

CULTURE: Conserving it Together

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Rethinking indigenous / local knowledge and western ecological science combination in Fiji: On the role of social sciences in tackling overfishing

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Research question:

How could social sciences contribute to a **rethinking of knowledge combination** aiming at:

- **systematically taking into account and valuing indigenous / local knowledge**, whatever its (dis)alignment and epistemological (in)commensurability with western ecological science, and in all its diversity and complexity;
- **ensuring that the introduced western scientific concepts and practices make sense** for the involved communities?

Focus:

- Fisheries management and overfishing issues
- Fiji's coastal areas and reef fisheries



Source: CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/mapsonline/base-maps/fiji-main-islands>

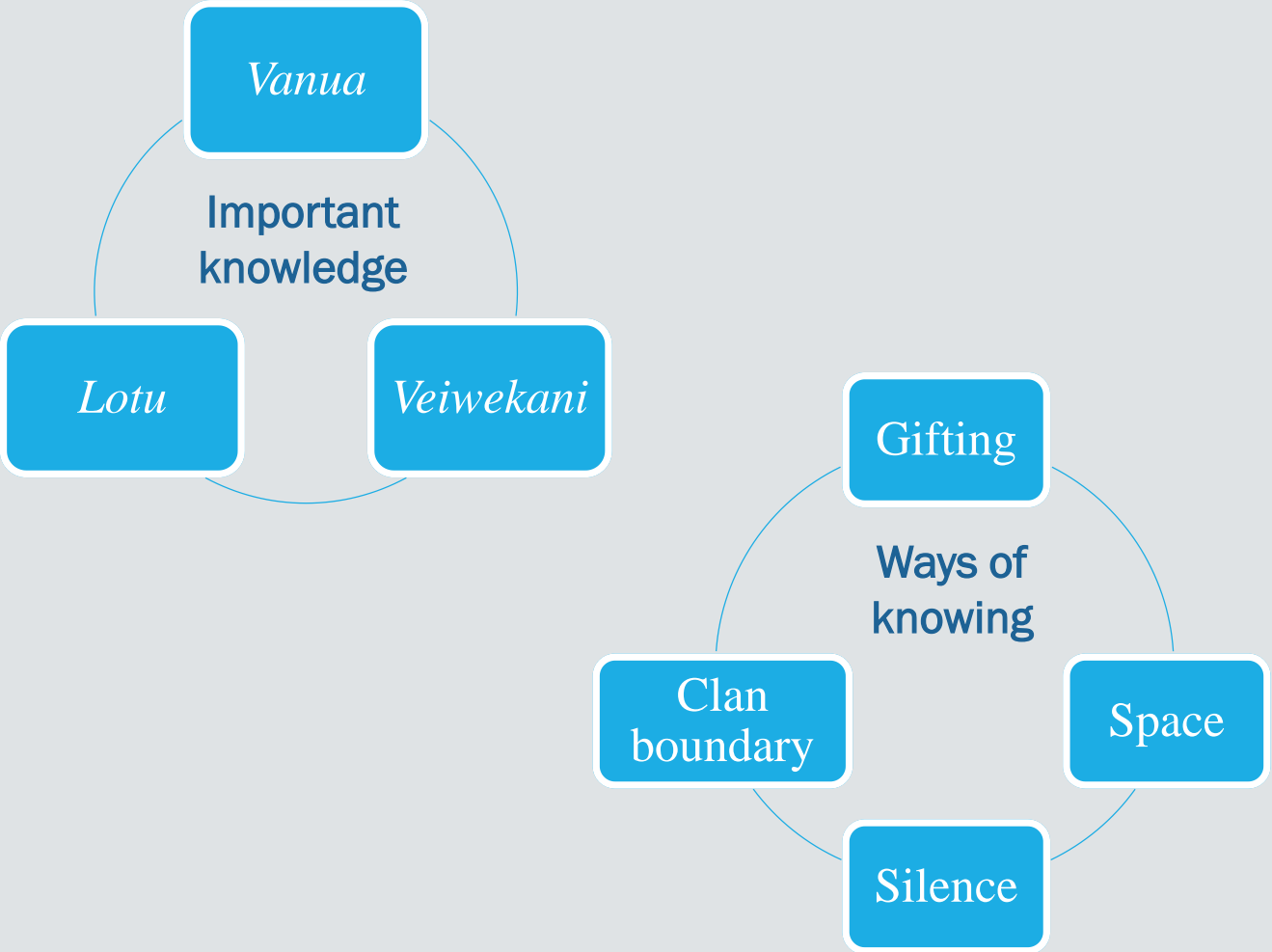
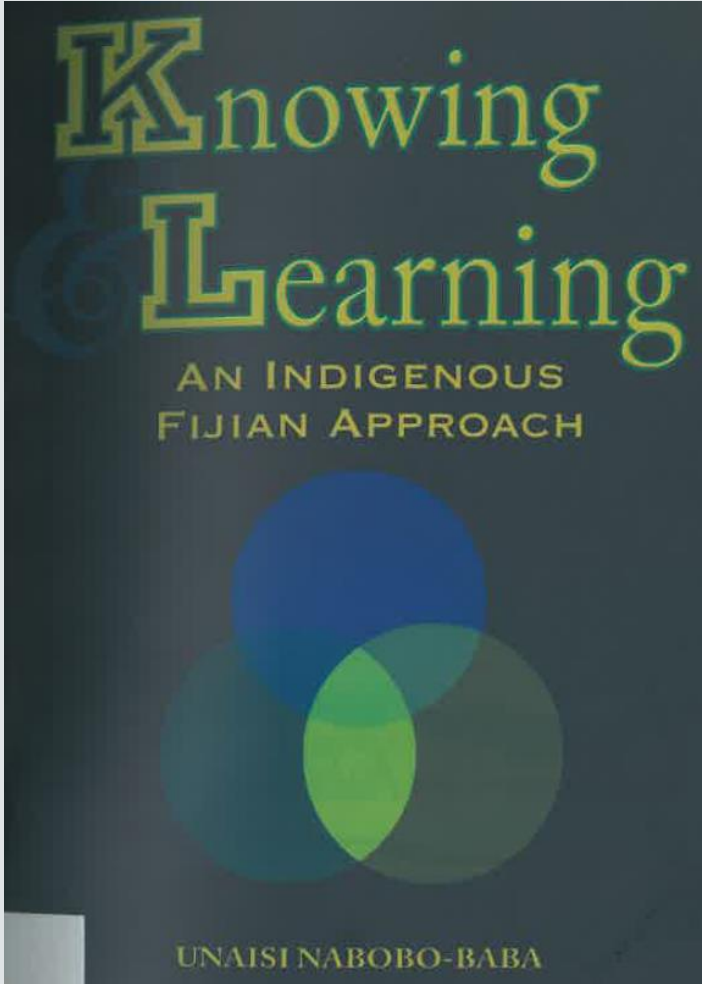
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Overview of this presentation:

- The category of ‘indigenous / local knowledge’
- Interconnectedness between human and non-human behaviours
- Knowledge combination initiatives beyond the Nature/Society divide
- The role of chiefs and religious leaders
- Conclusion

The category of 'indigenous / local knowledge'

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Interconnectedness between
human and non-human behaviours

Interconnectedness between human and non-human behaviours

Tugadra:

BIS *Selar crumenophthalmus* Carangidae / Jacks

Bigeye scad



Silvery with a large eye and **1** yellow horizontal stripe extending from head to base of caudal fin. **2** Scutes prominent on rear third of lateral line.

Max length: 30 cm FL

AS	CK	FJ	FM	GU	KI
MH	MP	NC	NR	NU	PF
PG	PN	PW	SB	TK	TO
TV	VU	WF	WS		

Similar to *Selar boops* but scutes restricted to rear third of body (scutes in *S. boops* extend from caudal fin forward to mid-body).

36

Deu or Ki:



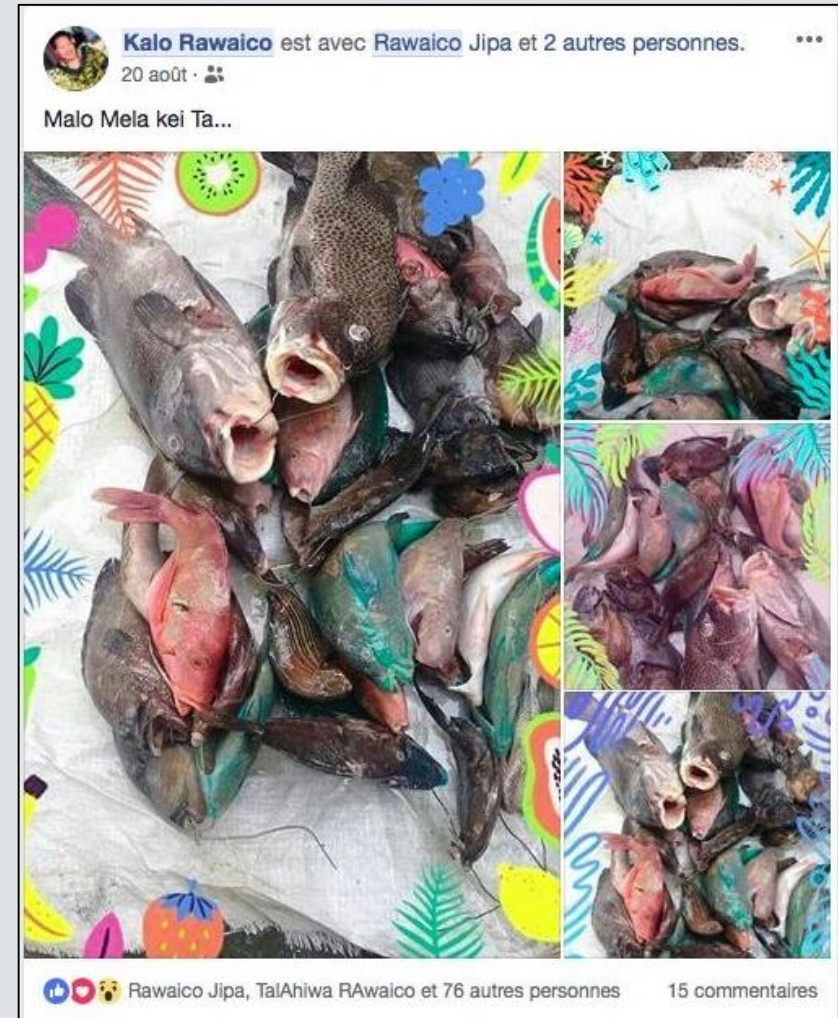
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Source: Brad Moore & Boris Colas. 2016. *Identification guide to the common coastal food fishes of the Pacific Islands region*. Noumea: Pacific Community.

Interconnectedness between human and non-human behaviours



Source: Facebook



Knowledge combination initiatives beyond the Nature/Society divide

Knowledge combination initiatives beyond the Nature/Society divide



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The role of chiefs and religious leaders

The role of chiefs and religious leaders

“The use of chemical insecticides and pesticides only shows us how greedy man is and how ignorant he is to Gods purpose for the world he created. **Organic pesticides and insecticides are Gods way of supporting the life cycle.** It is important that we let each of Gods own creation continue to live and serve their creator in order to sustain the world each one live in. God created everything for his purpose and Glory. There is no meaningless and purposeless creative work of God.”

(extract from a document given to each participant during an awareness workshop focused on organic farming on Gau island in 2016)

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Advocacy for a real / implemented respect for indigenous / local holistic knowledge systems, which consider human and non-human beings and behaviours as intrinsically connected (e.g. *Vanua* in Fiji)
- 'Overfishing' might not be the right concept to argue in favour of fisheries management, sustainable development, marine conservation, etc.
- The question is then: how to maintain or restore fish stocks, when their depletion seems to be the effect of 'overfishing' from a scientific point of view, in the terms of (rather than in contradiction with) the communities' worldview, in which this depletion is not (only or primarily) attributed to people's fishing activities?

Conclusion

- The measures or regulations aiming at limiting the negative ecological impacts of coastal / reef fishing practices, should be attentive not to challenge key pillars of the indigenous / local society and its reproduction.



Conclusion

- Customary and/or religious leaders would be the more appropriate mediators between scientists / experts and communities, between western ecological science and local / indigenous knowledge.

Vinaka vakalevu !

