Political Reviews

Micronesia in Review: Issues and Events, 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013
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Reviews of American Sāmoa, the Cook Islands, Hawai’i, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga, and Tuvalu are not included in this issue.

**French Polynesia**

The period under review saw great changes taking place in French Polynesia. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voted to relist the country as a non-self-governing territory, the first instance for that body to do so since it relisted New Caledonia in 1986 (France had unilaterally de-listed both countries in 1947). However, the people whose lobbying led to this decision—pro-independence politician Oscar Temaru and his supporters—lost the leadership of the country to their former (temporary) ally and now once again archenemy Gaston Flosse, whose party swept the territorial elections in May 2013. After Flosse won a two-thirds majority in the French Polynesia Assembly under the new voting system, his return to power as a quasi-absolute ruler also drew to a close a decade of political instability.

At the start of the review period, the international lobbying efforts by the Temaru government had been going on intensively for months and culminated in the hosting of two major international meetings. On 5 July 2012, Temaru hosted the meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum of the Club of Madrid, a group of former government leaders and businessmen predominantly from Western countries. A week later, from 12 to 13 July, Temaru’s Tavini Huiraatira party hosted an international forum of experts from other governments, the United Nations, and academia on the topic of postcolonial nation building, appropriately named “Build Me a Nation” (left untranslated into French or Tahitian). The open workshop, which was well attended by the public, featured presentations by Algerian diplomat Mourad Ahmia, executive secretary of the g-77 (the caucus of developing countries within the United Nations); the roving ambassador of Fiji to the Pacific Island countries, Litia Mawi; Hawaiian political scientist Keau Sai, leader of the acting government of the Hawaiian Kingdom since 1996 (Hawaiian Government blog); two Kanak leaders from New Caledonia; and a Canadian economist. These invited experts shared their knowledge and experience with various aspects of decolonization in other countries in order to help French Polynesia develop a way to function as a nation-state in the future (13 July 2013).

As usual, both meetings were strongly criticized by the pro-French opposition, especially the leading opposition party Tahoeraa Huiraatira (in English, “Popular Rally”), led by Gaston Flosse. Concerning the Club of Madrid meeting, Tahoeraa accused the Temaru government of selling out the country to Australian multimillionaire businessman Clive Palmer, one of the most prominent and publicly visible participants in the meeting, who made
promises to invest in the country (T1, 18 July 2013). As for the “Build Me a Nation” forum, Flosse’s party once more focused their criticism on the close relations of Temaru’s government, especially Senator Richard Tuheiava, with the current government of Fiji. A military dictatorship, Flosse argued, could not be a good ally in a struggle to achieve freedom. Tuheiava countered, however, that the government of Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama was not comparable with typical dictatorships since unlike in most military-ruled nations—and unlike in French Polynesia—the Fiji tourism industry was booming. He jokingly said that this meant it could not be such a bad dictatorship (T1, 11 July 2013). In line with this reasoning, Tuheiava attended the third “Engaging with the Pacific” leaders meeting from 23 to 24 August in Nadi, Fiji, to represent the government of French Polynesia (T1, 24 Aug 2012).

International awareness-raising and lobbying events like the “Build Me a Nation” forum achieved visible success, when the Non-Aligned Movement (the political counterpart to the economically focused G-77) voted unanimously to support the reinscription of French Polynesia as a non-self-governing territory. This success at the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Iran from 26 to 31 August was achieved in large part thanks to support from Fiji and other Melanesian member states.

On the other hand, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), which held its annual meeting from 28 to 30 August in Rarotonga, in its communiqué “reiterated their support for the principle of French Polynesia’s right to self-determination”—but instead of unambiguously supporting reinscription, it once more merely supported “positive dialogue between French Polynesia and France on how best to realise French Polynesia’s right to self-determination” (PIF 2012). Forum members were apparently under massive pressure from Australia and New Zealand, both of which have abandoned their once strong support for decolonization and now accept the continuation of French colonialism in the region. In contrast, on 30 August, also in Rarotonga, the second meeting of the newly formed Polynesian Leaders Group (in which Australia and New Zealand are not included) strongly endorsed French Polynesia’s reinscription (PIF, 30 Aug 2012).

On the global level, the Forum’s unclear attitude counted much less than the Non-Aligned Movement’s full-fledged support. Since the Non-Aligned Movement includes a large majority of UN member states, after their endorsement it appeared to be only a matter of time before the issue would come up in the UN General Assembly. Still, however, some insecurity about a UN vote remained, especially as France and allied Western countries were still expected to counter lobby. At the plenary session of the General Assembly in September, reinscription of French Polynesia was once more brought up by Fijian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ratu Inoke Kubuabola and the prime ministers of Solomon Islands and Sāmoa (Kubuabola 2012; Lilo 2012; Malielegaoi 2012). There was no immediate follow-up, however, and months passed without a draft resolution being introduced in the General Assembly.
Meanwhile, for the rest of the year, the country was preoccupied with various domestic issues. In November, a passionate debate was fought about marijuana, likely sparked by media reports about the successful plebiscites in two American states during the US general elections to legalize the substance. As in many Pacific Islands, the consumption of paka (the local term for cannabis) is becoming increasingly popular in French Polynesia, while the illegal but lucrative cultivation and sale of it has become a not insignificant sector of the economy. While many people see this as a dangerous social phenomenon, and an ever-increasing number of people are arrested for paka-related charges, President Temaru and other members of Tavini stated that it was time for a serious debate throughout society about legalization. When the opposition criticized this initiative as irresponsible, Tavini leaders underlined that the party was neither endorsing nor opposing legalization but simply wanted to facilitate discussion of this complex issue (††, 8 Nov 12; RNZl, 15 Nov 12).

As in the previous few years, the justice system dealt with several high-profile political corruption cases and pronounced sentences potentially carrying severe consequences for several politicians. In early October, local trade union leaders Cyril Legayic and Gaston Tetuanui and French ship magnate Bill Ravel were indicted and detained, with Ravel being accused of paying bribes to the union leaders in order for them to let him operate his ships without constant threat of strikes. For many years, several unions in the country have been accused of operating like a mafia, using strikes not as a genuine tool to obtain improved working conditions and better pay but rather as a sort of protection racket in order to extort bribes from business leaders and politicians (†PM, Dec 2012).

The most attention, however, was drawn to the trials of senator and opposition leader Gaston Flosse, who was being tried in two different cases, both dating back to Flosse’s earlier term as president of the local government from 1991 to 2004. In one of them, Flosse had already been found guilty and sentenced to several years in prison in 2011, but he and all of his codefendants had appealed the verdicts. After the trial on the other case started in mid-September, Flosse got into even more trouble. Because of his criminal conviction, he was denied visa-free entry to the United States, and, on 19 November, while he was at the US Embassy in New Zealand in order to obtain a visa, his residence in Vetea, a luxury subdivision in Pirae, was completely destroyed in a fire. Flosse aggressively used the media to portray these events as evidence of his being a victim of a vast conspiracy, accusing his political opponents of supplying information on him to US authorities and of setting fire to his home (†PM, Dec 2012).

On 15 January 2013, the verdict in the “Post Office” affair was pronounced. Flosse was found guilty of having received several tens of millions of CFP francs in bribes between 1994 and 2005 from French advertising executive Hubert Haddad in order to secure a monopoly on the sale of advertising space in phone books and other publications of the French
Polynesia Post and Telecommunications Office. Flosse was sentenced to a prison term of five years, a fine of 10 million CFP francs (US$100,000), and five years of ineligibility for political office, while Haddad received an identical prison term and fine, on top of a five-year ban on operating a business. Various codefendants were sentenced to prison terms, suspended prison terms, or fines, depending on their individual responsibility in the affair. Among those convicted were former Minister for Postal Services Émile Vernaudon; Flosse’s secretary, Melba Ortas; and politician Noa Tetuanui, a former member of Temaru’s Tavini party who had switched sides in October 2004 after Flosse channeled some of Haddad’s bribes to him (15 Jan 2013).

Barely a month later, on 7 February, the appellate court confirmed the conviction of Flosse and the other defendants in the “Fictional Employment” affair and sentenced the former president to four years in prison, a fine of 15 million CFP francs (US$150,000), and three years of suspended political rights. Seventeen of his codefendants—fellow Tahoeraa members and trade union leaders who had received enormous salaries as collaborators in the president’s office without ever actually working there—received shorter prison terms or fines, while twenty-five others were acquitted (13 Feb 2013).

Unsurprisingly, all convicted parties in both cases, advised by high-profile French lawyers, contested their convictions. In the “Post Office” case, this means that the case will be newly tried by an appellate court up to a year later, and until then, the sentences will be suspended. The verdict in the “Fictional Employment” case, which itself had already been appealed to no avail, is being contested at the Court of Cassation in Paris (a supreme judicial institution that checks court cases for judicial or procedural errors). Until the latter has made its decision on the case (expected to take at least half a year), the sentences in this case are also suspended, meaning that Flosse and other leading politicians of Tahoeraa faced no impediments to their participation in the upcoming territorial elections.

Senator Tuheiava was also having trouble with the law. In mid-October 2012, the Court of Cassation confirmed a civil penalty prohibiting the senator from exercising his profession as a lawyer for two years for not properly serving some of his clients when he was still practicing law but already engaged in politics (17 Oct 2012). Since he is now no longer practicing law, the civil penalty has no practical consequences for him. In February 2013, Tuheiava was cleared of all criminal charges arising from the case (13 Feb 2013).

After months of no news on the decolonization project, in early 2013 more action was finally forthcoming. Months of lobbying behind the scenes by President Temaru and Senator Tuheiava finally proved successful on 7 February when Solomon Islands, Nauru, and Tuvalu officially sponsored a draft resolution calling for French Polynesia’s reinscription. After publication in the UN journal on 14 February, the draft was further amended and definitively put on the agenda of the UN General Assembly in a streamlined version as Draft
While a definite date for the discussion of the draft resolution in the General Assembly had not yet been set, the campaign for the upcoming territorial elections was taking off, sparking another reconfiguration of the country’s ever-changing political landscape. On one hand there was the governing Union pour la Democratie (UPLD) umbrella group, dominated by Temaru’s Tavini Huiraatira party, forming a coalition government with the outer islands interest group Te Mana O Te Mau Motu (an assembly caucus formed by several outer island representatives elected on the lists of various parties). In power since April 2011, this government had been one of the most stable in the last decade, but its popularity was declining due to the country’s steadily deteriorating economic situation and the growing perception of Temaru as economically incompetent and too focused on only one issue: UN reinscription.

Among the so-called autonomist (ie, pro-French in the local political discourse) opposition parties, Flosse’s Tahoeraa, having gained all three seats representing the country in the French National Assembly in the legislative elections of June 2012, was regaining its strength as the main pro-French political force, a position it had temporarily lost to various splinter groups after 2007. In contrast to Flosse’s temporary reconciliation and political alliance with Temaru between 2007 and 2009, recently Tahoeraa had once more employed a confrontational discourse against the Temaru government, pushing for a polarization of society into pro- and anti-independence camps. This strategy won back for Flosse some former allies who had maintained that ideological stance during his reconciliation with Temaru, such as Jean-Christophe Bouissou’s Rautahi party, the ethnic Chinese-dominated Taatira No Te Hau party, and Sandra Levy-Agami’s splinter group Te Mana Toa, all of which merged under the banner of Tahoeraa for the 2013 elections. Several other politicians, among them Papeete Mayor Michel Buillard and former Minister of Education Tearii Alpha, rejoined Tahoeraa as well. These and other floor crossings made Tahoeraa once more the leading opposition group in the assembly, disposing of fourteen seats, while the conglomerate of pro-French splinter groups of the “third way” (which, under the banner of To Tatou Aia [TTA; “Our Country”] had collectively won a relative majority in the assembly at the last territorial elections of 2008) was reduced to a small remnant, with their leader, former President Gaston Tong Sang, now essentially a backbencher. For a while, the remaining “third way” (that is, neither pro-independence nor pro-Flosse) politicians, including those with and without assembly representation, were in turn divided into two groups. One of these, led by Nicole Bouteau, Philip Schyle, Beatrice Vernaudon, and Teiva Manutahi, considered themselves “progressive autonomists” by claiming to be less corrupt and opportunistic than some of the others (11, 2 July 2012).

By the beginning of the new year, however, most of the “third way” splinter groups had overcome their differences, and on 31 January, they announced their merger into a new
party called A Tia Porinetia (ATP; in English, “Stand Up Polynesia”), led by Teva Rohfritsch, a young former Tahoeraa member who had served as cabinet minister with various portfolios under Flosse, Temaru, and Tong Sang. The new party, essentially a remake of Tong Sang’s moribund TTA, encompassed all remaining “autonomist” splinter parties in the assembly, giving it a caucus of twelve. Among the “third way” political leaders without assembly representation, only two significant ones did not join ATP: Teiva Manutahi, who, considering Rohfritsch too much of an opportunist, declined to join (TI, 4 Feb 2013), and Bruno Sandras, mayor of Papara and former French National Assembly member, who was excluded from the party, ironically for being himself considered too much of an opportunist by Rohfritsch and the other party founders (TI, 19 Feb 2013).

While UPLD’s campaign strongly focused on the merits of UN reinscription (arguing, for instance, that New Caledonia’s significantly better economic situation could be linked to that territory’s being back on the list since 1986), ATP made vicious and polemic attacks on the decolonization campaign a cornerstone of its political discourse, much more so than Tahoeraa. While engaged in their diatribe against decolonization, Rohfritsch and his supporters also displayed their blatant ignorance of the UN process and their lack of research skills when, after the release of the streamlined version of the draft UNGA resolution on 1 March, ATP in a press release boasted that Temaru’s campaign for reinscription had supposedly failed (TI, 7 March 2013). They based this assertion merely on the fact that the verb “to reinscribe” was no longer in the draft, when in fact the project had advanced one step further by adapting the language of the draft to UN standards and the precedent 1986 resolution on New Caledonia.

Furthermore, Rohfritsch and Gaston Tong Sang contested the legality of President Temaru’s travels abroad to promote reinscription (citing the political statutes of French Polynesia, according to which foreign policy is the responsibility of France, not the local government) and filed a complaint with the French High Commission. The high commission responded, however, that Temaru’s approaches and overseas travels, while contradicting French policies and not having any legal effects, were legal within the framework of his prerogatives as president (TI, 8 March 2013). This was in line with an earlier decision of the administrative court that had upheld the August 2011 vote of the assembly that called for reinscription, which had been similarly challenged by the pro-French opposition at the time (RNZI, 10 Feb 2012).

In addition, Rohfritsch accused Flosse of once more secretly planning an alliance with Temaru, thereby selling out the “autonomist” cause (TI, 1 April 2013). Rohfritsch could hardly have said anything more hypocritical, since he himself was part of Tahoeraa when the alliance was concluded in 2007, and he held ministerial portfolios under the two governments created through that alliance.

While ATP was thus attempting to drum up support from the French settlers and pro-French locals by trying to surpass even the French govern-
ment in pro-French rhetoric, Tahoeraa’s campaign was more focused on nostalgia for the period before 2004, when Flosse had been the all-powerful president, the economy had been in good shape, and everybody supposedly had had a better life. Of course, they conveniently omitted the facts that at the time there was no global economic crisis, and Flosse’s close friend Jacques Chirac had been in power in Paris, guaranteeing a steady flow of official and unofficial subsidies to the territory. Clearly also targeting pro-independence voters disillusioned with Temaru’s poor economic performance, Tahoeraa’s campaign featured visibly less pro-French symbolism: Unlike rallies of ATP and smaller “autonomist” parties, Tahoeraa’s great electoral march of 23 March with an estimated 10,000 participants displayed thousands of orange Tahoeraa party flags but not a single French tricolor (TPM, April 2012).

A few weeks earlier, a UPLD electoral march focusing on support for the ongoing UN reinscription process gathered around 3,000 participants. Coinciding with the second anniversary of the March 2011 nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima, the march also featured a group of visiting Japanese peace activists (TT, 9 March 2013; RNZI, 11 March 2013).

While Tahiti’s politicians were busy campaigning, a Tahitian-born politician made international headlines in another Pacific country on 23 March when Moana Carcasses Kalosil was elected prime minister of Vanuatu (TT, 23 March 2013; NT, 25 March 2013). Born in Tahiti of a French father and a Tahitian mother, Carcasses is not only the first naturalized ni-Vanuatu citizen to become prime minister but also the first non-native-born head of government in any independent Pacific Island country. Furthermore, as the leader of Vanuatu’s Green Coalition, Carcasses is the first member of a “Green” (ie, environmentalist) party to head the government of any country worldwide. As the first Tahitian to lead an independent country, Carcasses’s successful career in Vanuatu exemplifies the ability and perseverance of Tahitians overseas. Importantly for politics back home in French Polynesia, Carcasses passionately supported reinscription for his home country at the United Nations, with Vanuatu under his leadership adding itself to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution alongside Sāmoa and Timor-Leste (UN 2013c).

As the elections drew nearer, people began taking a closer look at the new electoral system created by the French legislature in 2011, which was designed to increase political stability in French Polynesia. By now people must have become used to having each election conducted under a different system, as the last two consecutive territorial elections conducted under the same system happened in 1991 and 1996. Unlike all previous elections, in which the country was divided into five or six constituencies (one or two per archipelago), under the most recent rules all of French Polynesia is a single constituency, with the overall percentages of votes determining the composition of the assembly. Each party creates a list of 57 candidates, and two rounds of elections are held for the parties on the ballot. Those parties who receive at least 12.5 percent (1/8th) of the total vote in round
one appear on the second-round ballot, although unsuccessful parties that have won at least 5 percent can enter into coalitions with successful ones to contest round two. After the second round, 19 of the 57 seats (one-third of the total) are assigned to the party that receives the highest percentage of the votes. The other 38 seats are assigned proportionally among all parties that have gained at least 5 percent of the overall votes.

From the point of view of the smaller outer islands, the new rules are indeed quite strange. Since about two-thirds of the population lives on Tahiti, the representation of the sparsely populated outer islands has always been an issue of concern. In the new system, outer islands representation in the assembly is guaranteed (since party lists must be distributed throughout eight geographic sections), but not necessarily in proportion to the outer islands’ votes. The proportion of outer islands seats distributed to party list candidates is dictated by the overall result of each party, not by the results within each archipelago. As University of French Polynesia political science professor Sémir Al-Wardi explained, outer islands candidates who win only a small minority in their geographic section can win seats if their party performs well on Tahiti, while a party winning 80 percent (for example) in an outer archipelago might end up without any representation if it does not also have strong support in Tahiti (Ti, 26 March 2013).

Obviously targeted by these new rules were the representatives of Te Mana o te Mau Motu, also known as the “islanders,” who had become notorious for their constant opportunistic switching of alliance in the assembly. Because they were no longer useful under the new system, no party included any of them on its list.

The election results confirmed the tendencies already seen at the French National Assembly elections one year previously, with Flosse’s Tahoeraa Huiraatira gaining a landslide victory. Already in the first round on 21 April, Flosse’s party led the vote with 40.16 percent, while UPLD won only 24.6 percent, with ATP barely behind, gaining 19.92 percent. The list Maohi Tatou—a coalition of Manutahi’s Porinetia Ora and a section of the formerly important, now marginal Here Aia party (the other half of Here Aia being part of UPLD)—scored fourth, but achieved only 5.71 percent, while the rest of the votes were distributed among five small splinter parties gaining less than 4 percent each. Participation was at a significant low of only 67.45 percent of registered voters.

At the runoff election on 5 May, significantly more people participated (72.79 percent), and the results of the first round were mostly confirmed, with the votes of the splinter groups and the nonvoters from the first round almost evenly distributed among the three large parties. Tahoeraa achieved 45.11 percent; UPLD 29.25 percent, and ATP 25.63 percent. For Temaru’s ruling party, the results were a significant loss, compared to its score of 37.18 percent in the second round of the last territorial elections in 2008, while Tahoeraa dramatically increased its score, having received only 17.16 percent in 2008. ATP’s proponents of the “third way” can also be counted among the big losers of the election, given its predecessor To Tatou Aia’s
remarkable 2008 performance of 45.12 percent (Ti, 6 May 2013).

Tahoeraa thus clearly won the election in terms of votes, but because of the majority bonus system, its score translated into a two-thirds majority in the assembly. Flosse’s party ended up with 38 out of 57 seats (compared to 10 seats proportionally assigned in 2008). In contrast, the two opposition parties—UPLD with merely 11 seats (20 in 2008) and ATP with 8 (27 for TTA in 2008)—are in no position to challenge the majority in any form, even in the unlikely case of their bonding together. While the results clearly provide political stability for the near future, critics are worried that, if unchecked by significant opposition, Flosse might once more establish an authoritarian regime rife with the kinds of corruption and abuse of power that he had put in place when he led a similar majority government before 2004.

A further analysis of the elections on the regional and municipal level shows that Flosse was indeed successful in rebuilding his party to full strength on the ground. Tahoeraa had the highest number of votes in virtually all municipalities, even in places where the mayor was from another party. On the other hand, UPLD was leading only in its traditional stronghold of Faaa (where Temaru has been mayor since 1983) as well as on the island of Raivavae in the Austral archipelago. Even in Faaa, UPLD failed to reach its hitherto secure overall majority, scoring only 47.99 percent. The other divergence from the overall election results was the Leeward Islands archipelago, in which ATP was leading the vote, particularly in Uturoa on Raiatea as well as on the islands of Bora-Bora (where Gaston Tong Sang has been mayor since 1989) and Huahine (NT, 7 May 2013).

Since the election result was overwhelmingly clear, there were no post-election surprises like there had been in 2008, and the constituting session of the new assembly on 16 May was mostly a formality. Flosse’s son-in-law and designated successor Edouard Fritch was elected Speaker of the assembly by Tahoeraa’s thirty-eight representatives as planned, and the next day, Flosse (at age 81 the oldest representative; he had initially presided over the first session as Father of the House) was elected president of French Polynesia by the same majority. On the same day, Flosse presented his cabinet of eight ministers (a massive reduction from earlier cabinets consisting of up to sixteen). Nuihau Laurey, an economist and information technology expert who has published a book on renewable energy (Laurey 2009), was appointed vice president, and the cabinet includes several other young professionals who are newcomers to politics (Ti, 17 May 2013). Besides downsizing the cabinet, President Flosse also announced a reduction of his presidential salary by 50 percent and that of the ministers by 10 percent, which was approved at the first cabinet meeting (Ti, 22 May 2013).

While the assumption of power by the new government was a smooth process in institutional terms, it was overshadowed by the sudden announcement by the UN General Assembly on 15 May that finally a date had been scheduled for the vote on draft resolution L.56/Rev.1 on
French Polynesia’s reinscription on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Two days later, the same day Flosse was scheduled to be elected president, the United Nations took up the resolution. President Temaru, still formally in office, flew to New York to attend the historic occasion, while his vice president, Antony Geros, hoisted the UN flag in front of the president’s office in Papeete. During the constituting session on 16 May, Flosse, as Father of the House (whose normal job is merely to give a short ceremonial speech and conduct the election of the Speaker), took the unprecedented steps of not only ordering the restoration of a portrait of the French president and the display of the French and European Union flags at the assembly building (they had been removed by previous speaker Jacqui Drollet of UPLD) but also announcing that the “UN flag will never be displayed in this assembly.” Flosse also proceeded to hold a vote on a resolution denouncing the proceedings at the UN General Assembly and calling on all UN member states to stop them, claiming that the election results show an absence of support for reinscription from the people of the country. The resolution passed with the combined votes of Tahoeraa and ATP. Since the new assembly had not been formally constituted, Flosse was clearly overstepping his duties, and the validity of the resolution was contested by UPLD. To avoid a legal challenge, the majority agreed to change the item voted on from a formal “resolution” to a legally irrelevant, symbolic “wish” (TI and Polynésie Première, 16 May 2007).

Unimpressed with Flosse’s awkward moves, on the morning of 17 May (ie, in the early morning hours in Tahiti, which is six hours behind New York), while Temaru was still president, the UN General Assembly unanimously voted to reinscribe French Polynesia as a non-self-governing territory (NSGT), increasing the list of NSGTs from 16 to 17. Published as UNGA Resolution 67/265, the resolution “confirms the unalienable right of the people of French Polynesia to self-determination and independence,” as outlined in the UN Charter as well as in UNGA resolution 1514 of 1960, as a NSGT under the responsibility of the UN Special Committee on Decolonization. Furthermore, the resolution calls on France to “intensify its dialogue with French Polynesia in order to facilitate rapid progress towards a fair and effective self-determination process” (UN 2013b). Literally in the last hours of his presidency, Temaru had thus “lost the battle but won the war,” as Australian scholar and journalist Nic Maclellan put it (2013).

Unlike in the precedent-setting case of New Caledonia’s reinscription in 1986, and unlike the controversial resolutions on Syria and Israel/Palestine earlier in the current UNGA session, the resolution on French Polynesia was passed unanimously without a vote. However, France boycotted the session, and five other UN member countries—the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States, and Mexico—dissociated themselves from the consensus. The representatives from Germany and the United States explicitly referred to the recent election victory of pro-French parties and the wish expressed by the new majority of the assembly of French Polynesia. On closer examina-
tion, however, the opinion expressed by the pro-French local politicians as well as by the pro-French UN member states is illogical, as reinscription does not lead to a unilateral imposition of independence on the country. On the contrary, it guarantees the right of the people of the territory to self-determination and protects them against arbitrary actions of the French government, as have been experienced all too often in the near past.

Temaru and his supporters were particularly disappointed with the attitude of the French government, since the French Socialist Party of current President François Hollande is in a partnership agreement with Temaru’s pro-independence Tavini Huiraatira party. In the agreement, signed by Hollande himself in 2004 and renewed in 2011, the Socialists had pledged to support the right of the territory to self-determination within the UN framework (Socialist Party and Tavini Huiraatira 2004, 2011). By positioning himself against the reinscription resolution, Hollande not only acted like a good old colonialist in the mold of his right-wing predecessors but also broke his word and bitterly disappointed Temaru and his party.

Unsurprisingly, Flosse’s new pro-French government continues to fight the United Nations and hopes to have the country removed once more from the list as soon as possible. On 30 May, Ta'hoerah and ATP, its “fifth column” in the opposition, voted on a resolution calling on France to immediately conduct a referendum on independence. UPLD abstained from the vote, arguing that a process of self-determination should not be implemented precipitously but must be developed through dialogue among all local political parties, the French government, and the United Nations, in a way similar to the proceedings happening in New Caledonia under the Nouméa Accord of 1998 (TI, 30 May 2013).

At the same time, French Socialist Party Senator Richard Tuheiava attended the regional seminar of the UN decolonization committee in Quito, Ecuador, where French Polynesia was for the first time officially discussed as a NSGT. Referring to the Flosse government’s resolution, the senator pointed out that before any self-determination referendum could take place, a reform of the voter eligibility criteria must be undertaken, as currently any French citizen living in the territory is entitled to participate in local elections. As in New Caledonia, Tuheiava argued that the right to participate in a referendum be limited to persons who have resided in the territory for several decades; otherwise it could not be considered an exercise of the right of self-determination (Tuheiava 2013). Currently, there is a significant population of French expatriates in the territory, and there are indications that most of them tend toward a political attitude against independence. As many of them are short-term residents, having them vote in local elections, let alone in a referendum determining the future status of the country, would indeed be highly problematic, as it would distort the results in a major way.

While reinscription and the resulting possibility of participating in UN institutions marks the achievement of a long-sought goal of Temaru and the independence movement at-large,
it came as a consolation prize for their undeniable loss in the territorial elections. Flosse’s return to the presidential palace marks the end, for the time being, of the so-called Taui (in English, “change”), the political project of Oscar Temaru and UPLD to use their control of the political institutions of the government to set the country on a course toward long-term independence. While he was in and out of power between 2004 and 2013, due to unstable majorities in the assembly, the 2013 elections have definitely ended Temaru’s current ambitions. At least in terms of electoral strategy, the Taui has thus clearly failed, with UPLD having proven to be unable to permanently extend its vote beyond its core group of supporters. One of the reasons for this was the ill-organized campaign, which consisted of rather haphazard moves, random visionary statements by Temaru, and little substance in the party’s platform aside from support for UN reinsertion. A coherent social, financial, and economic policy was hard to identify. Since the country has been in a prolonged economic crisis for several years, and social issues like unemployment, homelessness, crime, and domestic violence are increasing rampantly, it is understandable that most people have more pressing worries than the country’s international status at the United Nations, as important as that may be for long-term goals. Tahoeraa, with its discourse of nostalgia for the “good old times” before 2004, paired with a few solid promises to alleviate social and economic ills, was evidently a more attractive choice to many voters. Immediately after the election debacle, the smaller parties within UPLD, especially Heiura les Verts (the local Green party), criticized Temaru’s style of leading the coalition and contemplated a reform of the alliance to make it more efficient (DT, 7 May 2012).

Besides unprofessional campaigning, UPLD never undertook concrete steps to cut back the wasteful government apparatus and the lifestyles of its members to realistic dimensions appropriate for a small-island developing country. As Tahiti-based French teacher and journalist Marc Frémy, a critical intellectual generally supportive of UPLD, commented, “One has seen that too many of the newly arrived copied from the old guard a behavior of nomenklatura and apparatchiks, greedy for power and wealth” (Frémy 2011, 85; author’s translation). Furthermore, since UPLD never held a clear majority in the assembly, it was somewhat obligated to bribe opportunistic representatives with high government positions for them and their friends and family in order to stabilize the majority, even though a denunciation of those very practices had been at the core of UPLD’s platform. This had been true even more so for TTA, the predecessor of ATP, whose campaigns for a “moralization” of politics proved similarly hypocritical.

The vast majority of voters, however, continue to switch back and forth between these mainstream political parties, and political newcomers with innovative ideas have no chance for success. Economist and entrepreneur Enrique “Quito” Braun-Ortega’s party, Te Hiti Tau Api, which presented an excellent program to redress the country’s finances and economy,
and trade unionist Emile Vernier’s party Rassemblement pour le Respect du Peuple Polynésien, which advocates a dissolution of the autonomous country government and full integration into France as a département like the French Caribbean Islands, achieved only a few hundred votes each.

While the “Taui” might be over, it would be premature to see the election loss as a deathblow to the independence movement, as Flosse and his allies have been touting. In a country whose final political status remains unsettled, the only party with a long-term nation-building project, which lost the majority but retains the support of almost one-third of the voters, is still extremely relevant. This is all the more so since the “autonomist” majority parties’ goals are purely materialistic, limited to securing a perpetual flow of French subsidies to keep the illusionary bubble of a high per capita income from bursting (Frémy 2011, 146). The project of building a “Polynesian or Maohi Nation,” as Frémy (2013) has termed it, remains open-ended.

Ironically, Tahoeraa and ATP, with their obsessive enmity to a UN-supervised decolonization process, are actually helping to keep the independence issue a front page news item. Having accused UPLD, not without some merit, of using the decolonization campaign to distract from Temaru’s domestic political incompetence, Flosse and the pro-French “opposition” did almost the same thing after the election, touting their opposition to decolonization, in order to hide their similar incompetence and unwillingness to implement necessary drastic reforms.

As Tahiti-based French historian Jean-Marc Regnault has aptly described (2013), the reinscription of French Polynesia on the decolonization list “raises phantasms: irrational fears and excessive confidences.” This is markedly different from New Caledonia, where the pro-French parties have long accepted the listing of their territory and welcome working with the UN decolonization committee on their country’s development, merely differing with independence supporters regarding the final outcome of the decolonization process. Interviewed amid the controversial debate on the issue in Tahiti, Harold Martin, the pro-French current president of the government of New Caledonia, expressed his astonishment at the attitude of pro-French Tahitians, stating that “being on the list is an advantage” (NT, 30 Aug 2012).

The other cloud hanging over Flosse’s new pro-French utopia is the ongoing corruption trials against him and several members of the new government. When it became evident that Tahoeraa was on its way to winning the elections, Paris newspapers expressed their surprise and disgust. Influential Paris daily Le Monde commented that “the devil is back in Paradise” (22 March 2013). In March, Le Monde journalists Gerard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme published a book titled “The Man Who Wanted to Be King” (2013), recounting the corrupt nature of Flosse’s “reign” during the 1990s and early 2000s, considering those “crazy years, smelling of sex, blood and money,” and referring to Flosse-ruled French Polynesia as a “Tropical East Germany” in reference to the spy scandals involving Flosse’s
presidential intelligence service and militia.

The most sinister of these scandals, the 1997 unexplained disappearance of anti-Flosse journalist Jean-Pascal Couraud, keeps haunting the present. After various rumors about Couraud’s disappearance being an assassination plot involving people connected to Flosse have been circulating for a long time, on 25 June 2013 two members of the Groupement d’Intervention de la Polynésie (GIP), Flosse’s now defunct presidential militia, were indicted for Couraud’s murder. On 16 July, charges were also brought against former GIP commander Léonard Puputaiki, who is already serving a prison term for homicide in another case (TI, 25 June, 16 July 2013).

Some of the new government’s actions are worrisome as well. On 3 June, Bruno Barillot, was fired from his position as the government’s official delegate for the follow-up on nuclear testing consequences. Since Barillot is an internationally renowned expert on nuclear testing who had received the Nuclear-Free Future Award in New York in 2010 and who had represented the rights of nuclear testing victims very effectively, his firing provoked an outcry of indignation, not only by local nuclear testing victims association Moruroa e Tatou but also from various anti-nuclear organizations worldwide (TI, 4 June 2013).

Equally widespread indignation came about in reaction to Flosse’s appointment of Brigitte Girardin as the “special representative of French Polynesia” in Paris. As the former French minister for overseas territories under Chirac in the early 2000s, Girardin became a notorious symbol of French colonialism and arrogance when she played a major role in subverting the first Temaru government in order to bring electorally defeated Flosse back to power in 2004. Besides her lack of impartiality, which clearly disqualified her from representing the territory in Paris, the appointment of a French bureaucrat into a position of the local government contradicts the policy of “Oceanisation” (ie, the preferred hiring of locals as officials to gradually replace expatriates). On top of all this, Girardin’s made-to-measure “special representative” position is superfluous, since there already exists a well-staffed French Polynesia liaison office that occupies an entire building in Paris.

The Flosse government’s neocolonial moves are not the only worrisome aspect making UN-supervised decolonization extremely urgent. More direct proof that French colonialism is alive and well in the country was given on 13 June when the Council of State (France’s highest administrative court) declared invalid two local laws dealing with pensions and social security because parts of the debates in the assembly when the laws were passed had been held in Tahitian, not in French. The imposition of French as the only official language is nothing new, but it is unprecedented that French courts now target the mere use of Tahitian by assembly members on the assembly floor (the laws themselves were drafted and published in French). This is indeed extremely worrisome and reminiscent of the worst colonial regimes of the past. An anonymous reader commented quite appropriately that “frankly, it is deci-
sions like this that make people want to become pro-independence” (TI, 15 June 2013).

As important as debates over the political status of the country may be, many ordinary citizens are first and foremost concerned with their quality of life, which for many is deteriorating. In February, an increase in violent crime was revealed in the annual police report for 2012 (TI, 4 Feb 2013), while a report released by the statistics office noted a significant increase in unemployment (TI, 17 Feb 2013). These two tendencies have been developing over the last few years. A few months after the release of the police report, it was announced that a weapons dealership would open on Raiatea (TI, 26 June 2013). With the rise of violent crime, such a store is the last thing the country needs, and it is thus absolutely incomprehensible that authorization was given for it. Even if the establishment of the store was not legally preventable, in a country notorious for its complex administrative bureaucracy, surely authorization for the store could easily have been repeatedly delayed and made so hard to obtain that the owner would have eventually abandoned the project, as has all too frequently happened to other businesses that would have been far more beneficial to the community.

A report by the public health service disclosed that only one-third of the population has access to clean water (TI, 21 Feb 2013). This might be excusable for an independent developing country with limited resources, but for a dependent territory with a high per capita income due to enormous financial subsidies from France, these figures are simply scandalous and provide implicit evidence of massive misappropriation of funds over decades in most municipalities.

On a positive note, the year under review finally saw the mobile phone market opened up to competition. After years of negotiation, in February 2013, Vodafone obtained permission to operate in the country (TI, 23 Feb 2013), and in June it began selling mobile phone services. This ended the decades-long monopoly of the government’s Postal and Telecommunications Office, which had made mobile phone service in French Polynesia among the most expensive in the world (TI, 11 June, 15 June 2013).

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Māori Issues

This has been a year in which ongoing tensions between Māori and the government have been exacerbated by a number of unhelpful judicial decisions. Most widely reported were the actions of Māori groups who sought judicial intervention as the government intensified its drive to legislate the extinguishment of all Māori claims under the Treaty of Waitangi. Self-congratulatory government propaganda belies the increasingly bitter divisions this process has created between claimant groups. Many have turned to the courts, the Waitangi Tribunal, and other Pākehā (European) judicial bodies, not only to seek justice for our treaty claims but also to prevent the despoliation and desecration of our lands, sacred places, waters, and culture and to prevent the New Zealand Police from terrorizing us. In the past year, we have found that little relief is available to us through those channels. Yet in the face of ongoing adversity, we were still able to celebrate Māori achievement and performance, although we were saddened by the passing of an internationally renowned Māori artist and of a sitting Māori member of Parliament.

In February 2013, our leading contemporary artist, Ralph Hotere, passed away at the age of eighty-one. He was Te Tāo Maui hapū (group of extended families) of Te Aupōuri iwi (grouping of hapū), with strong links to Te Rarawa iwi. He was born near Mitimiti on the Hokianga harbor. He had received numerous awards for his prolific artworks and for his leadership and service to Māori arts. Ralph was shy, retiring, and very humble, and he let his works do their own talking (Fox 2013, 4; Muru 2013, 26).

“Ralph’s artworks encapsulated much of the struggle that tangata whenua (Māori) were facing during his time. He was an activist; he was a thought provoking philosopher; and he was an advocate for Māori rights” (Sharples 2013). Although he lived most of his life in the south in Otago, he was taken home to Mitimiti to be buried with his ancestors.

At the end of April, Parekura Horomia, Māori member of Parliament and minister of Māori Affairs from 2000 to 2008, passed away at his home in Tolaga Bay on the East Coast at the age of sixty-two. A popular Parliamentarian in his own Māori electorate of Ikaroa-Rāwhiti, he was well liked...
by Māori throughout the country. He was hardworking and generous with his time, traveling many thousands of kilometers every year to visit marae and Māori gatherings throughout the country. His loyalty to the Labour Party could be relied on, but it caused him anguish during the 2003–2004 debacle over the foreshore and seabed legislation. When the government in which he was a minister announced that it would legislate the confiscation of the foreshore and seabed from Māori, he led the Māori Labour members of Parliament in denouncing it as “likely to breach international law” (Mutu 2011, 134). However, pressure from his own party forced him into supporting the legislation, even when his colleague and friend Tariana Tūria resigned from the party and set up the Māori Party in support of Māori opposition to it (Mutu 2011, 140).

Many thousands attended his tangihanga (funerary ceremony) at Hauiti marae in Tolaga Bay.

A by-election called to replace Horomia in the Ikaroa-Rawiti seat took place in June. The Labour Party candidate won the poll with the Mana Party candidate coming in second and the Māori Party candidate coming in third. The Māori Party has drawn significant criticism for the number of compromises it has had to make while part of the National-led coalition government. However, the by-election was most notable for the very low turnout—33 percent (Electoral Commission 2013). Low voter turnout in the Māori electorates was also a feature of the last general election, when it was 58 percent (Electoral Commission 2012).

Over the past year, the government has been publicly celebrating the pace at which it has been pushing through Deeds of Settlement and legislation to extinguish Treaty of Waitangi claims. What it eschews in its press releases is any mention of the large numbers of Māori groups who are disenfranchised by the settlements and who vehemently oppose them. Out of desperation, many have been seeking judicial intervention, even though the financial burden of doing so is often crippling. They are trying to prevent the Crown from legislating the theft of their lands and resources. The Crown does not have clear title to most lands it claims to own, so it uses settlement legislation to give itself title to millions of acres of land that belong to Māori, disingenuously stating in many of its Deeds of Settlement that “provision of full compensation by the Crown is not possible” and that claimants are “foregoing full compensation to contribute to New Zealand’s development.” Eleven of the fourteen Deeds of Settlement signed in the past year contain these clauses (OTS website). Even more excruciating for claimants is that the small areas of land that the Crown is relinquishing are often being vested in the wrong people.

Despite this, legislation was passed extinguishing all the claims of Ngāti Mākino (in the Eastern Bay of Plenty region), the descendants of the original owners of the Maraeroa A and B blocks (in the central North Island), Rongowhakaata and Ngāi Tūmanuhiri (both of the East Coast), Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara and Ngāti Manuhiri (both of Northland), and Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei (of Auckland) (OTS 2013, 3–4). Once legislation is introduced into Parliament, no further legal action can be taken.
with respect to any of the lands or resources involved. However, legal action can be taken against Deeds of Settlement, and very few have passed through to legislation without being challenged. Many look to the Waitangi Tribunal to put a stop to the Crown’s divisive and destructive behavior only to be disappointed, as the tribunal repeatedly refuses to grant the urgent hearings needed to challenge Deeds of Settlement (Jones 2013b, 28).

In one case, after granting Ngāti Kahu an urgent hearing (Mutu 2013, 130; Linkhorn 2012, 17), the tribunal declined an application for binding recommendations. This is the only legal mechanism available to the tribunal by which it can order the Crown to return stolen lands so that claimants are not forced into accepting Crown-determined settlements (Waitangi Tribunal, 2013). Yet, to the bewilderment of many, the tribunal chose to use Crown policy to determine the case rather than legislation (Feint 2013, 19), effectively removing itself from its role as an independent commission of inquiry and making itself just another arm of government. This raises wider issues of bias, natural justice, and judicial independence in terms of the rule of law (Durie 2010). The threats from successive governments to remove its powers if it ever made binding recommendations (Hamer 2004, 7) have severely affected the tribunal’s ability to operate effectively, in this case leaving Ngāti Kahu with well-founded claims over 70 percent of their territories but no remedy other than the political whim of a hostile government.

It does not help that successive governments have been dismissive of the tribunal’s recommendations and that the present government treats it with open contempt. When the tribunal started its hearing for the National Fresh Water and Geothermal Resources inquiry in July, the prime minister told national television that he could choose to ignore whatever findings the tribunal might make (Shuttleworth 2013). This earned a rebuke from Sir Edward Taihākurei Durie, a former chairman of the tribunal and retired high court judge, who commented, “That’s like turning your back on the law . . . it’s a very bad message to send to people” (Bennett 2012). While the prime minister toned down his contempt, he did not stop trying to dictate to the tribunal when it issued an interim direction at the end of July saying that the Crown should not commence the sale of shares in state-owned power companies before it had given “in-depth and considered examination” to the tribunal’s report that would be issued in September. The prime minister told the tribunal to report in August (3News 2012). The tribunal issued an interim report on 24 August stating that Māori do have ownership rights in water and that the Crown would be in breach of treaty principles if it proceeded with the sale of shares without first creating an agreed-on mechanism that recognized Māori rights and remedied their breach (Waitangi Tribunal 2012, 81, 143). Furthermore, the tribunal found that, contrary to the prime minister’s widely reported accusatory remarks, the claim was not opportunistic (Waitangi Tribunal 2012, 14).

On 3 September, the government announced that it would delay the
sale and would consult with specific iwi about a possible mechanism to recognize their rights and to remedy the numerous breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in respect of water. But the consultation was a sham, with several iwi boycotting meetings. Tainui iwi called a national hui, which confirmed that Māori have always owned the water. The prime minister lashed out, asserting that the statement was “just plain wrong,” thereby earning himself the label of “culturally ignorant” (Young 2013). Undeterred, the government announced it would go ahead with the share offer, effectively ignoring the tribunal. The New Zealand Māori Council took the matter to the high court, where their case was dismissed (Jones 2012, 4). Their appeal to the supreme court was also dismissed, but only after the Crown gave assurances that it would take action to address the proprietary claims to water upheld by the tribunal (Jones 2013a, 8). But Māori experience is that the Crown rarely honors its promises, and it remains to be seen whether this case ends up back in the courts.

While the battle over our water attracted a great deal of attention, many other battles to protect Māori resources, especially our wāhi tapu (sacred sites), were taking place around the country. In the Far North, Ngāti Kahu were fighting to stop an American billionaire merchant banker from building luxury houses on top of a burial cave. We had won our case in the high court only to see it overturned in the court of appeal. Te Patuwai hapū and neighboring Ta-ranga Moana hapū and iwi continued to battle the owners and insurers of the container ship Rena, which had been wrecked on Ōtaihit Reef (Astrolabe Reef) off Mōtūtī island in 2011 (Mutu 2013, 168). The insurers announced that they would leave the wreck on the reef after iwi had instructed that it had to be removed and Maritime New Zealand had issued an order for its removal. Ōwhata marae near Rotorua has been battling to stop the New Zealand Transport Agency from taking land containing wāhi tapu to build a bypass from the city to the airport. The bypass would require some of their houses to be demolished and would cut the community off from their cemetery, marae, hot springs, and baths. North of Wellington, Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai and Ngāti Awa ki Kāpiti are among the hapū and iwi who have also been battling to stop the New Zealand Transport Agency from taking Māori land and destroying wāhi tapu to build the Kāpiti expressway. Ngāti Hau hapū in Northland has been fighting a mining company that had been issued a license to prospect for gold on their lands. The area was mined for mercury during the last century, and many of the hapū suffered mercury poisoning when it leaked into their waterways. Further, mining will release more mercury and other toxins, and Ngāti Hau has banned all mining in its territories. However, two iwi managed to get some relief through the judicial system when the environment court fined the Rotorua District Council for the high-handed manner in which its staff acted, for making a false allegation, and for misleading Ngāti Pikiao and Ngāti Mākino over a resource consent process to build a waste-
The long-awaited report of the Independent Police Conduct Authority (IPCA), released in May, was also the source of a little respite. It focused on the 2007 New Zealand Police Armed Offenders Squad terror raids carried out in Rūātoki and Tāneatua by combat-ready police in black uniforms, helmets, masks, and balaclavas, heavily armed with combat rifles and with handguns strapped to their knees. The report provided vindication for the small Māori communities who bore the brunt of the squad’s actions and were severely traumatized as a result (Mutu 2011, 180). The authority found that while the investigation into military-style training camps in the area was reasonable and necessary, a large number of aspects of the operation were contrary to law, unjustified, and unreasonable (IPCA 2013). Yet the report made no recommendations for any compensation or reparation to be made to those who had been so unjustifiably, unreasonably, and illegally traumatized.

Successful governments and a number of local authority and judicial bodies are dismissive of Māori rights, and this fuels the ongoing racism that we experience. As in the past, numerous examples were reported in the media over the last year, although Māori who talk about racism are still condemned for doing so. Yet there were still some constructive attempts to discuss the issue and the effects it has on us. National television station TV3 broadcast a debate entitled “Is New Zealand a Racist Country?” Seventy-six percent of the viewing audience voted yes. Māori Party co-leader Tariana Tūria wrote a column in the New Zealand Herald entitled “Racism the Cause of Poor Health of Māori Children” (7 Aug 2012). In the Far North, a Māori general practitioner, Dr Lance O’Sullivan, had been vilified for publicly highlighting the racism that results in the poverty and poor health of so many of his Māori patients, particularly the children. The practical steps he took to change that, such as treating patients who could not pay and visiting patients in their homes, saw him censured by his employers. So he set up his own practice employing like-minded colleagues (de Graaf 2012). In February he was named Māori of the Year 2012, and in early July he received a Sir Peter Blake Leadership Award.

Māori celebrated a number of other successes as well. In July and August, twenty-two Māori competed in nine sports in the London Olympics and Paralympics, with Lisa Carrington (Te Aitanga a Mahaki and Ngāti Porou) winning a gold medal in canoeing, Cameron Leslie (Ngāpuhi) a gold medal in para-swimming, and Storm Uru (Ngāi Tahu) a bronze medal in rowing. In February, thousands descended on Rotorua for Te Matatini, the world’s largest celebration of Māori performing arts. Forty-one teams competed representing thirteen regions, with Te Waka Huia from Auckland winning their fifth festival title. In March, the New Zealand softball team, the Black Sox, won its sixth World Softball championship, which was held in Auckland. Most of its members are Māori, and Māori custom and protocol feature
strongly in the team’s culture. In June, both the New Zealand men’s and the women’s rugby sevens teams won the Rugby World Cup Sevens championship played in Moscow. Many of the players on those teams are Māori.

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RAPA NUI

Politics in Rapa Nui during the review period were diverse. In addition to municipal elections in November, there were significant political contests over cultural and ecological conservation projects, economic development, education, health, immigration, and the international human rights of the Rapa Nui Nation. Broadly, two competing discourses have structured conflict and possible resolutions: a Rapa Nui–based nationalist discourse of self-determination and a neoliberal Chilean-based discourse of stakeholders and sustainable tourism.

While Rapa Nui nationalist discourse continued to gain international support during the period in review, stakeholder discourse strengthened its local roots as a result of the municipal elections. In an election in which there was a voter abstention rate of approximately 47 percent—slightly better than the 55 percent Chilean national average rate of voter abstention—Petero Edmunds Paoa was elected mayor after receiving 1,013 of the 4,300 possible votes and thus defeating four other candidates: Luz Zasso Paoa (the current mayor); Julio Araki Tepano (a municipal councilman); Jose Rapu Haoa (a member of the Development Committee [CODEIPA]); and Mata Atan (a lawyer and political activist for Rapa Nui self-determination) (CM, 26 Nov 2012). Alberto Hotus along with Carlos Mardones Riroroko, Marta Hotus, Yolanda Nahoe, Mai Teao, and Peter Tepano were elected as the municipal council (concejal). Local media interpreted the abstention rate in Rapa Nui and Chile more broadly as “an indication
that the majority of the population is dissatisfied with the political class that governs the destinies of the country” (CM, 26 Nov 2012). In the case of Rapa Nui, some basic arithmetic is indicative of why some Rapa Nui voters would be disinclined to vote. There are only about 1,800 possible Rapa Nui votes (Young 2013), so Rapa Nui people are significantly outnumbered by the voting power of the Chilean settler population and thus see municipal elections as hopeless. Although Rapa Nui people commented to me while I was on the island in July and August 2013 that they knew some Rapa Nui had voted for Petero Edmunds and Alberto Hotus and that they recognized that a significant number of Chilean settlers had not voted (CM, 26 Nov 2012), they insisted that the Chilean vote nevertheless had an important impact on the elections. Given the numerical differences, it is indeed hard to see how the Chilean vote could not have had a significant impact.

Alberto Hotus and Petero Edmunds historically have been strongly supportive of the Chilean status quo on the island. Their election is particularly noteworthy in light of heightened conflicts on the island over the past few years. Alberto Hotus, the president of the Council of Elders (a Chilean political office transformed from an initially grassroots organization), has consistently supported the Chilean state and military against Rapa Nui people. For example, when Rapa Nui shut down a public Chilean celebration of the “annexation” of the island amid the six months of Rapa Nui occupations and protests of 2010, “Kete,” as Rapa Nui nicknamed Hotus (“kete” meaning “pocket” and the nickname implying that he is “in the pocket of the Chilean government”), conducted a military celebration on a navy ship anchored off the coast of the island (EM, 9 Sept 2010). Such betrayal is not uncommon in Hotus’s biography: in 2003 he supported replacing a truth commission report that told the history of relations between Rapa Nui and Chile, written by Rapa Nui over the course of months of painstaking grassroots community discussions, with a report written by Chilean social scientists that radically simplified the history and current Rapa Nui demands for reconciliation (Desling 2009, 244–245).

Petero Edmunds’s last involvement with politics on the island ended with his resignation as island governor amid the large-scale Rapa Nui occupations and protests of state-run institutions and the increasing corporatization of the island in 2010 (see Young 2012). It is transparent why Chileans would vote for Edmunds: he has consistently supported and collaborated with Chilean “stakeholders” on the island against the Rapa Nui people. After supporting the corporate development of the Hotel Hanga-roa Eco Village and Spa against the interests of the indigenous Hitorangi clan in 2010 in the conflict associated with his aforementioned resignation, he quickly went into partnership with Chilean businessman Alberto Pirola—owner of the Chilean hotel chain Noi—after failing to reach a deal with Hilton Hotels (LT, 11 Feb 2012). Mayor Edmunds is currently a 60 percent stakeholder in the Hare Noi luxurious boutique hotel that he and
the Executive Pirola developed just outside Hanga Roa, the town center of Rapa Nui. This corporate orientation is not new for Edmunds; in prior years he supported the development of corporate casino gambling on the island, which the Rapa Nui people vociferously resisted (Gonschor 2008).

On officially taking office as mayor in December, Petero Edmunds felt a sense of “coming home”—no doubt because he has held the office four previous terms (MV, Jan 2013). During his inauguration he did not publically discuss his contested past neoliberal policies, resignation, and individual pursuit of corporate profit but instead stressed the theme “hagamos todos el amor” (let us all love) (CM, 6 Dec 2012). He proposed an island vision that will “focus on the union of the entire Rapanui society, both public and private, to rediscover the passion for many types of cultural encounters, material and immaterial, to care for and preserve our land and history” (MV, Jan 2013). More specifically, he encouraged the development of municipal work communities on issues such as cultural and natural resource management, education, social problems, health, tourism, and sports (CM, edition 34, 2013).

The vision of Mayor Edmunds has articulated well with the Bicentennial Legacy Projects promoted by Chilean President Sebastián Piñera, the president who appointed Petero Edmunds to his failed reign as island governor. The projects emphasize marine, ecological, and cultural heritage conservation and restoration that will represent Easter Island as “a symbol for the planet” (BB, 1 Nov 2012). In light of the ever-increasing scope of tourism on the island—Rapa Nui had a 17 percent increase in tourism in 2012, with approximately 87,000 visitors (BB, 3 May 2013)—it is no surprise that ecological and cultural heritage conservation problems on the island are intensifying. The Chilean state has never developed a sewage system or water treatment facility on the island, and garbage is piling up (BB, 28 July 2012). Chilean Senator Richard Lagos Weber fears that the groundwater will eventually become contaminated (BB, 27 July 2012).

To address waste management issues, extensive and creative recycling is being conducted at the new Orito Recycling Plant under the direction of Piru Huki Atan. Projects have also been developed to transport some of the waste and recycled materials away from the island. As garbage accumulates, thousands of tons of solid waste—including tons of highly toxic computer waste (I Love Chile website, 6 June 2013)—have begun to be transported from Rapa Nui to Valparaiso, Chile, on a monthly basis (BB, 16 April 2013). The most interesting recycling project by many accounts is the construction of the “Eco-hare” (Eco-house) at the Orito Center, developed by the municipality and Coca-Cola Chile as part of the twenty-year plan entitled “Limpiemos Rapa Nui” (Let’s clean Rapa Nui) (MV, May 2013). Offices of the recycling center are housed in the seventy-five-square-meter Eco-hare, a building composed entirely of recycled materials: 50,000 beverage cans, 4,500 tetra pack boxes, 2,200 plastic bottles, 250 tires, and four cubic meters of ground glass (LT, 17 April 2013). Mayor Edmunds emphasized that the Eco-hare is sym-
bolic of a community unified over the concept of sustainable growth (MV, May 2013).

An estimated 90 percent of the island’s surface is significantly eroding, and there has been extensive loss of island biodiversity (EM, 17 April 2013). To help conserve terrestrial resources, the Jacques Cousteau Society has begun a project with Chilean state institutions to help reforest Rapa Nui. The project will initially begin with the reforestation of 1,400 hectares, with an ultimate goal of 5,000. Special attention will be given to the endangered Toromiro tree and other native species (NT, 18 April 2013). The Chilean secretary of the Institute of Agricultural Development, Louis Mayol, has begun related projects to reduce the impact of island farming on natural and cultural resources. Plans include promoting greenhouse crop production as well as the use of the traditional manavai (rock wall planters) (LT, 16 April, 17 April 2013). A sustainable livestock project—Programa de Ganadería Sustentable—is also being promoted to reduce the number of grazing cattle and to limit areas for cattle (LN, 17 April 2013).

To help conserve marine resources, two reserves have been proposed: a large marine reserve of 411,000 square kilometers around Motu Motiro Hiva and a relatively small reserve of 1.3 square kilometers outside of Hanga Roa in the area known as Hanga Roa o Tai. The reserve for Motu Motiro Hiva was proposed to the Chilean state by representatives of National Geographic and the Oceana international nonprofit organization, who have been alarmed by severe declines in marine resources in Rapa Nui—particularly tuna—that could result in imbalances in the marine ecosystem and consequently affect the Rapa Nui culture, which is dependent on marine resources for survival (The Clinic, 26 July 2012). The marine reserves, according to Pablo Galilea of the Chilean Undersecretary of Fisheries and Aquaculture (Subpesca), are designed to help “protect the ecosystem and biodiversity of fishery resources” in Rapa Nui. At Hanga Roa o Tai, there is particular concern about the viability of various kinds of sea snails, corals, and algae as well as lobster and Nanue fish without direct conservation efforts (EM, 22 March 2013). Some of the sea snails, according to Diego Ramirez, a leading scientist in the study of Rapa Nui marine life, have recently declined by as much as 80 percent (LT, 26 Dec 2012). Further, Chilean Senator Francisco Chahuán has suggested that a reserve will not solve the ecological crisis; he has begun to develop a fisheries act that would further restrict fishing (NT, 10 Nov 2012). Of particular concern is an act that would help Rapa Nui limit industrial fishing—a topic of protest against President Piñera during his visit (CM, 19 Nov 2012).

Somewhat contradictorily, in a period in which Chilean officials proposed two marine reserves, they concurrently promoted the expansion of the Hanga Piko docking area into a more comprehensive wharf. Mayor Edmunds stressed the importance of the expansion in terms of a broader twenty-year development plan during April meetings with Rapa Nui leaders, Chilean officials, corporate representatives, and consulting firms (Tāmura Re‘o, May 2013). Perhaps that is why
Esperia Bonilla, Subpesca chief of staff, uses the language of “stakeholders” to discuss the proposed marine reserves. For Bonilla, marine reserve developments must balance the interests of fishermen, tourists, divers, and educators (EM, 22 March 2012).

President Piñera’s announcement of the bicentennial projects in late October and early November during his first visit to Rapa Nui coincided with the inauguration of the new Chil- ean hospital in Hanga Roa. President Piñera emphasized that the creation of the hospital, a project initiated six years prior by President Bachelet (EM, 6 May 2006), was about doing “justice to the island” (CM, 19 Nov 2012). The hospital is supposed to represent “the state of the art” and a significant advance in the capacity of the island to treat disease and improve health on the island (BB, 2 Nov 2012), but the president admitted that, on its opening, the hospital had a “shortage of specialists” (CM, 19 Nov 2012). That situation has not thus far been resolved. When I asked Rapa Nui what they thought of the hospital in July and August 2013, I often received a reply similar to the one given by Vaihere Tuki Haoa: “It’s pretty.” Vaihere and others emphasized that while there is great potential for the hospital facility, more than six months after its inauguration it was still not really functioning. It still lacks medical staff and specialists to deliver the justice promised by the president.

The gravity of the current health care situation, unfortunately, is one I have begun to understand intimately. While on the island in July 2012, I developed appendicitis. A routine operation in many places in the world could not be performed on Rapa Nui. My life in danger, I had to be flown with a nurse to administer antibiotics intravenously on a five-hour flight to Santiago, Chile, to receive proper treatment in Hospital Salvador. Having missed the opportunity for a safe and easy operation due to the time delay, I had no option but to stay at Hospital Salvador for two weeks to reduce infection and swelling enough that I could be discharged to an outpatient care center in the nearby Providencia district of Santiago for another week and eventually return to the United States for surgery. While aboard the plane, at Hospital Salvador, and at the outpatient care center of Casa Acogido, I became acquainted with the situation that Rapa Nui have suffered for decades and continue to suffer despite the new, “pretty” hospital. Rapa Nui are regularly being flown in and out of Santiago for health care, and dozens are residing at Casa Acogido and Hospital Salvador while getting treatment that should be available on the island. Rapa Nui community members in Santiago take turns caring for the sick Rapa Nui who come to Hospital Salvador and Casa Acogido and help them navigate the complex bureaucracy of Chilean medical care. Tragically, many Rapa Nui die before obtaining treatment in Santiago—indeed, the island doctors sincerely wished me luck as they did not know whether I would survive the flight and transport to the hospital. Rapa Nui continue to live every day in a kind of medical terror: serious illnesses and medical problems can be treated only following a long and complex transport that lasts at least half a day from the hospital bed.
in Rapa Nui to the hospital bed in Santiago. The result is a complication of whatever ailment one has and a reasonable chance of death in cases of potentially mortal conditions.

As with the case of the hospital, promises for actual migration control have still failed to materialize in a context in which the population has increased approximately 86 percent in twenty years (IWGIA 2012, 19) and that Rapa Nui leader Rafael “Rinko” Tuki sees as contributing to a kind of “silent genocide” (CR, 5 Feb 2013). However, officials like Presidential Commissioner Carlos Llancaqueo emphasize “progress” in terms of the initial proposed amendment to Article 126 bis of the Chilean Constitution and the development of a bill “representing the community”; this bill would reportedly be based on discussions with Rapa Nui people and their elected officials that have been documented with video, photography, official note keeping, and observations from December 2012 to May 2013 in accordance with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 (Isla de Pascua government website, 10 May 2013). The proposed bill distinguishes four categories of migration to be managed: “crew,” “tourists,” “residents,” and “indigenous people.” All temporary residents, tourists, and flight crew are given particular timetables for residing on the island and eventually must depart according to the rules governing their category. Tourists will generally be restricted to no more than thirty days on the island and will be asked to pay fees proportional to the length of their stay for visiting the archaeological park. Permanent residents include individuals who are not indigenous Rapa Nui but have been residing on the island for at least two years prior to the enactment of the proposed bill. Indigenous people and permanent residents of the island are at liberty to reside on, depart from, and return to the island at their discretion. Committees and rules will be formed to evaluate new applications for permanent residency. Chilean police will be used to enforce laws based on the enactment of the bill.

The Chilean government appears to be developing laudable, progressive projects for protecting the island ecology, cultural heritage, and migration. However, when contextualized in more detailed terms of various struggles for self-determination during the review period as well as in the past few years and beyond, the projects often appear at least questionable—and, in many cases, seem to promote settler colonial interests. The progress stressed in the case of the proposed migration bill in official reports ignores the colonial processes that modified the content of the bill as formulated within community meetings. Rapa Nui had initially stressed that migration concerns were about conserving their contemporary culture and the possibility for democratic self-determination amid increasing numbers of settlers who, as noted above, are outnumbering Rapa Nui voters. Later formulations, following meetings with Chilean officials, replaced the emphasis on the politics of self-determination with a discourse of “environment” and “sustainable development of the island.” Chilean President Piñera, without consulting Rapa Nui people or leaders, also
modified the text of the bill after it was passed in congress from a bill that “restricts the right of freedom of movement” to a bill that “simply regulates” the freedom of movement (IWGIA 2012, 18–19).

Further, official insistence that the process is in accordance with ILO Convention 169 is disputable. Beginning at least in August 2012, Rinko Tuki, the leading representative of the National Indigenous Development Corporation (CONADI) for Rapa Nui, began consultation with James Anaya—UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples—to “develop a mechanism for consultation, in accordance with Convention No. 169 International Labour Organization Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries” (CR, 25 Oct 2012). Among many concerns, Rinko is alarmed that Chile’s version of ILO 169 dialogue, in violation of international law, includes the presence of threatening, armed Chilean police in “public” meetings (CR, 5 Feb 2013). UN Rapporteur Anaya has worked with Rinko and other members of CONADI to help Rapa Nui develop a proposal for a formal mechanism of “non-coerced” consent throughout the review period. In May 2013, the Chilean state promised that it would hold meetings between CONADI representatives and ministers of the Chilean government at Palacio de La Moneda in Santiago, Chile, and that it would make an official statement on such a formal mechanism in June. At the time of this writing, no statement has been articulated. During the review period, Chile has emphasized that in various contexts—in meetings on migration, language, conservation projects, and so on—it has consulted with the Rapa Nui in terms of ILO 169. However, there was never a formal mechanism agreed on in terms that UN Rapporteur Anaya stated are requisite at the level of international law that would entitle the state to legitimately make this claim. Eliza Riroroko (a Rapa Nui woman engaged in the struggle for Rapa Nui self-determination and human rights as a member of the Makenu Rapa Nui women’s organization and other grassroots organizations on the island) emphasized to me in July 2013 that Chilean officials only partially allow her to speak in community meetings. She recalls in migration meetings regularly being told by officials such as Governor Carmen Cardinali to sit down after voicing perspectives that are seen as incompatible with Chilean state desires. Rinko has noted that dismissal of dissenting voices by Chilean officials like Governor Cardinali also extended to official Rapa Nui representatives. He reports that Mario Tuki, a publicly elected member of the Easter Island Development Commission (CODEIPA), was also summarily dismissed by Governor Cardinali after voicing a dissenting opinion in a meeting staffed by armed Chilean police (CR, 5 Feb 2013). According to international observers, although Chile has been claiming to be consulting in terms of ILO 169, they have not really been involved in “intercultural dialogue” according to international legal standards; rather, they have been engaging in “information gathering” exercises (IWGIA 2012, 19).

Ecological conservation and cultural heritage projects, while on some level possibly of value to the
Rapa Nui, are contested by Rapa Nui in terms of political self-determination. Jacqueline Rapu Tuki, noting somewhat analogous ecological struggles for Māori in Aotearoa, has publically questioned why the Chilean state should be the one in charge. For her, it is important that “Rapa Nui own the reserve” (Overseas Territories Review, 7 May 2013). Leviante Araki, president of the Rapa Nui Parliament political organization, emphasized in Parliament meetings that it is not sufficient to understand Chilean conservation and restoration projects in Rapa Nui as merely altruistic instruments for the production of social and environmental good. Santi Hitorangi, a member of Rapa Nui Parliament and spokesman for the Rapa Nui Nation at the 2012 UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, stressed in dialogues with me in August 2013 that Chilean projects in Rapa Nui in general are about creating “dependency in which resources are distributed in piecemeal fashion.” He sees Chilean projects as ultimately techniques for socially engineering “needy” and “politically complacent” Rapa Nui people. Just as Parliament members oppose Chilean control of land in Rapa Nui, they contest further expanding Chilean power into the surrounding ocean, food supply, and cultural heritage. Supporting these projects is seen as weakening the prospects for Rapa Nui self-determination and dignity.

Rather than further entangling themselves in an undignified Chilean system of dependency, Rapa Nui continue to pursue political and cultural identity within international and regional forums. Rapa Nui Parliament attended both the September 2012 meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in Rarotonga and the March 2013 meeting of the Polynesian Group of Parliamentarians in Tahiti. In Rarotonga, Rapa Nui were participants in the Pacific Leaders Group, which included Māori representatives from Aotearoa and Kānaka Maoli from Hawai‘i—Pacific Island nations previously excluded from the forum given that they are not independent states. Leviante requested that Henry Puna, prime minister of the Cook Islands, help make decolonization a priority for the Pacific Islands Forum and to assist Rapa Nui in the process of being placed on the UN list of non-self-governing territories (Rapa Nui Parliament archives). He also requested that Rapa Nui be given an opportunity to gain a permanent seat in the Pacific Islands Forum. Erity Teave, Rapa Nui Parliament director of external affairs and human rights, coincidently met with UN Women’s Director and former Chilean President Michele Bachelet in Rarotonga to express grievances of the Rapa Nui Nation against Chile. She emphasized to UN Director Bachelet that Rapa Nui human rights have been violated and that Rapa Nui aspire to challenge Chilean abuse at the International Court of Justice at the Hague (Cook Islands News, 31 Aug 2012). Tuila‘epa Sailele Malielegaoi, the prime minister of Sāmoa, did not mention giving Rapa Nui a permanent seat, but he did suggest that the Forum establish an official place for the Pacific Leader’s Group, and Rapa Nui within that group, at the Forum (Development Policy Blog, 5 Sept 2012).

Rapa Nui Parliament had observer status at the Polynesian Group of
Parliamentarians in Tahiti (TI, 27 March 2013), which developed from letters to President Oscar Temaru in August 2011 requesting participation (Rapa Nui Parliament archives). Leviante’s address to the Polynesian Group of Parliamentarians was similar to the one articulated to the Pacific Islands Forum. He reviewed past and current abuses of Chile against the Rapa Nui Nation and emphasized the importance of decolonization in Rapa Nui. In addition, he highlighted an ongoing lawsuit filed against Chile in which, among other things, Rapa Nui assert that the so-called Agreement of the Wills that established a political relationship between Chile and Rapa Nui in 1888 has been breached by the state of Chile and is now void (Rapa Nui Parliament archives). Attorney Osvaldo Galvez, representing Rapa Nui Parliament in the Second Civil Court of Valparaiso, has noted that the chances of victory against Chile are slim. He emphasized, though, in a manner consistent with a recent study of possible international legal action against Chile (see Gomez 2010), that such cases are part of a process for access to international courts and human rights commissions (BB, 5 May 2013). The idea is that international courts will hear cases only after state court options have been exhausted. Given the recent reinscription of French Polynesia on the UN list of non-self-governing territories, Rapa Nui Parliament members consider relations with Oscar Temaru and other Tahitian leaders to be of utmost importance. In July 2013 meetings in Rapa Nui, Parliament members emphasized a need to learn the process of inscription from Tahitian leaders.

Attending the meeting of the Polynesian Group of Parliamentarians is seen as a major step in gaining opportunities to learn from the Tahitian example.

In addition to political relations with fellow nations and states of Oceania, Rapa Nui groups participated in both linguistic and cultural exchanges in the Pacific Islands region during the review period. In July 2012, thirty-three Rapa Nui under the leadership of Lynn Rapu participated in the Eleventh Festival of the Pacific Arts in Solomon Islands. The event featured representatives of twenty-six island groups. Rapa Nui performers were distinguished by the Solomon Star newspaper as the “darlings” of the festival given their consistently “vibrant” performances of traditional dances and songs (MV, Aug 2012). Also in July, thirty Rapa Nui students visited Tahiti for a two-week linguistic and cultural exchange with Tahitian students (TI, 18 July 2012). And in August 2012, like the earlier voyages of the Hawaiian Hōkūle‘a to Rapa Nui (see Desling 2009, 360–380), two Māori voyaging canoes from Aotearoa landed at Rapa Nui as part of a cultural exchange between the two Polynesian nations. The canoes were crewed by eighteen men and five women and navigated according to traditional Polynesian knowledge of currents, stars, winds, and sea life (MV, Jan 2013).

In international media and indigenous political forums, Rapa Nui is becoming in some sense “a symbol for the planet”; however, it is becoming a symbol for something very different from what President Piñera imagines. The International Work Group for
Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) concluded in a relatively well publicized report based on field and legal investigations of the island that Chile has been, and is, violating fundamental human rights of the indigenous Rapa Nui Nation (The Clinic, 23 March 2013; LN, 23 March 2013). The report notes that violations in human rights are identifiable in terms of a number of instruments of international law to which Chile is a signatory: ILO Convention 169, the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and case law resulting from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) (IWGIA 2012, 14–15). Chile can also be shown to be in violation of its own laws (IWGIA 2012, 15–16). The report concludes with a list of human rights that it maintains Chile has violated in Rapa Nui: right to personal integrity, prohibition of slavery and servitude, right to personal liberty, right to judicial guarantees, right to liberty of thought and expression, right to freedom of assembly, right to liberty of association, right to a nationality, right to property, right to political rights, right to equality before the law, right to judicial production, and right to progressive development (IWGIA 2012, 35–37). Among the many rights violations listed, the IWGIA analysis of the Chilean breach of Rapa Nui rights to a nationality stood out to me as fundamental. They state: “The Rapa Nui identify themselves as a people of the Pacific, rather than as members of Chilean society . . . the State or other external agencies cannot decide on their behalf” (IWGIA 2012, 36). During their stay on the island, representatives of IWGIA consistently stressed an obvious Rapa Nui Pacific Island identity in customs, heritage, language, and everyday life.

Chilean President Piñera and his local leaders Mayor Edmunds, Governor Cardinali, and Kete have made “progress” during the year in entangling Rapa Nui in a social order of Coca-Cola Eco-hare, Jacques Cousteau Society reforestation projects, National Geographic marine reserves, “pretty” hospitals, and Chilean hotel chains in an attempt to fashion Rapa Nui into a “global symbol” of Chilean “sustainable tourism.” Perhaps next year, through more armed “ILO 169 Convention” meetings, they will be able to develop this “satellite of the real” (Baudrillard 1998, 147) Rapa Nui further through a “Mega TV program” that hopes to film a reality show on the island (LT, 27 March 2013), even though Rapa Nui–based leadership and grassroots Facebook organizing have resisted what is seen as a development project likely only to provide a few elite Chilean-based island officials an opportunity to “fill their pockets” (BB, 29 March 2013). It is critical to see, however, that through their cultivation of international relationships with UN Special Rapporteur Anaya, the IWGIA, the Pacific Islands Forum, the Polynesian Group of Parliamentarians, and everyday grassroots organizations, Rapa Nui—as “supplementary subjects” (Rancière 2010, 33) to the Chilean-determined transnational “stakeholder” tourist order on the island—challenge its “distribution of the sensible” (see Rancière 2011). Rapa Nui are continuing to “dance their truth” (see Shorter 2009) to make sure that whatever global
symbol Rapa Nui becomes, it is not determined by Chile.

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**Wallis and Futuna**

During the year in review, economic activity increased despite a rise in prices (4.7 percent annual inflation, compared to 4 percent in 2011) and delays in shipping between the islands of Wallis and Futuna. Due to unfavorable weather conditions, the Pacific Direct Line’s *Southern Pearl V31* was kept in port at Matā Utu, Uvēa (Wallis Island) for three weeks starting at the end of June 2012 before being able to sail for Leava, Futuna, on 21 July. As a result, Futuna experienced shortages of food and other necessities. Overall, consumer spending remained high, with a decrease in household consumption (a 17.5 percent drop relative to 2011, which in turn had been up 41 percent from 2010) being offset by increases in vehicles imports (103 new registrations compared to 77 in 2011 and 53 in 2010). Funds transfers from France sustained economic activity, particularly through government spending. The public buildings and works sector was revitalized through various projects such as the Kafika multipurpose structure (athletic stadium), an investment costing more than US$5 million, and the improvement of the water supply network for about US$2.7 million. Although 2011 was a dynamic year for imports (US$67,703,864), they fell by 1.7 percent in 2012. This drop can be attributed to an increase in the cost of industrial materials. Exports remained weak; only 20.5 tons of seafood were exported abroad for a total value of US$145,651.

On 15 September, Tominiko Halagahu became the faipule (district chief) of Hihifo for the Royalists, succeeding Heneliko Kavahe’ega. From the village of Vaitupu, Tominiko Halagahu is a member of the Halagahu family (one of the main royal families from the northern district) and was formerly seen as supported by both Royalists and Renovators (anti-Royalists). However, Renovators objected to his appointment, denouncing him as the one-sided choice of a few northern Royalists and the Royal Council.

Plans for upgrading the mobile phone network in the territory to 3G service are currently in limbo. The president of the government of New Caledonia, Harold Martin, who is also chairman of the board of directors of OPT NC (the New Caledonian Office of Posts and Telecommunications), stated in an official report to Wallis and Futuna authorities in early 2012 that as part of the special agreement that links the territory and New Caledonia, OPT NC would set up a 3G mobile phone network. Previously, the Territorial Assembly had invited proposals to improve telecommunication systems in the territory—a move that turned out to be controversial. Two private telecom operators, Broadband and Digicel, responded to the
call for proposals, and when OPT NC submitted a bid after the announced deadline—and was subsequently awarded the contract—the other two companies strongly objected. The majority in the Territorial Assembly at the time justified their actions by citing the “special agreement” with New Caledonia. The main objection being raised by the current majority in the Territorial Assembly is the high cost of the contract with OPT NC. The financial plan calls for a territorial contribution of about US$10,079,000, with a $6,550,000 investment by the Caledonian operator. In the end, the lion’s share of the income from operating the network would be allocated to OPT NC. Since the election of the new majority last year, the 3G issue is now tied up in the assembly. Harold Martin is currently under investigation in another case for favoritism and conflict of interest in the awarding of the 3G contract in New Caledonia (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 2013a). On 18 September, a fourth operator entered into the fray: Xalu Nouvelles Technologies Company, represented by Luc Danell, who is alleged to be involved in shady business practices in France (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 2013b). Later, the 3G mobile phone issue experienced another twist when the French administration put a new project on the table in Paris. This time there were no more questions of external operators but only of territorial investment amounting to about US$7,887,980. The French State would contribute about 30 percent and the territory would have to come up with the rest. Resolution of this issue is still pending.

From 25–27 September, the Eleventh Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) Forum was held in Ilulissat, Greenland, bringing together twenty-six OCT territories connected to European Union (EU) member states, some EU representatives, and some member states to discuss the terms and conditions of the final Overseas Association Decision (OAD) for 2014–2020. The OAD are detailed rules and procedures defining the official relationship between the European Union and the various member states’ overseas territories. Wallis and Futuna was represented by Prefect Michel Jeanjean, French Senator Robert Laufoaulu, and the head of the Department of Coordination of Public Policies and Development. The last OAD (2008–2013) provided a budget of US$21,559,000 from the European Development Fund for Wallis and Futuna’s development strategy fund extension work on Matā Utu Harbor, among other projects. This new OAD underlines the strengthening of partnerships for environmental protection (European Commission).

The week after the OCT forum, on 2 October, Minister of Overseas France Victorin Lurel hosted Prefect Jeanjean and a Territorial Assembly delegation. Among the issues discussed were the new Social Agreement for 2012–2016, specifically the French commitment to assistance for the elderly and disabled, and the budget, which amounts to US$13,147,000. The French contribution is expected to be around 80 percent, or US$10,577,000.

On 15 November, the French Parliament endorsed the Act Against the High Cost of Living in French Overseas Territories (La loi contre la vie chère outre-mer) under the framework
of “economic regulation overseas,” which had been one of the major promises made by President François Hollande during his election campaign (Légifrance 2012; Le Parisien 2012). On 28 November, a new majority in the Territorial Assembly took shape, supported by the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), centrists, and independents. This new majority brought Sosefo Suve into the presidency of the Territorial Assembly, replacing Socialist Vetelino Nau.

On 26 February, the prefect, the four major commercial establishments, and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Trades and Agriculture (Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie, des Métiers et de l’Agriculture [CCIMA]) and Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SME) signed an annual agreement to control prices under the Economic Regulation Overseas Act. This agreement, which went into effect 1 March 2013, concerns eleven staple commodities (including chicken, rice, powdered milk, coffee, and sugar) whose maximum price was limited to US$100 (Prefecture of Wallis and Futuna 2013).

Following a request submitted by former Socialist Deputy to the French legislature Albert Likuvalu and current Territorial Councilor Kulimoetoke Mikaele, on 17 June 2012 the constitutional council of the French Republic overturned the election of Deputy David Vergé for irregularities in his campaign account (Conseil constitutionel 2013). Additionally, the French Council of State nullified the territorial elections held in Alo on 25 March 2012 because of irregularities.

On 17 March, the electorate of Wallis and Futuna was called back to the polls to elect a new deputy. The elections were unusual, particularly in the kingdom of Alo (Futuna) where people took part not only in the partial general elections (election of the deputy) but also in partial territorial elections (election of members of the Territorial Assembly). Three candidates competed for the deputy’s seat: Laurianne Tatau Vergé (Socialiste Républicain et Citoyen), who is former Deputy David Vergé’s spouse; Mikaele Kulimoetoke (Socialist, Union pour Wallis et Futuna); and Independent Napole Polutélé, a secondary school teacher supported by the local UMP. There were 9,070 registered voters. Of the 6,865 valid votes cast, Vergé received 2,006 votes (29.49 percent), Mikaele Kulimoetoke received 2,253 votes (33.12 percent), and Polutélé received 2,543 votes (37.39 percent). It is rather important to note that 2,205 voters did not vote in the elections. During the second round, it appeared that the 2012 scenario would reoccur—that the two Socialist candidates would not compromise and the territory would have to have another three-way election, which could be fatal for the Socialist party. There were 9,090 voters registered and 7,243 valid votes cast. Polutélé, supported by the local UMP, was elected with 2,695 votes (37.51 percent), surpassing both Vergé, who polled 2,171 votes (30.22 percent), and Kulimoetoke, who got 2,318 votes (32.27 percent).

In the Territorial Assembly election in Alo, six party lists contested to fill the four seats. With 1,412 valid votes, three incumbents were elected: Nau Vetelino (20.8 percent) from the Socialist Union for Wallis
and Futuna; Motuku Sosefo (18.4 percent), an independent; and Savea Toma (17.3 percent), Rassemblement pour Wallis et Futuna–UMP. The other incumbent, Alesio Katoa, lost to newcomer Baudry Frédéric (16.6 percent), a European secondary school teacher who ran as an independent.

On 1 April, with support from a new left-wing majority, Nivaleta Iloai was appointed as president of the Territorial Assembly, the first woman ever to hold this position.

On 30 March, after dealing with the controversial issue of the Électricité et Eau de Wallis et Futuna (the water and power utility) conflict and celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the territory in 2011, Prefect Michel Jeanjean left Wallis and Futuna to be replaced by Michel Aubouin as the new superior administrator.

Tropical Depression Evan hit Wallis on 15–16 December, devastating the island. Three hundred houses and fifteen public buildings were damaged. Fortunately there were no casualties. Approximately 90 percent of the power network and 80 percent of the telecommunication network broke down. Three days later, Minister of Overseas France Lurel flew to Wallis to see the disaster firsthand. On 20 December, assistance began to flow from New Caledonia, with five tons of materials sent to Wallis for rebuilding (Wallis et Futuna 1ère 2012).

Wallis and Futuna is preparing to host the 2013 Pacific Minigames in September. On 2 September 2012—a year to the day before the games were set to begin—the Minigames Committee organized a gathering to present their plans for the international competition and sporting events to the territorial authorities. At the same time they began recruiting volunteers. From 13 to 15 October, the Minigames Committee welcomed the delegations’ representatives to a first inspection of the sites and infrastructure being prepared for the event.

Just before the end of the year in review, on 7 May the French Polynesian company Boyer and its local subcontractors, BTP Sud, Atobat (a construction company), and Waltech (electric works) completed the first stage of the Matā-Utu Harbor upgrades.

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