KASTOM AND CONSERVATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE NGUNA-PELE MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK

by

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(Under the Direction of Peter Brosius)

ABSTRACT

In Vanuatu, the Melanesian archipelago formally known as New Hebrides, traditional marine tenure has become a center piece of marine conservation efforts. However, its influence is relatively slight in the area of the Nguna-Pele Marine Protected Area Network (NPMPA), a village-based conservation organization. The NPMPA has therefore adopted a westernized conservation model of Marine Protected Areas, or MPAs. As it pursues its conservation goals, the NPMPA must continually negotiate between the expectations, tools, and methodologies, of two powerful normative discourses: traditional knowledge and national indigenous identity, and marine biology and conservation ecology. This case study uses discourse analysis to investigate the interactions of western conservation discourse and traditional forms of knowledge surrounding the management of marine resources. Findings suggest that the adaptation of western conservation practice has resulted in conservation discourse that situates agency in documents and conservation tools more often than in human action.

INDEX WORDS: Ecological and Environmental Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, Marine Conservation, Melanesia, Discourse Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

There is mounting evidence that Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), even those established through participatory or community based methods, are largely failing in their goals of maintaining sustainable fish stocks and marine biodiversity while facilitating sustainable use of marine resources (Jones, et al. 2004; Rogers and Beets 2001). Political ecologists have many theories about why, including the overarching critique that conservation practices and the normative ideas on which they are based are often developed far away from the locations in which they are practiced. These are usually based on western philosophies and are based on constructions of nature and human action which have been heavily critiqued in their own right and frequently shown to be erroneous, oppressive, and damaging when put into practice.

There have been a number of responses to these critiques, often originating among indigenous or local groups [1]but taken up in various ways and in different incarnations by conservation practitioners (Chambers 1983; Cernea 1985), advocacy groups (the Transnational Indigenous People's Movement), and social scientists (Brosius, 1997, Hodgson 2002). This has lead to many discussions about taking into account local conditions, cultures and realities, and has lead to a variety of participatory or community based approaches to conservation often called community-based conservation (CBC) or community based natural resource management (CBNRM). Theses approaches emphasize a bottom up approach rather than a top down approach to management (Brosius and Russell 2003) and are often melded with

[1] Examples include indigenous movements in Borneo (Brosius 1997), El Salvador (Tilley 2002), and Tanzania (Hodgson 2002).

efforts to include local or traditional knowledge. Literature and organizations are now focused on finding appropriate mixes of local and indigenous practices with western science and organizational or bureaucratic structure (Berkes et al. 2002; Drew et al. 2006; LMMA Network)[2]. As these issues are incredibly complex, even more so on the ground than in the thousands of articles examining them, this is an area of much inquiry and ongoing discussion.

In Vanuatu, the Melanesian archipelago formally known as New Hebrides, the term kastom denotes a powerful national discourse of indigenous identity and knowledge. Kastom is a complex term which I will address in more detail in the following sections. It is often characterized as traditional or local knowledge. However, it does not refer to a specific suite of ideas or practices, but is used nationally and regionally to distinguish that which the people of Vanuatu identify as their own, in contrast to knowledge and practices originating elsewhere. Traditional marine tenure, as a form of kastom, has become a centerpiece of marine conservation efforts in many areas of Vanuatu. However, kastom holds stronger normative influence in some regions than in others. Its influence is relatively slight in the area of the Nguna-Pele Marine Protected Area Network (NPMPA), the site of this case study.

The NPMPA, a village-based conservation organization, has therefore adopted a westernized conservation model of Marine Protected Areas. As the organization pursues its conservation goals, the NPMPA must continually negotiate between the expectations, tools, and methodologies of two powerful normative discourses: the traditional knowledge and national indigenous identity associated with kastom on one side and the marine biology and conservation ecology of western science on the other. As such, the NPMPA is a case study about the

[2] The Locally Managed Marine Area Network is network of organizations promoting locally-managed marine areas (LMMA) which they define as "an area of nearshore waters that is actively being managed in a 'local' practitioner context by residing or neighboring communities and/or families, or being collaboratively managed by both resident communities and local government representatives based in the immediate vicinity of the LMMA."

intersections between and interactions of western conservation discourse and traditional forms of knowledge surrounding the management of marine resources and the strategic use of traditional and scientific discourses.

Problem Statement

In the field, the staff of the MPA pointed out to me that most community members didn't seem to do much for conservation and significant activities were left up to staff members. This statement on their part was confirmed by me, through discussions and interviews with community members in which I was continually told to speak with staff members when I asked any question about the conservation organization. MPA staff members told me that they have learned and are using the tools, processes and technologies of conservation science, but responsibility for conservation seems to remain with certain community leaders, resulting in little buy-in by the majority of community members. They asked for my opinion as to why this was the case and what to do about it. This leads to a broader question. How can community based organizations increase ownership and agency of community members in an organization negotiating between discourses of indigenous and traditional knowledge and marine biology and conservation science?

The first part to answering this question is to determine what people's ideas are about responsibility and agency to affect change related to conservation. In pursuing this, it is important to understand how responsibility and agency for conservation is understood on Nguna and Pele and in the Nguna Pele MPA Network.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu is located in the western South Pacific at 6° 0' S and 167° 0' E and lies about 2400km northwest of Australia and 800 km east of Fiji. It has a total landmass of approximately

12,200 square kilometers, spread out among over 80 islands, 65 of which are inhabited. Vanuatu's many small volcanic islands and mountains are framed by narrow coastal plains and fringing coral reefs, and its tropical climate is moderated by southeast trade winds through most of May through October. It receives moderate rainfall from November to April and can be subject to cyclones from December to April.

Current population is estimated to be around 215,446, with a population growth rate of about 1.4% (July 2008). Over 95% of the population is ni-Vanuatu, a term meaning “from Vanuatu” and officially defined as “a person who has or had four grandparents who belong to a tribe or community indigenous to Vanuatu” (Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu). There are more than 100 mostly Austronesian languages spoken by very localized populations. French and English are the formal languages for education in Vanuatu and a child usually attends a school which teaches in either French or English. The official language of Vanuatu is Bislama, a pidgin English whose development is traced to the late 1800 and the period of Blackbirding. During this time, hundreds of thousands of Pacific Islanders where brought, usually through trickery or coercion to work on plantations in Australia and Fiji and were exploited through a form of indentured servitude often boarding on slavery. Bislama developed as a form of communication between Pacific Islanders thrown together on plantations. After Blackbirding was officially outlawed in Australia in 1901, it was brought home by those who could return and developed into three dialects, Bislama in Vanuatu, Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea, and Pijin in the Solomon Islands (Crowley 1990). The grammar and syntax of Bislama is Austronesian in origin while the vocabulary is primarily English (Tyron 1987:3).

In 2007 it was estimated that about 80% of the population in Vanuatu occupy rural areas and 90% of the land is owned through traditional land tenureship. The two most populated urban

areas are Port Vila, the capital, on the island of Efate in central Vanuatu, and Luganville on Espirito Santo in the north.

Vanuatu was one of the last regions in the Western Pacific to be colonized in the twentieth century, and was jointly occupied by the British and French from 1906 to 1980, when it gained independence. England and France each had their own governments, administrations, and judicial systems, and governed their own citizens. There was no effort to create a national identity and ni-Vanuatu people were prohibited from becoming either British or French citizens. Colonial powers brought in people from Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, and Vietnam, as well as other countries, to be semi-skilled and unskilled laborers.

Economics and Subsistence

Traditionally, copra cash cropping was a main component of the household livelihood strategy, which also included gardening, raising pigs, and fishing. Swidden agriculture is the primary means of subsistence and is also necessary for producing goods for customary and family obligations. While families do raise crops for sale, these endeavors usually compliment subsistence strategies and are undertaken to raise money for specific events, like a marriage or the payment of school fees. Yams, taro, sweet potato and sugar cane are common domestic crops and some imported vegetables like onions, tomatoes and carrots are also sometimes planted (Kalontano et al. 2003:88). Livelihood strategies are traditionally flexible at the household level, where family members engage in a number of subsistence and income generating activities. Generally laborers work to produce specific commodities on a periodic basis, determined by market and social circumstances (Rodman 1987:720).

On Nguna and Pele most families rely on the produce from their gardens rather than on resources from the ocean. Many are involved in occasional or opportunistic fishing and reef

gleaning activities. While garden plots are held by families, marine territories and resources are not allocated in a similar manner. Land tenure extends to the high water mark along the shoreline[3], but the ocean is considered the property of state and under the jurisdiction of customary owners (Johannes 1998). All community members have access to marine resources within the territory of their communities and as long as resources taken are for subsistence or small scale endeavors they are not challenged. If an individual wishes to collect a large amount of a given resource it is expected that they get permission from a chief or the village council. While communities, as the custom owners, each have their own marine territories, the boundaries between the territories is not clear cut and is often the subject of debate. Just as disputes over community boundaries on land can flare up at different points, so can disputes over marine areas.

The people living on Nguna and Pele today do not speak of a different history when it comes to consumption or use of marine resources. And it appears that their ancestors in pre-contact times relied on the marine resources as little as contemporary residents do (Bartlett 2009). Knowledge about pre-contact times is sparse as the only source of information are oral histories. The earliest written records form Nguna and Pele come from the Reverend Peter Milne, a missionary who lived on Nguna from the time of his arrival in 1870 to his death 54 years later. While it took him about 30 years, Milne was eventually able to convert everyone on Nguna and Pele to Christianity. He kept diaries of his observations and his work, much of which was focused on ending what he considered pagan practices. While his diaries and documents left by other missionaries in the area can be used to reconstruct the process of conversion on Nguna, Pele, and the larger island of Efate, the information they provide about livelihoods before the arrival of Europeans is spotty and must be absorbed with the knowledge that their ultimate goal was conversion of the population.

[3] As stipulated by the Land Lease Act (Cap 163)

Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Kastom

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is described by Berkes as "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment"(1993;1999:8). In general, the term implies that practices have historical relevance and come from a specific, often local point of origin. It is a highly politicized term, especially within environmental discourses as it is connected to arguments about rights, autonomy, and knowledge. Conservation projects based on or incorporating TEK have been both applauded and critiqued for a variety of reasons. The integration of TEK into conservation programs had been described as a way to empower local communities and create locally appropriate conservation projects. It has also been critiqued for being another version of the image of the "ecologically noble savage".

In Vanuatu, the term kastom is used in a number of ways and defined and described differently depending on who one asks. However, it is generally considered a set of traditional beliefs, values, bodies of knowledge, traditional livelihoods, codes of conduct, spiritual beliefs and general practices of a language and cultural group of ni-Vanuatu people (Kalontano et al. 2003:83). It is defined by Bolton as "the knowledge and practice that ni-Vanuatu understand to be authentically their own, deriving from their pre-colonial past and from their place". Kastom is both a unifying national concept and a concept whose use and meaning varies widely throughout Vanuatu.

The term kastom as it is used in Vanuatu today is a political construct that has its origins in the independence movement of the 1970's. In the struggle for independence from the British and French, the Vanuatu Pati (party) explicitly used the term as a unifying force to create a

national identity within a nation of diverse peoples and geographic locations (Keesing and Tonkinson 1982). It was seen as a way of establishing independence from a colonial past by recognizing and reviving traditional practices and by claiming a unique indigenous identity. After gaining independence in 1980, kastom was a prominent theme used by the first Vanuatu government to unify and organize the new republic (Taylor, 2008:23; Lini 1980, Jolly 1997; Bolton 2003). Since independence, there has been broad national concern over building knowledge of customary practices in order to support and strengthen current uses of kastom and revive it in areas of weak influence (Regenvanu 1999:98).

In order to organize and establish protocol for collecting information on Kastom, the government established the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, whose mandate is to "preserve, protect, and develop Kastom" (Regenvanu 1999:98). Following the establishment of the Cultural Centre, the government instituted a ten year ban on foreign researchers to help ensure that the country had the infrastructure to guide research practices (Bolton 2003:33)

Today, kastom has become a "national idiom for the mobilization of culture-related projects at a national level" (Taylor 2008:11). Facey describes kastom in Vanuatu as a "variable entity... even within very limited geographical areas" (Facey 1995:220). She says it is often used as "an idiom" to express cultural differences between ni-Vanuatu and others (Facey 1995:220). And she argues that one of its strengths as a political term, is that it is variable and can be used to represent both national unity and specific historical and cultural identity of regions within Vanuatu. It invokes a sense of nationality because it is often used to represent "historical and cultural continuity" (Facey 1995:220) on both national and regional levels. Despite the unifying effect, there are many ambiguities concerning the word and concept of kastom. While many organizations embrace the concept, there are others, like the Sia Raga people from Pentecost,

that see kastom as a colonial term and concept which fails to express the full extent of their guiding ideas, values, codes of conduct, ideas of place, and spirituality (Taylor 2008: 11).

The political debates surrounding the term kastom in Vanuatu are similar to debates about use of the term Traditional Ecological Knowledge. While it is connected to national pride, indigenous identity and a discourse of political and cultural rights, Johannes argued that it can also result in valorization of some forms of knowledge as "local knowledge" which then puts those practices "beyond censure" (2003:121). The concept of kastom shapes conservation on a national level because practices that are rooted in kastom are often deemed more valid than those that are not. In his experience as an American researcher and Peace Corps Volunteer in central Vanuatu, Bartlett found that any research project having to do with natural resource management must use or refer to kastom, that permits are more accessible for research on kastom than biology or ecology, and that the NPMPA network is at a disadvantage when seeking resources and support from national organizations like the Environment Unit because their methods are based on western conservation practice rather than kastom (Bartlett 2009:160).

Overview of the Nguna-Pele Marine Protected Area Network

The Nguna-Pele Marine Protected Area network is an independent, community-run, network of villages on the islands of Nguna and Pele in Shefa Province, Vanuatu. The islands, separated only by a narrow channel, sit north of the Island of Efate, home of the capital city of Port Vila. There are currently 14 independent member communities. Each community runs its own conservation program, which means it is responsible for initiating conservation projects, forming conservation committees, writing its own management rules and regulations, and determining their own local-level means and methods for motivating the desired conservation behavior and enforcing the agreed upon restrictions. Each member community has, or is in the

process of selecting, community Conservation Areas (CA) which are small terrestrial or marine areas within the traditional and historical territories of each village.

Current conservation projects on the two islands grew out of the work of Wan Smolbag Theater[4], and the associated Vanua- Tai Resource Monitor program[5]. The MPA project was conceived of and developed through collaboration of four local chiefs and a Peace Corp volunteer adviser. The MPA network is the umbrella organization that assists with, and provides structure for community efforts. The network is supported by an MPA manager, three part time voluntary staff members and a Peace Corps advisor and provides services and resources to support the work of each individual community. This includes running workshops on conservation awareness and developing environmental management plans as well as running school and camp awareness activities for children. It also includes applying for funding, the development of income generating activities, and the provisioning of materials and manpower for regular monitoring programs and the installation of buoys and signs. Again, it must be stressed that it is up to each community to run its programs using the resources of the MPA Network.

The MPA network has been built on existing cultural, political and religious networks and management usually follows the same organizational processes that are used for general village governance and which structure the activities of community women's groups, youth groups and church groups. The Nguna Pele MPA has worked with a number of governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations including the Vanuatu Fisheries Department,

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[4] Wan Smolbag Theatre is a non-government organization based in Vanuatu that "uses drama to inform, raise awareness and encourage public discussion on a range of contemporary health, lifestyle, environment and governance issues". http://www.wansmolbag.org

[5] The work of Wan Smolbag theater inspired country wide efforts to monitor turtle populations. Volunteers from interested communities were trained to be turtle monitors. The success of this work led to broader monitoring initiatives. Volunteers are now called Vanua Tai Resource Monitors.

Vanuatu Environment Unit, and the United States Peace Corps. It has recently been recognized as a "role model for communities across the globe for their innovative work in biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation" through the UNDP Equator Award initiative (United Nations Development Program 2008).

The goal for this thesis is to address the questions brought to my attention by the NPMPA staff about why responsibility for conservation is not shared among community members throughout the organization. At the same time I aim to address larger questions in the field of political ecology about how community level conservation projects negotiate between local and foreign discourses of conservation.

CHAPTER 2

KASTOM AND CONSERVATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE NGUNA-PELE MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Ecology of Conservation

There is mounting evidence that Marine Protected Areas (MPA), even those established through participatory or community based methods, are largely failing in their goals of maintaining sustainable fish stocks and marine biodiversity while facilitating sustainable use of marine resources (Jones, et al. 2004; Rogers and Beets 2001). The field of political ecology has produced convincing arguments that human conceptions of nature are socially constructed (Brosius 1999; Cronon 1992; Escobar 1996; Zerner 1995;). Therefore an examination of historical, political, social, cultural, and economic factors shaping conservation programs is helpful for understanding current challenges and improving conservation practices.

There is also a growing body of literature suggesting that traditional management or co-operative and adaptive marine management models[6] may be more effective than top down approaches that often rely on zoning schemes and fishing prohibitions (Cinner, et al. 2005). Case studies from around the world have demonstrated and discussed the many ways that traditional management systems and knowledge are being used to improve conservation efforts and natural resource management (Berkes and Colding 1998; Johannes 1998; Alcorn 1989). These projects are often undertaken under the rubric of co or adaptive management. Supporters of these

[6] Traditional management and adaptive management are grouped together here because they both share what Berkes et.al. calls a "similar emphasis on feedback learning" (Berkes et.al. 2000: 1251).

strategies claim that the decentralized nature of these approaches allow for TEK to be combined with conservation science in a manner that addresses the unique characteristics of the local and maintains a flexible feedback system for evaluation and improvement. (Berkes 1994, Freeman 1992, Johannes 1989, Nadasdy 2005). While interest in establishing conservation based on traditional management practices has grown, these endeavors have also received their share of critique. Nadasdy critiques the assumption that co and participatory management empowers local people and therefore results in improved management practices. Building off Ferguson's argument about the way development projects can facilitate the extension of state power and bureaucracy (Ferguson 1994)[7], Nadasdy argues that co-management regimes, even those based on TEK, may result in the extension of state power into communities (Nadasdy 2005:216). One of the explanations for this observation is that these approaches assume problems are technical in nature and therefore technical solutions are sought, imported, and adopted. While this may be done in a participatory manner, involving flexibility and the incorporation of TEK, ultimately this process does not re-construct existing unequal power relations and the "participatory process ends up producing knowledge that reflects donor agendas more than local realities" (Nadasdy 2005:219, Mosse 2000). Therefore these programs and the discourses of participation, co-management and TEK can end up "restraining the way people can act and even think about wildlife management" (Nadasdy 2005:220).

Work in the political ecology of conservation has critically analyzed the narratives, explanatory models, and western scientific methods that have shaped the dominant discourse on environmental destruction and conservation. This is premised on the idea that ecological

[7] In The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development' Depoliticizaiton and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho, (1994) Ferguson argues that "development projects in Lesotho consistently fail to achieve stated objectives because they are based on a 'construction' that bears little relation to reality". What they do is "expand the field of bureaucratic state power in everyday lives". Therefore the "unintended consequence of 'development'" is often the expansion of bureaucratic state power.

conditions and environmental change are the result of political processes (Robbins 2004:11). In many places throughout time ideas of nature, wilderness, and conservation have been shaped by political factors. This includes work demonstrating that the narrative of a global environmental crisis is socially constructed (Taylor and Buttel 1992). It has increased the complexity of our understanding of the "community" in community based management, by showing that the concept of community is highly variable, fluid, and continually contested (Brechin, et al. 2002; Brosius, et al. 2006). Escobar (1998) and others have shown that discourse around conservation selectively chooses which knowledge is valid and which is not. It classifies and values some knowledge over others, especially forms of expert knowledge. Additionally, conservation technologies and methodologies often misrepresent and simplify local realities (Brosius 2006), and conservation programs have been shown to facilitate and justify the expansion of governmental or international jurisdiction (Ferguson 1994; Peluso 1993).

Because ideas of nature and conservation are socially constructed, western models have not worked in many parts of the world because they have been incongruent with local understandings and practices. To give specifics they often place responsibility for information, planning and action on outside, western, or expert sources. Social scientists have criticized conservation organizations for their inability to recognize and address cultural and local complexities (Ellis and West 2000:2) or take into account the ability of local communities to adapt and respond to future situations and needs (Newmark and Hough 2000:590). Ferguson and others have exposed the tendency of conservation discourse to portray and act as if conservation initiatives are independent from political context (Ferguson 1994; Brockington 2007). "Conservation efforts usually seen as benign can have negative effects and fail to meet their desired conservation goals" (Ferguson 1994; Peluso 1993; Peet and Watts).

As a result, the 1990's saw increasing efforts from a variety of actors to address the critiques of conservation programs and to approach marine systems as complex socio-ecological systems. This work was taken up in a variety of forms by conservation practitioners, social scientists and local movements and initiatives. The Pacific has been and continues to be a hot spot of this activity, Based in large part on the efforts of local governments and organizations to use existing historic and traditional practices to address this complexity.

Conservation in the Pacific

The Pacific is now a site of two important trends, the first, falls under what Johannes (2002) has called a "Renaissance of locally-based marine management" and consists of efforts to revive traditional practices. At the same time there are a number of newer attempts at co-management and adaptive management on local levels. The LMMA website states that "some coastal communities are reviving methods that have been used traditionally as part of their culture for many generations. Others are using more modern ideas introduced from outside. Some use a combination of both"(LMMA 2009). This later approach is best represented by the Locally Managed Marine Area Network or LMMA network which began in Fiji in the 1990s. The LMMA network grew out of attempts to bring together various marine conservation projects in South East Asia and the Pacific who have joined together to increase the success of their efforts. The LMMA network now works in Fiji, Indonesia, Palau, PNG, Philippines, Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, and most recently, Vanuatu

The LMMA approach brings together various stakeholders, usually involving a combination of community leaders, conservation staff, academics and researchers and donors and decision-makers. The central aspect of their work is that projects must be locally not centrally managed. Projects are often co-managed by the community together with traditional

leaders, local or state government agencies, and/or some other body (e.g., non-government organization or university).Work also includes governments and international conservation initiatives and organizations

Efforts like this have created some truly admirable projects and have produced various strategies for the management of these complex systems**.** As each specific project is unique, each has lessons to offer about the broader project of improving marine sustainability through programs and practices attuned to local situations and taking into account social factors. The most recent addition to the LMMA network is the NPMPA in Vanuatu, the site of this case study.

Conservation in Melanesia

As one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse regions in the world, the nations in the Western Pacific have historically been, and continue to be, a site of intense anthropological interest. Ethnographic data and research from Western Pacific nations has mounted some of the strongest challenges to western ideas and anthropological notions of governance, common property, gender, sexuality, and colonial and neo-colonialism (Carrier and Carrier 1983; Cretton 2005; Norton 1993). Anthropologists working in the region have made significant contributions to anthropological knowledge of ritual, social taboos, reciprocity, exchange, and subsistence and economic strategies as well as informing historical ecology and archaeology of coastal and marine environments, island ecosystems, and human settlement and population dynamics (Durrenberger and Pálsson 1987; Gewertz 1982; Kaplan 1995; Kirch and Hunt 1997).

The Western Pacific has also been a focal point for studies on the integration of local ecological knowledge systems and natural resource management practices. Anthropologists in

this region have raised questions about the extent to which customs designed for governance and conflict management purposes are misrepresented as "traditional conservation methods", and the extent to which ideas of indigenous and traditional customs have been constructed by colonial rule and influence (Taylor 2008; Zerner 1994). The Western Pacific also offers the opportunity to look at the interplay between national systems of governance and formal legislation and "traditional" systems, as a number of countries in the Western Pacific region have legislation supporting the authority of traditional practices (Adams 1998; Graham and Idechong 1998; Johannes 2002).

An examination of customary marine tenure practices and recent models of community based adaptive management in Melanesia contrast sharply with traditional and historic conservation practices espoused by western and international environmental organizations. Customary tenure practices and community based management have the potential to challenge the way both social scientists and conservation practitioners think about the management of marine environments.

Customary Marine Tenure

Customary marine tenure can be defined as a "system of social relationships, of claim entitlements, and obligations, through which people are capable of using marine areas and of controlling both access and the degree of resource exploitation" (Hviding 1996:21). Co-management is often described as the "mutual accommodation and sharing of management responsibility between local communities and the nation-state" (Hviding 1996:18). Adaptive management is defined by the Locally Managed Marine Area network as the "integration of design, management, and monitoring of a project to systematically test assumptions in order to adapt, learn, and improve the results of their efforts (LMMA, 2008). Each approach is practiced

in a number of different ways and customary marine tenure, in particular, can vary drastically from location to location and community to community. Despite the variety, different forms of customary marine tenure, co-management and adaptive management arrangements often share some basic characteristics. They often involve a mechanism through which communities control access to and use of resources, especially involving the means to restrict or exclude outside use. They are flexible in nature and are, therefore, able to adapt to environmental, socio-political and economic changes and variability. Traditional tenureship practices in Melanesia are understood through kinship systems, social relationships, political processes and means of subsistence and economic practice.

In many parts of Melanesia, including Vanuatu, customary law is recognized as official national law or is supported by it. This allows local communities to maintain differing levels of control over their territory, which is recognized through historical claims and ancestral lineages. This system and ones like it in other areas of Melanesia can give community governance legal backing which works to maintain the flexibility and individuality of customary practices in each community. It avoids codifying a sweeping set of regulations and supports individual community autonomy (Johannes 2002:332). Similar strategies are used in Palau (Graham and Idechong 1998), the Cook Islands (Adams 1998), and Fiji (Johannes 2002:332; Kuemlangan 2004:23). In many of these Melanesian countries there are also prohibitions, legal or otherwise, against the sale of customary or tenured land (Hviding 1996:139; Johannes 2002:332).

Relevance of the NPMPA

There are many other challenges for social scientists attempting to learn from and support customary practices, co-management models and community-managed areas. However there are increasing avenues for exploration, practice and support as indigenous and local communities

take on these challenges themselves. The practices of local communities in Vanuatu and broader areas of Melanesia provide many examples of models and processes, both new and old, that can be effective natural resource management tools. The comparison of customary marine tenure and community based or co-operative management schemes raises questions about the possible application of aspects of customary tenure systems to current environmental problems in a variety of places and situations.

The NPMPA case study is informative here because it is an example of a conservation program that combines western and local practices. Studying how the project on Nguna and Pele works can give us insight to questions about how to create hybrid programs and their socio-economic effects and ecological effectiveness. It is also a chance to ask how community and conservation leaders negotiate outside and inside influences. In trying to understand how conservation on Nguna works I am going to look at socially constructed ideas of conservation, particularly ideas about who holds responsibility for conservation projects.

Methods of Analysis

One way to examine the interactions between customary practices and western conservation is through the study of discourse, as discourse analysis has been shown to provide information about how language helps construct social processes (Foucault, 1972; Potter and Whetherall 1987; Van Dijk 1997; Whetherall et. al. 2002; Phillips and Hardy 2002). The idea of discourse is a topic of much discussion within anthropology and related disciplines including sociology and geography. There is no single definition but a variety of explanations that overlap in some areas yet may place emphasis on different components.

At the simplest level, discourses are the stories or narratives we tell ourselves about how the world works and what our place is in it. They are described by Tonkiss as a “system of

language that draws on certain terms and "encodes certain forms of knowledge" (Tonkiss 2004: 248). Foucault, described a discourse as "a determination of what can and should be said in a certain context or ideological formation" and Gee characterizes discourse as "simplified, often unconscious, and taken for granted ideas about how the world works" (2005:152).

We learn discourses from our experiences within the social and cultural groups to which we belong. They inform our actions and thoughts because they gives us a sense of what is normal or typical (Foucault 1992) and allow us to act on those assumptions in ways that are socially and culturally appropriate. These combined definitions tell us that discourses are systematic (Tonkiss 2004), largely unconscious (Gee 2005), and inform human thought and behavior by shaping what is considered normal in a given situation (Foucault 1992). Discourse is both constructive and indicative of ideology meaning that discourse both "reproduces and transforms society" (Fairclough 1992:36) and is a site of continual processes of change and social struggle.

According to Tonkiss, discourse as a system of language has the following three effects. It "marks a field of knowledge", "confers membership" on a select group, and "bestows authority" (Tonkiss 2004:248). All three of these effects are interrelated and must be examined in conjunction with each other. However, in this case study, I am most interested in the way discourses related to the Nguna Pele Marine Protected Area Network confer authority on various actors.

Discourse Analysis

The definition of discourse analysis is, appropriately, as varied as the term discourse itself. Again, there is no set definition or methodology for how to carry out discourse analysis (Tonkiss 2004: 248). In general, discourse analysis is the study of the systematic use of language, in spoken and written form, and the ways these systems of language-use encode certain

assumptions, involve taking certain concepts for granted, and ideas of normality that help shape human thought and action in various situations.

My use of discourse analysis is based on the "premise that discourse matters" in conservation practice. In his article *Analysis and Interventions*, Brosius argues that "discourse matters" because "environmental discourses are manifestly constitutive of reality (or, rather, of a multiplicity of realities). In their constitutiveness they define various forms of agency, administer certain silences, and prescribe various forms of intervention" (Brosius 1998; 278). Given the importance of discourse in influencing actions and interventions, discourse analysis is a useful analytical tool for gaining insight into the organizational structure of environmental organizations. In her article *Reflections on the Iconography of Environmental Justice Activism* ,Hilda Kurtz (2005) uses a combination of discourse analysis and critical visual methodology to examine "identity, relationships, and modes of authority within the contemporary environmental justice movement" (Kurtz 2005; 79). She identifies "recurring visual elements" in environmental logos and then examines the ways in which the dominant imagery of hands are used to "construct social movement organizations' identities and stances toward the discourse of environmental justice". In a similar manner, I identify recurring discursive constructions in textual materials from the NPMPA network and examine the way they construct agency to effect environmental change in Nguna and Pele communities.

The point of discourse analysis is to "explore the relationship between discourse and reality" (Phillips and Hardy 2002:3). The goal is to "understand how people use language to construct accounts of the social world" (Tonkiss 2004:249).This means studying the use of certain concepts, how they come about, and why they have certain meanings and influences at certain times (Phillips and Hardy 2002:8) as well as how the use and meaning of a concept may

change over time. Different disciplines apply this general formula in different ways. For example, geographers may look at how language shapes various social spaces or settings and critical theorists focus specifically on the ways in which language creates and supports unequal power relations (Phillips and Hardy 2002:25). Because it examines connections between language and social structures discourse analysis is an effective method for studying social change (Fairclough 1992:28).

Discourse analysis has been described as both an epistemology and a method (Phillips and Hardy 2003). It rests on a certain understanding of the social world and provides a methodology with which to study it. Discourse analysis comes from a strong social constructionist epistemology (Phillips and Hardy 2002, Berger and Luckman 1967, Gergen 1999), in that language is seen as constructive, and reflexivity is central to the approach.

While the definition of discourse and discourse analysis is a topic of ongoing discussion, it is generally agreed upon that the goal of discourse analysis is not to uncover or expose the "truth" or "reality" but to explain and discuss different ideas of reality, (Tonkiss 2004:249) how they originated, and what the effects might be. A hypothesis is not "proven", so to speak, the way it might be in a scientific or positivist study as much as it is supported with evidence. The goal as Gee describes it is to create and improve confidence in a hypothesis which can always be supported or refuted through further investigation rather than seeking or attempting to provide "definitive proof" (Gee 2005:13).

Why Use Discourse Analysis?

The relevance of discourse analysis to the case study at hand, rests on a number of assumptions about the world, social structures, and power. First, it is presumed that a person's perception of the world, and their place in it, has material representations (Althusser 1970: 155).

In his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation*, Althusser describes ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence", and claims that a person's understanding of the world and their place in it, is expressed in material form, through their actions, behavior, and the social practices in which they take part (Althusser 1970: 156).

The second assumption is that spoken language and text are also material representations of ideology (Pecheux, 1969) and therefore can be studied as representations of ideological frameworks. If language and text can be studied as representations of ideology the processes through which discourses are formed and changed can be examined as an indication of changes in ideology and the underlying power structures that shape social relations.

Conducting Discourse Analysis

The discourse analysis that I undertake in this case study is based on the concept of discourse and methodology developed by Norman Fairclough and must be distinguished from the definitions and discussion of discourse put forth by Foucault. While it is important to acknowledge the role Foucault played in developing the idea of discourse, he has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on discourse as a constitutive force[8] which determines both social identities and human actions (Fairclough 1992). Foucault defines discourse as a "system of rules which make it possible for certain statements and not others to occur at particular times, places and institutional locations" This approach was developed through Foucault's well known archaeological studies, in which he traced the emergence, use, and changing nature of discourses on mental illness and sexuality with attention on the structures of power embedded in these concepts and their effects.

[8] A constitutive force is a force with shapes or constitutes reality.

Fairclough, however argues that this is one-sided and does not recognize or allow for the investigation of human agency in relation to discourse and the many ways in which people subvert and re-constitute discourses, consciously or unconsciously, toward different ends and through different means. The attention to discourse as both reflective and constitutive of social realities is used by Fairclough as an effective method for the use of discourse analysis in studying social change. Change in discourse over time does reflect broader social changes in which they are embedded. However attention to who uses what versions of discourse, in what contexts, and toward what end, demonstrates the constitutive nature of discourse through which people effect and influence social change.

Fairclough (1992) argued that research which takes into account the reflective and constitutive nature of discourse must employ a multidimensional approach, one that involves attention to social actors and broad social forces. This multidimensional approach must include three components, knowledge, social relations, and social identities. Knowledge is studied by examining how a specific text is organized and written. Social relations are studied by looking at how texts are used by actors. Social identities are examined by connecting texts to broad power relations surrounding the texts and the actors that put them to use in various ways.

Each stage of this process relies on different types of data and unfolds according to a different process of analysis. My thesis focuses primarily on the first stage of Fairclough's process since I do not have the data necessary to adequately complete the second and third stage. In the next section I will discuss in greater detail the specific process I used in conducting the discourse analysis on which this case study is based.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Data Collection

Data was collected through a combination of observation, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews.

Observation and Participant Observation

During the two months of this study I lived in Unakap Village, one of the member communities of the Nguna-Pele MPA, and observed and participated in MPA activities that took place while I was there. These included an MPA management committee meeting, an awareness and management plan workshop, a research experiment on MPA effectiveness led by a visiting marine biologist, a three day project with college students from Canada to set up a coconut crab conservation monitoring program, and a guided snorkel trip in the Unakap Conservation Area. During the course of my stay I also engaged in daily conversations with community members and MPA staff about the work of the MPA, conservation practices, economics, community governance, and use of natural resources.

Shortly after arriving, I reviewed the calendar of MPA events and meetings with the MPA manager and asked to attend all those occurring while I was in the village, which I was permitted to do. I did not sit in on community meetings which were conducted in the local language, which I do not speak.

Semi-formal Interviews

Semi formal interviews were conducted with community leaders, community members, Nguna-Pele MPA staff members, and representatives from national environmental programs and international aid organizations. Four groups of key actors were identified: community leaders, community conservation area managers and MPA staff, community members, and representatives from national government organizations and international aid organizations. Representatives from each of these groups were asked about their involvement in establishing the conservation areas, what benefits they expected to get from them, how they are involved, and what they think needs to be done to improve them.

All interviews were arranged with the help of the MPA manager who either walked me from house to house to speak with community members, arranged for me to speak with community leaders, or introduced me to MPA staff. Interviews were conducted in Bislama and English, and a single interview often moved between the two languages. I felt that it was important to use as much Bislama as possible, because I was in the process of learning it, and because I wanted it to be clear that I was committed to learning and using it. Since a great deal of context, culture, and meaning is lost in translation, anthropologists and other's conducting ethnographic research strive to learn the local language of their informants. While my stay was limited to two months, I was speaking with community leaders about the possibility of returning to do further research. My attempts to learn and use Bislama was a sign of respect for my hosts, an indication of my interest in their culture, and a sign of my commitment to understanding their opinions and ideas by being able to discuss them in one of their primary languages[9]

I drafted interview questions for each group of key actors. I translated them into Bislama and then went over them with the MPA manager to make sure they were clear and appropriate.

[9] People on Nguna and Pele speak the local Nakanamanga language as well as Bislama.

This was also a chance for him to give me feedback and to add anything he felt was important. I also worked with the MPA manager to write a paragraph in Bislama explaining the purpose of my research, which I read to people before beginning an interview.

Interview Subjects

I conducted two sets of semi-formal interviews. The first were conducted with community members in Unakap and the second with community leaders, community conservation area managers and MPA staff, and representatives from national government organizations and international aid organizations. It is important to note that it is common for community members to hold multiple leadership positions in their communities and the MPA staff are also community members. Therefore, there are a few individuals that fall into more than one of the categories mentioned above. For example, MPA staff members are often also leaders within their communities and may hold a chairmanship position or similar position.

Community member interviews consisted of ten questions in Bislama. These interviews lasted between ten and twenty minutes and were conducted in people's homes or in the community center. Community member interviews were not recorded primarily because the MPA manager walked me from house to house and was present for at least part of many interviews. I did not ask him to leave because he helped with translation as these were conducted on my third day in the village and my Bislama was poor. Since he was present I could not guarantee confidentiality so did not record the interviews. Because it was my third day there, I was very much a stranger and people, especially women, were shy around me. I felt that recording would have been more imposing and intimidating. Since interview responses are heavily shaped by the tone of the interview and the interaction between interviewee and interviewer, I wanted my informants to be as comfortable as possible. Although conducting these

interviews on my third day in the village was not ideal, the MPA manager requested it as he was eager for me to begin the interview process and to show that I was interested in meeting and speaking with community members.

The second set of interviews with community leaders, community conservation area managers and MPA staff, and representatives from national government organizations and international aid organizations were more substantial. These interviews were between half an hour and one and a half hours long. I interviewed all four MPA staff members. The community leaders I spoke with were chosen by the MPA manager. It seemed most appropriate to look to him for guidance about who I should approach and how I should ask for interviews. I interviewed one chief and one elder in the Unakap community. Although there were other chiefs and elders in this community, these two men led the majority of community events I attended and held some of the most active leadership roles in the community. I also conducted a recorded interviewed with a Peace Corps worker who held an advisory role in the MPA. I asked him the same questions as I asked the rest of the staff members as well as a few additional questions. Representatives from each of these groups were asked about their involvement in establishing the conservation areas, what benefits they expected to get from them, how they were involved, and what they thought needed to be done to improve them.

I also shadowed an Environment Unit employee for two days while she conducted surveys on the island. She was visiting Nguna and Pele to gather more information about their MPA program. The Environment Unit was trying to develop institutional support for community based conservation efforts and were looking for a few pilot sites to test out some of their new ideas. This employee was scouting out existing community based projects and was conducting surveys with community and conservation leaders. I was able to sit in on surveys she conducted

with three community and conservation leaders and had the opportunity to ask her many questions about her work, the goals of the Environment Unit and her impression of efforts on Nguna and Pele.

Documents

I had access to a number of documents during the course of my research. These included official MPA network documents (i.e. NPMPA Management Plan), the work of previous researchers (i.e. formal reports or studies and notes from workshops) and community documents (i.e. community by laws and conservation management plans). If a document came up in conversation or interview I usually asked for a copy and was always given one. These documents, and the transcripts generated from the interviews mentioned above, are the primary data sources for the discourse analysis process.

Discourse Analysis Goals

There are a number of related goals guiding the following discourse analysis. The most basic is to undertake an examination of how different people involved in the NPMPA and Vanuatu conservation programs, use language, text, and discourse to produce accounts of the world and their current conservation efforts.

While a full discourse analysis based on Fairclough's methodology would include all three levels of analysis, this thesis is focused on the first level, that of individual texts. This is due primarily to the nature of my data, which consists of primary source documents from the Nguna Pele MPA and interview transcripts. Due to my limited time in the field, I was not able to collect data on people's behavior. That is on the way they interacted with the texts or used the texts in various situations. This would have required a much longer period of participant observation. While I do draw some connections between the format of texts I examined and

larger social structures and power relations, the absence of good data on behavior limits the effectiveness of this third step which seeks to connect text and behavior to broader social systems.

The process I undertake is what Fairclough calls a "descriptive analysis" (1992, 1995) which is a way of looking at systematic relationships between a collection of texts. This involves studying at a number of related texts with attention to the systematic use of words, symbols and formats to create certain meanings. It involves looking at the relationship between texts and the way a suite of texts creates meaning or draws on existing meanings.

The process I used in this thesis is also consistent with what Phillips and Hardy categorize as Social Linguistic Analysis. According to their definition, Social Linguistic Analysis involves a "close reading of the text to get insight into its organization and construction" (Phillips and Hardy 2002:22). The goal is to understand how "texts help to organize and construct other phenomena" (Phillips and Hardy 2002:22).

Discourse Analysis Process

I took notes during each community member interview and recorded additional field notes at the end of the day during which community members were interviewed. I created two documents from the community interviews. One was a page of notes on each individual interview and the second consisted of each interview question with the compiled responses of all community members. I transcribed all the recorded interviews. Transcriptions were done in the language spoken, often moving between Bislama and English. I did not translate the Bislama into English.

I conducted my discourse analysis with the help of the qualitative analysis software program MAXqda. I uploaded community level, MPA level, and national level documents, as

well as all interview transcripts, the document of compiled community member interviews, and my daily field notes. All the documents and transcripts were analyzed twice. I conducted an initial pass by coding all sources by topic and taking notes. As I read through each document I coded sections based on topics covered creating an overall list of topic codes. These codes were created iteratively as I read through the documents. During this initial pass, I also wrote memos, which were linked to specific pieces of text and contained my thoughts and observations.

After this initial pass I used the MAXqda program to compile documents for each topic code. I read through the 15 most common codes as well as codes specifically related to my research question, for example those on authority and enforcement. I also compiled and read through a document containing all of the memos I had written and their associated sections of text to indentify dominant themes. Themes were identified based on observable patterns of speech, use of phrases, and meanings invoked.

I then conducted a second pass of the data going back through each document and coding for the themes that had been identified and writing another round of memos. I selected the most interesting and compelling themes and examined them for ideas about agency and methods of legitimization, looking at how each discourse was constructed, who was included or excluded, and how.

This final phase of the analysis was guided by the work of Tonkiss and Gee. Both focus their process of discourse analysis around a central set of questions. Tonkiss' are primarily focused on the meaning an author is trying to portray. Gee includes a set of seven questions each corresponding to a function of language. These questions were helpful in expanding the discourse analysis from the text level to thinking about broader social structures and influences.

Table 3.1 Data Sources

DOCUMENTS		
National Level Documents		
	Vanuatu Fisheries Act 2006	
	Vanuatu Constitution	
Nguna-Pele MPA Network Level Documents		
	NPMPA Constitution	
	NPMPA Management Plan	
Village Level Documents		
	Unakap Village Council Policy	
	Unakap Village By Laws	
	Tanaropo Constitution	
	Stadi Long Conservesen Aria Mo Tabu Unakap Village Nguna Island: Fes Komunity Ripot (Study of the Unakap Village Conservation and Tabu Areas)	
INTERVIEWS		
	NPMPA Staff members (4)	
	Village Chief	
	Village Elder	
	Aid Worker	
	Community Members (12)	

Table 3.2 Sample Questions Used for Discourse Analysis

Tonkiss (2004)	What effect is the speaker attempting to produce?
	Which forms of knowledge are privileged?
	Which modes of argument are persuasive?
	Which speakers are heard as authoritative?
Gee (2005)	How is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways?
	What activity or activities is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e. get other s to recognize as going on)?
	What identities is this piece of language being used to enact?
	What sort of relationship is this piece of language seeking to enact with others?
	What perspective on social good is this piece of language communicating (what is taken to be normal, valuable etc.)
	How does this piece of language connect or disconnect things; How does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another?
	How does this piece of language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems (Spanish vs. English, technical language vs. every day language) or different ways of knowing and believing?

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

During my time in the field I had many conversations with MPA staff members who expressed frustration and confusion about the lack of community participation in conservation. They told me that while they were using the tools they had been exposed to in both domestic and international workshops on conservation and community participation, all the responsibility for conservation projects seemed to remain on the shoulders of NPMPA staff and a few self-selected community leaders. The result was that there was little buy-in from the majority of community members. They asked for my opinion as to why this was the case and what they might be able to do about it.

One way to address this question is to get a grasp of the discourses relating to responsibility and the agency to affect environmental change on Nguna and Pele. Since discourse is "constitutive of reality", discourse analysis can provide insight into why people take the action they do. I went through the village documents and the network level documents looking for indications of how decisions have been made in the past and who had made them, as well as which responsibilities were given to which people or groups. My goal was to be able to look at both frequency of reference and to see if there were any correlations between the various authority figures and the types of rules, regulations or issues they seemed to have jurisdiction over.

Authority Figures

I found that documents from both the community and the MPA contain references to a variety of authority figures and bodies. These included, Chiefs, the Council of Chiefs, the NPMPA Chairman, one's family, the land tribunal, the Paramount Chief, the Village Council, and a number of other groups like working committees. However I was unable to connect individuals or organizing bodies to certain kinds of decisions or areas of influence. They were mentioned in a variety of capacities with no clear pattern of when jurisdiction fell to which leadership position.

One of the reasons my initial attempt to identify which individuals or groups were responsible for which types of decisions was ineffective was that much of the information obtained through my interviews and from network and community level documents was vague or generic in nature and had little detail or site specific relevance. Despite the analysis process, it remained difficult to identify who holds responsibility and agency for various parts of either village or NPMPA level conservation practices. So much so, that the repeated generality and vagueness surrounding responsibility and authority became notable in and of itself.

Vague Descriptions

The lack of specificity about responsibility and agency was particularly apparent in conversations with NPMPA staff members. The following excerpt is from an interview transcript with a man I will refer to as "Informant A". Informant A is the NPMPA chairman and a leader in his own community. In this passage I am asking him about the challenges he faces as the NPMPA chairman. The interview was conducted in a combination of Bislama and English. The

following answer is primarily in English with a few Bislama pronunciations which should be obvious to the reader. For example, “numba” for “number”.

<a> wanem nao ol biggest challenge o obstacle?
<b> ok. we can not run away with the challenge and obstacle (laughs). ok challenge what we face is.. wan is we, we don't, most of the time we don't cooperate together ah, that's the challenge we a face, and numba two is, the time ah, or time of, ah, delaying time of awareness or something like that or workshop or something like that’s what challenge and numba three is financial assistance and numba three is communication, lack of communication, that’s our challenge that we face and ah..... the other wan is um.... support from the, I mean financial assistance through the government or the provincial government, the environment unit to come and support us, I mean lack of supporting, yah,

<a> financial support or?
<b> yah, financial and what technology o something like that

In the excerpt above Informant A’s reference to support from the provincial government and Environment Unit is vague. He mentions support but when asked what kind of support, seems to indicate support in general. He says “financial and what technology or something like that”. It is difficult to tell what kind of support he actually expects or would like from the government.

I encountered the same vague responses when speaking with community leaders. On one occasion I interviewed a community elder in my host village and met up with another very broad and general request for assistance. Informant B is an elder in his community. He is not involved specifically in conservation efforts like NPMPA staff members but as an elder he helps run his community and village council. During the course of our interview I asked Informant B what kind of research or information he thought would be helpful for their conservation efforts. He responded with the following:

Yes. Long saed blong research mo information hem ia nao mifala i lack long hem too. Yes. From i nidim someone blong save helpem mifala blong how nao mifala i save go research and finem ol information so we i stap long conservation area. yes. but <at this state> i no gat.

Yes. About research and information, now here we lack that also. Yes. We need someone to help us with how we can research and find information so we can make a conservation area but <at this state> we don't have that.

This is representative of many exchanges I had when trying to find out what people thought about what kind of information or research was needed in order to improve conservation or help them achieve their conservation goals. Often, as in this case, I was told essentially, "we need research" or "we need assistance".

Vague Descriptions of Process

I received vague responses to my interview questions not only when asking about the types of research or assistance that was desired but also when asking about decision making processes within the network and communities. The following excerpt is from an interview conducted with a village chief I will refer to as "Informant C". Like Informant B, Informant C was not directly involved with conservation efforts but was a community leader and involved in the community level decisions about the community conservation area.

[10]

1) Why did you start thinking about setting up a conservation area?
Mainly to preserve marine resources that were going to fade away. To protect resources.

2) How did you decide to set up a CA and who made the decision?
It was a decision of chiefs of the community and all the chiefs on Nguna.

3) How was the decision made? Was it just the chiefs that met or did they meet with the whole community?
They talked with the community and they agreed with the CA.

[10] The quality of this interview recording was very poor making it difficult for me to provide direct quotes. The information presented here is from my interview notes recorded during and immediately after the interview.

3)Why did you set up the CA?
For the reasons he gave in response to question 1

4)What kind of benefits did you expect?
Community benefits, income, again what was said in question 1

6) How did you tell everyone where the conservation area was?
They told everyone "you aren't allowed here" in a meeting in the Nakamal (meeting house) and everyone agreed.

8) How did you decide where to put the conservation area?
It is a place with many fish. The northern site (tabu area) has many shells. To fertilize the fishing ground. There are sea crabs in the two sites. The CA and Tabu area have black stones. There are no black stones here (indicating with his hand the shore area in front of the village). The crabs like the black stones. There are none here.

9) Was there anyone that didn't want the CA there?
All the community agreed

Here even while being fairly detailed about how they decided where to put their CA,(mentioning the crabs and black stones) Informant C is vague about the decision making process itself first saying all the chiefs made the decision together, then saying the chiefs talked with the community and everyone agreed. When I asked if anyone was opposed to the idea, he responded with virtually the same sentence, saying "all the community agreed". In this example, it is the process that is often simplified. Informant C provides relatively detailed information about why they decided to establish the Conservation Areas where they did but provides repeatedly vague answers to questions about how the decision to set up the CA was made in the first place.

I received a similar description of the decision making process from two other individuals in the same community. Informant D, is heavily involved in organizing and governance in his community, and is currently a NPMPA staff member. When asked how his community made the

decision to establish a conservation area he simply stated that the decision was made during a meeting: “Long wan meeting we mi mi no stap long taem ia, be oli agree blong nao ia oli setem up conservation area blong mifala” (“There was one meeting where we agreed to set up our conservation area”). When Informant B, the community elder, was asked about the process of setting up a CA, he also said the decision had been made at a community meeting. When I pushed for more information, we shared the following exchange:

<a> Anyone inside long community no lakem?
<b> Conservation?
<a> Yah conservation area?
<b> Yah. From se olsem mi bin telem earlier, hemi wan decision blong general meeting ah, even afta general meeting bi i gat some fulup man we, oli no wantem, be from we meeting i bin agree, oli must folem nao, ya, oli must folem nao. Only two or three man bambi oli disagree, be from we i stap long general meeting, oli must folem decicion long general meeting yah.

<a> Is there anyone in the community that doesn’t like it [the decision to establish a conservation area]?
<b> Conservation?
<a> Yah the Conservation Area?
<b> Yah. As I told you before, it was a decision from the general meeting, a decision of the general meeting ah? Even after the general meeting there were a bunch of people that didn’t want it. But because we agreed at the meeting, they have to follow. Only two or three people disagree, but because we had a general meeting, they have to follow the decision of the general meeting.

Although there were individuals that were unhappy with the decision, Informant B sums up a process of dealing with disagreement in a few sentences, stating only that those who disagreed were now expected to follow the majority.

Strong Emphasis on Conservation Tools and Low Level of Detail

In many instances the low level of detail and site specific information was pared with a high level of emphasis on conservation tools. My use of the term “conservation tools” refers to

documents, reports, management plans, surveys and databases that are often used in western conservation practice to collect, sort, codify or present information related to conservation efforts. These conservation tools are often part of bureaucratic organizational structures, reliant on scientific data for legitimacy, written to justify funding decisions, designed as educational tools, or used to inform policy. In the following examples, conservation documents are cited, requested, or presented as evidence of work accomplished, but any accompanying information is vague and generic, giving little indication of what has or will be done and who has or will be responsible for doing it.

The following excerpts are from an interview conducted with a man I will identify here as "Informant E". Informant E was one of the people on the islands of Nguna and Pele most involved with conservation efforts. He had been elected as the conservation chair in his community for the past eleven years. In this position he was responsible for running conservation projects in his village and was the village representative in the NPMPA. He was not an NPMPA staff member, but in interviewing him I felt that he had the same amount of knowledge and experience with conservation on the islands that the staff members did. During the beginning of my stay I often forgot that he was not a staff member as he was one of the people I learned from the most. When I first met him he was thinking about trying to create an eco-tourism project focused on the coconut crabs and wanted to gather information on them. His community had invited a group of university students from Canada to stay in the village for three days and help them set up a process for surveying coconut crabs in their village territories. This data was to serve as a base line of information for a project he hoped would be ongoing. The following is an excerpt from the interview transcript in which Informant E is answering the question "who do you work with?"

Nao ia, mi got committee members. oli raon about .. six committee member. Mifala stap nao ia. Nao ia mifala wok witem Nguna Pele MPA from mifala i part blong Nguna Pele MPA so mifala i got six committee with Nguna Pele MPA so mifala makem every monthly meeting long Nguna Pele MPA, mifala I putum out report, what are, mifala makem wanem mifala reportem.

Now I have committee members, about six committee members. We are here now. Now we work with the Nguna Pele MPA because we are part of the NPMPA, so we have six committee members with the NPMPA, so we have monthly meetings for the NPMPA, we put out a report, we report on what we do.

In this excerpt it sounds like the goal of the monthly NPMPA meetings is to report. The only information about the meeting provided here, is that they put out a report. There is no discussion of what else is done at the meetings, what kind of decisions are made, or who is involved.

Informant E also mentions a report or the act of reporting without mentioning anything about the content of those reports when he is asked what works well (in the community or NPMPA conservation program)? He replies:

Um, wanem i stap wok gud I think name blong mi, name blong conservation blong mi to Nguna Pele MPA i name blong mi i gud long hem, like Nguna Pele, they know that one strong organization of hem is Mere, so name blong mi i gud long Nguna Pele MPA, cause my participation to the meeting, how mi participate to the organization, name blong mi gud long hem. To other organization like um... Wan Smolbag, olgeta too name blong me gud long hem. Um... to community as well report blong me to long general meeting as an organization general meeting name blong mi i gud.

Um, what works well is my name, my conservation name for the NPMPA, my name is good for them, like Nguna Pele, they know that one strong organization of theirs is Mere, so my name is good for the Nguna Pele MPA, cause my participation to the meeting, how I participate to the organization, my name is good for them. To other organization like um... Wan Smolbag, for them also my name is good. Um... to community as well my report to the general meeting as an organization, general meeting my name is good.

Here, in discussing what works well about the NPMPA, Informant E says “name blong mi”. My name or my reputation. He also says “report blong me to long general meeting”, “ my report to the general meeting”. Reporting here is provided as evidence of work accomplished. A

good report is something deserving of recognition and respect and is seen as an indication of effective work. Again, there is no mention of the content of the report. There is also no mention of the actual work, so it appears that he is judged based on his reporting and not on what ever was done that he is reporting on.

The following was part of a response to the question "Did you earn money in the past for your conservation work and do you earn money for it now?"

So mifala i wantem wan management plan bakagain inside. Nao ia mifala I wok wit out management plan we mifala i bin gat i mifala wantem wan management plan so if any plan come in how will we manage that. So mifala stap process blong got wan new management plan, towards, so that management plan, hemi save helpem mifala long building we mifala i wantem, but for, kasem nao ia, hemi nao, mi no stap karem from mas benefit.

So we want a management plan again. Now we work without a management plan which we had and we want a management plan so if any plan comes in, we will know how to manage it. So we are in the process of getting a new management plan, towards, so that management plan, it can help us to build that which we want, but for, until now, now I wasn't earning any benefit.

Here, having a management plan is identified as a goal of the Mere[11] conservation committee. He says that they want a management plan so they will know how to deal with anything new that comes up. But in such a vague context, what that seems to mean, is that they want a management plan so they know how to manage. He also says that the management plan can help them build what they want. So the ability to manage, and the ability to build what they want, is dependent on them having a management plan. The specific information that the management plan might contain to actually produce these effects is never discussed. This suggests that the management plan will help them figure out what to do, with no reference to any of the people, actions, or decisions that have to be made. In this situation, the agency to create effective conservation seems to rest in the management plan itself. It is discussed as the catalyst

[11] Mere is one of the bush villages on Nguna

which will make the other components of conservation happen, but the human actions required to create the plan do not appear important.

When asked what they need to make the conservation area better, Informant E gave this response:

Mifala i nidim... wan, first wan, gud management plan, mifala i got finis be i tink bi i gud long yumi review wan....Numba tu, yumi nidim mone blong makem...mone ia hemi blong help at some point.

The first thing is a good management plan, we already have one but I think it would be good for you and me to review it. Secondly, we need money to make.... this money would help at some point."

So the automatic response to the question of "What do you need to make it work better?" is "a management plan". However, he then says they already have a management plan, and suggests reviewing it, implying that it needs to be improved or they are not sure if it is adequate. After repeatedly reading the various references to the management plan in this interview, I found myself increasingly confused about the status of an existing plan. They do have some kind of document, but it appears to be incomplete. However the need is still stated as "getting a management plan" rather than a more specific action related to the one that currently exists.

Again, the focus here is on the document itself. His response does not include any human actions. He never says that they need to do, or learn, or write anything. He says to improve the MPA we need a management plan, money, and surveys. His response consists primarily of a list of nouns and does not include actions or steps that the people involved can take. After talking about the management plan and money, Informant E also said that surveys would help to make his community's conservation area better.

..and, the other thing is, survey. The more, like students for example, they came do the coconut survey..., mifala se ol people, things are getting high oli kamback result. Cause we don't know how to do survey, like we don't know the pigeon, like mifala too, wantem bird survey, but we

don't know how to do it. Or mifala wantem kontem how many indigenous wood, all this, so we nid people to came here to help us, the other way we can help them.

..and the other thing is, surveys. The more, like students for example, they came to do the coconut survey.... we everyone, things are getting high the result is they comeback. Caus we don't know how to do surveys, like we don't know the pigeon, like we also, want bird surveys but we don't know how to do it. Or we want to count how much indigenous wood we have, all this, so we need people to come here to help us and the other way we can help them.

In this response Informant E says that what they need are surveys, plural. He does not request a survey about a specific species, in fact he seems unsure about which species should even be surveyed. This response is about getting surveys themselves rather than information which might be generated through the use of a survey.

When asked what kind of research would be helpful for them to have, he said:

Bi mi telem everi research bambai hemi helpful, every wan, like, even i stat in the sea kasem long land, crab coconut still bi helpful, what else, bird surveys still bi helpful, um... yumi wantem save life blong ground inside conservation is it a good place to plant sandalwood or wanem kind wood? Hemi save help. Because wan day bi mifala move hem out conservation to the other conservation but we know that researcher already told us that this ground is good for sandalwood or this ground it is good for this, we can plant. So I could say everything, anything.

I will tell you that all kinds of research would be helpful. Everything, like even from the sea to the land, coconut crab still would be helpful. What else, bird surveys still would be helpful, um...we want to know about the life of the ground inside the conservation area, is it a good place to plant sandalwood or what kind of wood? This can help. Because one day we will move the conservation area to the other conservation area but we know that the researcher already told us that this ground is good for sandalwood or this ground is good for this, we can plant. So I could say everything, anything.

Here, Informant E has listed three things that would help; a management plan, money, and surveys. There are a number of ambiguities in these responses. He says they need a management plan but then I am told that they have one; he says they need money but doesn't provide any example of what they would use the money for. And it does not appear that this is a simple omission as he says "we need money to make ..." trails off, and finishes with a very

general statement about how money is always helpful for something. He says they need surveys, but it seems like he wants surveys in general rather than surveys that provide information on specific things for specific reasons. He mentions birds and trees, but it is hard to tell if these are just examples of things that could be surveyed or examples of specific things they actually want surveyed for a specific reason. What will these surveys accomplish? What goals will they meet? How will they be helpful?

The attention Informant E pays to conservation tools was not unique. In my conversations with NPMPA staff members and peace corps volunteers there was a similar focus on documents and conservation tools, and in many cases this was combined with minimal and nondescript information about what those tools would be used for. Throughout my interview with Informant D[12]. Informant D indicated that one of the ways I could assist them in their efforts would be to help them create a brochure to improve tourism or help them with their website. He also spoke at length about his feeling that their efforts would be greatly aided if they had a single database in which they could collect data about their conservation area, saying to me "Supos yumi save helpem community blong oli kam wan wan, format or formation long how nao mifala i se preparem wan, ol data collection ia" ("if you and I could help our community with one way or one format for how we could prepare a place for data collection"). In describing how the database would be used he said:

> afta yu go harvest yu kam back yu telem long community emia nao ol something emia hamas pica, mi kasem hamas fish mi kasem, ah hamas troca me kasem, hamas clam shell me kasem. And then yumi save preparem wan, emia nao some kind information olsem committee oli nidim blong gat. blong taem every taem committee i go long harvest oli kamback oli putum together ol office result blong olgeta and then committee oli save ah, putum ol information ia, blong oli <present?> 00:42:41-7 emi go back backagain long community blong lukse .....

[12] The quality of the recording of R's interview made it difficult to produce a word for word transcript of the entire interview. Therefore my discussion of his contributions consists of a combination of direct quotes taken from the transcript and my interview notes taken during and after the interview.

mifala i nidim blong MPA blong mifala em save assist long community wan single data base nomo.

After you go harvest you come back and you tell the community here is how much pica (Surgeon Fish) I caught, how much fish I caught, how much trocha (Green Snail) I caught, how much clam shell I got. And then we can prepare a, well, some kind of information like the committee needs to get. So every time the committee goes to harvest they came back and they put together our official result and then the committee can put all the information there. They go back again to the community to look.

To be able to assist the communities for the MPA we just need a single data base.

Here, Informant D explains that the data base would be used to collect harvest data. What stands out about his example is the generality with which he describes the use of this tool and the ambiguity surrounding its intended uses. There is little discussion of what kind of harvest data would be recorded besides total catch. Would they be looking for weight, gender, fishing methods used etc.? Are there specific species they are particularly interested in? In the description it sounds like the proverbial net is to be cast as wide as possible with the goal being to keep account of everything that was caught. A broad database of this nature might be a very useful tool for initiating community involvement and generating the kind of expansive data set that is often necessary at the beginning of any monitoring project. However, the general manner in which the database is described leaves me with a number of questions about the drive behind the desire for the database. Is the primary goal community involvement? Is this a way to encourage individual responsibility on the part of the fishers? And/ or is the goal to gather information that can inform certain decisions and actions on the part of the conservation committee? What will the data be used for? What goals do they have that the database would help them achieve?

The “who” in this description is also somewhat ambiguous. While it sounds like the fishers themselves will be responsible for reporting their catch, who is going to be compiling the

data, and what kind of information will actually be given to the committee? Informant D describes passing on information to the conservation committee but seems unsure of what kind of information they might actually find useful or what kind of information might actually be passed on to them and how this is to be used within the larger conservation initiative. Again, I want to stress that a general database like the one described here could certainly be useful. What is unclear is whether the broad nature of the database is intentional and strategic. Does the community have conservation goals they feel can be met with the use of a database, or is the establishment of the database the goal in and of itself?

Questions about relationships between the organizational goals and the use of conservation tools and documents also arose during discussions about the relationship between the NPMPA and national organizations like the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and Fisheries Department. NPMPA staff indicated on a number of occasions that one of their objectives was to work in partnership with the Vanuatu Environment Unit and Fisheries Department. When ever I asked about these inter-organizational relationships, the NPMPA staff spoke to me about the signing of Memorandums of Understanding or MOUs. The process of forging these partnerships therefore appears to be based on the writing and signing of these documents.

This was especially apparent in discussions of the Cultural Centre because ties between the NPMPA and the Cultural Centre were much weaker than those between the NPMPA and the Environment Unit and Fisheries Department, yet the focus on an MOU was equally strong. When I asked about inter-organizational partnerships, I was told that they were currently in the process of signing an MOU with the Fisheries Department and Environment Unit. The Cultural Centre was usually not mentioned unless I asked about it specifically. When I did, I was told that they didn't really have a relationship with the cultural center but they wanted to sign an

MOU with them as well. There is a somewhat antagonistic history between the NPMPA and the Cultural Centre, based in large part on differing ideas about what constitutes traditional management and the adaptation and use of western conservation practices in Vanuatu. Given this history, and the current lack of interaction between the organizations, I found discussions of signing an MOU with the Cultural Centre striking. Conversations never touched on what might go into the process of establishing a partnership or who might take on that responsibility. Since the NPMPA does not currently have a relationship with the Cultural Centre, it appears that the writing of an MOU is supposed to help create one. Relationships, even on an organizational level are about interpersonal interactions yet the discussions of MOU's in this context included none. Just as Informant E spoke about writing a management plan so his community will know how to manage their resources, NPMPA staff spoke about signing an MOU with the Cultural Centre so they would have a relationship with them. This leaves us with a situation in which the documents are described as both a catalyst and a product while the actual human actions required to reach the desired goal are invisible and obscured.

In conducting a discourse analysis of documents and interview transcripts from the NPMPA network, I found a persistent vagueness in descriptions about what the organization needs to improve, how decision making and organizational processes are carried out, and what kind of actions are undertaken by specific actors. Additionally, documents and discourses about the work of the NPMPA frequently center around conservation tools, primarily documents. The writing of documents, use of surveys, and establishment of databases, are described as important conservation goals and are presented as evidence of work accomplished. The attention given to conservation tools like management plans, surveys and reports is important here because of the

fact that in most of these references there is very little specific information about the content of these reports, their intended use, or the processes for carrying them out.

Written Documents and Village Governance

The emphasis on written documents is not only a pattern apparent in conservation but is also found in community level governance. Furthermore, at the community level, the focus on documents goes well beyond bureaucracy, as documents are seen as essential guideposts for action and important symbols of community and identity. The importance of having something in writing is apparent in documents that deal with community organization and governance. In Unakap's Village Council Policy, there are two instances in which written communication is described as the only legitimate form of communication. In Unakap's Village Council Policy, written apologies are required from anyone missing a council meeting and all reports must be in written format.

9. Apologies & Vacant post.

Apologies:

- Any executive or a member of the council or a committee who wishes not to present at the meeting shall submit a written apology to the chairperson or a secretary one week before the actual date of the meeting. This applies to the council members and also every existing committee.

- Any member of the community who wishes not to be present at the general meeting shall submit a written apology to the chairperson three [3] days before the actual date of the meeting.
- Any written apologies during the meeting show the member is present at the meeting.

1. Any verbal apologies shall not be accepted at the meeting.

11. REPORTING:

- Every report must be written. Any verbal report shall not be accepted at the meeting.
- The two main council: They shall submit their report to general meeting three[3] times a year.
- Working Committee: Every working comity [sic] shall submit their report to the two council on their schedule prepared.

Figure 4.1 Unakap Village Council Policy (2007), Articles 9 and 11[13].

Not only do both articles specifically state that a written document is required, but they both emphasize the point by also stating that verbal forms of communication will not be acceptable. In order for something to be considered official and appropriate it must be in written form. Given the small size of the community (150-200 people, many of whom reside primarily in the capital city), the requirement for a written apology when missing a meeting hardly seems to be necessary for keeping track of people and maintaining order the way it might in a much larger governing body.

[13] Formatting original.

In figure 4.1 a written document is the only acceptable form of communication. However, the attention to documents goes much further than simply meeting official requirements and respecting formalities. In the example below documents are not referred to simply as requirements but as meaningful symbols and tools, at times deeply connected to village and community identity, cohesiveness, and goals for the future. This was most apparent in an interview conducted with Informant A, a NPMPA staff member and community leader . The interview had two distinct parts. The first was rather mundane, as I asked my prepared questions and he replied. The tone changed markedly when he asked me to tell him more about what I wanted learn. After hearing that I was interested in organizational issues Informant A launched into an animated discussion of community organization fueled by frequent references to two documents he had with him.

The first was the Tanaropo Constitution, the constitution for his village, and the second was the National Constitution of Vanuatu. He had the Tanaropo Constitution with him from a village council meeting he had attended right before we spoke. The National Constitution was a small bound book which he took out of his pocket reminding me of the way a religious man might reach for his bible. Both documents had the appearance of being treasured and referenced often. They were worn with pages coming loose and notes written in the margins. As we began discussing land ownership and community governance he referenced both of them, turning to known sections and reading allowed to me to emphasize or make his point.

Informant A spoke about the Tanaropo Constitution as both a summary of how his community lives and a guide for them to follow. He would point to specific constitutional articles and say “how we do it is like this” before reading it aloud. At the end of the interview I asked if I could make a copy of it and he was happy to let me do so, mentioning that he had also

sent a copy home with a researcher from Australia, although he wasn't sure what it was being used for. He seemed pleased to give it to me, saying:

> If you want to make a copy, its how.. how we live, and how we organize. But everything here, in this, we've got ah 15, I think, yah 19 [constitutional articles] there . We talk about land, we talk about village court, we talk about titles, ah? we talk about community structure, we talk about community technical advisory group, our membership, whatever, everything.

In this section Informant A refers to the constitution as "how we live" as if the whole representation of who they are and how they live is contained in those pages. He presents it as a symbol of their way of life, almost as the essence of who they are. At one point, as he was explaining ownership and decisions about land, he forcefully taped his finger on the Tanaropo Constitution saying "everything must be done, according to this". While reading through the Tanaropo Constitution left me with more questions than answers, for Informant A, it seemed to be both a representation of his community's way of life and a guide book to fall back on when situations became complex.

The introduction of the Unakap Village Policy contains a similar emphasis on the importance of the document itself. Under "Introduction" it reads:

a) We the people of Unakap wanted to developed [sic] our community in the future years to come, so this working policy and this by law is like the pilot's campus [sic] and the soldiers sword to direct and protect the administration work or even the full community to fulfill its aim or objectives, and to any non residence who live within the vicinity of Unakap village. Everyone must follow this working policy and this bylaw. Without this people cannot change and to even all community as a whole.

Figure 4.2, Unakap Village Policy, Introduction (2009)[14]

[14] Formatting original.

Unakap's Village Policy is described as both a "pilot's compass" and a "soldiers sword". It is both a tool and a weapon, a source of guidance, and a protective instrument. It is described as crucial to helping the community reach their objectives, something so necessary, that as the last line states, without it neither individuals or the community would be expected to progress. Clearly this is not a regular organizational document, written to fulfill bureaucratic obligations. It is described as a key to community improvement, and a symbol of the community's commitment and ability to create change.

Implications for Agency

There is little in these documents and interview transcripts that creates or draws on a cohesive idea or discourse of agency. Instead what I see are two related discursive tendencies. In the data presented above, we see the combination of a high level of emphasis and attention placed on conservation tools and a low level of detail and site specific information about the actual problems or goals the conservation tools are meant to address. What do these observations suggest about agency in general? First they suggest that community involvement in conservation activities may be low because the agency to create change and impact conservation is placed primarily in documents and conservation tools providing only limited means through which community members can become actively involved. Second they raise questions about whether or not the general desire for and use of conservation tools results in conservation practice driven primarily by outside interests.

The emphasis given to documents and conservation tools, and the ambiguity about who is involved or who is responsible, means that people are often absent in these discussions. In the data set presented, agency appears to reside in things rather than actions and in tangible objects rather than process. As was mentioned above, when Informant E talks about a management plan

that “can help us to build that which we want”, the only action here, the action of helping, is something carried out by the management plan. When he says that having a management plan means they will know what to do with new situations that arise, the site and process of actual decision making is obscure and mysterious. We don’t know where it occurs, who is involved, or how it is carried out. In other instances, documents are spoken about as if they have the ability to create a desired effect. This was seen in references to Memorandums of Understanding with other organizations and is perhaps most striking in the introduction of the Unakap Village Policy. The last line of the village policy states that “without this [the document] people cannot change”. The document thus appears to be the avenue through which people attain their desired goals.

A second observation prompts additional questions about the construction of agency in conservation discourse and potential influences on community involvement. There is one place in the Unakap Village By Laws that contains very specific information relating to conservation. The following articles outline prohibitions concerning important marine species and are similar to those found in the NPMPA management plan. The level of detail here, compared to the level of detail given in response to questions about future research, decision making processes, and the use of conservation tools, is striking. Species are specified with both common and scientific names, size limits are given, and detailed instructions about the proper measurement procedures are included.

Article 26 Rock Lobster

b) In this regulation rock lobster means a Crustean of genus panulirus.

c) No person shall harm, take have in his or her possession , sell or purchase:
   a) any rock lobsters carrying eggs; or
   b) any rock lobster which is less than 22cm in length when laid flat and measured from immediately behind the restriction to the rear edge of the telson or whose carapace is less than 7.5cm when measured along the mid line from immediately behind the restral horn to the rear edge.

d) No persona shall remove the eggs from the rock lobster or have in his or her possession , sell or purchase a rock lobster from which the eggs have been remove.

Article 27 Green Snail

e) In this section green snail means a melluse of the species Turbo marmot us

f) No person shall buy, sell locally or expert green snail except with the written permission of the council of chiefs and in accordance with such condition as he or she may specify;

g) Green shall not be harvested for a period of 10 years, …….2020.

h) No person shall harm, take ,have in his or her possession, seller purchase any green nail which is less than 15cm in length when measured in its longest dimension.

Figure 4.3, Unakap Village Constitution, articles 26 and 27[15]

These articles represent the only concrete actions mentioned in the MPA documents. So the only concrete actions available for those interested in conservation are prohibitions.

In the above examples agency sits at an individual rather than collective level and is not about action but abstinence. In these articles, action is also limited to fishers. If one is not a fisher, or does not frequently fish for protected species, there are few options for participation in conservation efforts. There are few if any references in the MPA documents to collective actions people can take to improve conservation practices.

[15] Formatting original.

Summary

There is little in these documents that actually creates or draws on a cohesive idea of agency. Instead what I see are two related discursive tendencies that may result in a de-facto situation where agency ends up residing primarily in conservation tools and not human action or certain human actors. The data I have laid out above demonstrates the following combination: a high level of emphasis and attention placed on conservation tools and a low level of detail and site specific information about the actual problems or goals the conservation tools are meant to address. In the following chapter, I examine potential explanations for the discourses described above, as well as potential implications. These trends do have important implications for the construction of agency to affect environmental change on Nguna and Pele as the lack of a clear idea of human agency may be one reason why it has been difficult for NPMPA staff to mobilize community members. It may also have implications for the relationships the NPMPA has with outside organizations and researchers, as the absence of a clear discourse of local community involvement may mean conservation practice is significantly influenced by outside interests.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Remaining Questions

This analysis leaves us with a number of questions for further inquiry. One question is, why do we see the discourse that we do? Why do we see a lot of attention placed on conservation tools with minimal attention given to details of implementation and use? Why does the agency to effect environmental change, or community change in general appear to lie in documents while the human actors and their actions are often invisible? A second set of questions has to do with the implications of these findings. Do these findings offer any insight into NPMPA staff members questions about the lack of community participation?

Why This Discourse?

I was unable to identify a cohesive idea of agency in my discourse analysis. In my data there was a pattern of vagueness which was focused on three basic areas. There was vagueness in requests for assistance and organizational support, vagueness of process, usually relating to decision making, and vagueness in descriptions of how conservation tools would be used and who would be using them. In addition, conservation tools and organizational documents were emphasized as necessary components of any attempt to improve community or NPMPA work while human action and agency remained obscure. Why do we see these discursive patterns in this particular data set?

In addressing this question it is important to remember that the data presented here can only serve as a small representation of the work done in the NPMPA network. It is limited by the

size and scope of the documents and interviews I was able to collect as well as the people and sources I tapped for information. The interviews were collected over the course of two months and the documents examined here only cover the last few years of conservation work on Nguna and Pele. In following the basic guidelines of discourse analysis, the goal of this study was to identify discursive patterns in order "to get insight into the organization and construction" of the NPMPA network (Phillips and Hardy 2002:22). The goal being to understand how the written and spoken texts in this data set help to organize and construct the broader conservation "phenomena" on Nguna and Pele (Phillips and Hardy 2002:22).

The goal of this analysis was never to identify or expose a certain "truth" or "reality" concerning the NPMPA network, but rather to examine different components of reality revealed through discourse and examine how they originated and what their effects might be (Tonkiss 2004: 249). In the remaining section I discuss possible explanations for my findings as well as possible implications. I am not attempting to "prove" these statements beyond a reasonable doubt. Rather I will argue that the data presented in this thesis suggests the following as important areas for future investigation.

Among the many possible explanations for the vague descriptive processes and focus on conservation tools, there are three I want to draw attention to, the first two briefly and the third in more detail. The first is the influence of my research methods. While we can be certain that my methods shaped the kind of data I collected (Tonkiss 2004; Gill 1996), it is impossible to know how much they may have influenced the discursive themes I identify in this thesis. The fact that I was a foreign, white, woman, speaking only imperfect Bislama and with limited familiarity with social and cultural practices certainly shaped my interactions with my interview subjects. It is likely that I received the vague and generic responses I did because informants were telling me

what they thought I wanted to hear or what they thought they should say. It is also possible that the questions I asked and the manner in which I asked them promoted the types of responses I received. The extent to which these factors influenced the data I collected could only be determined by additional field work conducted over a much longer time period.

The second possibility is that the attention to documents and conservation tools has resulted from the adoption of western conservation practices which place a high level of value on conservation tools and tangible evidence of accomplishment. Western conservation methods, like much of western society, has been critiqued for its technocratic and audit culture in which tangible reports are the focus of work. The ambiguities or the lack of a clear idea of human agency, may be the result of the conservation methods used, as western conservation involves many assumptions about the way written plans and policies can lead to desired changes in human behavior. Giving more agency to documents and tools than human actors may be a function of western conservation practice and not the NPMPA network itself.

The final possibility I will entertain here, is that historical and cultural influences, particularly colonialism, missionization, and valuing unity, shaped the responses I received. If the attention to tools and documents was only seen in conservation related discourse, this might lend more credence to the idea that the focus on conservation tools results from adopting a western approach to conservation. However, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, the focus on documents is not unique to conservation discourse but is seen at an even stronger level in governance at the community level.

At the community level, the focus on documents goes well beyond bureaucracy and management. Documents are meaningful representations of village identity and collective agreement, as well as important catalysis's for action. One possible explanation for the attention

to documents may lie in Vanuatu's colonial history and missionization. Colonization by the French and British as well as missionization has had a profound yet scattered effect on the nation of Vanuatu. The Nguna and Pele are in a region of the country that was particularly effected by colonialism and missionization in the 1800s.

On Nguna and Pele today, village governance and village proceedings are carried out in a very official manner. The village is governed by a series of committees in connection with village chiefs, and the Village councils. Positions on these committees are specific and titles are important, just as they are among the NPMPA staff. Each organization has a chairman or president, vice-chairman or vice-president, secretary and treasurer. Positions are taken seriously and meetings follow an official format. At every meeting I attended, an agenda was presented, the chairmen led an opening prayer and introduction, and the meeting was conducted in an orderly manner often involving proposing and passing motions.

Bartlett (2009) argues that while missionaries on Nguna and Pele "certainly forced social change, contemporary sentiment suggests that the changes were, at some level, eventually embraced by local people" (Bartlett 2009:147). Bartlett writes of the missionization period as a period which "saw the death of one transitional indigenous identity and the collectively supported birth of another" (Bartlett 2009:150). The second indigenous identity to which Bartlett refers to is one that includes religion as a central pillar of community life and a governance system based on those of the colonizing powers. In this framework, the value placed on documents may be an extension of the pride and value the people of Nguna and Pele place on their existing systems of governance and a history in which the missionaries on the islands, in the late 1800s, taught that self and community improvement, and indeed salvation, could be found through Christian and colonial teachings, practices and forms of governance.

A Unified Front

Possible cultural influences also include the importance of a unified front. One of the areas of vagueness identified in my discourse analysis was a vagueness of process, in particular the decision making processes involved in the establishment of conservation areas. Facey, who conducted anthropological research on Nguna in the 1980s, found that there is "significant pressure on Nguna and Pele to put forth a unified front" (1995:213). In *Kastom and Nation Making: The Politicization of Tradition on Nguna, Vanuatu* (1995) she presents the thesis that the people of Nguna and Pele value unity -or at least the appearance of unity- highly, making it unlikely that people will reveal contradictory or conflicting ideas. She bases her argument on the outcomes of two historical periods of "ideological crisis",[16] in which different factions were vying for political and ideological control. She argues that in both circumstances, existing leadership managed to retain control, and the unity of values appeared to be maintained. At the turn of the century, the main conflict was over religion and the result was that all Ngunese converted to Christianity. There are no remaining pockets of resistance to Christianity on Nguna as there are in many other areas of Vanuatu. In the 1970's and 1980's all Ngunese became supporters of the Vanuaaku Pati, again with little or no indication of dissent. While Facey found that people harbor differing political ideas, she believes they feel pressure to hide them so as not to undermine the image of a unified community (Facey 1995:214).

Facey's thesis about the value of unity on Nguna may explain the vague responses to my questions about how decisions were made to establish conservation areas. The responses I

[16] Facey defines these "periods of ideological crisis" as periods when "contradictory notions abounded and proponents of different social constructions of reality were vying for ideological control" (Facey 1995:216). She identifies them as late 1800s-early 1900s and 1970's -1980's. At the turn of the century conflict centered around religion and missionization and in the 1970's-80's it centered around trade relations, international labor movements and increasing influence of foreign ideas and values.

received to these questions were vague, in that they provided little detail about process, but they were also consistent, as I was repeatedly told that "everyone in the community agreed". This statement itself seemed to hold its own level of importance.

Implications

What does all this suggest about why there isn't more community buy-in? This may have something to do with the way the agency to effect conservation in Nguna and Pele is constructed. Much of the conservation discourse on Nguna and Pele centers around official documents. Documents of this nature, whether focused on community governance or conservation practice are usually written by those holding positions on village committees or those with training in conservation practice. The focus on documents and conservations tools also means that process, human action, and decision making are obscure and mysterious. In this environment it may be difficult for many community members to see a place for themselves in conservation work, even if they are looking for it. It is likely that many people simply do not see themselves in conservation practice and so leave the work to the MPA staff and conservation committee members. During my first community member interview in Unakap my informant told me that, if I wanted to know about his community's conservation area, I should just ask the MPA manager. Among the community members I interviewed, this was a common sentiment.

Vagueness and Vulnerability: Privileging Outside Interests

The generality and lack of site specific goals and details suggests that a great deal of agency rests outside the Nguna and Pele communities, often with those designing or privileged by the conservation tools in use. When Informant E is asked what kind of research or information would be helpful to improve conservation efforts he says "anythin"g and "everything". This implies that the projects they undertake are determined primarily by the

interests of those that want to work with them. What implications does this have for foreign and ni-Vanuatu collaboration?

For example, there is a researcher from Australia who recently asked the NPMPA if he can conduct research on sea horses in their marine areas. I spoke with a Peace Corps volunteer who is a marine biologist by training, lived in Vanuatu for seven years, and never saw a sea horse or heard anyone there talk about them (personal communication Bartlett 2009). If this researcher gets funding, partners with the NPMPA, and recruits staff to assist with data collection, what does this mean for the NPMPA? What does it mean that the NPMPA may put effort into gathering information about something that maybe relevant elsewhere, but probably irrelevant in that particular setting? If members of the of the NPMPA network are not specific about what they want or need, if they are open to anything, is there a risk that through collaboration, the work of the NPMPA will be guided by outside research interests, like mine or those of Peace Corps volunteers?

While the NPMPA network is not a strict example of co-management, Nadasdy's insights into the use of TEK in co-management situations is applicable. While co management has been hailed as a tool for the integration of TEK and conservation science (Berkes 1994, Freeman 1992, Johannes 1989), Nadasdy argues that co-management regimes, even those based on TEK, may result in the extension of state power into communities (Nadasdy 2005:216). While programs may make use of local knowledge, the process itself does not re-construct existing and unequal power relations and the "participatory process ends up producing knowledge that reflects donor agendas more than local realities (Nadasdy 2005:219). Therefore these programs and the discourses of participation, co-management, and TEK can end up "restraining the way people can act and even think about wildlife management" (Nadasdy 2005:220).

Nadasdy writes that one of the assumptions embedded in many participatory programs is that problems are technical in nature and therefore require technical solutions. This assumption then leads to a focus on technical solutions which facilitates the expansion of external interests. The data on which my thesis is based reflects a similar tendency. In the discourse examined here, discussions about what was needed often focus on conservation tools and therefore technical solutions. The challenge was often described as a lack of resources, and requests were made for help designing and using conservation tools like surveys and databases .

The NPMPA is certainly operating with limited financial and technical resources and they are doing a remarkable job of using the resources at their disposal and of seeking new ones. What I find important in this data set, is not that significant attention is given to the use of conservation tools and technical solutions, but that I was unable to find an indication of similar attention to organizational issues like involvement and by-in by community members. In commenting efforts to manage Dall sheep in the Yukon, Nadasdy writes "the focus on 'technical' issues takes for granted existing institutions of state management and so precludes any meaningful inquiry into the political dimensions of co-management." (Nadasdy 2005:220) Making a similar claim about conservation on Nguna and Pele in general would require a broader discourse analysis with more historical depth and ethnographic data. However, in the data provided here, the focus on "technical issues", in this case conservation tools, does override and appears to preclude attention and inquiry into the social and political relations within communities, between communities, and between the network and broader national concerns like an emphasis on TEK. In other words, finding that agency is placed in technical conservation tools more often than in human actors and actions indicates that the focus on technical issues

may preclude inquiries into important social issues, including inquiry into the relevance community members give to conservation and the way this affects community participation.

The lack of site specific detail suggests that the NPMPA management strategies may be informed by outside sources or by the conservation tools themselves more than they are by any person or group of people in the communities. In this case, the conservation tool may shape conservation practices more than any human actor. While this possibility is not something that can be confirmed or refuted based on the data presented here, there are additional indications that it is a question worthy of further inquiry.

One indication that conservation efforts privilege outside interests is a possible mismatch between community priorities and conservation priorities. There is a mismatch between issues identified as important in community documents and the actions outlined to address environmental issues. Both community documents, like the Unakap Village Council By Laws, and NPMPA documents like the NPMPA management plan indicate that waste management is a primary environmental and community concern. While these documents have very detailed information about fishing regulations, the only recognition of waste management are general prohibitions on littering and pollution.

The Unakap Village Council By Laws contain articles 26 and 27 (see figure 4.1) on rock lobster and green snails. Along with similarly detailed prohibitions on turtles, aquarium fish, coral, trumpet shells, beach de mer (sea cucumber) and “trocha” (trochus) (Ronneth 2007). In the same document there are two articles on waste management:

Article 19 Rabbis Disposal:

i) No person shall pollute seashore or dispose any rubbish within the vicinity of Unakap or on littering with any house hold waste or tree branches.

Article 20 Sanitation

i) There shall be a VIP toilet to every house hold on all Unakap residence.
ii) No person shall have any nature call within the seashore, open space or any such manner that may treat insects, flies, cockroaches or rats.

Figure 4.3 Unakap Village Council By Laws, Articles 19 and 20, (Ronneth 2007)[17]

It would be difficult to make these articles more generalized. In this document fishing prohibitions are both more detailed and more prominent; a pattern which is also seen in the NPMPA management plan and is emphasized by the fact that the organization responsible for conservation on Nguna and Pele is a Marine Protected Area Network and not a waste management network.

My research and my presence on Nguna also serves as an example of the way that outside interests and influences can impact what happens in Nguna and Pele villages. Along with waste management, leaders in Unakap were concerned with access to water. There are two sources of fresh water on Nguna, the first is rain water collected and stored in rain barrels and cisterns adjacent to people's homes and the second are water pumps located in one or two places in a village. A few communities have systems of large cisterns and pipes which delivers water directly into people's homes. One of the chiefs in Unakap told me, in no uncertain terms, that getting a similar system in his community was his number one priority. Other community leaders spoke about this goal and one told me he hoped it would happen in his life time. While the

[17] Formatting Original.

community leaders I spoke with in Unakap told me clearly that water was their main concern, I was there because of their marine conservation efforts, and I wanted to study conservation not water access. While waste disposal and water access may be some of their most pressing concerns, my questions and my efforts were focused on marine conservation. This thesis is about conservation efforts and not plumbing or waste management. The NPMPA has received international recognition for their conservation efforts but continues to run into obstacles in their attempts to get water in their homes.

Topics for Future Research

It is possible that the attention to conservation tools in combination with vague articulations about the why, who, what, and how, of implementation, make the NPMPA member communities vulnerable to conservation practices driven more by outside interests than by local ones. However, as we discussed in the introductory chapters, the nation of Vanuatu and the broader Pacific region, in general, have unique forms of social, political, and cultural organization leading to processes that unfold differently than in other parts of the world. Examples in line with Nadasdy's claim about conservation as an avenue for the expansion of external interests into communities, often come from regions of the world, where small communities and indigenous groups have limited political and financial resources with which to assert their interests, especially when their resources are compared with those of the international or government based organizations guiding conservation or development projects (Peluso 1993; Ferguson 1994). In contrast, Vanuatu has social, cultural and political structures supporting and promoting village level governance and local resource management. As was discussed earlier, Vanuatu's legal system and the promotion of kastom means that within the country, villages have a great deal of agency to shape conservation programs. The importance of the community

or village in relation to larger organizational structures like the NPMPA network comes through in the texts examined in this study.

Community Over Network

The NPMPA management plan says that the NPMPA is intended to act as an "umbrella organization" that provides assistance, yet does not in any way stifle community autonomy (NPMPA). The primacy of the community as opposed to the network is established, through evoking common phrases like that of an "umbrella organization" but also in the descriptions staff members gave about how village conservation areas are established. When I asked about how CAs were established, I was told by the Peace Corps Volunteer that:

[They] were established in different ways. But for most part the process is that the village will seek us out..[they] will seek out the MPA and seek advice about what would be a good area to conserve.

When I asked one of the NPMPA staff members the same question I was told that first they hold an "awareness" (a workshop to promote conservation awareness in the community) and they give "a consultation". The second step is to "make an assessment" and then to "make a implementation of the conservation" which involves monitoring.

When I asked what it meant to "make an assessment" he said:

Mi askem olgeta, (I ask them) you find that resources still reproduce or not? We've got ah, wan form a survey form. To every communities we make survey throughout the communities, every household they fill it out. We ask question and we bring it back to them and then we give back their result and we show them, this one is how you use your resource. It's the result. So you need to set up your conservation to conserve some of the spaces. But, almost we don't force them. We just go and give the tool, like a tool, we just give them (laughs) but we don't force the communities no, no, (laughing) that's how our organization is.

The NPMPA network is constructed as an additional structure that can offer benefits and resources to its member communities. But these statements make it clear that the communities must take the initiative to go to the NPMPA network. They need to ask for assistance or resources. In the last quote, Informant A makes a specific point to explain that they guide the community through the process of gathering information, but it is up to the community to decide what to do with it. He describes leaving information with the community as a "tool", but clearly states, that they don't "force" the communities to do anything. He laughs at this point because he finds the idea that they would tell the community what to do humorous.

In the NPMPA network documents, there are numerous places where the primacy of the village over the network is asserted. The management plan is careful to state that the network does not have the authority to shape conservation practice in individual villages (NPMPA 2006). In the section entitled "Rules and Regulations of the Nguna-Pele MPA" the introductory paragraph states that "ol rul ia hemi guideline nomo" ("the rules here are only guidelines") (NPMPA 2006:7) and that each community can adopt them if they think they are appropriate. In each of these instances, the primacy of the village over the network is asserted. The villages are responsible for seeking resources from the NPMPA staff members and for adopting, changing, or rejecting, recommended rules. The villages have more agency than the network to make decisions about how conservation will unfold in their communities.

This may limit the influence of external interests. For example, one of the jobs of the NPMPA network is to seek out grants and funding sources for conservation work in its member communities. Grants and funding are one avenue through which outside interests may take hold. Communities can become tied to contractual agreements or projects which make them subject to a new level of bureaucratic management. However on Nguna and Pele, when a NPMPA network

grant is funded, each member community makes the individual decision to participate or utilize new resources. As the Peace Corps volunteer described above, they must go to the network and ask for assistance.

The way in which the potential susceptibility to outside influence, suggested in this discourse analysis, interacts with a political and social climate in which villages hold more agency than larger organizational bodies, is an interesting question for future research.

Conclusions

Perhaps the most important overarching question is how the discourses of agency in conservation tools and documents might be better utilized to promote the desired community involvement. The Nguna and Pele communities are strongly attached to the conservation documents they have produced, viewing them as important representations of their work. Creating management plans, writing reports, and using different survey or data collection methods instills confidence, and is seen as evidence of achievement and accomplishment. These documents also demonstrate their accomplishments to others, (i.e. the National government, the World Wildlife Fund, the Peace Corps etc.) and are helpful for attracting funding and support. The NPMPA has received recognition and funding because they have been able to effectively distribute information about their work.

Furthermore the importance documents play in the communities on Nguan and Pele, and the fact that documents seem to hold the agency to affect change, means they may be a very effective organizing tool. If conservation documents and agreements can gain the same meaning and respect that village level documents seem to hold, motivation for participation may increase. Maybe conservation tools, like management plans can be drawn on in Nguna and Pele to foster more community involvement. Maybe the drafting of a management plan, can be the action that

draws people into the process. Community organizers often stress that any activity can become an avenue for community building; a historical project, community garden, school based effort, environmental concern or something that seems much more mundane. People have organized around all kinds of actions and goals because it is the process of organizing rather than the action that usually makes the biggest difference.

This touches on a much bigger question relevant to social change and social movements, the question of whether or not tools of oppression can be re-appropriated by different groups to be used in emancipatory ways. Can they be re-appropriated in different contexts, given different meanings and produce different outcomes? Audre Lorde argues that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (1979), a reference to the way that the tools used to build something fundamentally shape and confine it. Can a tool, like a management plan become something emancipatory or will it always confine those who use it? Similarly, can a certain discourse become something emancipatory or will it always confine those who use it? In what ways might current conservation practice on Nguna and Pele be constrained by their focus on conservation tools? In what ways might the symbolism and meaning connected to documents and conservation tools be utilized to facilitate more community involvement and more engaging conservation?

In focusing on technical solutions, the NPMPA organization may be overlooking social and political factors which both contribute to the problems and complications they identify and could be effective tools in improving their conservation practice. Community organizers often talk about people being motivated by their own best interest. So important questions might be asked about what motivates individuals in the communities and how conservation can be framed as something directly related to their personal interests. These are the types of questions and

endeavors that appear to be overlooked in my data in the interest of pursuing "technical" solutions. However during my time on Nguna there were indications that these issues are being considered. For example, I had two separate conversations, one with a Peace Corps volunteer and the other with a NPMPA staff member in which they said the NPMPA organization was trying to connect to and draw on the women's groups and church groups on the islands. The women's groups and church groups are two of the most efficient organizations on the islands. The plan was to get the leaders or a representative from these groups involved in conservation work, creating a clear avenue for communication and direct connection to an effective and existing social system. This was something that was being discussed and was in the process of being implemented. However, the overall emphasis on this compared to the overall emphasis on management plans and conservations tools remains minimal.

The discourse discussed above may constrain conservation practice on Nguna and Pele and may result in a situation where outside influences gain significant traction. However, there is also the potential that this discourse can be drawn on and used to facilitate more community involvement in conservation practice. The NPMPA leadership is exploring social and political issues shaping conservation on their islands and have plans for drawing on effective and existing social structures to further their efforts. While there are important questions to consider about various factors shaping conservation practice, there is undoubtedly great potential for the NPMPA staff to draw on existing discourses and social structures to improve and expand their conservation efforts.

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