

Greenland and the Pacific Islands: An improbable conjunction of development trajectories.

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ABSTRACT: Predictions for the future of small islands and island states are often pessimistic. Multiple discontents have followed decolonization. In Pacific island states poverty and inequality have increased, free trade offers few development possibilities, governance is weak and urban biased, and aid dependence has not declined. Economic niches, including ‘sovereignty sales’, have largely failed to emerge. Populations are contracting from outer islands, resulting in unmanageable urbanization in primate cities. One outcome has been rising international migration, along with remittances, as a safety valve and diversification strategy. Selective out-migration and limited return migration have contributed to a skill drain. Yet migration has enabled the periphery to survive, and brought improved welfare. Diaspora engagement and deterritorialization have ensued. Formal development strategies, more international than national, emphasize ‘modernity’ with culture to be abhorred and ignored, yet hybridity offers possibilities for a more equitable and environmentally sensitive sustainable development, where modernity has inherent disadvantages. Even so a combination of migration, selective economic diversification and cultural hybridity, can only be shaped within the difficult context of globalization. Seemingly very different Greenland shares multiple similarities with post-colonial Pacific states, including urban bias, deterritorialization and the marginalization of culture, but especially where ‘welfare colonialism’ has been prevalent. These parallels point to both uncomfortable similarities and lessons, and difficult future decolonization and development trajectories in the Arctic.

Keywords: colonialism, decolonization, development, Greenland, island states, Pacific

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Introduction

Small island states are widely argued to be disadvantaged by size, location and other factors, hence their belated decolonization. Yet development, as an idea and a practice, is premised on the assumption that all nations have the ability to raise the material wellbeing of citizens, usually through a combination of familiar market-based strategies. Small states were thus encouraged, by former colonial powers, aid donors and international agencies, such as the global banks, to develop conventional export-based economies and regional and international linkages to negate economies of scale. However both strategies have proved problematic, at least for Pacific island states, and, rather than regional integration, a ‘progressive balkanization’ has followed.

Pacific island states have consequently sought to develop distinctive and unusual strategies (where sovereignty has some limited value), but none have had long-term success. Two recent outcomes of these disappointments have been the almost polar opposites of hybridity (where local values predominate, in political institutions and economic strategies)

and migration to distant metropolitan cities. Neither have contributed to conventional development strategies (and indeed are a partial response to their failure) but reflect the growing significance of a form of 'identity politics' that recognizes and benefits from the distinctiveness of places and cultures.

This paper examines which if any of these 'tropical trajectories' have parallels in, or lessons for, the much larger island state of Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat). It points to the convergence between quite different colonial and post-colonial regimes in different world regions. It thus constitutes a preliminary approach to a comparative analysis of colonialism and post-colonialism in very different island countries and regions, one where agriculture dominated, the other where hunting prevailed. It neither seeks to be an exercise in historiography (cf. Thomas, 1994; Linnekin, 1997) nor a detailed consideration of contending ethnographic discourses that reflect on bounds to indigenous agency and variations in the legal regimes, colonial institutions, education and settlement practices of island colonies (cf. Aldrich and Connell, 1998; Lange et al., 2006). It can only hint at parallel histories and entangled destinies, despite quite different colonial and post-colonial regimes, even as colonising powers sought to divest themselves of colonies and stimulate some broader sense of development.

Decolonization

Pacific island states (excluding Papua New Guinea) are small in land mass and population, and experience multiple, now familiar constraints to economic development (Connell, 2013). Only (Western) Samoa actively sought to gain independence; in Vanuatu violent struggles resisted it and several island states went unwillingly to independence. Subsequently, from Bougainville to Bellona, there were aspirations to and attempts at secession, in the same way that Tuvalu left Kiribati, stressing cultural identity and economic autonomy (Macdonald, 1975). A number of islands, such as Wallis and Futuna, Niue and Tokelau, have strenuously resisted any movement towards even tentative decolonization, in favour of continued colonial ties (Connell, 2009a). Classic constraints to 'development', uneven development and ethnic complexity offered pointers as to why that should have been so. Such reticence was not propitious for post-colonial development. Many island states have 'impossible geographies': colonial constructs, artificial creations, that bind quite different islands across often long distances. As much as any part of the world geography assuredly matters; it poses basic problems for governance, planning and management, and for a post-colonial identity. Distance resonates across seas and oceans.

A passing parade of paradigms, imported from distant places, has largely failed to bring sustainable development to small islands and island states in the Pacific. Insularity might once have suggested purity but more extended resource frontiers and other external pressures have challenged illusory and seemingly idyllic benefits of 'isolation', few of which stretched beyond the distant, detached European gaze (Connell, 2003; 2007a). A quarter of a century ago, soon after the independence of Kiribati and Tuvalu, a report on their future economic development noted 'considerable political skill will undoubtedly be needed to dampen down local expectations and aspirations that are no longer realistic' (Geddes et al., 1982, p. 187). Newly independent islanders had no particularly grandiose expectations, but the chances of achieving a significantly different development status were improbable. And so it has remained.

Some states have been described as failed states, so disorganized that they cannot serve the needs of the people, especially in the peripheries (Connell, 2006b). Their emergence brought post-colonial interventions in different guises, to quell violence, train workforces and take up senior positions, paradoxically in a region characterized a quarter of a century earlier by what many saw as hasty decolonization: the unusual situation of colonizers being more anxious to withdraw than were the colonized to take control. Not surprisingly, not only were “the ghosts of the colonial powers still present, looming over the shaky futures of the tiny islands” (Jourdan, 1995, p. 127) but the intertwined histories, economies and geographies of New Zealand, Australia and the smaller island states, even where Britain was the colonial power, meant that independence was in a sense only a ‘trial separation’ and any real project of independence scarcely occurred (Denoon, 2005). Intervention represented a form of continuity rather than change. Decolonization became an infinitely stalled process.

Development constraints

Many states are fragmented, with numerous populated islands and distinct language and cultural groups. Prospects for economic growth are limited. Constraints include: remoteness and isolation (resulting in high transport costs to markets, and costly tourism), diseconomies of scale (with small domestic markets), limited natural resources and a narrow production base, substantial trade deficits, few local skills, vulnerability to external shocks and natural disasters (principally cyclones and floods), and a disproportionately high expenditure on administration. Political systems have sometimes been fragile, ecological structures vulnerable and economies lacking diversity. Set against such disadvantages, the comparative advantages of smallness and isolation are few. No state is without some poverty, uneven income distribution, and significant unemployment, especially of youth. Basic needs and the Millennium Development Goals have been poorly met. Development problems have intensified with the shift from an older reliance on commodities towards a more diversified but less protected economy, involving the liberalization of trade, the globalization of production and intensified pressure on resources, lands and seas. Smaller and more vulnerable islands have become a more evidently peripheral and dependent part of a wider world.

Economic growth has been disappointing since independence, resulting in a series of imposed attempts at restructuring, including structural adjustment programmes in various countries, urged by aid donors and such institutions as the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank (Corbett & Connell, 2015). Development and economic growth, associated with such phrases as ‘good governance’, were counterpoised against ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’, implicitly posed as its enemies. Such themes were absorbed into indigenous lexicons and practices of development, where national exhortations to change invoked notions of progress, and ‘good citizens’ embraced capitalism, autonomy, entrepreneurialism and personal achievement, and eschewing the shackles of localism and tradition (Connell, 2007c).

Most island states have substantially benefited from aid and remittances, enabling them to run big current account deficits and maintain substantial bureaucracies. The Pacific islands are the most heavily aid-assisted world region on a per capita basis. The public sector dominates formal economic activity almost everywhere, despite external pressure for restructuring. Aid is tied to the political, strategic and commercial interests of donors, whether countries or international organizations (Murray & Overton, 2011). Islanders often enter “the material life of the nation more frequently by way of the backdoor of bureaucracy than through the front door of the market mechanism” (Rutz, 1982, p. 51; Hooper, 1993). Many

places have become ‘government islands’, where public service employment enables a prosperity and population stability that would otherwise be impossible. Such islands have moved from subsistence to subsidy, very much dependent on the whims of the central state and of aid donors. For all that modernity has come from outside and been eagerly greeted, whether of technology or theology, of money or migration, there has also been an exceptional social stability and continuity, that in no ways denies interest in change.

Failed conventions

Economies have characteristically been weak and awkwardly placed in a transition from subsistence to something that might constitute both a ‘modern’ and a viable future.

Agriculture remains important, despite problematic dependence on world prices, with established specialization on a narrow range of agricultural exports, such as copra and sugar (Murray, 2001). Those few agricultural commodities for which small island states once seemed to have a comparative advantage are now unreliable sources of national income, and export diversity is less than in any other world region. Bananas, once a cash crop, are no longer exported. Favourable trade agreements were often critical in protecting exports, but many regional and global agreements have expired. Free trade has been promoted as the most appropriate means of enhancing global development and reducing poverty in developing countries, in line with global aims to replace aid with trade, but trade benefits are few while the cost of accession was borne by the poor.

Alongside participation in the multilateral trading system, epitomized by the WTO, island states were also encouraged to develop niche economic activities, usually distinctive agricultural crops, for which they were assumed to have a comparative advantage. In Fiji this meant an intermittent focus on crops such as ginger and kava, until the latter was banned in its main European markets. Elsewhere there have been attempts to develop vanilla, chillies and other crops, and pearls and beche-de-mer from the lagoons, to meet niche markets. Seemingly promising niches have often been transient, being highly vulnerable to subtle global shifts in demand and therefore prices. In Tonga prices squash production brought new problems of land tenure, inequality, environmental degradation alongside increased regional competition (Murray, 2001; van der Grijp, 2004). Only the most exceptional products have uncontested markets, and most have been thwarted by intervening opportunities, quarantine regulations and biosecurity concerns.

Fisheries have never realized the potential that a cursory glance at the map suggests they have; the value of fish ‘exported’ from Pacific waters by vessels of distant nations is considerably more than the licence fees. Fisheries have been most beneficial where local fleets have developed (Gillett, 2009). States have struggled to regulate overseas fishing, which has generated limited revenue and resulted in illegal fishing and depletion of crucial fishing stocks, in some cases to endangered status (McNulty, 2013). Some major fisheries stocks may disappear before PICs have the capacity to effectively manage, fish, add value and directly benefit from them. Manufacturing has never progressed beyond the ‘beer and bread’ of import substitution. Mining and forestry are localized, largely operated by multinational corporations with, in many places, dismal records of environmental degradation, corruption and disadvantageous deals (Dyer, 2016).

Tourism, in a context where ‘sea, sun and sand’ are ubiquitous, has boosted some states, but remote islands, with poor transport connections have failed to benefit and tourism has proved vulnerable to political issues. Most island states are disadvantaged by high

transport costs, limited infrastructure and intervening opportunities, hence tourism is concentrated in a few states, notably Fiji, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands and Palau, where it has grown steadily. Tourism growth outpaces that in other economic sectors, and states where tourism is unimportant – notably Tuvalu, Kiribati and Solomon Islands – include the poorest states. Access to metropolitan states is critical, competition between countries is considerable, and tourism unusually subject to the whims of fashion, economic uncertainty (domestic and international), and local and regional political instability.

Until quite recently there was a widespread belief that poverty did not exist, because of the existence of both urban and rural ‘safety nets’ where extended families supported those who experienced problems. These are breaking down and it is no longer possible, if it ever was, for urban people simply to return to and be supported by rural kin (Connell, 2006a, pp. 68-70). Some households are poor through not having enough food, clean water or the resources to enable access to adequate housing, health care or basic education. Although absolute poverty and new inequalities have emerged, a poverty of opportunity, and even a poverty of dignity, are more critical. Low levels of investment, political instability and failures of governance have resulted in a downward spiral – an emergent ‘poverty trap’.

Dissatisfaction with conventional forms and outcomes of rural development has contributed to rapid urbanization, a phase that began on the eve of independence in most states, as urban bureaucratic employment expanded, so that it is no longer useful to consider island states as primarily rural. In Micronesia the United States imposed a policy of urban centralization in the 1960s (Hanlon, 1998). Urban areas have grown faster than national population growth, and informal settlements are growing particularly quickly, as the supply of land and formal housing is inadequate. Even in the smallest countries, such as Tuvalu and Kiribati, primate ‘cities’ have emerged where more than half the country’s population lives, creating extreme environmental pressures (Storey & Hunter, 2010). A ‘youth bulge’, where a high proportion of the population is both youthful and unemployed, is increasingly visible, placing strains on land resources, employment markets, education and social organization. Unemployment and underemployment are high, the number of formal private sector jobs is limited, and job creation is slower than education completion. Low incomes and lack of support during illness or unemployment give a sense of biding time, waiting for unforeseen and uncertain opportunities and sometimes securing multiple jobs, maintaining strict budgets and abandoning some ‘traditional’ obligations, simply to get by. Many urban residents survive rather than prosper in the city.

Currently, two thirds of island state exports remain primary products, mainly agricultural. Export growth has been minimal or negative in the past decade. Trade imbalances are high and deteriorating: greater trade deficits accompanied trade liberalization. Typically, the early experience of WTO accession for Vanuatu “suggests that a trade-led model of economic growth may initially be accepted, enthusiastically or reluctantly, on the basis of abstract neo-classical theory and debt conditionalities but loses its legitimacy in the face of negative experience, external coercion and informed empirically based analysis” (Kelsey, 2005, p. 257). Overturning established production and trade regimes through the enforced global compliance of island states did not enable development. Negotiations over a new trade regime, PACER Plus, followed in 2009 but subsequently stalled. Its objective was to establish greater regional trade and economic integration, such that would enable the free movement of goods and services in the region, between Australia and New Zealand and sixteen Pacific island states. The island states refused to accept it because it would neither include nor enable

the unhindered regional labour mobility that they sought; they were acutely aware of the need for alternatives to mainstream models.

Global niches

Lack of success through conventional trade oriented strategies contributed to a range of unusual 'development' strategies in various service activities, increasingly being based on rents rather than production. Pacific island tax havens were not as successful as those elsewhere and this century brought global opposition from other states, the EU and civil society, to reduce tax evasion and associated illegal activities, especially money-laundering, hence their extent, activities and economic benefits have been greatly reduced.

Other service industries have had some success. Stamp sales thrived in the 1980s but eventually slumped, because of the propensity to produce stamps of limited aesthetic value or local relevance and the global decline of philately. Coins were also minted and sold. Several states, including the Marshall Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu, provide flags of convenience. Rather more have sold diplomatic passports, mainly to Chinese entrepreneurs (Van Fossen, 2007). Stamp, coin and passport sales, being a tax haven or providing flags of convenience are disproportionately more attractive to small states, despite some social costs, because even the small revenue is valuable. Several island states have benefited from strategic land rentals, for missile ranges, tracking stations, forward defence installations or refugee processing centres. Many such activities were hard to monitor and engendered risks. Small states are not easily able to defend themselves against corrupt activity emanating from overseas, including illegal fishing and drug-running. Internal anti-corruption efforts are hampered by weak government capacity, limited state penetration, unskilled and divided police forces, lack of civil society involvement and institutional inertia. Such strategies offered no sustainability and were and are more asymmetrical than trade negotiations. Yet service incomes are not easily won, and fluctuations in morality (that ended Tuvalu's 'phone-sex' income), global tastes (the demise of philately) and strategic interests alter their significance. Few can be influenced, economic benefits may be small and social costs great, corruption can develop, and moral quandaries are raised. That they remain of significance is indicative of the limited status of conventional development strategies, and the need for a diversity of ingenuity.

Migration and the new mobility

Migration has been an established response to real and perceived inequalities in socio-economic opportunities, within and between states: primarily about access to incomes but also to education and health services. Expectations have risen over what constitutes a satisfactory standard of living, a desirable occupation and a suitable mix of accessible services and amenities. Migration had been long established, perhaps especially from remote islands such as Niue, once opportunities became available. The more educated have tended to migrate first as earning power is increasingly concentrated amongst urban bureaucracies while the absence of developed state mechanisms (such as progressive taxation, unemployment benefits and pension schemes) for affecting transfers of income, minimizes redistribution towards rural areas other than through personal remittances. Growing inequalities, coupled with rising expectations, are the concomitants of increased migration. Despite political and environmental influences, an economic rationale ultimately underlies most migration moves.

The 1960s 'long boom' brought rising demand for labour in metropolitan states, jet air travel and cheaper fares. Within a decade of that boom, smaller island states, such as Niue, were already losing population and fast establishing a 'culture of migration' where migration was normative and central to island life (Connell, 2008; 2013). Migration quickly became an expected and accepted phenomenon, an integral strand in both household and national concepts of development and a semi-permanent safety-valve, not merely for population growth but for weak local and national economies. The culture of migration proved an appropriate and legitimate means to economic and social well-being, and neither rupture nor discontinuity with island experiences.

Whereas early migration tended to follow colonial, post-colonial and linguistic ties, contemporary migration is more global, emphasized by active recruitment and selectivity by skills. Migration decisions are usually shaped within family contexts, as migrants meet family expectations, directed at improving the living standards of those who remain at home and the lifestyle and income of the migrants. Consequently, as in Tonga, "families deliberate carefully about which members would be most likely to do well overseas and be reliable in sending remittances" (Gailey, 1992, p. 65). Even with imperfect knowledge, households consciously make decisions in favour of the quantity and quality of education of children that boost their chances for migration and thus the supply of remittances (Connell, 2008). Through this process, extended households, have transformed themselves into 'transnational corporations of kin' which strategically allocate family labour to local and overseas destinations to maximize income opportunities, minimize risk, and boost remittance flows, so diversifying and extending livelihood strategies (Marcus, 1983; Bertram, 1986; Macpherson, 2004). Moreover,

the capacity to call on international resources has become a crucial factor in influencing a family's local economic conditions. The lowest strata in contemporary Tonga are those totally dependent on the nation-state framework, and the limited resources it embodies, without any overseas options at all (Marcus, 1993, pp. 29-30).

Indeed, it is increasingly argued, as in Tonga, that "every family needs to have someone overseas. Otherwise the family is to be pitied" (quoted in Small, 1997, p. 152).

Remittances constitute a significant and often primary source of income in many outlying islands (Connell, 2013). They have been such a substantial and growing component of disposable income, that by the 1980s smaller Pacific island states (initially Kiribati, Tokelau, Cook Islands and Tuvalu) were conceptualized as MIRAB states, where MIGration, Remittances, Aid and the resultant largely urban Bureaucracy were central to the socio-economic system (Bertram & Watters, 1985). That conceptualization is also applicable in rather larger states such as Samoa and Tonga, where remittances constitute some of the highest proportions of GNP of any country in the world.

Remittances are overwhelmingly used for consumption objectives; however, after debt repayment and welfare needs, new forms of consumption, housing, some community goals (such as water tanks and churches), air fares and education (an investment in social capital), remittances are used for various forms of investment, sometimes in the agricultural sector but more frequently in the service sector, and especially into stores and transport businesses. Where there are opportunities, remittances stimulate entrepreneurial and trading activity, increase the extent of formal sector employment and produce multiplier effects, though in

‘mature migration economies’ such as Tonga they have reduced both poverty and inequality (Connell & Brown, 2005; Brown & Connell, 2015).

Because of the loss of skills from some key sectors and the population declines in several islands, considerable ambivalence exists towards migration. Several countries have trained workers for overseas employment, to reduce domestic unemployment and increase remittances. That was initiated in the Marine Training Schools of Tuvalu and Kiribati. Fiji has contracted mainly men to work for the United Nations as peacekeepers in the Middle East (MacLellan, 2007), women to work as nurses in the Marshall Islands, the UAE and elsewhere (Connell, 2009b) and rugby players to Europe and Japan. Most Pacific island states have become enthusiastically involved in new guest-worker schemes for agricultural workers (Gibson et al., 2013), and sought to extend them into other sectors, such as tourism and caring, where demand is increasing. A multinational Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC), serving most island states, was established to enable Pacific islanders to gain international skills and qualifications in a variety of trades (Connell, 2013). Islanders, from individuals and households to extended families and national governments, increasingly seek out new opportunities.

Multiple migration strategies, of island states and their people, emphasize the significance of migration and therefore the refusal of island states to agree to the PACER Plus regional trade agreement without greater provision for labour mobility. Moreover, while migration to distant metropolitan capitals might seem a thoroughly modern strategy, and “an exercise in pure textbook economic rationality” as labour is deployed to where remittances will return, it simultaneously allows the elaboration of culture through ceremonial exchanges (Hooper, 2000, p. 9). Diasporas play increasingly intricate roles in national politics and development (Chappell, 1999) while states seek to control and direct the activities of international migrants, in terms of return, bonds and loans, knowledge and remittance transfers, investment and social obligations, as national space takes on international dimensions (Connell, & Corbett, 2016). Increasingly both residents and governments of island states have contributed to establishing a diasporic future, and argued that this is a feasible and realistic means of development. To a rather lesser extent metropolitan states and some international agencies have concurred in this form of deterritorialized development, or ‘globalization from below’.

Towards hybridity: At home in the islands

Pacific Islanders have increasingly migrated to metropolitan centres, whether at home or abroad. This deterritorialized development strategy has become an unusual, often state-sanctioned, alternative development model (beyond the stasis of political dependence or the blind alley of conventional economic development). It echoes post-development thinking in celebrating the wisdom of local solutions embedded in culture (Curry, 2003; Alexeyeff, 2009; Hooper, 2000) but departs from this narrative by emphasizing the agency of those involved, placing these in an international context and supporting them through state actions. Remittances are therefore more obviously bidirectional while ‘economic’ activities like stores involve kin needs rather than profits (Curry, 2003; Petrou and Connell, 2016).

Limited ‘modern’ development opportunities in island states have ensured that subsistence based economies have survived longer than in most parts of the world, though their diversity has declined, whether on land or sea, as even remote people have oriented towards a cash economy. As in Kadavu (Fiji) “a rich tradition of agrodiversity persists in

adversity ... because of geographic isolation and a scarcity of profitable export commodities” (Kuhlken, 2007, p. 72). There and elsewhere the persistence of a distinctive way of life has been as much “the product of an externally imposed political economy more than of conscious resistance” (Bayliss-Smith et al., 1988, p. 8), but more recently conscious resistance has become more evident, out of both disillusionment and choice.

Shifts away from cooperative labour have occurred, alongside a greater degree of materialism, competitiveness and individualism, as labour and land have become more like commodities (Connell, 2007b). Older people have been denied the benefits of change, losing power and status to more mobile and ambitious young. Uneven access to education and health has posed frustrations, as local knowledge is downplayed, and tensions over access to land have followed increased cash cropping. In so many parts of the Pacific, “capitalism was not so much a means of economic domination as ‘a means of seducing the senses, a carnival of goods, an image of the future, a call to arms for the younger generation” (LiPuma, 2000, p. xii). Ubiquitous frustration with at least some aspects of development, modernity and progress brought recognition that ‘progress’ had been problematic, uneven, disruptive of the social order, environmentally damaging and required rethinking in a more local context.

Conservation has sometimes led to a revitalization of an older order. In many parts of Melanesia a more traditional political order has meant the establishment of chiefs and chiefly councils (even where ‘chiefs’ were absent in the past) while efforts have been made to secure the integrity of languages, ignore mission religion, revive exchange goods and mechanisms, effectively strengthening local societies as far as possible against the incursions and disruptions of the outside world. The efflorescence of ‘custom’ not merely as ‘empty practice’ has seen the consolidation of gift exchange in various contexts, though even its weakening has not been a precondition for the establishment of a successful western-style capitalism (Evans, 2001; van der Grijp, 2004; Rasmussen, 2015).

Local societies have embraced new forms of hybridity and syncretism, where variants of the new were grafted onto the old. Simultaneous emphasis on both the locality and globalization did not bind together antithetical phenomena (LiPuma, 2000, p. 299) but simply made them more comprehensible and appropriate. In some respects this could be seen as resistance, reflecting subtle culturally specific, but hybrid, value systems that fused culture, politics, economics, religion and social structure, partly in opposition to imposed systems and partly in the co-option of these systems, in order to stimulate a culturally appropriate social and economic development. Multiple examples exist of the integration of capitalist forms, from trade stores to money itself, into local culturally constructed social economies. Every facet of modernity took new and multiple forms in diverse Pacific contexts, but local specificity was most obvious for land tenure (Connell 2007a, 2013). Nonetheless, “it is all too easy and a serious mistake to romanticize the social arrangements that distinguish much of peasant society” (Scott, 1976, p. 5); there are traps in discovering a kind of virtuous society somehow aloof and independent from global forces. Discontent and a degree of ‘ordinary violence’ existed; elites could be autocratic and gender relations asymmetric and unpleasant. Aspirations were indeterminate and variable, between those with and without adequate land, education or wider experiences, so that the lack of homogeneity of experience and aspiration contributed to contradictory characteristics of modernity (Gewertz & Errington, 2004; Brison, 2003) and resistance to it. Change was no smooth process.

Arctic dreaming?

The extent to which recent trends in the tropical Pacific may have some implausible relevance to the Arctic island of Greenland can now be examined. While Greenland resembles a continent, rather than the small islands of the Pacific, its population of about 57,000 is much like that of smaller Pacific states, and if ice-covered areas (roughly 80% of the country) are excluded its size takes on more Pacific dimensions. Greenland is 2.1 million km² of mainly ice; Kiribati is 3.1 million km² of mainly sea. Greenland's political status is broadly that of such Pacific island states as the Cook Islands and Niue, with Denmark exercising control over several policy areas on its behalf, including foreign affairs, security, and financial policy.

The economy remains critically dependent on exports of fish and marine products (which accounted for 89% of exports in 2010), with mining of significance through increased oil and mineral exploration. Greenland is highly dependent on a substantial subsidy from the Danish Government, making it the most heavily subsidized state on earth (Taagholt & Brooks, 2016). Agriculture is limited and accounts for about 4% of the workforce and the GDP: much less than in Pacific states. Dependence on foreign investment is likely to intensify with the increasing minerals exploration activity which, especially as ice retreats, provides a growing base for the economy. However the last mine closed in 2013 and mineral prices are falling. Renewed mining would enable reduction of aid (although that has not proved true in either PNG or the Solomon Islands) while the spectres of 'Dutch disease' and the resource curse have been regularly raised. Rare earth deposits are substantial but associated with uranium, raising environmental concerns. In 2012, Danish aid constituted about 56% of total government revenue; fishing brings in 34%. The public sector consequently plays a dominant role in the economy. As in the Pacific this has a substantial urban bias. Tourism offers some possibilities for economic growth, with increasing numbers of cruise lines in the west and south, though it is and will be a seasonal phenomenon, with tangential and isolated impacts and primarily overseas ownership (Bjorst & Ren, 2015). Greenland makes some money from stamp sales and has options for 'strategic' incomes (Ackrén & Jakobsen, 2015). Only substantial mining would offer the financial resources for fiscal and political independence¹.

A quarter to a third of the population (87% of whom are Inuit) live in the capital, Nuuk, and most of the others are in scattered settlements on the west coast. The population growth rate is trivial, and probably declining, partly the outcome of substantial migration to Denmark, where possibly as many as 20,000 Inuit live, in Copenhagen – including the literary persona of Miss Smilla – Århus and elsewhere. Migration thus follows a pattern familiar in Polynesia. Remittances are of considerable significance (but hard to compute since Greenland's currency is the Danish kroner). Despite the negative population growth rate the number of school leavers still exceeds the rate of employment creation.

The small coastal settlements function much like Pacific 'outer islands' since communication between them is only by sea or air, with roads confined to Nuuk and several other small 'towns', and can be very infrequent. In these small 'towns' urbanization is also occurring, as in the eastern regional capital, Tasiilaq, with a population of barely 2000 and Upernavik in the west, with about 1700 (Dzik, 2015; Hendriksen & Jørgensen, 2015). In the last century, as rural-urban migration was followed by the disruption of communal patterns of living, and new gender roles (or their absence), it "often led to unemployment, disorientation

¹ This is exactly the dilemma that the island of Bougainville presently confronts as it moves towards a 2019 referendum on secession and independence from Papua New Guinea (Connell, 2005).

and despair” (Stenbaek, 1987, p. 305). Domestic violence also ensued. At least in the 1990s female migration, for education and employment, was more significant than that of men (Hamilton et al., 1996) and that pattern has continued (Leonard, 2014). Over time migration has seemingly become more inevitable: thus, on the small island of Kulusuk,

The youth ... seem to be aware that there are limited local opportunities for them upon finishing school and that they will have to decide whether or not to move on to Tasiilaq, West Greenland or Denmark (Dzik, 2015, p. 82).

Here too therefore migration is becoming normative as a ‘culture of migration’ becomes established, although poor education militates against urban economic and social success.

Denmark exercised a colonial policy over two centuries variously described as ‘positive isolation’ or ‘economic paternalism’ that ultimately brought extensive ‘modernization’ policies in the 1950s and 1960s, involving population centralization which reduced subsistence activities, adversely affected hunting, creating a vastly more bureaucratic environment which made Greenland even more dependent on Danish support (Nuttall, 1992; Dzik, 2015). In the past century Denmark has had only two, not particularly distant, ‘colonies’ therefore it has been more involved and effective in pursuing policies, where the Pacific was more likely to experience lack of interest and benign neglect. Colonialism was generally peaceful but, at best, neglectful of culture and language. The Greenlandic language was suppressed, and children sent to Denmark for education (a situation much like that in the cities of Australia and New Zealand with respect to rural Aboriginal and Maori populations) though it was not enough to lead to its abandonment. Denmark thus established, from the 1950s onwards, a classic example of welfare colonialism²: material wellbeing improved but cultural heritage was severely challenged.

Urbanization and centralization were the outcome of the infamous colonial G60 policy of the 1950s and 1960s that sought to concentrate the entire Greenland population in a few towns so that service provision could be centralized, resulting in anonymous urban public housing blocks, the loss of hunting cultures and social disruption (Grydehøj, 2014). As in the Pacific, urbanization was seen as crucial to nation-building and capital cities could usefully be places where disparate groups might come together. Even after the centralization policy formally ended, and attempts were made to achieve a more balanced population distribution and service delivery, the loss of services, including stores, in small settlements contributed to continued depopulation (Hendriksen & Jørgensen, 2015). Attempts to decentralize public service activities from Nuuk were made in the 1990s (Hamilton et al., 1996) but there is no evidence that this worked, just as it failed in the Pacific: there was little or nothing to decentralize and the decline of outer islands and settlements continued.

Very long distances and lack of roads result in high transport costs, extremely high costs of service provision and uneven service delivery. Tiny isolated ‘outer islands’ are dependent on the intermittent and infrequent arrival of ships to replenish stores and dispensaries. Secondary schools and hospitals are few outside Nuuk. Space undeniably

² The term ‘welfare colonialism’ was coined by Robert Paine (1977) to describe the situation in the Canadian Arctic that was unlike ‘classic colonialism’ in being solicitous rather than exploitative, liberal rather than repressive, and where the granting of social rights to indigenous people was as debilitating as it was beneficial because of the dependencies it created at additional cost to local cultures.

matters, in the least densely populated country in the world. Urbanization and centralization have emphasized uneven development, with even basic services, such as water supply, sanitation and electricity lacking in the smaller settlements. Employment is increasingly concentrated in larger towns, alongside growing divisions between those with jobs and those without.

Urbanization, unemployment, under-employment, and rapid social change, have brought high social costs (Rygaard, 2010). Urban employment, heavily concentrated in the service sector (bureaucracy, cleaning and stores), has long favoured women (Hamilton et al., 1996). Employment in high status positions is often of Danish migrants. NCDs are common; there is a high prevalence of diabetes, cancer, alcoholism, HIV/AIDs and other NCDs amongst Inuit migrants in Nuuk and Copenhagen, and also outside these cities (Bjerregaard & Curtis, 2002). Nutrition has changed rapidly with the import of 'fast' and processed foods, and some distaste for particular local foods (Sowa, 2015). Urban markets are confined to marine products. Alcohol consumption rates are high, but by 2010 had fallen slightly below those in Denmark. Since alcohol prices are much higher, consumption has both social and economic impacts. Binge drinking occurs in both large and small communities in Greenland, but with no statistically significant differences in alcohol intake between Inuit living in the different communities (Madsen et al., 2005; Aage, 2012), and has been vividly depicted for Qaanaaq (Leonard, 2014). Greenland is believed to have one of the highest suicide rates in the world (Folger, 2015). In both alcohol consumption rates and the extent of suicide Greenland is remarkably similar to several Pacific states, notably Samoa and the FSM, where suicide is often of young men. Tuberculosis rates are also high, partly a function of overcrowding.

As centralization, urbanization and social change occurred so the 'old' rural economy centred on hunting, sharing and reciprocity declined. Sharing still existed in the 1980s in rural communities, enhancing social relationships and enabling resilience that provided security in difficult times (Nuttall, 1991). Two decades later it was disappearing fast. Even in the most remote areas the impact of welfare colonialism meant that survival was guaranteed without the need to fish and hunt. Moreover youth were uninterested in such pursuits, possessing a fraction of the local knowledge of their leaders, leaving some hunters in an 'existential vacuum' without motivation (Leonard, 2014, p. 78; Dzik, 2015). Dependence on government has thus increased, a familiar transition from subsistence to subsidy (Folger, 2015), much as in the Pacific, but on a different scale and with a greater impact on traditional livelihoods.

Fishing has been eroded further by climate change, the imposition of quotas on small-scale fishers with preferences given to larger vessels from elsewhere (Leonard 2014, Hendriksen & Jørgensen, 2015) and EU bans on seal imports cutting off export markets, further marginalising remote communities where alternative income generating opportunities range from scarce to non-existent. Negotiations and disputes over fishing quotas, that pose international attitudes to conservation against local livelihoods and market access (Tejsner, 2014; Taagholt & Brooks, 2016), have acute Pacific parallels and raise questions of scale, ownership and continuity. Again there are analogies with the 'squeeze' placed on Pacific farmers and fishermen through the treaties and trade policies supposedly beneficial to them, that they have been cajoled into signing.

For a small population in colonial circumstances, trends match those in the Pacific and in other parts of the global south: greater individualism, monetization, competition rather than cooperation, the fading of subsistence, the collapse of indigenous knowledge (and the increasingly tenuous link with nature), skilled human resource shortages, commodification and

materialism, wage labour and the rise of bureaucracy, the need for out-of-village employment and migration towards it, hence the decline of 'outer islands' and urbanization, anomie and an epidemiological transition to NCDs, within a 'video and mobile phone culture' Gradually, the population margins fade as state-based welfare has exerted social control.

Crucial 'cultural' issues pose problems, as they continue to do throughout the Pacific, and centre on such critical issues as language and education, at a time when the new elite speak Danish (just as they speak English in the Pacific) and have had an urban education, which has produced new kinds of leaders. Debates about the role of Greenlandic and Danish in future society are ongoing, although developing a local education system has been "a feat in cultural compatibility unparalleled in other native educational settings" (Wyatt, 2012, p. 819). It may improve equity in circumstances where Inuit students have dropped out, especially in remote areas, through inability to learn Danish adequately. At the core of such changes rests the continuity of the Inuit culture and economy. Little is more fundamental to developing national identity as Greenland moves to enhanced self-government.

Welfare colonialism had significantly weakened Inuit economy, culture and identity, in itself not homogeneous, by the 1980s, and any sense of identity politics was directed by Greenlanders who had been educated in Denmark, but often seen by others as not 'real' Greenlanders (Taagholt & Brooks, 2016). Greenlanders became more estranged from local life, from identification with one group and from a ritual approach to the world as markets (for fish and workforces) became the model for governance. The limited autonomy of 'outer islands' was eroded via a tyranny of choice. Inuit societies had become 'part societies' since social reproduction was nowhere located entirely in an Inuit social universe. By the time of Home Rule in 1979 outlying settlements were too weak, isolated and fragmented to provide comparative security against local variants of settler colonialism and globalization, or to triumph the virtues of residual hunter societies, circumstances paralleled in Inuit culture elsewhere (Paine, 1977; Sibley, 1983; Chabot, 2003) and, other than in Micronesia (Hanlon 1998), rather more challenged by colonialism and globalization than in the more detached Pacific islands.

But continuities remain. Family and kinship structures persist, the Greenlandic language survives, even as Inuit live the ambiguity of being demonstrably peripheral in the world, but proud of their culture and distinct sense of place. Land has been retained in community ownership, at least until the 1990s (Petersen, 2015), a boost for continuity and culture. A tentative increased engagement with local foods exists partly as a form of identity politics (Sowa, 2015). Communities remain dominated by a domestic moral economy, underpinned by kinship relations, with some elements of a hybrid economy - balancing and combining the customary, government and (in most places) market sectors. But crucial questions remain over whether these are than merely residual fragments and underpinnings, and whether contemporary urban populations have the ability, will, desire and confidence to reinvest in remote lives and livelihoods, and the values that this entails. Substantial problems exist in challenging, let alone reversing, longstanding centralization; but a greater focus on indigenous knowledge, new forms of governance and senses of identity (Larsen & Fondahl, 2014) offers some hope and promise that the values of localism can be revitalized.

Conclusion

The Pacific and the Arctic offer similarities. Greenland has a small population, an increasingly centralized urban economy, no economies of scale, high transport costs, population ‘growth’ in excess of employment creation, growing urban primacy and urban homelessness, natural resource exports (but with little local control or downstream processing), environmental management issues, tourism, bureaucracy, fragmented ‘outer island’ settlements, linguistic divisions, out-migration (involving a culture of migration and a growing diaspora), rapid cultural change, and a rise in NCDs and anomie. It has become something of a government island, where MIRAB makes sense, and centralization continues. The new world of choices and opportunities – even opportunism – destroyed the old order of certainty, security and stability. Greenland too has engaged in deterritorialization.

Migration has deferred and mitigated, but not resolved, development issues, but it constitutes one increasingly less hesitant solution: an expanding and unsatisfied outward urge, a necessary bottom-up globalization that will always be both uneven and somewhat uncertain. It is not possible to ‘retreat’ into greater self-reliance. The greater self-sufficiency that would follow a decline of migration and remittances would have been difficult and painful enough half a century ago. Despite hybridity it is even more challenging now. And such stresses are felt even in the most remote places, whether in the Pacific or the Arctic (Leonard 2014). Contraction and compression of the world through migration and electronics, and their consequences, from remittances to international kinship, have widened socio-economic ties yet ultimately ensured that symbolically and practically, especially through land tenure, islanders rarely abandon island homes.

Stark climatic differences disguise similarities. Ironically climate change poses more problems in one of the coldest islands of the world than (yet) in some of the hottest. Sea ice is thinning, the massive inland ice sheet is beginning to melt, and hunters experience difficulties travelling in search of marine mammals and fish, and then transporting them, and some infrastructure has been flooded (Folger, 2010, 2015; Hatcher & Forbes, 2015). Global warming challenges the Inuit economy further as distributions and numbers of hunted and fished species fluctuate differently, as some are already doing in other Arctic regions (Robards et al., 2013). Reduced numbers will threaten subsistence further, and further undercut the economic base of Inuit culture. That has happened for different reasons in the Pacific.

Similarities also exist by default. Whilst more conventional development models may have worked in a range of larger countries, despite multiple and inevitable critiques usually centred around issues of equity, environment and sustainability (e.g. Ferguson, 1990; Li, 2007; Mosse, 2005), they cannot easily be transferred either to small island states, in a substantial ocean, that covers a third of the earth’s surface, or to a semi-frozen subcontinental island, where space matters. In two superficially vastly different contexts, far apart, there are remarkable similarities.

The Pacific island states and Greenland experience challenging contexts for development, both from their innate characteristics and from the past and present manner of their colonial incorporation in the wider world. Real difficulties attend the long-term project of nation building in conditions of economic and political insecurity, where cultural differences are real and not simply to be dismissed as awkward vestiges of historic practices and a “scandal to be overcome” (Scott, 2005, p. 191). Much of what is valued remains: a sense of community in association with a particular place, shared beliefs and values, a rough equality of material conditions, reciprocity and some degree of community control over the means of

production. Such values and virtues that have enabled localized autonomy and self-reliance are not readily transferable into a more globalized world. Island states and Greenland thus present something of a Janus face to the world system: on the one hand, officially seeking national development in a traditional capitalist mode (that favours resource exploitation, tourism and the quest for niches), with the alternative being migration to more advanced capitalist countries; and on the other, a series of more inchoate, fragmented and local attempts to translate the uncertainties of global capitalism into a more satisfying and culturally appropriate form of local development. In this latter context, 'culture' becomes not the enemy of development but its bulwark. At the same time, it is necessary to be wary of both the mechanistic ways in which culture can crudely be treated as a resource, and as a store of knowledge, techniques and practices to be mobilized in pursuit of externally derived development goals, as well as of the structures of power that exist within all local cultures.

The great era of globalization is currently winding down as governments retreat from multilateralism and reassert their roles, barriers to foreign investment are renewed, trade barriers remain, immigration is a major political issue, and movements towards food security have strengthened a new nationalism. In this difficult international context, local cultures cannot be reduced to either being mere victims of the west, or confident opponents of it, but are in effect entangled objects and ideologies (Thomas, 1994). While entanglements have intensified over time islanders will continue to forge futures from their own moulds. What have sometimes been rejected as 'invented traditions', such as the discovery of chiefs and chiefly councils, have become invaluable means of developing an indigenous order on a new scale, dealing with the intrusions of distant governments and large corporations, and securing compromise and continuity. While some islanders will move away, some scale the outer ramparts of capitalism, still others will assert and value the strengths of culture and locality. The coconut palm, the swamp taro and the narwhal will emplace some part of the future at home.

Developing a viable national economy underpinned by culture will be at least as difficult in Greenland as anywhere else in the world. As in the Pacific, local understandings of place, culture, locality and belonging are challenged by national and international, political and economic interests. Although local identities remain strong, alongside the bonds between people and place, the process of Greenlandic nation-building continues to discount people living in small communities, and has separated them from their customary access to local resources (Nuttall, 2001). Moving towards a new hybridity requires unusually sensitive leadership, real regional livelihood options, and perhaps resistance to unwelcome resource projects (despite their financial allure), but few of these seem straightforward in the wake of a pervasive welfare colonialism. Ultimately, rather than with the south Pacific, where colonialism had a lighter impress, the most acute parallels are with Micronesia and Australia, where indigenous margins are also fading, with governments (in Australia at least) still positing concentration, rather than out-stations, tinged with neo-colonialist objections to indigenous 'lifestyle choices' (Austin-Broos, 2009; Howitt & McLean, 2015). These are not happy parallels for an island nation contemplating an evolving political future but there remain spaces of hope for a moral economy.

These diverse directions emphasize that small island states and territories – with few if any comparative advantages for conventional development – must both pursue a range of unusual options and engage in strategies quite different from larger states. Diversity and flexibility matter. None of these approaches necessarily offers a viable solution to

development constraints but both emphasize that culture is not a brake on development. Identity and culture offer knowledge, security, hope and continuity within change. Language, culture and symbols are a necessary part of becoming a nation. Giving them real substance is the hardest part. Yet, they offer knowledge, security and continuity in changing worlds. Local development has both a past and a future, and even amidst obvious ecological, historical and colonial difference, size and scale prove to be rather more important linking factors than might well have been anticipated.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Adam Grydehøj and two anonymous readers for their comments on an earlier version.

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