers in some areas of its aid program and focus instead on building detailed local political knowledge and on tailoring aid and assistance programs to suit local contexts (*ibid*.: 7, 8, 11). This move away from technical assistance is supported by AusAID's (2011d) *Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness*. The review found that, although there are some success stories, the results of technical assistance programs are generally poor. Where the local political will for governance reform is absent, technical assistance is of little use (AusAID, 2011d: 47, 166).

3.18 AusAID strategy from 2012 onwards

It is clear from the material discussed above that the language of politics has increasingly come to the fore in AusAID's thinking around how to improve its aid and development assistance programmes. What is less clear is the extent to which this awareness of the importance of politics is being translated into actual policy, programs and research priorities.

AusAID's (2012a) response to the independent review states that it will follow the recommendation to reduce the number of technical advisors by 25% by 2014. This suggests that the critique of the technical and managerial approach to development has made some impact. However, in the list of research priorities outlined in AusAID's (2012b) research strategy for 2012-2016, there is no mention of any commitment to exploring strategies of political engagement, or to acquiring a deeper knowledge of the underlying power structures in aid recipient countries.

These are just two very broad examples of possible items on the kind of research agenda one might expect to see from a development agency that was committed to a move away from a single-mindedly technical, managerial and administrative approach to development. Instead, the agenda returns to more technical issues such as creating sustainable economic development through "appropriate management of natural resource wealth" and effective governance through "economic and public sector reform including areas of service delivery and security" (AusAID, 2012b: 5). The only reference to more politically-oriented research is in "increasing understanding of leadership" (*ibid.*). This is an important step that needs development.

3.19 Conclusion

This literature review has found that the greater part of the work that has been done to understand the development problems of the Pacific has assumed that the causes of those problems are primarily to do with structural issues such as failing institutions, poor economic policy-making, and a lack of infrastructure. In looking to respond to those problems, aid programs have centred primarily on the technical business of governance reform and institution building. More recently, steps have been taken by some analysts and academics, and within AusAID, to recommend and adopt a more political approach that engages with individual and collective human agency, the political actors. But this trend is very much in its infancy and the level of commitment within AusAID to incorporating political analysis in the development of its actual policies, programs and research priorities is far from clear.

The following section sets out a few of the many possible avenues for future research that are suggested by the gaps and omissions of the literature discussed above.

04

Gaps, omissions and avenues for further research

4.1   Introduction

The overarching question that research on development in the Pacific has yet to address in any comprehensive sense is: "What would it mean in concrete policy terms for the international community to 'think and work politically' to address the development issues in the region?"[24] Progress in this direction could be furthered through addressing the following gaps and omissions in the current literature.

4.2   Apply political settlements analysis

There are no clear and detailed empirical case studies of political settlements in the Pacific. Important research by Anthony Regan (2002) into the politics of the Bougainville conflict and its aftermath incorporates broadly similar concepts and ideas, but no explicit attempt has yet been made to undertake the kind of political settlement 'mapping' exercise suggested in Parks and Cole (2010) in any Pacific country.

Mapping a political settlement involves looking at a society or sector and sketching out the following (Hudson and Leftwich, forthcoming 2013).

•   The structures and institutions of power (economic, political, social and ideological).

•   The key actors and their interests. Who are the key local agents, groups, coalitions, alliances or organisations that could potentially drive through – or stand in the way of - developmentally positive institutional and policy change in the Pacific? What are the sources and forms of their power? What is the structure of their incentives and interests? How do those interests and incentives intersect with current institutions?[25]

The evidence of this paper suggests that current research on the Pacific sheds very little light on these kinds of questions. Sue Ingram's (2011) important paper on the political settlement that unfolded in East Timor after the crisis in 1999, and her on-going research around this topic, is a significant and innovative example of how this kind of mapping analysis can be used to better understand the political dynamics at work in any given country or sector, and to design aid or assistance programs accordingly. Ingram's work is an excellent model for how analysts and researchers might look to fill the current gap in political settlements analysis in the Pacific.

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24   It could be equally pertinent to explore, in another research project, the inverse of this question – namely, what have been the internal political processes that have prevented the international community from adopting a more finely-grained political understanding of, and approach to, development problems more generally and in the Pacific more specifically? Ranging, for example, from the World Bank to AusAID and other bilaterals, each of the major national and multi-lateral development agencies would reveal quite interestingly different stories.

25   Carrying out this kind of mapping exercise would also encourage outside agencies to develop assistance and governance reform programmes that are appropriate to the particular size, scale and budget of the country in which they are working, rather than automatically trying to replicate the formal institutions and machinery of government of larger countries. In a number of cases, Pacific countries have been lumbered with bureaucratic structures that are far too complex for their size, budgets and needs. A particularly extreme example is the Federated States of Micronesia, where a population of less than 100,000 people is governed by four state parliaments and one national parliament (Saldanha, 2004: 34, 39).

4.3   Develop and commit to a framework for political analysis

Related to the above point, there appears as yet to be no systematic commitment to develop, adopt or adapt a systematic and consistently applied framework for political analysis that could be generalised in its application to the many different levels, sectors and issue areas that AusAID is concerned with. Without embedding such an understanding and approach in the training, skills and standard operating procedures of officers in the Agency, it will be very difficult to sustain the rhetorical commitment to political or political economy analysis now so common in the Agency's published statements and thematic strategies.

4.4   Work on bringing together leaderships, coalitions and alliances

Further, it is important now to extend policy-level thinking about what the international community, and AusAID in particular, could do to broker and facilitate the emergence of developmental leaderships, coalitions and alliances in the Pacific (some progress has been made around this topic in the context of peace-building – please see the following bullet point). It is also not clear how much or how little is known about the sectors or issue areas that might be appropriate for this kind of brokering activity, and which areas may need to be treated as the 'no-go' areas.

4.5   Think about the lessons to be learnt from successful peace-building projects

This initial research indicates that the method of the international community to conflict resolution and peace-building in Bougainville was an important example of a politically engaged approach – identifying key players in the dispute, brokering meetings, facilitating discussions, and so on. Detailed accounts of the peace process – and the political factors that account for its success - can be found in Brown (2005: 7) and in Regan (2010).[26] It may therefore be worth exploring the question: why has the international community's approach to peace-building in situations like the Bougainville conflict been more politically engaged whilst the approach to other development issues – such as sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development etc. - has tended toward the technical, administrative and managerial? Could the comparative success of the peace-building exercise in Bougainville be used as a model for how to work politically in the Pacific to overcome other collective action problems around development?

4.6   Think about the lessons to be learnt from other relative success stories in the Pacific

There is an absence of detailed and comparative case-study work of the kind that would seek to explain, for example, the factors that have shaped the relative political stability and steady development progress in states like Samoa and Tonga when compared to those parts of the Pacific that are struggling on key development indicators. Applying a consistent framework for political analysis to these and other cases will deepen and generalise understanding of the factors that may contribute to political stability, the essential condition for growth and poverty-reduction institutions.

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26   Regan's (2010: 52) important analysis places particular importance on the fact that the peace process was "locally initiated" and that local actors "felt strongly that, for the most part, they were in control of the process". One of the key lessons he draws from the Bougainville example is that peacebuilding interventions must be based on a fine-grained understanding of the context of the conflict and peace process (*ibid.*: 134). In short, Regan's account suggests that the success of the Bougainville peace agreement is owed in large part to the fact that the international community, and Australia and New Zealand in particular, adopted a politically sensitive approach.

4.7 Think about education and developmental leadership

What scope is there for secondary and higher education in the Pacific to promote the leadership, networks, outlooks and qualities in future generations that are conducive to the later formation of developmentally progressive coalitions and alliances? The general question of whether there is evidence for linking higher education to the emergence of developmental leaders and coalitions is one that has received little attention from academics or policy-makers, and as such DLP is engaged in on-going research on this topic (see Brannelly, Lewis and Ndaruhutse, 2011a and Brannelly, Lewis and Ndaruhutse, 2011b).

4.8 Explore alternative ways of integrating traditional leaders into state structures

In the absence of research that explores potentially positive ways of integrating customary chiefs and traditional leaders in the institutions of developmental governance in the Pacific, there may be a case for work that seeks to learn lessons from other parts of the world (Botswana in Africa, for example) – where traditional leaders (chiefs) are paid a salary to oversee governance and economic development in their areas, but are not permitted to participate in national politics. However, whilst examples from elsewhere can be provocative and useful, the starting point for this kind of analysis would be to develop a more comprehensive picture of how local political practices and norms in the Pacific intersect with, and have influenced the operation of, the formal state institutions that were established at independence.

4.9 Conclusion

These brief suggestions are far from exhaustive of the ways in which academics and policy-makers could make progress towards a more politically engaged way of thinking through the causes of, and the potential avenues for addressing, the various development hurdles faced by the PICs. But if the international community, and AusAID in particular, is prepared to take seriously its commitment to a deeper political analysis of the contexts in which it works, these constitute promising avenues for moving the agenda forward and for arriving at concrete policy suggestions.

05
Conclusion

It is now widely accepted that 'politics matters' for development outcomes. Yet it is debatable whether this acceptance has had much influence yet on the actual policies and practices of donor agencies and the international community (Hudson and Leftwich, forthcoming 2013; Wild and Foresti, 2011; Unsworth, 2009). The purpose of this background paper has been to establish the degree to which academics, analysts and policy makers have begun in recent years to adopt a more politically informed approach to understanding development problems and formulating aid assistance programs in the Pacific.

The review in section 3 found that the greater part of the recent literature on the region has described the development problems as structural or technical issues related to poor institutions, narrow-sighted policies, or a lack of infrastructure. As a result, aid programs have focused primarily on the technical business of governance reform and institution building. Some progress has been made recently to adopt a more politically engaged approach, and AusAID in particular has been increasingly explicit in its commitment to political analysis. But there is still much work to be done in translating that commitment into concrete Agency skills, practices and programmes. In particular, there is ample scope for the development and application of new political analysis tools, including the political settlements framework as an entry point for understanding local contexts. There may be considerable value in bringing to bear a more detailed interdisciplinary approach to understanding how informal institutions operate in PICs, and how they intersect with formal state institutions and the machinery of government. Anthropology, geography, and sociology all have much to offer development theorists and practitioners, particularly in the context of countries where informal customary and traditional institutions, practices and norms are central to much of their social and political life. The persistence of the daunting development problems in the Pacific region, despite the vast sums of aid that have been spent in the last fifty years or so, suggests that it is now more than appropriate to commit resources to finding new ways of addressing those problems.

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Appendix

Listed below are the references to all the papers, documents, agency reports, etc. on issues to do with governance, leadership, political instability, poverty and inequality in the Pacific that were found in the course of the undertaking the literature review for this background paper. These references were not thought to be directly relevant for the very specific purposes of this paper, but they provide important material for anyone interested in acquiring a deeper understanding of academic and policy thinking on development in the Pacific. The references are sub-divided, first into those with a general focus on the Pacific, then Melanesia, and then those with a specific country-focus.

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