

book is an important contribution to the growing literature on sustainable development in Melanesia and the Pacific as a whole. Teachers, researchers, and policymakers in particular will find it very useful.

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Sociocultural Issues and Economic Development in the Pacific Islands, by Penelope Schoeffel. Pacific Studies Series. Manila: Asian Development Bank, 1996. ISBN 971-561-081-1, xiii + 179 pages, map, notes, bibliography, tables. First edition is free of charge.

Commissioned by the Asian Development Bank, this book springs from two concerns: the "Pacific Paradox" that despite high levels of foreign aid the Pacific Islands region as a whole has experienced low growth or economic stagnation; and that past development interventions in the Pacific Islands, including those by donors, have focused too much on economic factors and have not taken adequate account of sociocultural ones. In addressing these concerns, the study is aimed primarily at Pacific governments and aid donors. The final chapter is entitled "Issues for Donors."

In Chapter 1, Schoeffel presents an informative and commendable overview of the cultural and economic diversity of the region. Aggregate statistical materials are used to paint a good picture of broad regional patterns as well as subregional and national differences. In Chapters 2-4

local variations are fleshed out in more detail, and the four areas on which she concentrates are land tenure; agriculture, fisheries, and forestry; business and credit; and governance and institutional issues. There the coverage of key sociocultural issues is very good, with, in addition to the sketches of broad regional similarities, constant reminders and examples of local variation.

Schoeffel is skillful in her use of case studies, and the large number she presents support her central argument that development outcomes are shaped fundamentally by key macroeconomic variables, but also that an adequate appreciation of cultural values and customary practice is critical for the success of development projects. In her words, "while sociocultural factors are significant determinants of economic behaviour, and while it is easy to blame customary ways for economic stagnation, price factors are real impediments to economic productivity in the Pacific islands" (146).

Even where sociocultural factors might have been acknowledged in the past, often developmental interventions have failed because of inaccurate assumptions about them. One is that rural villages are communities with common interests and goals. "But this," Schoeffel correctly argues, "is rarely the case. Villages are often held together quite tenuously by the ownership of common assets, have major divisions and rivalries which impede co-operation within the community, and often have serious conflicts with neighbourhood settlements" (130). Another is "[t]he idea that island 'communities' . . . are in some sense

undifferentiated in terms of the aspirations and interests of the people who comprise them" (131).

Correcting such assumptions will go some way to achieving more effective outcomes, but clearly more is necessary. In Chapter 5, Schoeffel therefore turns to governance and institutional issues. Donors, she says, are realizing more and more that "the crux of the 'Pacific Paradox' . . . is the issue of governance, [which is] of serious concern in developing countries [and] has been described by Grynberg as the most serious problem confronting Pacific islands since problems of poor governance weaken public confidence in government and its institutions and undermine development efforts" (138). Governance is not actually defined in the study, but Schoeffel has this to say: "Governance issues are not simply to do with official political and financial probity. They have to do with political cultures which see public office as an avenue of personal (and often kin group) advancement, without effective checks and balances normally associated with democratic systems" (138).

All this suggests that Schoeffel agrees with donors and Grynberg about the central importance of governance, yet the discussion of governance is rather short. Chapter 5 is easily the shortest of the five substantive chapters. However, this is not altogether surprising. A more extensive and probing discussion of governance issues runs the risk of offending member governments. Schoeffel merely says, "It is difficult for external donors, constrained by bilateral and other diplomatic conventions, to ascertain what

they might do about such issues within sovereign states" (139).

The absence of fuller interrogation of governance issues might also be seen as a consequence of the conceptual foundations of the study as a piece of social analysis. The study is predicated on the conceptual separation between sociocultural and political issues, which is arbitrary because the two are inherently linked, and nowhere is this more evident than in the recommendations Schoeffel makes. Structural adjustment, institutional strengthening, human resource development, capacity building, and more effective development planning require political decision and action. They involve choice and contestation and necessarily impinge, at times in a fundamental way, on precisely the sorts of sociocultural issues that are the focus of the study.

The point is not that the politics of Pacific Island development required full treatment, but that the relative neglect of political questions renders the analysis less holistic and dynamic than it might otherwise have been. The sociocultural and political context of Pacific Island development is not fixed, and changes occurring at the wider global level impose additional imperatives to which the Pacific Islands need to adapt.

To describe issues and problems, therefore, is certainly helpful, but an understanding of process and the dynamics of stakeholder interaction is necessary if realistic possibilities for more effective interventions are to be identified and exploited. Such an analysis would need to take account, for example, of the changing fortunes of

stakeholders, shifts in the balance of social forces, the fluidity of coalitions, and contingency. In so doing, it would necessarily draw together the economic, sociocultural, and political dimensions of development and would therefore be more likely to yield more realistic indications of what might (or might not) be possible, why (or why not), and under what sorts of conditions.

That kind of analysis is more likely to be useful in a practical way to donors and member governments. Schoeffel is certainly right about the need for further work at the "micro-level," but at both that and the macro-level, analysis needs to be informed by a greater degree of holism and dynamism than is exhibited in her study.

Nonetheless, this study is useful because it brings together in a concise and well-written way much that is already known, as well as new material. An index would be helpful.

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New Politics in the South Pacific, edited by Werner vom Busch, Marjorie Tuainekore Crocombe, Ron Crocombe, Linda Crowl, Tony Deklin, Peter Larmour, and Esther Winima-maori Williams. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific in association with the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association, 1994. ISBN 982-02-0115-2, 353 pages, tables, maps, photographs, notes, bibliographies, index. US\$20 (with discount for the Pacific Islands).

New Politics offers an eclectic range of contributions in terms of topics, countries, and authors' perspectives. It is encouraging to see that most of the contributors are Pacific Islanders. Many of the authors are academics, while others are nongovernment activists or politicians. This diversity in authorship is a strength insofar as it is both refreshing and enriching to gain insights from people active in the political and social life of the countries concerned. On the other hand, in a couple of chapters the ideological tone and lack of balance detract from the quality of analysis. The system of referencing is inconsistent, but most authors have relatively comprehensive footnotes or bibliographies.

The challenge was how to organize this disparate collection and tease out an integrative theme. The introduction by coeditor Peter Larmour goes a considerable distance in achieving this task. Larmour identifies new politics as the context in which one can interpret and explain changes in the contemporary Pacific. He argues that new politics is distinguished from traditional and modern forms of politics in several