



## WORKSHOP

### Sovereignty, Autonomy and Diversity in the French Pacific

Victoria University of Wellington, Kelburn Campus, Alan MacDiarmid Building (AM 103)  
**Thursday 14 March.**



The island territories of the French Pacific face formidable challenges as we approach the third decade of the 21st century. New Caledonia saw a long-awaited referendum on independence on 4th November 2018, with 56.6% voting against and 43.3% in favour, and the prospect of two further referenda over 2020-22. Contemporary political debates in French Polynesia have also centred on constitutional status, as well as on the enduring consequences of French nuclear testing. Both territories are now full members of the Pacific Islands Forum, and have explored new connections with the wider Pacific region. Wallis-and-Futuna by contrast has not changed its constitutional status for 60 years but is likely to be greatly affected by any changes in the status of other French Pacific territories. This workshop brings together scholars and political actors from the French territories with those from New Zealand and aims to strengthen collaborations between French and New Zealand researchers.

#### 9.00 — Opening

- Vice Chancellor, Victoria University of Wellington [TBC].
- Serge Tcherkezoff & Jon Fraenkel – Workshop themes, aims & objectives

#### 9.15—FRAENKEL, Jon

*Victoria University of Wellington*

#### **Sovereignty or Post-Sovereignty in the Pacific Islands?**

In the 1970s and 1980s, de-colonization was a dominant theme in Pacific political thought and scholarly commentary on the Oceania region. In the new millennium, claims of ‘state failure’ in western Melanesia have encouraged an external focus on limits to sovereign authority. The 2003-17 Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands has been identified as a successful example of ‘shared sovereignty’. After a 2008 visit to the Solomon Islands, visiting World Bank consultant Francis Fukuyama concluded that ‘sharing of responsibility for sovereign functions is largely accepted’. Other island territories have encountered efforts to redefine or rethink ‘sovereignty’, particularly the New Zealand or US freely associated states and New Caledonia, where some claim the evolution of a unique form of ‘Islandian sovereignty’ that departs from classical ‘Westphalian’ sovereignty. Others have emphasized the limited economic benefits of independence and higher living standards for states that experimented with lesser political autonomy. Are these claims and verdicts sensible

correctives to the over-optimistic ideals of the independence era or efforts to turn back the clock on decolonization and self-government?

### **New Caledonia**

*Chair : Serge Tcherkezoff, Australian National University (program Pacific-Dialogues EHESS@ANU) & Centre de recherches et de documentation sur l'Océanie (AMU, CNRS, EHESS)*

9.30 — GODIN, Patrice

*Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*

#### **Is New Caledonia a pluricultural society? Blind spots and perspectives**

New Caledonia is 'pluricultural' if one considers ('en extension') the list of the various groups of inhabitants. People of very different origins and cultures live there. But what is the situation if we were looking for a characterization in terms of a shared reference, linking each cultural group to the whole society ('en compréhension')? It is a society which remains compound, composite, plural and very unequal (In an economic sense, but also starkly as regards academic achievement). The historic agreements created the possibility of building a way of living together but remain compromised by blind spots, or double binds: the right to auto-determination but subject to majority rule ; the obligation for non-Kanak citizens to assume the burden of a colonization they did not instigate ; and a state which intends simultaneously to decolonize, to preserve its constitution and to maintain France's position in the Pacific.

10.00 — LAGARDE, Louis

*Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*

#### **The origins of New Caledonia's fractured society: what do archaeology and recent colonial history tell us?**

New Caledonia underwent dramatic changes after the first Europeans sighted the archipelago in 1774. Today, the territory is a multicultural mosaic. Social inequalities mostly parallel ethnic cleavages. Yet contemporary patterns of residential segregation, and of separation or exclusion from the formal economy, are not simply rooted in a colonist/colonized dichotomy, but have rather been shaped by a complex set of rules and values which we can trace back to a) inconsistent policies pursued by French colonial rulers, b) the economic constraints of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and c) the remoteness of New Caledonia and its characteristics in the Pacific context.

10.20 — KORSON, Cadey

*Massey University*

#### **Rebalancing power dynamics in sub-national island jurisdictions: Defining sovereignty in Kanaky/Nouvelle Calédonie**

The outcome of the 2018 referendum in Kanaky/New Caledonia seems to support the ongoing trend among small islands who choose to remain a sub-national island jurisdiction (SNIJ). While a number of researchers have identified and deconstructed the economic and social benefits of this decision among other SNIJs, Prinsen and Blaise (2017) posit a different motivation: the ability of islands to act like a sovereign state while retaining the benefits of SNIJ status. This sovereign exceptionalism, or islandian sovereignty as they term it, is a set of powers SNIJs have negotiated with administering states that mainland sub-national units will likely never be able to achieve. In the context of Kanaky/New Caledonia, islandian sovereignty has been part of an effort to rebalance power: between domestic communities and between the French state and Territorial government. Domestically, the notion of rebalancing has underpinned restricted and inclusive definitions of self-determination, restrictions on voting and citizenship, the construction of imagined communities and identity politics. However, as the archipelago moves towards a second and possibly third referendum, particular attention should be given to the ways in which this all-but-sovereign sovereignty evolves. Specifically, how customary authorities have been involved in this process, used islandian sovereignty as a platform for greater Indigenous autonomy and engage with new forms of governance.

10.40 — Teabreak – 20 minutes

*Chair, Iati Iati, Victoria University of Wellington*

11.00 — WADRAWANE, Eddie Wayuone  
*Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.*

**Changes for recreating a shared social and educational imaginary.**

How can we create a deliberative school system and construct common symbols? As new frameworks of sociopolitical expression, the two political agreements - Matignon-Oudinot in 1988 and Noumea in 1998 - provided the stimulus for unprecedented innovations in the New Caledonian landscape. What part do these changes play in the reforging of a new shared social imaginary? We shall be examining certain practices of place and adjacency or combined alterity developed by Kanak society, in a perspective which may lead to innovative decisions for recreating educational cohesion and the symbolism of living together.

11.20 — McDONALD, Caroline  
*Victoria University of Wellington*

**Free association: a mixed blessing**

It is widely asserted that free association as a decolonisation option is "the best of both worlds" for the associated entity, and various "models" are discussed. The experience of the Cook Islands and Niue shows that free association is not an "off-the-shelf" solution, but reflects the historical context, existing arrangements and the interests of all parties involved. A continued relationship with the metropolitan power is a mixed blessing. It has pros and cons. Flexibility and clarity of status are important components of success.

11.40-12.20 — DISCUSSION

12.20-1.20 — Lunch

**French Polynesia**

*Chair - Gerard Prinsen, Massey University.*

1.20 — BROTHERSON, Moetai  
*Représentant à l'Assemblée de Polynésie*  
*Député de la Polynésie Française à l'Assemblée Nationale*

**From French Polynesia to Mā'ohi nui: A Pacific vision of decolonization**

The history of French decolonization has too often been tainted with violence, bloodshed, and liberation wars. Since its creation in 1977, the Tavini Huiraatira, the main Independence party in French Polynesia has promoted a 'Pacific' vision of decolonization, both in the sense of 'peaceful' and accomplished in 'the Pacific way'. This paper asks what, in an ever changing world, are the likely changes facing supporters of independence in *Mā'ohi nui* ?

1.50 — AL WARDI, Semir  
*Université de la Polynésie Française*

**The politics in French Polynesia: current debates, challenges and perspectives**

The political agenda in French Polynesia has been dominated by the elections for the territorial presidency, centered on the opposition between Edouard Fritch and his former mentor Gaston Flosse. Metropolitan national electoral cleavages have been reconfigured in local idioms. Pro-independence politicians have been able to secure an additional seat in the National assembly. Recent debates have centred on two key issues: the enduring consequences of historical nuclear testing and proposals for amending the political status of French Polynesia. On both issues, France has yet to engage into a fully comprehensive local dialogue.

2.10 — PETIT, Sylvain  
*Université de la Polynésie Française*

**What forms of tourism can sustain the development of the French Polynesia economy?**

Local authorities in French Polynesia have based economic development on the primary and tourism sectors. After some difficult years, the tourism sector is finally back in a phase of sustained growth. Many changes are

evident, particularly in the aviation sector. Despite these positive developments, French Polynesia is still struggling to carve out a niche in the global tourism market. This presentation focuses on a study of the tourism sector, but also briefly concludes with a broader assessment of the economic situation and the likely future challenges faced by French Polynesia.

2.30 — Tea/Coffee break – 20 minutes

*Chair – Emma Harman, National Bureau of Assessments New Zealand Government*

2.50 — CHAILLOUX, Steve

*Chargé de la valorisation du patrimoine culturel de la ville de Faa'a*

### **Is the autonomy/pro-independence dichotomy still relevant in *Mā'ohi Nui* (French Polynesia) today?**

Since 1984, there have been two political blocks confronting each other in every local election in *Mā'ohi Nui*, officially called "French Polynesia" since 1957. On one side, we have the autonomist movements who want to keep *Mā'ohi Nui* as a French territory and on the other side, we have the pro-independence movement. Public debates among Tahitian politicians have exclusively focused on these institutional questions: Is it better for French Polynesia to move towards its political independence or to seek greater autonomy within the French republic? Does a preference for 'autonomy' necessarily mean wanting to remain French? This paper is based on my personal experience during the local election of May 2018, when I found that these institutional issues were *not* the main concern of the *mā'ohi* voters.

## **Wallis and Futuna**

3.10 — PASTOREL, Jean-Paul

*Université de la Polynésie Française*

### **Reflections on Wallis and Futuna Islands**

Wallis and Futuna obtained its current constitutional status in 1961, following the abolition of French Protectorate. Unlike most Pacific Islands territories and countries which have acceded to independence or self-government, Wallis and Futuna became part of the French Republic. Nevertheless, political and social organization was the result of a compromise between the traditional and Catholic religious leaders and representatives. With an indigenous system that is kept in place permanently, the pre-existing system customary law was recognized and accommodated in Wallis and Futuna. Denominational instruction has also survived this change of status. Nearly eighty years after the 1961 act, where does this leave Wallis and Futuna? Can the two islands remain divorced from the broader pressures for decolonization seen in New Caledonia and French Polynesia?

3.30-4.20 — DISCUSSION

## **The French Pacific in a Comparative Context**

Chair – TBC

4.20 — BEVANT, Yann

*Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*

### **Implications of the New Caledonian Experience for Divided Societies**

New Caledonia has a very specific status in the constitutional framework of the French Republic. It is a *sui generis* territory with wide devolved powers comparable to a certain extent to those of the former British Dominions. This exception to the rule, given the centralised nature of the French State, owes much both to the provisions regarding the organisation of the French '*Territoires d'Outre-Mer*', and to a political process derived from the tensions which led to violent conflict in the 1980s. The 1988 and 1998 agreements provided for a new organisation of the territory based on power sharing between the Loyalist and Pro-Independence traditions, and for the possibility of self-determination under the auspices of the UN. Despite major differences, the New Caledonia experience bears some resemblance to that in Northern Ireland. In both cases, fundamental

issues are about the legitimacy of a territorial claim, the process of decolonisation, and above all the sense of belonging of the communities.

4.40 — FRAENKEL, Jon  
Victoria University of Wellington

### Implications of the New Caledonian & Northern Ireland Experience for Divided Societies: Constructive Ambiguity, Intermediation and the Brexit Dilemma

Research on the politics of divided societies has neglected the New Caledonia experience. As in Bougainville and Sudan, agreements put off a referendum on the core constitutional question to the distant future. In Northern Ireland, the 1998 Good Friday or Belfast Agreement also pushed back in time critical constitutional decisions, with the Blair government declaring ‘no selfish strategic interest’ in Northern Ireland, and the Government of Ireland amending its own constitution to agree that ‘a united Ireland shall be brought about only by peaceful means with the consent of a majority of the people, democratically expressed, *in both jurisdictions* in the island’. The outcome is often celebrated as an agreement founded on ‘constructive ambiguity’, acceptable to both loyalists and nationalists, but it left many issues unresolved. After the 1980s and 1990s agreements, the British government – like the French government as regards New Caledonia – has struggled to present itself as an intermediary between loyalist and nationalist politicians. The collapse of the Stormont executive in January 2017, the present-day Conservative/Democratic Unionist Party coalition arrangements in the UK and the impending March 2019 Brexit, have entailed a major crisis for the Northern Ireland peace deal.

5.00 — DISCUSSION

5.30 End

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*With the partnership of:*



Lettres, langues et sciences humaines

Research Centre TROCA (Trajectoires d’Océanie)



Research Center GDI (Gouvernance et développement insulaire)



## Biographies:

### Acronyms:

ANU	- Australian National University
DEG	- Département de Droit, Economie, Gestion (at UPF)
EHESS	- École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, France
GDI	- Research Centre “Gouvernance et développement insulaire” (at UPF)
LLSH	- Département de Lettres, langues et sciences humaines (at UNC)
TROCA	- Research Centre “trajectoires d’Océanie: dynamiques des changements historiques, géopolitiques, sociétaux et littéraires” (at UNC)
UNC	- Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie
UPF	- Université de la Polynésie française

### BIONOTES:

Sémir AL WARDI is a member of GDI and an associate professor in Political Sciences at the University of French Polynesia (DEG director). He has been researching and publishing since the 1990s on the evolution of the ‘State-Territory’ relations between France and French Polynesia, on political models for Pacific states, particularly the ‘associated state’, as well as on the regional relationships that France and French Polynesia entertain within the Pacific, and recently on the Chinese presence in the Pacific.

Yann BEVANT is a member of TROCA (director) and an associate professor at the University of New Caledonia (LLSH). He is a member of the French Universities National Council. His research has focused on Anglo-Irish relations, Irish history, minority languages and cultures.

Moetai BROTHERSON is a Polynesian politician and writer. A long time member of the *Tavini Huiraatira no te ao mā’ohi*, the main pro-independence party in French Polynesia, where he is responsible for international relations, he was a candidate and won in 2017, on his first attempt, one of French Polynesia’s three parliamentary seats, thus becoming a member of the French National Assembly where he joined the Foreign Affairs Committee. As a writer, he published in 2007 the award-winning novel *Le Roi Absent* (*The Missing King*, translated and published in Auckland in 2013), which weaves together traditions, visions and voices from his home area, France and beyond, and explores the boundaries around Mā’ohi identity, history and fiction. In 2010, he was also a member of the team who built and sailed a replica outrigger canoe (*O Tahiti Nui Freedom*) that made the four months voyage from Tahiti to China, against the currents and typhoons, relying only on navigation by star observation, in homage to the traditional Polynesian voyaging across the Pacific Ocean.

Steve CHAILLOUX is in charge of the promotion of cultural heritage in the town of Faa’a. He holds a degree of social anthropology from the EHESS. He co-choreographed the professional cultural group ‘O Tahiti ë (which won an award at the 2016 Heiva). He was a member, and then deputy-director, of the committee of the Heiva (2017-2018). He has been teaching Tahitian language (*reo tahiti*) and culture for a number of years at the University of Hawai’i (Manoa). Back in his homeland, he devotes much of his time to teaching the Tahitian language, while continuing to hold workshops overseas (recently in the US mainland) and promoting the value of *reo tahiti* as an essential part of the Mā’ohi identity.

Jon FRAENKEL is a Professor of Comparative Politics in the School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations at Victoria University of Wellington. He was formerly a Senior Research Fellow based at the Australian National University (2007-12) and the University of the South Pacific in Fiji (1995-2007). He is Pacific correspondent for The Economist magazine.

His research focuses the politics of the Pacific Islands region, institutional design in divided societies, electoral systems, political economy and the economic history of Oceania.

Patrice GODIN is a member of TROCA and an associate professor in Social Anthropology at the University of New Caledonia (LLSH). Since 1983, his main research topics are about the social organization, culture and history of the Kanak chiefdoms of Hienghène, on the North-eastern coast of New Caledonia and about the Kanak nationalist movements advocating for independence.

Cadey KORSON is a Lecturer in Human Geography in the School of People, Environment and Planning at Massey University, Auckland in Aotearoa New Zealand. She holds a Ph.D. in geography from Kent State University, USA. Her research interests include critical and popular geopolitics, small islands and Indigenous rights, commemoration and geography education.

Louis LAGARDE is a member of TROCA and an Associate Professor of Pacific Archaeology at the University of New Caledonia (Dept LLSH). His research focuses on the archaeology of the Pacific Islands, through the study of settlement, human impact on the ecosystems, evolutions in material culture, local and regional interaction through exchange mechanisms and networks over time. Having also worked on the impact of European contact, through the excavation of Kanak hamlets and early colonial sites, he also addresses the question of heritage in the Pacific context.

Jean-Paul PASTOREL is a member of GDI and a Professor of Public Law at the University of French Polynesia (DEG). He is Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University with responsibility for international relations. His research focuses on the peripheral regions and overseas territories. At present, he is responsible for the supervision of two doctoral dissertations on international and strategic relations in the Asia-Pacific region (in cooperation with the “Maison des Sciences de l’Homme” in Paris).

Sylvain PETIT is a member of GDI, an Associate Professor in Economics at the University of French Polynesia (DEG) and associate researcher at the Polytechnic of University of Hauts de France. He is a specialist in applied econometrics and international trade and applies this to the study of tourism economics. He has written a number of empirical articles analysing tourism demand and tourism trade. He is the director of the Bachelor program in tourism management at the University of French Polynesia and he is also an elected council member of the International Association for Tourism Economics. He has regularly published in academic journals in the field of tourism.

Wayuone Eddy WADRAWANE is a member of TROCA and a Senior Lecturer at the University of New Caledonia Teachers Training College (ESPE). He holds a PhD in Education (*Sciences de l’Education*). His research looks at the modalities of transferring certain particular modes of learning of indigenous knowledge to so-called academic contexts by taking a reflexive and critical look at the didactic resources of Kanak and Oceanian cultures.

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