

Pacific Alternatives: Cultural Heritage and Political Innovation in Oceania

Proposal for International Collaborative Project, May 2007

Submitted by **BERGEN PACIFIC STUDIES RESEARCH GROUP**

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Project outline: Cultural Heritage and Political Innovation

In this project, internationally leading scholars, research groups, and institutions in the multi-disciplinary field of Pacific Islands Studies join forces across a broad range of interrelated themes centred on the twin analytical concepts of *cultural heritage* and *political innovation*. The project aims to examine contemporary connections between *expanding perceptions of cultural heritage* (including objects, visual representations and ‘intangible cultural heritage’ and grassroots ‘culturalist’ movements) and the *emergence of new political forms in response to challenges of global political economy* – all in the context of the Pacific Islands region. The concepts of cultural heritage and political innovation will thus serve as an analytical platform for understanding social developments in the Pacific – with a view to providing more general insights into important global processes as nation states are weakened and challenged from both local and global agents. Together these concepts stand for the creative forms of ‘Pacific Alternatives’ which our experienced group of collaborating scholars aims to grasp, analyze and theorize. As addressed from the regional vantage point of the Pacific, and from the combined perspectives of anthropology, political science, archaeology and history, the research topics proposed for this project – in which 19 project investigators pursue a total of 21 sub-projects – hold the combined potential for theoretical and methodological reorientations of globalization studies, for providing fresh perspectives on the field of cultural heritage, and for promoting an integrated approach to understanding the interfaces between culture and politics. A major underlying assumption of our project is that global generalizations are possible on the basis of carefully selected case studies of cultural heritage and political innovation in the Pacific region.

In addition to a strong scholarly network of mutual commitment to joint research effort, involving key institutions in Europe, North America, Australia and the Pacific Islands (wherein most partner institutions contribute considerable research time to the overall budget), the project visions and budget include components of training-and-education, scholarship programmes for students from Pacific Island nations, support of Pacific cultural centres and museums, a programmed sequence of co-funded international conferences, and a wide-ranging dissemination programme including a “virtual museum”.

Conceptual background and hypotheses

“Cultural Heritage” is a concept with its own particular history, deeply anchored in United Nations policy, specifically in UNESCO’s efforts to preserve global cultural diversity (see Eriksen 2001; Rowlands 2002; Cameron and Kenderdine 2007). In recent years the issue of cultural heritage has come to the centre of attention as an important concern worldwide, not only among politicians and policy-makers (Blake 2001), but also in terms of a more general trend in society towards placing value on locally and historically significant spheres in the face of seemingly dwindling nationalism, disempowerment of the state, and the rise of global influence (Trouillot 2001). The Pacific islands region exemplifies this trend particularly well, in a range of innovative and original ways. Although certain long-term patterns of cultural history generate regional similarities, there is generally great diversity in the traditional political and social organization in the Pacific (White & Lindstrom 1997) -- not just between Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia, but also within each sub-region. While Melanesia and to some degree also Micronesia are recognized areas of linguistic, cultural and social

diversity, even Polynesia – which despite the extreme dispersal of its archipelagos and societies is usually considered a more homogeneous region – shows much variety in terms of social organization (cf. Sahlins 1958; Harrison 2000).

From a Pacific perspective, we argue that cultural heritage has always been a basic ontological anchorage of human existence from which people make sense of their world. Cultural heritage relates to specific *peoples*, with specific *collective histories*, linked directly to specific *spatial and social histories*, as well as to *objects* that may stand for these histories. Across the Pacific region – but perhaps most strikingly in the culturally diverse archipelagos of Melanesia – colonial power, the construction of nations, and ideas of the global have been historically formulated within this very potent space of cultural heritage and customary essentialism (e.g., Babadzan 1988). Analyzing the concept of cultural heritage in the context of political innovation will allow us to draw attention away from static issues of “preservation”, and to develop the idea that cultural heritage represents a viable counterforce to external challenges. Hence we see “political innovation” as descriptive of current processes in Melanesia and the wider Pacific region that defy simplistic tropes such as “failed states” (cf. the critique by Kabutaulaka [2004]) or “invention of tradition” (cf. the classic collection by Hobsbawm and Ranger [1983]). Our use of these concepts implies not just social and politically motivated change and transformation, but also invokes the creativity that goes into experimenting with social forms themselves (see Rio 2007). In the constituent activities of the project this form of creativity will be followed in detail with regard to such processes as the drafting and implementation of national cultural policies, the development of rural-urban political forms such as so-called “town chiefs”, creativity within the system of law for the handling of cultural issues, as well as the inherent experimental potential of kinship systems and multitudes of claims made with regard to important sites, land rights or intellectual property rights (IPR). While many such issues in the Pacific was addressed comprehensively in an important yet little-cited volume on cultural policy in Melanesia (Lindstrom & White 1994), the provocative and original observations contained in that volume were never followed up in an ambitious, comparative and theoretical way. We aim to take up these leads in the present-day context, and in that regard are fortunate to have as members of our group of cooperating scholars the editors of that pioneering volume, as well as a number of its contributors. Our focus on a myriad of social movements circumscribing cultural heritage is not looking back to a reified past – but to future or present assemblages of social relations, constituting a huge repertoire of “Pacific Alternatives”. On this background we formulate the following general hypotheses:

- *That a world-wide intensified interest in locally specific places, objects, ideas and social formations develops into a political force that counteracts the de-localizing consequences of globalization. Although we believe that we can expose such tendencies and movements on a global scale, we find the Pacific region to highlight the processes extraordinarily well, and in a strikingly comparatively manner.*
- *That these developments – at the crossroads between the twin concepts of cultural heritage and political innovation – represent, in a exemplary way, viable alternatives to scenarios presented in much current discourse in development studies and seen in present-day political formations*

Project plan: Research agenda and method

With an initial focus on the nations of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (current research foci of the Bergen group and of key partners in this project) and additional components focussed on Micronesia, Hawai'i, Cook Islands and Aotearoa New Zealand, we wish to highlight perspectives on the Pacific that have tended to be obscured by an over-representation in Pacific Studies of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and the central archipelagos of Polynesia. Research by the Bergen research group in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu shows how Island Melanesian idioms of cultural property, claims to copyright, rights to land and sea and customary political legitimacy can accommodate rapid expansions of political and/or

religious movements at the interface between rural communities and the state/nation (Hviding & Bayliss-Smith 2000; Hviding 2003a, 2005, 2006; Rio 2007; Eriksen in press). In the Western Province of Solomon Islands, ancestral skulls and associated assemblages of pre-19th century objects associated with headhunting, hidden in forest shrines for generations, have become powerful means for religious-political movements (acting as corporate resource owners) to regulate timber extraction by Asian companies, while reaping monetary benefits channelled into rural development (Hviding & Bayliss-Smith 2000; Hviding 2004). In Isabel Province of the Solomons, an extraordinary political innovation referred to locally as the “tripod” is emerging as chiefs, church leaders and provincial administration attempt to integrate forms of authority based in custom, Christianity, and the state. This movement refers back to Christian conversion in the late 19th when powerful chiefs allied with the new church produced new forms of expansionist leadership (White 2004). In Vanuatu, national debates about “traditional copyright” to woodcarving designs emerge from intensified, profitable local production of objects for a burgeoning metropolitan “tribal arts” market (Rio 2005, 2007; Geismar 2005). The issue of protecting ‘intellectual property rights’ – the rights to the cultural stock of knowledge, designs and artefacts – has now been put on the global political agenda, a process in which the Vanuatu Cultural Centre has been a frontrunner in designing legislative bills. Also in Vanuatu, the national government in 2007 launches a new banking system which gives rural people the opportunity to save and invest through traditional exchange media such as pigs, woven mats and shell valuables (cf. Huffmann 2005). These combined observations of innovative processes at the crossroads between local culture and national (and transnational) politics transcend established regional theories of “cargo cult” that saw indigenous political movements in colonial times as mimicking Western formations and as desiring Western objects and goods.

A major aim of this project is to trace the wider implications of these insights gained through the study of these truly alternative movements in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands. The additional focus on Micronesia, a part of the Pacific which differs strongly from Melanesia and most of Polynesia in terms of colonial history and present global engagement, gives a significantly wider scope to the project as a whole. This scope is further widened by the inclusion of a study of the Cook Islands and the pan-Pacific activities of the Hawai’i-based Polynesian Voyaging Society.

Our collective argument (cf. the list of partners and projects in **Annex 2.3**), which we aim to investigate and theorize in deep comparative detail, is that in many Pacific movements today, desire is intensely directed towards the potential of local objects, natural resources and cultural concepts, from a wish to retain control over conditions for local life in a globalized world. In this perspective ethnographic collections of Europe – some going back to the 18th century – may also receive renewed interest from Pacific peoples. In rich metropolitan collections, much more extensive than those in Pacific national museums, indigenous scholars and cultural policy makers may find a potential for reclaiming local skills, concepts and images. In this way Pacific islanders “explode” former definitions of “cultural heritage” by drawing the value of heritage from the past into the development of new political formations and religious movements. Interestingly, for much of the British-influenced Pacific this dynamics can be linked to the “Westminster system”, in which a traditional practice is seen as legally valid if it has been practiced since “time immemorial”.

By drawing together a unique group of experienced Pacific scholars from anthropology, political science, history and archaeology, and engaging with museum collections in Europe and the Pacific (including Hawai’i), the project aspires to generate interdisciplinary theoretical models for understanding the above-outlined processes in the Pacific, to drive forward more general understanding of local responses to globalization. The ambition is to form innovative analytical perspectives on connections between indigenous peoples, nations and states, and museums and other collections and representations of artefacts. With an initial strong focus on the Melanesian nations of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, which are major research areas of the Bergen research group, the project will develop wider comparative perspectives (from the Pacific and beyond) on the relationships between the politics

of cultural heritage and the emergence of new formations of power under the challenges of globalization. The overall ambition is to contribute to the formation of fresh perspectives on the connections between indigenous peoples, nations and states, and museums and other collections and representations of artefacts.

In terms of the concrete research agenda of the 20 collaborating scholars in the project certain areas of interest to these developments are given particular attention. The research will be organized around three main issues:

1. *Sites of cultural production and revival.* Social analyses and engagements with some of the most significant sites of cultural and political innovation in the Pacific.
2. *Urban developments with regard to authority.* We find it crucial to assess the role of urban development in relation to the negotiation of traditional concepts and political manoeuvring in institutions of leadership, law and religion.
3. *Claims to ownership of culture.* The third point of entry will be the field of claims as an important social motor in Pacific development. We propose a handful of studies that will go into local discourses about belonging, origins, ownership (also of natural resources) and genealogies – that will highlight the importance of claims and cultural ownership in social process.

A comparative portfolio of projects

Under the first issue we propose to invest research into some of the most significant sites of cultural protection and revival in the Pacific. Nan Madol, a United States National Register of Historic Properties site in Pohnpei, Micronesia (**Hanlon**), road projects in the Micronesian island states of Palau and CNMI, (**Wickler**), the protection of particularly potent designs in Vanuatu and New Zealand (**Geismar**), the revitalization by the Polynesian Voyaging Society of Polynesian navigation and voyaging as a far-flung site of cultural reconceptualization (**Scott**) – all are cases of contested sites in time and space, that in particular and intense ways highlight the potency of cultural heritage across the Pacific region. A close study of the small Polynesian nation of the Cook Islands (**Jonassen**) reveals a form of nation-making grounded most of all in cultural heritage, and a study of Australian Aboriginal cultural production at indigenous festivals in the Pacific region (**Henry**) highlights the interaction among distant parts of Oceania mediated by “intangible heritage”. A project that proposes to construct a digital and virtual space of cultural engagement (**Were/Rio**) – initially piloting museum collections in London and Bergen to be engaged by Pacific islanders – will seek out the potential of cultural ‘sites’ in a completely new way. This could become an important meeting place between major metropolitan museums (including the British Museum, also a project partner) and Pacific islanders.

The next area of attention is that of present urban developments in the Pacific. The establishment in Vanuatu of a “traditional money bank” will be closely followed by one of the bank’s “architects”, with special attention to its role in the urban political economy (Regenvanu). The important role of town chiefs as mediators between “grassroots” and state levels in Vanuatu (**Bolton, Lindstrom**); the role of the Solomon Islands National Museum in cultural policy and state-driven development (**Foana’ota/White**); innovations within Vanuatu’s legal system and its capacity to handle “traditional”, even occult, matters (**Rio**); and the emergence in urban Vanuatu of new evangelist-inspired churches that refer their power to traditional spirituality (**Eriksen**) are all sub-projects on topics that intimately link grassroots movements to state level governance.

The third point of entry will be the issue of ‘ownership to culture’. By proposing, for the culturally complex nation and archipelago of Solomon Islands, a comparative study of a diversity of kinship systems and their adaptation to colonial law with regard to making land claims (**Hviding/Berg**), a study of the ever-increasing tendency to claim “traditional” compensation payments in national settings (**Foana’ota**), a study of how one particular island claims the uniqueness of a specific political

configuration inside an integration of “kastom”, Christianity and state (**White**), and yet another that investigates inter-island links in pre-historic materials (**Roe**), we want to address how formulations of culture in this region always and immediately go in the direction of ownership and claims. A prominent example of such contestation is the Western Solomons war canoe and its role on local, provincial and national levels (**Hviding**). Furthermore, specific attention will be given to the remarkable ways in which Solomon Islanders and other Melanesians actively counter-challenge the assumedly overpowering forces of large-scale resource development like logging and mining (**Kabutaulaka**). Such examples, where local customary landowners appear as anything but passive victims of globalization, include present examples of reformulating materially dispersed cultural heritage (ancestral forest shrines) in centralized “museum” fashion in the Western Solomons (**Hviding/Roe**). This focus also applies to the total political re-constitution of the major Melanesian island of Bougainville (population 170,000) as an autonomous province of Papua New Guinea, following decades of bloody civil war founded precisely in the effects of large-scale resource development (**Wesley-Smith**).

These studies will be carried out according to the methodological requirements of the different disciplinary conventions and in adaptation to the research environments in question. This will include participant observation and in-depth ethnographic studies in localized environments, archaeological field site methods of excavation and technologically advanced registration, the study of public discourses around the cultural heritage sites, the recording of people’s narratives and localized stories of origins and claims, interviews with significant actors within political and legal apparatuses, the use of surveys and databases for the collection of statistics, and the study of a broad range of archive material on issues of the state, politics, law and religion. We envisage that in the ongoing collective dialogue of project scholars, fresh approaches to multi- and trans-disciplinary debates and methodologies will develop.

Analytical templates: Centres and peripheries in social movements

The peoples and societies of the Pacific islands relate to the global in highly specific ways, sometimes with an efficiency and astuteness that defy their so-called isolated island status. As pointed out by prominent Pacific scholar Epeli Hau’ofa (1994), the Pacific is a “Sea of Islands”, not “Islands in a Far Sea”. Pacific peoples’ relationships with outside worlds, beyond the home island, have historically involved huge distances and partly unknown worlds. Global space is therefore not difficult for islanders to envision, and the ocean mediates external links which are direct and uncluttered by obstacles, be they land, other cultures, or large-scale bureaucracies. As such, the people of the Pacific islands region are, and have always been globally orientated.

It is therefore only natural for various Christian leaders, be it in Vanuatu or the Solomons, to conceive of a global spiritual unity of fellow religious members, in ways not too different from how religion was viewed in early renaissance Europe. Nor is it strange for the Polynesian Voyaging Society in Hawai’i to re-territorialize vast areas of the Pacific Ocean, underlining that past Pacific colonizations were founded not in coincidence but in conscious and innovative communication and migration.

In the nations particularly in focus under this project, populations are composed of a smaller or greater number of indigenous peoples and governed by representatives of exactly those peoples, or a selection of them. Rather than a “minority issue” used to front struggles against a repressive state or colonial power, the concept of cultural heritage thus becomes an issue that ranges across the local to the national - and there is a strong potential for the use of cultural issues in all forms of political activity, and cultural heritage mediates the rather short gaps between the local, the national and, indeed, the global, between centres and peripheries – in situations of “compressed globalization” (Hviding 2003). In a number of nations (Vanuatu and Cook Islands are interesting and very different examples) the postcolonial project has to a large degree been grounded in cultural policy, whereby government institutions responsible for cultural affairs take a strong hand in nation-building. The Vanuatu Cultural Centre is a unique example of this trend. But whereas some Pacific island nation states do engage

forcefully in cultural projects, the machinery of world capitalism and the new, homogenizing global system of “empire” (Hardt & Negri 2000) have more generally made it difficult for the small island states of this region to form stable political structures. On the one hand, we are thereby confronted with an uncertain situation of fragile states, with coups d’état, law and order problems and violent tension in a number of Pacific island nations such as Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and, most recently, Tonga. On the other hand, in these seemingly chaotic contexts new and radically different forms of organizations appear as alternative social movements with political potential, as when church organizations and locally based hierarchical orders are seen taking over the tasks of the deteriorating nation-state. It is crucial to understand how local values are articulated under these significant transformations of power.

Therefore we need to think twice about these processes of social life. We aim to identify, analyze, explain and compare alternatives exemplified by the often successful organization of people’s lives in local social movements. This represents a change in perspective, away from an all-too-common assumption that the development of social life can be deduced from national surveys, GNPs, rate of development and political stability. We also aim to shift the perspective away from what has been the common anthropological tendency in regionally oriented studies – the grounding of the understanding of development, culture and society in essentialist views of “traditions”, independently of colonial history, state levels or international relations. In particular we need to rethink our assumptions about how the local/grassroots level is configured in relation to Pacific models of the social world. In our experience in this region – even on the level of the state, whether in Parliament, in law or in national media - when it comes down to reaching decisions, seeking crucial knowledge or locating origins that are important, this will be sought inside local environments, at the village level and at the inter-personal level. This is contrary to systems in India, China or Southeast Asia where traditional kingdoms provided social process with a centre in the cosmic sense as well as in a political sense (Tambiah 1977). With regard to social decision making processes, configuration of cause and effect in political life, and with regard to the tendency of locating importance at the localized level down to the scale of the person or cultural objects, we see here an interesting challenge to contemporary thinking around centre and periphery (see also Biersack 1991).

So far we can formulate a hypothesis that what we see is a “no centre, no periphery” situation wherein the varying distribution and composition of crucial persons (a lineage headman, a diviner, a knowledgeable person, a church elder, the holder of a potent right to an object, a magician; i.e. potentially anyone, but in practice always someone specific), objects (potent cultural heritage), or places (as the locations of origins and rights) will determine any decision-making process on any level of the nation. This bottom-up perspective of political life can in fact serve to exemplify an alternative way of organizing the state. In recent years we have seen – especially in Fiji (with its coups d’état and the support from the chiefly ranks) and Vanuatu (with the importance of the National Council of Chiefs vis-à-vis parliament, government and legal system) – a notable discomfort and discord with a centre/periphery democratic model of political life, where ‘majority rules’ within the parliament as a centre of political authority. In these nations a model based on chiefly authority, and above all, authority located on the level of the individual person as a beholder of rights and knowledge, works in parallel to the democratic state. This is likely to continue to stir up situations of tension.

In this project we will therefore look for the potential in local social movements, persons and objects for influencing decision making processes on the national levels of these Pacific island countries. We will reformulate assumptions about centre and periphery to propose a closer fit with observable everyday political processes in the Pacific. It is our hypothesis that a closer understanding of social life in the Pacific today, as these social dynamics are constituted at the margins of geopolitically dominant powers, reveal a range of processes relevant to understanding general social transformations in the present world. With “social movement” we understand a broad spectrum of organizations which, in shorter or longer term, mobilize people around common desires, objects, ideals

or goals (see also Bolton 2006, 2007; Eriksen 2006; Geismar 2005; Were 2003, 2005). We saw this already in relation to the early indigenous Melanesian reactions to colonialist influence, conventionally labelled as ‘cargo cult movements’ (Burridge 1960; Lawrence 1964; Worsley 1968; Lindstrom 1993; Jebens 2004). We have also seen this in relation to the concept of “kastom” that rapidly became a particularly Melanesian response to the global nostalgia for historical roots, issues of cultural heritage and issues of belonging. But maybe surprisingly for outsiders who tended to reify ‘cultural heritage’ in terms of preservation, site-protection and the nationalist institution of the museum, Melanesian “kastom” movements were first and foremost mobilizing force through putting quite different things into focus, such as political leadership (see Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Lindstrom 1990; White & Lindstrom 1997, Bolton 1998) and the cosmological knowledge contained in locally held sacred objects or substances (see Keesing 1992), installing an order of “Government” and “Law” into the context of ancestor worship and religion (see Lattas 2006) and often creating a moral and emotional terrain of social relations on the ground level (see Akin 2004). We also believe there is continuation here in terms of social movements grounded in new charismatic churches throughout the region (see Strathern and Stewart 1997; Strathern, Stewart and Robbins 2001; Robbins 2004; Jebens 2005). Although these movements follow a global wave of charismatic Christianity, they also appear as expressions of local unity aspirations in the face of state disruption and uncertainty. Recent exploratory research by a number of the project scholars (Eriksen, Rio, Hviding, White, Lindstrom) shows how church-based movements, also long-established indigenous ones, now take over responsibilities of schooling and social welfare, arousing local hopes for the future.

In these situations it is the innate potential of the indigenous community – in people’s search for truth and well-being - that is at centre. Extending from these currents we see a potential of interconnection between religion and politics – between cultural revival and future expectations. This observation opens an analytical common ground for understanding Pacific Islands development. The project’s combined range of research aims to develop a conceptual understanding of the social dynamics of social movements across the Pacific, including the social forces, the religious or cosmological dimensions, and the issues of multi-level political manoeuvring. We have to take into account to what degree the Pacific social environment works in extension to global tendencies related to modernity (see Knauff 2002, Robbins and Wardlow 2005), but we aim in particular to locate in these social movements the originality, and innovation in the many alternative ways with which Pacific islanders approach global challenges.

Organization, strategic relevance and cooperation

The present application is initiated by the *Bergen Pacific Studies* research group (website: www.pacific.uib.no). The group was established in 2005 at the Department of Social Anthropology under the leadership of Professor Edvard Hviding (**Annex 2.1**). This institutionalization of a long-term regional research focus came as a result of years of dedicated recruitment in the context of a successful external grant record and wide international collaboration, and the group has shown a high recent publishing profile (**Annex 2.2**).

Project management and financial responsibility rests with the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, as attested to by the Project Leader’s current position as Chair of that Department. It is fundamentally international in scope and involves leading centres of Pacific scholarship in the UK, the USA and Australia and key institutions of cultural heritage management in Pacific Islands nations. We believe that the group of participating scholars (from Norway, United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Cook Islands, and representing eight universities, three national institutions of cultural heritage, as well as the East-West Center) is a unique gathering with a strong commitment to research both of deep disciplinary, wide interdisciplinary and immediately practical scope (**Annex 2.3**). This is attested to by the strong combined record of long-term research and cultural heritage work of the 19 participating scholars.

The development of this project **complies with the University of Bergen's strategy for 2005-2010** which emphasizes globally comparative development-related research, increased international collaboration, and the consolidation and expansion of research groups. The Pacific focus of the planned project implies valuable comparative contributions to international development studies at the University of Bergen and beyond.

The phase leading up to the present application was funded by the RCN (BILAT—"Bilateral cooperation") and the University of Bergen, and started in early 2006 with introductory meetings with international partners (some funded by the institutions through already existing travel plans). It was decided to move towards a large collaborative research proposal addressing urgent scholarly and political issues in the Pacific Islands region. A major conference at the British Museum (*Solomon Islands Art*) was then co-convened in October 2006 by Edvard Hviding and Professor Nicholas Thomas of the University of Cambridge. Having co-funded this important event, the Bergen group organized an immediate follow-up for the participation of indigenous scholars and policy-makers from Solomon Islands. At a week-long symposium at the University of Bergen they joined a group of Vanuatu scholars and policy-makers as well as representatives of key partner institutions (The British Museum, University of Hawai'i, James Cook University). These successive events in London and Bergen produced an unprecedented level of dialogue among scholars, collections and institutions. An edited book of contributions to the Bergen symposium is under preparation for submission in 2007 to an international publisher, and in early 2007 follow-up discussions were held as members of the Bergen group visited collaborators at the University of Hawai'i and the British Museum. These discussions included ideas of co-funding and submission of additional applications to US, UK and Australian funding agencies for support for related activities of research and training that will tie in with, and add value to, the present application. Key aspects of a detailed **dissemination plans** were also clarified.

Ethical aspects and gender perspectives

All activities under the project will follow the established **ethical guidelines** for the involved disciplines and different research localities. All involved universities have a long research record in the Pacific region and high expertise in the ethical aspects of such research. Moreover, with key national cultural institutions and actors (notably in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Cook Islands) as confirmed project partners, ethical challenges are sure to be addressed and observed. Moreover the involvement of Pacific national institutions ensures that research projects are screened and research permits issued in appropriate ways. We add that a main aim of the project is to generate policy-relevant perspectives on culture and politics which have a closer fit to the everyday lives of Pacific Islanders.

The composition of the group of project scholars and the combined research record will place gender perspectives at the centre. Participants **Bolton, Eriksen, Geismar, Regenvanu, Henry, Jonassen, and Were** each has a distinct research record explicitly engaged with gender issues in culture and politics. In particular, Bolton (2003) has been central in documenting and theorizing the male-dominated Melanesian field of "kastom" from women's perspective. The participation of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre with its women's fieldworker programme will promote the recruitment into the project network of promising young female scholars. At the University of Bergen, the recruitment of students and junior scholars into the research group is already dominated by female scholars.

Budget and co-funding

This is a large-scale and complex project with a four-year time frame, involving the stated commitment of ten international institutions in partnership with the *Bergen Pacific Studies* research group. Institutional partners confirm their participation in **Annexes 4.1 to 4.10**. Significantly, the institutional partners commit to the project the research time of a total of 11 faculty members, each estimated here to an average of 0,5 years over the total duration of the project. Such commitment from institutional partners accounts for nearly 25% of the total project budget of NOK 16.174.000. Smaller co-funding is

also committed by partners (such as conference fundig from the University of Hawai'i). The total sum of NOK 9.823.762 applied for from the Research Council of Norway covers **2 scholarships for MA students** and **1 doctoral fellowship**, all to be recruited by the Bergen Pacific Studies group under the themes of the project. In addition the application covers **1 postdoctoral** fellowship (to be advertised under the project themes) and **shorter fellowships for senior scholars and visiting researchers**. For the two tenured faculty members in the Bergen Pacific Studies group (Hviding and Rio) compnestaion for teaching and other duties is sought so as to allow for full-time research throughout the duration of the project (for details see **Annex 5.1**). Other expenses included in the budget under the sum applied for from the Research Council include 2 international conferences, travel and fieldwork for all participating scholars, and archaeological and audiovisual equipment and operating costs. A unique component of the budget is the provision for a special "Norwegian-Pacific Islands Scholarship" for one undergraduate and one graduate student from a Pacific Islands nation, to be jointly administered by the University of Bergen and the East-West Center, Honolulu (see **Annex 5.2**, and **Annex 4.3** for this special scholarship).

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