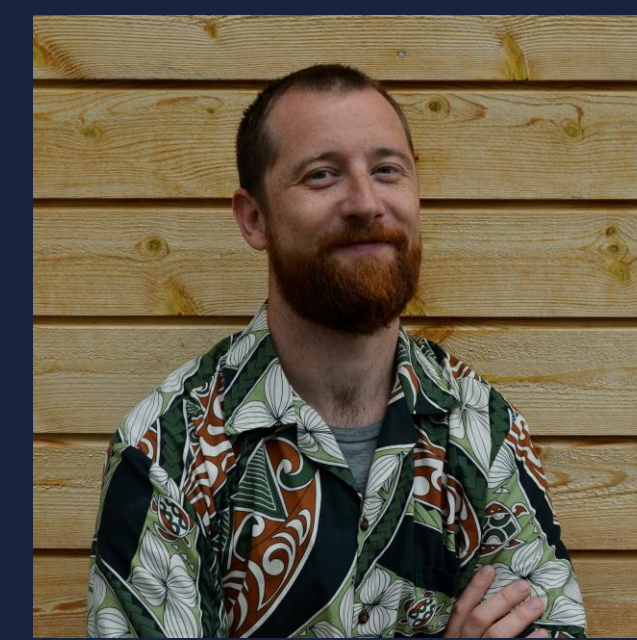


Sovereignty in a Big Ocean State

Sovereignty by Mutuality: Connections and Disconnections in a Big Ocean State



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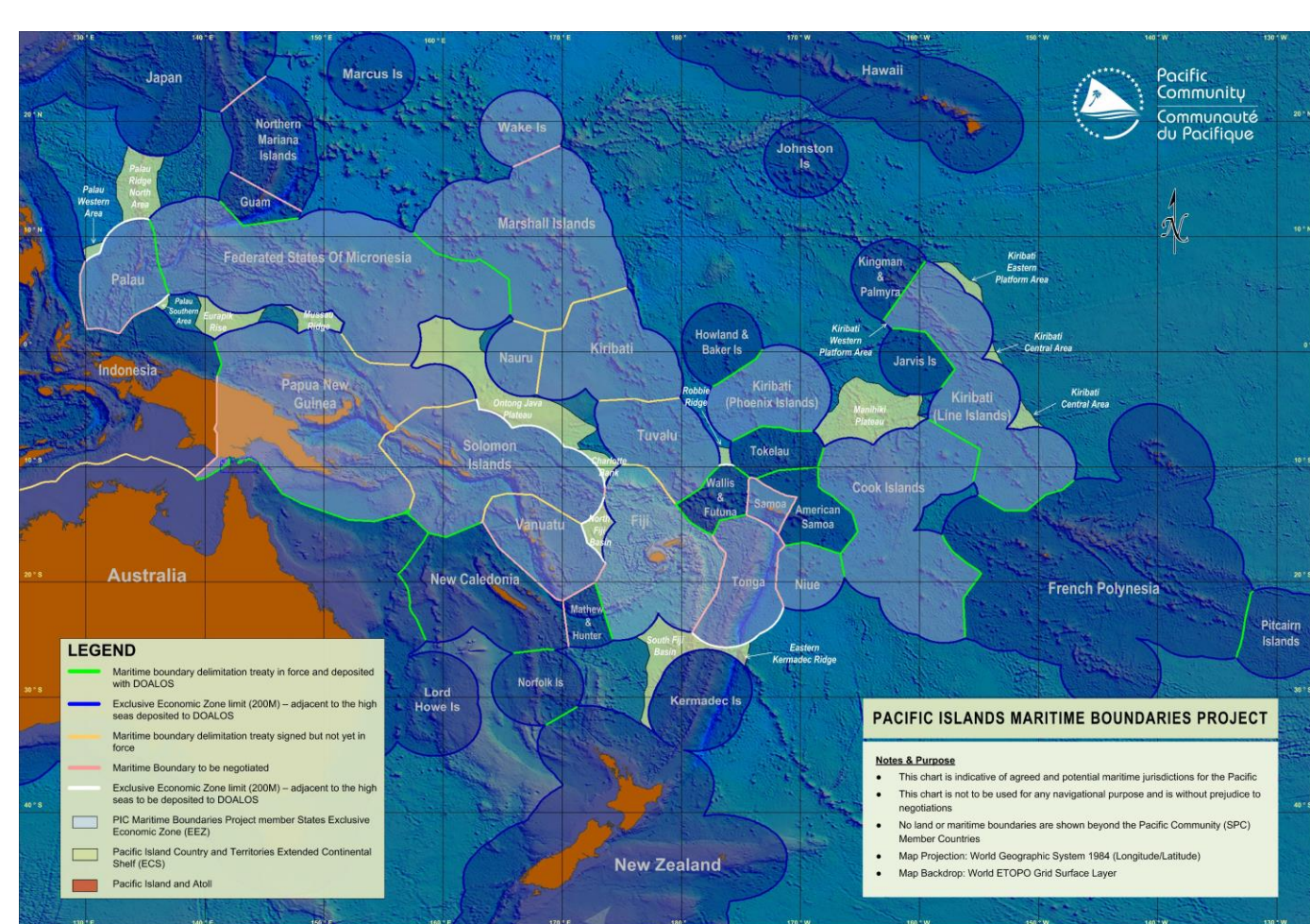
Background and motivation

I'm an anthropologist that has worked on the Marshall Islands since 2013. Through three long-term ethnographic fieldworks, I have studied the politics of subsistence fishing in outer atolls, artisanal fisheries and fish markets in urban centres, and the wide impact of the tuna economy. My motivation for applying for the SEAS programme was to continue and expand my previous research on the Marshall Islands.



Project description

I'm studying how the ocean figure into quests to assert sovereignty in the Marshall Islands, a large ocean state in the Central Pacific Ocean that outsiders typically describe as dependent. My research shows that Marshall Islanders use the ocean as a symbol to assert sovereignty in several important ways. The ocean is a source of personal and cultural identity, it provides the means for subsistence livelihoods and cash income, it's a space for recreation and cultural practices, and it holds considerable marine resources that the state use to forge and maintain diplomatic relations necessary to navigate in a tense geopolitical region.



Main questions

How can the Marshall Islands case deepen our theoretical understanding of sovereignty and dependence?

In what ways do contemporary assertions of sovereignty and quests to preserve culture and traditional knowledge inform and strengthen ocean management and climate change adaptability?

Aims

I aim to publish the main results from my ethnographic fieldwork and archival studies as a monograph.

Marine sustainability

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



Highlighted results and activities

Completed ethnographic fieldwork in the Marshall Islands.

Commenced archival studies on the history of tuna fisheries, economic development, and colonial politics.

Presented theoretical framework for my project at the biannual conference for European Association for Social Anthropology (EASA) in Barcelona in July 2024.

Submitted several journal articles for peer review.

Started several exiting interdisciplinary article collaborations with other SEAS fellows.



Supervisory team

UiB supervisor:

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

External supervisor:

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

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