The Global Village: Rethinking the Village’s Footprint

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Abstract
The concept of a village as existing as a socially, politically, economically and spatially bounded entity has been overtaken by reality. As migration has gained momentum since WWII, many villages have become increasingly dispersed entities. Nevertheless, the strong bonds in Samoan society ensure that many of those who leave the village retain ties to the village and contribute to its life in a variety of ways. The expatriate members of villages continue to exert influence, in varying degrees, on the social, political and economic activity within the village. This reality has both strengthened traditional villages by giving them access to new resources, but it has also weakened them by making them increasingly dependent on these relatively new expatriate-controlled resources. This paper focuses on the development of villages’ larger global footprints and raises questions about the sustainability of these resource flows.

Introduction
At one time, Samoan villages existed as relatively autonomous entities. They were, in Immanuel Wallerstein’s terms, “micro-systems”, which could function autonomously using the social and natural resources that existed within their spatial boundaries and which they controlled. In Samoa, as elsewhere, the economic and political autonomy of villages has declined as they have become increasingly integrated into, and dependent on, external entities, from which they derive an increasing range of goods and services. Declining autonomy is a consequence of incorporation into nation states and is a result of growing participation in global trade and the dispersal of village populations into global labour...
markets. Each of these linkages has increased the village footprint but has also, ironically, increased its dependence and reduced its economic and political autonomy.

In Samoa, the decline in political autonomy commenced around 1830 as village activity was driven by progressive integration into the colonial state and, after 1962, into the independent state of Western Samoa. The villages’ economic autonomy began to decline as village populations became involved first in national labour markets and later in international ones (Lockwood, 1971, Pitt, 1970, Shankman, 1976). This transnational existence gave villages access to new financial resources and increased village wealth, but it also, ironically, weakened them by making them more dependent on resources that are controlled from beyond the village. These externally-controlled resources support a growing range of activities that villages have embraced. This paper explores the impact on village autonomy of villages’ growing dependence on expatriate populations, and considers the sustainability of these arrangements. This paper suggests that it is important to reduce dependence by increasing village wealth through more creative use of local resources.

The transfer of power from village to state

Since the 1800s villages in Samoa have gained access to services such as education, health and justice, and have gained infrastructure such as roads, electricity and water from the state. In return, they have surrendered some political autonomy to the state. In exchange for these services, the state has taken certain powers from villages, including the right to tax citizens of the village to fund developments and has limited their power to act autonomously in both “traditional” areas, such as adjudication of customary lands and titles (see Tuimalealiifano, 2011), and in “new” areas such as justice, resource management and construction standards. The state clearly has no wish to strip villages of all of their power, however. The state depends on village governance structures to deliver policy and to
maintain social order and political stability. It has spelled out the framework of an ongoing and complementary relationship with villages in a range of documents.

The relationship between the village and state is broadly defined within the constitution, and is more generically defined in legislation such as the Village Fono Act (1990) and, more specifically, in legislation that regulates resource use, construction standards, maintenance of order, administration of justice and so on within the village. In this essentially cooperative process, villages agree to surrender some powers in return for provision of services by the state. For example, villages agree to provide school buildings and the state provides teachers’ salaries, stationery and, since 2009, pays school fees. Likewise, the state provides adjudication services and in return villages agree to forego some powers to act in certain matters. These exchanges occur within a political process in which competing political parties outline political agendas between which villagers then choose.

While the programmes that competing political parties propose may differ in detail, all involve proposals to exchange some village autonomy in return for provision of specific services. When the parties’ powers are unclear, or where they are disputed, their respective rights are resolved either in conciliation proceedings and or within the states’ various courts and tribunals. In this respect, the process in which villages surrender some rights to the state in return for services is a negotiated one and is subject to periodic review in national elections in which villages pass judgment on the exchange.

This relationship between village and state, while periodically contested, is continuously evolving as case law redefines the limits of the power of each entity, and results in a growing degree of mutually beneficial interdependence.
The growing significance of global trade

In Samoa, as elsewhere, the economic decisions made in villages are increasingly influenced by global trade. Production decisions have been influenced by their progressive incorporation into national and global markets since the mid-nineteenth century (Cyclopedia of Samoa, 1907). Since villages can no longer provide all of the goods and services that their citizens regard as essential, decisions about the use of village resources, such as land and labour are increasingly influenced by the global economy.

Village growers read the requirements of the market and increasingly orient production to local and international demand. But, while participation in the market both diversifies and increases the size of a village’s resource base, it also reduces its economic autonomy by offering incentives to produce crops that are more profitable than others. This too is an implicit exchange: those who do not wish to sell into a market at prices offered are free to grow what they choose and in ways they choose. But the increasing range of goods and services that villagers now regard as essential, and which can only be purchased rather than grown, requires more and more people to surrender productive autonomy and to engage in production for markets to secure these goods and services.  

Similar sorts of decisions are taken in disposition of village labour. Where the cost of goods and services cannot be met by expanding or commercialising village production, members of the family are deployed in wage or salaried work in either domestic or overseas labour markets. While parents may well prefer to have their children around them, and to guide their lives, their increasing cash “needs” dictate that they surrender some of their children, either temporarily or permanently, to the wage labour market. Demographic profiles of Samoan villages, constructed from census data, reveal that there are, at any given time, significant numbers of people in the 20-45 years age cohorts of most rural villages who are “missing”.

Page 4
The village and its expatriate population

As Samoan village populations have become dispersed, it is increasingly irrelevant to treat the village as a single, autonomous, spatially bounded “micro-system”. It is now, as several authors (e.g. Hau’ofa, 1993) have noted, more useful to think of the villages as transnational entities (Morton and Francis, 2009) with a “centre” and “nodes” in different locations and what Bedford has called “effective villages” (Bedford, 2007). The nodes are connected by continuous movement of people, ideas and capital, a process that has been comprehensively documented (Macpherson and Macpherson, 2009). The village from which people departed may retain a special significance in the hearts and minds of the emigrants and their children, as a “place of origin” in which ancestral lands are found and with which family titles are connected (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009). It may remain the emotional “centre” of a much larger “effective village”, which comprises all members of the village, wherever they are, who remain socially, politically and economically engaged with the village of origin.

Over time, villages have become increasingly dependent on their expatriate populations for a range of resources and services (Connell and Brown, 2005, Muliaina, 2001). The dispersal of the population has extended the size of both family and village demographic and economic “footprints” and has diversified their revenue bases (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009). The examples in this paper summarize that argument.

The dispersal of family and village populations into multiple labour markets has effectively raised the “average wage” of the village. The average wage and income for the “effective village” is now, in effect, a weighted average of the wage rates in all of the markets in which the labour of the “effective village” is deployed. Thus, the average wage of the “effective village” may be significantly higher than the average wage in the “Samoan node” of that village, as shown in Table 1 below.
Table 1: Average gross wage of the “effective village” [SAT]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Samoa</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Fiji</th>
<th>Average Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Weekly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1360</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Numbers)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wage)</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>40800</td>
<td>51000</td>
<td>25500</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1363.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Numbers)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wage)</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>68000</td>
<td>85000</td>
<td>51000</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>1295.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These figures reflect the average wages of two ‘model’ villages chosen to reflect different patterns of participation.

This does not mean that the villages will have access to all of these wages, because the costs of living in various nodes can be high and will vary from one node to another over time, so the discretionary income available to the “effective village” will be significantly lower than Table 1 suggests. It will also vary within nodes because single individuals, with lower living costs and no debt, may be willing and able to contribute larger proportions of their income than married persons with dependent family members and significant debt, and some will not contribute at all. The exact amount available will, therefore, vary with the socio-demographic mix in the expatriate village population and their capacity and inclination to contribute. But even if a village had access to only a proportion of that discretionary income it is not insignificant, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2: Available income of the “effective village”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Income</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>15%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>25%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village 1</td>
<td>117880</td>
<td>11788</td>
<td>17682</td>
<td>23576</td>
<td>29470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village 2</td>
<td>207250</td>
<td>20725</td>
<td>31087.5</td>
<td>41450</td>
<td>51812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village 3</td>
<td>75500</td>
<td>7550</td>
<td>11325</td>
<td>15100</td>
<td>18875</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over time, villages have made increasing use of the accessible income from the effective village population for a range of purposes, including the building, maintenance, extension and rebuilding of community facilities such as schools, women’s committee houses, churches and ancillary dwellings, access roads and projects such as village beautification and the commemoration of various significant events in village life. Villages have become
increasingly dependent on this income from their expatriate populations to fund significant parts of capital expenditure. Any listener to a Samoan language radio station soon becomes aware of the succession of village leaders passing through expatriate enclaves and holding "tusigaigoa" and various other fundraising activities to access this expatriate income.

The extent of dependence varies from project to project and from one village to another, as Table 3 shows. While access to these social and financial resources has increased the scale and range of projects that villages can undertake, it has also increased their dependence on expatriate populations for funding. The capacity to undertake large projects that require external funding depends on the leaders of families and villages engaging their expatriate populations and encouraging them to contribute to village projects.

Table 3: Some comparisons of village funding patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Samoa</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Fiji</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Project 1</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>6500</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>42500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Project 2</td>
<td>75000</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td>53000</td>
<td>37000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>205000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Project 3</td>
<td>117000</td>
<td>84000</td>
<td>110000</td>
<td>64000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>375000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei</td>
<td>30000</td>
<td>30000</td>
<td>41000</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>111750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church-building</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>45000</td>
<td>68000</td>
<td>17500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>180500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Extension and maintenance of women’s committee building.
2. Rebuilding of pastor’s house.
4. These figures are from different villages.

The means available to village leaders to persuade resident and expatriate populations to contribute to village projects will differ. While the population residing in the village and on village land may be persuaded by appeals to self-interest and by “peer pressure” exerted by those around them in the village, the same means are either not available or not as effective with expatriate members of the “effective village”. They are more dispersed, more difficult to reach and, in many cases, have no direct interest in and will not benefit from village projects. They may also face high costs of living and raising families, and participating in community
activities in a higher-cost location. Furthermore, since they do not derive either their livelihood or their right to reside from the village, they are under no legal compulsion to contribute. Their decision to contribute rests on an ongoing moral or social commitment to support the village.

Yet despite these challenges, many expatriate members of the “effective village” continue to contribute as the funding patterns compared in Table 3 suggest. Their continued participation may lead some village leaders to believe that they will be able to depend on this support. Some village leaders assert with great confidence that the “people outside” will continue to “show their love for the village”. Many point to the apparently high levels of remittances, which constitute around 23 percent of Samoa’s GDP. Some also presume that the migrants’ children will maintain the same sense of commitment to the village as their parents did: that it will remain an “emotional centre” for them as it was for their parents. This view reflects a limited understanding of the financial challenges that face members of the village living abroad and of the changing nature of migrant identity. This paper now examines whether overseas-born children support the village and on what terms.

A Sustainable Footprint?

Many emigrants who were born and raised in the village, and whose families remained in the “villages of origin”, contribute significantly to village causes, for personal and family reasons: they retain personal emotional connections to the village and want to ensure that their families are well-regarded in the village (Pitt and Macpherson, 1974).

The contributions of those who left in the 1950s and 1960s built many of the houses that make up the present Samoan built environment. Even after emigrants married and began to buy houses and raise families, many continued to find money and time to support their villages, albeit at different levels, which were related to the migrants’ long term plans for
residence, and whether their parents and siblings were living in the village (Macpherson, 1994). As they aged and moved on to smaller retirement incomes and faced the higher costs of health, however, their ability to contribute declined.

The declining contribution levels of the earliest migrants were not considered significant at the time because in the 1970s and 1980s there was a continuing demand for Samoan labour in New Zealand, American Samoa, Australia and the United States, which attracted young single migrants, who became the new contributors, supplementing the declining contributions of the earliest migrants and contributing to a steady growth of remittance volumes, to a point at which remittances constituted some 32 percent of the Samoan economy. What was less obvious was the fact that the per capita remittances were declining.6

There were several reasons for this decline. Samoans in expatriate enclaves had established a range of social institutions and activities, which consumed a growing proportion of their discretionary income and, for many, left less available to remit. The steady growth, for instance, in the number of EFKS, EFKSA, Methodist and AOG congregations abroad placed pressure on family incomes. Commitment to support the clergy, land acquisition and building programmes placed significant demands on the expatriate congregations. Many migrants committed significant time, energy and resources to these, which became their “urban villages” and central features of migrant identity.

In the 1990s, demand for Samoan labour declined in metropolitan economies and governments in destination countries instituted a series of neo-liberal, structural reforms that deregulated labour markets, and authorities instituted a range of user pays policies in those economies. These structural reforms often had their heaviest consequences for lower income groups, in which the Samoan migrants were concentrated and effectively reduced their discretionary incomes in significant ways (Macpherson, 1992). The combination of
falling discretionary incomes and weakening demand for labour resulted in falling levels of remittances, both in real terms and in per capita terms (Brown, 1998).

The Samoan-born proportion of the total Samoan population in New Zealand has been declining steadily over the past 30 years as shifts in the New Zealand labour market have led to a reduced demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Samoan-born people now make up around 30 percent of the total Samoan descent population, and this proportion is declining. Most growth in the Samoan-descent population now comes from internal growth. Retirement of the earliest migrants from the workforce has limited their personal capacity to support their villages and they have become dependent on their children for resources to support the village, which points to the importance of the role of overseas-born children.

The Future

The Samoan descent populations in New Zealand and Australia continue to grow, mostly from natural increase in resident populations, and comprise people who were born and raised outside of Samoa. Ironically, although members of this group do not contribute to the home villages to the extent that their parents did, they often have more social capital and higher incomes than their migrant parents (De Raad and Walton, 2008). They may have limited attachment to the village centre, however (Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi, 2003). Their parents’ villages of origins will no longer necessarily be their “emotional centres” and they may not feel compelled by the same emotional and moral imperatives that led their parents to give to the villages. They are potentially valuable members of the “effective village” but will they continue to contribute and on what terms?

A quantitative, longitudinal study of a large number of young Pacific mothers in Auckland, which commenced in 2000, provided the most concrete evidence that this group is reducing
its levels of contribution to both churches and to family in New Zealand and Samoa (Macpherson et al. 2011). This study reported that,

Some 47.5% of the parents reported that they gave no money to either family in New Zealand, to relatives in the ‘homelands’ or to churches in either New Zealand or ‘homelands’ in the month before the birth of their babies. Some 61.1% of the sample had not given money to either their families in New Zealand; some 65.3% had not given money to a church, 75.2% had not given to family in the ‘homelands’ (Macpherson, Ghao et al. 2011).

Within that group, those raised in Samoa gave more than those raised abroad, but both groups showed reduced levels of financial support, which was measured, in this case, in cash. It is likely that this level of contribution for all groups will have declined further as the impact of economic recession reduced incomes and increased costs for most New Zealand low and middle income families. This raises the question of why this support might be declining.

Many Samoans born abroad now have strong connections to the expatriate communities and congregations in which they have grown up (Taule'aaleausumai, 2001). They may be less likely than their parents to give to their villages of origin out of a strong sense of historical involvement with and emotional attachment to the village, because many have had only limited contact with their parents’ villages and with the relatives living in those villages. Steadily declining fluency in Samoan in overseas-born populations means that many are less familiar with formal language and protocol and less confident about interacting with the “village” in formal contexts (Tiatia, 1998). They may choose to participate indirectly in the village through contributions to their parents, but this pattern of indirect contribution may fall as parents die and linkages with kin in the village of origin weaken.

7
The education they receive abroad may lead overseas-born children to reorient their 
economic priorities, and lead to a declining commitment to activities and entities from which 
they derive no obvious “benefits”. Some migrant parents are alienated from Samoan custom 
(Va’a, 2001), and have actively discouraged their children from participating in Samoan 
village affairs (Macpherson, 1984, Macpherson, 1991). Even where this is not the case, 
research is suggesting that some overseas-born children are alienated from the fa’asamoa 
through their direct, and indirect, experience and are not inclined to participate in any way.

Increasing levels of inter-ethnic marriage and partnership can result in the priorities of non- 
Samoans influencing the spending decisions of overseas-Samoans. The partners and 
spouses who do not understand, or do not accept, the psychosocial and political importance 
of participation in village activities may discourage their Samoan spouses’ participation in 
tusigaigoa and other village fundraising activities. This is significant when one considers that 
some 33 percent of Samoans in New Zealand who marry, marry non-Samoans.

Another factor affecting remittances from overseas-born Samoans is that the New Zealand 
Ministry of Commerce has made strenuous and highly publicised efforts to encourage 
financial literacy in general and, specifically, to discourage people from borrowing from fringe 
lenders and loan sharks who charge Pacific borrowers very high interest rates for the 
unsecured loans they are often forced to take to meet village demands. Furthermore, many 
Samoan families, who have borrowed their way into significant obligations, have been 
required to put their financial affairs under the oversight of budgeting agencies as a condition 
for securing assistance both from government and non-governmental organizations. This 
further reduces their freedom to contribute to village fundraising, even where they might be 
inclined to do so.
Conclusion

Since migration gained momentum after WWII, Samoan villages have come to depend on their expatriate members to support a range of village ventures with contributions in cash and in kind. The significant amount of remittances, which initially flowed back to villages from expatriate populations, reflected, in part, the relatively high incomes in the destination countries, the youth of the migrants and their willingness to support the village in which their parents and families remained. Over time, these groups of prime contributors have shrunk as a proportion of the population and villages that wish to access these overseas resources will have to look to their expatriate members’ children and grandchildren for support. This support may be more difficult to secure, for the reasons outlined in this paper.

The footprint that grew and promised so much may now be shrinking. It may be more practical in the long term to anticipate shrinkage and to seek to grow incomes and investment within the village than to expect continued support from overseas populations. The work of Samoa’s Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI) and the entrepreneurial activity promoted hold greater real promise that continuing dependence on remittances, where there is clear evidence of remittance decay. Realistically, a more serious attempt to generate higher and stable real incomes in the village will be called for to revitalise the economies and population of the “villages of origin”.

In this context, the possibility of a major project employing new energy generation technology, and a range of locally-grown biomass to create energy self-sufficiency for the country may promise more than any other initiative currently under investigation. The shrinking footprint may make villages aware of their unhealthy levels of dependence on external populations and make them willing to consider and adopt new and more radical alternatives such as innovative energy projects. Ironically, they may reclaim some of their former autonomy in the process.
References


Siao, I. ‘You give me, I give you politics’ Unpublished paper in Governance Section of the Samoa II Conference, NUS, Apia, Samoa, 4th-8th July 2011.


Endnotes

1 This extends the argument outlined in our recent book The Warm Winds of Change: Globalisation in Contemporary Samoa, Auckland, AUP, 2009.
2 This legislation is currently under review by the Samoan government’s Law Commission and may be significantly revised before this paper is published.
3 As Siaoa (2011) has noted, in “client list” systems, these decisions are frequently influenced less by consideration of long-term gains than by short-term monetary gains as politicians compete to distribute “gifts” to secure votes before elections.
4 As for, instance, in the events following the murder at Lona, where the state and the village challenged each other over their rights to administer “justice”.
5 Thus, the cost of routine services such as Cashpower payments, cell phone cards, water services; school fees and church contributions such as alofa and peleti demand continuing supplies of cash, while larger sporadic events such as an appearance before the Lands and Titles court which involve such expenses as legal consultation fees, documentation, transportation may cost as much as SAT 5000 and fa’alavelave may involve even larger sums.
6 This can be established by dividing the total volume of remittances, corrected for inflation, by the numbers of economically active Samoans living abroad. There are some problems with calculating the exact numbers of Samoans living abroad but these tend to under-estimate the rate of fall.
7 This may be arrested temporarily when parents return to Samoa to live in later life, but this may further limit their children’s understanding of the linkages with the village.