

Tuna management in Oceania

Tuna Diplomacy: Mutuality and Affinity Geopolitics among PNA's Big Ocean States

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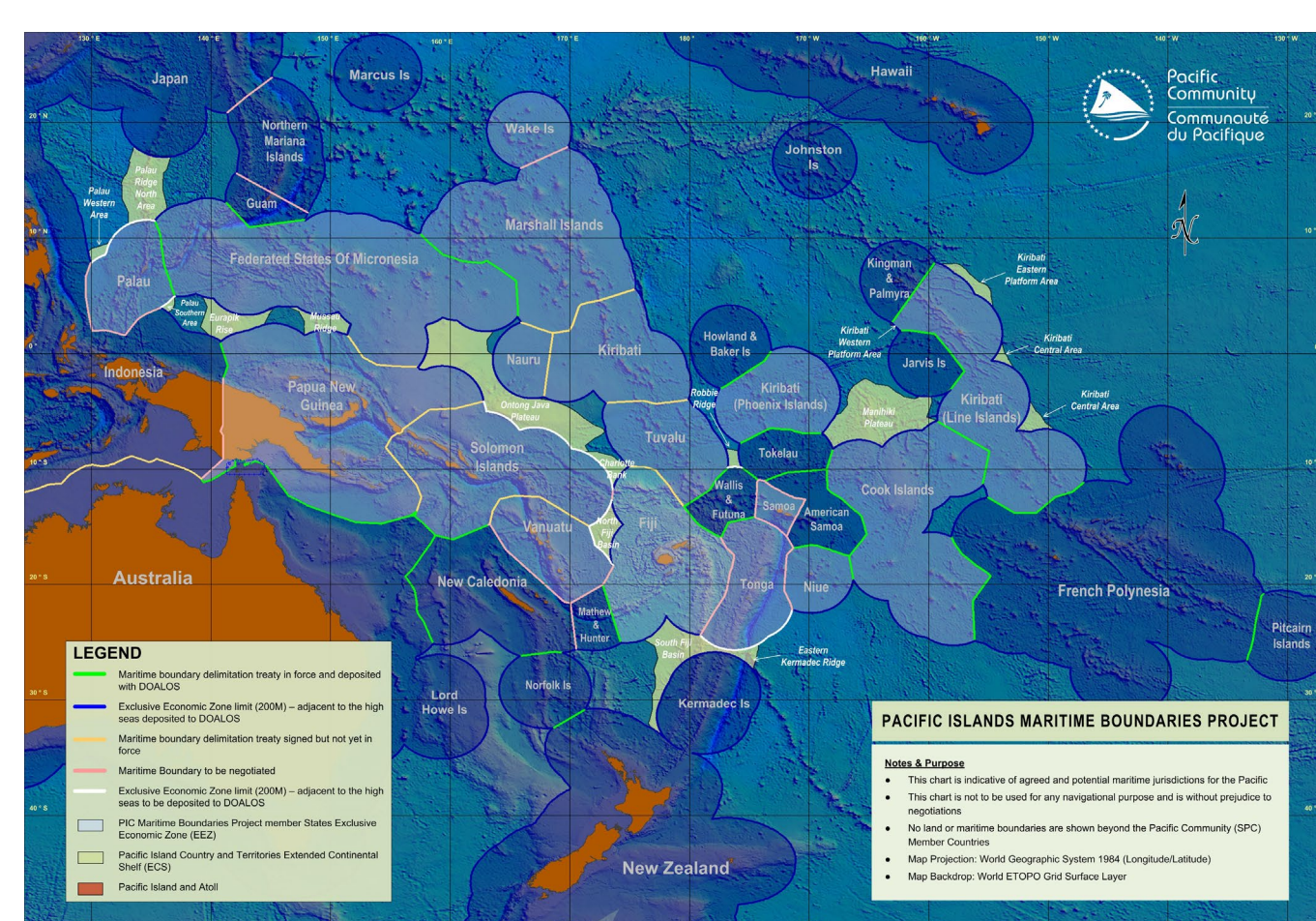
Background and motivation

I'm a political anthropologist that has worked on the Marshall Islands since 2013. Through two long-term ethnographic fieldworks, I have studied subsistence fishing in outer atolls and small-scale fisheries and fish markets in urban centres. My motivation for applying for the SEAS programme was to expand my gaze to study transnational fisheries management while maintaining my ethnographic engagement with the Marshall Islands.



Project description

This project will study collaborative tuna management in Oceania in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), a collaboration comprising eight island states with combined exclusive economic zones (EEZs) spanning more than 14,000,000 km². Through regulations like the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS), which limits the amount of fishing days through the year, the PNA aims to secure increased revenues and sustainable tuna fishing. The VDS has also made the PNA a stronger negotiator on the global political scene than any of its member states could hope to be alone. Indeed, the PNA has successfully prohibited fishing in large areas of the high seas adjacent to member states' boundaries. Following internal and international negotiations over the allocation of fishing days and the monitoring of tuna fishing in PNA EEZs, this project will develop an ethnographic study of the ways in which the PNA helps each individual member state to assert its sovereignty by gaining control of its own ocean and the resources it holds.



Aims and plans

I will conduct ethnographic fieldwork at the PNA headquarters in Majuro, Marshall Islands.

Will also follow the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authorities on patrol to control fishing vessels.

Hope to develop parallel case studies of small-scale fisheries in the Marshall Islands.

Main areas of ethnographic focus: Potential tensions between...

- National interests and those of the PNA (e.g., deep sea mining, independent bilateral agreements)
- Assertions of state sovereignty and regional cooperation
- PNA states in the allocation of fishing days
- Aims of increased state revenue and sustainable tuna fishing
- Industrial fisheries and local fishing communities



Marine sustainability

Controlling more than 50 % of the global skipjack trade, the PNA members see themselves as custodians of the world's largest sustainable tuna purse sein fishery.

My project will develop a holistic approach to marine sustainability by integrating economic, environmental, and social perspectives on large and small scale.

Supervisory team

UiB supervisor:

Professor Edvard Hviding, Department of Social Anthropology: edvard.hviding@uib.no

External supervisor:

Associate professor Jennifer E. Telesca, Radboud University, Netherlands: jen.telesca@ru.nl



Upcoming work and work in progress

Fieldwork will commence from March 2024.

Will soon submit research article on PNA and sovereignty.

Currently revising PhD thesis into a full-length monograph.



SEAS

