Title

Decolonising Myself: Navigating the Researcher-Activist Identity in the Urban South Pacific

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8dv7x526

Journal

Author

Day, Jennifer Eve

Publication Date

2022

DOI

Copyright Information

Decolonising Myself: Navigating the Researcher-Activist Identity Before and During COVID in the Urban South Pacific

Author: Jennifer Day

Abstract

This paper charts my path from observer to action researcher – and my *ex post* realisation that a transition had happened in my work. This transition happened on the fly, in the field, without me critically reflecting on it at the time, while I was studying evictions in Port Vila, Vanuatu, South Pacific. My ethics came into direct conflict with my research approach, and I chose to change my approach. I theorise my transformation in the modernity/coloniality literature. I close by offering strategies to students and other researchers who are looking for ways to engage more deeply with, and give something back to, the communities they study, and with some reflections on how the personal transformations I describe helped me to adapt to research during COVID-19.

Acknowledgments

Introduction: Dual Academic Identities

One day in November 2019, in the middle of running a community training in Port Vila on Vanuatu's policy protections from evictions, a thought occurred to me in a flash of uncertainty: Had my activities transgressed into activism, and if so, was I compromising my research? I continued on with the training, working with community members to understand a policy titled the *Vanuatu National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement* (Figure 1). I explained how this policy could actually protect them from rumoured upcoming evictions, despite its title having no indication that evictions are a type of dispossession against which the policy provides protection. All the while, I was troubled by the idea that my participation in the anti-eviction social movements would hamper my capacity to observe them. This was not the first time I had run this training. My first training had three attendees, and we sat together on the floor of an outdoor space (Figure 2). In more-recent trainings, 30 or so people have attended. This was, however, the first time I had explicitly considered whether my participation changed my capacity to generate knowledge about the resistance movement.

Figure 1. Vanuatu National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement
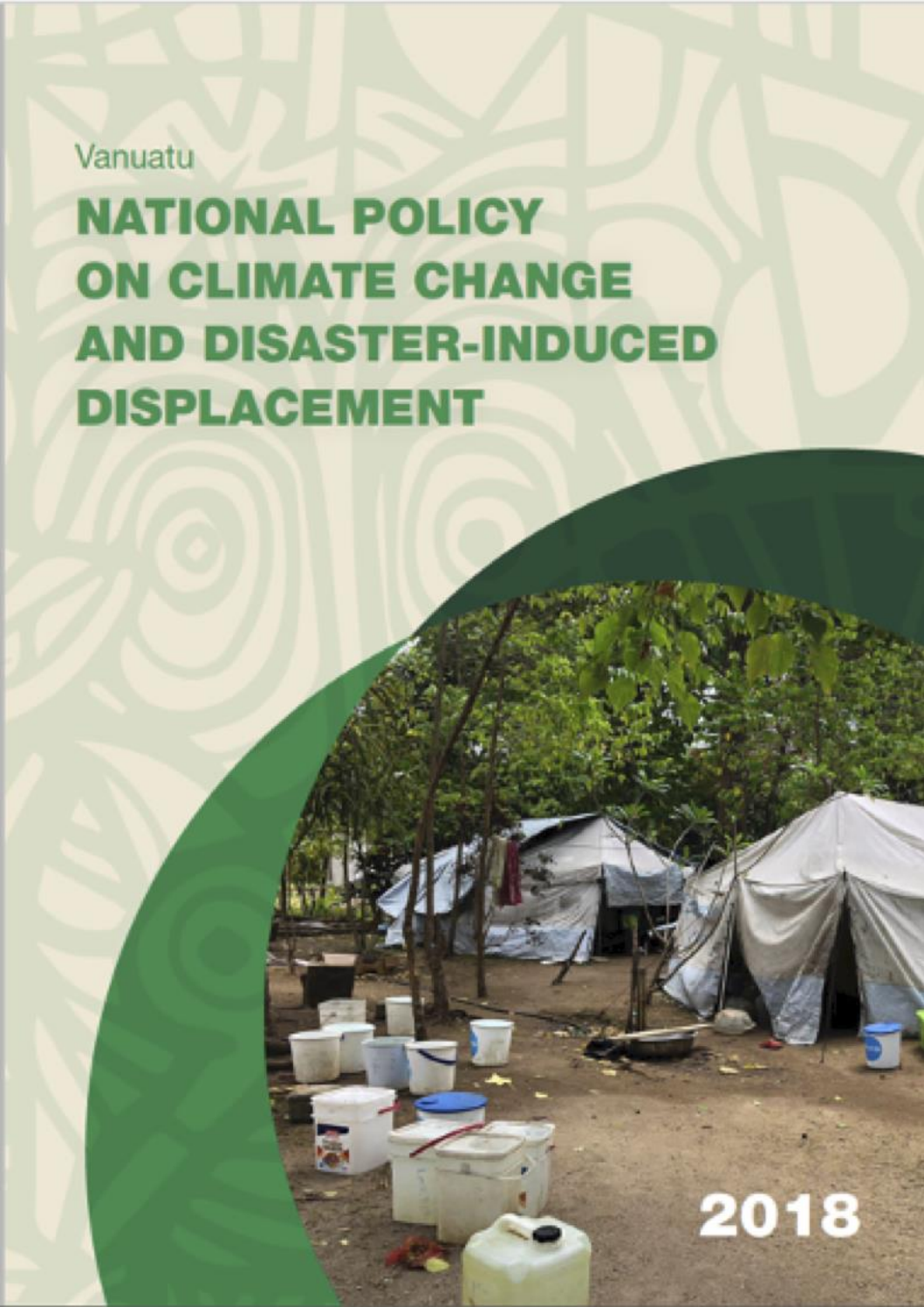
Figure 2. Author and EECA Executive Reading Displacement Policy

Image: Melisa Hango

That a full-time academic should be concerned with whether helping the communities she observes may be compromising to research outputs, is perhaps a sign of the state of the planning discipline – or perhaps, if the discipline cannot be charged, a sign simply of my own modernist training and biases. Either way, others may find my transformation to be instructive. This essay is about my own process of decolonising my understanding of my role as a researcher, and about the ontological shift that I required to start doing action research. In the process of internal change, I expanded my capacities to contribute to the communities where I work, and I expanded trust and cooperation with my collaborators. It is about how decolonial approaches offered me a path from researcher-observer to researcher-participant in the study of an in-progress social movement in the urban South Pacific. It is about the incidental learning that the rigorous research process provided

to me about myself. It is a critical reflection based on the process of conducting research. My hope is to show the path a little more clearly to students and other researchers who are looking for ways to give something back to the communities they study.

Critical urban scholarship is committed to meaningful inclusion and genuine participation, and to the emancipation of thought and practice from the oppression of a need for universal ways of knowing. Mechanisms of emancipation include acknowledging who is doing the knowing, where knowledge is produced, and how it is passed along – an acknowledgement of the "geographies of knowledge" (Agnew, 2007). My own identity development was influenced by the same postcolonial processes affecting the identities of my research interlocutors. The Pacific is a region where the colonial experience intersects with indigenous ideas about land governance to such a degree that these concepts exist quite literally, together, encoded in the *Mama Loa* (Mother Law; the Constitution). People have dual identities informed by both the colonial experience and indigenous practice. The rights of indigenous people to their ancestral, customary lands are foundational to the national identity and underpinned the independence movement in Vanuatu. At the same time, the city makes no enduring place for rural migrants without local land rights (Day and Bamforth, 2020), and land claims by people whose access was disrupted by colonisation are regularly discounted by the courts (Wilson, 2011). Where people are facing evictions, the rights of the customary landowner sits in direct contradiction to the need to have a place to settle, belong, and feel secure in the Pacific city.

There are few places in the world where postcolonial critique would not be useful for interpreting the mentalities of people. I was trained in Eurocentric traditions that propound universal ways of knowing with origins in the scientific processes of the Enlightenment – processes that have produced great advances in human welfare, such as vaccines for devastating diseases like polio and smallpox (and now, COVID-19), and antibiotics that prevent mass death from the Plague and tuberculosis. As with many advances, these Eurocentric ways of knowing generate new problems – one of them, the application of the thought structures of modernity too widely, to the exclusion of other ways of knowing. Mignolo calls this, "the darker side of the Renaissance" (Mignolo, 2003). I only started to learn about the imperialism embedded and constitutive of research after graduate school. Imperialism is a process of controlling people and territories away from a metropole. Colonialism is a mechanism of imperialism (Said, 1994; Said, 1978), but it is not the only one. Research, Smith (1999) argues, is a contemporary manifestation of the ways in which dominant western notions crowd out indigenous ways of knowing,

Vanuatu's borders have been closed since early 2020, but the products of colonial thought have not been shut out of the country. *Cot oda* (court orders) continue to be issued and evictions threatened by landowners. Land disputes continue, the products of Western ideas of how land can be owned and transacted. In February 2021, I worked with local collaborators in Port Vila to run a remote field survey in an anthropological style, with a set of open-ended questions designed to explore rather than confirm a hypothesis. The purpose of the survey was to find out how people talk about authority over land: how people negotiate a secure place to live in the city, who has the power to tell people to leave, and how standing customary tenancies are preserved or disrupted. This remote study was possible in part because of my own transformation, which is still in progress and hopefully will always be. I have been able to think about research in a broader way that includes action and contribution, not just observation. The lessons I describe in the last section of

this paper enabled me to mentor others, identify issues of interest to survey-fatigued communities, adapt to changing circumstances, and respond to the generative ideas of my team.

Background: Participation and Transformation in Action Research

Social research is constitutively a discovery process that requires participation by both researchers and research subjects. Action research takes multiple forms, from participant observation to participatory action research (PAR) to ethnography. Ethnography is more the method of anthropologists and sociologists, rather than planners, and they often live in the communities where they work and partner with local researchers (e.g., Jarillo et al., 2020). In the process of research, transformation is a possible outcome of participation. Transformation can occur in states of knowledge, where new knowledge is generated, or existing knowledge is refuted or further supported. Transformation can also occur for the research participants as well as for the researchers, as they encounter difference. The purpose of this section is to describe how participation, decolonisation, and transformation are positioned and theorised in the literature, and to set the theoretical structure for my reflections later in the piece.

Participation

In the context of development practice, much of the participatory policy and poverty research refers to the participation of the communities and people about whom policy is being made, rather than participation and transformation of the researcher. For instance, Brock and McGee (2002) reflect on a series of policy processes in which participation was generated from the affected populations in Myanmar (Shaffer, 2012), Uganda (Yates and Okello, 2012), and other development settings. Mitlin and Thompson (1995) describe the policy improvements and improved enfranchisement that arises when affected people are involved in planning and policy development. Experiential knowing and epistemological expansion of policy makers is another focus of some work (e.g., McGee, 2012). Here, the author notes how working directly with poor people can expand their empathy with the populations they serve.

The thoughts and institutions of oppressed people can also be colonised (Freire, 2005; Scott, 1995), via interpellation (Escobar, 2007), so current processes of participation are probably not sufficient to ensure decolonised processes. Many inclusion approaches that leverage action research toward the preservation of power and the *status quo* (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). The development apparatus has entrenched, Eurocentric models of what counts as knowledge (Escobar, 2007; Agnew, 2007), and what it means to be included in the development of policy and implementation of development projects. Critique of participatory approaches is often framed as a co-optation of participation in entrenching power structures in the development apparatus (Brock and McGee, 2002: 2). An alternative is the *pluriverse*: a rhetorical device acknowledging the decolonial turn away from striving for universal truths and epistemologies, and toward acknowledgement of different ways of knowing (Oslender, 2019).

Likewise, much of the research focusing on the engagement of academics with communities in a participatory process, focuses on the improvement of the policy outcome due to participation (e.g., Lantz et al., 2001). In urban planning, participation has been included as part of a positivist process (e.g., Burke et al., 2006), where the community is engaged to provide context and feedback. Pain

and Francis (2003), for instance, describe their experience working on a participatory diagramming process with homeless and at-risk youths in Newcastle upon Tyne, in the United Kingdom. They use participatory diagramming to identify issues that matter to their target groups. Their project was the product of a short-term engagement with their study population, and their reflection is about how to make such a data-collection productive and have it lead to meaningful and actionable findings that can be implemented by relevant health and housing authorities.

Power in the research process is also a key issue (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995) with which academics in action research contend. However, the power of Eurocentric hegemonic thought (Oslender, 2019; Harding, 2018) and the personal path of emancipation from it as part of the research process, has as far as I know not been discussed in an academic article. This process of "decolonising myself," from the paper's title, is the main contribution of this piece.

Decolonisation

Reading the opening vignettes I have written above, the white-savior complex comes to mind. Rather than try to dispel that impression if any other readers also had it come up, this essay is to some degree an attempt to work out who I am in research. On the one hand, I am indeed a product of the imperial system that Said and Smith critique. Educated at an elite institution, at The University of California, Berkeley, I have been an uncritical consumer, and surely a producer, of the kinds of misinformation Smith identifies (p. 82) being circulated about indigenous peoples. "Trading the other" (Smith, 1999, p. 89) includes drawing a livelihood, in the form of an academic salary, from writing about indigenous people.

This essay, then, is about my relationship to imperialism, and my ambition to move toward the *decoloniality* identified by the *modernity/coloniality* movement. I hope to join the ranks of Western scholars capable of thoughtful analysis of cultures which are not their own. Lindstrom's (2019) recent work on Vanuatu's cargo cults taught me that I had joined the expatriate misinterpretation of Vanuatu's cargo cults as a comical artefact of indigenous people's experience of World War II rather than a set of social movements designed and evolved to reclaim cultural practice lost during a century of missionary and colonial influence. Lindstrom's work explains an ongoing social resistance, taking his topic beyond a set of travellers' tales (Smith, 1999, p. 78) typical of anthropology of the 19th and 20th Centuries.

The *modernity/coloniality* movement (Escobar, 2007) has emerged since the mid-2000s. An outcropping of postcolonial studies, MC thought rejects the claims of universality arising out of Eurocentric thought and its imperialist ambitions. It instead locates the origins of these universal claims not in Enlightenment, as I assert above, in the Introduction – but instead in the colonial conquests by European colonial powers beginning with the Americas in 1492. This conquest was a critical moment when Europeans began to think of themselves in relation to colonised people (Oslender, 2019), and of themselves as the standard against which other societies' levels of civilisation and development would be judged. This modernist approach to knowing, centred on a narrow geography – Europe – privileges ways of knowing customary to the European continent. A technique of the MC movement is its stress toward action. Its objective is *decoloniality*: the "redefinition of democracy from the practices, cosmologies and epistemologies of the subaltern" (Grosfoguel, 2011). Part of the process of decolonising thought is de-privileging the current

presumed centre and establishing alternative imaginaries that acknowledge the importance of local experience.

Transformation in Action Research

Decolonisation is a form of transformation, but it is not prevalent in the literature on who is transformed in action research, and how they are changed. Reason and Torbert (2001) classify different action-research "dimensions": first-, second-, and third-person approaches. In first-person action research, the focus of the query is on the internal processes and transformation of the researcher. The first-person process does not need to involve interlocutors, as the exploration is internal and auto-reflexive. In second-person action research, the focus is on how the researcher transforms the context and collaborates with others in the research setting. In second-person inquiry, the researcher co-constructs knowledge and inquiry with collaborators, working together as co-researchers and co-subjects in a reflexive process. In third-person action research, knowledge construction is still collaborative and co-produced, but the scale can be larger, with more participants.

This work is also informed by my other work, e.g., (Day and Bamforth, 2020), which engages in the second- and third-person dimensions, seeking to understand the "slow violence" (Pain, 2019) of evictions in the context of the faster processes of climate change and disaster. So, my larger body of work is reflexive in the way that Burawoy (1998) uses the term: in response to positivist processes requiring pre-determination of methods, and to describe processes of changing one's methods and paradigms as knowledge of processes deepens. First-person action research has been criticised for being too focused on the researcher at the detriment of the context (Marshall and Mead, 2005). This paper is focused on the researcher, but I direct the reader to my other work, which seeks to be transformative of policy and knowledge – not just of myself.

In my review of the planning literature, I have found only a few examples of authors describing their internal points of transformation as participatory researchers. Roy (2003), for instance, reflects on how studying women in Calcutta as both a local and an outsider generated transformation in her thought and in her research methods. However, she does not document a process by which she emerged as an action researcher. There are studies of collective action (Beard and Dasgupta, 2006) and community engagement (Pain, 2019; Murtagh, 1999) where the researchers must have been close to their communities and to have fostered relationships over time. However, the path to that relationship is not described.

Outside of planning, even where first-person development is the focus of the piece, the process is often, like in planning, "opaque" in published research (Marshall, 2004). This is likely because of the difficulty of relating the internal process of change, which I attempt here. There are, however, many examples of self-reflection by researchers using participatory practices. Burgess (2006) describes her reflexive process of confronting and reshaping her own paradigms and beliefs in the process of first-person action research as a nurse. Maguire (1987) reflects on personal transformations that occurred for her while studying battered women in New Mexico. Judi Marshall has a body of work where she explores various social phenomena including management as a "way of life" (Marshall, 2004; Marshall, 2000), describing her work as "self-study" (Marshall, 2004). McGee (2012) reflects on her epistemological expansion in becoming part of the

community and seeing people as the same as herself. She does not, however, describe a personal shift from observation to action, and her first-person experience is only a couple of paragraphs in a broader reflection of the self in action research. None of these authors frame their work specifically in MC thought, with a focus on the transition from modernism to something else. McGee's work does suggest, however, the kind of epistemological expansion that accompanies a transformation out of a Eurocentric mindset.

Anti-Eviction Social Movements in Port Vila

There are currently more than 70 planned evictions in urban Port Vila (personal communication with the Sheriff's office, December 2019). Starting with the eviction of a community called Destination in 2014, which occurred overnight with the community under significant duress (Day and Wewerinke-Singh, 2019), forceful evictions have been occurring with increasing frequency. 500 to 600 people at a time are evicted under lawful court orders, issued after a legal process that identifies a customary landowner's claim to particular lands (Pacific Islands Report, 2014; Port Vila Daily Post, 2018; Napwatt, 2018). These claims by customary landowners themselves have colonial roots. Across the Pacific, and in Vanuatu, "ownership" of land is an introduced idea, generated from the introduced Eurocentric governance processes of the colonial period.

Vanuatu is an island archipelago of 82 islands, including the island of Efate, where the capital city, Port Vila, sits. Destination itself was part of a long conversation that dates in its oral histories back to 1451 or 1452. Colonised in 1901 by the British and French jointly, the New Hebrides islands achieved independence in 1980 and named the country, Vanuatu, with the root of the word, *vanua*, a reference to land. The people living at Destination were assembled under a community leader with a precolonial claim to the land where Destination sat (personal communication with the community leader, December 2019). His claim originates in the oral history with the eruption of the volcano at the Kuwae caldera, which displaced the populations of the Kuwae island to the Efate (Wilson, 2011). The eruption of the Kuwae caldera was known by European and American geologists to have occurred somewhere in the world because of the ash record in the sedimentary layers, but they did not know where it had occurred until research into the oral histories of the Shepherds Islands of Vanuatu uncovered the stories in the oral record.

Much of my understanding about the claims of people to the Destination lands comes from my own work with the community and an unpublished report prepared by a member of the community making the claim – a daughter of the movement's leader and scholar at the University of Hawaii. Dorah L. J. Wilson wrote an account of the Vete Association in her report, *Vete: The Emerging Movement on Efate, Vanuatu Politics and Indigenous Alternatives* (Wilson, 2011). A member of the community and indigenous woman, she describes her position as both an indigenous woman and a foreign-educated researcher, which gave her the capacities for insider comprehension of the movement and outsider-observer in Eurocentric methods, including into content where non-researcher indigenous women may not have been included.

According to the oral history, people living on the island of Kuwae fled the eruption to Efate, where they were granted lands by the chiefs there. Centuries of canoe travel and dual-island location ensued – or rather, continued – wherein people travelled the aquatic highways between the new islands of Efate and Epi and Tongoa, which were created when Kuwae exploded. Without

the Eurocentric ideas of land ownership and with no capital city to relate the islands to the international system of capital and accumulation, these dual-island identities were not contested (Wilson, 2011).

Then, arrived the missionaries, the colonial period, and World War II. The missionaries convinced newly-converted indigenous people that sedentism was preferable to migration, the colonial masters declared Ni Vanuatu people to be unwelcome as residents of the city, and the war made it unsafe to travel between the islands. People with an ancestral claim to Efate dating back five hundred years found themselves limited to Tongoa and Epi, and their claims were never acknowledged by the colonisers (Wilson, 2011). The self-described chief who assembled the community at Destination by recruiting people to come and live on the land, was part of a social movement resisting the declaration of Port Vila, the national capital, to be the lands of a smaller group of owners acknowledged by the colonial governments and exclusive of the people of the Shepherd Islands. Shortly after independence, the land holding Port Vila was declared by the Government of Vanuatu to be the historical land of five indigenous villages, and compensation was paid to the declared landowners for the alienation of their ancestral lands. The Vete Association has repeatedly lost court cases over land claims.

Historical land claims are not the only mechanism by which people come to live in the capital city – but most land claims in Port Vila relate back to those five villages whose claims were legitimised at independence, and to the "customary landowner." Land ownership in Pacific societies is itself an introduced idea. Precolonial ideas about land custodianship were more collective, never unlinking people from place (Bonnemaison, 1985). The power of the customary landowner compared with the customary tenant is an issue I take up in a recent paper (Day, 2020). In quick summary, customary tenancies are a long-established practice in Vanuatu, whereby customary landowners grant permission for a migrant or neighbour to set up a homestead on his land (it's usually a "him"). Sometimes, the tenant pays in the form of food items or paying respects; usually, there is a fixed cash amount paid incrementally over time until the agreed amount is fulfilled (as opposed to a rent that is paid in perpetuity). Rarely are the arrangements written down or vetted with lawyers. The problem in recent years is that urbanisation in the capital city has meant that tens of thousands of people are now living under these customary arrangements, and land values in the city are changing. What seemed like a good deal to a customary landowner ten years ago may now seem like a low payment, as a hotelier or resort investor may want to lease his land. Under current precedence in the courts, when a landowner changes his mind, he can appeal to the state to evict the customary tenants. Very frequently, the courts uphold his appeal, and whole communities are evicted. Other times, the customary landowner evicts because too many migrants have arrived, and he feels that the tenants have violated the original terms of the agreement, which may be decades or generations old (Day and Wewerinke-Singh, 2019).

Even though international law protects people from forced evictions and Vanuatu's own national policy strongly recommends against them (Day et al., 2020), evictions continue. I and my interlocutors argue (Day, 2020; Day et al., 2020) that urban evictions violate these customary tenancies, but this idea is certainly not mine only. Member of Parliament Ralph Regenvanu, in a foreword he wrote for a book on urban governance in Melanesia, declares most of these arrangements to be not-informal (McDonnell et al., 2017).

A number of community associations have organised in response to eviction threats. Concerned initially with tenure security, organisations like the Elang Etas Community Association (EECA) seek to generate collective identities (Polletta and Jasper, 2001) under new forms of leadership that are adapted to the urban setting (Day, 2021). Leadership in social movements takes varied forms (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004) and is concerned with framing the movement for resource mobilisation and collective action (Benford and Snow, 2000). I have been working with the EECA and other community associations since 2017, when I tracked down dozens of people who had survived the eviction at Destination, seeking to understand how the eviction had changed their lives. Many people from Destination moved to Elang Etas, which is how I came to know the Elang Etas community. These associations, including Vete and EECA, resemble other Pacific social movements in their assembly of resources, collective identities, and declared causes, e.g., (Klepp and Herbeck, 2016).

The Modernist Planner

For the average anthropology student or researcher, what I write here may be straightforward and a normal part of their training. But for an urban planning academic like me, these ideas took time to understand. I think this has something to do with the bifurcated nature of our profession and academic discipline. I was primarily trained in the positivist branches of planning, although I did have the opportunity to learn critical methods from excellent thinkers such as Ananya Roy and Judith Innes. My doctoral dissertation was an econometric analysis of welfare shifts after forced displacement in Shanghai, e.g., (Day and Cervero, 2010). Helping people to avoid being displaced is my passion, though how I imagine and conduct my research has changed over the years. As a doctoral student, I hoped that demonstrating the monetary (Day and Cervero, 2010) and subjective (Day, 2013) welfare losses people suffered due to involuntary displacement would be convincing to policymakers to change displacement policy and practice. My approach was modernist in the way that Berman (1983) describes the concept in reference to cities, in his book, *All that is Solid, Melts into Air.* One might also call that approach, *instrumentalist* or *rationalist.* Essentially, I believed that demonstrating welfare impacts in positivist terms would unlock an underlying truth of harm and disadvantage that could not be denied once it was exposed.

In that training, I learned a modernist approach in which the researcher must avoid changing the system she is researching. China did eventually begin to change its relocation policies, and I have not abandoned my modernist origins. I have, however, realised that truth is slippery and contextual, and there is not necessarily one there, or a single one there, to be discovered (Kemmis et al., 2013: 28). For instance, claims to land and the right to the city (Harvey, 2003) are not simple concepts whose study is easy to enumerate in financial terms. In Vanuatu, customary land ownership is a foundational right that drove the country's independence movement, is enshrined in the 1980 Constitution, and whose value is shared by indigenous *Ni Vanuatu* person – from average citizen to Member of Parliament – with whom I have talked about the matter. Article 74 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu* declares that, "[t]he rules of custom shall form the basis of ownership and use of land in the Republic of Vanuatu." Despite custom being declared in principle to form the basis of land management, in practice, it is the landowner whose interests have been upheld by the courts, as at Destination.

Ironically, displacement is an inherent part of Eurocentric modernity (Escobar, 2003), along with the ideas about private property that underpin any claims to own land. The Pacific relationship with movement and private property is different than Eurocentric models (Wilson, 2011), even though the systems introduced by the colonising powers persist alongside customary systems to form a "bird that flies with two wings" (Forsyth, 2009): a legal system that acknowledges and empowers both customary practice and introduced governance.

Planning in the tradition of modernism – unreflective of its role in reproducing coloniality and inequality – persists in planning departments and the academy. I know because I have been part of that apparatus, and I have also critiqued it (Day, 2020; Day, 2021; forthcoming). At the University of Melbourne, where I teach, our student society, the Melbourne Urban Planning Student Society (MUPSS) ran a survey in 2018 and concluded that 70 percent of students are uncomfortable writing in the first person (personal communication with MUPSS leadership). The anonymous credibility of the unacknowledged, omnipotent observer (who according to MC thought probably has European origins) still has broad appeal in urban planning.

This is not to say that planning does not have a transformative (Healey, 2007) or even insurgent mission (Huq, 2020). Planning scholarship has been enhanced by a focus on indigenous practice (Lane and Hibbard, 2005) and community development (Kennedy, 2009) that has made decisive moves to incorporate transformation. A latecomer to planning via prior academic training in engineering, I must take most of the responsibility for failing to engage with these ideas while I was a graduate student. However, my own story illustrates that a planner can complete a prestigious education without confronting many of these ideas, and in Australia, where I teach, mainstreaming indigenous knowledge across the program is just now become part of our work. My own academic faculty at the University of Melbourne is currently joining in this attempt at self-transformation, having recently established an initiative to decolonise the urban planning curriculum. This comes at broader efforts in Australia to engage with "*decolonising settler cities*" (Porter et al., 2018) in Australia and other settler-colonial societies.

My Transformation

This section describes how I made the methodological transition to more-decolonised action research, and the ethical necessity for doing so. Some customary tenancies are some combination of fraud and customary migration, as I found in 2017, when I was on sabbatical in Port Vila, working on a project about the welfare impacts of forced displacement. I was specifically studying the eviction of Destination, a community of roughly 500 people that had been evicted overnight on a Sunday night, and whose homes were bulldozed at 6 am the next day (Day and Wewerinke-Singh, 2019). As part of that work, I heard many stories of resilience and recovery, and many more of trauma and lasting despair. People told me that I was the only person who had ever asked about how they are. I also found out that the community had never been allowed by the landowners to settle on those lands, but that a central man recruited residents based on an ancestral claim to the land and a false agreement with the landowners. Hundreds of people moved onto the land and spent their life savings on houses, trusting that his claim to the land was legitimate and their presence allowed by the landowner. McDonnell calls men like this, *masters of modernity* (McDonnell, 2017), because they have figured out how to use the uncertainty of change, like urbanisation, to their own ends.

I only found out the end of this explanation – about the master of modernity – after transitioning to action research. In late 2019, I was finally able to interview the master of modernity, a man who now lives, in some ways shunned, in a community where many people from Destination relocated after their eviction. His claims, part of the Vete Association's body of work, began to enter the "public" transcript of activism during Vete's active years (Wilson, 2011), but then quieted to a "hidden" transcript (Oslender, 2007) that includes local knowing but without a unified, external face that can be known to outsiders. The process of finding out about this hidden transcript began to occur for me via action research. Elang Etas, home of the EECA, is itself facing another eviction, this time again for a complex host of reasons. Primarily, the problem is that a corrupt intermediary apparently did not make their land payments to the landowner, and died before he could be held accountable for these millions of Vatu (hundreds of thousands of US dollars).

My 2017 research was the necessary beginning of my process of transformation. Interviewing Destination survivors, I was still simply a researcher-observer. I did not have enduring relationships with my research subjects. My writing from that period suggests as much (Day and Wewerinke-Singh, 2019). I was not invested in them as individuals, and I did not have their trust. They told me the part of the story that mattered for them to tell: that their livelihoods were still fragile, that they had never recovered, and that children were not in school. They did not tell me about the underlying politics or share with me their angers at the master of modernity that had brought about their financial ruin.

When I attended the opening of the EECA in October 2018 (Figure 3), I was still a researcher-observer. I attended upon the invitation of some of my Destination interlocutors, who were beginning to trust that I had their interests in mind. This trust was partly built because I shared with them the writing I had been doing about them, asking for their opinions about whether I had gotten the story right. In particular, I had returned to visit many of my interlocutors and told them about the report I was writing about them for the *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019* (GRID2019). Through these repeated interactions, they began to see that I was genuine and planned to develop a lasting relationship with members of the community.

Figure 3. EECA Launch Parade

So, until I became an action researcher, I was not given the full story of how the community at Destination was deceived by a master of modernity. Perhaps I still do not have the full story. Time will tell, or maybe it won't. Either way, I can share what happened to me between 2017 and 2019, that led me to the privilege of knowing more about the community than I was allowed to know before.

Thinking back, there was a moment of decision one day in my field research on communities facing eviction, when my ethics came into conflict with my approach. In that moment, I changed my approach. In 2017, about halfway through my interviews with survivors of Destination, I became aware that there was a newly-released draft national policy on displacement, at that time called the *Draft National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement: Towards a Durable Solution for People Affected by Displacement in Vanuatu.* I read the policy and worried that there was going to be a missed opportunity for protecting urban people facing evictions. The policy was, and still is, largely geared toward the other prevalent types of displacement in Vanuatu and the Pacific: displacement related to climate change and disaster.

It is fitting that GoV would be concerned with these types of displacement. Vanuatu's population is among the most at-risk in the world for environmental hazards, and other Pacific countries comprise much of the top ten ranking countries at risk of catastrophic events. The majority of Vanuatu's population lives in buildings that cannot survive cyclonic winds from large storms like Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2015 and Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020, both of which destroyed the vast majority of urban and rural housing in the affected areas (Ahmed, 2020).

However, I argued then and have continued to argue more recently that urban evictions comprise a third, important, prevalent type of displacement that deserves attention in national policy and by international actors in displacement. In November 2017, as my first move into action research, I circulated a memorandum via the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which was

assisting the government in finalising the national displacement policy, arguing for protections for urban people. Ultimately, my memoranda were instrumental in getting more urban protections added to the final policy (Personal communication, IOM, November 2018).

In the meantime, I began training local people about their protections under the draft policy, and I encouraged them to advocate for more protections for urban people in a final policy. This was my shift to advocacy. As a researcher who understood the devastating effects of evictions on urban people, I was in a position to speak with community support on this issue. As a researcher, my inclination was to watch quietly and observe what would happen. However, as a friend and colleague of people affected by displacement, my moral compass directed me to action.

It was my body of work and the support of my community interlocutor s that gave me the courage to write that first series of memoranda asking for better protections for urban people. My work in Port Vila after cyclone Pam in 2015 (Day and Bamforth, 2020) helped me to understand the intertwined effects of climate and disaster displacement with urban migration. People, I found, may migrate fleeing disaster, but then find themselves in a cycle of evictions in the city. This happened to my friend, Mary, who was evicted from Destination and again in March 2019, her house bulldozed with two hours' notice. It turns out, in her case, the Sheriff's office made a mistake and bulldozed the wrong house.

I shared that first series of memoranda with my interlocuters in Elang Etas and other communities, and gave them the chance to comment before I submitted it. That was the moment, I think, when people began to trust that I was going to be a persistent presence and that I was genuinely seeking to help them. From there, we have gone on to work together on a number of projects. Notably, we have invited the then-Regional Representative for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Fiji to visit Elang Etas during her short visit to Vanuatu (Figure 4). She followed up her visit by sending a deputy to run a training on human rights in the community. From there, the community has mobilised around its defence of human rights, organising its own Census (Figure 5), and inviting a New Caledonia-based NGO, Urbasophy, to train them on future data collections. I have helped to organise, and have participated in, many other events in the community, which is mobilising toward its own development in addition to resisting an eviction.

Concurrent Research Paths

I have not stopped being a researcher, even as my community engagement and advocacy work has increased. Rather, my research has grown and expanded as a product of my advocacy work with the community. My current research actually now has two origins. I still ask hypothesis-driven questions, such as a recent National Geographic-funded project about how women at Destination did not know that the eviction was coming up until the day of the eviction (Figure 6). However, I also now have a broad question about how communities successfully mobilise to resist eviction, which I research as an active participant and action researcher.

My incidental work in the community has resulted in lessons like the one I outlined above, being able to complete the story about the master of modernity that was behind the eviction of Destination. My hypothesis-driven work, then, is now enhanced by my community engagements. Being an action researcher has also changed the kinds of research that I can do. For example,

during a conversation with the EECA executive in July 2019, I changed the system by recommending that the executive draft a mission statement. The discussion we were having revealed that they were worried about new community members joining the Association. I recommended a mission statement to help with explaining the Association to new members. Figure 7 shows that mission statement as pulled from the EECA Facebook page, in the *lingua franca*, Bislama. Because of some translation difficulties (Day, 2020), that mission statement is not available in English.

Acting as an influence in the development of a mission statement, changes my relationship with the question of how communities resist forced eviction. I can no longer comment on whether these modes of organising are, for instance, an organic, community-driven process. My presence disrupts that observation, but it also added a reflexive (Burawoy, 1998) possibility to my work that would not have been possible without participation. I will, for example, be able to study the future effects of the mission statement on community mobilisation. I have also written on the power dynamics exposed by words that appeared in the original drafts of that mission statement, which are rejected in the community but are common in the documents produced by the development industry (Day, 2020). Similarly, with the EECA Census, in any future work that describes this effort, I will need to acknowledge my role in this process (I did not design the instrument, but I did produce the analysis on behalf of the EECA; Figure 5).

Figure 4. Chitra Massey Visits Elang Etas

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

A conversation with

Dr. Chitra Massey,

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Friday, 21 June, Elang Etas Stage
9am-noon (lunch to follow)

The Elang Etas Community Association invites Dr. Chitra Massey to the Elang Etas community for a discussion about urbanisation and human rights in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

ELANG ETAS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

UNITED WE STAND

The Elang Etas Community Association
is a community-driven initiative
whose mission is to achieve tenure security
and a share of urban prosperity
for the residents of Elang Etas,
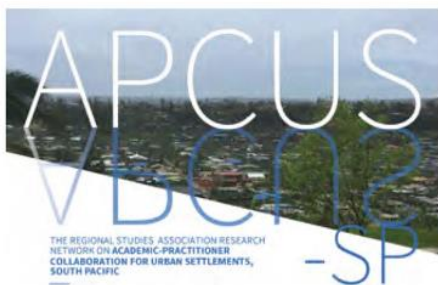a peri-urban neighbourhood of Port Vila

This session will achieve:

Discussion of EECA's vision, mission, and activities
Information sharing about human rights in the Pacific
Planning a way to work together in the future.

Contact Us

Chairman Sam Tabawa: stabawa@vanuatu.gov.vu; 5368495
Vice Chairman Wycliffe Tarilenga: tarilengawycliff@gmail.com; 5992874
Youth Committee President Brian Merah: 5737983

Partner

APCUS-SP

THE REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION RESEARCH
NETWORK ON ACADEMIC-PRACTITIONER
COLLABORATION FOR URBAN SETTLEMENTS,
SOUTH PACIFIC

Also Supported By

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
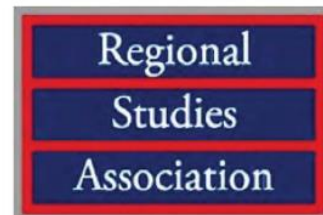
Regional Studies Association

Figure 5. EECA Census

DRAFT

**Wan Gudfala Komuniti:
Elang Etas Community Profile, 2018**

22 December 2019

Prepared by: .

Prepared for: The Elang Etas Community Association
Chairman: Sam Tabawa
Vice-Chairman: Wycliff Tarilenga

EECA Chairman Sam Tabawa explains a concept to community participants
during a training on data collection. Photo:

Figure 6. Current Hypothesis-Driven Work

ANNOUNCING
a research project

**Gendered Migration:
Women, Evictions, and Power in Port Vila**

Mary's home was bulldozed after an overnight eviction in a peri-urban area of Port Vila. She reports that she did not know about the eviction until the Vanuatu Mobile Force arrived on a Sunday evening to execute the eviction order.

This research project takes Mary's experience – with dozens of other women in her community – as a starting point for unpacking the power dynamics around forced evictions in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in the South Pacific. Mary's is a story of migration around the fringe spaces of a growing capital city where escalating land prices pose increasingly-pressing social challenges. This work documents the experiences of women facing forced migration in their city, placing these experiences in the broader legal and policy contexts. We seek to describe the information flows that limited Mary's understanding of her eviction, toward the aim of contributing to gender-inclusive planning, legal process, and customary land management.

A survivor of **development-induced displacement (DID)**,
Mary and her community were not displaced because of a cyclone, an earthquake, or climate change.

We seek to understand the power dynamics and information flows that produced Mary's situation.

Decoding these dynamics and flows could help Ni-Vanuatu people to ensure that this never again happens to women and their communities.

This research will document the experience of women facing urban forced displacement in one of the world's fastest-growing cities. Since Mary's eviction, Vanuatu has adopted a new *National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement*, which also provides protection from eviction. This work will enable recommendations for future operationalisation of the policy. Mary's story and many others are published here:

Research Team Contact and Funder Information

This project is funded by the National Geographic Society and supported by the University of Melbourne and the University of the South Pacific.

USP
PACIFIC CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Figure 7. EECA Mission Statement, from the EECA Facebook Page

ELANG ETAS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

UNITED WE STAND

STAMBA TINGTING
Port Vila, Vanuatu
19 June 2019

Elang Etas Community Association
hemi wan niu wantok organaes grup blo pipol
we i hang andanet long wan stamba tingting
we i aotlaenem gud seftiness blong ol pipol longsaed blong graon
mo fearshering lo komuniti developmen projek towards rod blo sakses
blong ol pipol we i stap insaed long komuniti blong Elang Etas,
wan sista komuniti blo Port Vila long Efate, Vanuatu.

Elang Etas hemi wan sista komuniti blong Port Vila Municipal we ol pipol i nedim wan gud sefti ples blong stap.

Bigfala tingting behaen yumi kam togeta, hemi blo yumi evriwan i buildem togeta ples ia.

Yumi mas joen wetem kavman blong strengthenem komuniti mo liftemap standed blong laef blong yumi insaed lo Port Vila.

Ol goal blong yumi:

Protektem graon we yumi liv long hem
Liftemap komuniti awarenes mo felim gud togeta
Faenemaot stret mo **kam part** blo wok togeta from komuniti nids
Liftemap awareness baot ol issues we i stap affectem komuniti
Providem komuniti wetem ol kavman services
Supportem bisnis blong economic wetem development.

Bae yumi kasem ol goals ia olsem:

Activatem ol risorses blo yumi towards ol goal blong yumi
Invest insaed long komuniti blong yumi
Buildem patnasip wetem kavman, NGOs, mo ol narafala komunitis
Includem evriwan, includem ol yut, mama, mo ol disabilitis blo evri wok plan mo operasen decisen blong yumi
Jensis long fasin blong wok insaed lo komuniti asoseasen i mekem big jens long growing blong komuniti.

Chairman Sam Tabawa: stabawa@vanuatu.gov.vu; 5368495
Vice Chairman Wycliffe Tarilenga: tarilengawycliff@gmail.com; 5992874
Advisory Committee Chairman Jack Ulas: 5418601
Youth Committee President Brian Merah: 5737983

Partner

Adding Value as an Action Researcher

I do not live in Elang Etas or Tagabe Bridge, though prior to COVID-19, I did spend up to four months per year doing fieldwork in Vanuatu. PAR is sometimes articulated as a method that requires intentional participatory research design by practitioners and professionals like teachers working in the sites they study (Kemmis et al., 2013). In contrast, all of my action has been incidental, a product of my work and engagement in communities rather than a part of the original research design, and I am not a development practitioner working on projects in the areas I am studying. Participant observation, then, is perhaps where I fit most closely.

Action research is appropriate when the researcher is already part of the community she is researching, like Wilson (2011), and also when she is called to action by circumstance or ethics. My experience in Elang Etas has been more aligned with the latter of those circumstances. It is from this position that I can offer some insights about when action research is appropriate, and how to transition one's work from hypothesis-driven work that does not involve participation, to being driven by parallel processes of hypothesis-led and participation-generated research.

I am under no pretence that the strategies I offer here are new, ground-breaking, or universally applicable. My contribution is that I offer them specifically contextualised, and from the positionality of a non-indigenous researcher undertaking a genuine project of personal transformation that is informed by indigenous people and indigenous scholarship on imperialism and modernity/coloniality. My recommendations are offered from this perspective, for anyone who may be on the same journey that I am on: trying to decolonise myself.

Revisit fears of exploiting

As a less-experienced researcher, I often felt that taking people's stories for my gain (in the form of publications) was exploitative and self-centered. This introduced fear and uncertainty into my fieldwork that I have processed over time. More recently, I have come to believe that, under the right conditions, hearing people's stories can be emancipatory on the part of the participants and generous on the part of the researcher. I found this out while I was researching Destination's survivors in 2017. My interlocuters were grateful to have someone – anyone, even a stranger – come around to see how they were doing. It turned out that nobody from government had ever come to check on them, and they continue to feel abandoned and forgotten by the structures of power. In this way, caring about people was an act of generosity, and people felt heard and validated to be able to tell their stories. Indeed, my writing about their stories (Day and Wewerinke-Singh, 2019) helped them to feel heard on an international scale. In the 2021 training for the enumerators, in an interim debrief after the first week of enumeration, we talked about how it can feel exploitative to take people's stories. The enumerators agreed that they had similar fears. I was able to share my insights about how people at Destination felt heard, and the enumerators came back from the field the next week reporting a transformed experience: that they felt like this work was helping people. Just talking about my fears of exploitation helped them to understand theirs.

Seek to add value

The "right conditions" that I describe above include an intention to add value, to contribute by helping people. If the researcher's first intention is to contribute, and a second is to publish, then action research is a possibility. Indeed, it may be unavoidable if the researcher finds herself in a situation where inaction would be unethical.   Reflecting on Smith, I have strived to always ask myself whether I am engaged in extractive research that is more about building my career than being engaged with the communities. Certainly, I am building a career, but my work is not about origin stories or indigenous practice, which Smith (1999, p. 25) argues has been a center of extractive work. Rather, it is aligned more with social movements, and about how people resist eviction. My work sees people not as living in fixed worldviews that are there to be discovered, as Said (1978) describes, but rather as evolving social phenomena that resist late capitalism, and as Smith (1999, p. 24) describes, late modernism and late colonialism. That is how I position my work. My work sees indigenous people as remaking and adapting governance (Day, 2021) and resisting labels of informality (Day, 2020) and disaster (Day et al., 2020), rather than seeing indigenous people as people who had never created institutions (Smith, 1999, p. 25) and seeking to explain contemporary indigenous existence, which has not been recognised under modernism (p. 38).

For my interlocutors at Destination, I demonstrated value by returning to show them the first publication in which their story was told (Day and Wewerinke-Singh, 2019). I have added value at Elang Etas and Tagabe Bridge by helping people to understand new policies, organising outsiders to visit, and conveying their messages where they cannot go, such as to international conferences. From the 2021 field study, the enumerators also insisted that we return to the communities for more than just a research debrief. They also wanted to know how we can help these communities. The result is an emerging partnership with some local NGOs to run community trainings on the national displacement policy.

Assert academic thought

I have learned that my interlocutors are interested in thinking in academic ways. One example where I have been able to add value with my academic knowledge was in the EECA's recent deliberations over whether to publish its internal 2018 Census report. When the report was ready, the EECA Executive committee called a meeting to discuss disseminating the report. The initial discussion centered around how the estimated community population could help to direct government attention and resources to Elang Etas, e.g., paving the roads, providing policing and street lights, *etc*. Because of my academic background, I was able to point out another possibility: that the report would cause the government or the disputing landowners to "see" (Scott, 1998) the community in a way that made evicting the settlement, unavoidable. This use of James C. Scott's concept that the state has certain ways of seeing that may not be aligned with the best interests of the community, resonated with my interlocutors. I am not an expert in what is likely to happen in this context in this situation, but expressing this possibility caused the Executive to pause, and ultimately to decide not to publish the report.

Teach while learning

Working closely with communities on issues requiring trust and familiarity, also presents significant opportunities to teach people and build their capacities – which takes time and energy. My research assistant on the Destination project leveraged her work with me to be hired as the community-engagement officer for the Chinese construction company doing aid-based infrastructure projects on the island. She had completed Year 7 (seventh grade) in school, but we had many conversations inspired by academic debates; for instance, about tokenistic versus meaningful community participation. She discussed these concepts in her job interview and got the job.

Be reflexive

Good action research adapts in response to findings. I didn't know about the Elang Etas Community Association or other local social movements in Port Vila until a year into a study of evictions. Once I knew about the Association, my research questions grew to incorporate the EECA. In our 2021 remote field study, the local enumeration team drove the research, politely demanding that we expand our research scope to many more communities, taking home voice recorders on the weekends so that their friends and families could be interviewed, and insisting that certain chiefs also needed to be interviewed to complete the study. Ni Vanuatu people are not generally a demanding set, so I immediately recognised that we should follow their suggestions and adapt the study.

Remember core competencies

When I first started doing action research at Elang Etas, I felt helpless and fearful. I felt helpless because I did not have the skills to help with community organising, and I felt fearful that I would hit the limit of my capacities to help, and at that point, there would still be need. Both of these have turned out to be true: I am not an adept community organiser, and I am usually not able to resolve people's problems – especially their biggest problem, which is the longstanding land dispute and impending eviction. Luckily, my interlocuters are expert community organisers and are working on the land dispute themselves. Along the way, they have reminded me of what I am good at: keeping up with national policy, writing papers and mission statements, analysing community Census data, presenting at conferences and making videos, and making connections with the international community. Now, I understand that I should contribute in ways that are aligned with my role as a researcher. I am not an activist; I am not an organiser. I have been able to add value in ways that are aligned with my own capacities as a researcher.

Involve interlocutors in publishing and writing

The most satisfying academic outputs are those that give back to the community, and those that I co-produce with my interlocutors. Co-producing written outputs is one way that I try to avoid essentialising what I see because my modernist mind cannot comprehend that urbanisation in Vanuatu is complicated, internally diverse, and at times, contradictory. Complexity, diversity, and contradiction can coexist in indigenous epistemologies (Smith, 1999, p. 74). As an outsider writing about indigenous people, how do I avoid committing essentialism to the page myself? Smith (1999, Introduction) admonishes researchers to speak to

their research interlocuters about the complex ideas raised in and by the research. They will understand and help the researcher to form the ideas. One way that I have attempted this kind of involvement was when I and my interlocuters at Elang Etas co-produced a video for presentation at the World Urban Forum, in an attempt to convince intergovernmental organisations such as the Red Cross and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center that urban evictions should be considered and funded alongside climate change and disaster as a major form of internal displacement: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5yZ5CLDzI0&t=17s. These contributions have resulted in my interlocutors asking me to be more deeply involved in community affairs and to write more about different parts of their experiences. Action research, then, is generative of opportunity, even if the initial investment of time is considerable.

Plan to keep travelling

There is a large temptation now, from within the pandemic, to imagine remote work and online conferences becoming the new normal. Certainly, participating remotely is a great way to include more people and stay connected while travel is limited. When the pandemic ends, however, I will be seeking to get back to the field.

Start where you are

Some students might be in a hurry to do action research. Because I never imagined myself as an action researcher, my struggle was in understanding when I had actually become one. About this, I would advise newcomers to start with a hypothesis-driven process, and if the situation allows, develop relationships that create opportunities for adding value and developing friendships over time.

References

Agnew J (2007) Know-where: Geographies of knowledge of world politics. *International Political Sociology* 1(2): 138-148.

Ahmed I (2020) Prospects And Challenges For Reconstruction After Tropical Cyclone Harold In Vanuatu. In: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme. Available at: https://www.sprep.org/news/prospects-and-challenges-for-reconstruction-after-tropical-cyclone-harold-in-vanuatu?fbclid=IwAR0QuG_nfyX65CN3K_DkLjHhO90u54W-g3d2CXJvBxGxMvBRWwALJlRjt3w (accessed 2020).

Beard VA and Dasgupta A (2006) Collective action and community-driven development in rural and urban Indonesia. *Urban Studies* 43(9): 1451-1468.

Benford RD and Snow DA (2000) Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual review of Sociology* 26(1): 611-639.

Berman M (1983) *All that is solid melts into air: The experience of modernity.* Verso.

Bonnemaison J (1985) The tree and the canoe: roots and mobility in Vanuatu societies. *Pacific Viewpoint* 26(1): 30-62.

Brock K and McGee R (2002) *Knowing poverty: Critical reflections on participatory research and policy.* Earthscan.

Burawoy M (1998) The extended case method. *Sociological theory* 16(1): 4-33.

Burgess J (2006) Participatory action research: First-person perspectives of a graduate student. *Action research* 4(4): 419-437.

Burke JA, Estrin D, Hansen M, et al. (2006) Participatory sensing.

Cooke B and Kothari U (2001) *Participation: The new tyranny?* : Zed books.

Cornwall A and Jewkes R (1995) What is participatory research? *Social science & medicine* 41(12): 1667-1676.

Day J (2013) Effects of involuntary residential relocation on household satisfaction in Shanghai, China. *Urban Policy and Research* 31(1): 93-117.

Day J (2020) Sister Communities: Rejecting Labels of Informality and Peripherality in Vanuatu. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44(6): 989-1005.

Day J (2021) Ol Man Kam: Community Associations as part of inclusive urban governance in the urban South Pacific. *Development Bulletin* 82: 119-122.

Day J (2021; forthcoming) One Road, No System: The Critical Need for Urban Planning around Port Vila's OBOR Projects. In: Sintusingha S, Wu H and Han SS (eds) *The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Infrastructure Investment, Regional Collaboration and Urban-Regional Dynamics in the Asia-Pacific*. New York: Routledge.

Day J and Bamforth T (2020) 'This is our garden now': disasters and belonging in an urban Pacific. In: Sanderson D and Bruce L (eds) *Urban Disaster Resilience in the Asia-Pacific*. New York: Routledge, pp.Chapter 7.

Day J and Cervero R (2010) Effects of Residential Relocation on Household and Commuting Expenditures in Shanghai, China. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34(4): 762-788.

Day J and Wewerinke-Singh M (2019) Learning from Survivors of Development-Induced Displacement: Operationalising Vanuatu's New Displacement Policy toward an Inclusive Capital City. Reportno. Report Number|, Date. Place Published|: Institution|.

Day J, Wewerinke-Singh M and Price S (2020) Eviction is not a disaster. *Development Policy Review* 39(1): 103-120.

Escobar A (2003) Displacement, development, and modernity in the Colombian Pacific. *International Social Science Journal* 55(175): 157-167.

Escobar A (2007) Worlds and knowledges otherwise: The Latin American modernity/coloniality research program. *Cultural studies* 21(2-3): 179-210.

Forsyth M (2009) *A Bird that Flies with Two Wings: Kastom and state justice systems in Vanuatu.* Canberra: ANU E Press.

Freire P (2005) *Pedagogy of the oppressed, 30th Anniversary Edition.* New York, London: Continuum.

Grosfoguel R (2011) Decolonizing post-colonial studies and paradigms of political-economy: Transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality. *Transmodernity: journal of peripheral cultural production of the luso-hispanic world* 1(1).

Harding S (2018) One planet, many sciences. *Constructing the pluriverse: The geopolitics of knowledge.* 39-62.

Harvey D (2003) The right to the city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27(4): 939-941.

Healey P (2007) The new institutionalism and the transformative goals of planning. *Institutions and planning* 61: 61-87.

Huq E (2020) Seeing the insurgent in transformative planning practices. *Planning Theory* 19(4): 371-391.

Jarillo S, Darrah A, Crivelli C, et al. (2020) Believing the unbelieved: Reincarnation, cultural authority and politics in the Trobriand Islands.

Kemmis S, McTaggart R and Nixon R (2013) *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research.* Springer Science & Business Media.

Kennedy M (2009) Transformative planning for community development.

Klepp S and Herbeck J (2016) The politics of environmental migration and climate justice in the Pacific region. *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment* 7(1): 54-73.

Lane MB and Hibbard M (2005) Doing it for themselves: Transformative planning by Indigenous peoples. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 25(2): 172-184.

Lantz PM, Viruell-Fuentes E, Israel BA, et al. (2001) Can communities and academia work together on public health research? Evaluation results from a community-based participatory research partnershipin detroit. *Journal of Urban Health* 78(3): 495-507.

Lindstrom L (2019) *Cargo cult: strange stories of desire from Melanesia and beyond.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Maguire P (1987) Doing participatory research: A feminist approach.

Marshall J (2000) Living Lives of Change: Examining Facets of Women Managers' Career Stories". *Career frontiers: New conceptions of working lives.* 186-200.

Marshall J (2004) Living systemic thinking: Exploring quality in first-person action research. *Action research* 2(3): 305-325.

Marshall J and Mead G (2005) Self-reflective practice and first-person action research. *Action research* 3(3): 235-244.

McDonnell S (2017) Urban Land Grabbing by Political Elites: Exploring the Political Economy of Land and the Challenges of Regulation. In: McDonnell S, Allen MG and Filer C (eds) *Kaston, Property, and Ideology: Land Transformations in Melanesia.* Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp.283-304.

McDonnell S, Allen M and Filer C (2017) Kastom, Property and Ideology: Land transformations in Melanesia. Canberra: ANU Press.

McGee R (2012) The self in participatory poverty research. *Knowing Poverty.* Routledge, pp.25-54.

Mignolo W (2003) *The darker side of the Renaissance: Literacy, territoriality, and colonization.* University of Michigan Press.

Mitlin D and Thompson J (1995) Participatory approaches in urban areas: strengthening civil society or reinforcing the status quo? *Environment and Urbanization* 7(1): 231-250.

Morris AD and Staggenborg S (2004) Leadership in social movements. *The Blackwell companion to social movements.* 171-196.

Murtagh B (1999) Listening to communities: locality research and planning. *Urban Studies* 36(7): 1181-1193.

Napwatt F (2018) Over 600 To Be Evicted. *Vanuatu Daily Post*, 09 June.

Oslender U (2007) Revisiting the hidden transcript: oral tradition and black cultural politics in the Colombian Pacific coast region. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25(6): 1103-1129.

Oslender U (2019) Geographies of the pluriverse: decolonial thinking and ontological conflict on Colombia's Pacific Coast. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 109(6): 1691-1705.

Pacific Islands Report (2014) Squatters Around Vanuatu Airport Being Evicted. *Pacific Islands Report*, 20 October.

Pain R (2019) Chronic urban trauma: The slow violence of housing dispossession. *Urban Studies* 56(2): 385-400.

Pain R and Francis P (2003) Reflections on participatory research. *Area* 35(1): 46-54.

Polletta F and Jasper JM (2001) Collective identity and social movements. *Annual review of Sociology* 27(1): 283-305.

Port Vila Daily Post (2018) Bladiniere Evictions. *Port Vila Daily Post*, 28 February.

Porter L, Jones T, Cox S, et al. (2018) Decolonising Settler Cities. Post-Workshop Report, May 2018. Reportno. Report Number|, Date. Place Published|: Institution|.

Reason P and Torbert W (2001) The action turn: Toward a transformational social science. *Concepts and transformation* 6(1): 1-37.

Roy A (2003) *City requiem, Calcutta: gender and the politics of poverty.* U of Minnesota Press.

Said EW (1978) *Orientalism.* London and Henley.

Said EW (1994) *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Vintage.

Scott JC (1995) *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance.* New Haven, London: Yale University Press.

Scott JC (1998) *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed.* Yale University Press.

Shaffer P (2012) Participatory analyses of poverty dynamics: Reflections on the Myanmar PPA. *Knowing Poverty*. Routledge, pp.55-79.

Smith LT (1999) *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* London & New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Wilson D (2011) *Vete: The Emerging Movement on Efate, Vanuatu Politics and Indigenous Alternatives*. University of Hawaii at Manoa, Thesis submitted for the degree, Master of Arts in Pacific Islands Studies, Manoa.

Yates J and Okello L (2012) Learning from Uganda's efforts to learn from the poor: Reflections and lessons from the Uganda participatory poverty assessment project. *Knowing poverty*. Routledge, pp.80-109.