From Vulnerability to Resilience: Partnerships for Development
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Theme: Questioning current thinking about resilience and vulnerability

The sovereignty of non-sovereign island states

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Contents

• The creation of Westphalian sovereignty
• Contemporary challenges to Westphalian sovereignty
• Indigenous sovereignties in the Pacific: Oceanian and UN
• Islands without Westphalian sovereignty
• Are islands rejecting Westphalian sovereignty?
• Are islands developing ‘Islandian’ sovereignty? Five patterns
• Island sovereignty at the crossroad of indigeneity, decolonization and globalization
17th century, Westphalian Peace, European negotiations argue all state representatives are equals – irrespective of state’s size...

... And Westphalian War: the justification of imperial/colonial expansion
19th century nationalism: sovereignty belongs to the people born in a territory – not to kings (and not to colonized people)
After 1960, UN declares all peoples have a right to sovereignty – whether they claim it or not.

... Decolonization or the tentative export of the Westphalian model.
Challenging Westphalian sovereignty

- Being undermined by globalisation, movement of people, goods, capital (Lowi, 2011)

- Being displaced by ‘sovereignty without a territory’, i.e. international bodies and regulations (UN, WTO, ICC) (Perez et al, 2011)

- Indigenous concepts of ‘sovereignty without a state’ (Pitty & Smith, 2011)
Islands and sovereignty in the Pacific

‘Islands’: motu

‘Land’: vanua, whenua, enua, fenua …

also vaka vanua – customary

and mana whenua – authority over the land

(assertive, territorial, bounded, separation of rights, layered

…. sovereignty)

contrast this with Oceanic (Epeli Hau’ofa) vaka moana

(unbounded, opportunity, outward looking, connectedness)

→ Oceanian sovereignty made of localised link to the land

and delocalised network-like societies
On the “list of 17 territories that should be decolonised”…

15 territories are island states.
More islands without Westphalian sovereignty...

- US has ‘constitutional’ bonds with 7 territories... (Hawaii, Guam, NMI, Am. Samoa, Palau, FSM, Marshall Isl.)

- New Zealand has ‘constitutional’ bonds with 4 Pacific territories... (Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Samoa)
Are islands rejecting Westphalian sovereignty?

In 1983, St Kitts & Nevis were the last island state to vote for independence.

When comparing non-sovereign island states with sovereign island states since 1980s, “the former consistently remained more affluent.”

(According to McElroy & Parry, 2012: 417; also: Baldacchino & Milne, 2011; Dunn, 2011; Oostindie, 2009)

Are islands developing ‘Islandian’ sovereignty?

Amidst the many debates about “sovereignty” ... non-sovereign island states may be developing a new form of sovereignty.
Five global patterns of ‘Islandian’ sovereignty

1. Voting ‘no’ in referenda for Westphalian independence

2. Negotiate continuously over constitutional statuses
   New Caledonia had ten different statuses since 1946 (Mohamed-Gaillard, 2003); US territories re-negotiated compacts three to four times (Van Beverhoudt, 2003); Dutch Antilles three times since 1954.

3. ‘Get away with’ bending metropolitan rules to local interests
   New Caledonia ignores Court ruling on labour laws since 2009; Aruba “acknowledges but does not register” gay marriages since 2001; Wallis & Futuna secure state-funded Catholic education since 1969.
Five global patterns of ‘Islandian’ sovereignty

4. Sign agreements that are uncomfortable to metropolis
   Faroe Islands have free trade with Russia and Norway; Cook Islands’ banks: “Dirty deals in paradise”?

5. Metropolitan transfers add to domestic revenue
   NZ pays 16-21% of Cook Islands public budget; France 31-46% of New Caledonia
Island sovereignty at the crossroad

• Indigeneity: between the link to the land and network-like societies
• Decolonization: late, negotiated, partial
• Globalization: global indigeneity, rent-seeking strategies and global (de) regulations (cf. ‘corporate sovereignty’)

→ Inventing a post-colonial island sovereignty in the Pacific?