

# New Pathways Across Old Terrain? SSGM Research on Resources, Conflict and Justice



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## Introduction

Melanesia is characterised by complex interactions among land and natural resource uses, legal and political institutions, and interest groups. These interactions play out at the national level, where institutions have been profoundly shaped by an interplay of 'local' and 'global' orders and by the political and economic systems which affect natural resource exploitation. Institutional dynamics at local, national and regional levels have animated both violent conflict and its peaceful resolution, and are central to understanding the changing political economy and broader processes of state formation that are occurring in Melanesia. Drawing on 20 years of State, Society and Governance in Melanesia (SSGM) research, this paper examines the complex interrelationships affecting land and natural resource exploitation, peace and conflict, and justice.

A key plank of the SSGM research has been to develop fine-grained and sophisticated understandings of these complex interrelationships. We have done so by combining comparative and interdisciplinary studies underpinned by long-term fieldwork, with a particular focus on Papua New Guinea (including the Autonomous Region of Bougainville), Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, but also extending to Timor-Leste and Fiji. The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to review this longitudinal research effort (summarised briefly in 'At a Glance'). We also draw attention to areas where important policy questions remain unanswered and further research is required to inform them.

SSGM's research on conflict and peacebuilding across Melanesia demonstrates that violent conflict is never the outcome of a single cause, but rather a tangled blend of multiple factors. These can include global demand for resources, for-

eign investment patterns, the changing nature of development partnerships, and domestic political hegemony. It also shows that contestation is a normal aspect of all human societies and that in certain circumstances conflict can, in fact, have generative effects in facilitating positive social and political change. When contestation has turned violent and destructive, SSGM's work has focused on the critical role of institutions in peacebuilding. This has been reflected in our recent research on political settlements, that is, processes of elite bargaining and the way in which power is exercised across formal and informal institutions. These studies have shown how the uneven distribution of power can result in social exclusions and inequalities, and in some cases become drivers of social tensions.

Substantial research on legal pluralism and locally evolved governance innovations has provided critical insights on Melanesian law and justice. It has also served to highlight the important role played by informal institutions in areas of dispute resolution, everyday security and stability more broadly. If seen at all, these informal institutions are often poorly understood. Case studies have examined highly adaptive and functional Village Courts in PNG, and the resilience of restorative justice mechanisms across Melanesia. The informal and community-oriented nature of justice delivery can still be prone to capture by local elites, particularly if the necessary community and institutional oversight mechanisms across jurisdictions are not in place or are weak. Our research has shown how these issues can often come to the fore in disputes relating to resource extraction. The problem of elite capture is, however, by no means confined to informal justice processes as recent evidence from a number of Melanesian countries attests. A broad lesson from our



### At a Glance — Paper Highlights

- Regional drivers of conflict are rarely a product of one cause, but are more likely to result from a messy combination of factors such as uneven development, inequitable distribution of development benefits, changing foreign investment patterns, and shifts in domestic hegemony.
- Efforts to promote good governance need to take account of the systemic ‘provisioning pacts’, that is systems where political elites are beholden to powerful stakeholders and interest groups and need to secure their support by providing them with a share of rents and resources.
- Melanesia suffers from the ‘resource curse’; resource exploitation supports highly centralised and clientelist power bases. More accountable and transparent processes that increase access to justice services and economic opportunities can advance peace prospects.
- When strong identities are associated with perceived resource rights, the mix can be a major driver of conflict between ethnic groups and can also be exploited by commercial interests. Understanding these sociopolitical identities is critical to peaceful nation-building.
- Access to formal-legalistic and informal-community-based dispute resolution systems can diffuse conflict. Local dispute resolution systems work best in low-intensity conflicts where power distribution among parties is fairly even; more formal responses suit complex or corrupt systems.
- The gendered and intergenerational impacts of resource and development projects is not fully understood or well managed – processes of exclusion that disadvantage women and marginalised groups require more policy and development partner attention.
- ‘Light footprint’ interventions with high community engagement and limited use of force have important characteristics that can be peace enhancing in the long-term.
- Restorative justice has deep social foundations in Melanesian society, and has high social resonance; it needs to be part of any Melanesian justice system. Hybrid systems which combine traditional and contemporary justice systems, and create supportive linkages between systems, hold potential.
- The limited reach and effectiveness of state justice services creates jurisdictional gaps and contradictions across levels of government which are being exploited by commercial interests and political elites to the detriment of national development.
- Expanding private policing services are filling security gaps across the region. However, the relationship between these private providers and state police is not well understood, nor is the issue of who benefits from this development and who might lose out.
- Large-scale resource extraction is associated with violent conflict and political fragmentation. More effective regulatory and institutional arrangements have the potential to underpin socially responsible and equitable resource development, particularly for minerals, forestry and oceans.
- Rapid urbanisation can drive national development, but, in the Pacific, weak management is adding to socioecological stresses. Issues of food, water and land security will become more pressing, particularly as populations rise, resources become more scarce, and climate changes.
- The lack of benchmarking and evaluation of resource development impacts on national development priorities is creating policymaking weaknesses and blind spots.

research is the need to recognise the full spectrum of actors and institutions involved in ‘justice work’ in Melanesia and better understand the interplay between them.

The intensification of resource use has seen an increasing focus by SSGM on land and ocean governance, especially in response to major ‘land and ocean grabs’ across the region. New areas of rapidly increasing prominence are adding to pressures on resources and social relations, in particular in areas of rapid urban population growth, expanding forms of mineral extraction, and escalating ocean resource development. Institutional arrangements and regulatory systems are falling behind development trajectories, creating pressures on socioeconomic systems. This range of research issues in the realm of conflict and peace, justice and resource exploitation are explored in the sections to follow, and possible policy implications highlighted.

### Conflict, Peacebuilding and Interventions

Although relatively peaceful compared with many other parts of the world, the broader Melanesian region has experienced serious conflicts in recent decades. The most prominent of these have been the decade-long Bougainville crisis, the ‘ethnic tension’ in Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste’s long struggle for independence and nationhood. These developments, in combination with recurring outbreaks of localised disorder in parts of the PNG Highlands and the coups that have punctuated Fiji’s post-independence history, have been taken by some external commentators to indicate a larger pattern of regional volatility or ‘arc of instability’ surrounding Australian shores. While there may be some commonalities, the region is famously diverse and the conflicts in the region have their own distinct aetiologies, histories and dynamics. SSGM’s work has sought to drill down beneath the superficial and generalised quality of much popular commentary to investigate the complex interplay of social, economic, political and environmental drivers behind these conflicts.

While it remains common to classify particular conflicts according to a predominant driver — for example, Solomon Islands being labelled ‘an ethnic conflict’ and Bougainville viewed as ‘a resource-

based conflict’ — the more complex reality, as documented in SSGM’s research, is one where multiple factors interact and coalesce over time in often unpredictable ways. Melanesian experience highlights the non-linear character of conflict and how it can morph, move across scales and influence social tensions in other jurisdictions, both domestically and regionally. For example, the initial heavy-handed ‘law and order’ intervention in Bougainville in response to a dispute between local landowners and the operators of the Panguna mine escalated into a Bougainville-wide secessionist struggle, before later moving into a series of internecine conflicts between a range of local factions across the province (Regan 1998, 2008, 2010:17–19, 2014:74–5). The Bougainville experience has also influenced expectations around resource-led developments in other parts of the country and beyond, as well as around issues of resource distribution and conflict prevention. There was also some fall-out from Bougainville in neighbouring Solomon Islands as its own internal conflict emerged in the late 1990s (Firth 2014).

The research at SSGM has always had a strong empirical foundation and commitment to long-term analyses in Melanesia and Timor-Leste, often conducted in partnership with local researchers and practitioners. This approach helps to reveal the domestic and global drivers of conflict and stresses in the region, including global resource demand, foreign investment patterns, and the changing nature of development partnerships and domestic political hegemony. We also draw on experiences from other fragile and conflict-affected parts of the world. Research on Timor-Leste and the wider Asian region helps inform our analysis of additional factors policymakers need to consider when evaluating state fragility (Ingram 2012) and the changing regional pressures (Connolly 2016), including changing geopolitics, national political priorities, commodity trade, and financial markets.

SSGM has expanded the scope of debates on resources, state fragility and justice by developing analytical concepts as applied to regional research. For example, the ANU-led Diminishing Conflicts project resulted in the publication of a major study of drivers of tensions and interventions across 15

different countries and territories in the larger Asia–Pacific region and factors that have contributed to their diminution (Aspinall et al. 2013). While each case study had its distinct dynamics and trajectories, factors influencing conflict reduction include processes of internal democratisation, agency coordination and the character of international interventions. Additionally, the impact of broader international trends such as the end of the Cold War, exhaustion and stalemate in particular conflict settings, and expansion of post-conflict economic development options help advance peace prospects. Likewise, our researchers have regularly brought regional experiences of conflict and peace-building into the deliberations of leading international policy and research organisations engaging with similar issues (c.f. Dinnen et al. 2010). An example of this was the inclusion of case study material from Melanesia in the World Bank's influential *2011 World Development Report on Conflict, Security and Development*.

Broad factors affecting contemporary conflict in Melanesia include identity, resources and uneven development. Identity can be the glue of nations or regions, but in the culturally and linguistically diverse Melanesian context it can also carry with it the seeds of division and conflict through the very act of distinguishing between an 'in-group' that shares the same identity and an excluded 'out-group' that does not. This is particularly relevant to understanding the ongoing tensions and violent conflicts in the Highlands of PNG (Haley and May 2007). Markers of identity or difference in the region include ethnicity, kinship, skin colour, language, religion, gender, age and relationships to land, amongst others. When strong identities are associated with perceived resource rights, the mix can be a major driver of conflict between ethnic groups and can also be exploited by outsiders and global commercial interests wanting to access resources (Allen 2013b). In a rapidly globalising world and a region with intensified contestation over the allocation and distribution of benefits from the extraction of natural resources, understanding these sociopolitical identities and emerging contexts is fundamental for critical analysis and policy development. It also has important ramifications

for broader processes of nation-making and nurturing citizenship in contexts of intense social diversity and fragmentation.

The shortage of resources has triggered conflict in some parts of the world, but it is primarily the abundance of resources in Melanesia — the region's version of 'the resource curse' — that has contributed to acute levels of contestation at different scales in the Pacific islands countries. Historical patterns of uneven development that commenced under colonial rule and have continued and been accentuated during recent decades by enclave patterns of resource-driven development, can generate resentment and grievances between groups and across space that also constitute significant sources of social stress. These issues are highlighted in SSGM's seminal work on the conflicts in Bougainville (Regan 1998, 2008, 2014), Solomon Islands (Allen 2013a, 2012; Allen and Porter 2015), Southern Highlands (Haley and May 2007) and across Melanesia more broadly (Allen 2013b; Dinnen et al. 2010).

Of course, certain types of conflict and ways of managing disputes and contestation have always been an integral part of Melanesian social orders, as elsewhere. Some forms of conflict can be socially generative and constructive. This can occur, for example, by confronting entrenched injustices or airing legitimate grievances and providing the impetus for reform. Additionally, conflict can serve as a catalyst for innovative and practical forms of problem-solving. Evidence of socially generative outcomes of conflict in Melanesia would include: the widespread, but often poorly documented, informal experimentation in governance arrangements at sub-national levels in parts of Solomon Islands, Bougainville (Regan 2000) and the PNG mainland, including justice, policing and resource management initiatives (Dinnen and Allen 2016); and, at least in its initial stages, the political settlement between Bougainville and PNG, where the latter was granted autonomy status and Bougainville's constitution adopted innovative 'hybrid' governance arrangements.

It is not so much contestation *per se* that causes problems, but rather when that contestation turns violent and destructive. The issue then becomes the critical role of institutions, whether formal or infor-

mal, in providing non-violent means for effectively managing conflicts of interests, and whether the rise of new institutional arrangements and settlements from these conflicts are more inclusive and durable than previous ones (Craig and Porter 2013).

Many of the older or neo-traditional mechanisms for containing contestation in Melanesia have become distorted or detached from their social moorings and conventional restraints in the face of ongoing globalisation and newer forms of contestation. In some cases, they have themselves contributed to conflict escalation. The role of compensation in Solomon Islands during the recent tension and its continuing prominence in contemporary conflict in the PNG Highlands are cases in point. In these instances, the 'traditional' institution has become increasingly monetised, separated from its social foundations, and often used instrumentally to extort and intimidate, or otherwise used to promote particular material or political interests (Dinnen 2002b; Fraenkel 2004).

Other local approaches to conflict resolution are also susceptible to capture by local elites and are likely to reflect prevailing power relations that may operate against the interests of weaker groups, such as women and youth. As elsewhere, localised dispute resolution mechanisms tend to be more effective in low intensity conflicts and in cases where the distribution of power between parties is relatively even. This is not the case in most resource-driven conflicts or some extreme cases of systemic gender violence where significant power differentials are at play. In these cases, disputes tend to militate against mutually or traditionally acceptable resolutions. For these types of conflicts, more formalised and legalistic responses can help overcome some of the problems associated with seriously comprised or corrupted local systems. At the same time, it is equally clear that formal justice institutions and oversight agencies are by no means immune to the influence of domestic elites and overt forms of political interference, as vividly demonstrated in a number of recent and ongoing cases around corruption in the region (Walton and Dinnen 2016).

The relative weakness of state institutions in managing conflict has been a longstanding concern in many parts of Melanesia. This situation

appears to have become progressively worse in PNG, the largest and most volatile country in the region. Against a backdrop of intense and uneven globalisation and a domestic political environment that works against efficient and equitable policy development and service delivery, the PNG government is struggling to develop institutions that can effectively resolve conflict and manage contestation. Although they do so in different ways, all three major regional conflicts indicate that state agencies charged with maintaining peace and order can themselves become a driver of conflict or conflict escalation in certain circumstances; this has been particularly true with respect to the behaviour of some of the police and defence security forces in the region. Parts of the state security forces were implicated in both the Solomon Islands' tension and the violence in Timor-Leste in 2006 and 2007. More broadly, we can see how socially destructive forms of violent conflict tend to increase when people's ability to adapt older approaches, or socially embed newer institutions for managing conflict, become overwhelmed by the sheer pace, scale and asymmetry of social and economic change.

### **State-building and Peacebuilding Interventions**

Each of the region's larger conflicts have given rise to interventions involving domestic, regional and international actors with a common emphasis on state-building and peacebuilding as the pathway to post-conflict recovery and prevention of conflict recurrence. While broadly according with international peacebuilding practice, there have been significant differences between the interventions in Bougainville, Solomon Islands and East Timor. These include: the auspices under which each was undertaken (e.g. bilateral, regional or multilateral); the nature of the mandates; and the size, composition, duration and outcome of each mission. As with the conflicts that preceded them, each intervention underwent significant evolution over time. For SSGM's researchers, these engagements have provided an important opportunity for investigating the practical and theoretical challenges of conflict transformation and processes of state-building in the region, both in terms of individual country studies and comparative analysis (see Box 1 overleaf).

**Box 1: 'Solomons in Transition?'**

In November 2013, SSGM, in partnership with DFAT, hosted the Solomons in Transition Workshop. It brought together interested members of the Canberra policy community, Australian researchers and development practitioners as well as participants from Solomon Islands, including two provincial premiers, senior public servants, members of civil society and leading Solomon Islands academics. The workshop took the 'transition' taking place in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) as a point of departure for considering other important changes underway in Solomons, spawning a range of SSGM publications (c.f. Allen and Dinnen 2016, 2015; Haque 2012). A key tension to emerge from the workshop concerned whether Solomon Islands is experiencing transformational change, or merely continuing along familiar trajectories. The primary finding was that there had been more continuity than transformative change. This highlighted the inadequacy of uncritically applying tropes of modernisation, good governance and demographic transition.

An important area of continuity concerned the centrality of natural resource exploitation and aid flows to economic development in Solomons. The relatively spectacular economic growth rates during RAMSI's tenure were largely based on unprecedented rates of logging and the boom in aid. Economic reforms implemented by RAMSI have done relatively little to effect structural change and economic diversification. Furthermore, while a major shift from logging to mining is anticipated, there is much continuity relating to resource rents and clientelistic behaviour amongst political elites.

Accompanying this tension between continuity and transformation was another between tenacity and innovation on the one hand and decline and failure on the other. The consensus was that local social orders remain the primary reference point for most Solomon Islanders in the face of continuing state withdrawal from rural areas and the expansion of what are widely seen as corrupt and clientelist institutions. The so-called failure of the state in this regard has enabled many positive developments in local governance innovations to address the centralised governance vacuum. Nonetheless, this decentralisation has still spurred serious stresses in many localities, including intergenerational tensions which contribute to the erosion of social cohesion and increase the potential for conflict.

Solomon Islands' post-RAMSI future is likely to be one of contested and non-linear state formation and will probably be characterised more by continuity than change. Understanding the full potential of post-RAMSI Solomons, and the scope for appropriate policy development, requires building on the social potential for tenacity, innovation and experimentation.

With the intervention in Bougainville being generally regarded as a considerable success in terms of comparative international experience (Breen 2016; Regan 2010), SSGM researchers have contributed to understanding the nuances of that success. This work has included: an edited book on the regional Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) and its successor, the Peace Monitoring Group (PMG), with a particular focus on the remarkable fact that nearly all military elements of both were unarmed (Regan 2008; Wehner and Denoon 2001); a book on the benefits of a relatively 'light footprint' intervention where the key approaches were determined by local actors (Regan 2010); and, an analysis of Australia's particular contribution and the policy lessons drawn (Regan and May 2001). SSGM has also examined the risks of conflict recurrence (Regan 2013, 2014); since 1945, 60 per cent of internal conflicts concluded by peace agreement have failed within five years of the agreement (Human Security Report Project 2012:171), and when conflicts have been over natural resources reoccurrence has been even faster (Rustad and Binningsbø 2012:71).

The interventions in Melanesian and Timorese settings where many people continue to live on the fringes of the modern state and formal economy have also provoked analysis and debate. This has generated interest in hybrid forms of authority, governance and institutional development; that is, approaches that blend neo-traditional and customary institutional arrangements with more formal, legalistic ones. As elaborated upon in the law and justice section below, this interest in hybridity has included the workings of local courts that seek to combine the authority of state law with the legitimacy and accessibility of local *kastom* approaches for dealing with minor disputes. Such courts exist across the Melanesian region and for many years were largely neglected by governments and donors, whose capacity-building engagements tended to be focused on the more visible and better represented formal courts. A growing appreciation

of the significant role of these hybrid local courts has been accompanied by more government and donor support in recent years. In the aftermath of serious internal conflicts, transitional justice mechanisms, such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, have also become standard features in many international peacebuilding engagements, including the cases of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands.

Research on these transitional justice initiatives has highlighted how they have interacted with local forms of authority and community norms when dealing with the legacies of a violent past. Lia Kent's work (2015, 2012) on transitional justice in Timor-Leste sheds considerable light on the often complex configurations of power, including those along gender lines, which impact on the workings of these transitional justice mechanisms in practice, at times producing unexpected or unwanted outcomes.

Rather than viewing peacebuilding interventions in narrow technical and institutional terms, our work on peacebuilding acknowledges the inherently political character of these engagements. The manner in which interventions impact upon, and are mediated through, power relations operating at different levels has been a consistent theme in SSGM research. The 'political turn' in development thinking more broadly has placed increasing attention on understanding how political, economic and social forces are organised in specific national settings and their implications for peacebuilding and other forms of external intervention. In this respect, the notion of political settlements has acquired growing prominence as a relatively new concept for helping to explain the very different outcomes in different countries (Ingram 2014, 2012). While still evolving, the concept highlights the character of elite bargaining, and the mix of formal and informal institutions through which the exercise of power plays out.

The discussion of political settlements in the policy literature has been largely conceptual and normative. Relatively few empirical studies exist that analyse the character of the political settlement in a particular country setting and how it affects institutional behaviour. SSGM researchers and associates working in the Melanesian and Timorese regions have attempted to address this

gap by applying the concept in specific contexts of fragility. For example, Craig and Porter (2013) use a political settlement lens to examine prospects of stability in post-RAMSI Solomon Islands, suggesting that provisioning pacts — when political elites are beholden to other interests and need to secure their support by providing them with a share of rents and resources — remain the most important driver of elite coalitions and wider politics in Solomon Islands. Their work raises the central question of whether future provisioning arrangements will be adequate to avoid conflict relapse. Sue Ingram (2012) has also applied a political settlement lens to Timor-Leste's post-independence political development. Her study of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) argues that while UNTAET was able to consolidate the relationship with Indonesia, and build the organisational framework for an independent state, it failed to nurture an inclusive internal political settlement. Such a settlement was the essential foundation for a stable state and as such this failure contributed to the serious civil disorder experienced in 2006–7.

### Law and Justice: Engaging with Legal Pluralism

Building legal and regulatory systems capable of operating effectively across the fragmented social and geographic landscapes of contemporary Melanesia remains a major challenge for domestic policymakers and donors alike (Dinnen 2002a). The region is well-known for its internal diversity and the wide dispersal of authority and regulatory power across both state and non-state sectors. The term 'legal pluralism' is used to describe the coexistence of multiple legal orders or systems of rules. While legal pluralism exists in all countries, its manifestations in Melanesia reflect the legacies of a recent colonial past which saw the introduction of state-based legal orders into local settings already occupied by a profusion of small-scale self-regulating social orders based on customary or traditional authority.

These local socio-legal orders have evolved considerably over time and continue to play an important role in everyday social regulation and dispute resolution in many places (Forsyth 2011). In part, this reflects the enduring appeal of these approach-

es at local levels, but is also often a consequence of the limited reach and effectiveness of state justice services. Problems of access to justice, particularly in rural areas, may reflect more systemic challenges with government service delivery. In these circumstances, many citizens have limited options when it comes to dealing with infractions and disputation.

While local approaches appear to work well in some areas, they can be weak in managing newer forms of contestation associated with ongoing processes of social and economic change. Their past effectiveness depended in large part on high levels of social cohesion and uniformity in the communities concerned. Broader processes of change associated with social mobility, economic development and globalisation have contributed to the erosion of social cohesion in many places. This is most obvious in the rapidly growing, as well as socially and ethnically heterogeneous, urban and peri-urban areas. It is also evident in rural localities affected by large extractive or other development projects, where local dispute resolution capacities can in some cases breakdown altogether (c.f. Haley and May 2007; Hegarty et al. 2004).

Although difficult to generalise across such a diverse region, SSGM research in Solomon Islands has shed light on some of the challenges of delivering justice locally in the regulatory landscapes of rural Melanesia (see Box 2; Allen et al. 2013). The *Justice Delivered Locally* research revealed extensive experimentation with different governance arrangements at sub-national levels as part of local attempts to overcome particular problems and develop coping strategies. Evidence of local-level innovation and problem-solving has been noted by SSGM researchers in other parts of Melanesia (Forsyth 2014c; Regan 2005). There have also been some more formal attempts to adapt institutional responses to the challenges presented by Melanesia's legal and regulatory pluralism. These include the hybrid courts mentioned previously that are established under state law and empowered to resolve minor disputes according to local *kastom*. Labelled as Local Courts in Solomon Islands, Island Courts

### Box 2: Justice Delivered Locally in Solomon Islands

Few comprehensive studies have been undertaken by governments or donors to map out local patterns of justice and security provision and to illuminate how end-users navigate plural regulatory landscapes. SSGM and Solomon Islands researchers, in partnership with the national government and World Bank, conducted interviews in 86 rural communities in five provinces between 2010 and 2011 (Allen et al. 2013). The research revealed three overlapping forms of socio-legal order in rural Solomon Islands: *kastom*, church and state. While their configuration varied from place to place, each form was viewed as having a core sphere of operation. State justice was viewed as most appropriate for serious infractions and disputes. *Kastom* justice, typically equated with the authority of local chiefs, was preferred for everyday matters and managing the most socially embedded forms of disputation such as land disputes. Church justice was favoured by many women in marital and family disputes. Although based on different sets of logic, *kastom* and church approaches are viewed as entwined and complementary, sharing broadly similar goals around the restoration of social relationships damaged by dispute or conflict.

The *Justice Delivered Locally* research also highlighted the increasing fragility of each of these localised justice forms. Despite their primacy, local approaches have come under growing stress associated with broader processes of socioeconomic change. These included newer forms of disputation that threatened to overwhelm the efficacy and integrity of these local approaches. The research identified four main types of contemporary disputation: social order problems, often associated with substance abuse; commercial development and land disputes; disputes around NGO, donor and government projects; and marital conflict and domestic violence.

Calls for more support for local approaches were accompanied by demand for better linkages with state justice services. *Kastom* and state justice were viewed as compatible and mutually reinforcing. The key takeaway message was the need for policymakers to broaden justice and governance engagements beyond a narrow focus on state agencies based in urban centres in order to connect with the dynamic realities of local social order and regulation as experienced daily by most Solomon Islanders.

in Vanuatu and Village Courts in PNG, these hybrid institutions have followed different trajectories in different places (Evans et al. 2010). Village Courts now have significant reach across both rural and urban PNG, and undertake an enormous volume of work.

Research by Melissa Demian (2014a) has shown the innovative and adaptive character of Village Courts in the face of practical difficulties associated with their remote locations and distance from government resources. Demian's work challenges the deficit view of Village Courts held by many domestic and international critics which focuses on purported procedural or jurisdictional irregularities and dysfunctions. Instead, the detailed ethnographic research by Demian and other colleagues reframes Village Court developments as examples of bottom-up innovations that illustrate how the legal system in PNG is adapting in necessary and highly functional ways (Demian 2014b, 2015).

Another example of innovation has been the attention paid to developing restorative justice within the state justice systems of some of these Pacific countries, including PNG whose national law and justice policy is subtitled 'toward restorative justice'. Restorative justice has become a significant focus of reform and innovation in justice systems around the world. While viewed as a radical innovation in many countries, restorative justice has deep social foundations in Melanesia as in many other tribal societies. SSGM researchers have been involved in research and policy work that seeks to identify and leverage these restorative strengths in terms of contemporary law and justice reform (Dinnen et al. 2003; Regan 2000). It is also worth noting in this context that the current global interest in restorative justice can be viewed as a relatively rare example of institutional transfer from south to north, reversing the more usual flow from north to south.

A recurring critique directed at informal and community-oriented systems of justice delivery and adjudication, particularly by lawyers and human rights advocates, has focused on issues of accountability. Longstanding concerns have typically been expressed about the susceptibility of these approaches to capture by local elites and the risks

that they end up reinforcing existing power imbalances at local levels, particularly along the lines of gender and age. While these concerns are real, there is also evidence, such as that provided by Demian in PNG (see above) or by Dinnen and Haley (2012) in Solomon Islands, that justice actors operating at the most local levels are often able to navigate power relations in more subtle and nuanced ways than given credit for by their critics.

Significant engagement by NGOs, donors and different parts of government in recent years with local institutions, particularly around issues of gender-based violence, is predicated on the recognition that these local approaches are capable of adaptation and reform (Forsyth and Eves 2015). These engagements in local settings serve to highlight the need for effective processes of translation and partnerships to effect attitudinal change. The practical challenges of engaging in these local social environments are shared by all major forms of intervention, whether in law and justice, security governance or peacebuilding, or other areas of development. In this regard, SSGM's socio-legal researchers have taken the lead in initiating critical discussions around notions of 'hybridity' across a range of policy interventions in the region, as well as linking these to broader debates occurring in development circles (Dinnen and Kent 2015). The latter include the growing recognition by leading development agencies, such as the World Bank, of the need to move away from privileging institutional form over function in development practice, and the value of a more pragmatic focus on problem-solving appropriate to specific local issues and contexts (World Bank 2011).

SSGM researchers have engaged with the concept of hybridity in relation to issues of sub-national governance and security in different parts of the region (Dinnen and Allen 2016). This has been in addition to leading the critical interrogation of the concept of hybridity in peacebuilding, justice and development during the 2015 Horizons Seminar Series at the ANU's Bell School of Asia and Pacific Affairs. This work, which will be published as an edited book in 2017, concluded that while the concept of hybridity has serious shortcomings, it remains a useful heuristic for examining complex processes of social and institutional

### Box 3: Regulating Sorcery Accusation Related Violence in PNG

Sorcery-related violence is a growing problem in PNG and has attracted domestic and international calls for an effective government response. It is implicated in a range of negative developmental outcomes, including economic disempowerment, poor health, insecurity, persecution, and violence, including torture and murder. These negative outcomes impact disproportionately upon women. The government and a broad range of civil society, faith based, and international organisations are developing legislative reforms as well as projects and programs to address this social problem.

Led by its Department of Justice and Attorney General, the PNG government together with a range of partner organisations, including SSGM, have developed a Sorcery National Action Plan ('SNAP') which sets out a comprehensive response to the problem (Forsyth 2014b). The SNAP was approved by the NEC on 16 July 2015. However, the evidence is still very thin concerning which interventions are working; which interventions may work, and the reasons for this; and how the interventions can best be supported.

SSGM is currently engaged in a four-year research project that will:

- Identify what regulatory levers exist to overcome sorcery accusation-related violence, and the context or conditions necessary for them to work effectively
- Document SNAP as a 'coalition for change' network through identifying its development, impacts, failures and challenges.

change. Hybridity achieves this by foregrounding the unique, dynamic and contingent socioeconomic and sociopolitical forms that emerge in local settings and that shape peacebuilding engagements and ongoing historical processes of state formation.

A major emphasis in our law and justice research has been on developing a deep understanding of local context based on how power and institutions work in specific settings, rather than

being driven by assumptions based on idealised institutional forms. Practical examples include Forsyth's pioneering work around hybrid approaches to intellectual property and traditional knowledge in the Pacific Islands (Forsyth and Farran 2015). The current action-based research around hybrid responses to sorcery-related violence in Papua New Guinea provides a further illustration (see Box 3).

### Policing and Security Governance

Policing practice, and security governance more broadly, are also influenced by the normative and regulatory pluralism in Melanesia. SSGM research has sought to contribute to the understanding of how security governance actually works in particular places, as well as to better inform reform efforts. This work has focused on the interface between institutional policing and informal approaches to dispute resolution, order maintenance and community safety involving non-state actors (Dinnen and Peake 2013, 2015). Studies have been undertaken into hybrid forms of community policing in Bougainville and Solomon Islands with a view to better understand the dynamics of these interactions and, where possible, to improve alignment and complementarity between different security providers. An example is the interface between police officers, private security, and community-based leaders (Dinnen and Allen 2013; Dinnen and McLeod 2009; Dinnen and Peake 2013).

Donor engagement with domestic policing organisations has a long history in each of the Melanesian countries. While usually undertaken on a bilateral basis, the case of RAMSI represents an important and in many respects unique approach to police development. Over the past 14 years, police officers from 15 different Pacific islands police organisations have been involved in working with the Solomon Islands police. SSGM researchers are currently undertaking an Australian Federal Police-funded study of the impact of the RAMSI experience on the effectiveness of regional policing and connectivity between different national police organisations. This research builds on earlier work undertaken by SSGM and other researchers that investigated Australian policing assistance in PNG and in the post-conflict contexts of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands (Goldsmith and Dinnen 2007).

Another increasingly significant source of pluralism in the security governance arena is the growing prominence of the private sector in the provision of a wide range of security services, this being part of a global trend that is playing out in the Pacific Islands. In PNG, this expansion is marked against a backdrop of pervasive concerns about insecurity, limited confidence in public policing, and the proactive role of the private sector in a resource-driven economy. Furthermore, the expansion represents new challenges for regulation and accountability across different scales. Sinclair Dinnen has been working with colleagues at Massey University, the United Nations Development Programme and the Pacific Islands Forum around issues of regional regulation of the private security industry. These developments also provide new opportunities for addressing problems of insecurity that have had profoundly adverse social and economic impacts in the countries concerned. Understanding the character and dynamics of these changing security landscapes is also important in helping to explain the broader shifts in the political economies of these states in the face of intensifying globalisation.

### Land and Natural Resource Governance

SSGM has produced a significant body of published research on natural resource management issues, including the mineral, forestry and agricultural sectors of PNG, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and Solomon Islands, but also extending to Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and the wider Pacific. We have drawn upon this base of evidence to engage in extensive policy and advisory work on contemporary resource management issues for a wide range of stakeholders and audiences. Recently, we have expanded our sectoral focus, which has primarily been on land-based extractive resource industries, to include oceans governance and seabed mining. Indeed, we see oceans governance and ocean-based economic activities as a critical emerging policy, research and development agenda for Melanesia and the Pacific as a whole; agendas for which SSGM is well placed to engage and add value.

Reflecting our overall mandate and disciplinary expertise, SSGM's research and policy work in the resource space has focused on the social, economic

and political dimensions of natural resource management. A central and enduring concern has been the close association between extractive resource industries — especially large-scale mining, oil and gas, and commercial logging — and violent conflict, social disintegration and political fragmentation. A deeper understanding of these interrelationships is key to more effective regulatory and institutional approaches that will ensure the peaceful, socially responsible and equitable exploitation of the region's non-renewable resources (Allen 2013b; McKenna 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d).

Nowhere has this been more apparent than in our long-term and deep engagement with mining, peace and conflict on Bougainville, work that has directly informed the Autonomous Bougainville Government's new mining policy and legislation, including in relation to small-scale and artisanal mining (see Box 4 overleaf).

SSGM has recently undertaken similar research and advisory work in Solomon Islands, where extractive resource industries have also contributed to violent conflict. This trend has the potential to continue, as the economy is anticipated to transition from commercial logging to large-scale mining over the coming years (Allen and Porter 2015). This general theme is also reflected in the recent tensions that have arisen on Guadalcanal over the re-opening and operation of the Gold Ridge mine, and on Isabel in relation to proposed nickel mining (Allen 2017).

In neighbouring PNG, SSGM research on natural resource-related conflict in the Southern Highlands and at Porgera mine in Enga Province is revealing that tensions go beyond resource access, and can be escalated by periphery players such as service contractors vying for lucrative contracts. In particular, the private security sector is rapidly growing throughout Melanesia and is becoming an important, though not well understood, player throughout the region's extractive and urban sectors (Dinnen and McKenna 2014).

Much of our work on extractive resource industries has focused on the encounter between globalised extractive resource companies and local customary tenure. Key policy contributions here have included: developing a better understanding of the ways in which customary landowners

**Box 4: Small Scale Mining in Bougainville**

An ongoing collaborative research project between SSGM and Griffith University is developing the first ever comprehensive review of the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) industry in post-conflict Bougainville. This has become a significant source of income and livelihoods for people in rural areas, with an estimated 10,000 people, including many women, directly involved in the industry. SSGM's research has documented: the location of mining activity and methods of mining used; the identity of miners; the nature of miners' participation in ASM; the economic motivations driving ASM; the wider economic networks created by ASM; and the risks associated with ASM, including safety, health, cultural and environmental risks. Our work has also considered the possibility that ASM might foster tensions in still-fragile post-conflict Bougainville, so current research is evaluating the effectiveness of both formal and informal mechanisms for regulating ASM in ways that are socially acceptable (Regan 2014).

Despite the comparatively brief history of ASM in Bougainville, this research has the potential to provide insights that have wider relevance to the region, especially in PNG where ASM is rapidly expanding, but poorly understood. To date, several issues have received inadequate attention in the international ASM literature. These issues include the critical question of how small scale miners gain access to land and minerals as well as the economic, social and cultural implications of the ways in which they do so. SSGM's work is exploring how local knowledge and governance capacity can be mobilised to help regulate a form of mining that is highly dynamic and typically occurs in remote areas far from administrative centres. These latter insights have directly informed the extensive provisions on ASM that have been adopted in the new Bougainville Mining Act 2015 (O'Faircheallaigh et al. 2017).

can be identified, organised and represented for the purpose of engaging with large-scale extractive resource projects (Allen 2013b; Filer 2004; Goldman 2003); improved knowledge in relation to benefit-sharing mechanisms, especially between different levels of government and communities (Allen 2017); and finer-grained understandings of how disputes arise, escalate and can be resolved (Allen 2013a; Allen and Monson 2014; McKenna 2015b; Regan 2000, 2014). The gendered and intergenerational impacts of extractive resource industries have been important cross-cutting themes in much of this research and advisory work.

More recently, our work on the governance of land has expanded in response to two major 'land grabs' that have occurred in the region over the past decade or so — the Special Agricultural and Business Lease scandal in PNG (Filer 2011) and the land leasing controversy in Vanuatu (McDonnell 2017) as well as to the broader intensification of land reform agendas across post-colonial Melanesia, including in Timor-Leste (Cryan 2015). Our initiatives and activities in this area have included significant policy advice and support to the land reform program underway in Solomon Islands and the publication of a major edited volume on contemporary land issues in Melanesia (see Box 5 opposite). Another significant subset of this recent research on land has concerned the question of how migrant-settlers are obtaining access to land in rural, peri-urban and urban areas, and the broader socioeconomic and livelihood impacts of these processes (Foukona and Allen 2017; Keen and McNeil 2016; McDonnell et al. 2015).

The challenge of mushrooming informal settlements in urban areas is creating significant pressures on land, services and livelihoods, but is also transforming local identities and social relations. As urban tensions rise, the mechanisms to resolve them remain inadequate and narrowly defined. As such, the largely unmanaged and uncontrolled nature of urban growth is creating governance challenges, with plenty of scope for more innovative and hybrid arrangements that create bridges between customary/traditional and formal-legalistic systems. To date, there is still scant political attention given to the management of urban areas

(Barbara and Keen 2016; Keen et al. 2017; Keen and Barbara 2016). Issues of agency and uneven power relations confound proactive urban management and result in ongoing urban exclusion of many of those living in cities (Keen and Kiddle 2016; McDonnell et al. 2017).

Melanesia's cities are growing extremely rapidly, but they continue to be 'the elephant in the room' — a policy challenge that is not going away and yet remains largely neglected (Mecartney and Connell 2017). SSGM is facilitating a fresh look at these issues with a wide range of stakeholders in the greater Honiara area. These include residents living in settlements (Carpenter and Munro 2016; Munro and Carpenter 2016), the growing youth population flocking to the city (Evans 2016), peri-urban provincial government (Barbara et al. 2016), customary landowners (Foukona 2017), and NGOs working at the coalface. From its inception, the project has worked closely with policymakers and produced short 'In Briefs' to explore pressing issues in urban environments, and ensure that our evidence-based research is available in a timely manner. This work highlights the difficulties of translating policy and planning frameworks into action on the ground. In particular, policy importation from Western countries has resulted in a lack of fit with local contexts; formalised and legalistic systems are creating jurisdictional discontinuities and tensions with customary governance systems, particularly for urban land management; and major planning and economic development processes largely exclude key groups such as informal settlers, vendors and youth. With little monitoring and evaluation of many urban initiatives, policy adaptation and responsiveness remains patchy (Evans 2016; Keen et al. 9/3/2017).

Demographic shifts and new economic opportunities are also creating resource use pressures on ocean resources in the region. SSGM in collaboration with the University of the South Pacific has recently launched a new program of applied research and engagement around oceans governance, including fisheries and seabed mining. There is plenty of potential for the

### Box 5: Research and Policy Work on Land Issues in Contemporary Melanesia

With its origins in a session at the 2013 State of the Pacific Conference and a follow-up workshop at the University of Sydney in 2014, SSGM researchers in conjunction with a colleague from the ANU's Crawford School have recently published a comprehensive volume on land issues in contemporary Melanesia, titled *Kastom, Property and Ideology: Land Transformations in Melanesia* (McDonnell et al. 2017). The book's 13 chapters cover a number of critically important contemporary policy issues including: urbanisation; the PNG Special Agricultural and Business Lease scandal; the Vanuatu land grab and recent land reform process; and, gender and land. Importantly, the book contains chapters by Melanesian researchers, including women. In accepting the challenge posed by Ralph Regenvanu (the author of the book's foreword) to make the publication accessible to policymakers, students and researchers in the region, the editors and contributors decided to publish the volume with ANU Press because of its free online platform.

In 2015, in recognition of its expertise on contemporary land issues in the region, and in the context of a new Solomon Islands Government having prioritised land reform as a key policy issue, SSGM was commissioned by DFAT to conduct a program of research into possible pathways for land reform in Solomon Islands. The research documented lessons from land reform initiatives in Solomon Islands and other Pacific islands countries, and drew on these experiences and lessons to identify possible pathways for land reform in Solomon Islands and involved a series of in-country consultations during April and May 2015. The findings from the 2015 Land Reform in Solomon Islands research project were presented in the SSGM *Building a Pathway for Successful Land Reform in Solomon Islands* report, which was launched at a national land conference in Honiara in August 2015 opened by Prime Minister Sogavare.

Following on from this research, SSGM is conducting collaborative research with colleagues in Solomon Islands on urbanisation in Honiara and the implications for urban land-use planning and economic development. An overview report has just been published, *Urban Development in Honiara: Harnessing Opportunities, Embracing Change* (Keen et al. 2017). While focused on Honiara, case studies from the other major Melanesian cities are also included in the report. This research provides a foundation for further collaborations and work on urban issues in the region.

development of the Blue Economy, but institutional arrangements are falling short (Keen et al. 9/3/2017; Keen and Hanich 2015). A successful multi-agency workshop was recently held in Suva to consider ocean governance priorities prior to the UN Summit on Oceans. This workshop, involving leading experts from the region, highlighted the increasingly assertive role Pacific islands countries are playing in shaping the international oceans agenda, for example through pushing for the Oceans Sustainable Development Goal and co-hosting the June 2017 UN Summit on Oceans.

The series of short papers and podcasts from the workshop also drew attention to the challenges ahead for Pacific islands countries (Aqorau 2016a, 2016b; Saiki 2017), such as poorly integrated customary and legal institutional arrangements; rising and largely unmanaged extractive pressures on ocean resources; multi-scalar and multi-jurisdictional tensions over shared management of ocean resources; and, economic measurement approaches that neglect customary ocean values and informal ocean-based economies. The SSGM-ANU [website on Oceans Governance](#) is facilitating the ongoing development and exchange of ideas.

Looking ahead, SSGM staff will produce the first environmental history of the Pacific Ocean to be published by Polity Press in late 2017. New staff member, Paul D'Arcy, has been appointed General Editor of the two-volume, 64 chapter *Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean* which will provide comparative analyses of Pacific islands nations, and Asian and American Pacific Rim nations. D'Arcy will also publish his study on the problems and prospects of seabed mining in the Pacific Islands in 2017.

### **Agriculture and Fisheries in Melanesia: Development Foundation**

SSGM's main research on primary resource management, and in particular agricultural systems, has grown out of the merger of the Land Management Group (LMG) in the former Department of Human Geography and SSGM. Since the merger, this work has continued to develop and be applied in PNG to improve agricultural system management, policy development and disaster respon-

siveness. While this research is mainly focused on PNG, it does have wider applicability, particularly with respect to the vulnerability and adaptability of agricultural systems. Recently, we have begun to extend our knowledge and policy work on another key resource sector of importance to regional food security and stability — fisheries. Together, this work lays vital foundations for the future development and security of Melanesia and the rest of the Pacific Islands.

As a regional first, LMG created the *Mapping Agriculture Systems in PNG* (MASP) Geographic Information System (GIS) which used fieldwork observations to detail the food production systems and cash cropping activities in every district of PNG.<sup>1</sup> The information in this GIS remains of great value, despite being based on fieldwork in the 1990s. The GIS was designed to be used in close association with another GIS on PNG's natural resources, the CSIRO's *PNG Resource Information System* (PNGRIS) and this collaboration continues.

Together, these databases have been used to create the *PNG Rural Development Handbook* (Hanson et al. 2001), and *Food and Agriculture in PNG* (Bourke and Harwood 2009). The *Handbook* is a rich development database that contains district profiles including information on district populations, services, incomes, subsistence agriculture, land quality, land pressures and poverty. *Food and Agriculture in PNG* applies the database to provide a detailed description of PNG agriculture in six parts: people, land and environment; food production, consumption and imports; village food production systems; the broader economy; cash income from agriculture; and agriculture development, policies and governance.

Domestic food production in PNG and the rest of Melanesia is extremely important, but the statistics are hidden in national accounts. For example, despite the PNG 2007–14 National Accounts stating: 'In PNG a large proportion of economic activity is undertaken in the household sector. This includes most agricultural production and a significant proportion of retail activity' (NSO 2016:35); the value of household food production is buried in a category labelled 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' and no attempt is made to value domestic food

production separately. Our research goes some way to filling this gap.

Local sales of fresh food provide more rural people with a cash income than any other cash earning activity, including the sale of coffee and cocoa. This cash is used to purchase imported food and locally produced canned fish to supplement diets which are low in protein and oils. It is also used to even out fluctuations in food supply that occur annually, or in irregular times of severe food shortages associated with El Niño events. Critical observations of the impacts of the 1997–98 PNG drought and the Australian aid response were published in cooperation with Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) (Bourke et al. 2001). During a less severe weather event in 2015–16, insights from earlier work helped to inform and provide the basis for SSGM advice to the Australian Government and a number of national and international NGOs who were providing aid (Allen 2015a, 2015b).

Our research has revealed that around 85 per cent of calories consumed in rural areas and 50 per cent consumed in urban areas are produced domestically in PNG. Most of this food is produced by rural people from their customary land using their own labour with almost no external inputs. Pressures are building on these systems as Melanesian populations are doubling every 30 years. This raises the question: will these rapidly growing populations be able to feed themselves in 50 years time? In PNG, widespread malnutrition is not being observed, which suggests that the demand for increased food has thus far been met. PNG food production systems are classified as ‘shifting cultivation systems’, in which soil fertility is maintained by regular fallow periods. The MASP GIS provides detailed descriptions of cultivation and fallow times, and has been used to identify environments that may be coming under pressure. A book titled *Food Security in Papua New Guinea* which identifies where environmental constraints may mean food production will be unable to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population is in a final draft and will provide vital insights into future food security and vulnerability.

Research and knowledge gaps concerning the

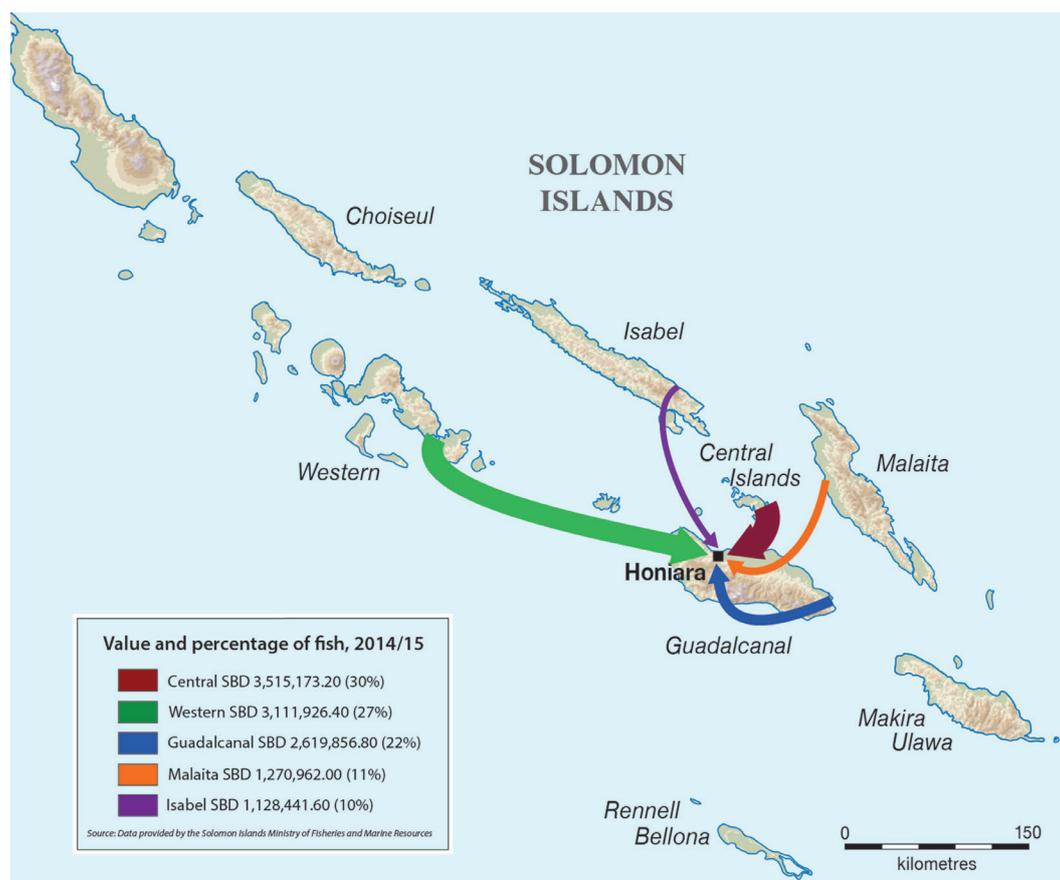
linkages between primary sector production and local markets can create vulnerabilities, social tensions and missed opportunities. Sharp (2012, 2013, 2016) carried out a pioneering study of the betel nut markets of PNG. He tracked the movements of betel nut from lowland production areas into the highlands and through large wholesale markets to local markets and individual sellers. He also described the social relations that the betel nut trade creates between all participants, and challenges emerging in urban produce markets which are becoming more difficult for growers to access without connections to middlemen.

Food security issues are also arising in the fishery sector. Fish make up 50–90 per cent of the animal protein intake in Pacific island countries (Bell et al. 2009). Recent work at SSGM, in collaboration with Solomon Island colleagues, highlights the mounting pressures on fisheries and the economic activities dependent on them, particularly as urban and global demand rises. In the main, there is inadequate attention paid to integration across scales, time and stakeholders, with a few noteworthy exceptions (Keen et al. 9/3/2017). Issues of power, culture and gender in fisheries development remain poorly addressed.

With respect to fish markets in cities, we know remarkably little about their value or their impact on marine ecosystems. Fish sales in the Honiara Central Market alone are valued at over AUD2 million per annum with vendors coming from the Honiara region and the five surrounding provinces (Figure 1). Earnings from these sales benefit rural households, but more research is needed to understand the pressures on surrounding marine ecosystems from the rapidly rising demand for fish as urban and regional populations grow.

In addition to analysing trends and threats in primary production sectors, SSGM has also become involved in natural disaster risk reduction (Johnson 2013). Current research is identifying risks specific to particular areas and how local populations can help shape responses to potential future risks (Johnson et al. 2010). This research will involve increasing the quality and amount of material available to communities and in school curricula. Under an action research approach, school teachers would be supported to lead

Figure 1: Central Honiara Fish Market: Main Sources of Fish for Sale



Source: SSGM drawing on data from the Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources.

local communities to prepare for specific risk events in ways that would reduce severe injury and death. For example, in the case of a volcanic eruption or a tsunami, local populations would already know where to go to seek refuge. The program will also provide information concerning risks and responses to sub-national District administrations.

SSGM research is also shedding light on climate change and disaster preparedness in Vanuatu and throughout the Melanesian region. Since 2010 Siobhan McDonnell has been a consultant on various projects looking at how to support carbon trading projects in the Pacific designed to address deforestation and environmental degradation (REDD+ projects, where REDD stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). SSGM researchers, McDonnell and Mark Harradine, have also supported the Vanuatu government to develop responses to Tropical Cyclone Pam by boosting disaster response preparedness and better integrating Community Disaster Committees activities into

centralised responses. Research to gain a stronger understanding of the politics of distribution and gender issues in relation to disaster response is currently underway. Drawing together work in the South Pacific and the rest of the world, Paul D’Arcy is producing two major edited collections on indigenous responses to climate change with his international colleagues.

### Looking Ahead

As can be seen from the foregoing discussion, SSGM’s research efforts over the past 20 years have shed considerable light on the complex interrelationships between natural resource use, peace and conflict, and justice across legal, political and socioeconomic orders in contemporary Melanesia. However, as is so frequently the case with complex and ‘wicked’ real-world problems, there is much that remains to be learned. In framing our ongoing research questions we are guided both by the trends and continuities that we have identified above and

by what we see as emerging issues and agendas. We conclude here by sketching out future research priorities that will provide an evidence base for the formulation of informed and robust policy interventions to tackle some of the region's most pressing and deepening challenges.

Despite the 14-year presence of RAMSI, our finding that Solomon Islands has been experiencing far more continuity than transformative change could be more broadly applied to the region as a whole. In other words, the key trends and trajectories are well established and will continue to shape many of the research priorities moving forward. These include questions such as:

- How is the Melanesian version of the 'resource curse' likely to play out and what can be done to best ensure a peaceful and equitable development of extractive industries?
- How can the challenges of Melanesian urbanisation be effectively managed?
- How will Melanesia feed itself in the face of rapid population growth and the increasing pressures on subsistence agriculture and inshore fisheries?
- In the future, what will be the likely drivers of conflict and what institutional arrangements can be drawn upon to contain and manage the risks of conflict recurrence or new outbreaks?
- What will be the key animators of socioeconomic inequality and how can the negative impacts be mitigated?
- How will hybrid institutions at different scales respond to, and be shaped by, the rapid social and economic changes that we have described here which are likely to accelerate in the context of deepening globalisation?
- How will the reshaping on the domestic security landscape in countries like PNG, where private security growth has been exponential, affect security and insecurity? Who stands to gain and who to lose?
- What will be the likely gender and intergenerational dimensions of these processes of social and economic change?

More recent pressures on the socioeconomic and political systems will add new strains and will merit careful monitoring to assess whether these

will result in relative continuity or change. These include: the increased investment and engagement of external actors in the South Pacific, especially resource sectors; the increasingly decentralised forms of governance in Melanesia; the more assertive role played by regional agencies in resource and environmental management (Fry and Tarte 2015) and demographic shifts which increase pressures on land, resources, infrastructure and services. Whether these developments and their impacts on socioeconomic, legal and political institutions are socially generative or degenerative needs further analysis and longitudinal study.

In terms of emerging policy and research priorities in the nexus of natural resources, hybrid institutions, and peace and conflict, we expect two key agendas to emerge more strongly. One, which we flagged at the outset, is 'oceans governance', particularly as the number of external players in this realm rise and pressures on fishery and mineral resources escalate. The other is climate change, and how it is likely to create additional impacts upon some of the key dynamics that we have reviewed here. For example, it seems reasonable to assume, based on evidence to date, that climate change will cause significant population displacement, food and water security challenges, and increase the frequency and severity of 'natural disasters', all of which are likely to become pressing public policy issues in the coming decades. Moreover, the building sociopolitical pressures in response to climate change could affect both domestic and global alliances as Pacific islands countries look for assistance.

In terms of how these emergent research agendas might be approached, we call for a continuation of multidisciplinary work that is grounded in fieldwork-generated empirical data and engages with comparative research and experience. This research will continue to be collaborative and enhance already strong academic and policy partnerships in the region. As we have demonstrated with our recent work on hybridity, there is much to be gained by bringing comparative and interdisciplinary experience to bear on the pressing questions and challenges in contemporary Melanesia. Indeed, as noted, hybridity provides a useful heuristic for grappling with the unique, dynamic and highly plu-

realistic legal, political and socioeconomic orders that are configured and reconfigured by the deepening encounter between globalisation and Melanesian societies and ecologies. Another organising concept that has animated much of the research that we have reviewed here is space, encompassing concepts such as scale, place, identity and networks. At SSGM, we are working on analytical frameworks that combine the lenses of hybridity, spatial reordering and identity politics to give a fresh perspective on the pressing research and policy agendas facing the contemporary Pacific.

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### Endnotes

- 1 The results were published from 1993 in the *Agricultural Systems of Papua New Guinea Working Paper* series by the Department of Human Geography, Australian National University. A revised reprint of issues 2–20 was published in 2002.

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