

**A Critical Ethnography of Dispossession, Indigenous Sovereignty and Knowledge  
Production in Resistance in Samoa**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Samoa's independence in 1962 came with high expectations for sovereignty and freedom from colonial domination. The continued struggle against material and social dispossession during fifty-four years of independence, however, suggests that the tentacles of colonialism are hard to dislodge. Against the backdrop of neoliberal globalization (contemporary capitalism), structural reforms target Samoa's financial and agricultural sectors with a sole emphasis on promoting the economic use of customary land. The current project of colonial capital moves to privatize and commodify customary land tenure, which for many *matai* (chief) threatens alienation of customary land and has deep implications for *fa'aSamoa* (Samoan way) and *fa'amatai* (political system of *matai*). These intrusions have been contested by *matai* in and through spaces of learning and social action, reindigenizing *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* to rearticulate power relations and engage in struggles to protect customary land and Samoa's sovereignty.

The primary purpose of this research was to critically examine the continuities and the mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession (ABD) or the colonial capitalist infiltration of Samoa's political economy and traditional governance systems and ways of life. The study also sought to elaborate on modes of traditional organization, resistance, and learning in social action or the struggle for control of customary land, labour, food production, and political sovereignty in Samoa. A critical ethnography, informed by an anticolonial and Marxist analytic, guided the analysis of colonial capitalist domination and attempted disarticulations of Samoan ways of knowing and doing, including the spaces of learning in struggle and social action to reindigenize *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*.

## PREFACE

This thesis is an original work by Naomi Gordon. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Food Sovereignty as Agrarian Resistance in Samoa”, No. 00050488, September 12, 2014.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background to the Study.....	1
Statement of Purpose and Research Questions .....	6
Significance of the Research.....	7
Research Methodology .....	8
Limitations and Delimitations of Research.....	9
Mapping out the Thesis.....	10
CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY OF DISPOSSESSION, COLONIALISM AND INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Pre-independence Samoa .....	16
Post-independence Samoa .....	32
<i>Fa'aSamoa</i> and <i>Fa'amatai</i> .....	38
Colonialism and Neoliberal Globalization.....	42
Sovereignty, Resistance and Learning .....	46
Summary .....	50
CHAPTER THREE: CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY .....	50
Introduction.....	51
Critical Ethnography.....	53
Towards an anticolonial and Marxist Analysis.....	57
The Research Journey .....	62
Positionality and the locus of enunciation .....	64
Research Site: Apia, Samoa.....	67
Gaining Access: Strategies to recruit participants .....	67
Research Participants .....	69
Methods: Data Collection .....	72
<i>Field notes: Participant observation</i> .....	72
<i>Interviews</i> .....	73

<i>Documents</i> .....	75
Data Analysis.....	79
Trustworthiness.....	81
Summary.....	82
CHAPTER FOUR: TERRAINS OF DISPOSSESSION.....	83
Repudiation of <i>Fa'aSamoa</i> and <i>Fa'amatai</i> .....	84
<i>Cooptations</i> .....	85
<i>Colonial paternalisms and Imposing democratic institutions</i> .....	89
<i>The church and Fa'aSamoa and Fa'amatai</i> .....	91
Colonial Law, Land, Finacialization and Dispossession in Samoa.....	93
<i>Land, Law, and Finacialization</i> .....	97
<i>Colonial and Foreign Laws</i> .....	99
<i>Food, Labour and Trade</i> .....	105
Thematic Discussion.....	111
Summary.....	114
CHAPTER FIVE: TERRAINS OF RESISTANCE.....	115
Reassertions of <i>fa'aSamoa</i> and <i>fa'amatai</i> .....	116
Spaces of Learning and Social Action.....	118
<i>Collective Agency and Tacit Knowledge</i> .....	120
<i>Learning in Action</i> .....	124
<i>Learning through the Fono Council</i> .....	127
Future Considerations.....	130
Thematic Discussions.....	133
Summary.....	134
CHAPTER SIX: REVISITATIONS AND CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.....	136
Personal Reflections on Doing Critical Ethnography in Samoa.....	136
Revisiting the Statement of Purpose and Research Questions.....	141
Emerging Questions and Areas for Further Study.....	145
REFERENCES.....	147
Appendix A: Information Form.....	165
Appendix B: Consent Form.....	167
Appendix C: Interview Schedule.....	168

## GLOSSARY OF SAMOAN TERMS

This glossary outlines the meaning of Samoan words used in this research study. As there are many meanings for a particular Samoan word, the terms and concepts listed below were determined in the contexts in which they were shared or defined.

*Āiga* – family

*Alofa* – love, compassion

*Ali'i* – high chief

*Fa'aaloalo* – respect

*Fa'alavelave* - obligation

*Fa'alupega* – customary address and salutation

*Fa'amatai* – the organization and practices of the *matai*

*Fanua* – communal land

*Fa'aSamoa* – in accordance with Samoan customs and practices

*Fale* - House

*Folo a le Nu'u* – village council

*Fono a Faipule* - council of lawmakers

*Fono a Ta'imua* - council of the front line

*I'inei* – home

*Itū mālo* – customary political districts comprised of villages

*Mālō* – reigning authority, government

*Mana* – power, divine authority

*Matai* – chief, titleholder of an *āiga*, either an *ali'i* or *tulāfalē*

*Nu'u* –village, polity

*Papalagi/Palagi* – foreigner

*Pule* – power, political authority

*Sufa* – high title

*Tafa'ifā* – paramount *ali'i* holding four of the *pāpā* titles

Tautua - service

*Tulāfalē*– orator, high talking chief

*Va tapuia* - sacred relationship

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Background to the Study

Colonial capital penetration of economies and ways of life are violent realities for indigenous peoples across the globe. For Samoa, the colonial capital project of domination and dispossession dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with the arrival of mercantilists, commercial entrepreneurs and Christian missionaries. A period typified by new forms of economic organization and activity emphasizing agricultural production and expansion into market economies through colonial division of labour, commodification of land and resources, and introduction of European ideological hegemony. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Samoa would fall under the rule of the German colonial regime whose endeavours concentrated on expanding agricultural cash economies, increasing individualization of land and access to resources through mechanisms of dispossession that labored to weaken Samoan kinship rules and the power of *fa'aSamoa* (Samoan way) and *fa'amatai* (Samoan system of chiefs). With the advent of the First World War, German administration ceded control over Samoa to New Zealand beginning a new wave of dispossession, introducing civilian public service and a democratic government system, enforcing private law and doctrines of constitutional order and continued efforts to weaken Samoan customary social and political systems, ways of life and knowing (Davidson, 1967). In 1962, Samoa would become the first sovereign Pacific nation and would face new challenges from international and regional economic actors and experience new forms of legal and financial mechanisms of dispossession. In the current period, infiltration of colonial capital into indigenous society, commodification and enclosure of the commons and normalization of racialized bodies are occurring through mechanisms of the state and agents of neoliberal

globalization (contemporary capitalism). Neoliberalism, as characterized by Barch (2002) is “a more sophisticated global marketing and institutionalizing regime” (p. 67). For Harvey (2005), neoliberalism is the new imperialism entailing destruction vis-a-vis accumulation by dispossession (ABD), new predatory practices and mechanisms of dispossession, resulting in “the wholesale commodification of nature in all its forms. The commodification of cultural forms, histories and intellectual creativity entails wholesale dispossession...and the corporatization and privatization of public assets, constitute a new wave of enclosing the commons”(p. 75). The mechanisms of ABD, central to the functioning of neoliberalism, “needs to be viewed as integral to global capitalist development everywhere...[where] the accumulation process has been both an extensive (geographical) and intensive (social) frontier” (Glassman, 2006, p. 622). While dispossession in its multitude of forms works to sever Samoan social and political relations, historically and today, the systems and practices of *fa’asamoa* and *fa’amatai* have attenuated the infiltrations of coloniality and capital into Samoa’s cultural and political economy, as is the case in Samoa’s current struggle for protecting customary land. In Samoa, ABD as described by Harvey (2005) is seen in the endeavors of the state and the Asian Development Bank to mobilize and securitize constitutionally protected customary land for economic use (Asian Development Bank, project 46512-001, 2013; Ravuvu and Thornton, 2015). For some Samoan *matai*, this project is tantamount to the alienation of customary land and works to displace customary laws and practices that govern and protect Samoan land and peoples, ostensibly threatening Samoans sociopolitical sovereignty (Iati, 2009).

While Samoan peoples heeded high expectations for sovereignty from colonial domination with independence in 1962, continued struggles against social and material dispossession expose a recurrence of colonial capital domination to undermine, disarticulate, and

dispossess Samoan ways of knowing and living, flourishing in Samoa's fifty-four years of independent rule. For McClintock (1992) "despite the hauling down of colonial flags...revamped economic imperialism has ensured that America and the former European colonial powers have become richer, while, with a tiny scattering of exceptions, their ex-colonies have become poorer" (p. 94). As suggested by Mignolo (2000) the post-independence condition is profuse with the ideology of coloniality, which "has not weakened or wavered, despite the 'end' of territorial colonialism in the post -World War II era" (p. x). Bargh (2002) submits that the relevant questions are not whether there was "a clear break [from colonization] or something of a reincarnation from the past...rather what aspects of colonialism has changed and what has stayed the same" (p. 66-67).

Despite neoliberal discourses of inevitability, interventions and reformations are dependent upon the state and involve national elites, described as a process of 'recolonization,' the "embedding and re-embedding of neoliberalism utilizing multiple avenues including institutional, state, corporate and intellectual pressure" (Bargh, 2002, p. 252). Harvey (2005) similarly suggests, "the state, with its monopoly of violence and definitions of legality, plays a crucial role in both backing and promoting these processes" with accumulation by dispossession offering new avenues of exploitation (p. 74). In the case of Samoa, the state - governed by the Human Rights Protection Party - has been lauded by international economic institutions as a successful example of neoliberal reform, designed and implemented through a series of national development strategies (Asian Development Bank, 2005, 2011, 2013, 2015; Samoa Government, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2016). Among the many interventions and reforms, the state focuses on developing the private sector, attracting foreign capital, streamlining the public sector, incentivizing commercial agriculture, and expanding communications, manufacturing, and

tourism (Asian Development Bank, 2002; Samoa Government, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2016). As written large in World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Asian Development Bank literature, customary land in Samoa is viewed as an untapped resource, representing a secure option for investments and revenue (Asian Development Bank, 2002; IMF, 2013). Customary land in Samoa by large is not perceived as a commodifiable resource, rather as articulated by Fairbairn-Dunlop (2000) land is understood in a saying:

Samoa is like a fish that has been divided – every piece of land has been allocated and every person knows his or her place for all time. The *fa'aSamoa* is the *matai*; the *matai* is the family is the land. The land is the village; the village is the family, is the *matai*, is the *fa'aSamoa*. (p. 63)

Hawaiian scholar, activist and poet, Haunani-Kay Trask (1993) articulates this sense of connectivity and bond between people and land:

But because the West has lost any cultural understanding of the bond between people and land, it is not possible to know this connection through Western culture. This means that the history of indigenous people cannot be written from within Western culture. Such a story is merely the West's story of itself. Our story remains unwritten. Its rest within the culture, which is inseparable from the land. To know this is to know our history. To write this is to write of the land and the people who are born from her. (p. 120)

For the agents of colonial capital, land is an extractable resource for accumulation and by enveloping the commons, liberalization reconfigures indigenous land tenures, shifting collective subsistence production to individualist commodification, severing spiritual and cultural connectedness to land, resulting in generational cultural dislocation and disarticulation of

indigeneity (Araghi & Karides, 2012; Escobar, 1998; Firth, 2000). Alfred and Cornthassel (2005) postulate that in the “era of postmodern imperialism and manipulations by shape-shifting colonial powers; the instruments of domination are evolving and inventing new methods to erase Indigenous histories and senses of place” (p. 601). In keeping with Harvey’s (2005) account of ABD, this stripping of indigeneity works in tandem with exploitative legal, commercial, environmental and financial formations that generate structures of economic and social inequality and political dependency. Thus reconstructing the impoverished, ethnically endangered, and geopolitically vulnerable ‘other’ necessitating direction from a ‘wiser’ colonial authority and implementation of regulatory frameworks that acculturate indigenous knowledges, supplanting “indigenous structures with its own” (Bargh, 2002, p. 252) for the objective of economic and social growth (Dei, 2002; Esteva, 2003; Fenelon & Hall, 2008). Samoa’s current customary land for development scheme typifies this process of violent acculturation.

While the state and globalizing institutions prescribe structural and social reforms, Samoan *matai* engage in anticolonial analysis uncovering colonial-capitalist imbrications underpinning neoliberal reformations and development schemes. As Alfred (2009) reminds us, that while analytics on colonialism aim to expose “resource exploitation of indigenous lands, racism, expropriation of lands, extinguishment of rights” (p. 43), it is more than categorical, it is lived and is understood as an infliction of harm onto peoples and communities. Reindigenization of *fa’amatai* and *fa’aSamoa* emerge in these spaces of learning and modes of organization and resistance. Historically and today, these sociopolitical systems have attenuated infiltrations into Samoan ontologies and epistemologies, stymieing attempts to dissolve customary land tenure and subsistence economies for individualized ownership/property rights, agricultural cash economies, and wage labour (Firth, 2000; Meleisea, 1987). In the current struggle to protect

customary land, *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* are explored as tangible avenues of resistance and spaces of learning to contest ABD.

In the sections that follow, I situate my arguments around the understanding that Samoa's experience of social and material dispossession is a recurrent process inextricably linked to the historical and continued contexts of colonialism and global capitalism. While there are risks of romanticizing customary practices and systems, Samoan articulations and reassertions of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* as resurgence of collective identities and self-realized ways of doing and being recovers narratives of the past and charts a future of indigenous design predicated upon Samoan values and principles - refutation to domination (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999).

### **Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

Questions of history are always relevant to contemporary indigenous struggles as is the recognition of the particular histories and geographies of indigenous communities in relationship to coloniality and indigeneity (Alfred, 2007; Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; Trask, 1993). Samoa's current struggle to protect customary land and sovereignty needs to be understood as emerging from the interrelated and historical contexts of colonialism and neoliberal globalization (contemporary capitalism) advancing the idea of dispossession as a recurrent process occurring differentially across space and time. This analytic and the experiences and memories of Samoa's cultural and political subjugation and emancipation together suggest a historically situated and place-based response which critiques the continuities and discontinuities of the colonial capital project while enabling a potentially more complete understanding of colonized life in Samoa (Rabaka, 2003).

This research set out to explore and critique the continuities of the project of colonial capital and the mechanisms of ABD that endeavor to infiltrate Samoa's political economy and

erode *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai*. The study also sought to elaborate on the terrains of resistance, modes of traditional organization and learning and social action in the struggle over control of customary land, labour, food production, and political sovereignty in Samoa. This research is guided by the following questions: (1) What is the Samoan analysis of historical and contemporary forms of colonialism? (2) How has colonial capital restructured systems of land tenure, food production, social and political institutions, and culture? (3) What is Samoan resistance to colonial capital, including the role of learning and social action?

### **Significance of the Research**

ABD as typified by Harvey (2005) entails predatory processes, which for indigenous peoples cuts across sociopolitical contexts infiltrating and displacing traditional economies and knowledges, normalizing the concepts inherent in privatization and the market economy. In the case of Samoa, the state has worked in concert with the Asian Development Bank to privatize and commodify collectively owned land, suppress subsistence economies and traditional practices, and entrench credit systems vis-a-vis collateral mortgaging. The usurping of customary landowner rights, however is familiar terrain for Samoa and is linked to colonial agendas that endeavored to displace customary land tenure and subsistence economies for individualized ownership/property rights, agricultural cash economies, and wage labour. This research is part of theoretical/conceptual endeavors that advance the idea of dispossession as a recurring process inextricable from the historical contexts of colonial capital.

This research also contributes to Samoan and Pacific research/scholarship, as Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) argues - the way forward for indigeneity rests on the necessity to decolonize the mind and design a language of critique that embraces a multitude of identities and plurality of knowledges – rooted within Pacific values and ethics. Samoa's experience of structural and

social dispossession manifests across multiple social dislocations and power relations and is articulated through Samoan analytics in spaces of learning and social action, contributing to understanding the simultaneous spaces of Samoan reindigenization of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* (Finau, Wainiqolo, and Cuboni, 2004; Huffer and Qalo, 2004). These spaces illustrate a cartography of colonial capital, marked by points of Samoan compliance, negotiation, and resistance. Understanding Samoan analytics, experiences and responses implores a deeper awareness and consideration of the structures and practices that challenge coloniality and ABD. It demands the articulation of a Samoan sociopolitical geography of space, founded upon the principles and values that govern *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* – and which can be expressed as terrains of indigenous resistance.

This research is also of personal significance. Over the course of my academic history, I have engaged with scholarship that works to examine and surface uneven power relations, social injustice, capitalist domination and colonial oppression, particularly in relationship to indigenous struggles and resistance to the project of colonial capital. Being a Samoan-Canadian, the opportunity to engage and explicate the continuities of coloniality and social and material dispossession as experienced and understood by Samoan *matai*, enabled me as a member of the Samoan diaspora to contribute to learning and social action on the ground. This study's focus on land and sociocultural and political dispossession is of great personal importance, as land is the physical space where Samoan culture and identity are rooted and attempts to jettison customary laws and practices that safeguard Samoan peoples and land necessitates response through shared knowledge and learning of which this study can contribute.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employed a critical ethnographic methodology, given its emphasis on focusing

on power relations with an explicit political and emancipatory orientation to address systemic cultural and structural inequalities (Carspecken and Walford, 2001). Against this methodological backdrop, key participants were identified who are part of the *matai* system and who were open to sharing their experiences and engagements with global and local forces of structural and social dispossession, including members of nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, agricultural coops, village farmers and community members. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews occurred, on site on the main island of Upolu, Samoa with 14 participants, in conjunction with on-going exploration and dialogue via email over the course of 2014/2015. Document collection and analysis further provided historical and current insight that highlighted sociopolitical contexts and corroborated findings.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of Research**

The focus of this research was to examine Samoan analysis of colonial capital dispossession of customary land and traditional ways of knowing and living, including labour and food production. The focus also included gaining insights on Samoan resistance, including the role of learning and social action. As such, it was important to undertake this study in Samoa, which presented unique challenges. Researching and writing about the social and material relations, peoples and spaces of Samoa, alone and in the context of a critical ethnography, is not a neutral exercise, particularly as I am half-Samoan. My Samoan heritage was of both benefit and limitation. Given that I was raised outside of *fa'aSamoa* with minimal experiential knowledge of Samoan cosmology or the expectations and obligations of *fa'amatai*, there were limitations to uncovering the nuances and complexities of Samoan onto-epistemic horizons and knowledges that have shaped the social and material landscapes of the nation and its people.

Language presented another limitation, as I do not speak Samoan, which restricted

interviews to *matai* who spoke English. While interpreters were available, I was limited financially, only once enlisting the services of an English-speaking relative of an interviewee. As an intrinsic component of Samoan culture, language meaning, expressions, and intent are not always translatable in full force, as many participants noted challenge to finding appropriate translations given the distinctions and multiple meanings of Samoan words.

A delimitation was the restriction of time. If more time was afforded on site, I would have ideally included and connected with more *matai*, building deeper relationships to engage and share experiences, analytics, and critiques. This would have enabled for a better understanding of village and urban life, subsistence and wage economies and the ability to dive deeper into *fa'amatai* and *fa'aSamoa*. While on site research was limited, a wider ethnographic snapshot including historical background, newspaper articles, government reports and ongoing connections, engagement and discussion with participants via email occurred over a year. Through critical ethnographic tools, I was able to connect with the everyday narratives of Samoan people, which offer a counter-discourse against colonial representation vis-à-vis the reconstruction of self-defined and lived experiences and narratives. Overall, the quality of data and analysis produced for this thesis is rich in personal experience, knowledge, and deeper understandings of Samoan life. While this research provides preliminary analysis into Samoan resistance to colonial capital and control over land, labour, food production, and sociopolitical sovereignty there is room for further research development in this area.

### **Mapping out the Thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One introduced the research study, its purpose, significance and limitations, broadly situating the current struggle around protecting customary land, traditional economies, and ways of life. Fundamentally, this chapter introduced

the idea of dispossession as a recurrent process suggesting the experiences of Samoa's cultural and political subjugation and emancipation are a historically situated and place-based response analyzing the continuities and discontinuities of the colonial project in Samoa. Chapter Two provides relevant literature related to colonial capitalist machinations and resistance to such in relation to pre and post-independent Samoa with emphasis on colonial capital and ABD. Colonialism and neoliberal globalization (contemporary capitalism), the politics of sovereignty, resistance and social learning are explored as key concepts germane to this critical ethnography. Chapter Three discusses critical ethnography as the research methodology articulating its capacity for unsettling neutrality and assumptions by revealing the overt and covert operations of power and domination, contributing to emancipatory action. This chapter also establishes an anticolonial and Marxist analysis that shaped this research study. The research journey, researcher positionality, and process involved in conducting critical ethnography research in Apia, Samoa, as well as the processes of data collection and analysis fill out the remainder of Chapter Three. Chapter Four introduces the terrains of dispossession and repudiation of *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai*, detailing the thematic findings of *matais* around customary land, labour, food production, and sociopolitical sovereignty. Closing Chapter Four is a discussion on emergent themes on colonial capital and ABD. Chapter Five presents the terrains of resistance and reassertion of *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai* outlining the spaces of learning and social action and reindigenization of *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai*. Chapter Five similarly finishes with a discussion on emergent themes on the politics of sovereignty, resistance, and learning and social action. Chapter Six concludes by discussing personal reflections on doing critical ethnography in Samoa, revisiting the research purpose and questions, and concludes with emerging questions and areas of further study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### History of Dispossession, Colonialism, and Indigenous Sovereignty

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, Samoa's historical development and experiences with colonialism and neoliberal globalization (contemporary capitalism) and Samoan modes of organizing resistance are considered across two epochal moments: pre-independence and post-independence. While there is considerable literature on Samoa, early historical accounts rely on interpretations of Christian missionaries and colonial administrative records. As such, these accounts were considered within the temporal and imperialist worldviews they were written in. This chapter provides a historical and conceptual backdrop for this study, contextualizing Samoan onto-epistemic orientations and horizons expressed in *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* as foundations and formations of indigeneity. The concepts of colonialism and neoliberal globalization (contemporary capitalism) are also examined, as racialized systems of power underpinning ABD, conceptually framing Chapter Four, terrains of dispossession. At this intersection of dispossession exists a parallel process of struggle against colonial capital intrusions in spaces of learning and social action, facilitating resurgence of collective identities and self-realized ways of doing and being through the politics of sovereignty and resistance, which establishes the conceptual groundings for Chapter Five, terrains of resistance. These analytics contextualize the main assumptions of this study expressed in the adoption of a critical anticolonial and Marxist analysis that has shaped this research and which is addressed in Chapter Three.

On January 1, 1962, Samoa became the first sovereign Polynesian state of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The raising of the Western Samoa flag by Tupa Tamese Maeole and Malitua Tanumafili II (the joint head of state) marked the end of New Zealand's colonial rule. While largely overwritten by post-WWII decolonization discourses, Samoa's story of sovereignty

proliferated in conjunction with the Samoan *Mau* movement against colonial intrusions and structural violence under the mantra, *Samoa mo Samoa* – Samoa for Samoa. Now 55 years later, the struggles of Samoa are fastened to the neoliberal project of structural and economic reformation, which is resolute to the expansion of capital and replete with continued ‘coloniality of power’ (Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2000). As signatory to neoliberalizing policies, Samoa’s government led by the Human Rights Protection Party promotes land and labour, as instruments for economic growth and social prosperity (Strategy for the Development of Samoa, 2014). Over the last two decades “a joint effort between the Asian Development Bank and the Government of Samoa” concentrated on reformations “to mobilize and securitize customary land” under the Asian Development Bank project named *Promoting Economic Use of Customary Land* (Ravuvu and Thorton, 2015, p. 87). For many Samoan *matai*, this project threatens to undermine customary land tenure and ownership rights, which has deep implications that threaten the nation’s traditional political framework and more ostensibly, Samoan sociopolitical sovereignty. While the state has been largely successful in stemming consultations and dialogue on the issue, inquiry into government records and Asian Development Bank reports illustrate intent to introduce new legislation and amend Acts to mobilize, commodify, and commercialize customary land using land leases as loan collateral (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

Plotting this course of economic liberalization, marketization, and privatization begins in the late 1990s with Samoa’s first national planning document, *Strategy for the Development of Samoa*. This guiding document lays out the nation’s economic policy focusing on attracting foreign capital and increasing investments in the private sector. Early endeavours to mobilize land were seen in amendments to the *Lands, Surveys and Environment Amendment Act 1989* in 1997, describing which government lands could be alienated by way of lease or sale. In the

following year, 1998, the Asian Development Bank released a report entitled *Improving Growth Prospects in the Pacific 1998* that examined ways to create individual freehold and leasehold tenure. This early work on land tenure reformation was enhanced in the early 2000s with the expansion of micro and small business enterprises (MSEs) under the project, *Small Business Development*, which the Asian Development Bank provided \$3.5 million (US) in loans (Asian Development Bank Project 33167, 2011). The aim of this project was to improve MSEs access to credit, facilitating private sector-led growth. Guarantee of Asian Development Bank loans required commitment from the Samoan government to open the market for investments on land, with particular emphases on using customary land as collateral (Asian Development Bank TA354-SAM, 2011). This project was tied to the technical assistance initiative for *Capacity Building of Financial and Business Advisory Services*, which was designed to improve the private sectors legal environment and debt recovery process for reforms to customary land (Asian Development Bank, project TA4712-SAM, 2005). From 2005 onwards, the government and Asian Development Bank's strategy focused on land development under the technical assistance project, *Economic Use of Customary Land phases I, II, III* to strengthen investments through customary land leases as collateral for financing (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

Phase I was approved in 2005 to establish a working group on the economic use of customary land, which built off the work of previous projects/technical assistance *Small Business Development* and *Capacity Building of Financial and Business Advisory Services* (Asian Development Bank, project TA4712-SAM, 2005). In 2008, the government passed the *Land Titles Registration Act 2008*, introducing the Torrens Land system in efforts of enabling registration of customary land under individual ownership. One year later, Phase II of *Promoting Economic Use of Customary Land* was passed further exploring the leasing of customary land

and options for development. A primary output of Phase II involved the formation of the *Customary Land Advisory Committee (CLAC)*, which worked to coordinate and implement a national customary landowner registration, build capacity to support customary land reformation, and liaise information with the public (Asian Development Bank, project 41173-012, 2009). In 2012, a second amendment was made to the *Customary Land Alienation Act 1965* to legalize mortgages over leases of customary land granted by the Minister (Customary Land Advisory Commission Act, 2012), thereby setting the stage for Phase III of the project.

Phase III of the project, which has received the most attention, aims to improve access to credit for business investment with the expected outcome of using customary land leases as collateral (Asian Development Bank, project 46512, 2013). The controversy with Phase III revolves around the leasing framework, which allows for:

- (i) creating a security interest in leases; (ii) establishing priority for the lender;
- (iii) publicizing security interests in leases so that interested parties can establish if a lease has already been pledged as security; and (iv) creating a process for repossessing and selling the lease in the event of default. (Asian Development Bank, project 46512, 2013, p. 2)

In conjunction with Phase III, the ADB, in 2014, approved a \$5 million (US) grant to the government for an agribusiness project to promote the commercialization and export of agricultural produce and processed products with provision of \$1 million in funds for financial intermediaries to lend to agribusiness (Asian Development Bank, project 46436, 2014). Another highly controversial piece of legislation introduced by the government includes the *Citizenship Investment Bill 2014*, which enables citizens of any country to apply for Samoan citizenship by investment of \$4 million tala (\$1.6 mill US) giving individuals legal access to land for anyone

who has a net worth of \$2.5 million tala (\$1 mill US). With these government sanctioned amendments to legislation and ABD's injections of finance capitalism, a group of four *matai* have led opposition, challenging the Asian Development Bank through legal channels and on the ground struggles in spaces of learning and social action.

We object to the ADB's determination to dispense with our customary laws and systems, which have successfully safeguarded the interests of the *āiga* for millennia... The risk runs high that benefits will flow not to local communities, but to foreign investors and national elites... Meanwhile, members of our *āiga* will face dispossession from potentially large-tracts of land, foreseeably resulting in loss of income, threats to food security and impoverishment. (Inclusive Development International, para. 3)

In the following subsections, historical accounts depict Samoans experiences of colonialism and neoliberal globalization and resistance against capitalist incursions and forms of oppression.

### **Pre-independence Samoa**

The expansion of European empires into the Pacific in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century marked the beginning of long-term colonial projects and the instillation of legacies of racialized oppression (Flexner, 2014; Harvey, 2005; Meleisea, 1987). Comparably to other areas of the globe and across the region, Samoa's colonial encounter came late, abated by the nation's remote geographic location, the island's lack of natural resources, moreover, Samoa's indolence to foreign agendas, rejection of wage labour, and largely impenetrable systems and institutions of *fa'amatai* and *fa'asamoa* (Firth, 1977; Linnekin, 1991; Meleisea, 1987). Prior to colonial contact, Samoa's early sociopolitical structure was a traditional chiefdom based upon birth-

ordered descent divided amongst extended families and characterized as a rank style leadership (Goldman, 1970). Within this system, social organization was derived from reciprocal interactions amongst kinship with duties and labour drawn along family lines (Godelier, 1978; Kirch, 2000; Kirch and Green, 2001; Sahlins, 1965). There was also an extensive system of exchange and trade partnerships with Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu and Niue involving intermarriages and goods (Flexner, 2014; Irwin, 1989, 2006; Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009; Meleisea, 2007). By early colonial encounters, Samoa's social structure and political economy had developed into a complex chiefdom with a specialized redistributive subsistence economy, social stratification, and kinship obligations (Buck, 1930; Goldman, 1970; Sahlins, 1958). Power and status, central to *fa'amatai* was determined by *matais* control over supply and demand of goods and resources.

Samoans early interactions with commercial entrepreneurs and missionaries involved the entrenchment of new forms of social and economic organization and activity (Linnekin, 1991; Macpherson and Macpherson, 2009). The earliest commercial recordings of European contact dates to 1721 by the Dutch sailor Joseph Roggeveen followed by French navigator Lois de Bougainville in 1768, though neither expeditions anchored in Samoa. It was not until 1778 when commercial colonial settlement arrived in Samoa with the exploration of French explorer La Perouse (Linnekin, 1991; Meleisea, 2007). In this period of early mercantilism, Samoans were informally introduced to Christianity through millenarian philosophies, Pentecostal revival, and 'sailor and cargo cults' (Holmes, 1980). Formalized Christianity and permanent missionary settlement did not occur until 1830 with the arrival of Reverend John Williams of the London Mission Society, followed by Wesleyan missionaries in 1835, the Catholic Church in 1845, and the Latter Day Saints in 1863 (So'o, 2008). This period of Christian induction while seemingly collaborative, was also simultaneously negotiated (Luther, 1995). Meleisea (1987) suggests that

Samoa acceptance of the new religion was as much political and economic as spiritual in nature. Samoan perceptions of the Christian god oscillated between spirituality and materiality, as a divinity linked to wealth and power, and a source that could influence and elevate a *matais* status (Holmes, 1980; Luther, 1995; Macpherson and Macpherson, 2009).

This correlation between Christianity, power, and political affiliation was reinforced through missionary dependency on *matais* for dissemination of Christian teachings to villages, establishment of relationships between missionaries and Samoans, and for the protection of mission stations. Robson (2009) suggests, “a natural alliance developed between *matais* and the missions” in large part due to the establishment of missions within political districts (p. 37). Building missions within Samoa’s eleven districts (*itumalo*) each carrying its own constitutional foundation (*faavae*) based on *matai* title was in accord with Samoan political organization, which Robson (2009) suggests demonstrates Samoan-Christian syncretism. Holmes (1980) and Meleisea (1987) propose that the ‘Samoanization of Christianity’ was a means to reform the ideological variances between Christianity’s individualist materialism and the collective and consensual nature of *fa’asamoa*. This may also reflect resistance to a new social order that was inherently incompatible with the social and political organization of Samoans. As expressed by a missionary:

Instead of accepting Christianity and allowing it to remold their lives to its own form the Samoans have taken the religious practices taught to them and fitted them inside Samoan custom, making them part of native culture...Christianity, instead of bursting the bonds of the old life, has been eaten up by it (Hanson, 1973, p.3)

While historians question Christianity’s success in sociocultural conversion (Hanson, 1973;

Luther, 2005), the church was successful in gaining access to and alienating land which Meleisea (1987) asserts occurred from misunderstandings and incompatibilities between Samoan and European systems of land tenure. In contrast to European systems of individual property rights and ownership, land tenure in Samoa is collectively owned and early land transfers to Europeans were predicated on these traditional systems (Meleisea, 1987). In Samoa, land tenure is a system attached to *suafa*, which are ultimately owned and controlled by *āiga* and *nu'u* and “the *suafa* gives the *matai* the authority to govern the lands associated with the *suafa*. If land is separated from *suafa*, then the *āiga* and the *nu'u* lose control over these lands, because their ownership is based on their control of *suafa*” (Iati, 2009, p. 3). Moreover, land is understood holistically and considered sacred as it “acknowledges the *va tapuia* between man and the land” (Taule’alo, 2001, p. 98). Samoan cultural identity is interconnected to land with ownership passed down generationally, linking people to ancestors. Land is considered the traditional record of ancestry in which “the knowledge of lineage is the blood arteries of Samoan society” (Taule’alo, 2001, p. 98). Given the sacredness and ancestral ties to land, it is unalienable in the eyes of Samoans. “The system of common interest in each other’s property...is clung to by Samoans with great tenacity... this communistic system is a sad hindrance to the industrious, and eats like a canker-worm at the roots of individual or national progress” (George Turner, 1884, chapter six, para. 10).

In the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, American, British, and German expansion intensified in the Pacific to establish trading networks and docking posts for the shipment of resources and goods. This period also saw intensified economic expansion and increasing involvement of colonial interests in Samoan political struggles, vying to secure national agendas and interests. Economic expansion focused upon the commodification of land, resources, and

labour, and accumulation of surplus economic profits (Macpherson and Macpherson, 2009). This period also marked early acts of Samoan resistance against market and capitalist modes of production, wage labour, and land dispossession (Macpherson and Macpherson, 2009; Meleisea, 2000). However, during Samoa's period of civil wars, *matais* began alienating land in exchange for European weaponry, which enabled commercial settlers to establish large-scale plantations (Kennedy, 1974; Linnekin, 1991; Meleisea, 2007).

In 1872, the German trading company Godeffroys and Sohn, the largest trading company in Samoa, capitalized on the conflict, establishing a trading post in Apia and acquiring large tracts of land (Cooper, 1888). "It was bought at a low rate, not upon an average exceeding 75 cents per acre, and paid for chiefly in ammunition, arms, or such articles of barter as are most in vogue among semi-barbarous people" (Cooper, 1888, p. 232). In response to land dispossession, Samoans formed an indigenous government (*malo*), comprised of *Fono a Ta'imua* and *Fono a Faipule* (council of lawmakers). As a centralized indigenous governing body, the *malo* represented Samoan interests and was responsible for conducting relations with colonial powers, including the settlement of land claims. Its other function was to maintain law and order in the Apia area (So'o, 2008). Initially, commercial settlers and colonial powers supported the formation of a centralized government, as they perceived this new authoritative body as susceptible to foreign influence (Meleisea, 2005). However, the new *malo* demonstrated allegiance to Samoan interests, as illustrated by *Ta'imua* and *Faipule* dismissal of European land claims (Meleisea, 2005; So'o, 2008). Another thorn to colonial influence proved to be the *malo*'s retention of district and village involvement in decision-making and government policy, which "emphasized the continued importance of the tradition of village autonomy" (So'o, 2008, p. 36). Samoan autonomy contributed to mounting pressure from foreign consuls to amend the

constitution of 1873, and redesign the *malo* to better align with colonial interests including increased centralization, appointment of a single king, and the reduction of powers of *Faipule* (So'o. 2008).

Greater stability materialized in 1887 with the proclamation of Tamaese as King, spurred by the backing of Germany whose interest lay in protecting investments and capital interests. The German consul deployed Eugene Brandeis, an employee of the Trading and Plantation Company of Hamburg (D.H.P.G), to the position of premier under King Tamaese. Under the Brandeis-Tamaese government coercive methods of “debts, taxes and land mortgaging” were employed to “gain a stranglehold over Samoan lands”, enabling the dominance and expansion of D.H.P.G (Linnekin, 1994, p. 544). Originally founded in 1878, D.H.P.G between the years 1880 to 1900, accumulated 7,773 acres of plantation land and approximately 93,000 acres of uncultivated land, making D.H.P.G the largest agricultural complex throughout the Pacific, enabling for their monopolization of copra and cocoa markets (Firth, 1977; Moses, 2008). This early period characterizes the first wave of colonial globalization in the Pacific. A legacy typified by mercantilist expansion and agricultural production for the market economy through development of plantations, export of raw goods, and colonial division of labour (Firth, 2000; Murray, 2001). This period of early contact also demonstrates Samoan resistance to European hegemony through appropriation of the church and state, with the effect of imbuing Samoan symbols, meanings, and customary systems upon European institutions and practices (Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984).

Following an intertribal warfare in 1898 and increased competition between Germany, Britain, and the United States, the 1899 Treaty of Berlin was signed by which the islands of Samoa east of Longitude 1715° were ceded to the United States and the islands west of

Longitude 1715° were ceded to Germany. This marked the beginning of colonial rule in Samoa, first under a German regime and then New Zealand rule. Both regimes emphasized the intensification and expansion of agricultural cash economies and wage labour, the commodification of land, and simplification of kinship rules in attempts to weaken the power of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, whose systems and practices were seen as impediments to imperialism. A central constituent of the Treaty of Berlin was the formation of an international Land Commission and Supreme Court, which adjudicated settler claims to Samoan land (Olson, 1997). Over the course of four years, the Land Commission granted approximately 135,300 acres of land (14% of Samoa's land area) to foreign settlers (Meleisea, 1987; Olson, 1997). Of this land, approximately 75,000 acres was dispersed for German interests, 36,000 acres for English settlers, 21,000 acres for American commercial interests and roughly 1,300 acres for the French (Meleisea, 2007).

Formal annexation to Germany came in 1900 under prevailing policy of racial hierarchy and 'native administration' that concentrated on converting Samoans into submissive objects to ensure a passive and productive labour force for German enterprises (Campbell, 2005; Firth, 1977; Meleisea, 2007; Moses 1972). Moses (1972) writes that the attitude of the German administration was not to advance civilization rather "It was expected that they (natives) would supply a cheap steady source of labour in return. Indeed the natives had to learn the obligation of work" (Moses 1972, p. 43). Fortifying German interests involved the reorganization of Samoa's customary political framework into an interventionist style of government by restructuring the *Faipule* as a "centralized paid council of 27 chiefs in efforts to dissolve traditional political authority (Campbell, 2005, p. 48; Firth, 2000; Macpherson and Macpherson, 2009; Meleisea, 2007). In conjunction with the reorganization of traditional systems, the German administration

implemented colonial bureaucracies to further alienate traditional political frameworks, notably the creation of the Land and Titles Commission to adjudicate all land matters, a task formerly controlled through the *matai* system (Meleisea, 1987). In establishing a legal land entity, colonial powers focused on monopolizing agricultural commodification, export production, and initiating full-scale development of the plantation economy.

This signaled the beginning of new concerns, namely labour, which was a contentious issue for the administration. Plantations owned by commercial settlers demanded a cheap labour source to access and control (Firth, 1994). Moreover, settlers believed that as a colony Samoans should be subservient to German powers, stripping Samoans of their lands and forcing individuals into wage labour (Firth, 1994). Samoans, however, had no interest in acquiescing control of land and labour to foreign interests, given their customary social systems and subsistence based formations (Boyd, 1968; Firth, 1994; Meleisea, 1987; Moses, 1972). “Every Samoan had labour obligations to his village which employment away from home interrupted, and to work for oneself as a paid servant rather than for the community was in Samoan eyes contemptible” (Firth, 1994, p. 158). With the administration, recognizing that forcing Samoans into wage labour would result in insurrection and refusal to participate in trade, the administration turned to indentured labour from Melanesia and China (Firth, 1994; Meleisea, 2007). During this period, the pillar of agricultural exports was copra, primarily produced in villages and a requirement of the regimes native policy that “every Samoan *matai* plant 50 palms annually” (Najita, 2008, p. 68). As a mechanism of the plantation economy, Samoans were required to sell their crops to commercial traders to provide D.H.P.G with a steady and cheap source of copra. In 1904, the market slump in copra prices and the corrupt practices of colonial traders resulted in the first formalized agrarian resistance to German colonial rule.

While Samoans had demonstrated everyday acts of resistance, such as filling copra baskets with rocks, harvesting crops based upon convenience for Samoan planters or disengaging from the market system entirely, the ‘*Oloa* movement’ signaled a new dimension in Samoan political consciousness (Moses, 1972). Springing from Samoan discontent with inequitable market systems and exploitation, the movement challenged hegemonic order by proselytizing emancipation from colonial traders through the establishment of a cooperative copra trading company based on Samoan ownership and collective profit making (Droessler, 2015). Quintessentially, the *Oloa* movement symbolized “Samoan protest at the domination of capital by Europeans and an attempt to assimilate part of that factor of production to themselves through self-reliance” (Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984, p. 29). Under direction of the *Malo*, male Samoans were required to contribute money as capital to the movement (Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984). In hasty response, the German regime dismantled the *Malo* and prohibited” the names and privileges of *Tumua* and *Pule* by legislating against any reference to them in the *fa’alupenga*, the traditional formal salutation of Samoa which expressed their political precedence” (Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984, p. 26-27).

For Samoans this was an unconscionable act, which fuelled the 1909 insurgency led by Lauaki Namulau’ulu Mamoe, an orator from Safaotulafai in Savai’i (Meleisea, 1987). The movement referred to as *Mau a Pule* called for the reinstatement of *Tumua* and *Pule* and the return of *Faipule* and the lowering of the head tax on Samoans (Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984). With these proposed politicized reformations, the *Mau a Pule* became regarded as a movement inscribed with sovereignty politics under a charter that demanded the restoration of Samoan political institutions and the nation’s independence from colonial rule. Acting quickly and with impunity, the regime responded in a show of force of militia who landed on the shores

of Samoa. Lauaki and eight other *matais* surrendered and were deported to Saipan in the Mariana Islands. German rule would continue until 1914 with the arrival of World War I and the occupation of Samoa by New Zealand expeditionary forces. Over the course of German rule, Samoan political and cultural institutions were devalorized and assailed in attempt to inscribe capitalist values and meanings upon indigenous structures and practices. Similarly, as with early colonial encounters, Samoans demonstrated forms of resistance to colonial prescriptions, working to strengthen and reassert subsistence economies and collective governance. Importantly, this period saw the emergence of an indigenous movement that formed the basis of the *Mau* movement that emerged under New Zealand occupation; a movement committed to sovereignty from colonial rule.

New Zealand's colonial administration of Samoa can be categorized into three distinct periods: military rule from 1914-1919; colonial administration from 1919-1931; and civil administration from 1931-1961. Throughout these periods, three events are of particular significance. First, the 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic that resulted in the death of 8,500 Samoans, roughly twenty percent of the population, and an onto-epistemic devastation with a majority of high-ranking *matais* and orators decimated due to the spread of pneumonic influenza introduced by passengers docked in Apia (Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984, p. 33). The second involved the stripping of *matai* titles between 1922-1928 to secure political control and indigenous containment. The third event involved the *Mau* independence movement in 1929, which laid the foundation for Samoa's independence (Maxwell and Liu, 2010).

From 1914-1919 the new regime concentrated on liquidating German interests, which opened the copra market resulting in a scramble for resources by commercial settlers, and a move by *matais* to assert sovereignty and capitalize on copra production and sale by imposing a

*Sa* (boycott) on trading stations not purchasing village copra or selling consumer goods at overinflated prices. From this discontent grew a more formalized resistance with the establishment of the *Toeaina Club* by high-ranking *matais* from every district to champion Samoan food sovereignty and regulation of copra production and sale (Boyd, 1968; MacQuoid, 1995). Meleisea (1987) proposes that the Club formed in response to concerns by *matais* over the future of the nation under colonial administration and as mechanism to confront colonialisms impact on traditional practices and governance systems. The *Toeaina Club* as suggested by Hempenstall and Rutherford (1984) also served as an informal apparatus to settle land and title disputes, reflecting Samoan's discontent for the colonial institution of the Land and Titles Court. Hiery (1995) contends that Samoans displayed economic forms of resistance as "Samoans deliberately applied and exploited the basic rules of market economy" (p. 165) producing copra and buying European goods only when the economy was favourable.

During 1919-1931 the League of Nations Mandate was established which gave New Zealand administrative responsibility over Samoa (So'o, 2008). In 1921, the Samoa Act was passed establishing New Zealand colonial administration in Samoa (Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984; Meleisea, 1987; So'o, 2008). This Act introduced a civilian public service and government system "with a legislative council in which there was no representation of Samoan people (Kerslake, 2010, p. 17). Davidson (1967) purports that the Act enforced private law and doctrines of constitutional order to govern "less advanced British crown colonies" (p. 100). Apart from the constitutional impositions of the Samoa Act, it also outlined the position on land (Nayacakalou, 1960). Subsequently land was classified into three legal categories. The first was *crown land*, which encompassed all previously owned land under the German administration for a total of 85,630 acres between Upolu and Savai'i. The second classification was *European (free*

*hold*) land, which belonged to churches and individual settlers for a total of 40,000 acres between Upolu and Savai'i. Thirdly was *Native (customary) land* belonging to Samoans totalling 599, 370 acres between Upolu and Savai'i. *Native land* was further classified into cultivated and uncultivated (fallow) lands; the latter traditionally fell under the governance of the village fono. According to Nayacakalou (1960), land belonging to native land was inalienable "by way of sale, lease, licence, or mortgage except in favour of the Crown, nor could they be taken in execution of payment of the debts of a Samoan" (p. 105). Furthermore, leases of Samoan land could not exceed a period of 40 years and ownership was determined according to customary practices and tradition (Nayacakalou, 1960).

In 1923, growing discontent and numerous petitions by *matais* led to the Amendment of the Samoa Act, which saw minor concessions to local demands for greater Samoan involvement in the government through legal recognition of the *Fono a Faipule* (Meleisea, 1987). The administration during this period was overly paternalistic and championed economic development by individualizing land title and tenure, diversifying agricultural crops, and increasing Samoan production (Boyd, 1969; Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984). The enactment of legislation to form the Native Land and Titles Commission occurred in 1924, consisting of a European Chief Judge, European Assessors, and a number of Samoan advisors (Tiffany, 1974). The following year, the Samoan Individual Property Ordinance was enacted, permitting the bestowing of customary land as if it were freehold and encouraged the individualization of land tenure (Nayacakalou, 1960). The administration's individualization reformation scheme "proposed that every taxpayer (adult male) be allocated a five-acre block of land in the fallow category, together with a quarter-acre portion in the village" (Meleisea, 1987, p. 131). Further, individual *matais* would continue to govern cultivated land with the caveat of dividing land into

blocks for individual use (Davidson, 1967).

In conjunction with land reformations, the regime implemented the Samoan Offenders Ordinance, which gave the administrator “discretionary powers to banish and to forbid the use of chiefly titles to punish any Samoan in any village, district or place” (Meleisea, 1987, p. 132). Under Samoan customs, banishment was considered the ultimate form of punishment and was decided upon only after much deliberation by the village *fono* (Davidson, 1967). As an assertion of power, the Ordinance was abused, banishing 40 mid to high-ranking *matais*, which in some instances resulted in *matais* “refraining from using his title or any of the rights or authority attached to the tile” (Meleisea, 1987, p. 133). The enactment of this Ordinance transferred power and rights of the “*āiga potopoto* (the decision making senior members of the *āiga*) and the village *fono*” to colonial administration (Davidson, 1967; Meleisea, 1987, p. 133).

From the administrations exploitive and repressive policies, sprang Samoa’s independence movement, *O le Mau* (Davidson, 1967; Hemenstall and Rutherford, 1984; Meleisea, 1987; So’o, 2008). While the beginnings of the *Mau* movement have been subject to many academic debates, Eteuati (1982) and Meleisea (1987) posture that the *Mau* movement symbolizes Samoan desire for sovereignty and protection of traditional institutions and systems (So’o, 2008). Taking shape in 1927, the *Mau* under direction from Olaf Nelson, a half-Samoan and *matai*, declared its political intent, demanding “a government of the people in accordance with the will of the people” under the banner of *Samoa mo Samoa* – Samoa for Samoa (Davidson, 1967, p. 119). Samoan acts of passive resistance included discontinuation of meetings by district councils, women’s committees and village committees, the withdrawal of Samoan children from government run schools, neglect of plantations, and the ceasing of payments for taxes diverting money instead to the *Mau* (Davidson, 1967). The *Mau* were in

bitter opposition to the administration's attempt at individualizing land tenure and appropriating customary practices such as with banishment, and the imposition of European economic and ideological policies that influenced Samoa's polity and subsistence economy (Davidson, 1967; Meleisea, 1987). As a political body, the *Mau* opposed the regimes attempt at weakening customary political and social authority, and outwardly challenged market-based intrusions and capitalist ideologies that had infiltrated the traditional subsistence economy (Davidson, 1967; Meleisea, 1987). Ultimately, the *Mau* were making a case for Samoan self-governance contesting colonialisms paternalistic rendering of a people that were racially and culturally inferior to Europeans (Davidson, 1967; Hempenstall and Rutherford, 1984; So'o, 2008).

In 1928, the *Mau* movement intensified with the enforcement of a *sa* (ban) on European retailers in Apia, which was met with warships and naval officers from New Zealand for the arrest of over 400 *Mau* supporters. While intended to instill fear it became a rallying point as hundreds more *Mau* volunteered to be imprisoned (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2014). During this period, a new leader of the *Mau* emerged, Tupua Tamasese Leolofi III triggering the resurgence of the *Tumua* and *Pule* authority and the exponential support of the movement (Davidson, 1967; Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2014). On December 28, 1929, Samoans would face another political devastation and loss of lives in what would be recorded as 'Black Saturday.' In celebration of the return of exiled *Mau* supporters, a peaceful parade had been organized beginning at the Vaimoso headquarters and travelling towards Apia (Najita, 2008). Prior to the parade, New Zealand police had issued arrest warrants for men who were wanted for evading payment of taxes and warned the *Mau* of their arrest on sight, a veiled threat in the eyes of the *Mau* (MacQuoid, 1995). As the parade progressed through Apia, the New Zealand police opened fire upon the marchers; claiming members of the parade had initiated the

attack (MacQuoid, 1995). On this day, 11 Samoans were killed including Tamasese, the leader of the *Mau*. In response, the government declared the *Mau* a ‘seditious organization’ and launched a campaign against the *Mau* (Davidson, 1967). Over the coming weeks, police hunted *Mau* men, pillaging homes and villages, forcing the *Mau* men into the bush for safety (MacQuoid, 1995). The responsibility of continuing the *Mau* movement fell to the women of Samoa, who continued protest, particularly against the night raids that were occurring (MacQuoid, 1995).

In period from 1931 to 1961, the *Mau* remained a strong political force, legally recognized as a political organization in 1936; however, by 1940 the *Mau* as a formalized movement tapered off; but its mandates and objectives remained integral to the shaping of the constitution and the achievement of independence in 1962. During this decade, there were three notable policy changes. The first occurred in 1934 with the passing of the *Native Land and Titles Protection Ordinance* enabling the continuation of the *Native Land and Titles Commission*, which changed its name to the *Native Land and Titles Court*. The representative body was comprised of “a Chief Judge, Samoan Judges, and European Assessors, and having complete jurisdiction in all matters affecting land titles and Samoan custom” (Nayacakalou, 1960, p. 106). The second occurred in 1936 with repeal of the *Samoan Offenders Ordinance*, a move to demonstrate its commitment to a less paternalistic administration than previous. The third was the *Faipule Election Ordinance of 1939*, which “increased the number of *Faipule* constituencies from thirty-nine to forty-one” (Luther, 1995, p. 169). The administration’s inclination to reincorporate traditional governance structures, notably legal recognition of the *Ali’i* and *Faiupule*, was not without the intent of serving the interests of New Zealand by building colonial administrative structures within the autonomy of villages (Davidson, 1967).

During the Second World War, Samoa became inundated with American troops, which

brought an influx of capital and the opening of commercial ventures outside of the agricultural complex, particularly high paying wage labour (Davidson, 1967). The national agenda remained committed to developing its small to mid-scale export agricultural market, incentivizing agriculture through the return of large tracks of land to Samoans; however, competition with high paying salaries and a slump in agricultural prices resulted in the neglect of commercial plantations resulting in copra and banana export decline (Luther, 1995; O'Meara, 1995).

Following the Second World War, global politics had shifted, as had national agendas. With the establishment of the United Nations and development of global policies, and Samoans demand for self-government, New Zealand began the long process towards Samoan independence (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2014). The global shift to Keynesian economics changed the face of Samoa's economic and political landscapes, as across the Pacific "the objective of reform has been the increase of traditional and non-traditional agricultural exports" (Murray, 2001, 139), which Murray (2001) argues occurred through privatized activity that centered on niche markets. With capital flowing throughout Samoa, a Samoan elite began to emerge accumulating social and economic wealth through commerce and agricultural development and through ties to foreign commercial firms. O'Meara (1995) argues that such acquisition of individual wealth reflected and precipitated the development of a hybridized land tenure system by modifying traditional social systems for individual gain, as similarly articulated by Murray's (2001) analysis of privatized activity, thus raising the question of cooptation and the role of Samoa's elite in aiding capitalist intrusions in the name of resource accumulation. Given the fluctuations of the export economy and influence of the global market and trade policies, the nation grew increasingly dependent upon imported goods (Davidson, 1967). Determined to increase the flow of capital, the government initiated technical assistance programs for

infrastructure to access fallow lands for commercial purposes and established a Copra Board that was granted the sole right of export (Davidson, 1967). This was in part due to pressures to develop land for economic use and a mechanism to mitigate Samoa's traditional subsistence economy and traditional land tenure practices.

Politically, this period also saw the most significant move towards Samoan self-governance with the call for a National Council of Samoa, led by Tupua Tamasese (Boyd, 1969; Davidson, 1967). The Council drafted a petition for self-governance under New Zealand trusteeship. In 1946, the United Nations ratified the petition, formalizing the road to independence. In conjunction with the Trusteeship agreement, the *Samoan Amendment Act 1947* was enacted readying Samoans with governmental experience for independence. The rise of Samoan leadership and the political organization for sovereignty according to Davidson (1967) was born from the *Mau* movement and the overarching opposition to colonialism. Driven to achieve independence, Samoan leaders worked at both the national and local level bridging the gaps between a centralized government and local and village authority (Davidson, 1967). While blighted for stagnation, Samoa's traditional institutions provided the stability upon which Samoan led development could and was occurring (Iati, 2013). On January 1, 1962, Samoa achieved independence.

### **Post-independence Samoa**

As the first independent nation in the Pacific, Samoa faced new challenges from international and regional economic actors, experiencing new forms of legal and financial interventions and dispossession; of particular importance were two land acts. The *Taking of Land Act 1964* enabled government to utilize land for public purposes and for the payment of compensation including customary land. The *Customary Land Alienation Act 1965* while

prohibiting the alienation of customary land was amended, enabling the Minister of Lands, Surveys and Environment to grant lease over customary land without permission from the *āiga*. Changes to these *Acts* foreshadowed the national challenges the government faced as it worked to define the relationship between traditional authority and law with that of state authority, ostensibly negotiating the relationship between “indigenous collectivist ideals and individual political freedom (So’o, 2008, p. 71). Iati (2013) argues that political stability, as an independent nation is attributable to the continuation of a melded traditional political system with westernized democracy. Iati (2007) further states that co-existence of the *nu’u* and the Samoan nation state, each autonomous in governance, but with shared political power is often tension filled each labouring for political supremacy.

Toleafoa (2013) suggests that over the course of Samoa’s post-independence development, the extent and power of indigenous forms of political and social organization has come into question. Constitutionally the state was defined as Head of State, Cabinet, Parliament, and all local and other authorities established by or under any law where any member of State was also required to hold the title of *matai*. Samoa’s modern political history from independence until the late 1970s was conducted consensually, consistent with the *fa’amatai* system, with deference shown to the *Tama-a-Āiga* (highest-ranking chiefs), as the nation was in absence of political parties (Toleafoa, 2013). According to Toleafoa (2013) these practices changed “with the emergence of political factions and later political parties with the formation of the Human Rights Protection Party in 1982 and the Samoa National Party” (p. 71). Since winning office in 1988, the HRPP has maintained power, ostensibly making Samoa “a one party political system with HRPP being the only party in parliament” (Toleafoa, 2013, p. 71). Toleafoa (2013) argues that with such power, the HRPP has made amendments to the constitution and government

resulting in “almost absolute power” of the cabinet (p. 71). Post-independence also saw a rise in emigration to New Zealand for labour in production factories and the service sector (Gough, 2006).

In the decade following independence, Samoa faced macroeconomic imbalances resulting in the government’s focus on intensifying agricultural diversification, tourism and foreign investment as response to the nation’s economic stagnation, growing government expenditures, increasing inflation and the drop in commodity prices for its main exports of bananas, taro and copra (Amoso, 2012). As with other countries in the global south, Samoa was influenced by a global shift in economic ideology and its mechanisms of economic control and development. Until the late 80s and early 90s, Firth (2000) suggests that Pacific nations were heavily supported by international and regional aid and a growing remittance economy. Under neoliberalism, economies underwent intensive de-regulation of markets and expansion of capital (Firth, 2000; Murray, 2001). Within this new economic climate, prescriptive measures by international economic institutions precipitated a shift in the provision of aid enforcing conditions and implementation of structural adjustment polices and institutional reforms, including “downsizing of civil service, tariff reductions, subsidy cuts, reduction in government expenditure devaluations to promote exports and other competitiveness inducing, foreign investment-attracting and export-oriented moves” (Murray, 2001, p. 138). Even though pressures mounted to acquiesce to prescriptive policies set by dominant economic actors, Samoa’s subsistence sector accounted for 80% of cultivated land (Amoso, 2012).

Significant economic change for Samoa continued throughout the 90s compounded by major external shocks, two cyclones that devastated infrastructure and agriculture, followed by the taro leaf blight, which devastated the taro industry, yet to fully recover. For the government

to access loans, International Monetary Fund and World Bank conditions required the adoption and implementation of structural adjustment programmes and rigorous neoliberal reformations, which concentrated on streamlining the public sector, increasing private sector development, supporting existing commercial agriculture through incentivization schemes, and expansions in communication, manufacturing, and tourism (Asian Development Bank, 2002). Opposition to SAPs came with the introduction of the Value Added Goods and Service Tax Bill (VAGST), which was intended to fund government development. The deputy leader of the opposition, Hon. Le Mamea Ropati stated that:

I am against the bill as I was when it was first introduced. Samoa is only a small country with only Apia town that has modern shops but most of the country has only very small shops to cater for the villages basic needs. I believe approving the bill will burden the rural areas and the low wagers more than the better off (Samoan Parliamentary Debates, 13 August, 1992, 527).

Despite opposition's protest to the VAGST, it was passed by government. In response, the *Tumua* and *Pule* and *Āiga* (TPA) protest movement arose, operating to abolish VAGST, challenge party system politics, and intensify anti-HRPP sentiments (So'o, 2008). In a symbolically laden act, the TPA movement brought into their fold and utilized traditional institutions, elevating the magnitude of the protest, undermining and delegitimizing the parliamentary government by petitioning directly to the Head of State, one of the four *tama-a-aiga* titleholders, bypassing government in entirety (So'o, 2008). On March 2, 1994, approximately 20,000 people participated in the protest, half of who held the title of *matai* (So'o, 2008). The later part of 1990s also saw an increase in migration from rural villages to the greater Apia area for wage labour, concomitant with the rise of food security in urban areas. To address

food security issues, emphasis has been “placed on the development of niche market food production (by the Central Bank of Samoa) and on local food production for urban markets” (Thorton, 2012, p. 211). Thorton (2012) asserts that the most vulnerable groups are “the urban poor with limited land access, the rural poor who lack cash income and the young” (p. 211).

This period also signaled the government’s move towards intensified development, articulated in Samoa’s first planning document, *Strategy for the Development of Samoa*, supported by the Asian Development Bank. According to Amoso (2012), the latter part of the 90s saw government renew focus on the private sector and attraction of foreign capital through incentivization schemes, “deregulation of the banking industry and the removal of some tariffs and duties” (p. 12). This period also reflected the beginnings “between the Asian Development Bank and the government to mobilize and securitize customary land” through such initiatives as the “Samoa Agribusiness Support Project” and the “Small Business Development Project” (Ravuvu and Thornton, 2015, p. 87). Ravuvu and Thornton (2015) argue that liberalization policies initiated between the 1980s and 1990s have been founded upon the linking of aid to macroeconomic stability vis-à-vis structural adjustments, conditioned by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank in collaboration with regional donors such as AusAID. “These ‘tied aid’ conditions have been highly influential in the way Pacific island governments have rapidly adopted and implemented reforms, which now make them inevitably much more dependent on developed global markets” (Ravuvu and Thornton, 2015, p. 84).

The state’s commitment to neoliberal reform strengthened in the new century continuing its prioritization of private sector development and foreign investment. For Samoa, these economic and ideological prescriptions targeted financial and agricultural sectors with specific attention on promoting the economic use of customary land (Amoso, 2012; Ravuvu and

Thornton, 2015). In the push for market efficiency and private enterprise, the Asian Development Bank has instituted a financialization process to expand the scale of collateralized lending to businesses using customary land as a primary input. The impetus to reform land tenure legislations has culminated with the creation of a Torrens land and registry bill in 2008 and approval of a securitization bill in 2014, which has readied the process for land collateral mortgaging. Today, Samoa's economy is predominantly based on primary production, including coconut, cocoa, banana, and taro, as well as tourism, fisheries, overseas family remittances, and development aid (Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 2009). The largest formal employment sectors include public administration, commerce, transportation, and construction with agriculture and fishing reported as the smallest employment industries (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The total estimated population employed in the formal sector is 24,381 persons with 68% employed in the informal sector (International Labour Organization, 2014).

Samoaan compliance however has not always been unanimous. In 2004, the village of Sili on Savaii rejected a hydropower scheme, proposed by the government and the Asian Development Bank, citing sustainability concerns for future generations (Radio New Zealand, 2004). Sili's village council rejected another Asian Development Bank development scheme for a hydropower station in 2007, again citing concerns for sustainability with questions around control over land tenure and ownership of resources (Radio New Zealand, 2007). In 2012, protests erupted at the villages of Satapuala and Magiagi. In the case of Satapuala, untitled men of the village took to the street blockading the Faleolo Road overland disputes between the government and the village, which was met with a force of more than 100 armed police. In this same year, the village of Magiagi erected a roadblock in response to a government decision for the village to switch from free to prepaid electricity or cash power. According to the Samoan

Observer (2012), the village claimed that an agreement had been made in 1983 between the Electric Power Corporation and the village, in which village lands would be used to develop government sponsored hydropower projects in exchange for the village receiving free power. Fighting for their rights, the village set up barriers to block access to the hydropower station, which was met with a threat from government of cutting off power supply to the entire village if they refused to agree to cash power (Samoan Observer, 2012). In 2014, a group of four *matais*, working outside the dominant forms of civil society or social movement resistance mobilized traditional practices and knowledge to engage directly with neoliberalizing policies of the state and the Asian Development Bank, namely the project promoting economic use of customary land. These *matai* have met with village *fono* 's, hosted presentations and conversations to discuss the outcomes of this project in relation to private property rights, financialization, and alienation of customary land, and have lodged a formal complaint through Asian Development Bank channels. In 2016, the Asian Development Bank's Compliance review panel found evidence that the Asian Development Bank "violated its operational policies in advising the Government of Samoa to adopt controversial land and financial sector reforms," effectively stalling Phase III (Inclusive Development International, 6 September, 2016).

### ***Fa'aSamoa and Fa'amatai***

For these *matai*, the implications of promoting economic use of customary land involve not only the alienation of land, but challenge the cultural foundations of Samoa. "Land in Samoan culture is regarded as an inheritance from God and connected intimately to the *matai* system. The fear is that if land is lost so will the *matai* system, hence also the culture of Samoa" (Pacific Islands News Association, 19 July, 2015). In Samoa, the overarching social structure, known as *fa'aSamoa* governs all social relations, encompassing meaning making, culture,

tradition, rituals, values, and principles (Iati, 2009; Huffer and So'o, 2005). *Fa'asamoa* is described as the Samoan way, prescribing and governing Samoan life and customs, determining social interactions between kinship, outlining behaviours and obligations, and uniting Samoans in culture and identity, enacted through ceremonial rituals and everyday practices (Meredith, 2002). Lilomaiva-Doktor (2009), suggests that to understand ones' place in Samoan cosmology is to learn and connect with the protocols and dimensions of the *āiga* (kin group), and the principles of *tautua*, *alofa*, *fa'aaloalo*, *fa'alavelave*, and *pule*. For Samoans social identity and *i'inei* is rooted in the indivisible bond between kin group and *fanua*.

Politically, the chiefdom system is known as *fa'amatai*, the political system of *matais*, which refers to the political and governance sphere that centers on the *āiga* and the position of the *matai*, the elected leader of the *āiga* (Iati 2009). The institutions of *fa'amatai* include the *āiga*, *matai*, *faletua ma tuausi*, *aumaga*, and *auluma* (Iati, 2009). Within *matai* titles there are distinct hierarchal rankings, divided between two styles of lineage, the *ali'i* (high chiefs) and *tulafale* (orator chiefs) (Iati, 2009; Linnekin, 1991; Melesia, 2007; O'Merea, 1994). The authoritative power structures were built around the political framework of *nu'u*'s (local polities), which were "politically autonomous with its own hierarchy of leaders and functioned as an independent governing entity" (Iati, 2007, p. 13). The governing arm of the *nu'u* is the *folo a le nu'u* (village council) which exercises "executive, legislative, and judicial powers" (Iati, 2007, p. 13). Each *nu'u* is comprised of *āiga* who themselves are a "semi-political institution, with members having social, economic and political functions" (Iati, 2007, p. 13). Functionally, the *āiga* can be categorized into distinct groups: the *matai* (chief of the *āiga*), *faletua ma tausi* (wives of *matai*), *taulelele'a* (untitled males), *tama'ita'i* (untitled women) and *tamaiti* (children) divided into districts and villages, each attached to a *fono* (village council) and *Matai sufa* (high

chief titles). Ostensibly, *fa'amatai* comprises the processes and institutions within and between kin groups, as administrator to family interests, such as land, *matai* titles, and honour of the family and village.

While *fa'amatai* is a highly hierarchical political and power structure, its core is one of reciprocity and connections to family and the village. As articulated earlier in the chapter, colonial regimes took great effort to reorganize the *fa'amatai* structure to unsettle traditional governance systems, destabilize power relations, and secure property or land. In other colonies, indirect rule was central to colonial regime practices, whereby “colonial powers used traditional rulers (‘chiefs’) as the local level of government, empowering them to tax, dispense law and maintain order...[but] making chiefs accountable to the colonial power, rather than local people, made them much more despotic” (Acemoglu, Chaves, Osafo-Kwaako, and Robinson, 2015, p. 3). In Samoa, the inherent checks and balances of reciprocity, *fa'aaloalo*, *va fealoalao* 'i and publicity embedded within *fa'amatai* disempowered such practices. Keene (1978) suggests “pride is related to an egalitarian spirit...[and while] Samoa has a complex hierarchy of titles, there is no class distinction. Every aiga has a chief and thus its dignity, and in the classificatory kinship terminology, every Samoan is the son or daughter of a chief” (p. 50). Tcherkezoff (1998) comments that regardless of status “all Samoans are gardeners and planters and are very proud of their taro fields” (p. 420). For Huffer and So'o (2005) the notion of publicity ensures that discussion occur in public settings, for all to hear and in which “the emphasis on publicity in Samoan life (demonstrated by, among other things, the practice of open fale) leads to...individual behavior is restrained and monitored by the group, rather than by the individual” (p. 325).

For Samoans, *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai* are the embodiment of the physical and spiritual

collective, grounded in *i'inei*, in the land, in the sea. Samoan cultural identity is interconnected to land with ownership passed down generationally, linking people to ancestors. Land is the traditional record of ancestry in which “the knowledge of lineage is the blood arteries of Samoan society” (Taule’alo, 2001, p. 98). Moreover, land is understood and considered sacred, as it “acknowledges the *va tapuia* between man and the land” (Taule’alo, 2001, p. 98). Pragmatically, land is governed by the *fa’amatai* system, as land belongs to territory of the village and *āiga* and is attached to a *suafa*, which empowers the *matai* to decide on matters regarding land, resources, and affairs of the *āiga* (Iati, 2007). Any members wishing to access and use the land must first gain approval of the *matai* and in turn are obligated in service and allegiance to the *matai*. If land is separated from a *suafa*, then the *āiga* and the *nu’u* lose control over these lands, because their ownership is based on their control of *suafa*” (Iati, 2009, p. 3). As stressed by these *matai*, “there may be unintended consequences to governance and social welfare systems because customary land is a cornerstone of these systems” (Pacific Islands News Association, 19 July, 2015).

For most *matai* who participated in this research study, *fa’aSamoa* and *fa’amatai* was described as living accords founded upon the values and principles of reciprocity, love, respect, obligation, and collectiveness all of which underpin Samoans ethos. The following are thoughts shared by two *matai*:

*Fa’aSamoa* means many things, *fa’aSamoa* means speaking Samoan that’s another meaning for the word and another meaning is making the Samoan way, and some people use *fa’aSamoa* as Samoan culture...And then *fa’amatai* our governance system... key roles of a *matai* is to defend your family and at the village level... He acts as the warrior for the family at the village council of chiefs and at the family level you are the trustee of all resources of your

family...including the use of land. So you see we found our relationship in Samoan scenarios in the reciprocal sharing and giving so there wasn't any accumulation of wealth... And just to add on to that is your role as the priest of your family, which means you lead the family in times of worship...and act as a mediator when there are problems between different family members...your role as a *matai*, you act as a peacemaker (Interview notes, Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, November 2014).

Well when you talk about *fa'amatai*, you're really talking about the local governance system. *Matai* – I see, eyes there, eyes everywhere. So that's literally what *matai* means, you got to have your eyes everywhere. *Matai* really is the custodian of land, custodian of all family assets, and custodian in terms of general welfare of all heirs and members of the family. Not the owner, I like to make that distinction very clear – not the owner, just a manager...So whoever is anointed and appointed *matai* by the family happens to be just a trustee...also our accountability in our *fa'amatai* is different. It doesn't have to be input equals output. But input equals output in terms of sharing and caring... *Fa'amatai* is like sharing redistributing our wealth. Take things from the haves and redistribute among the haves not (Interview notes, Maulolo Tavita Amosa, November 2014).

### **Colonialism and Neoliberal Globalization**

Colonialism is a shape shifting force that not only dominates the material and symbolic, but all spaces, locking “the original inhabitants and newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationship in human history” (Loomba, 2005, p. 2). For Memmi (1965) this history involves the creation of place of the colonizer by taking and erasing that of the inhabitant, the

colonized through usurpation of established rules, imposing his own. For Fanon (1963) this relationship between colonizer and colonized is represented in the structural and ideological racialized violence that rules “the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life” (p. 40). Within the colonial world “historical dispossession, of racial, cultural and economic subjugation and stigmatization” (Trask, 2004, p. 10) is enforced by “a government and a judicial system fed and renewed by the colonizer’s historic, economic and cultural needs” (Memmi, 1965, p. 91). For Alfred (2009) “colonialism is best conceptualized as an irresistible outcome of a multigenerational and multifaceted process of forced dispossession and attempted acculturation – a disconnection from land, culture and community” (p. 52).

Colonialisms trajectory from early colonial contact into modern European colonialism was distinguished “by its inextricability with the establishment of capitalism in Western Europe” (Kapoor, 2009, p. 1). Europe as the hegemonic site of world capitalism and the global model of power is predicated upon a system of social classification and racialization, which Quijano (2000) calls the ‘coloniality of power.’ Quijano (2000) postures that ‘coloniality of power’ has been (re)produced through race and division of labour, which are structurally interdependent and mutually reinforcing, resulting in the racial division of labour. This codification of difference between the colonizer and the colonized concretized relations of colonial domination, granting legitimacy to colonizing systems of exploitation and oppression becoming naturalized through colonial discourses. Described by Nebbou (2013), the colonial discourse creates divisions and alienations “in the self-identity of the non-white colonized peoples. Under colonialism, the history, culture, language, customs and beliefs of the whites were to be considered as universal,

normative and superior to the local indigenous culture of the colonized subjects” (p. 26). This process of normalization occurring through the indoctrination of the colonial discourse, as expressed by Nandy (1997) occupies the body and spaces of the mind, programming the self into the new social order through cultural co-optation/dislocation and cognitive imperialism, internalizing and self-actualizing imprisonment of cultural inferiority (Nandy, 1997).

In the current era of neoliberal globalization, colonialism continues to cast its net, ensnaring “indigenous peoples in exploitive relationships with agents of the world economy” (Linnekin, 1994, p. 547). Alfred & Corntassel (2009) argue that its tactics are covert, hidden within legal language and trade liberalization. For Harvey (2005), neoliberalism is characterized by relationships between the state and international economic actors and the policies of structural adjustment programs. While maintained as necessary measures for economic development, structural adjustment programs have created conditions for financial and government institutions “to proliferate monopoly powers with all manner of social, ecological, economic and political consequences” (Harvey, 2005, p. 71). This proliferation illuminates decreased economic and social rights protections from governments who have implemented such austerity measures (Abouharb and Cingranelli, 2007). In this context, neoliberalism is revealed as the new imperialism in search of global accumulation of capital (Harvey, 2005). Sassen (2010) attributes the continued regime of structural adjustment programs and economic reforms to the systemic deepening of advanced capitalism, posturing that the restructuring of the global economy occurred through debt servicing, weakening traditional economies and bolstering the state’s subjugation to international finance. Enshrined within this mode of finance capitalism is the imperative for nations to open economies to trade liberalization and privatization, which Sassen (2013) argues has shaped global land grabs where foreign land acquisitions are acquired for their

own needs and interests.

For indigenous peoples, neoliberalism is a form of colonization that is “predicated on the wholesale exclusion of most of the world’s population from partaking equitably in the world’s resources accelerating a downward shift toward unconscionable poverty and human misery” (Macedo and Gounari, 2006, p. 6). Kapoor (2011) asserts that these combined processes and systems of domination are articulated as the reproduction of colonialism, “the coloniality of power being expressed through globalizing capitalism” (p. 130). In the Pacific, Bargh (2001) asserts that the self-maximizing rationalist individual reigns absolute, decentralizing and destabilizing the material and social structures of the nation state, giving rise to immense economic disparities and deep structural inequalities. Such an example in Pacific nations is the adoption of policies for low wages and flexible accumulation as strategies to bolster competitiveness and foreign investment.

While neoliberal policies focus on economic and structural reformations, the pervasiveness of neoliberalism’s ideological pedagogy are pursued through other covert mechanisms and educational/learning institutions (Bargh, 2007). Cognitive imperialism, as defined by Battiste (2000) is coercive, destructive and manipulative disclaiming and devaluing ‘other’ knowledges and values, “cognitive imperialism denies people their language and cultural integrity by maintain the legitimacy of one language, one culture, and one frame of reference” (Battiste, 2000, p. 198). Such indoctrination is advanced through the globalization of education, which has diminished learning to modes of production and human development for the global economy (Spring, 2009). Within the Pacific, western models of education have dominated educational institutions, practices and curriculum, directed by neoliberal education policies and foreign aid (Luke, 2007). Coloma (2011) suggests that surveillance in the parlance of Foucault

theorization is regulated as a form of domination and discipline constructed and inscribed upon minds and bodies.

It is in the context of power, knowledge production, and regimes of truth that neoliberal education reveals its coloniality. Within this scope, indigenous peoples are envisioned as the culturally deplete victims of systemic and racialized oppression, a commodified image and mechanism to remove agency and political identity from indigenous peoples (Chandler, 2000). This is not to relinquish the realities of poverty and violent acculturation that indigenous people's experience, rather in the context of education it is a trope that depoliticizes the colonial mechanisms of subjugation and assimilation. Chandler (2000) asserts that indigenous education is centre stage in a cultural war where indigenous epistemologies are hallowed out and overwritten by the colonial discourse. In the Pacific, Bray (2006) states that "South Pacific higher education has reflected the concerns and interests of the colonial power and has been derived from the education systems of those powers" (p. 341). Education as a mechanism of subjugation and assimilation into normative discourses are particularly salient in relation to the subversion of indigenous knowledges in which cognitive imperialism has sought to destroy indigenous epistemologies, intensifying the obfuscation of geopolitical particularities and histories of indigenous interactions with colonialism and capitalism.

### **Sovereignty, Resistance and Learning**

In the modern world, sovereignty is tied to the nation state, legally defined as control over certain territory (Wiessner, 2008). For colonized peoples, sovereignty was to arrive through the post WWII, UN process of decolonization, which claimed to recognize "their preferred solutions to their political status, whether they desired independence, integration into the colonizing state, association, or any other status in between" (Wiessner, 2008, p. 1150). As

Wiessner (2008) points out, this process was problematic given that choice was reserved for the inhabitants of colonized territories rather than the peoples who were colonized; furthermore, the demarcations of the nation state were based upon the colonizers conception of the territory. “Thus the colonizers, by constituting the new country’s people under the new sovereign’s control, continued to rule the colonized from their graves” (Wiessner, 2008, p. 1150). Indigenous sovereignty, involving self-determination and autonomy, extends far beyond nation states and is “founded on the aspiration to preserve indigenous peoples inherited ways of life, to change those traditions as they see necessary, and to make their cultures flourish” (Graham and Wiessner, 2011, p. 410). Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) asserts that sovereignty in relation to an indigenous perspective is attached to a colonial frame drawing “attention to the thousands of ways in which indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures have been silenced or misrepresented, ridiculed or condemned in academic and popular discourses” (p. 20). Trask (1999) however posits that sovereignty is political and an embodiment of self-governance “on an identifiable land base” (p. 38).

Indivisible from indigenous sovereignty is resistance. While multifold in its conception, form, and scale, resistance in context of colonialism and neocolonialism - anticolonial resistance - has over five centuries involved defense by pre-existing states, nativist uprisings, slave revolts, issue specific uprisings, and organized movements (Kapoor, 2017). Cornassel (2012) asserts that resistance to colonialism includes decolonization and resurgence, as interconnected actions and strategies to dismantle and disrupt hegemony. As posited by Bargh (2001), “resistance to re-colonization takes multiple forms, including attempts to decolonize, to both dismantle colonial structures and supposedly purify aspects of Indigenous culture which are seen to have been contaminated by colonial practices” (p. 123). Smith (1999) notes that decolonization, “once

viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological divesting of colonial power” (p. 98). Thaman (2003) purports that decolonization begins with genuine reclamation of indigenous ways of thinking that exist outside the vernacular of globalization and neoliberal education. According to Pacific scholars Huffer and Qalo (2004) the reconstruction of Pacific thought by Pacific peoples is a form of reindigenization and space for reengaging with indigeneity. Pacific indigeneity as grounded within indigenous epistemology according to Gegeo (2001) encapsulates “a cultural group’s way of thinking and of creating, reformulating, and theorizing about knowledge via traditional discourses...anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture” (p. 58). For Pacific peoples, indigenous knowledge is informal/formal, intellectual and experiential including materiality, sociality and spirituality, “it is what sustains people and what connects them to particular places and spaces and is crucial to their identity...knowledge is communally made, sanctioned and shared with the aim of achieving the good life for all members” (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009, 111). Quanchi (2004) correspondingly asserts that it is instrumental for Pacific peoples to view the world through localized particularities and knowledge systems that engage in a form of indigenous critical praxis and reflection.

In the reconstruction of indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, learning is tool of reclamation and resistance to decode, deconstruct and dismantle hegemonic discourses and power relations. Horton and Freire (1990) refer to learning as a process where practice and theory are interlocking, shaping one another, articulated as learning being a process of praxis. This concept can be read in Kapoor’s (2009) articulation of social movement learning. Within this mode of learning, there are four critical stages. The first, critical learning is an analysis of the

inequitable and unjust power relations that underpin lived situations and experiences, second, strategic learning as the necessary understandings of a social movement's position, third, tactical learning involving the development of ideas used for strategic positioning to initiate political pressures. Lastly, information learning as new information acquired to better understand the barriers and apparatuses of modernity. Kapoor (2009) writes, "these learnings along with our ways of learning have strengthened the movement's ability to analyze, predict and position itself...to curb the possibility of...dispossession" (p. 72).

In the context of collective learning as presented by Horton and Freire (1990) the lens of learning is viewed as an interlocking process that is based upon working with the people, where experience is lived, learn and shared. Intrinsic to such learning are the concepts of collective agency and empowerment, which are interwoven in the historical fabrics of indigeneity and enacted through resistance to capitalisms systems of domination (Alfred, 2002). Experientially, oral history is an important modality of learning and resistance to colonial domination, which is tied closely to the imagination and reinvention of alternative ways of understanding the world (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Similarly theory discussed as a means to recover narratives from the past, recover language and epistemological foundations provide for cognitive agency (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) promulgates that the most important aspect is not the tools for knowledge production; rather that knowledge is being produced by indigenous peoples as forms and sites of resistance and resurgence of collective identities, replete with self-realized epistemologies and ontological lenses. Through indigenous analytics, the systems of power and ideologies that deliberately dehumanized and systemically fragmented the indigenous world are unearthed, setting the stage for decolonization and most importantly the resurrection of peoples imbued with dignity, power, and a future charted by their own indigenous design (Tuhiwai-

Smith, 1999).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, Samoa's historical background with colonial capital domination and dispossession and Samoans resistance to coloniality and ABD was considered through two epochal moments, pre-independence and post-independence. The control over land, governance, labour and food was considered in the context of the colonial discourse and entrenchment of Eurocentric legal and political apparatuses. The continuities of colonial capital machinations and agendas that underpin the current challenges in Samoa were also explored. This chapter further engaged with Samoan ontoepistemic horizons, *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, which are foundational to Samoan indigeneity, the basis of Samoan resistance. The concepts of colonialism and neoliberal globalization were examined as racialized systems of power and domination. The spaces of sovereignty, resistance, and learning were explored as a backdrop to the critical ethnography chapters Four and Five. The following chapter addresses the critical ethnographic methodology used for this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Critical Ethnography**

## Introduction

“We have been exploited by researchers in the past with regards to our knowledge and not actually given the right acknowledgement. We are happy to share because of your connection [to Samoa] and truly believe our sharing with you will be part of an agent of change for Samoa” (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, 2014).

This chapter considers critical ethnography as the methodology employed for this study and summarizes the research journey and points of discovery in interrogating and disrupting systems of power. The aim of this research was to critically analyze the continuities and discontinuities of the colonial project in Samoa, exploring coloniality and ABD and the experiences and memories of Samoans cultural and political subjugation. This paper also takes up the terrains of resistance and modes of organization grounded in the politics of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, including spaces and the role of learning and social action, which contest the systems and structures of colonial capital. Comprehending the experiences and topographies of subjugation and resistance to the endeavours of coloniality which seeks to assimilate and commodify indigenous economies, knowledges, and ways of life, demands a methodology that is unapologetically political and committed to action (Brown and Strega, 2005; Simon and Dippo, 1986). Such research necessitates a methodology that investigates inequities and injustices, and which questions the knowledge (re)productions and power structures that uphold colonial capitalist regimes. Critical ethnography is such a methodology that works to locate historical conditions and continuities of social and material interactions and transgressions by hegemonic systems, global institutions, and local functionaries that advance structural oppression and unjust social realities (Harvey, 1990; Jordan, 2003).

This critical examination of dispossession, resistance and learning, and colonized life in Samoa is explored through the encounters, experiences, and critiques of fourteen participants

who amongst various professions and positionalities are holders of a *matai* title. This chapter outlines two key sections. First, critical ethnography is introduced as the methodological framework to engage and critique colonial capital and ABD. The broader epistemological frame of critical research offers an introduction to critical ethnography, attending to power relations through interpretations and experiences of the dispossessed. Within this section, an anticolonial and Marxist analysis that informed this research is presented. Second, this chapter details the research journey and the parallel process of reflexive inquiry and discovery that challenged personal ontological assumptions and orientations around the conceptualization and articulation of resistance, internal colonialism, and asymmetrical power relations, as outlined by researcher positionality. Further, this chapter documents the research process including the research site, participant recruitment and selection, and the methods section, which describes the process of data collection and data analysis. This analytic and the experiences and memories of Samoa's cultural and political subjugation and emancipation together suggest a historically situated and place-based response which analyzes the continuities and discontinuities of the colonial capital project. This research engages and confronts the "layers of imperial and colonial practices in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded...generating an orientation that has been (re)constituted with a name, a face, a particular identity" (Smith, 1999, p. 2). Moreover, it engages "in the shared production and dissemination of knowledge for the purposes of conscientisation" and transformation (Jordan and Yeomans, 1995, p. 400). Within this rubric, this research has the potential to advance transformative paradigms through spaces of reindigenization in which knowledge and culture continuously evolve, and through spaces of reengagement with Samoan indigeneity through learning and social action, this study can contribute to confronting the discourses and violence inherent in the project of colonial capital.

## **Critical Ethnography**

Criticalists find capitalist society inequitable and oppressive for the vast majority of people (Carspecken, 1996). Harvey (1990) views that critical social research attends to focusing on power relations through interpretations and experiences of the dispossessed with an explicitly political and emancipatory orientation. Research with such emancipatory aspirations involves a process of deep reflection and understanding of particular situations and conditions, for both the researcher and the researched (Lather, 1986). To construct a sound critical ethnography, we must understand, engage, and expose oppression explicated through dominant social structures linked to imperialism and colonialism (Harvey, 1990). Under the rubric of critical research, it is necessary to locate meanings and knowledge production within the context of these uneven power relations (Thomas, 1998). This is particularly true of indigenous knowledge, which has been delegitimised through ideological impositions and processes of colonialism (Hunt, 2013; Kovach, 2005; Maaka, 2004; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Trask, 1999). “If knowledge is fundamental to understanding, interpreting and establishing values within a society, then control over its production becomes an integral component of cultural survival” (Kovach, 2005, p. 23). Through this lens, exploring Samoan ways of knowing involves observation and participation in people’s daily lives with the ability to critically examine belief systems and forms of knowledge production around dispossession and resistance. In such a study, the researcher must work from a critical holistic approach that encompasses social and material analysis. In corroboration, Anderson (1989) posits that “for critical ethnography the cultural construction of meaning is inherently a matter of political and economic interests...the ideological nature of knowledge resides in the embeddedness of common sense knowledge in political and economic interests” (Anderson, 1989 p. 254). Critical ethnography, then, enables for a deeper understanding of the ways in which Samoans mediate and resist the social and structural incursions and legacies of

colonialism.

Using Jordan's (2003) definition, critical ethnography is an approach that "focuses on revealing the sources and effects of power relations on the everyday world of peoples lived experience... to reveal how power infiltrates and organizes lived experience in ways that are congruent with the relations of the ruling" (p. 35). For Carspecken (1990) critical ethnography examines social sites, processes, and relations to reveal inequities through building "a systems analysis from the experience and cultural terms of participants" (p. 206). Critical ethnography was undertaken for this study to investigate the anatomy and practices of colonial capital dispossession and forms of resistance including the role learning and social action to coloniality and capitalist reformations in Samoa. To this extent, critical ethnography "is a powerful methodology from below for constructing research practices that...analyze and detail new types of hegemony produced by global capital across different sites within the new cultural economy" of globalization (Jordan, 2003, p. 46). It is also a methodology in association with an anticolonial and Marxist analysis that calls for a critique of the continuing experiences and conditions of colonized peoples and the reimagined possibilities that exist outside of dominant systems and ways of knowing (Dei, 2006).

The orientation of critical ethnography as described by Jordan (2003) has undergone significant transformations influenced by a number of theoretical paradigms. This research draws explicitly upon the concepts of reflexivity and praxis, as an antithetical offer to researcher imposition of meanings on situations and to the reification and objectification of participants. As a theoretical concept, reflexivity has lent itself as a means to overcome binaries imposed by positivist frameworks and as a means to explore the positionality of the research in context of the research process (Jordan, 2003). As a practice, reflexivity demands researchers locate their own

privileged positions and their ideological and political orientation, sharing research motivations and commitments to social change (Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 1990; Jordan, 2003).

According to Anderson (1989), reflexivity in critical ethnography is a dialectical process which involves five different forms, including: “(a) the researcher's construct, (b) the informant's common sense constitutions, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study” (p. 254-255).

Praxis similarly to reflexivity is grounded in the situations and contexts of everyday life and is constructed within a reciprocal relationship, “premised on a deep respect for the intellectual and political capacities of the dispossessed” (Lather, 1986, p. 261). For Lather (1986), praxis involves dialectical practices that treat participants as active agents instead of top down imposition approaches and reifications of domination. In this sense, praxis is in direct contestation to the mechanisms and systems of domination through an engagement of learning as a process where practice and theory are interlocking, shaping one another in the aim to meaningfully and systematically disrupt asymmetrical power and hegemonic material relations (Horton & Freire, 1990). “The present is cast against a historical backdrop while at the same time the “naturalness” of social arrangements is challenged so that social actors can see both the constraints and the potential for change in their situations” (Lather, 1986, p. 268). Macedo & Gounari (2006) posit that a meeting of the minds requires a revolutionary praxis given the violence of capitalism, its entrenched racism, and obedience to colonial structures. Gouin (2009) strengthens this analysis by articulating the importance of learning from experience and social relations, while keeping intact a “material analysis of experience” and employing a lens that deconstructs the “interdependent relations of ruling” (172).

Critical ethnography is the most powerful methodology to understand the current struggle for protecting customary lands, food production, labour, and sociopolitical sovereignty in Samoa, as it explicates historical dispossessions and infiltrations of colonial capital. Analysis is shaped upon the credence that colonialism continues, reproducing itself through new forms and apparatuses (Dei, 2006, p. 2). Moreover, analysis is situated within the local knowledges and practices of Samoan traditional institutions that challenge hegemonic social order. While critical ethnography is not bound to any particular methods monopoly, the framing of this research loosely draws from Carspecken's (1998) process of critical ethnography as a means of organizing and engaging data. In this context, this research involved three stages, the first developing a historical record of thick description, and building an initial reconstructive analysis to tease out power locations and meanings. The second involved engaging participants with in-depth interviews and analysing data within wider sociopolitical and economic systems. The third and certainly the most challenging was interpreting findings that challenge normative theories by digging beneath the surface in a dialogical process for the outcome of transformative social action and change.

Critical ethnographers treat the social relations of their research settings as opportunities for a pedagogical encounter with those they research. In doing this, they should not only focus upon disclosing the forms which critical consciousness takes, but seek to investigate the everyday methods through which it is produced. Showing how these methods produce alternative, concrete ways of knowing and acting within the world to dominant forms then becomes central to the research process (Jordan and Yeomans, 1995, p. 404).

## **Towards an anticolonial and Marxist Analysis**

While theory at its broadest level explains human activity, it was necessary to locate the purpose of theory by asking what theory contributes to this research. With this question in mind, mapping out the purpose of theory revealed several key points. Theory is a backdrop and a catalyst; it functions as an analytical guide; it frames the selection and interpretation of data; it challenges and questions knowledge; and most importantly it is critical. From this understanding, I began exploring the plurality of theoretical options that could explain the historical and current situation of colonial capital, dispossession, and resistance in Samoa. Capitalism through all its incarnations is a process of expropriation for the purposes of capital surplus and the resultant malicious circle of accumulation of capital, which as Luxemburg (1951) argues requires continuous and unfettered access to new areas, resources and raw materials (). In its contemporary form, capitalist ideology advances neoliberal policies that stipulate rigorous requirements around privatization, state retraction and structural reform as necessary mechanisms for market-led economic development. Its essence, as David Harvey (2005) promulgates is a fervent allegiance to economic expansion by ABD. Embedded in ABD is what Anibal Quijano (2000) refers to as the “coloniality of power”, replete with structural, social, and pedagogical violence. To generate a deeper understanding of land dispossession, dislocations of food production and labour, disarticulations of *fa’aSamoa* and *fa’amatai*, and resistance, including learning and social action, addressing colonial capitalist infiltrations, I decided to proceed with an anticolonial and Marxist analysis for this critical ethnography.

Marxism and anticolonialism share a tenuous theoretical and political location. The former has been critiqued for its narrow emphasis on class-based struggles and related silences on socio-cultural dispossession (and coloniality) while “dismissing anticolonial land-based approaches as counter revolutionary in sociopolitical terms” (Kapoor, 2016, p. 5).

Marx acknowledged European colonization as an indispensable necessity and advantage in advancing world historical and revolutionary progress: an important modernizing force necessary for the transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capital mode...simultaneously dismiss[ing] rurality and the peasantry as politically inert and counter-revolutionary in socio-political terms and the ideas of revolution...became preoccupied with the political agency of an industrial proletarian class project...The continued anticolonial projects of the indigenous and small/landless peasants based on a territorial solidarity...and an attendant material interest to ensure that the economic activities...on a given land are indeed supports its' inhabitants, were ejected to an anachronistic space of the pre-political. (Kapoor, 2017, p. x)

From an anticolonial perspective, Kapoor (2016), drawing on the insights of Amílcar Cabral, points out the need to recognize the political-economic specificity of colonized “Third World” regions and related implications for a wider (land and class) politics of the “wretched of the earth” (Fanon, 1961):

In theoretical, materialist and political terms and as a continued critique of economic exploitation, anti/decolonial postcolonial developmentalists have suggested that Marxist imperatives break down in colonial contexts as colonial political-economic structures actually thwarted class formation that accompanies the development of market production and therefore the prospects for a class-based revolutionary politics (p. 5-6).

Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) suggest that the anti-colonial discourse is interconnected to spaces such as Marxism, while Fanon (1963) reminds us of the need to stretch the Marxist analysis in

consideration of the colonial problem. While tensions exist, an anticolonial and Marxist analysis provides a lens that offers colonial critiques of the post colony in struggles over land and a lens that critiques the accumulation imperative and the violent processes of resource acquisition.

Rabaka (2003) prompts researchers that “one of the most important tasks of a critical anti-colonial theory...is to capture and critique the continuities and discontinuities of the colonial and neocolonial in order to make sense of our currently...colonized life...and worlds” (p. 7). When examining the colonial in the context of Samoa and for the explicit purpose of activating social change, this research excavates anti-colonial concepts of decolonization and indigeneity. Decolonization as articulated by Fanon (1961) is a historical process of questioning coloniality with the intent to change social and political order. It “is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies” (p. 36). Tuhiwai-Smith (2005) emphasises that decolonization must be more than words; it involves a reclamation and resurgence of “the past, our stories, the present...our social practices” that activate “spaces of resistance and hope” (p. 4). For Alfred (2009) decolonization requires a collective and conscious rejection of colonial identities, structures, and institutions.

The evolution of an anti-colonial discourse has grown in keeping with decolonization, as articulated in the works of Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, directing attention to the violence of colonialism along with an explication of liberatory tactics that disrupt and destabilize the colonial condition (Shahjahn, 2005). Within an anti-colonial framework, power and discourse belongs not only to the colonizer, but resides within the colonized (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001). This is a salient point explored through Mignolo’s (2011) theory of decoloniality and delinking. Delinking from the universalized prescriptions of modernity allows for a resurgence of

discourses and resistance that are not only counter-hegemonic but a catalyst for the creation of another world predicated upon “global equality and economic justice” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 274). For Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001), these discourses are rooted in indigeneity; in the recognition of indigenous knowledge and intellectual agency articulated, reformulated, and theorized by one’s own culture, language, and history (Gegeo, 2001). As described in the previous chapter, indigenous knowledge is a holistic conceptualization of the political, social, material, and living environment. Battiste (2002) describes indigenous knowledge and knowledge systems as shared experiential informal understandings of social and material relations that has enabled a decolonization of learning and the development of collective capacities that address the injustices that underpin historical and contemporary indigenous struggles. For Pacific peoples, indigenous knowledge “sustains people and connects them to particular places and spaces and is crucial to their identity...knowledge is communally made, sanctioned and shared with the aim of achieving the good life for all members” (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009, 111).

Marxist and anticolonial analysis both critique and question (colonial) capitalist power and domination (Kapoor, 2016) in one way or another. According to Marxism, capitalism is defined “as a non-equilibrating system, a system which, as it evolves will expand to exploit new peoples and places and eventually the entire globe” (Blaut, 1989, p. 1). Marxist theory pivots on “concepts of mode of production and class” (Solomos, 1986, p. 84). For Marx (1967), primitive accumulation was a process of violent separation of the peasant from the land wherein the usurping class (capitalists) were the owners of the means of production including unfree labour thereby setting up the (exploitative) conditions for their transformation into capital, begetting the viscous cycle of accumulation. For Luxemburg (1951), primitive accumulation relied on third parties, such as peasants and involved exchanges between capitalist and non-capitalist production

to create surplus value, which subsequently resulted in clashes between non/capitalist production and to quell resistance, capital resorted to violence. “The unbridled greed, the acquisitive instinct of accumulation must by its very nature take every advantage of the conditions of the market and can have no thought for the morrow. It is incapable of seeing far enough to recognize the value of the economic monuments of an older civilization” (Luxemburg, 1951, p. 376). In a capitalist society, there are those who control or have power, those who are without power, and who must sell their labour. In the context of class formation, Gramsci asserts that the ruling capitalist class controls the proletariat through a structural (control over production and means of violence) and ideological (forced consensus) hegemony. Marxism argues, “work is the social process of shaping and transforming the material and social worlds” (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 515). In the era of advanced capitalism, Gramsci argues that global capitalism is maintained by material inequalities, buttressed by a dominant ideological and structural capitalist hegemony.

Marxist critique posits that the surplus of capital and labour power without profitability creates a crisis that contemporary capitalism absorbs through “geographical expansion and spatial reorganization” (Harvey, 2004, p. 63). Though Harvey (2004) articulates the nature of inherent inequalities within capitalism, he relates the chronic problems of over accumulation since the 1970s to orchestrated volatilities of which “the United States sought to preserve its hegemonic position within global capitalism” (p. 64). This hegemon, Harvey (2005) asserts, has materialized through the processes of ABD which includes “the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and the suppression of indigenous forms of production and consumption” alongside privatization of intellectual property rights, cultural relations and public assets (Harvey, 2005, p.75). Sassen (2010) similarly argues that the

organizing logic of primitive accumulation rests on the “expulsion of people and the destruction of traditional capitalism to feed the needs of high finance and the need for natural resources (p. 25). Harvey (2003) describes ABD as an extension and continuation of Marx’s primitive accumulation that includes sets of predatory practices and mechanisms that exploit and commodify natural resources and labour power. While it has always been a feature of capitalism, Harvey (2005) argues that it has gained increasing significance under neoliberalism.

### **The Research Journey**

This research emerged as critical inquiry in the attempt to understand Samoan analysis of historical and contemporary forms of colonialism, how colonial capital has restructured systems of land tenure, food production, social and political institutions and culture, and Samoan resistance to colonial capital, including the role of learning and social action. The process of inquiry began in Canada with preliminary exploration of Samoa’s colonial encounters and capitalist development and the implications of colonial capital structures on Samoan ways of knowing and living, *fa’asamoa* and *fa’amatai*, and more acutely the mechanisms of ABD. A parallel process of inquiry examined Samoan forms of resistance, learning and social action in engagements with colonality of power and capitalist structural reformations and dispossessions. Inceptive analysis necessitated a deeper examination of the intersections between Samoan cultural and political systems and the legacies of subordination and inequitable power relations, which aligned with critical ethnography’s call for “locating specific practices in a wider social structure in an attempt to dig beneath surface appearances” to facilitate structural analysis (Harvey, 2001, p. 5). For Samoa, the wider social system and structure of *fa’aSamoa* and *fa’amatai* is complex and necessitated the consideration of Samoa’s history with colonial capital intrusions and the nations points of struggle against these incursions. Against this backdrop, I

began identifying key actors who are part of the *matai* system and who could share experiences and engagements with global and local forces of structural and social dispossession. Potential participants included members of nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, agricultural coops, and village farmers and community members. With the beginnings of a record of thick description, I travelled to Samoa late September 2014 to initiate a critical ethnography study. On site, I began the process of meeting individuals, engaging in participant observation, and conducting semi-structured interviews. To tease out connections and deeper critique, some preliminary data analysis was initiated during my time in Samoa by combing through field notes and typing interview transcripts. Upon returning home, I continued ongoing exploration, examining online Samoan newspaper articles, sifting through government reports and continuing dialogue with some *matai* over email. I also began the complex task of data and document analysis. Followed by the writing process, which at times was overwhelming given the commitment to a critical ethnographic study that aims to contribute to transformative social change. With the aim of structural analysis, this research set out to excavate colonial systems of power that promulgate oppressive social realities in Samoa, and mechanisms of ABD in relation to land, food and sovereignty. As an emancipatory project, this research engaged with the analytics of Samoan understandings of historical and contemporary colonialism, endeavoured to explicate colonial capitals restructuring of land tenure, food production, social and political systems and culture, and sought to identify *matai* responses and resistance to colonial capital incursions and understand the role of learning and social action. and the customary systems of *fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai*, as spaces of reindigenization for Samoan interpretation, negotiation, and construction of meaning of lived social realities, inspiring transformative collective learning and avenues of deliverance from colonial machinations. The goal of this research is to contribute

to local and global discussions around ABD and resistances to colonization and neoliberal globalization. Moreover, this research contributes towards Samoa's current day struggles around land, food, labour, and sociopolitical sovereignty.

### **Positionality and the locus of enunciation**

The explicit focus on power relations and political contexts in critical ethnography necessitates “both self-reflection and a rigorous critique of one’s own implication in the related relations of power and social hierarches” (Fitzpatrick & May, 2016, p. 104). Researchers have an obligation to acknowledge power dynamics that occur within the researcher participant relationship (Absolon & Willett, 2002; Kovach, 2002; Steinhauer, 2002; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Moreover, an obligation to “provide information about one’s cultural location, so that connections can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established” (Steinhauer, 2002, p. 78). Absolon and Willett (2005) assert that in an indigenous context, location of oneself is critical to the recovery and resurgence of collective and individual indigenous identities as it honours the “recovery of self from internalized colonialism, racism and oppression” (p. 120).

In research engaging indigeneity, locating researcher positionality is imperative given the colonial and imperialistic antecedents of western research as argued by indigenous scholars who maintain that research ‘on’ indigenous peoples has appropriated and disposed indigenous knowledges (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Hunt, 2013; Steinhauer, 2002; Thaman, 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Trask, 1991; Webar-Pillwax, 1999).

It galls us that Western researchers and intellectual can assume to know all that it is possible to know of us...It angers us when practices linked to the last century, and the centres before that, are still employed to deny the validity of indigenous

peoples' claims to existence, to land and territories, to the right of self-determination, to the survival of our languages and forms of cultural knowledge, to our natural resources and systems of living within our environments. (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, p. 1)

In my own research, I was routinely reminded of the appropriation of Samoan knowledges and the distrust Samoan peoples have with research and more profoundly with researchers who have violated Samoan customary practices and dishonored reciprocal, respectful relationships. Given conventional ethnography's long history of imperialistic renderings, this research study implored constant consideration of social dispossession. Allweiss (2016) argues that much research has sought "to pathologize, exoticify and name the others with the researcher gaining from the plundering" (p. 12). In the context of Samoa there is no clearer example of colonial underpinnings than in the work of anthropologist Margaret Mead who according to Tuaopepe Felix Wendt (1994) egregiously portrayed Samoa as a mythical illusion of a "joyously promiscuous society" (p. 94). In unpacking Mead's controversial works on Samoan society, Newman (1999) suggests that Mead's social and political location was rooted within early white feminism and whose work was influenced by "Victoria race politics" (p. 234) which perpetuated "racist hierarchies of racial difference" (p. 234). This is a significant critique in relation to positionality, in which I draw upon the concept of 'enunciation', specifically the locus of enunciation. The analysis presented by Mignolo (2009) shifts the question to "who and when, why and where is knowledge generated" (p. 2). For Mignolo (2009) enunciation is anchored in the detachment or delinking from the "colonial matrix of power," that initiates a 'waking-up' from the processes of western modernity and the promises of capitalism (p. 2). In this context, I use the locus of enunciation to locate my positionality to challenge colonial capital machinations,

recognizing the time and space in which I write and the sociopolitical and economic knowledges and realities that have shaped my perspectival lens.

To locate my positionality necessitates stating who I am. I was born in Canada to a Canadian mother and a Samoan father. While my Samoan ancestry is rooted within my father's lineage from the village of Aua in American Samoa, my connections to Samoa are through my godmother who is from the village of Lepea in Samoa. As I was raised outside of *fa'asamoa*, I have limited knowledge and experience with Samoan social and political traditions, language, and customary practices. Over the course of my formative years, I have travelled twice to Samoa, visiting both the island of Upolu and Savaii. It was in Samoa that I first encountered the term *afakasi*, Samoan for mixed ancestry and a term rooted in a colonial system of racial classification (Meleisea, 1998). Meleisea (1998) contends that prior to colonization, part-Samoans were included in the social fabric of Samoan culture, but under colonial regulations, *afakasi* were racially codified and prohibited from holding *matai* titles and from legally accessing customary land as dictated by colonial policy that entrenched "social, economic and legal divisions between" Samoans and part-Samoans (Meleisea, 1998, p. 155). My lived experience of being part Samoan, in Samoa and at home, has provided me a unique lens to view the world, shaped by an intimate understanding of racialized relations and internal colonization. Such experience has also formulated my commitment to social change. Living between multiple cultural identities is a resistance to coloniality and to the positioning of others, it involves "the agency of individuals to be active participants in creating and constructing their own culture and identities" (Keddell, 2007, p. 52). In describing my locus of enunciation, I am writing from a lens that extends beyond identity politics to encompass structural critique through an anti-colonial and Marxist approach.

### **Research Site: Apia, Samoa**

Apia is the capital city of Samoa and the single urban area for commercial enterprises, markets, and educational and political institutions (Ward and Ashcroft, 1998). Holston and Appadurai (1996) posit that in the era of economic globalization, “cities represent the localization of global forces” and “is the place where the business of modern society gets done, including that of transnationalization” (p. 189). In as such, Ward and Ashcroft (1998) articulate that the influence of urbanization as evident in Apia has reshaped Samoan political and structural institutions, namely the individualization of decision making, which has ostensibly transformed Samoa’s traditional political economy. As a critical ethnography, Carspecken (1996) postulates that the focus of a research study can “be portrayed through the imagery of a focal region within a naturally occurring stream of social life surrounded by a complex social context where the focal region is the ongoing social routines of a single social site,” in this case, Apia (Carspecken, 1996, p. 33). Apia is part of the *Tuamasaga* district and of the election districts *Vaimauga West* and *Faleata East*. The Apia region is comprised of 45 independent villages, with local power resting within each constituent village. Apia provides for a rich, diverse, and conducive environment for this research. It is the epicentre of public service, the control centre of financial and commercial enterprise, the hub of agribusiness and markets, the headquarters for wage labour, and the setting of various and conflicting perspectives on coloniality and capitalist intrusions and the complicit and resistant role of traditional institutions in relation to the entrenchment of capital.

### **Gaining Access: Strategies to recruit participants**

Creswell (2012) notes that gaining access to participants in ethnographic studies, characteristically occurs through a gatekeeper, considered an individual who belongs to the

cultural group or who has established relationships with the group. To initialize a relationship with the gatekeeper, Creswell (2012) highlights the need to provide the gatekeeper with the intent, scope, and meaningfulness of the research facilitating a relationship of reciprocity, particularly “for strangers studying the culture” (p. 154). In the context of critical ethnography, Creswell’s (2012) observations are valid as the researcher is free from positivist neutrality and encouraged to engage in reciprocal relationships and narratives (Anderson, 1998; Carspecken, 1996; Jordan, 2003). “Samoans believe that the nature of human being is love, caring and looking after each other, respecting each other, having relationships, because if there is no respect there is no harmony or peace (Interview Notes, Le Tangaloa Dr. Pitapola Alailima, 2014). Harrowing, Mill and Spiers et. al (2010) elaborate on the importance of establishing relationships by positioning the researcher as an instrument of data collection, which “is dependent upon relationships with the participants in an attempt to gain the emic, or insider, perspective” (p. 241).

Creswell (2012) also maintains the importance of sensitivity and the “need to honour who owns the account and whether participants and leaders at our research sites will be concerned about this issue” (p. 56). Given Samoan socio-cultural values on respect and authority and the sensitive subject matter of coloniality, dispossession, and resistance, I understood the possibility that participants would be hesitant to sharing their experiences and critiques. To mitigate this, I assured all participants that the research process adhered to ethical standards of confidentiality and I would respect privacy and security by using coding (pseudonyms) for participant names. In following ethical standards, I informed all participants that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell, 2012). Further, as described earlier in the chapter, as a critical ethnography, I was ethically bound to a research process predicated on a reciprocity that

involved sharing my positionality and ancestral ties to Samoa, which established a meaningful and trusting foundation. “The interviewee is not an object, but a subject with agency, history, and his or her own idiosyncratic command of story. Interviewer and interviewee are in partnership and dialogue as they construct memory, meaning, and experience together” (Madison, 2012, p. 28). Through this dialogical process and drawing upon Creswell’s (2012) observations, gaining access to participants required the building of relationships, establishing a shared and connected frame of intent, and ensuring reciprocal trust enabled for purposive and snowball sampling of Samoan participants. It should be noted that during this process, some participants felt that recognizing the knowledge they were sharing was more important than confidentiality and asked for attribution of their names. Battiste (2002) asserts that the “recognition and intellectual activation of Indigenous knowledge today is an act of empowerment by indigenous people” (p. 4). Indigenous knowledges will be explored further in the chapters on dispossession and resistance.

### **Research Participants**

The selection of participants was a conscious project with many considerations. As the research study aimed to explore and locate Samoan resistance to coloniality and material and social dispossession, participants were selected based on their experiences and relations to customary land, food production, and Samoa’s political economy. In qualitative research “subject selection is purposeful participants are selected who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Sargent, 2012, p. 1). It was also important to consider the possibility “for participants to disrupt predetermined subject positions (Anderson, 2004, p. 204). Given Samoa’s complex social and political milieu, this research aimed to include diverse perspectives and experiences, relational to the points of

inquiry. Over a two-month period, fourteen participants were interviewed, many of whom requested that their intellectual contributions be recognized by name, while others chose to remain anonymous. Given that this study is a critical ethnography committed to action, the bedrock of analytics centers upon the narratives of the four *matai* who have taken up joint action to challenge the current customary land development scheme. These *matai* are Fiu Mataese Elisara of Sili and Executive Director of Ole Siosiomaga Society; Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu of Samatau an environment/climate change consultant; Lilomaiava Dr. Ken Lameta of Vaimoso an agricultural consultant; and Leuluaiali'i Tasi Malifa of Afega a barrister. Participant perspectives representative of agricultural and financial critiques include Afamasaga Toleafoa of Lauli'i, Chairman of Samoa Farmers Association and former Ambassador to Brussels and Sua Rimone Au Chong, an accountant and former Controller and Chief Auditor of Samoa. Leasiolagi Dr Malama Meleisea, Director of the Centre for Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa and Le Tangaloa Dr. Pitapola Alailima of Sili, Director of the Indigenous University of Samoa and former parliamentarian provide an academic and historical lens. While commonalities are shared across participant narratives, it was also important to consider those narratives, which perceived development cautiously and with caveats, but optimistically as potential avenue for village prosperity. These *matai* included three small-scale farmers, a *matai* from Satapuala, Peseta Margaret Malua, CEO of Small Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC), and Maulolo Tavita Amosa of Afega, owner of the Samoan Cultural Centre.

Those interviewed all held a *matai* title and were small scale/subsistence farmers, members of political and religious organizations, affiliates of sovereignty movements and nongovernmental organizations, and academics. The involvement of *matais* was particularly important given the role of traditional governance system in relation to customary land tenure

and social organization. In Samoa, *matais* “are the warrior for the family at the village council of chiefs and when it comes to the family level you [*matais*] are the trustee of all resources of your family so we [*matais*] have that very important responsibility of allocating resources to the various members of your family including the use of land” (Interview notes, Dr. Telei’ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, 2014). Similarly, the church as an ideological institution was considered significant given its historical role in colonization and its continued influence on village and state governance. “Our very purpose of the church ministry here in the country is to get people for Christ, even in the government leaders have to be Christian so that their regulations, their rules has to be in the sense of Christian management” (Interview notes, participant, 2014). The perspectives of NGOs were also deemed essential given their role in the reproduction and contestation to development schemes that are transforming agricultural and economic structures in Samoa. “We facilitate infrastructure support and work with the farmers and how we get financing for them to have their infrastructure in place so they are able to invest in a farm that can supply commercial business” (Interview notes, participant, 2014). Samoan academics/scholars are also key to this research given theoretical intersections around colonialism and economic liberalization and provide theoretical foundations from a Pacific/Samoan perspective and epistemic foundation. “Missionaries came here and discovered a well-organized philosophy, language, culture, governance, spiritual life. Yet they didn’t recognize this was civilization. We still have a strong culture and system of governance even with colonial impositions” (Interview notes, Le Tangaloa Dr. Pitapola Alailima, 2014). Local/small scale farmers are also crucial to this research as they represent local responses to issue of land tenure and transformations to land usage and economic development of land and resources. “Instead of worrying about exports...you need to learn to crawl before you can walk,

if you can't compete in your own domestic market how are you going to compete overseas...the focus is to build up your capacity by supplying local markets" (Interview notes, Afamasanga Toleofa, 2014).

### **Methods: Data Collection**

As a critical ethnography, this research drew upon the methods of participant observation, oral history and participant narratives, and documents. While the specific methods have been detailed under each of their own respective categories, it is essential to note that they were taken up in this research as interrelated, flowing into each other to build and support a critical ethnography. Atkinson and Delamont (2008) suggest, "the forms of data and analysis reflect the forms of culture and social action...they are the forms of social action in which identities, biographies, and various other kinds of work get done" (p. 288).

We believe, therefore, that it is important to avoid reductionist views that treat one type of data or one approach to analysis as being the prime source of social and cultural interpretation. We should not, in other words, seek to render social life in terms of just one analytic strategy or just one cultural form. The forms should reflect the forms of social life, their diversity should mirror the diversity of cultural forms, and their significance should be in accordance with their social and cultural functions (Atkinson and Delamont, 2008, p. 288).

This is particularly salient in relation to this research as Samoan histories and collective consciousness are rooted in oral histories and narratives and are experienced and learnt through observation, praxis, and reflexivity, core elements of critical ethnography.

### ***Field notes: Participant observation***

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) reminds researchers that as much as immersing oneself in the social world of participants is a cornerstone to ethnographies, so too is the writing of observations. Field notes are the record of researcher observations, of meaningful interactions, the link between researcher and participant (Wolfinger, 2002:). Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) writes “field notes are not straightforward factual accounts, but authored representations of ongoing social life” that are often descriptive and narrative based (p. 132). In my research, field notes provided a rich data source of observations and a place to write honestly and openly about my research, thoughts, and strategies. These notes described as the “getting into place” experience of peoples social worlds (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 2011, p. 114). To extend this description, participant observation “connects the researcher to the most basic of human experiences, discovering through immersion and participation” the experiences and realities of people, their behaviours and impression in a specific context (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013, p. 75). For this research, participant observations occurred in social settings including a traditional village (*fono*) council, local agricultural markets, places of commercial interactions, and people’s homes. It required building rapport and time to inspire trust and acceptance, which enabled an opening into the contexts of daily life “taking notes, recording images, and asking question that are designed to uncover the meaning behind the behaviours” (Guest et al., 2013, p. 75). Data generated from participant information enabled for greater insight into Samoa’s social milieu, helping inform what questions to ask.

### ***Interviews***

Oral history and personal narratives reengage historicity and involve practices “that counters the elite assumption of the unreflected silence of ordinary people and makes their self-representing expressions authoritative” (Anderson, 1989, p. 260). Engaging in ethnographic

interviews were envisioned “as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond” to questions (Spradley, 1979, p. 464). “Moreover, what the interviewee says is taken to have lasting importance, it is recorded for future analysis. This is not a transitory conversation, but one that is invested with significance” (Walford, 2001, p. 114). Over the course of two months, I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with participants recruited for this research. Of the 14 interviews, 13 were conducted in English and one was conducted in Samoan with the assistance of an interpreter. In accordance with ethics, I ensured each participant was provided with a letter of information that detailed the purpose of the research. This involved not only a written description of the project, but conversation, which elicited mutual exchange of dialogue, and entry into discussion around interview questions. Participants were also provided a consent form to sign, which overtime was also offered as verbal approval as many participants felt the process of signing a document was too formalized and an alien concept to the sharing of Samoan knowledge and oral history. In alignment with ethics, participants were ensured anonymity and confidentiality, throughout the research process, and as discussed previously many participants requested that their names be used in acknowledgment of information they were sharing. I used a set of interview questions to guide the interview, with interviews typically lasting 60 minutes, all interviews but one were recorded. Early into the interview process, it became apparent that meaningful exchange of dialogue often occurred before or after the formal interview process. To address this, I recognized that while the interview guide contained questions that anchored this research, it was also important to be able to explore and amend questions to elicit in-depth responses. I determined key questions within the guide and was open to probing new areas that emerged in conversation. Rubin and Rubin (2012) articulate this as responsive interviewing. It is important

to note that this did not usurp the semi-structured interview process; rather it strengthened the process of active and responsive listening with the ability of designing questions to tease out deeper understandings and explorations of Samoan experiences and memories.

### ***Documents***

In addition to interviews, I also chose to include documents as secondary sources to provide contextual place-based and historical insight, to express particular representations of social situations, to track developments, and corroborate findings (Bowen, 2009). May (2001) suggests that documents are a useful tool for political struggles as they are a means to coordinate social relations and activities. Documents, broadly defined, refer to printed materials relevant to a study including visual documents, public records, popular culture and artifacts (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). For this study document collection included literature, pamphlets, leaflets, and website materials from nongovernmental organizations and agricultural cooperatives, editorials to the government and community, newspapers, web sites, organizational and government reports and publications, video and photographs.

Similarly, with the interview process, the collection of documents was guided by early findings, and while systematic, allowed for “the accidental uncovering of valuable data (Merriam and Tisdell, 215, p. 175). McCulloch (2004) states as with any findings, documents require a process of validation and understanding of the social conditions in which documents were developed. In unpacking power relations it was important to consider who produced the information and for what purposes, who was included or excluded from discussions, and who benefited from this information (Bowen, 2009). In this sense, documents also aided in uncovering new understandings that generated new thoughts of inquiry that aided in the evolution of interview questions, particularly around agricultural and legal issues related to the activities and interests of non-governmental and development agencies. This was also true of

newspaper articles, which detailed the state's position and propaganda and provided for commentary by Samoans of all positions. Documents also enabled for unobtrusive access to natural settings and as Glaser and Strauss (1967) profess, "In publications, people converse, announce positions, argue with eloquence, and describe events or scenes in way entirely comparable to what is seen and heard during fieldwork" (p. 163). Mertens (2010) adds that documents enable for a more robust picture of social dynamics and background of the situation, as researchers cannot be everywhere at once.

Documents were used in two stages, the first as a scoping method to begin constructing a preliminary record of description, to open points of inquiry, and to identify key individuals and organizations involved in issues of land alienation, sovereignty, and state responses. Second, documents were used as means of connecting and corroborating experiences and expressions of dispossession and resistance throughout the data analysis stage. Throughout both stages, documents enabled for a deeper understanding of local contexts and of hegemonic and anti-hegemonic discourses and expressions of Samoan experiences.

Photographs



Church in Apia



Church in village



Small scale plantation



Small scale planters



Fugalei Market



Fale



Government of Samoa in Apia



Fruit Market



Land

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis by simplest definition means making sense of the data, Dey (1993) suggests that categories emerge from researchers clustering of data generating “inferences from the data, initial or emergent research questions, substantive, policy and theoretical issues, and imagination, intuition and previous knowledge (p. 100). The construction of categories and the comparison of data must be meaningful to the context in a process that “stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 341). Keeping in mind the tenets of critical ethnography, analysis was anchored in discourses that “interrogate the ways in which power, ethics, and social justice intersect” (Denzin, 2002).

Beginning the process of data analysis was daunting and at times messy. “A major problem for ethnographers is the sorting, coding, and organising of ethnographic material as ethnographic research invariably leads to the collection of an enormous amount of detailed accounts, quotes, examples” (Harvey, 1990, p. 9). It demanded constant reflection on the data, “shuttling between detailed material and the wider social milieu, which is at the heart of the dialectically generated critique” (Harvey, 1990, p. 10). The initial starting point involved transcription of all of interviews, field notes, and documents, proving invaluable towards a deeper understanding and interpretation of the data. Once transcribed, data was broken down and organized into preliminary categories, enabling for comparative and interpretive analysis, where key points and considerations emerged; bringing to the surface a clearer picture of what data was relevant and meaningful to the research questions.

Creswell (2012) maintains that once the data is organized the next phase of analysis is data familiarization by engaging in cursory readings of the texts to gain a broad understanding of the data at the individual and collective level, “getting to know the data and to see it from a number of different perspectives” (Harvey, 1990, p. 10). This process required deep emersion,

which at times seemed an endless task. As a starting point, I marked thoughts in the margins for initial categories and codes, looking for what Carspecken (1990) calls narrative structure. While various software exists to automate and expedite this process, I chose to engage with the data manually- literally and figuratively living and breathing the data. I began by highlighting (pawing method) patterns, words, and phrases on hard copies of the interviews and documents and then sorted and collated the data extracts to cursory themes. Harvey (1990) suggests at this point, data is carefully traced and cross-referenced, which for this study involved piles of paper sorted and resorted into categories and themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This enabled me to tease out relationships between potential themes and across multiple data sources. Through the process of consolidation and refinement, I was able to identify and compare themes. At this point of analysis, triangulation played a central role to exploring disjunctions, coherences, and complexities expressed within the text, narratives, and multiple data sources. While this research study embraced the concept of triangulation in its original form as a strategy “where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study,” this research also looked to a broader rendering of triangulation (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 126). Denzen’s (2012) articulation of triangulation “inspires generative politics and dialogic democracy” and represents more than validation (p. 81). With the introduction of researcher as a ‘bricoleur,’ triangulation represents a “working between and within overlapping perspectives and paradigms” attuned to the interactive processes shaped by positionality and endeavouring to connect the parts to the whole, underpinned by the obligation to confront injustices (Denzen, 2012).

The final stage of analysis involved naming the themes and organizing the data into a coherent and consistent account, identifying the ‘story’ within the theme and its relationship to

the research questions. The tenets of critical ethnography were implicit throughout all stages of data analysis, reflecting on the imbrications of colonial and capitalist systems as factors that shape Samoan meaning and experience. The role of the critical ethnographer is to keep alert to the structural factors whilst probing meanings.

### **Trustworthiness**

While critical ethnographic studies, and largely the broader scope of qualitative research, refute positivist validation measures, researchers have been ensuring rigor through different frameworks, many favoring Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of a trustworthy study (Anderson, 1989; Shenton, 2004). This study draws loosely on Guba's (1981) trustworthiness constructs including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. For the purposes of a critical ethnographic study, not all of Guba's criteria were employed, for this research only the first two criteria were relevant. The first criteria, credibility, refers to a holistic approach to 'truth' of the findings, which involve a number of techniques including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, member-checking, and establishing structural corroboration or coherence (Guba, 1981). The second criteria, transferability, refers to applicability in other contexts and situations, and involves thick description (Guba, 1981).

Employing Guba's criteria for this study entailed working through the different techniques starting with credibility, which involved some but not all of the techniques, including prolonged engagement with many *matai* on site in Samoa and upon returning home to Canada. Persistent observation involved identifying elements most relevant and focusing upon them, such as Samoan meaning making around land, the practices and obligations of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, daily activities and interactions at local markets. Lastly and importantly this study

utilized triangulation, which involves the use of multiple data sources to generate a deeper, robust and well-developed understanding of Samoan matai experiences, realities and perspectives. Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) identify four types of triangulation: methods triangulation, triangulation of sources, analyst triangulation and perspective triangulation. For this study, method triangulation included looking at the consistency of themes and findings generated across all of the different data collection methods including participant observation, oral history and participant narratives and documents. Triangulation of sources included looking at consistency of data sources within each of the methods listed above. Analyst triangulation involved multiple ways of seeing the data to see if there were gaps, areas for further inquiry, commonalities. Perspective triangulation included seeing the data through an anticolonial and Marxist lens. In terms of transferability, this study and critical ethnography more generally drew upon thick description, which involved the detail accounts of participant observation captured through field notes of participant observation, *matai* narratives, documents to tease out explicit patterns and social and material relations related to ABD, land dispossession, and sociopolitical sovereignty.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of critical ethnography as the methodology employed for this study. This chapter also introduced an anticolonial and Marxist analysis. A detailed description was provided of the research journey, inclusive of researcher positionality and locus of enunciation, selection of Apia as research site, and the gaining access and selection of participants. A discussion outlining the methods used to collect data including participant observation, field notes, interviews, and documents was outlined, as well as discussions on data analysis. The next chapter considers the emergent themes from this critical ethnographic study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Terrains of Dispossession

As Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) poignantly writes, “the colonial past flows within and throughout indigenous narratives, is embedded in discourses, and articulated in music and poetry forming a shared language for talking about the history, the sociology, the psychology and the politics of imperialism and colonialism as an epic story telling of huge devastation, painful struggle and persistent survival” (p. 19).

They came from all corners of the earth. Ideas and ideologies they thought of worth. Different religious worldviews. To civilize our godless crews... They brought cash, knives and goods... Worshipped the gods of capitalism and equality. Bowed to individualism and personal gain. Told us communal lands hindered development... We replayed the struggles of Pacific Island brothers and sisters. Forced to abandon their own languages, customs, sovereignty. To powers that invaded not only their lands but the very tenets on which a proud and productive society existed for centuries before the white man set sail. Did they not recognize the magnitude of what we would lose if we accept wholeheartedly what they thought we should choose... Did we? (Jackie Fa'asisila, Development, 2015).

This chapter sets out to expose the patterns and fissures within the structural and social impositions of colonial capital to illuminate recurrent processes of dispossession and domination. Most significantly, this chapter shares the experiences and knowledges of *matai*, taking up Alfred's (2009) assertion that the colonialities of dispossession and ABD are more than analytic categories; they are lived experiences of violence and racialization. From *matai* narratives, as well as observations and documents, two main themes emerged. The first theme explores

Samoan expressions of coloniality's recurrent process of dispossession fomented by incursions against indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, namely repudiation of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* through the elaboration of two related sub-themes including: (1) cooptation; (2) colonial ideological paternalism and imposition of democratic institutions. The contradictory role of the Church is also considered here in relation to the dispossession of Samoan culture, spirituality and *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*.

A second thematic chronicles Samoan analysis of contemporary forms of material and political-economic dispossession in keeping with David Harvey's notion of ABD (Harvey, 2005) its mechanisms, and epithets of racialized domination. Within this broad theme two specific points of inquiry emerged, the alienation of customary land enforced by colonial law and the mechanisms of financialization and efforts to dislocate against food sovereignty and Samoan labour as imposed by trade regimes. Across many of the narratives and analysis of *matai* emerged an overarching critique that challenged the rhetoric of assumed inevitability, decried the notion of universality, and uncovered the economistic camouflage, exposing the continuities of coloniality and the social and material relations of domination within ABD.

### **Repudiation of *Fa'aSamoa* and *Fa'amatai***

To understand Samoans experiences, critiques and analytics of ABD and its mechanisms necessitates a historically situated analysis that excavates the spaces and relations of colonial power that engenders structural and ideological conditioning necessary for neoliberal globalization to supplant itself, destabilizing and devaluing Samoan political economies. It requires a disarticulation of metanarratives to understand that the enclosure of the commons is inseparable from the enclosure of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, as physical and social worlds are indivisible within Samoan cosmology. Colonial regimes placed great emphasis on endeavours to

weaken the power of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, as these systems and practices were perceived as impediments to colonial expansion and economic development. Dispossession was advanced predominantly through legal and financial mechanisms that aimed to reorganize *fa'amatai* and diffuse the values and principles of *fa'aSamoa* to transform customary land tenure, and displace and commodify Samoa's agrarian political economy.

By the end of my research in Samoa, I was only beginning to gain some initial clarity in the complexities of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, seeing and feeling it more pronouncedly in villages, in people's interactions, their obligations, in protocols and in stories. Predominantly, I came to the clearest understanding by listening and engaging with *matais* responses to customary land alienation and their concerns about neoliberal globalization's (contemporary capitalism) impacts on *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*. While many expressions of concern were raised, two categories in particular were repeatedly vocalized, including the idea of cooptation of Samoan leaders and *matai*, ideological and structural colonial paternalism imposed upon Samoan peoples and traditional systems and the restructuring of traditional governance structures into democratic institutions.

### ***Cooptations***

The influence of the development of the economic powers that do business with government since our independence and even in the colonial times is such that even now, globalization is such a dangerous animal. Everything is about cooptation to somebody's values which is not necessarily Samoan values and the challenge ... is our poor Samoan government who is so minor compared to the power of this animal, globalization animal. It's so difficult for them to say no to the many transnational corporations and foreign direct investments and many multimillion dollars that is being poured into this country...But these partnerships

are manipulative and exploitative, so the fundamental issue of partnership is flawed and for a small society like Samoa, trying to survive in a world of globalization how can you actually do that it is so difficult...50 years of being bombarded by globalization policies, bombarded with so called democratic values that belong to the UK and other westernized models. I mean we have to actually see the changes and those changes are in the mindset of our people who do not compare to the framers of our constitution, the forefathers of Samoa ...their hearts were in it for the future generations of Samoans, Samoan identity, their hearts were in the *fa'amatai*, in the greatest sense of *fa'amatai*. Now because they are so coopted, which you find in the system and people at the highest level of government ... transnational corporations and globalization has done this to our country. They basically manipulated your whole system so you end up being the environment to further promote and shove their policies down people's throats and make their minds believe that this is the right thing for them (Interview notes, Fiu Mata'ese Elisara, November 2014).

Building upon the idea of globalization as a set of processes and mechanisms that endeavour to supplant Samoan social and political systems with western ideologies and economic policies, the following narrative reconnects globalization to a historical perspective and the idea of colonial capital as a reoccurring process.

What we call *fa'aSamoa* is subjected to all sorts of things like missionaries, colonialism, and then since independence we are members of international organizations like the UN who have their own international conventions, World Bank, IMF, all sorts. And you have this thing [*fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*] here

and it's trying to cope with all these darts been thrown at it...and you can't expect it not to change from the fundamentals. When it comes to globalization I think if you look at it from that point, the historical perspective and you go way back and regard the invasion by the Tongans as part of the global and then the early beachcombers and runaway sailors and so on, as part of that the whole process of globalization and so on...and now, today...I think one of the topical issues here is the debt that we have accumulated from borrowing. I'm not an economist so I'm not going to pretend I know what the economic argument is all about, but what I understand is that we seem to be borrowing more than we should. The presence of donor countries here, Chinese in particular, seem to be quite noticeable in their presence and their increasing amount of aid programs, for example there are a lot of Chinese construction companies and so on. I don't know where it will lead but I think the sooner we, our leaders - at least those who are denying or still in the denial mode - realize we are changing and have changed and will continue...we can put policies in place to deal with those anticipated changes to ensure Samoan sovereignty. I think that some people who are denying are the worst perpetrators of change [with] the biggest TV's, the biggest graves, the biggest cars (Interview notes, Leasiolagi Dr. Malama Meleisea, November 2014).

The following narratives continue to build upon cooptation as a substantive force affecting the core of Samoan ways of life, systems, and institutions, with *matai* raising concerns over the implications of sociocultural dispossession, the shifts towards monetization, and corruption of the fa'amatai system. Through participant observation and informal conversations, many concerns around sociocultural dispossession involved the increasing value placed on money.

Examples included changes to practices such as *faalavelave* in which money has replaced customary items and food products and the increase in migration of people from villages to urban areas in search of wage labour, ultimately affecting village economies:

We don't seem to have the capacity to stand up and defend what has worked for us for generations and more or less the political economic powers [Samoan government] are coopted by the views of the western model and have succumbed to that pressure. And we ended up serving the very structure that we belong. Sure there are some issues we need to address, I mean no society is perfect but don't touch the structure of the society that has made our identity for generations and links us to who we are (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, October 2014).

The way I see it, it's kind of slipping away from the traditional culture and the thing is as you all know culture is not static its dynamic and the external factors that make culture dynamic is mainly due to our values from time to time. Today we look at our values, which are very much influenced and impacted upon by the dollar...So, Samoans today they are looking at the way of maximizing the accumulation of their monetary capacity in order to meet modern value demands (Interview notes, Maulolo Tavita Amosa, November 2014).

Our *matai* system has changed quite a lot with the introduction of the concept of globalization and the continuation of colonization with the mindset. The mindset of the Samoan people at that time [New Zealand Colonial period] had been corrupted. The way they see things and they see the Europeans you know they tend to accumulate a lot of wealth. They cut down a lot of forest and then cultivate land for the sake of profit making...what you call capitalization,

capitalism ...so different from how we [Samoans] do things, but that's part of the problem (Interview notes, Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, October 2014).

***Colonial paternalisms and Imposing democratic institutions***

For other participants, colonialities repudiation and endeavours to dislocate *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai* were seen as direct violations to Samoan autonomy. In particular, territorial colonial regimes implementation of 'native policies' and colonial paternalism, which reverberates today in Samoa, perpetuating the *papalagi* belief that indigenous Samoans lack political providence, and as such require(d) enlightenment and democratic emancipation, as clearly stated by one participant:

What did they think when they came here, the missionaries. We had a strong governance structure, politics, culture, but they didn't acknowledge our life as civilized or our capacity. They, colonialism, introduced so many foreign values and ways of life, and ideas of western democracy, none of this is Samoan (Interview notes, Le Tangaloa Dr. Pitapola Alailima, November 2014).

Le Tangaloa Pitapola (November 2014) further articulates that the political indoctrination of western democracy for Samoans symbolizes dispossession as experienced by the collision of two forces, one *papalagi* the other Samoan, where the former is inherently incompatible with the social and political organization of Samoan governance systems and ways of life:

What is the difference of the governance of the western world and the governance of the *matai* systems...it's that decision making is by plurality or majority. Now if your voice happens to be with the other groups of plurality then it is accepted, right? But if your voice happens to be with a minor group of people your voice is discounted because decisions are made by plurality or majority. So where is the equality of people in that type of decision making....And once you open the

decision to a number, who actually dominates, [and] makes that decision? The one who can buy the number with influence of power, with influence of money, and influence of position, wealth, money, and status...in a democracy there is nothing but a tyranny of the majority... Is there any wonder why in a democracy of majority you need weapons, outside forces, outside strength to enforce the will of the majority. Now how about the will of equal voice of the Samoan *matai* system. No decision is made unless there is absolute 100 % consensus of the decision makers. Complete unanimity, holistic decision making (Interview notes, Le Tangaloa Dr. Pitapola Alailima, November 2014).

This incompatibility between European and Samoan systems, perceived as an expression of dispossession is further articulated in the critiques of colonialities machinations that attempt to delegitimize *fa'amatai* and Samoan indigeneity by means of structural and ideological impositions, as said by one participant:

Of course, our traditional methodologies and the knowledge in the past have really been tread on badly. I also have to say that the democratic system that now runs our government and politicians is the wrong system for Samoa. It is a foreign system and unfortunately, we cannot continue to harbour the old system that used to work because globalization has taken over. And the best we can do is find a way we can keep our fundamental principles and values but try and find a way to accommodate some of the pressures that our now on us, to be able to survive... And when the colonials came here they wanted to make sure they got right out to the villages quickly and facilitate there, so they actually selected people from each village and called them *pulenu'u* – *pule* means authority – they have the authority

of the village. We had questioned that in one of our meetings with *pulenu'u* in Savaii. We said it's about time that you guys think about this concept of *pulenu'u* because it's colonial. Who are you – you are not the *pule* of the *nu'u*. You're not the authority of the village. The authority of the village is the old people who are there in the village, it's them who are the *pule* of the *nu'u*. So this colonial concept continues to exist and we've used it and like one of the elders say, you use the wrong concept over and over again it becomes the right concept in the minds of the people (Interview notes, Fiu Matese Elisara, October 2014).

### ***The church and Fa'aSamoa and Fa'amatai***

As illustrated by the narratives above, *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* are living systems that are continuously shaped and effected by external and internal dynamics and have been both complicit and resistant to coloniality and capitalist encroachments. For some participants, the church has played a leading role in influencing *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*; however discussions about Christianity or the church was challenging, as many Samoans frown upon any criticism about the church or feel disrespectful doing so in public conversations, given that Christianity is woven into the tapestry of *fa'aSamoa*. Throughout a majority of interviews, Christianity or God was routinely referenced, and by observation alone, the overwhelming number of churches, at least one per village, illustrates Christianity's embeddedness in Samoan life. As articulated by most participants, the church is intrinsic to the social and political fabric of *fa'aSamoa* and as such has influenced social obligations such as *faalavelave*. For many Samoan's, however, this has resulted in financial burdens and pressures to fulfil obligations to the *āiga* and obligations to the church.

The Christian influence stands out as still probably the major source of change which in my opinion is not only the biggest sort of impact but its lasting and it's

taken over. My own thinking is that the village councils authority has deteriorated a bit for all sorts of reasons and a little bit of vacuum that has been created by that and I think the church is stepping in and that's probably true of every village council for every village I can think of. I am not saying it's a good or bad thing that's a fact. A lot of oratory, a lot of decision making, and a lot of punishment, you know people do it by just quoting the bible, but the bible becomes a vehicle for a lot of things happening. And if you look around and estimate how much Samoans give to church every Sunday. I hear it's about 1.5 million tala given to church every Sunday. That's cash not to mention all sorts of other things that church people get (Interview notes, Leasiolagi Dr. Malama Meleisea, November 2014).

I guess some people say they survive by faith. I was just thinking of that phrase 'man does not live on bread alone' ...It's very difficult for people to...change their mindset...of how to spend, so that they can spend some money on their children's education and medical rather than spending all that you know on custom, but the killer stone is the church and all that. I go to church but it's very difficult...The same people who gives and prays are the same people who mourn and suffer (Small-scale farmer, November 2014).

In conversation with a Baptist Reverend, the influence of the Church, its role in politics and its position on Samoan theology is exceptionally clear:

Our very purpose of the ministry, the church ministry here in the country is to get people for Christ and let them hear the proclamation of justice and let them become Christian. Even in the government church leaders has to be Christian so

that's their regulations, their roles, their rules has to be in the sense of Christian management. That's our real purpose the intention of the church here in the country is to Christianise people...before, the Samoan people worshipped gods. They have their own gods, they just pray when the sun goes up and when the sun gets down, and the moon, the stars, they can pray and they could call a big huge tree a god because at night the owl will come and make noises. Before Christianity came they had that sense inside themselves to worship something. When the Christianity came and stopped them worshipping those gods they show them the real god, Jesus Christ...but we are the Samoan. We love our custom, we love our culture, we love our land, we love our environment. There are some customs that still exist when you come into my house I offer you a root of kava there's a way of greeting our guests and when we drink kava before they had their gods and it seems that they carried their gods wherever they go. Before they drink the cup of kava they pour some to the god, now we no longer pour those kava juice to any gods, but we pour to god in heaven. That's our custom we pray to god say praise for what he gave us before Christianity arrived in Samoa (Interview notes, participant, November 2014).

### **Colonial Law, Land, Finacialization and Dispossession in Samoa**

Land is crucial to indigenou ways of life as expressed in literature, in stories and in the narratives of participants. In Samoa, land maintains the histories of families, is the genetic cartography of bloodlines, is a physical representation of Samoan indigeneity, is a vessel of social, political, and environmental knowledge, and is a place of collective spirit. sentiment is strongly echoed by two participant's own meaning making of land, describing its centrality to

Samoan indigeneity:

We believe that customary land is a westernized concept and is certainly far removed from the reality of customary lands here. The intricacy of intergenerational values, it is a value of our principles and our fundamental issues that we treat lands for sustaining current generations and future generations. We also look at the rights of people who are Samoans not only in Samoa but overseas to have that claim and coming here anytime they want and still be recognized as owners. We need to understand customary land the way we see it and actually treat it as the sustainable element of our identity, of our life as Samoans (Interview Notes, Fiu Mata'ese Elisara, November 2014).

Land is the very core of who we are and what our identity is...this government has been carried away by its own cleverness, egged on by donors who do not understand Samoa's traditions. They [international institutions] do not understand the stability comes from the traditional, the land, the cultural - *fa'aSamoa* (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleafoa, October 2014).

While observations and interviews provided a sense of meaning and people's relationship with land, the most profound sense of understanding came from visiting a family's home and small scale plantation. Off the Main West Coast Road east of the Faleolo airport and down a rutted mud caked road bountiful in mosquitoes, stray dogs, and the overwhelming scent of hibiscus and frangipani, lay a property dotted with two *fales*, one for cooking and one for living and sleeping. In Samoa, a *fale* is a traditional Samoan style home, constructed with a domed thatched roof, and evenly spaced posts supporting beams in the center, and is without walls. I was invited to sit, always crossed legged in a *fale* and wore a lavalava as respect for protocol and the family. I was

offered the water of a young coconut and listened through an interpreter to the family's greetings and was then asked to share my history and connection to Samoa. Once our lineages were shared, our conversations turned to their village and their toil to harvest agricultural goods, and their struggles to make a profit in the local market, causing them to change tactics and sell closer to home along road side stands. They tell me that life is hard, but they have everything they need, their health and their belief that the "bush" is their home, this land is Samoa, and Samoa is the land. They also tell me that if customary land is leased for long periods of time, for a generation, it's no different from alienation of land and with all these foreign influences Samoans will become like the "red Indian" of America and Canada, no home and no land.

In the contemporary capitalism, Harvey (2005) describes ABD, as an extension of primitive accumulation in which the ongoing process of accumulation is executed by sets of 'predatory practices' exploiting and commodifying all human and natural resources, including cultural forms. As described here and illustrated in previous chapters, coloniality and dispossession have flourished in political and social spaces under colonial rule and during Samoa's independence. This ongoing process of social and political relations of domination intends to disrupt and destabilize Samoa's political economy and sociocultural matrix through normalizing and entrenching liberal conceptions of private property rights, legal and democratic institutions, agribusiness, wage labour, market economy, trade, and Christianity. Most significantly, what emerged across many participant analytics was a unanimous perspective that the cumulative effects of foreign interference and the state's complicity and acquiescence to international aid, policies, and agendas has precipitated the current struggle for control over customary land. Articulated by the four *matai*, the issue at hand is the lack of consultation between the Asian Development Bank and Samoans, and their financialization and privatization

agenda that works to usurp customary land tenure by way of long term leasing and collateral mortgaging, which these *matai*, and other silent supporters, believe will result in the alienation of customary land. These *matai* also spoke about the mechanisms of international trade resulting in food dumping and racialized wage labour. Most fervidly, the group opposes these legal, economic, and ideological impositions that jettison customary laws and systems that safeguard the interests of Samoans. These analytics are clearly expressed in the following excerpts of the *matais* official complaint letter to the Asian Development Bank:

We, the undersigned complainants are *matais* and high chiefs, who are deeply concerned about the individualization, financialization, and alienation of customary land that is occurring under the guidance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s Technical Assistance Promoting Economic Use of Customary Land project, which has been carried out without meaningful consultations across Samoa. We also object to the Agribusiness Support Project, which appears to be aimed at further encouraging the financialization of arable land under customary tenure...The cumulative long-term impact of these ADB interventions will be severely detrimental to our people, including land alienation and dispossession. These reforms are incompatible with the indigenous culture and political institutions of Samoa, and they are inconsistent with the needs and aspirations of the Samoan people... Land is an integral aspect of Samoan identity. The customary land tenure system guarantees a durable and lasting security for all Samoan people. It provides eligibility for all members of an *āiga* to reside on and use family lands. The system disallows individual ownership of land even for the Sa'o (paramount chief) of the family. Rather it treats land as the perpetual

property of the whole family and regards the paramount chief as the trustee. The system allows for equitable allocation of family lands to all its members thus availing ample opportunities for all to provide for their needs through subsistence and commercial development... We object to the ADB's determination to dispense with our customary laws and systems, which have successfully safeguarded the interests of the *āiga* for millennia, in the interests of expediently transforming land parcels into commodities to be absorbed by global financial markets. The risk runs high that benefits will flow not to local communities, but to foreign investors and national elites, with short-term monetary gains to individuals vested with unfettered powers over our lands. Meanwhile, members of our *āiga* will face dispossession from potentially large-tracts of land, foreseeably resulting in loss of income, threats to food security and impoverishment. It is also foreseeable that such fundamental transformations to customary land tenure will lead to social unrest, conflict and violence... Our customary systems of consensus building may be slow and frustrating in the eyes of the financial market, but they safeguard our rights and help ensure the equitable distribution of land and its benefits. It is these systems that have ensured our survival as a people into the 21st century (Asian Development Complaints Letter, August 29, 2014).

### ***Land, Law, and Finacialization***

The legal and governance structures of *fa'aSamoa* fall within the domain of *fa'amatai*, the political system of *matais*. This system is predicated on the *āiga* and the position of the *matai*, the elected leader of the *āiga*. Within this system, authoritative power structures are built around the political framework of *nu'u*'s which are divided into districts and villages, each attached to a *fono* and *matai sufa* who were elected by and who govern all social and material

relations of their *āiga*. The *matai* system is based upon hierarchal rankings, the highest titles belonging to Tumua and Pule. Ostensibly, *fa'amatai* comprises the processes and institutions within and between kin groups, as administrator to family interests, such as land, *matai* titles, and honour of the family and village. These systems of law and order were and have been the locus of colonial dispossession and ABD in efforts to transform customary land tenure by instituting private property rights and individualization and to displace and commodify Samoa's agrarian political economy. Participant have this to say about the Asian Development Bank and ruminations on the consequence of land dispossession:

We have got to a point where government for economic reasons is misplaced and being pushed on by institutions like Asian Development Bank and World Bank who only see economics...they see development as ownership, security of tenure... and government has listened to the donors (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleafoa, November 2014).

I want to stress the idea that whatever the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, or whatever financial institutions, people need to understand what underlies financial assistance. We have been taken for a ride so many times. At the end of the project, we are supposed to be the recipients of the benefits but we are not benefiting...I think there is another ulterior motive for them to push for the economic use of customary land (Interview Notes, Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, November 2014).

I think if our leaders, if our government is not careful on this and a bit more discerning it may sort of end up heading that way being pushed by international banks and institutions and we all know the *papalangi* way is quite different from

our sort, but that's where the security of our land tenure is. Once it's changed you know it may sort of eventually end up being that [dispossessed]. And then the whole *fa'aSamoa* is going to change. You see land is where everybody connects. And once that's gone then people don't go back to their families. I mean because you know once people leave [land and village] if they have no sense of belonging and there's nothing there to be proud of or held up as something, does that not change our culture and way of life? There is a complexity and range of things that could happen if we are not careful (Interview notes, Sua Rimone Ah Chong, November 2014).

### ***Colonial and Foreign Laws***

The usurping of customary landowner rights is not new terrain for Samoa, dating back colonial agendas that worked to displace collective ownership and subsistence economies for individualized ownership/property rights, agricultural cash economies, and wage labour. For many participants these encroachments on customary land have occurred through structural and legal mechanisms both internal and external that enable leaders and economic institutions to disregard customary and constitutional laws for the purposes of economizing land. These thoughts on the matter were shared:

The issues of lands and title court and the power they subsumed under the normal westernized courts which is really inconsistent and a colonial administration.

While they set up the land and titles court it is still subjected its decision under the model of the Westminster model... and that's why we are afraid of this customary land thing and the current *Land Titles Registration Act 2008* which is good for freehold lands but we believe it's totally wrong when we are now dragging in our customary lands into it. Because its fundamentally destroying our customary land

system because now it does not recognize the cultural collective ownership of customary land but it recognizes the name of certificate that is on that title as the owner. So if you have one *matai* on that tile in the eyes of the land and titles registration act that is one person owns all the lands. It does not give recognition of the fact that he is only there as representative of the collective family lands. So what is the situation with the generations to come when that land is taken? What is the situation when the banks start to take it when you mortgage leases and licences of customary lands as the current small business project in Samoa? It's a dangerous precedent and people know that. People love to go and get money and forget there is implications if you don't end up paying. So some people who enjoy that this is available go and receive mortgage money but what will happen when we will not be able to pay and the bank will ultimately take that land. And then the bank will sell that lease to somebody else and then when you go to use your land somebody else has ownership of that land. (Interview Notes, Fiu Mata'ese Elisara, December 2014).

So the alienation of land they [government and Asian Development Bank] go the other way and say it's a different interpretation of the court, so they don't need to have this [legal] process. Well anyway they did not do that they got the head of state to sign. So all these other laws that are alienating things from our point of view requires article 109 of the constitution any alienations for the provisions of the proprietor must be submitted before the common law. But they actually signed these things without calling for the reconstitution of process. So who is the culprit? The bank who financed the money to violate our constitution. And

government is forcing the changes and is not doing the proper way of consultation to have this law because it actually alienates land for an extended period of time, they are doing exactly the opposite. The constitution prohibits mortgage and they are allowing mortgage of these things alienation (Interview notes, Le Tangaloa Dr. Pitapola Alailima).

Others offer a clear lineage of colonial/neoliberal influence on Samoa's legal structures through implementing and changing laws, both colonial and traditional:

There's a lot of issues that we need to look at, compensation issue, the issues of the impact on our constitution and what they are saying it's constitutionally protected when it's not. We need to look at the new legislation that they passed lands advisory commission act that was passed last year that was ridiculous. We need to look at the implications of leaseholds land and the alienation of customary land act 1965. We need to look at all that and how they have actually been changed from time to time and in those changes they have continued to say to our people it's (land) protected...when now in the *CLAC Act 2013 section 15* they have now said that alienation of customary land includes mortgages. It's been saying no in the constitution, no in the continuance act, and then in the last section of the *CLAC Act* they changed it all together and you can now see the camel moving into the tent without people understanding it. But who's actually farming it and pushing it, it's actually international foreign investors. Because some of our local investors are looking at that because they continue to say that customary lands is inhibiting development, which is ridiculous. It might be in terms of the fast economic pace that they want to go but the way that we develop the

customary land for years it's always been the way for us. (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, November 2014).

These reformations and amendments to the constitution and legislations are for many participants in sharp repudiation of and disregard for Samoan ways, emphasizing the uneven power relations and self-serving motives of international institutions:

Land is the very core element of who we are and what are identity is. This government has been carried away by its own cleverness, changed the date lines and changed roads, egged on by donors who don't understand samosa tradition... or understand that the stability comes from the traditional that cultural faasamoa and they don't understand or they don't care. Outsiders are quite stupid when coming to understanding cultures that are quite different from their own. But egged on by the donor community Asian Development Bank, OZAID and if you look at their publications its written large about land tenure is an impediment to development in the pacific this is why are rate of growth lags behind everybody else. Its rubbish if you look at the size and the geography scale (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleafoa, November 2014).

Government they are really smart when they introduced new legislation. They used the chairman of the National Council of Churches, as chairman of the commission, the land titles commission. And of course, Samoans will never say anything against the church or church leader. I talked to one of the people who was on the consultation, a good friend and the process was more or less telling people this will be done and this is why we are doing. It was never fully explained to the people the impact on ownership of the land (Interview notes, Lilomaiava

Dr. Ken Lameta, October 2014).

Other points of concerns that emerged were the implications of the financialization schemes, broadly for the nation articulated by some participant's overture of Samoa's aid dependency, and more specifically in relation to the commodification of customary land. Both points stressing the consequences of and obligations to globalizing capitalism, as an expression of colonialities temporal and spatial economic domination:

Government has been borrowing extensively from the World Bank, IMG, Asian Development Bank and other international loan institutions for the last 15 to 20 years at terms and conditions that are not easily redeemable. Indeed, in any such borrowing transactions, these lending institutions want return for their investment. After all, borrowing is a contractual obligation that must be satisfied by its own contractual terms. And of course, beggars do not choose. It follows that as an unsecured borrower, Government and the country must do what the World Bank and those other international lenders demand. That is the economic and financial return these loans require (Interview notes, Leulua'iali'I Tasi Malifa, November 2014).

Government has now come out with this idea that we need investment here to attract investment from the outside to go into agriculture that we need to make ownership, to change the land system, in this way you can actually use the lease. See land is leased at the moment there is no problem, but now you can lease, but use that as collateral to get money to invest, I mean it's a bit of a contradiction. If you're looking at investing from outside, why would they want to borrow money here again to have this lease, the idea is that they bring the money in not lease

land for money... government says there will never be alienation of land with this leasing thing to use as collateral. The constitution says the customary land is not alienated so the question is can this lead to alienation of land if someone can't pay their debt to the bank and the bank takes over the lease, can the bank do what they will. This a question that's amazing to get a straight answer (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleafoa, November 2014).

As articulated above, a concern for many of the *matai* was the issue of defaults on the loan and repossession of loans by the bank bringing into question land title retention, as expressed by two participants:

Of course, this whole scheme results in alienation when leases are for 50 years and not only that who are the beneficiary for that lease? Only the *matai*. Now how do they do so when those who own the land are living everywhere in Australia, in America. Do you see how dangerous this is the duration of the leases. Here again is another issue, suppose they make land business for profit and they have already mortgaged the land to the bank for lease who owns the lease? It's no longer the business man, but it's been mortgaged to the bank. So the bank will pick another businessman whoever can pay the lease and continue until the money is owed to the bank is paid back before the lease is released. The question is if they don't get their money back. Now the rank of the economic man which is the business man, which is the bank, will trump the paramount the natural owner of the land which is the *matai* and the whole land lease process is alienation (Interview notes, Le Tangaloa Dr. Pitapola Alailima).

The perception at the community level is that they [Samoans] own the land and

that the land is actually a god given heritage for all the community members so there is respect that they will treat the land and care for the land as sustainable as possible. And to secure the land as a perpetual property of community...when it comes to using the land I have been to a lot of villages including my own village where people pay very little respect to land and resources all they care about is to cultivate land and get as much as possible out of it ...The land has that kind of mentality that you develop your land like you used to do and that's really good because Samoans were really sustainable before the European's came but because of the change to economic power of land and especially this cash crops, people just cultivate land and cut down the forest without really thinking about what will be the impact (Interview Notes, Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, November 2014).

### ***Food, Labour and Trade***

Samoa's economy has been heavily supported by international and regional aid, propped up by an immense remittance economy. To streamline the public sector, increase private sector development, support existing commercial agriculture and expand communications, manufacturing, and tourism, Samoa's economy underwent intensive reformations vis-a-vis Structural Adjustment Programmes (Development Bank, 2002). As part of these reformations, agriculture and labour have undergone intensive restructuring with focus on agribusiness and labour power. During my time in Samoa, it became evident that while closed door agreements are reached between the state and global economic functionaries, their neoliberal policies of market competition, trade treaties, privatization, and corporatization are naturalized on the streets of Apia and within villages. This was most readily observed in the sectors of agriculture and labour.

Subsistence farming and subsistence labour has and remains foundational to *fa'aSamoa*

and the *matai* system; however under the auspices of trade and economic development these types of practices have been characterized as economically negligible and restrictive to economic development. While the state has emphasized a shift in agricultural and labour power from the nation state to the world market, Samoa's 'underperforming' agricultural sector has received increasing prescriptions for enhanced market driven approaches. For many participants this is problematic and expressed emphatically by one participant:

For example government has come out with this idea that we need to attract investment from outside to go into agriculture...but we have to look historically, the global economy changed and disadvantaged the kind of agriculture that we practiced...the world changed the economies of those importing countries moving away from heavy industrial stuff to high technology clean stuff...we couldn't compete...And then WTO [World Trade Organization] came and said you can't have agricultural protections anymore boys, its go to be free trade and then globalisation came in and instead of markets being a little market it became one huge competing market where the biggest and the strongest rule (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleafoa, November 2014).

Afamasunga Toleofa (Interview notes, November 2014) further elaborates on the issue of export in relation to local markets:

A lot of the food we give to tourists is imported so instead of worrying about exports it's like learning to walk before you run or learning to crawl before you walk. If you can't compete in your own domestic market how the hell are you going to compete overseas which is 10-15 twenty times more difficult? We talk about the local market first, but yes when you get the capacity you build up your

capacity by supplying locally to the market here. You refine your skills you get your product stronger and then start exporting. So eventually there is potential for export but we are not ready, when it happens that is good, every country needs to export but also export of the right things. We also have to make sure we are doing things right with the right technologies and practices.

For other *matai*, the impacts of policies and practices that promote the commodification of farming and agriculture raised concern over food production, security and impacts to traditional farming/planter methods, which some *matai* expressed concern over continued loss of traditional knowledges:

And yet they [government] say they can't stop it now because they are already co-opted to trade policies...In terms of food security the capacity is there to provide food, but the way it's being done now, unfortunately, we are seeing a lot of our own traditional knowledge being lost. The fact that we are now so much more comfortable after how many years of being introduced to foreign policies that we think this is the right thing to do (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, October 2014).

We need to be competitive against those substitutes the big mistake people talking about is growing rice here, I said you got to be nuts. If you are prepared to create the environment and cost, but it's totally uncompetitive against cheaper places, that's not the way to go. Even now the Ministry is talking about imports what big items, potatoes, onions, carrots, we can grow so now they talking about growing carrots, onion. While you can grow anything don't be stupid you can't make milk from grass, you can do anything with technology but the costs are non-sense and

unsustainable in practice (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleafoa, November 2014). When it comes to using the land I have been to a lot of villages including my own village where people pay very little respect to land and resources. All they care about is to cultivate land and get as much as possible out of it...But again we say that is part of our mandate for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and also of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and also the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development. I think that there should be another approach where people will be getting some essential knowledge of how the biodiversity responds to this kind of intensive development with clearing and exposing so much of the soil and losing so much of the moisture...its these key issues for sharing to those who's developing the land that kind of mentality to develop your land like you used to do and that's really good because Samoans were really sustainable before the European's came (Interview Notes, Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, November 2014).

Of these changes and impacts, a few participants spoke about the dispossession of food sovereignty in relation to Samoa being the recipient of food dumping and its implications on Samoans health:

This is part of the impacts of WTO [World Trade Organization]. They sell their rubbish so cheaply to us. You go to a supermarket and you buy chicken. In just the last 6 months the markets have been flooded with Taro, a bunch of Taro for 10 tala. After a while the planters will give up for all the hard work they are doing when they can only get so little. Now you go to a shop and you buy rice very cheaply and at the same time the nutrition value is very low. Because of the WTO

they are just throwing all the rubbish into the Pacific, into Samoa. They are thinking that it is doing something useful but it's not. Samoa will become malnutrition because there is so much cheap but very poor nutrition food that is available. But you can't put the blame on people because that is what they can afford and this is part of globalization and the impact of WTO. People are not selling their products at an honest price. They make very little so the best they can do is buy with the small income they have. This is how the whole globalization and WTO impacts now they moving in with the ADB providing a kind of financial support. And convincing farmers this is the way to go bringing in foods that are not traditional. But they say this is the way to go because it has economic came (Interview Notes, Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, November 2014).

Rice and potatoes those are the big substitutes and flour substitute for our local staples like root crops and bananas. Young people are eating bread some of them won't even look at a taro. The young people eat breads, new foods, rice no taro bread fruit so that another longer term challenge (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleafoa, November 2014).

The impact of food dumping was further linked to the dispossession of traditional practices and devaluation of subsistence economies, as convenience was valued over working the land:

Unfortunately what is happening here in Samoa when we talk about food sovereignty and food security, we have been a food secure country all our lives, even now there is so much food here. We decide what to grow but unfortunately with a lot of pressures from outside actually through trade agreements they are

now dumping a lot of the unwanted food here and as people grow up its now easier for them to go and buy food from the shop and unfortunately the food is junk food. And these people are being nurtured into a mindset that is best for them and it's too hard to go and develop your taro plantation, you know the whole nurturing of the mindset is easily accommodated because of the fact that yes it's difficult to go out there to grow your bananas and taro (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, November 2014).

In terms of labour, participant narratives on dispossession focused predominantly on labour migration from rural to urban areas and regionally to New Zealand for quick cash, which is impacting not only labour, but Samoan identity:

Our people still have the opportunity to live off the land. But the policies of government today are such that it's not providing the right incentives to the farmers to continue, working the land. Because they [government] now provide policies that continue to prioritize tourism as a revenue earning sector for Samoa, but when you look it is exploiting our customary owners. Many of them are now being pushed out of working the land. Many would rather go and work in these tourism sectors becoming yes sir, yes sir, what do you want for your lunch, sir, people. They become servants and I don't need to tell you, you can see the infiltration of this country with all these foreign business interests (Interview notes, Fie Mataese Elisara, November 2014).

In the outer areas and Savaii a lot of people want to migrate to the town. They prefer working fast cash and they neglect land don't work on the plantation because it takes time that's why a lot of land is being left. I think the government

is doing something about that to encourage more school leavers the young men and women who don't have school to go back and farm the land. The usual story is that they prefer to stay in the town and have quick money...a lot of migration people going to overseas and sending money back to their families remittances, I think that is still going on I think that is one of the biggest income for the country remittances from families overseas. So it's becoming a habit, if these people going to work they earning a lot and people [*āiga*] say just send the money for this *faalavelave* and then they expect to get the money fast but also that's why one of the reasons is why they like to slack working on the farm growing plantations. Now the minister of agriculture has some project to encourage people they issue they borrow from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank to provide the money as a soft loan, the government has some policies how to and encourage people if you work on land we give you money to buy tools and more materials to plant more to increase production (Interview notes, Albert Peters Sooalo, November 2014).

Albert Peters Sooalo (2014) further describes the out migration of Samoan labourers to New Zealand for fruit picking, which he comments leaves land sitting idle without it being worked on. "They need labour for picking so they hire people from here and a lot of men go over for a short time, like six months, and earn quite a lot of money."

### **Thematic Discussion**

This chapter explored the continuities and discontinuities of colonial capital endeavouring to illuminate recurrent processes of dispossession and domination. Through *matai* articulations of colonial capital intrusions, a clearer picture emerged in relation to *matai* analysis

of colonialism, the modes of colonial capital restructuring of food, political and cultural systems, and *matai* resistance, including learning and social action, to dispossession. Broadly, across these narratives and analytics, what emerged most pronouncedly was the reoccurring process of ideological and structural reorientations and reformations vis-a-vis the project of colonial capital. For many *matai*, structural encroachments while framed by the state, World Bank, IMF and the Asian Development Bank as purely economic entailed ideological and social reforms that attempted to refigure traditional Samoan institutions and structures. As well as destabilizing Samoan knowledge in efforts to dispossess *matai* and more ostensibly Samoan histories and connectivity to the land, disrupting the values and principles that underpin Samoan onto-epistemic orientations. As articulated by many of the *matai*, social and material dispossession is a collision of two systems, one Samoan and the other European, which largely are incompatible systems. In understanding historical and contemporary colonialism, some *matai* perceived colonialism as a historical concept, ending with independence, and beginning anew with neoliberal globalization understood as systems of exclusion, assimilation, and dispossession. For many *matai*.

Analysing the recurrent processes of colonial capital, *matais* expressed dispossession occurring along ideological and knowledge based fronts. Central to this analysis were the concepts of cognitive imperialism and colonial paternalism, expressed by *matais* as repeated intrusions and disarticulations of Samoan values and principles that underpin *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*. For many *matai*, these incursions occurred through prescriptive policies of the state and international and regional institutions. On the ground, these incursions were enacted through shifts from subsistence to commercialized agriculture, introduction of food imports and transferences in modes of production, consumption, and subsistence labour, both epitomizing the

devaluation and disarticulation of traditional knowledges. Matai analytics suggest that the destabilization of Samoan knowledge enables for the dispossession of Samoan histories and particularities of place. This linkage among themes to the dispossession of place and collective identity was important for many *matai* who suggested that through the normalization of import foods, export labour and increasing value placed on money, the erosion of customary practices and values would alter Samoan culture, specifically *fa'aSamoa*. While *matai* recognized the influences, which have already affected *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, concerns were raised as to the ongoing efforts of displacement and dispossession and the long-term effects.

Another area of analysis included structural/material dispossession of land and labour and the introduction of financialization, articulated by *matai* as a mechanism of ABD. Tantalizing concern for many *matais* was the current effort to individualize, commodify and alienate customary land. For many *matai*, changes to customary land tenure would adversely impact and alter *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai* and ostensibly result in the alienation of customary land, linking back to the aforementioned dispossession of place. As articulated by all *matai*, land is the physical, social, cultural, and spiritual embodiment of Samoa and lack of access to or dispossession of customary land violates the Samoan constitution and jettisons customary laws and practices that have protected land and people. For some *matai*, land while representative of Samoan indigeneity represents a pragmatic and functional purpose of being the resource base to support an agrarian subsistence economy. In association with land, structural and legal mechanisms work to erode protections and open land to the market economy. With the opening of land to the market, many *matai* questioned the processes of collateral loans with emphasis on loan defaults and titleholders.

**Summary**

In this chapter I considered themes that emerged from observations at meetings, farmers markets, a village *fono*, and interviews with participants, as well as data collected from documents pertaining to Samoan Legislation and Acts. A thematic discussion was also presented. The following chapter discusses emergent themes in the context of Samoan resistance to colonial capitalist imbrications, reasserting spaces of Samoan indigenization.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Terrains of Resistance

In the words of Hawaiian scholar and activist, Huanani-Kay Trask (1999) Pacific sovereignty and resistance to imperialism is more than vocalized disagreement; it is a disruption and rejection of imperialism, full stop, which requires organization, tenacity and involves the unveiling of state and other institutional power.

Exposing state power and its mechanism is, in itself, a public good; indeed, it is a revolutionary good. The lines between liberatory practices and oppressive practices are drawn much more clearly when power is exposed...put another way, citizens come to understand the constraints that entangle and disable them when they organize to change the very institutions that possess power over their daily lives (p. 187).

For Samoan poet Tusiata Avia (2004), power is not only vested within structures, systems or ideology, but is transmitted through a hegemonic history that is imparted as truth, erasing Samoan knowledges and lived realities.

You didn't die on the road to Apia when the soldiers opened fire you hit the ground with your trumpet you hid in the bushes of Lefaga and your wife told them you were gone. There were other times you didn't die that no one has told me about (p. 64).

This chapter works to explore and analyze Samoan spaces of reindigenization, as active sites of reclamation and resurgence of Samoan epistemologies and ontologies for reinhabitation of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*. As in the preceding chapter, the findings presented reflect and engage with the everyday lived experiences and knowledges of *matai*, participant observation

and documents. From these sources, one main theme emerged exploring Samoan narratives of resistance through spaces of learning and social action to mobilize and repudiate racialized domination and victimry, unsettle power relations, and contesting ideological and structural dispossession as advanced by the mechanisms of ABD. Three related sub-themes were also explored: (1) Collective Agency and Tacit Knowledge; (2) Learning in Action; and (3) Learning through the Fono Council. Exposing power requires the disarticulation of colonialisms 'other' by reasserting a Samoan counter history that refutes hegemonic discourse and engages with Samoan culture, histories, and heritage, embracing liberatory ways of understanding social and material difference and moreover reify Samoan social and material relations of power and knowledge production.

### **Reassertions of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai***

Mapping terrains of resistance unfolds differentially across various spaces and places, creating a cartography of redress to the systemic violence of globalizing capitalism and the colonialities of power (Quijano, 2000). For the multifold representations of indigenous resistance, a common thread woven throughout is knowledge, as a site of resistance and mechanism of contestation to colonial capital (Tuhivai-Smith, 1999). Indigenous knowledge, as the embodied experiences of colonized oppression and survivance, reorients thinking and doing allowing for a resurgence of politicized consciousness to disrupt dominant systems of power (Mignolo, 2011). Historically and today, Samoan spaces of (re)indigenization are mapped along the social and material geographies of colonial capital accumulation as points of creation and struggle for sovereignty. To understand these spaces of reindigenization, or more aptly Samoanization, implores a deeper understanding of the practices that confront coloniality and neoliberal domination. By generating a Samoan sociopolitical geography of space, fissures are

exposed bringing to light colonial capital machinations and the points and terrains of resistance. Through such analytics, this chapter works to uncover points of assertion and repudiation to racialized exploitation, subjugation, and assaults against Samoan ways of knowing and living, with particular emphasis on the struggle to protect customary land. Overarching analytics shared across many *matai* narratives included the reclamation and sustainability of Samoan knowledges, rejection of colonial prescriptions of the ‘other,’ and reinhabitation of a politics of sovereignty in the struggle to defy coloniality. This is aptly captured in the expressions of one *matai* leading the defense against the Asian Development Bank and state backed efforts to commodify and alienate customary lands:

I guess our efforts, we still believe that we are doing the right thing and we are proud to be actually doing the right thing in the midst of all the pressures from all sides and our colleagues in government who are saying one thing and acting another. Of course all of us would like to feed our families and live comfortably but at the end of the day that comfortableness will only come with the fundamental issues of life and the security of long term sustainability of our life. There are so many things that we are calling injustices. It’s the fundamental violation of the rights of people, its fundamentally not being honest to the people - telling them one thing when they know very well it’s the other. But the biggest problem is the very people who are lawmakers with only three or four people understanding the laws they are passing... We continue to add our presentations [about the Asian Development Bank’s customary land scheme] by saying it’s not right for us, it was bad enough to be colonized by foreigners but its criminal to be colonized by our own people. Because we see the whole mindset of our leaders

basically rest their decision making power into what others are telling them. And especially this unbalanced treatment of the sustainable development three pillars, because for us we are also pushing the fourth pillar of culture. In the pacific the fourth pillar of sustainable development is culture inherent to our citizens and is fundamentally part of our existence and you need to push it as the fourth pillar of sustainable development in the pacific. Forget about the global notion of sustainable development but what relevance for the pacific and even small island states is that culture has to be an integral part of our existence because that's what makes us, that's our identity, that's what makes us the people that we are (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, November 2014).

### **Spaces of Learning and Social Action**

Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies have largely been ignored and silenced by colonial capital, dismissed to the dustbin of history (Kapoor, 2011). “Recovering and maintaining Indigenous worldviews, philosophies, and ways of knowing and applying those teachings in a contemporary context represents a web of liberation strategies Indigenous Peoples can employ to disentangle themselves from the oppressive control of colonizing state governments” (Simpson, 2004, p. 373). For Freire (1970), “human existence cannot be silent nor can it be nourished by false words...Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection” (p. 88). For *matai*, resistance is articulated as the right to speak to their own experiences of colonial capital dispossession based upon their own memories and analytics. In this context, learning as action exemplifies a process of praxis, where practice and theory are interlocking, shaping one another (Horton and Freire, 1990).

Over the course of my research, I was able to witness praxis at variable points and to

varying degrees, and in every instance it involved the creation of new spaces of inquiry and dialogue. On one of my visits to the Fugalei open-air produce market for small scale planters/farmers, I encountered a young man who asked if my home has markets like Fugalei or if we shop at places like Trader Joe's, a western style supermarket. From this question began a conversation about changes to people and communities, the type of foods eaten and questions about food security, rights and health. He pointed to the stalls of taro, breadfruit, eggplant, snake beans, bananas, papayas, coconuts and said this comes from somewhere, it comes from people who look after the land, but people want that food that comes wrapped in plastic and makes you fat, pointing to my stomach laughing. We also talked about land, which was described by this young man as the basis of life. After a pause, looking out across the parking lot, he shared his concern that when we urbanize and modernize land, we as humans and as Samoans construct artificial barriers that distance our connections to one another and to the land. He continued to speak about Samoa and the connections between land and god and from his perspective he feels that many people now living in Apia are without purpose and connection to family, to culture or to their land.

Knowledge, particularly place based knowledge, as articulated by many *matai* is a cornerstone of Samoan culture and the *matai* system, shared by orators and expressed in the *fa'alupega*. One *matai* shared his thoughts on the importance of Samoan knowledge and its role in customary political institutions and practices', emphasizing that knowledge is a mobilizer for and action and power of the people:

This ritual and political process is very important to Samoans, Samoan way of life. It enshrines our history, how we do things and represents accountability. We engage with the *fono* because it is our traditional system, because there is power

in the decisions. For example, when we went to a village and shared the long-term impact of the Asian Development Bank and government so called visibility study on hydroelectric power, overnight they changed their whole affirmative response to government saying no forever, nobody is going to touch that. So, the power of information and power of awareness and good information can really be the power of the people. If those guys clearly understand from trusted sources because you can have people go and brainwash them and then make decisions from some false information and that's the danger of it and therefore the responsibility is on us to make sure that we do take that challenge because at the end of the day if we don't advocate the issues that we know with the peoples that we love and with the land we love then we are also guilty (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, November 2014).

### ***Collective Agency and Tacit Knowledge***

Peoples own empowerment and consciousness raising involves a process of understanding their tacit realities and knowledges, which for some people is a catalyst for mobilizing social action to challenge systemic oppression and exploitation. In relations to indigenous knowledges and being, the concepts of collective agency and empowerment play a central and are interwoven into the social and material fabrics of indigeneity and resistance to the project of colonial capital. In the context of learning, collective agency is an interconnected process of shared, experiential learnings, and knowledge production that is simultaneously individual and collective. In Samoa, collective learning and tacit knowledge are innate functions and central features of village life, of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*. In the current struggle for protecting customary land and sovereignty, the four *matai* engage with the practices of *fa'amatai* and knowledge sharing to engage in collective learning as spaces for potential social action. As

explained by some *matai*, the sharing of experiences and knowledges are essential elements of fighting back and talking back to systems and acts of dispossession, particularly those projects that take aim at Samoan values and beliefs embedded within Samoan culture:

The other thing with *fa'aSamoa* when young people come back [from studies overseas] and doing well, the families grab them and give them a title [*matai* title]. They are good leadership material and people with means to support family. It's a powerful thing that's why we have so many titles because we are grabbing these youth. Once you're in the system they mold you, the way they lull you into and then you adopt the values of the system. You become a *matai* and see people slowly speaking like a *matai*, acting like a *matai*, and then defending a *matai* – its repeated over... We need to have a reference point for language and basic things of culture. Samoa is rightful place of the language, particularly as there is a language commission now... a reference point... to help say what new words and how they brought into language so you can have that and different words for modern. Given the size of the diaspora and the need of the culture to have a central reference point to set standards to talk about the impact of globalization (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleofa, November 2014).

Afamasaga Toleofa (2014) further articulated his perspectives on the derivative of Samoan strength - cultural values and principles. His analysis warned that while Samoans adhere to respectful encounters, any attempts to disrespect or devalue these foundations or “mess with land” will be met with resistance:

A lot of people don't understand what's going on [current economic use of customary land scheme], but when it comes to understanding land alienation,

people say well come on boys come and try to take my land. Security of plantations is a big issue so imagine somebody invested in a farm in the middle of village land, I wouldn't wish it to anybody. You are a stranger in the village. Even if you're from here and you go and do something like that you become part of the village, must be part of the village, the best way is to get a *matai* title then you serve the village. Then you're part of village and have protection, but if you're an outsider, a foreigner I wouldn't wish it, it's not safe...we will continue to live and practice our system and way of life. We have taken in a lot of stuff and sift through it and absorb the stuff and turn it into the way we want it to be like Christianity...when I look at the churches and the youth systems and I see these young people's going through the things we went through, their characters and values being formed by basic core values that are very strong. Go to village even these kids at university; you also see them doing all the things the Samoan things, the learning things, and going through same experiences. Sometimes it's frustrating because some of those core values about authority and respect sometimes I wish they would speak up against our politicians to get up but those are our core values (Interview notes, Afamasaga Toleofa, November 2014).

One *matai* spoke about the hierarchical and power structures of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*, articulating the balance of respect required when engaging other *matai* and fono councils. He said, the messenger is important, and how you deliver the message, but ultimately it is the message that is of the utmost importance, because knowledge is the key to informed action:

If we go and share knowledge we have no power to change the chiefs and orators decisions at the village level, they have to do that for themselves. So the best we

can do is try and influence their decision-making as best as we can so that they can make the right informed choices. So that's the attitude of us here with all this about customary lands and Asian Development Bank and government we have advocated our issues with the people of this country, meaningful consultation so they understand the long term impacts of mortgaging customary lands (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, November 2014).

Discussion around modes of organizing and response to land reformation projects and economic development schemes, led to dialogue on how to engage with others in exchange of knowledge and social action for the purposes of mobilizing and exposing the real agendas behind these projects:

We are doing a biodiversity audit on mangroves at the moment we have done more or less half of Upolu. And we're using that as an avenue, where we can sit down with village *matais* and discuss this thing [Asian Development Bank and economic use of customary land]. And they are all supporting us against this [alienation of customary land]. Though we working for mangroves we are using that as a means to discuss this customary land issue with the people and they are very sensitive to it... We have already just yesterday had some major discussion with some groups here like YWCA. We are getting to those groups here as well. So not just the villages but we are getting out, our concern is the young ones, the youth they should understand what is happening, so we have contacted YWCA and YMCA, we are getting to the women's group, we have a member who is also a board member of the women's groups here. And we will leave the *matais* for the village meetings and go to meet the *matais* there. Everybody else we are working

on that. We want to cover as much, all the people we can. Particularly, our focus is on the youth so they understand what's happening here... One of the things we should do is go on the television and radio once every week to make sure everybody knows what's going on. Because the only thing people knows, is that land will be leased and the investor will put up a hotel and you will get this money (Interview notes, Ken, November 2014).

### ***Learning in Action***

While collective agency and tacit knowledge provide the foundations for a pedagogical tool that links older and newer forms of colonialism, Chaudry (2007) asserts that “learning is insufficient to bring about change: people also need an organizing or collective context in which to act” (p. 100). For many *matai*, learning in action is articulated as the mobilization of indigenous empowerment and political consciousness enacted through Samoan systems and institutions, it is the resurgence of the *fa'amatai* and reconnections to land, remembering and celebrating Samoan histories of political and cultural struggle. One *matai* described such mobilization of knowledge and *matai* resurgence to disrupt and engage directly with neoliberalizing policies of the state and international economic institutions in the village of Silli:

It's probably a 15 million dollar US dollar project that they have already invested Asian Development Bank and that's why the Asian Development Bank is continually pushing government to actually do something about Sili. We kept on telling government that hydroelectric power is not a renewable energy option for a small country like Samoa. They didn't even tell the people that they were going to damn off about four intakes in the river and run dry the whole thing. You see whole biodiversity, the river biodiversity is going to be lost and they never told

them that. And they were only going to have one trickle little system to flow through and then they were going to drive stuff down to the hydroelectric station. And there was only about five miles in, three miles inland from the village itself. So any man made infrastructure is going to fail and then what happens to the villages? So we told them [village council]. Our leaders have already said yes to government and we went there and made a presentation and when the people understand they open their eyes and stop it forever... See the government actually sent a helicopter to Sili village, put these guys on the helicopter and fly them over here to town go into the room of the minster to discuss it and offer them a whole lot of money, of course what else would they do the poor guys have been influenced in such a way that they feel manipulated and obligated to this and because they are so influential in the village they actually then canvassed the approval of the whole village. And then when we arrived they had already said yes to government, but after our presentation, overnight they see the other side of the story and they said no forever nobody is going to touch this decision which is final for generations to come. Government is not going to use our water for hydroelectric power. And that's why government then went ahead and developed another legislation called the water resources management act to put all the waters in government because that is the only way they can actually go and use water as they wish. But our people there said over our dead bodies. That legislation law was only developed because of us (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, November 2014).

Similarly, another *matai* described the actions of a village on the island of Savaii and

their response to land leasing:

As usual they [government] don't want to answer anything they know is not working. In Savaii, all former western properties, the villages just stood up against government. The government can't do anything. They went there to lease land and the people said no, you step on this land and you are finished. So the Savaii people did a really good job. In fact one of the largest plantations there, the government has split the plantation into three amongst the three villages because of resistance from the villages. Fair enough, that's what I said from the beginning give it back to the owners of the land. How can you tell me in Apia to go and farm in Savaii, they will cut my head off (Interview notes, Lilomaiava Dr. Ken Lameta, November 2014).

Another site of village organization was Satapuala where *matai* engaged in atypical Samoan forms of resistance over reclamation of lands held by the government. One of the *matais* from the village spoke about the need for standing up, even to government:

In 2012, the village asked the government to help to do our water because we need a lot of tanks for the supply. Plus the village said 1942 there the marine army came to Samoa for the Second World War and they stay here. At the Satapuala village... The deal was marines will use the land of Satapuala and when they finish they give it back. When they finished and they signed in those days. My father was there and they said they only 12 of the chief in the village. All this land cover up with copra and coconuts and then marines arrive and they make a square hut concrete [building] hiding there. So now my village asked the government for land – well there are a lot of stories a lot of things happening in there makes

things different and that's what happen in 2012...The government said the navy left so the government step in and take the land. That's not the deal. When the navy left give it back...After that problem happen in 2012, we already pay respect to court, say sorry to the government but we do it for reasons that's what happen. We believe this is our land they only give the land back a bit that's not the way to do it, give the whole thing...In 2012 they [government] send 500 police. I said don't do anything to my people; it's just the government that forced the people to make it ugly. So leave the people alone, we don't have guns in our village and they ask do you have army, we don't have army in our village, we Satapuala people, human, not army. Nobody hurt, they just made it worse sending lots of police. (Interview notes, Satapuala Matai, November 2014).

### ***Learning through the Fono Council***

After multiple meetings with Fiu and Sapa, I was invited to partake in a village council meeting in Fasito'outa. Experiencing a village council meeting is a great honour and opportunity to see firsthand the exchanges in salutations and orations, participate in the kava ceremony, and observe a traditional Samoan political institution in practice. The *fono* represents the process of maintaining or re-establishing village harmony and is called when a breach of social norms has or will occur and is the place where decisions are made for the village. As per Samoan protocol, I required proper attire, which meant a mad dash to the market to purchase a *puleitasi*, a traditional dress worn to cultural and formal events. Arriving at Fasito'outa, we waited to be invited into the council meeting. The *fono* itself is a physical and social space that reverberates with Samoan indigeneity. Its physical construction is without walls, it is open and transparent for all to hear. Its openness enables for connection to the land, the sea, the air. Each fono has four distinct

sides: the front for orators, the back for untiled men, and two sides for *matai*. Its social space is guided by strict protocols that bind Samoan indigeneity in history, and lineage, rooted in connections to the land. Once invited into the village, we greeted the *matais* of Fasito'outa who were positioned around the perimeter according to title. The floor was covered in fine mats atop a wooden foundation. Once seated in cross-legged fashion as per protocol the *fono* began with the *fa'alupega*, a ceremonial greeting that recognizes the *fono* and the naming of *matai* titles, which connects individuals and families to land and to their origin history. Only *matai* – orators and chiefs – can attend a *fono* and only a small number of those in attendance actively participate. The proceedings began with a kava ceremony, which is ritually prepared and served based on rank with an honorific oratory given as the *ipu* cup is shared. As explained by Fiu Matese Elisara (2014), the sharing of the *ipu* cup represents trust and unity by all those who share and drink from the same cup. While not a *matai*, I was invited to participate in the kava ceremony, first introduced by Fiu who announced my connections to the village of Lepea, my godmother's village. Even though I do not speak or understand the language, my experience and observations of the passing of the *ipu* and oratories given by the *matai* was profound. Following the ritual opening, the long oration and discussion of the matter at hand began, lasting over two hours, which was followed by the sharing of food and drink. The importance of engaging in Samoan custom and practice is paramount, particularly at the village council given that land alienation is a breach of social norms and that the *fono* is a place of decision-making and consensus building occurring through the sharing of knowledge, as expressed by Fiu Matese Elisara (2014):

This ritual and political process is very important to Samoans, Samoan way of life. It enshrines our history, how we do things and represents accountability. We engage with the fono because it is our traditional system, because there is power in the decisions... I hate the word education when you start to deal with our customary landowners because who are we to go and educate our leaders (customary/village) I mean they are the professors of their own resources and they know best. It's basically sharing with them what we know from a perspective that they might not appreciate and then once when we lay down clearly for them the issues, they are the best people to decide because they are the resource owners. They know exactly the solutions to any problems they have with the lands and whatever we share with them, they might be able to actually generate solutions for.

Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu (2014) expresses the power and authority of the *fono* council in all matters related to development that impacts customary land and the importance of engaging the *fono* council as a site of social action:

Yes when we went to *Fasito'outa* village that's the reason why we have to go through that cultural norms and protocols because they still have that authority within the community. To stop any community members from cutting down mangroves or if somebody applies to the government for a permit to claim some of that they have that right to intervene for the sake of the community. So that is a very powerful approach. We have to give, when we exchanged things, we give them money, and I mean money is not the issue but that is symbolic of how respectful we are as visitors coming into the community. We have to be respectful

of their own sovereign right to be a village and we acknowledge that they hold every right to stop anybody from intruding into their resources, so yes it's quite useful. I guess a very wise approach for any research including people from the government. When they want to communicate with communities, they have to go through these pathways, ah. And people just don't come to you with an *ava*, and to hold a kava ceremony for you they also have respect knowing you have full respect for them. Unfortunately that has been abused by both government ministries because they have the excuse that they are public servants and they are part of the communities but still I think they should be more respectful than just the words. They need to show their respect that's village *matai* elders coming with their *ava* and using the kava ceremony which is the highest form of showing respect to welcome the visitors into the village. So I really support the idea of going through the *matai* council because they still retain that power and authority to control the natural resources. And the biodiversity that those resources embrace and whenever we go out we just try to emphasize to community leaders the *matai* that there are resources that have never been examined and which might hold cures for many diseases...benefitting the community at large (Interview notes, Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, November 2014).

### **Future Considerations**

As noted earlier, learning and action is reflected in the work of the group of *matai* challenging the Asian Development Bank, and who employ the tactics of collective agency and practices of *fa'amatai*. This group has also employed the modern political process, lodging a formal complaint to the Asian Development Bank Complaints Review Panel. Their message is

consistent: while leasing of lands is not forbidden, the length of land leases currently required to secure a mortgage amounts to land alienation, which is forbidden by both customary laws and the constitution. To date, the *matai* have successfully slowed implementation of phase III, through social action aimed at the channels of the Asian Development Bank mediation process, which has found that the government did not sufficiently meet the consultation requirements as set out in the agreement. Fiu Mataese Elisara (2014) says through dialogue and through learning, people are beginning to understand the issues at heart, to understand the devil in the detail:

There might be few of us but there is a lot of support there, who might be latent support quiet support but I know when a lot of this comes up, they will join forces with us. We are not interested in making any names for ourselves but we fundamentally believe in the value of this and we hope that this being a god given country will find a way to move forward (Interview notes, Fiu Mataese Elisara, November 2014).

Similarly, other *matai* articulate that moving forward necessitates continued learning and excavation of power relations and assertion of Samoan ways of knowing and living, with education as a driving factor:

Education is one of the key issues to me. When I say education it's not just formal education, non-formal whatever you call all these avenues to educate people to be more aware more responsible. See without that understanding of responsibilities then people will continue to just get the best out of any resources and then move on. I feel that there is a need to relook at things like membership in the WTO and this kind of free trade agreements because people at the community level will be affected. You know we have spoken about the cheap stuff that will be sent that is

already here you find things that will only last a month at the local markets. I mean the local producers of clothes they are affected quite a lot because they are competing with some of the businesses selling shirts at five and three tala. Even those industries are affected quite a lot by WTO and free trade agreements. And I think that government have to really look at the wisdom of many members of the communities. Maybe it's going to be you know expensive but in the long run Samoa should be free from that and people will have some freedom to control their own food sovereignty and key issues of food security. I still believe that sustainable development of land is possible but with the pressures that WTO and all the legislation that were formulated to meet the requirements, I think if we move those pressures then I think the people will be relieved and can cope with those pressures by just producing what the land is able to provide at specific periods of time. I don't believe in what these people are saying to develop more lands because some of the lands cannot provide what they used to provide 20 years back, they need to be put on fallow. To replenish the fertility naturally that's the best way. See when you bring in a lot of foreign investors with a lot of money and they don't really care about sustainable development from the ecological viewpoint so they put in all these chemical fertilizers so maybe in the next 30 years it will be unusable, but by the end of 30 years they will have made heaps of profit. And they will leave as these big companies have been doing in Africa in Asia in PNG. Samoa is very very small. Its biodiversity is very fragile and has to be protected so land of course is where the biodiversity is and the sea is also. And that's where I think that if Samoans are educated to look after this major resource

the land and the sea resource they may gain some independence or freedom to ah to live sustainable, economically, socially, and culturally and ecologically large (Interview notes, Dr. Telei'ai Sapa Saifaleupolu, November 2014).

### **Thematic Discussions**

In analysis of *matai* narrative and participant observation, Samoan ontologies and epistemologies were articulated as expressions of collective embodied experiences rooted in local histories, shared through knowledge, protocol and custom, and as practiced and maintained in *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai*. For all *matai*, this collective agency and interconnected processes of shared learnings and knowledge production was ostensibly foundational to a process of long term learning and action, and mobilized as sites of resistance. Unlike large social movements, Samoan resistance was understood as the right for Samoans to speak to their own experiences of colonial capital dispossession and to stand against any agenda that worked to devalue, displace and dispossess Samoan ontologies and ways of living - even if supported by the government. For many *matai* it was respect for Samoan values and principles that strengthened collective identities and opened avenues for dialogue, learning and potential social action in contestation to social and material dispossession. Key to the concept of learning was a distancing from formal education, which was perceived by many *matai* to signify colonial domination.

In terms of reindigenization, some *matai* expressed collective learning as inspiration or catalyst to the reclamation and resurgence of Samoan onto-epistemic horizons, which would contribute to a pedagogical mobilization to engage directly with neoliberalizing policies of the state and international economic institutions. For some *matai* social action would only be bourn from political consciousness rooted in place-

based responses. Most importantly, *matai* believed that any form of collective learning enabled and fostered Samoan productions of meaning and connectiveness to all natural and social relations, a direct repudiation of the endeavors of colonial capital to restructure Samoan meaning making around land, food, labour and sovereignty. This point was a key consideration and though implied in other analytics, the importance of Samoan knowledge production was paramount to reindigenizing the Samoan political consciousness. For all *matai*, however, any form of contestation requires a balanced approach to account for social conventions and public acceptability in accordance with *fa'aSamoa*.

An analysis that emerged in relation to resistance formation were the challenges in balancing respectful approaches in accordance with *fa'aSamoa*. Many *matai* spoke jokingly about the nature of Samoan responses – respectful and in agreement to your face, disapproving and in disagreement behind your back. Other *matai*, raised points that the fono council, as representation of village governance, was a unique strength of indigenous Samoan polity. While many *matai* in the previous chapter lamented at the many influences reshaping Samoan culture and the *matai* system, such as monetization and corruption, all *matai* expressed optimism that the *matai* system would continue to be a space for leadership and decision-making at the village level and which stood apart from the Western system.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I considered one central theme and several sub-themes that emerged from interviews with participants and observations at the *Fasito'outa* village fono meeting, as well as news articles. The following chapter concludes this research, discussing reflections on the

research and research experience on critical ethnography. This concluding chapter also works towards a anticolonial and Marxist analysis, drawing upon Samoan experiences of colonial capital and ABD and indigenized space of *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*. The final section discusses emerging questions and future areas of research.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Revisitations and Concluding Reflections

#### **Personal Reflections on Doing Critical Ethnography in Samoa**

What is the meaning of Samoa? This was an existential question; I never considered until asked by Le Tangaloa Pitapola. I provided what I thought was a reasonable answer, but after an hours dialogue, I realized that his intentions were not for me to formulate a conceptual or as he called a text book response, rather he was asking me to delink myself from Western ontologies, a necessity he said for understanding Samoan knowledge and social relations. Our conversation continued for the greater part of three hours in a process of learning. Our discussions covered subjects from the ‘tyranny of democracy,’ to the role and function of a *matai* and the larger system of *fa’amatai*, to neoliberal globalization, and the changes he sees in *fa’aSamoa* and *fa’amatai*. When I left this interview, I realized that our conversations never left the subject of land, which he described as an inherited gift from god connecting bloodlines, and family lineage. Land, he said, in the eyes of Samoans is the spiritual and physical space of Samoan indigeneity.

As I reflect on my experience of doing a critical ethnography in Samoa, I return to the early design of this study and Jordan’s (2003) definition of critical ethnography as an approach that “focuses on revealing the sources and effects of power relations on the everyday world of peoples lived experience... to reveal how power infiltrates and organizes lived experience in ways that are congruent with the relations of the ruling” (p. 35). To engage with critical ethnography required commitment to subjectivity and interactivity. It is not a methodology where one stands on the side lines quietly observing; rather it is a methodology that encouraged partnerships and engagement in rich dialogue and open conversation “in the shared production and dissemination of knowledge for the purposes of conscientisation” and transformation (Jordan

and Yeomans, 1995, p. 400). As a critical ethnography, this research aimed to unsettle neutrality, objectivity, and detached observation for subjectivity and interaction to explore the multiplicities, contradictions and complexities of the constructed social world (England, 1994; Madison, 2011). Lending to the purpose of this study, which was to explore, excavate and analyze the continuities of colonial capital and the mechanisms of ABD that work to penetrate Samoa's political economy and disarticulate *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai*, while also exploring the terrains of resistance, modes of traditional organization and learning and social action in the struggle over control of customary land, labour, food production, and sociopolitical sovereignty in Samoa.

With the intent of liberatory aspirations and processes of deep reflection to understand and analyse the colonial capital condition in Samoa, as experienced, lived and refuted by *matai*, I reflect on the group of *matais* petitioning the Asian Development Bank, giving voice to their struggle, reinhabiting the *matai* system to reify local histories, knowledge production, and social action.

The cumulative long-term impact of these ADB interventions will be severely detrimental to our people, including land alienation and dispossession. These reforms are incompatible with the indigenous culture and political institutions of Samoa, and they are inconsistent with the needs and aspirations of the Samoan people... Land is an integral aspect of Samoan identity (Asian Development Complaints Letter, August 29, 2014).

For many *matai*, dispossession is the collision between Western and Samoan sociopolitical, ideological, and structural forces, moreover, an ontological and epistemological collision. On the ground, *matai* articulated dispossession as the imposition of foreign policy normalized

through Samoa's democratic governance structure and colonial institutions. Dispossession is the implementation of neoliberal structural reforms and finance capitalism enforced through the state and international and regional actors, prescribing market access to customary land. It is the commodification and racialization of bodies and labour. It is the dislocation of *matai* ontologies to the land, and more ostensibly it is the disarticulation of Samoan values and principles that underpin *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai*. For Samoa, the colonial capital project is one of reproducing inequalities, social and material exploitation and endeavours to privatize, commodify and alienate customary land, control food production and labour servitude, and threaten sociopolitical sovereignty and Samoan ways of knowing and doing.

Through this critical ethnography, I came to understand David Harvey's (2005) ABD, described as an extension and continuation of Marx's primitive accumulation that includes sets of predatory practices and mechanisms that exploit and commodify natural resources, labour power and all social forms; and how ABD is mapped upon the physical and social landscapes of Samoa, commodifying and exploiting land, labour and people. And through *matai* analytics, I came to understand the anticolonial and Marxist observation of a critique "on the ongoing internal colonial domination between state corporate actors, the comprador bourgeois classes and racialized social groups and classes with states and regions, reproducing historical inequalities and projects of subjugation through development or market violence, land theft, exploitation and cultural invasion (Kapoor, 2017, p. np). In relationship to Samoa, primitive accumulation and ABD are understood as theft, robbery and inequality, systems propped up by the state to serve global functionalities, involving land as natural resource for the accumulation of capital, labour as exploitive, and the state as perpetuator of systemic exploitation. For Marx (1967) primitive accumulation is the "historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production",

transforming ‘the social means of subsistence and of production into capital’ and ‘the immediate producers into wage laborers” (p. 714). Marx (1967) suggests that the separation and transformation of social relations includes “forcible usurpation’ of common property through ‘individual acts of violence’ and eventually the ‘parliamentary form of robbery’, the Acts for enclosures of the Commons, through which ‘the landlords grant themselves the people’s land as private property’ (p. 724). In the current neoliberal system, the expansion and accumulation of capital, as asserted by Luxemburg (1951) is continually in search of resources and means of production extending the entire globe and enacted through vicious cycle that “displace peasants to the industry and leave the land free for capitalists to exploit it and continue with the accumulation of capital and its reproduction” (Torres and Piedad, 2014, p. 251). These violent characteristics as suggested by Harvey (2005) involve new predatory practices that result in commodification of natural and cultural forms and entails wholesale dispossession “and the corporatization and privatization of public assets, constitute[ing] a new wave of enclosing the commons” (p. 75).

As I look back onto my conversation with Le Tangaloa Pitapola’s, I reconsider his question and reflect upon this Samoan saying:

Samoa is like a fish that has been divided – every piece of land has been allocated and every person knows his or her place for all time. The *fa’aSamoa* is the *matai*; the *matai* is the family is the land. The land is the village; the village is the family, is the *matai*, is the *fa’aSamoa*” (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2000, p. 63).

While I couldn’t answer his question then, I understand now the magnitude of loss in relationship to the dispossession of Samoa’s social and political economy, land and ontologies. Mignolo (2011) suggests that knowledge creation is anchored in politically driven projects that have

historically been dominated by western hegemony and the construction of epistemological and ontological hierarchies and by delinking from these prescriptions allows for a resurgence of counter-hegemonic responses and resistance. As forms of response and learning, Huffer and Qalo (2004) suggest that the creation of Pacific thought by Pacific peoples is a form of reindigenization and space for reengaging with indigeneity, which as expressed by *matais* is occurring in local communities already engaged in indigenous struggles. Reclamation of power as articulated by Horton and Freire (1990) deconstructs colonial archetypes and refashions oppressive systems into radical sites of empowerment. In this sense, collective learning involves resurgence and reindigenization of epistemologies and ontologies.

For Samoan *matai*, anticolonial analysis contributes to ideas of reindigenization from land base politics, which centre on learning and social action through the sharing of knowledge. Charudy (2007) suggest that “mobilization against neoliberal policies and practices provides a potential pedagogical tool to bring to the fore struggles and strategies around decolonization, and to build an analysis of contemporary social, environmental, economic, and political issues grounded in an understanding of colonialism, not as a historical occurrence, but as an ongoing process (p. 87). Huanani Kay-Trask (1999) rejoins land based politics and continued colonialities writing “we are surrounded by other, more powerful nations that desperately want our lands and resources and for whom we pose an irritating problem... This relationship between ourselves and those who want to control us and our resources is not a formerly colonial relationship but an ongoing colonial relationship” (p. 102-103).

This bounded relationship between critical ethnography, an anticolonial and Marxist lens, and my positionality allowed me to see this research as a potential contribution to liberatory work and social change in Samoa (Batiste and Henderson, 2000; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Being of

two worlds, one *palagi* and one Samoan also engendered for a deeper relationship between myself and participants in investigative inquiry towards *matai* reindigenization and land based responses to social and material dispossession. It further compelled me as a researcher to engage with reflexivity and understanding that “researchers remain human beings complete with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings, and moods...[and where] our consciousness is always the medium through which the research occurs” (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 157). I was able to connect on different levels with Samoan experiences and realities of the project of colonial capital and the onto-epistemic violence of dispossession. Moreover, I came to understand agency and the alienation of agency, as described by Freire (1970)

A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation. Resignation gives way to the drive for transformation and inquiry, over which men feel themselves to be in control, if people, as historical beings necessarily engaged with other people in a movement of inquiry, did not control that movement, it would be (and is) a violation of their humanity. Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects (p. 85).

### **Revisiting the Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

This research explored and critiqued the continuities of colonial capital and the mechanisms of ABD, which works to infiltrate Samoa’s political economy, disposes customary land and disarticulates *fa’aSamoa* and *fa’amatai*. The study also sought to elaborate on the terrains of resistance, including learning and social action in the struggle over control of

customary land, labour, food production, and sociopolitical sovereignty in Samoa. Overall, three questions guided this study: (1) What is the Samoan analysis of historical and contemporary forms of colonialism? (2) How has colonial capital restructured systems of land tenure, food production, social and political institutions, and culture? (3) What is Samoan resistance to colonial capital, including the role of learning and social action?

Reflecting on these questions, I illustrate key points of analysis relative to these questions:

**(1) What is the Samoan analysis of historical and contemporary forms of colonialism?**

*Matai* analysis illustrates that colonialism in the past and today is a destabilizing force that focuses upon structural and social dispossession and extraction. For many *matai*, colonial agendas endeavoured to dispossess Samoans from Samoan histories and connectivity to the land, disrupting the values and principles that underpin Samoan onto-epistemic orientations. As articulated by many of the *matai*, social and material dispossession is a collision of two systems, one Samoan and the other European, which largely are incompatible systems. In understanding historical and contemporary colonialism, some *matai* perceived colonialism as a historical concept, ending with independence, and beginning anew with neoliberal globalization understood as systems of exclusion, assimilation, and dispossession. For many *matai*, structural encroachments while framed by the state, World Bank, IMF and the Asian Development Bank as purely economic entailed ideological and social reforms that attempted to refigure traditional Samoan institutions and structures, signifying new predatory practices of dispossession. Analysis around the recurrent processes of colonial capital was articulated as occurring along ideological and knowledge based fronts. Central to this analysis were the concepts of cognitive imperialism and colonial paternalism, expressed by *matais* as repeated intrusions and

disarticulations of Samoan values and principles that underpin *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai*. For many *matai*, these incursions occurred through prescriptive policies of the state and international and regional institutions. The overarching analysis of *matai* perspectives on historical and contemporary colonialism centred on ideological and structural reorientations and reformations - the project of colonial capital.

**(2) How has colonial capital restructured systems of land tenure, food production, social and political institutions, and culture?**

Across many *matai* analytics the restructuring of systems enacted through shifts from subsistence to commercialized agriculture, introduction of food imports and transferences in modes of production, consumption, and subsistence labour, both epitomizing the devaluation and disarticulation of traditional knowledges of *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai*. Another area of analysis included structural/material dispossession of land and labour and the introduction of financialization, articulated by *matai* as a mechanism of ABD. Tantamount concern for many *matais* was the current effort to individualize, commodify and alienate customary land. For many *matai*, changes to customary land tenure would adversely impact and alter *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai* and ostensibly result in the alienation of customary land, linking back to the aforementioned dispossession of place. As articulated by all *matai*, land is the physical, social, cultural, and spiritual embodiment of Samoa and lack of access to or dispossession of customary land violates the Samoan constitution and jettisons customary laws and practices that have protected land and people.

### **(3) What is Samoan resistance to colonial capital, including the role of learning and social action?**

In analysis of *matai* narrative and participant observation, Samoan ontologies and epistemologies were articulated as expressions of collective embodied experiences rooted in local histories, shared through knowledge, protocol and custom, and as practiced and maintained in *fa'a Samoa* and *fa'amatai* – tangible avenues for resistance. Unlike large social movements, Samoan resistance was understood as the right for Samoans to speak to their own experiences of colonial capital dispossession and to stand against any agenda that worked to devalue, displace and dispossess Samoan ontologies and ways of living - even if supported by the government. Analysis illustrates that central to resistance is collective agency and interconnected processes of shared learnings and knowledge production which ostensibly is foundational to a process of long term learning and action, and mobilized as sites of resistance. In terms of reindigenization, some *matai* analysis expressed collective learning as inspiration or catalyst to the reclamation and resurgence of Samoan onto-epistemic horizons, which would contribute to a pedagogical mobilization to engage directly with neoliberalizing policies of the state and international economic institutions. For some *matai* social action would only be born from political consciousness rooted in place-based responses. Most importantly, *matai* believed that any form of collective learning enabled and fostered Samoan productions of meaning and connectiveness to all natural and social relations, a direct repudiation of the endeavors of colonial capital to restructure Samoan meaning making around land, food, labour and sovereignty.

### **Emerging Questions and Areas for Further Study**

This was a critical ethnography research that set out to explore and critique the continuities of the project of colonial capital and the mechanisms of ABD that endeavor to infiltrate Samoa's political economy and erode *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'amatai*. The study also sought to elaborate on the terrains of resistance, modes of traditional organization and learning and social action in the struggle over control of customary land, labour, food production, and political sovereignty in Samoa. Based on the experiences I had throughout the research, the following ideas can serve as considerations for similar research to be undertaken in the future.

1. While research that engages with the oppressed and dispossessed is important, this work attempted to show emancipatory perspectives and modes of resistance to colonial capital in an attempt of illustrating resurgence of indigenous knowledge production, social action and learning. I think there is need for continued research on liberatory perspectives.
2. Critical ethnography is a powerful methodology to engage and explicate power relations, domination and resistance. This research worked to connect with the everyday narratives of Samoan people through critical ethnography, which enables for spaces of counter-discourse against colonial representation vis-à-vis the reconstruction of self-defined and lived experiences and narratives. I believe critical ethnography is an underused methodology that should be taken up in future research.
3. Samoa is a rich site for further research that addresses colonial capital material and social dispossessions. While there is significant research, it is often from the perspectives of neoliberals and developmentalists. This research endeavored to explicate processes which have deep implications for Samoan culture and politics to potentially support emancipatory work. While more can be done, this research closes with the hopes that others will take up future research contributing to support Samoan knowledge production, learning and resistance and social action

on the ground.

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## **Appendix A**

### **INFORMATION LETTER**

#### **What is this form?**

This form is called a Consent Form. It gives you information about the study so that you can decide if you want to participate in the research. This form will provide you with the background and purpose of this research and describe what you will need to do to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy for your records. This information will be kept confidential and private.

#### **Background**

I am currently undertaking a small research project for my Master's thesis. Am writing to ask if you will be willing to be interviewed as part of my research.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand Samoan responses to questions of control over land and food in relation to trade liberalization (economic policies) and food sovereignty (the right for people to define their own food systems). The outcomes of this study will contribute to discussions and scholarly work around land, economic policies, and the concept of food sovereignty. Importantly this research contributes to Samoan understandings and knowledge in relation to food and land.

#### **Study Procedures**

Interviews will be one hour in length. You will be interviewed about your experiences and perspectives on traditional and modern uses of land and your thoughts on traditional meanings and connections to land and food. The interview will be conducted at a time and place convenient for you (e.g. in your home or at your office). If agreed upon, the interview will be audio-recorded.

As part of this research, you may also be asked to participate in small focus groups of 10 people. You will be asked questions about your experiences and perspectives on traditional and modern uses of land and your thoughts on traditional meanings and connection to land and of food. Please be advised that every precaution will be taken to ensure confidentiality and privacy. I will remind all participants to respect the privacy of fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. Participation in focus groups is voluntary. Focus group interview will be conducted at a time and place that is suitable and central for all individuals. If agreed upon, focus groups will be audio-recorded.

#### **Benefits**

I hope that the information from this study will help better understand Samoan knowledge and

ways of life related to land and food. There are no personal benefits from being in this study. There are no costs involved in being in their research. There is no compensation or reimbursements for participation in this study.

### **Risk**

This study involves minimal risk. There are not risks to physical or mental health beyond what is faced in everyday life.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw a any time or decline to have parts and/or all of your information removed from the study for any reason. If you withdraw from the study, your information will be destroyed.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Careful steps will be taken to protect your identity. Individual participant data for this research will be kept confidential by the researcher. The typed interview will NOT contain any mention of your name on any identifying information will be removed. All written recorded data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet a research home in Upolu, Samoa and in Edmonton, Canada. All digital data will be secured on a external hard drive protected by anti-virus and data encryption software. Only the principle research will have access to the data. All information will be destroyed after five years' time.

## Appendix B

### CONSENT FORM

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for responding to my invitation to participate in this research study.

The purpose of this study is to understand Samoans responses to question of control over land and food in relation to economic policies and the right for people to define their own food systems.

By participating in this research, there are no direct personal benefits but your participation will help people understand Samoan knowledge and ways of life related to land and food. This study involves minimal risk. There are not risks to physical or mental health beyond what is faced in everyday life

Interviews will be one hour in length. You will be interviewed about your experiences and perspectives on traditional and modern uses of land and your thoughts on traditional meanings and connections to land and food. The interviews will be conducted at a time and place convenient for you (e.g. in your home or at your office). If agreed upon, the interview will be audio recorded.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time or decline to have parts and/or all your information removed from the study for any reason. If you withdraw from the study your information will be destroyed.

Careful steps will be taken to protect your identity. Individual participant data for this research will be kept confidential by the researcher. The typed interview will NOT contain any mention of your name and any identifying information will be removed. All written recorded data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researchers home in Upolu, Samoa and in Edmonton, Canada. All digital data will be secured on an external hard drive protect by anti-virus and data encryption software. Only the principle research will have access to the data. All information will be destroyed after five years time.

The results form this study will be used to complete my Master's thesis. The results may also be used in presentations and for publication in academic journals. I expect that this study will be completed by July 2015 at which time you can receive a copy of the results if you choose.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Naomi Gordon [atngordon@ualberta.ca](mailto:atngordon@ualberta.ca). If you wish to discuss this research with the researchers supervisor, please contact Dr. Dip Kapoor via email at [dkapoor@ualberta.ca](mailto:dkapoor@ualberta.ca). If you agree to these terms, please sign the consent below. I have read the above information regarding this research study and consent to participate in this study.

**(Printed Name)** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Signature)** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Date)** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Title:** Food Sovereignty and Agrarian Resistance in Samoa

**Date:** TBD

**Venue:** TBD

**Time:** TBD

**Introduction:** (5 minutes)

My name is Naomi Gordon and I will be guiding the interview. This interview will take one hour of your time.

Your involvement in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose to answer all or only some of the interview questions. You may also end the interview at any time. All information you give is confidential. Your name and other personal information will be removed to protect your identity and ensure you remain anonymous.

The purpose of this study is to understand Samoan responses to questions of control over land and food in relation to economic policies and the right for people to define their own food systems. By participating in this research, you may help people understand Samoan knowledge and ways of life related to land and food.

**Preliminary Questions:** (5 minutes)

I will ask the interviewee general questions about themselves to break the ice and start establishing rapport.

- a) How old are you?
- b) Are you married?
- c) Do you have any children? Do your children attend school? Do they work on the plantation? Do they live here or overseas? If they live overseas, do they send you money every month?
- d) Can you please tell me what village you were born in? Do you and your family still live in that village today?

**Interview Questions:** (45 minutes)

Matai Respondents

- a) Please explain your role as Matai?
- b) Please explain the governance process for Matai related to land?
- c) What is the role of the fono?
- d) Has the authority of the Matai and fono changed over time?
- e) Has *Fa'aSamoa* changed over time? Are younger generations practicing *Fa'aSamoa*?

- f) How are people relating to land and food?
- g) Are people moving to urban areas? If so, in what capacity – are they employed, do they have no option? – (prompt: if land is leased where do people move?)
- h) How do people relate to land and food? Is there access to available food? If land is being leased, how does that affect where people are living? Are people experiencing land dispossession?

#### Matai Respondents

- a) Have there been changes to *Fa'aSamoa*?
- b) How have these changes affected governance around land and food?
- c) Is there more interest in individual prosperity? If yes, how is this affecting villages?
- a) If yes, how is land being divided? Are communal lands being registered under single title ownership?

#### Matai Respondents

- a) How does the government help your village?
- b) What is the relationship between Matia's and fonos and the government?
- c) What is needed to improve village life?
- d) Has the village applied for government loans? Are there any stipulations for the loans?

#### Matai Respondents

- a) Do you have access to communal lands? How are the lands divided between family? Has any communal land been leased?
- b) What is grown on this land? How big is the land?
- c) Do you make money on the sale of your crops?
- d) Do you export your crops?
- e) Do you sell your crops at the local market?
- f) What is your preference – sell locally or export? Please expand on your answer?
- g) Are you able to live off these sales?
- h) If you don't have a plantation, do you work on the family plantation? Do you have another job? Do you rely on your family overseas sending money?
- i) The government wants customary land to be used for growing more crops for food security. Do you agree?
  - a. How will this been done – use more land, make the plantation larger?
  - b. If family no longer has access to this land, how does that affect family and village life?
  - c. Is there access to secure food resources, or reliance on imported foods? How do people afford imported foods?
  - d. Does this result in land alienation? Is there a possibility for increases in poverty? Is this resulting in urbanization?

- e. If people are not connected to their land how does that affect Samoan understandings of land and food?
- j) If land is being leased is it being used for food security or for development purposes? Please explain. Do you feel that money is being reinvested in the community?
- k) What are some issues around land leasing? (prompt: changes in Samoan practices, increase in poverty, land alienation)

Matai Respondents

- a) How are Samoans responding to policies that promote leasing of land? – at local levels (prompt: what does your village think? How are people responding?)
- b) Are these efforts coordinated? At larger scales – national, regional?
- c) Why is it important to respond to these issues?
- d) Is there knowledge sharing occurring? How is this knowledge being shared?