



The European Union's relationship with the Pacific Island Countries

emerging opportunities through its partnership
with New Zealand



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Abstract

This thesis discusses opportunities for the European Union to foster its relationship with the Pacific Island Countries through its partnership with New Zealand. While the relationship between the European Union and the Pacific Island Countries has various shortcomings, this thesis shows that New Zealand's understanding and approach in the Pacific Island Countries is more effective. Even though the European Union's comprehensive partnership with New Zealand already led to cooperation in the Pacific Island Countries, the thesis shows there are still opportunities for enhancements. This thesis concludes that the European Union can benefit in multiple ways from its partnership with New Zealand. New Zealand can contribute to identify, understand and raise awareness to areas the European Union previously lacked to address. The European Union's agreements with the Pacific Island Countries can reach more efficiency through knowledge exchange with New Zealand. Furthermore, the country can support the European Union's efforts through their extensive diplomatic ties and the close people links to the Pacific Island Countries.

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List of Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
EDF	European Development Fund
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
NZ	New Zealand
PARC	Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
UN	United Nations

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Figure 1: Pacific Island Countries and their broader region (Pacific). Territories not affiliated to the indicated PICs are excluded.	1
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1 Introduction

The political relationship between the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and the European Union (EU) is constructed through several centuries. New Zealand (NZ) has a unique stance in this relationship as both the PICs and the EU have developed close ties to the country. NZ has been closely involved and built close ties with the PICs while the same efforts of the EU often lacked effectiveness. NZ's historical developments in the relationship with the EU might thereby open an opportunity for the EU to work with the country to increase the political relationship with the PICs.

For clarification, when I refer to the PICs, I speak of the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. I adapt these states from the list of countries that NZ established aid partnerships with and which the EU is represented through by delegations in the region (European External Action Service, 2016c; New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018f). When referring to the Pacific, I mean the PICs and their broader region of the South Pacific Ocean. For a better understanding, the Pacific is visualised in Figure 1.

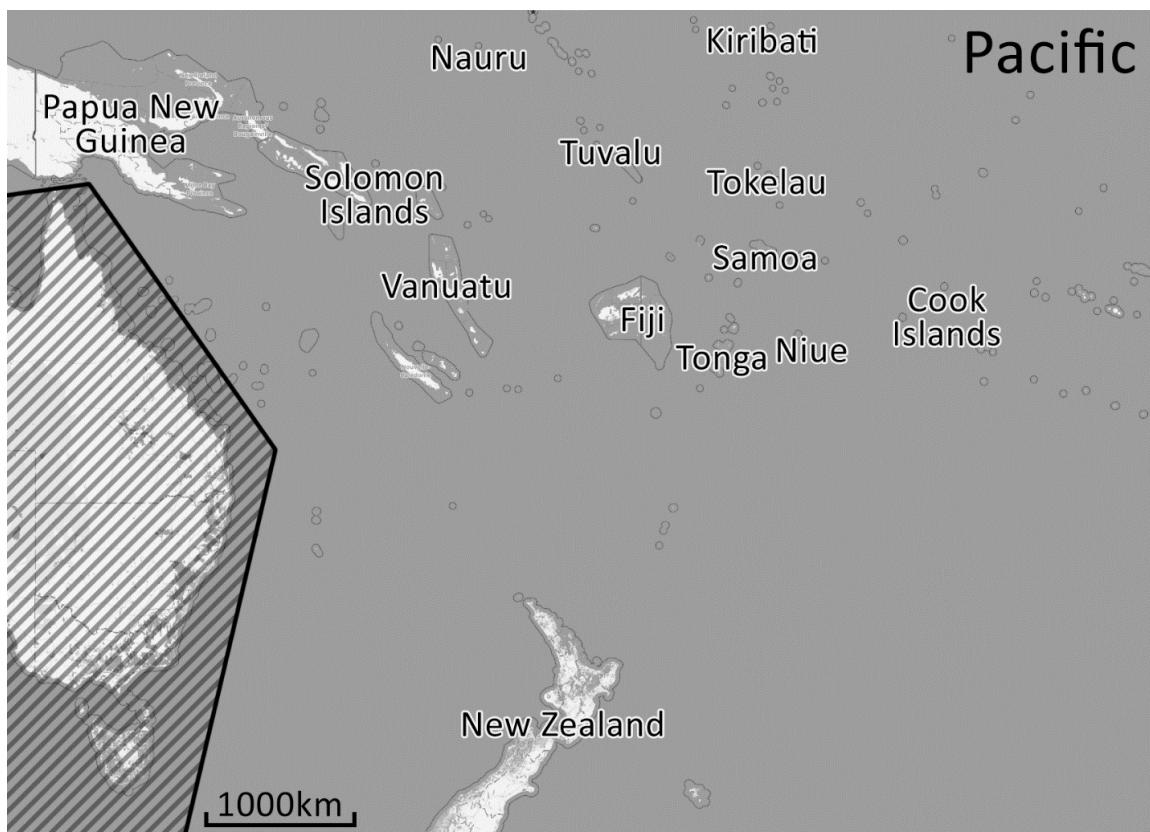


Figure 1: Pacific Island Countries and their broader region (Pacific). Territories not affiliated to the PICs indicated by name are excluded.

The historical relationship between Europe and the PICs dates to 1520 when the first Europeans explored the Pacific on a voyage led by the Spanish Juan Sebastián Elcano and Ferdinand Magellan. Roughly a century later, in 1642, a Dutch crew under the leadership of the explorer Abel Tasman were the first Europeans to discover NZ (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2017). During the 18th century, the British and French dominated the explorations, and the Europeans involved themselves into internal politics of the Pacific societies which lead them to gain more influence in the Pacific. The increased involvement and the unstable conditions of the Pacific led the European countries to seize control over the Pacific by annexing the territories (West & Foster, 2016). The European initiated colonisation of the Pacific in the 1830's by the British Empire who colonised NZ. The Brits engaged with the Māori, the indigenous peoples of NZ, who are descendants of Pacific peoples from the Polynesian region that arrived in NZ roughly 500 years earlier. Shortly after, in 1840, the European colonisers established the founding document of NZ, the Treaty of Waitangi. The treaty is an agreement between 540 Māori chiefs and the British Crown. It showed the Europeans' acknowledgement for cultural understanding and mutual respect to live together in peace and harmony. In the 1850's, NZ created its parliament while remaining influenced by the British Crown. However, the Māori and Pacific voice remain to be heard today by creating seats for the indigenous and Pacific people in the parliament.

While the Europeans remained to have a strong influence in all PICs, the relationship with NZ remained unique due to a large number of European settlers in the country. The European influence on the Pacific increased, and almost the entire Oceanian region remained under European control by the late 19th century which enhanced the construction of ties between the Europeans and the Pacific peoples. During the late 19th century Auckland turned into the trade centre for the Pacific. In these years, NZ aspired to increase their influence and secure a dominant position across the PICs. In 1883, the NZ Parliament introduced a bill that allowed to build an island empire and expand NZ influence in the Pacific (Fraenkel, 2012a). The country seized control over the Cook Islands and Niue in 1901. This was followed roughly a decade later by taking control over Samoa on British request. The colonial rule of the Europeans and NZ included all PICs at the end of the Second World War.

However, NZ's history under the British Crown tied the country closer to European rather than Pacific perspectives and approaches to life. The 1931 Statute of Westminster gave NZ the legislative independence. However, the country did not ratify the statute until 1947 after joining the United Nations (UN) in 1945 (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2016). In the early 1950's NZ's official name changed to the Realm of New Zealand, and further achievements on self-determination such as an NZ based court of final appeal

followed. However, the Queen of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms remains to be the NZ head of state.

After its shift from being a distant outpost of the British towards being an independent country, the identity of NZ increasingly emphasised on its links with other countries in the Pacific (Fraenkel, 2012a). In 1960 the UN issued the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to encourage self-government and independence of colonised territories (United Nations, 2018). The decolonisation of the Pacific region was initiated in 1962 when Samoa became the first Pacific country to regain independence from NZ while concluding a Treaty of Friendship to guarantee NZ's assistance in different areas such as foreign affairs (Fraenkel, 2012b). The independence of many of the British and NZ colonies followed and during the 1980's most of the PICs gained their independence.

Today, only three PICs (the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau) are still dependent or in free association with NZ while the others obtained the status of sovereign states. The PICs are therefore mostly self-governing states that act independently based on their respective ideas and perspectives. The former colonial relationship between the EU, NZ and the PICs gave way for relationships that based on the mutual recognition of the other as a legitimate entity. The historically evolved relationships between the actors, which I refer to when speaking of the EU, NZ or the PICs, developed into different degrees of bilateral as well as multilateral political relationships.

The EU's construction of interactions with the PICs started through its efforts on development aid directed towards different regions in the world. This led to the perception of the EU's relationship with the Pacific as predominantly to base on economic aspects, while the perception of the EU as a political actor in the region still comes short (Holland & Chaban, 2010; Holland & Kelly, 2012). The EU's developments efforts in the Pacific are not perceived to be adequate and multilateral incentives criticised for the lack to address the Pacific specific circumstances (Carbone, 2008; Dearden, 2008; Holland & Koloamatangi, 2006). The self-perception of the EU as being a mindful actor in the Pacific does thereby not match its image (Holland & Kelly, 2012). On the other hand, NZ established extensive bilateral ties with the PICs and focussed on multilateral and regional cooperation (Kelly, 2013). This made the country an active driver of Pacific regionalism (Bryant-Tokelau & Frazer, 2016). The geographical location and the extensive interaction with the PICs go hand in hand with NZ's sense of identification as a Pacific nation (Baker, 2015; Rolfe, 2001). Simultaneously the influence of Pacific communities in NZ leads to a Pacific voice which is heard in NZ politics (Barker & Coffé, 2016). While NZ's and the EU's political relationship with the PICs differ, the

EU and NZ developed a close partnership between them that builds on a commitment to shared values and covers a long list of areas of cooperation (Köllner, 2016; Lee-Makiyama, 2015).

While literature pays attention to the EU's and NZ's involvement and relationship with the Pacific, less awareness is displayed to the EU's opportunities of using the partnership developed with NZ to enhance its ties with the PICs. Building on the constructed ties between the EU and NZ, the partnership might be relevant to enhance the EU's understanding and find new approaches to promote the EU's engagement with the PICs. From this, the following research question emerges: *How might the European Union's partnership with New Zealand be pertinent to foster its political relationship with the Pacific Island Countries?*

The objective of the research aims to analyse the current relationships between the EU, NZ and the PICs to create a perspective and identify opportunities for the EU to increase their political relationship with the PICs through its partnership with NZ. In order to, it is relevant to look at the bilateral and multilateral political relationships as well as the agreements between the actors constructed on this basis. The analysis of the actors' relationships builds the fundament for further reflections for the research question. The empirical data will help to identify opportunities to foster the EU's political relationship with the PICs which will be discussed based on NZ as a partner of the EU. This aims to answer the research question by outlining perspectives on opportunities on how to foster the relationship. It might be perceived as recommendations or solely as enhancement of the readers' perspectives. That mentioned, one can perceive this research as creating awareness of potential opportunities to enhance the interaction or to increase the understanding of the intrinsic value of the partnership with NZ regarding the EU's engagement with the PICs.

The structure of the paper starts by addressing the choice of the underlying philosophical approaches. A chapter on the methodology follows, which addresses the general research approach and an evaluation of the methodological choices. The section on data collection consists of the participant observation approach and the usage of semi-structured interviews for the collection of empirical data, the data analysis approach as well as the evaluation of the sources. The theoretical lens of social constructivism is introduced following that and its implications to answer the research question clarified. The findings and analysis chapter of the paper is divided into four different parts whereas the first three seek to analyse relationships between the different actors. The fourth section focusses on possible shortcomings of the EU's interaction with the PICs, NZ's knowledge of the PICs and seeks to identify indications of NZ as a partner for the EU in the PICs. The discussion chapter builds on the reflections of the findings and brings forward different opportunities

for the EU to use its partnership NZ to foster its political relationship with the PICs. Finally, the conclusion sums up the findings and discussion to answer the research question.

Limitations

This research does not aim to offer concrete steps and procedures on how to foster the EU-PICs political relationship. I do not look at working processes of the actors in detail because I lack insights into the specific methods of the agents and different mechanism of communication. Proposing concrete steps of action would decrease the reliability of my research as I would build the conclusions on assumptions that are difficult to reflect upon objectively. Therefore, I do not examine the different operating principles of the agents and actors. Furthermore, this is the reason why I do not apply concepts and theories of change management. Ensuring a reliable inquiry of steps to take in line with the concepts would mean to have insights into working methods which I am lacking.

I do not aim to offer an overall picture and solution to the research topic but solely to raise awareness and outline some opportunities to foster the EU's political relationship with the PICs. I acknowledge the ambiguity of the many different realities involved and claiming to find one solution would lack understanding for other perspectives on the subject. The theoretical lens does thereby serve to examine opportunities for increased interaction.

I do not take all political achievements in the relationships between the EU, NZ and the PICs into perspective as this would go beyond the scope of the research. The research considers only the relevant perceived agreements and other achievements which means it involves a few selected economic agreements and aspects solely. Further, the discussion of the different agreements and formal achievements will not be made individually in detail because of the lack of insight into the processes of the different agreements. Doing so would result in argumentation that would lack quality and reliability. However, I will discuss these bilateral and multilateral agreements more superordinate and address only agreements that I perceive as especially significant to enhance the EU's political relationship with the PICs. That said, the analysed relationships are crucial to the discussion by building the basis to reflect and identify overall shortcomings in the EU-PICs political relationship and show how to improve the EU's partnership with NZ.

The opportunities to foster the political relationship between the EU and the PICs derive from the analysis and are only some areas for potential for improvement. The identification of these specific opportunities is based on my perspective derived from the research process and conversations with NZ academics in the margins of my internship. This research does not outline an entirety of opportunities, and I acknowledge that further approaches for change might be possible.

I do further not intend to analyse the power relations between the EU, NZ and the PICs. This means that I will not analyse the correlation between donor and receiving countries, the colonial roots of the relationships nor the differences in political and economic size.

While including specific Pacific evaluations, this research does not focus or extract the PICs perspectives on a potential change in their relationship with the EU. I acknowledge that the realities of the 12 PICs are distinct and that a standard approach to these countries will be perceived differently by the single states. Therefore, when I speak about the PICs and the Pacific, I do not take their unity and like-mindedness for granted and neither do I want to arrogate to have a Pacific understanding myself. The clustering of these countries under the term PICs builds on the EU and NZ's outlined countries in the Pacific region. While I acknowledge that the two actors cluster these countries together under the term PICs due to their perspectives and reasons, I use the term for practical reasons as I perceive the single PICs have too little political relevance which is why I add political weight by encompassing the twelve states. That said, I do not analyse the different PICs in detail nor analyse why the EU and NZ cluster the actors together.

As I will not take the PICs into perspective when answering the research question, this inherently means that I do not discuss the PICs opinion on NZ as an advocate or bridge to increase their relationship with the EU. The objective is to how NZ might be pertinent for the EU-PICs relationship and not if the PICs themselves qualify NZ to be in the position to do this.

2 Philosophy of science

2.1 Ontology

The ontology of this research builds on a relativist position as I acknowledge that multiple, subjectively derived version of the world can coexist. Realities are perceived differently by different people which leads to the recognition of many 'truths' depending on various factors as different context or social constructs (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015). This leaves space to see the same issue from different perspectives, in other words, different observers can have different viewpoints on the identical argument. It further implies, there is not one true reality rather it depends on which perspective someone is reflecting on the matter. As Collins (1983, p. 88) says, "*what counts for the truth can vary from place to place and from time to time*". Relativism is the main ontological approach, hence I acknowledge specific characteristics of a nominal approach. As many truths are coexisting depending on the different perspectives, I recognise that this ambiguity of realities can lead to a perception of some extent that there

is no truth (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). It is therefore relevant to reflect on the reasons behind different versions of the truth.

2.2 Epistemology

The epistemological approach of the thesis grounds on social constructionism. Divergent realities are not objective and depended on context and perspective. The meaning given to reality is constructed through interaction between people, rather than determined by external factors. Actors place meaning on their experiences which together with their sense-making determine the actions taken. The observer of an issue is therefore also part of the observed, and personal interests are a driver for research. Explanations within social constructionism are made to increase a general understanding of a situation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The understanding takes into account the coexistence of the many truths while acknowledging the relateness and subjectivity of each apparent truth. When looking at social constructions, it is relevant not only to comprehend a reality or situation but to interpret its meaning and origin. Meaning is expected to be hidden thought to be unveiled among others by the interaction between the researcher and the research participants (Ponterotto, 2005). The perspective on a putative reality is therefore considered to be “*in terms of the meaning people bring to them*” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3). This epistemological approach can be understood as a stimulus to boundless reflections and interpretations. However, it is important to acknowledge that it also enables to make informed judgements about the researched topic (Cousin, 2009). While the epistemological choice of the research is based on social constructionism, I acknowledge features of an interpretive research philosophy. Myers (2013, p. 39) describes the interpretive researchers’ mindset to “*assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments*”. Using this interpretive approach aims at developing a more comprehensive understanding of social relationships including norms, belief systems and values (White & Adams, 1994). As the research itself takes influence by social constructions and the resulted sense-making of the researcher, this simultaneously means that a certain subjectivity of research is inevitable.

2.3 Axiology

The philosophical study of axiology gives this paper a vital foundation as it leads to the recognition that the values of the researcher influence the before described epistemological approach. It includes the ethics, human actions, and aesthetics, physical trades of an object, that is evaluated by the researcher. According to axiology, the researcher takes influence on the research through own values.

3 Methodology

The methodology of the research is based on both an inductive and deductive approach which will be explained in more detail in the following sections. Simultaneously, the research is conducted in the spirit of action research as I am researching on a possible change. The objective is to analyse the current status of affairs and the opportunities for the EU to foster its political relationship with the PICs through its ties with NZ. In line with the inductive research approach, action research offers the research as a journey rather than a product (Brew, 2001). I acknowledge aspects of action research as the inductive stage of the research has led the primary data collection to be in the notion to research *with* instead of *on* the subject (Cousin, 2009). However, I do not intend to impose a change myself instead will I offer my perspective as a starting point to identify opportunities to initiate a change process. The finding of ideas in the empirical data was supported by interactions with NZ academics to broaden my reality and be able to reflect from a different perspective.

The constructivist perspective enables me to stand outside the realities that are in the research endeavours themselves and does, therefore, enable me to consider ways how to enrich these realities (Gergen & Gergen, 2015). To work in the spirit of action research offers me a tool to have an eye on how the other parties might perceive dialogues and interactions. From this fundament, I can contribute by giving suggestions on how to change the current relationship. Thereby it is important to look at the constructed relationship between the parties because each of the advancements of their interaction contributes to future possibilities to foster their relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 2015). This means I will observe and analyse the developed ties between the actors to identify and formulate possibilities for change. However, I am only working in the spirit of action research and not fully applying this approach to answer the research question. This is also due to the two following aspects where I work against what literature outlines as essential to action research (Cousin, 2009; Sagor, 2000). Firstly, the research includes the discovery of perceived truths of the actors, and I reflect on these while adding my perspective to the discussion. Secondly, I am not entirely working with action research as I am not carrying out any actions or trying to implement changes in the field. I solely present opportunities without trying to implement these in practice.

3.1 Research approach

3.1.1 Inductive initial stages

The research is based on an inductive approach as I started the observations and data collection that lead to the choice of theory. While looking for patterns in the extensive data, I let the data guide the direction of

the research. Therefore, the meaning of the research derived from the data as I learned from the experiences while handling the sets of information (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). My insights from the involvement at the EU delegation in Wellington made me curious how the EU and NZ cooperate in the PICs and how this benefits the three parties. This helped to frame the data collection and drive the research broadly. The early stages of the data collection were dominated by the inductive approach that allowed to collect extensive amounts of data. Simultaneously, this resulted in an overflow of data that led the research process to be subject to a continuous change of scope. The comprehensive data covered a broad spectrum of knowledge on the research topic that lacked focus. Therefore, I looked for patterns and salience within the data. I assessed these patterns and regularities by drawing out tentative hypotheses that were reflected upon during the further data collection and gained knowledge. The data collection and analysis were thereby a concurrent process. The tentative hypotheses were solely utilised to find a research direction and helped to gain an overview of the data.

While the inductive reasoning opens the opportunity to generate hypotheses and theory, scholars simultaneously acknowledge that this does not exclude the use of a pre-existing theory (Saunders et al., 2012). During the data collection, patterns drawing and tentative hypotheses making the need for a theory to look at the data from a specific lens occurred. While assessing where the collected data led my research to develop towards the identification of social constructivism as theory, which I will introduce in the respective chapter, occurred to give the research the focus it lacked.

3.1.2 The deductive approach in the later stages

In later stages of the research, the application of the deductive approach followed. The identified theory gave the broadly collected data more focus on looking at the research question from a specific perspective. This changed the data collection and approach to the research as the reasoning went from the general to the more focused data collection. In this stage, the existing data was filtered to become directed more particularly towards the research question. For instance, I abandoned information collected on economic aspects or other major Pacific regional actors. It also led me to concentrate on observations that concretely address the research question. The switch towards the deductive approach enabled me to address the research from the theoretical lens which led me towards the findings, discussion and conclusions.

3.2 Data collection

Qualitative data is the basis for the research and used for my subjective interpretation and formation of understanding on the topic. Qualitative data is chosen in preference of quantitative data because I assume

that realities are dynamic and negotiated rather than a fixed and measurable. These data base on the understanding of the information sources' perspective of reality. The data collection is conducted by different types of qualitative research to enhance its validity through data triangulation (Denzin, 2009). Qualitative research allows to include the different interpretations of a researcher based on the socially constructed reality. Implicit, I acknowledge that I am a participant in the study (Cousin, 2009). As the study is conducted partly in the researched setting, in special regards to my internship at the EU Delegation to New Zealand, there is interaction with the studied setting. A participant observation influences the research. This results in a more in-depth understanding of which data is relevant and must be involved in the research. The preparation for the tasks at the internship and the knowledge and insights gained during the involvement in NZ are the first steps of the data collection process. Hence the internship opened for opportunities to access non-public available data, I do not take these into perspective due to non-disclosure obligations. During the internship, I also interacted with NZ academics to enhance my reflections and gain insights into additional perspectives on the research topic. This exchange did further contribute to identifying opportunities for the EU to foster its political relationship with the PICs. That said, inferences from these insights are utilised to search for valid qualitative, generally accessible, data for the thesis.

The data collection evolved through an ongoing process of discovery and re-interpretations of gained knowledge. I acknowledge that using the chosen research approach implies that the data collection and data analysis is not entirely distinguishable (Thorne, 2000). The qualitative approach is further chosen to understand the interactions and implications involved surrounding the study. To give a reflected and comprehensive answer to the research question the qualitative data of the thesis consists of both primary and secondary data that the following sections introduce. The section on semi-structured interviews addresses the primary qualitative data emerged through interviews.

3.2.1 Participant observation

Participant observation is applied as research approach because it allows collecting data in a naturalistic setting as the researcher is involved and observes the activities of the area of study (Dewalt, 2010). In the interview talk, the researcher is not an entirely objective and independent observer but part of the research, which is the case in this research. The interviews are therefore a “*joint production of an account by interviewer and interviewee*” (Alldred & Gillies, 2002, p. 146). The internship at the EU delegation to New Zealand and the preparations for this provided me with sources of questions to address with the interview participants (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). As I took part and was involved in the relevant field, this opens for insights on explicit but also tacit knowledge from the research setting. The involvement at the EU delegation in New Zealand gave a good basis to use information gained from observing and

participating in the collection and analysis of these data. Participant research was chosen because it shows a researcher what the participants deem to be important in various aspects including political priorities and cooperation. Participant observation offers better insights and understanding of the researched subject and *“allows researchers to see these processes more clearly, both in their own lives and in the international system”* (Klotz & Lynch, 2014, p. 37). The insight from this research approach evolve and are subject to change during the research process. The internship in Wellington is a useful experience to understand better, reflect and interpret knowledge gained in the interviews. Being involved in the field of the research topic eased the access to the interview participants. Simultaneously, this leads to the creation of a certain level of trust and mutual understanding between the interview participants and myself. Participant observation allows to reassess and reformulate the research question based on the observation and participation at the interviews (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews obtain the primary qualitative data of the research. I chose this form of data collection because it offers the opportunity to produce rich empirical data on the topic (Cousin, 2009). I prepared an interview grid on forehand of the interview conduction that structured around themes I discovered through the previous data collection and analysis. The prepared questions were organised through different topics while leaving space for adaptation and modification of questions in the flow of the interview talk. This qualitative research approach allowed for an inquiry into themes that not have been in my awareness before the interview. As Holstein & Gubrium (1997, p. 116) describe the interview, it is a *“search-and-discovery mission”*. I intended to keep the interview questions as open-ended questions, however, during the interview process, sometimes more closed-ended questions formed.

3.2.2.1 Interview participants

The interview participants are exclusively high-ranking officials that have the status of representatives for their respective institution or political entity. The choice of interview partners aims to reflect upon the research topic from different perspectives. It further aims for validity and reliability of the findings and analysis. To do this, I kept the pattern by which I interviewed a representative from the European External Action Service and the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and their respective ambassadors. The interviews were conducted in two rounds on a one-to-one basis. The deputy head of mission who is an expert on the NZ-PICs relations did further attend the interview with the NZ ambassador to the EU. The time distance between the rounds of interviews enabled ongoing analyses and assessment of the retrieved data in line with the methodological research approach. Each of the interviews lasted 30-50 minutes,

depending on the available time of the interview participants. For credibility reasons, all interviews are attached in the appendix. The research was introduced before the beginning of each interview, and the academic independence and objectivity of the research were highlighted. I did further obtain the assent to the recording and use of the interview previous to the conversations.

3.2.2.2 Interview conduction

The conduction of the first set of interviews was at the very end of my experience in the field in Wellington. The two interviews were conducted in mid-December 2017 with a one-week interval to allow for reflections and interpretations of possible unexpected insights. The first interview grids have a similar outline to reflect on the same questions from different perspectives. However, the interview questions were adapted to the participants concerning their political affiliation. The first interview conduction was with the first resident ambassador of the EU to New Zealand on 14 December 2017 at the EU delegation's office. The second interview was conducted the 20 December 2017 with the Divisional Manager of the Pacific Regional Division of the Pacific Branch – Pacific and Development Group of New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. To be noticed, the interview grids were not followed precisely to allow to react to evolving information during the interviews in line with a semi-structured interview approach.

The third and fourth interview participants were both interviewed on 9 February 2018 in Brussels. The opening interview session of the day was with a lead advisor in the Asia-Pacific Department of the European External Action Service who was former EU Ambassador to the Pacific. The participant works on advising the EU on how to upgrade its relations with the PICs. Later the same day, the interview with New Zealand Ambassador to the EU, NATO and Sweden was conducted. The interview transcriptions can be found in the appendix and are sorted from A-D by order of the interview conduction.

3.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is one of the approaches for data triangulation. Varied secondary qualitative sources are utilised for the document analysis (Bowen, 2009). Public accessible official documents and publications from the respective involved actors were accessed primarily through the internet. Mostly official communications of the involved actors were accessed to ensure the validity and reliability of the documents. Academic publications and other literature in the field of international relations were mostly accessed through the Libsearch online library tool of the Copenhagen Business School. The process of the secondary qualitative data collection and analysis was initiated in NZ. Prior literature from my study program was also incorporated, however, these documents were re-evaluated and interpreted in line with the research

question. The document analysis started with my internship in NZ and continued through the entire process of the research. The ongoing process of the document analysis was crucial for the study because the relations between the EU, the Pacific and NZ are in constant change, especially regarding developments towards new agreements and meetings.

3.4 Thematic analysis

The collected data in the research process is further identified, organised, described, analysed and reported through the means of thematic analysis. The early stage inductive approach in combination with the later change towards a deductive approach makes the use of thematic analysis particularly interesting. While starting to collect data without a clear theoretical frame, this analysing approach is an approachable technique to structure the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach served as a tool to outline the categoric data analysis of this research. As the research is based on documents and different interviews, the thematic analysis offers a useful tool to spot similarities and differences in the collected data which allowed the generation of unanticipated insights. I chose this method because it offers the opportunity to highlight and summarise the key features of the collected data (King, 2004). As mentioned, the data collection and analysis are a concurrent process and therefore not distinguishable from each other (Thorne, 2000). The research was conducted in a research cycle that is alternating between the different stages and phases of data collection and analysis.

The thematic analysis is similar to the conceptualisation step of Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson's (2015) seven-step approach. However, I have chosen to include the thematic analysis because it puts more emphasis on the themes involved in the analysis. Thematic analysis thereby supports the importance of the categorisation of the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe a six-phased method for thematic analysis of data. These phases are: familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. At the same time, I acknowledge that due to the early inductive approach to the research these phases are not followed step-by-step. The analysis is an iterative and reflective process that involves the moving between the different phases (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). That said, I use Nowell et al. (2017, p. 4) approach of “*establishing trustworthiness during each phase of thematic analysis*” that is based on the trustworthiness criteria for thematic analysis outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The use of the approach aims to achieve validity and reliability of the analysis. To do so, I take teachings and insights from both models to achieve a more structured, reflected and credible analysis.

3.5 Coding the data

To gain a better overview of the data in the early steps of the data collection I utilised open coding as a first analytical step. My perception of coding builds on the understanding of codes as not only labelling information but also linking them. Thereby was the coding in the early stages of the research especially valuable because it led me as a researcher from “*data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea*” (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 137). During the open coding, I clustered data together that showed similar patterns which constructed the overall objectives to be involved in the paper. The second stage of coding, the focused coding, built on the open coding. This coding stage builds on an analysis of the first codes and helps to develop a cognitive map of the research (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). That said, during the focused coding I gained an overview of what I want to include in my research.

3.6 Validity and reliability

I acknowledge that the research is subject to my interpretations and perspectives as described in the section on philosophy of science. By the inductive approach, the conducted data were analysed in a continuous process and the research itself evolves through a learning process (Brew, 2001).

The validity of the research was taken into consideration by including different perspectives on the issue. The data collection is conducted by different types of qualitative research to enhance its validity through data triangulation (Denzin, 2009). The primary data was gathered from the respective equivalents from the EU and NZ. Due to my internship at the EU, I gained access to the experiences of the research participants on a reliable and trustworthy basis. I aimed to balance the collection of secondary data from sources that offer perspectives from the different involved actors.

My research based on the assessment of primary and secondary qualitative data whereas I acknowledge that the findings based on estimations of reliability. I am convinced that other observers can reach similar observations of the data. However, the choice of methodology means a certain ambiguity regarding the analysis and discussion. Due to the ontological and epistemological view of different perspectives, many truths and different interpretations, I do acknowledge that a different researcher might identify other opportunities to increase the political relationship between the EU and the PICs.

The combination of the philosophy of science and the conduction of the research in the spirit of action research was useful because it offered the opportunity to identify opportunities to foster the EU-PICs political relationship from my perspective without claiming that my reasoning is the sole truth.

The sources of data were chosen to ensure trustworthiness, as both secondary and primary data are based mostly on official communications from the respective governmental institutions. Simultaneously, I acknowledge that the creation of the primary data is based on the different subjective perspectives of the agents of the actors and that these have their realities. This creates a limitation to the identified areas for interaction itself. I would have gotten even broader reflections on the research topic if I had included further interview participants with their perspectives. Especially PICs perspectives could have enriched my research. This would have enhanced the validity and generalizability of my research.

4 Theory

4.1 Social constructivism

Social constructivism as a theory of international relations builds the basis for the theoretical approach of this paper. The relevance of the theory emerges from the knowledge and insights gained from the data in the inductive stage of the research which expanded through the deductive approach. As this theoretical lens sees the world, the current political relations and structures did not develop in a vacuum, and neither are they pre-given (Wendt, 1999). Historical developments have led to different realities, and political ties emerge over time. The same holds true for identities and interests of actors. The world that we live in is a construction of our making that simultaneously constructs us (Viotti & Kauppi, 2011). The historical developments take influence on the continuous construction of the different political realities and ideas. The continuous process of meaning-making implies that change within realities and perspectives is possible and pervasive (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2016). These different realities of the involved actors mean that interaction between these builds on the acknowledgement of different perspectives on the same situation. This means that socially constructed different realities coexist in international relations.

From a social constructivist perspective for the analysis, ideas, cultures, identity, norms and interests determine international relations. However, it is essential to look at cultures and identities before drawing attention towards interests because culture and identity constitute meanings and interests (Wendt, 1999). The plural of these concepts is crucial as it emphasises the possibility of change by the different actors in the international system. This opportunity of change enables cultures to compete, overlap or to appropinquate (Wendt, 1999). The international system is, therefore, able to change as actors, such as states and political unions, can transform or renegotiate their perspectives as results of ideas or interests. These interests are constructed through the culture respective norms and ideas. The actors in the international system bear the ideas and strive for the realisation of these. The meaning of power and essence of interests

is too great extent a function of ideas when looking through the lens of social constructivism outlined by Wendt (1999). In the argument, ideas constitute the creation of material self-interest (Wendt, 1999). That said, materialist factors have an influence on decisions through the construction of meaning based on ideas that shape culture, norms and identity.

Through this, the basis of international society is ideational and social grounded by assuming that ideas are the bedrock of relationships. Structures evolve through the social systems which conversely are structured by knowledge distribution through interaction. Therefore, interaction is essential when aspiring a change. Different interests are broadly constituted by ideas which are the basis for interaction (Wendt, 1999). Ideas are subject to a continuous process of change that is inherent in the interaction between the different actors and structures in international relations. The conception that ideas constitute behaviour of actors means that the internal structure of actors influences their external actions. The structure is possible to transform and new ones can emerge, as structures in international relations are based on culture and identity constructed through social interactions.

Agents in international relations follow the rules based on their perception of identities and roles that are given by norms perceived as legitimate and stable (Schwellnus, 2006). In other words, norms influence the behaviour of actors while defining the identity of these and giving meaning to decisions. On the contrary, this does not exclude that agents can make decisions outside of their respective structures. The assumption is that agents and structures mutually constitute each other. This leads to a reproduction of the social structures by agents in praxis. Thereby, can culture and identity, more generally speaking structures, be both produced and reproduced.

The interaction between actors increases the mutual knowledge and understanding. While interactions create knowledge, it results in an understanding for the counterpart through sense-making and learning processes. As the interaction between the actors constructs their relationship, this means that an increased interaction offers basis and opportunity to increase the state of this relationship.

4.2 The nature of the actor

International relations do not happen simply by the interaction of actors (states and political unions) but through the relation between actors and its social construction. The phrase “*anarchy is what states make of it*” (Wendt, 1992, p. 424) opens a perspective on the relationship between an actor and an agent in international relations. The relation between structures, the actor, and agents, the individuals related to the respective actor, lies in the nature that the latter constructs the identities and interests of the structures. The

interaction between people does therefore determine the essence of international relations (Gold & McGlinchey, 2017). The interaction between agents of actors confronts the anarchy in international relations (Wendt, 1999). Having said this, actors do not interact with each other, but it is the agents who work for the respective actors. As an example, could this be heads of governments and states, ministers, ambassadors and lower-ranking diplomats. However, these agents are not reducible to individuals with solely self-interests as to become an agent for a structure it requires three features that lead to decision-making for the sake of the integrated structure. The first feature requires the individuals' shared knowledge to lead to the idea that the state or political union is a corporate self (Wendt, 1999). This gives actors the political legitimacy on which to build their collective identity. A genuine agent has, therefore, to acknowledge the actor as legitimate and be able to identify themselves with the actor. The other features require the state or political union to have a decision structure that institutionalises and authorises agents to take collective actions (French, 1984). To reach this, an actor needs centralisation and internalisation (Wendt, 1999). Centralisation takes decision-making based on hierarchical structures into perspective where top officials are superior in their decisions over their subordinates. As this can lead to issues relating self-interests, internalisation is necessary to ensure the stability of the structure. In this context, internalisation refers to an agent's definition of identity and interests in coherence with the norms of the corporate structure (Wendt, 1999). While the agents are crucial for the interaction between actors, an actor cannot be reduced solely to the actions of an individual agent since the agent is only an element of the actor (Wendt, 1999).

The anarchy in international relation is part of an actors' reality and the reality of the structure in which they function. Following the previously quoted phrase by Wendt, anarchy can be perceived differently by different actors and its qualities can change over time. A system introduced by decision-making agents can bridge the inherent ambiguity of anarchy in international relations and the anarchy itself (Gold & McGlinchey, 2017). This means that the idea of the proxy of an actor can reach unanimity by another which can be the basis for common interest and cooperation. The agents of an actor do therefore act as initiators of change. Previously shared values and interests between individuals who interact are relevant for the ties between actors on global stage as this eases the interaction. The interaction of the agents of states is the driver for the construction of relationships as the communication between the respective agents and an increase in interaction fosters knowledge and understanding of the counterpart. The hierarchical levels of agents can further take influence on the success of an interaction (Wendt, 1999). The interaction between actors of a similar hierarchical level is relevant as it might induce reciprocal valuation and recognition which can contribute to foster a relationship.

4.3 Formation of a collective identity

The repeated interaction between the different agents can lead to the constructed of shared identity on subjects with a joint goal. This implies that identity can change over time (Klotz & Lynch, 2014). Simultaneously, through the interaction, a structural change can derive in the respective actors' politics that construct a collective identity together with the other actor (Wendt, 1999). This emphasises that international structures such as bilateral, multilateral and international regimes derive in a social process through shared understanding and goals. Wendt (1999) offers insights into how collective identity is formatted. The understanding of the collective identity formation is relevant to keep in mind as its formation offers an opportunity to increase a relationship. However, the formation of a collective identity is rarely perfect or total. The formation takes place on the background of culture where respective identities and interest are dominant. The formation of a collective identity will in practice be more of a concentric circle of identification. Actors will identify themselves to varying degrees with others which relies on their perception of their own identity and what they seem to be at stake (Wendt, 1999). While a collective identity is rarely perfect, and resistance can occur, it does not mean that it is not possible to construct it. The individuality of actors and their strive to preserve it "*does not preclude them from making the terms of their individuality more collective*" (Wendt, 1999, p. 364).

4.4 International regimes

The construction of a collective identity links to group membership, processes and intergroup behaviour (Abrams & Hogg, 1998). These groupings can be called for international regimes. In other words, the term international regime describes the governing arrangements that are constructed by actors to regulate their expectations and behaviour for an adequate use on global issues (Krasner, 1983). These arrangements base on the state-specific ideas, identity, norms, rules and principles. Building on this, regimes are relevant in international political discourse because they base on collective identity. Players within a regime usually share similar goals and history to some degree (Krasner, 1983). This leads them enhanced interaction with each other. The regimes work together towards solutions on issues of mutual interest that has derived from different origins whereas historical constructed context builds a basis for the linkage between these different actors. Due to the relevance of historical context and relations, it is essential to analyse the constructed ties between actors when accessing how to develop a relationship further. Other scholars add that some international regimes are in the process to increase their legitimacy which makes them more credible in the international arena (Payne & Samhat, 2004). In other words, the significance of international regimes increases concurrently to their legitimacy.

The concept of international regimes helps to understand that shared ideas and areas of common interest can be addressed jointly which can contribute to strengthening the ties between the involved actors further. That said, the creation of collective identity on some terms of their individuality and the enhancement of collaboration in regimes could lead agents to foster their interaction and increase the level of mutual understanding.

4.5 The implications of the theoretical lens for the research

I chose the social constructivist lens because I look at the construction of the EU, NZ and PICs political relationships that contain different realities of the involved actors. The theoretical lens is a basis to see the relationships as constructed and it is, therefore, relevant to analyse the developments and achievements of a relationship before bringing forward ideas of change. The analysis of the constructed relationships between the actor's outlines the issues where they managed to reach a common framework. The ideas of the actors reflect the topics on which the actors work together. This leaves open space to indicate where the actors might be able to increase their political relationships.

The theoretical lens enables me to see the world as a construction of our making that simultaneously constructs us which means that the actors can change as they can transform their perspectives as results of ideas through interaction. Therefore, the theory shows up the importance of interaction as the driver for the political relationship between actors and that increasing interaction offers an opportunity to foster this relationship. The influence of international actors on another and the ability to change opens the opportunity to research the cooperation and the possibilities to foster their political relationships. For the analysis and discussion, this builds the basis as I can reflect on the relationships, identify shortcomings and discuss possible changes.

The theory of social constructivism does further create a perspective on international relations that is constructed not merely by different actors but by their agents. The interaction of agents of states is relevant to take into perspective when analysing the relations between the actors. The agents confront the ambiguity and complexity of the international system which leads them to be the driver for change. Therefore, the interaction between the respective state agents and their ideas for change are crucial for the construction of international relations and the agents should be in focus in the discussion for a change. The theory implies that interaction between the agents can be on different hierarchical levels created through ideas in the shape of a structural condition.

Further implications of the theoretical lens offer the insight that indications of collective identity can assist to identify potential strengths and weaknesses in the partnerships as well as point out common ground that can be used to construct closer ties between the actors. The possible creation of collective identity can lead to the alignment on international regimes. The concept helps to understand that areas of shared interest can be addressed jointly. The group processes of an international regime can thereby increase the interaction between actors and their overall relationship.

5 Findings and analysis

5.1 PICs and the EU

This chapter analyses the constructed political relationship between the EU and the PICs. The different sections address the bilateral and multilateral ties which in sum offer an understanding of the current relationship between the actors. While the sections reflect on these ties will it offer a basis for the discussion by identifying shortcomings and opportunities to foster the political relationship.

5.1.1 EU – PICs bilateral diplomatic ties

The historical developments between the PICs and the EU led to the construction of formal diplomatic ties between actors. There are currently two EU delegations in the PICs. One is in Suva, Fiji, and represents the EU in the Pacific region and another is in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, which represents the EU bilaterally with the country. The delegation in Fiji, opened in 1975, represents the EU relations with the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu. The delegation does further coordinate the EU's efforts with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). Further sections address the PIFS. The EU delegation for the Pacific is responsible for the bilateral and regional relations with the named PICs and the region more generally. The delegation promotes understanding and knowledge of the PICs in the EU and vice versa (European External Action Service, 2016a). Most of the PICs do have representations in Brussels, namely, Fiji, Vanuatu, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Palau and Papua New Guinea. This means that there is a distinct diplomatic network between the EU and the PICs. Through these means, there is an interaction between the actors and space to bring forward new ideas. However, not all PICs have a representation at the EU, and some of these representations are limited in their resources. It might indicate that the EU's representations in the Pacific region coordinate most of the interaction between the EU and the PICs.

A third Pacific delegation closed in July 2017 and was based in Honiara, Solomon Islands. NZ criticises this as in their perspective “*it was a very unfortunate signal to send*” to the PICs regarding recognition and valuation (Interview B). The timing of the closure is seen as questionable by NZ as the delegation closed its operations in the same week the EU's Post-Cotonou High-Level Facilitator visited the region. NZ critiques further address that the EU's decision “*wasn't grounded in the understanding of what the EU was gaining in terms of strategic advantage*” (Interview B). This means that the lack of the EU's understanding ends up in a disadvantage by not only losing a point of interaction but also evoke negative perceptions of the PICs on the EU's engagement in their region.

5.1.2 Constructing the framework for EU-Pacific relations

The relations between the Pacific and the EU build on the historical constructed ties with the region. The creation of the European Community (EC) in 1957 under the Treaty of Rome was simultaneously the beginning of the EC/EU's formal cooperation with the Pacific. The Treaty of Rome of 1957 includes articles that created the European Development Fund (EDF) (Rat der Europäischen Union, 1957). The EDF provides development aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries as well as EU overseas territories and countries.

The EU's predecessor signed the Lomé Convention in 1975 (European Commission, 2018b). The Lomé Convention was the first formal agreement on cooperation between the EU's predecessor and some of the Pacific countries (European Commission, 2005). The Lomé Convention built on a partnership principle in the combination of political, aid and trade aspects. The EC outlined the intentions of the convention to create equality, respect for sovereignty, interdependence and mutual interest. While increasing the support for the Pacific, additional Pacific countries adjoin the list of ACP countries which now includes all PICs (European Commission, 2006b). With an increase in cooperation between the parties, the expiry of the fourth Lomé Convention in 2000 offered an opportunity for profound changes. In 1998, the strive for increased cooperation with the ACP countries was supported by the Commissioner for Development Joao de Deus Pinheiro and led to the start of talks on a new agreement (European Commission, 2005). While identifying a long list of critique points on the Lomé Conventions, the new millennium gave an opportunity for the EU to adjust their political commitments to the ACP countries. At the same time, the EU recognised the need for enhanced political dialogue with the ACP countries (European Commission, 2005).

5.1.2.1 EU - ACP relationship

The Cotonou Agreement coordinates the current EU-Pacific relations which I will also refer to as ACP agreement. In 2000, the Cotonou Agreement was adopted and is the overarching framework for relations

between the EU and the ACP Countries (European Union, 2000). The agreement will expire in February 2020 and covers the EU's relations with 79 ACP countries. The Cotonou Agreement is based on three pillars. Namely, a political dimension, development cooperation, and economic and trade cooperation. These aim to support the cultural and social development of the ACP countries, reducing and eradicating poverty, support sustainable economics and facilitate the integration of these economies into the world economy. The agreement highlights that the involved partners are equal, the ACP countries themselves decide the development policies, and that cooperation shall be on many levels including governments, civil society, parliaments, the private sector and others. Further, the objectives of the cooperation are said to depend on the country-specific aspects (European Union, 2000). The ACP evaluation section will analyse this claim.

The Cotonou Agreement was revised several times with its most recent modification in 2010. The revision of the partnership focusses to adapt to new challenges such as climate change, food security regional integration and sustainable fisheries (The Council of the European Union, 2010).

5.1.2.1.1 Political pillar

The political pillar of the ACP agreement involves a political dialogue on issues of global, regional and national interests. The agreement takes the EU's values and belief in democratic principles and human rights into perspective and aims to promote these. The document addresses the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as the development of peace-building policies (European Union, 2000). The agreement addresses migration aspects and includes the improvement of conditions in countries of origin, transit, the return of illegal immigrants and legal migration. While the Pacific gets lesser attention, the EU gave the African ACP countries more awareness through the Valletta Summit in 2015 with African leaders to strengthen their cooperation on migration (General Secretariat of the Council, 2015).

5.1.2.1.2 EU-ACP administration

Different joint institutions administrate the Cotonou Agreement. The EU-ACP Council of Ministers is thereby the supreme institution of the partnership that meets on an annual basis. It comprises a member of the government of each ACP country, members of the Council of the EU and a member of the Commission. The EU-ACP committee of ambassadors assists the Council of Ministers. They monitor the implementation of the agreement. The EU-ACP Parliamentary Assembly promotes democratic processes and facilitates understanding between the people of the parties. The assembly consists of an equal number of ACP and EU representatives and is a consultative body to the other institutions (European Union, 2000).

5.1.2.2 Evaluation of the EU engagement through the Cotonou Agreement

5.1.2.2.1 Benefits of the ACP grouping membership for the Pacific

The participation of the Pacific in the ACP grouping was beneficial for the PICs in several aspects. Being included in the Cotonou Agreement helped the PICs to gain increased recognition and presence in the international arena as well as at the EU. The Pacific managed to raise global awareness on its region partly through the membership in the ACP grouping (Laporte & Puig, 2013). The attention helped to gather support in the UN to address issues of Pacific concern. This includes amongst others the increased interest for global issues with specific relevance for the Pacific region such as climate change. In 2017, Fiji held the presidency of the 23rd Conferences of the Parties in Bonn, Germany, which is the formal meeting of the UN Climate Change Conferences. Alliances of the Small Island Developing States in the UN are perceived to have benefitted from their affiliation to the ACP agreement by the creation of shared interests and solidarity (Laporte & Puig, 2013). The ACP regime opened opportunities for the Pacific to increase the communication not only with the EU but also with the other members of the regime. The intra-ACP cooperation on issues of common interest such as tourism or climate change has been mutually beneficial for the different regions. The exchanges with the African and Caribbean counterparts of the Pacific are used to address common positions on issues towards the EU agents (Laporte & Puig, 2013).

5.1.2.2.2 Pacific evaluation

The ACP agreement is criticised for not taking “*adequate considerations of the needs and particularities of the Pacific circumstances*” (Interview D). This suggests that the Cotonou Agreement is too broad and does not take the Pacific and its different countries into sufficient perspective. The NZ perspective of the agreement evaluates the agreement to have a too broad scope and does not take account for the diversity between the Pacific countries. The political dimension of the Cotonou Agreement from a Pacific perspective focused especially on climate change and development cooperation (Evaluation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement 2016). The perspective of an EU agent from the Asia-Pacific Department of the European External Action Service claims that the political dialogue in bilateral context between the EU and the different Pacific states work well. However, the EU’s agreement commitment to political dialogue was “*a little bit slow to get off the ground*” which supposedly has changed in the agents’ view (Interview C). This shows a diverge of the perceptions of the EU and NZ on the effectiveness of the ACP agreement. While NZ sees the agreement more critical, the EU’s perspective reflects the agreement sceptically but perceives it still as a functioning framework for interaction.

An EU agent evaluated the involvement by saying that “*we [EU] need to do more work is on political dialogue with the PICs as a group*” and that “*there is room to improve the way we [EU] interact on a strategic and political level*” (Interview C). It points out shortcomings in the dialogue between the EU and the PICs as a group as the interaction is alleged to be too less strategic and functioning. The EU might benefit from taking further considerations and leave room for interactions with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) but also sub-regional groupings. This shows a picture of the EU’s understanding for their shortcomings in the Pacific and that they seek to change this lack of political interaction. Laporte and Puig (2013) argue that the cooperation of the Pacific with the EU under the umbrella of the EU-ACP agreement was felt to be a trigger for the creation of an enhanced regional awareness and cooperation. As described in the previous section, the Pacific benefitted from the ACP agreement by attracting global attention to issues of Pacific concern. The ACP comprises various small and vulnerable countries around the three regions which share particular problems with the Pacific, especially regarding maritime bio-diversity and climate change. However, not said that these issues would not be addressed without the EU-ACP partnership, but it most probably would have drawn lesser global attention to the Pacific concerns (Laporte & Puig, 2013).

The Pacific perspective of the economic and trade cooperation pillar of the agreement is evaluated to be successful to a certain degree from the EU perspective. In 2015 the Cotonou Agreement was evaluated by a post-Cotonou Taskforce set up by the European Commission which describes the Pacific to have gained an increased integration into the world economy. They also outline that it has become easier to start a business with the Pacific region (European Commission, 2016a). The development cooperation pillar of the Cotonou Agreement from a Pacific perspective is evaluated differently by different actors. The EU taskforce evaluates the contribution of the EU support for the Pacific region as positive but to leave open space for improvements, however, without providing more in detail information (European Commission, 2016a). The perspective of the former EU ambassador to the Pacific sees the EU procedures more critical regarding managing development aid. From his perspective “*the EU procedures for management of development aid are a bit drowning for a bunch of Pacific Islands*” (Interview C). This perspective shows that various PICs are overwhelmed by the EU procedures and have problems to live up to the involved requirements. Scholars do further argue that the EU’s involvement in the Pacific gives lesser attention than the other two regions of the ACP grouping (Busse & Grobmann, 2007; Carbone, 2008; Dearden, 2008; Holland & Koloamatangi, 2006). From this perspective, the EU neglects a clear strategic focus towards the Pacific and its interactions with the Pacific is not sufficient nor comprehensive enough to strengthen the relationship.

5.1.2.2.3 Future EU-ACP partnership

The EU works currently on an outline for a new ACP agreement after the expiration of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. In November 2016, the European Commission introduced a proposal for the EU's future partnership with the Pacific after 2020. It took the evaluation of the EU taskforce into perspective. The communication focusses on different priorities of EU interests including amongst others the international rule of law, human rights, good governance, migration, and cooperation on challenges and areas of common interest (European Commission, 2016b). The NZ perspective remarks the need for the EU to take "*adequate considerations of the needs and particularities of the Pacific circumstances*" (Interview D). It means that these perspectives wish that the EU would increase its engagement in the Pacific region and see the current ACP agreement to focus too much on the other ACP regions. The proposal from 2016 keeps these concerns in contemplation and envisages the importance to consider regional specificities and circumstances. The communication of the European Commission outlines specific priorities for the Pacific to increase the EU's interactions. Especially issues on good governance, disaster management, human rights and gender are said to hold back the regions' development and need future attention by the EU (European Commission, 2016b).

An EU agent states that "*everybody recognises that that relationship [EU-ACP] needs to be modernised*" (Interview A). This indicates that the EU is aware of the critical perspectives towards the Cotonou Agreement. The evaluation of the agreement helped the EU to enhance its reflections through consulting its partners in the world including the perspectives from the PICs. The EU agent outlines that the political relations between the EU and the Pacific countries are sought to be enhanced. Due to the interactions with its partners did the EU gain insights from outside of its reality which might help them to address their ideas in the future better.

5.1.2.2.4 Discussions towards the new agreement

The EU foreign minister opened a discussion in November 2016 on the ACP relations after the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement. The ministers expressed broad support for the communication by the European Commission from 2016. The European Commission presented recommendations for the outline of the future ACP partnership in December 2017. The recommendations include authorisation for negotiating directives. These directives were discussed in January 2018 by the Council of the European Union in foreign minister's configuration. The ministers expressed support for the approach to move towards one ACP agreement that takes tailored perspectives for each of the three partner regions into consideration (Council of the European Union, 2016). The ACP working party of the council does currently discuss the future cooperation between the EU and ACP states (state May 2018).

In a communication from August 2017, the PIFS expressed its support and assistance for Pacific ACP countries in the negotiations for a successor of the Cotonou Agreement. The PIFS calls the review process of the Cotonou Agreement an opportunity to achieve a better and more Pacific specific EU-ACP agreement. The Pacific ACP countries exchange views amongst themselves to agree on a common stance and unified approach when the ACP negotiations with the EU begin (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2017b). The members of the PIF addressed their opinions of the importance to further take into perspective the role of non-state actors which includes the private sector. These are expected to foster the regions integration and its political relationship with the EU.

5.1.3 Latest formal agreements

5.1.3.1 The 2006 strategy for a strengthened partnership

In 2006 the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee issued a communication on the EU relationship with the Pacific Islands which remains in force (state May 2018). The communication is seen as a milestone in the construction of EU-Pacific relations as it is the first formal strategy of the EU to strengthen their partnership in the Pacific (Council of the European Union, 2016). One of the core aims is to strengthen the political dialogue between the PICs and the EU. The objectives of the political dialogue are matters of common interest including social, environmental, trade, economic, governance and political issues. The EU points out their ambitions to better support incentives in multilateral regimes in consonance with the Pacific ACP countries. The dialogue is proposed to be enhanced through increasing engagement primarily with and through the PIF. The communication outlines shortcomings of the post-forum dialogue such as limited impact and interactions. It further criticises the post-forum dialogue for leaving too little time for the EU-Pacific dialogues. The strategy describes other partners of the region with reference to Japan to have established PICs interactions in addition to their participation in the talks following the PIF (European Commission, 2006a). The EU outlines their ambitions to conduct the dialogues most effectively and efficiently. In addition to the dialogue in multilateral regimes, the communication defines the direct dialogue between Pacific ACP countries and the EU as relevant (European Commission, 2006a).

In the 2006 strategy, the EU evaluated their relations with third countries in the region. The strategy gives attention to NZ which is examined to have a stable and broad relationship with the EU and the cooperation on Pacific matters should be enhanced. The communication states that the EU's influence in the region decreased and the bilateral relations with NZ can be useful to increase the EU's efforts in the region (European Commission, 2006a). Taking this into perspective, the EU perceives NZ as an eligible advocate

for their interaction with the Pacific and sees the potential for cooperation with NZ in the Pacific. Already in 2006, the EU recognised the potentials of a partnership with NZ for the cooperation in the PICs. However, a further section will analyse the success of the cooperation.

5.1.3.2 The 2012 communication for a renewed development partnership

In 2012, the Council of the European Union welcomed and adopted a communication by the European Commission on a renewed EU-Pacific development partnership. The 2012 communication complements the EU's strategy for a strengthened partnership from 2006. The EU perceives an increase in the political dialogue since the 2006 strategy (European Commission, 2012). The 2012 communication claims that the EU engages in regular political dialogues with the region on a bilateral and multilateral level (European Commission, 2012). The construct of the 2006 strategy gets broadened by the 2012 communications objective to increase the political dimension of the relationship by enhancing the impact of its development policies. However, the communication simultaneously addresses the need to enhance the political dialogues in all areas of cooperation including on principles of the UN charter and international law. Regarding areas of interaction, the EU perceived climate change as the most significant threat to the Pacific Islands and agreed on additional funding for climate-friendly projects (European Commission, 2012).

The 2012 communication aspires to increase the interaction with the Pacific ACP countries, regional regimes and like-minded partners such as NZ shall contribute to foster positions and resolutions of the UN charter globally. These channels of dialogue are designed to enhance the effectiveness of the EU development aid. The EU made its willingness explicit to conduct joint missions with other donors in the region. Interaction of players involving civil society, the private sector, regional networks, local authorities shall be fostered to further strengthen the ties between the EU and the Pacific (European Commission, 2012).

The 2012 communication shows that the EU's perspective sees progress in the political relationship but simultaneously acknowledges that there is room for improvement. This can also be perceived as an admission of the EU that the efficiency of their intended engagement is not always living up to their expectations. The EU shows its shortcomings through rephrasing their previous identified intentions and renewing their aspirations to enhance their relationship. More concretely, the EU's ambitions outlined in 2006 are still subject to the 2012 communication which indicates that the EU's lacks efficiency in their interaction with the PICs.

5.1.3.3 EDF and the Pacific Regional Indicative Programme

The European Development Fund (EDF) is the primary instrument of the EU to provide development aid to the ACP countries and the EU's overseas countries and territories. Today, there are four European overseas territories left in the Pacific region. Namely, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Fortuna, and Pitcairn. The first three territories are French as the lastly named is British and all citizens of these territories are EU citizens. The EDF supports cooperation activities in areas of human, social, and economic development as well as regional integration and cooperation (European Commission, 2018a). The EDF includes all Pacific members of the ACP group. The Pacific Regional Indicative Programme encompasses all Pacific regional funding projects of the EDF. There are several facilities and focus groups subordinated to the funding mechanism such as the Investment Facility for the Pacific. The latest funding cycle including the Pacific is the 11th EDF and was signed in 2015 at the by the Forum Secretary General and the EU Commissioner for Development. The entire 11th EDF financial resources total €30.5 billion applicable between 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2018a). However, the 11th EDF allocated only €166 million to the Pacific region via the programme. Previously, the EU support totalled around € 318 million. This shows a clear misbalance between the EU's efforts in the Pacific in comparison to the other ACP regions. That is only one perspective on the misbalance at the expense of the Pacific ACP countries as the problem is more general and also involves the lack of political attention (Holland and Koloamatangi 2006).

Working groups consisting primarily of the organisations of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific conduct the formulation of the Pacific programs in the 11th EDF (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2018b). In February 2018, the latest round of meetings for the decisions on development assistance programs was held which was a joint meeting between officials from the Pacific region as well as from the EU (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2018a). The development aid coordination between the EU and the PICs does offer a point of interaction which can contribute to their overall political relationship.

5.1.3.4 Other regional and bilateral cooperation

The PICs and the EU do further cooperate in various other agreements and programs. The relationship between the EU and the PICs is not limited to Pacific regional programmes but instead made up by a combination of these with bilateral agreements. In 2009, the EU signed an interim Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Fiji and Papua New Guinea to liberalise trade with the countries that got implemented by Fiji in 2014. The EPA with the Pacific countries aims to include the other PICs to support and enhance the regional economic integration. The current EPA focuses on trade in goods but aims to deepen itself towards a comprehensive agreement with areas such as trade facilitation or sustainable

development (European Commission, 2014). While the EU sees opportunity in the EPA to foster the economic relationship with the Pacific, critical voices see a problem in the outlay of the EPA as it addresses only the larger PICs and practically excludes the smaller (Tavola, 2017).

The NZ perspective evaluates the EU's efforts sceptical as the "*EU expectations irremediably a bit great for countries with the capacity of some of the PICs*" (Interview D). This addresses the high bureaucratic efforts that the smaller PICs must cope when engaging with the EU which the limited capacities of some of the PICs authorities cannot handle. This results in different perceptions of the efforts in the EU and the PICs and the unfulfilled expectations cause frustrations on both sides. Critiques come for the EU's efforts in the PICs as it lacks efficiency even after being involved in the region for more than four decades. The EU seeks to address a comprehensive and the, in their perspective, logical set of objectives misses achieving its impact (Tavola, 2017). This shows an apparent lack to construct an effective relationship after several decades of contact. The reasons might be grounded in shortcomings of interaction that are the basis for a mutual understanding of the others' ideas and culture.

5.2 NZ and the Pacific

This chapter analyses the constructed political relationship between NZ and the PICs. The different sections address the constructed bilateral and multilateral ties which in sum offer an understanding of the current relationship between the actors. While the sections reflect on the established ties, this offers a basis for my discussion by identifying NZ's political relationship with the PICs to be more mature as the ties developed by the EU.

5.2.1 NZ's territorial footprint in the Pacific

The relations between NZ and the PICs are comprehensive which is not at least because NZ is in the South Pacific Ocean and perceives itself as "*a Pacific country*" (Interview B). NZ has longstanding cultural, political and economic ties to the Pacific and three PICs remain in association with NZ. Namely, the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau. The Cook Islands became self-governing in the 1960s, and while they administer their affairs, the country remains in a free association with NZ and the islanders NZ citizens (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018a). In 1974, the people of Niue decided to be in a free association with NZ while being self-governing (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018e). Tokelau remains part of the Realm of NZ while having its public institutions and full control over its budget despite being NZ citizens (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018j). The

historical ties and its efforts in the Pacific leads NZ to have a sense of identification with the PICs (Baker, 2015).

5.2.2 NZ's comprehensive diplomatic network

NZ has formal connections to the Pacific on both multilateral and bilateral level. On the multilateral level, NZ was one of the six founders in 1947 of the South Pacific Commission, now Pacific Community, that was found to assist the governance and stability in the region (Pacific Community, 2018). However, the most significant point of Pacific political interaction is the PIF. NZ is a founding member of the 1971 established forum and has ever since been an active driver for regional integration and cooperation (Bryant-Tokalau & Frazer, 2016). The PIF and NZ's involvement in the forum is analysed in more detail in the respective section later in the chapter.

NZ established formal diplomatic ties with many PICs and deployed high commission to most PICs. High commissions represent the Cook Islands and Niue in NZ and vice versa. NZ has no representation in Tokelau, nor vice versa. Samoa and NZ deployed high commissions to each other. However, the prime ministers and other ministers of the countries do regularly visit each other. The latest visit of an NZ Prime Minister to the four mentioned countries was in March 2018. High commissions do additionally represent NZ in other countries which are namely Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati. There are NZ based high commissioners to Tuvalu and Nauru (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018d).

Vice versa many PICs have representations in NZ. Additional to the diplomatic ties between the countries in association with NZ there are high commissions deployed from the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Fiji. General-consuls represent NZ in other countries, namely, Kiribati and Tonga. The leaders and ministers of these countries and NZ meet on the regular bilateral basis (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018d). Through these means, NZ offers a reasonable basis for interaction with PICs as the diplomatic networks are comprehensive. This leaves room for comprehensive points of interactions which also supports the country to enhance its reflections on the different realities and ideas of the PICs.

5.2.3 Pacific advocate at the UN Security Council 2015

NZ had a seat as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from 2015-16. The country held the presidency of the Security Council in July 2015 and pledged efforts to raise awareness for security and peace challenges for small island developing states. This was agreed on by the leaders of the PIF which

collectively supported NZ candidacy to maintain a Pacific voice in world politics (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2014a). The foreign ministry highlights NZ's success on the security council by advocating for and ensuring the Pacific voice gets heard. From their perspective, it was the first time that the challenges of the small island states gained focus at the Security Council (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018i). Most PICs head of governments and other high ranking officials did attend the open debate of the Security Council on Small Island Developing States where they used the stage to address the challenges the PICs are facing (United Nations Security Council Open Debate, 2015).

5.2.4 Pacific communities

The construct of people-to-people links further strengthens the extensive bilateral diplomatic network between the PICs and NZ. The influence of Pacific communities in NZ is as significant as in no other country in the world. The close historical, cultural and political ties led NZ in 1984 to appoint a Minister for Pacific Island Affairs (Fraenkel, 2012a). This incentive was only to be expanded six years later by creating the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs which was renamed to the Ministry for Pacific Peoples. Since 1993, Pacific Islanders regularly hold seats in the NZ Parliament. The Pacific Islanders do thereby gain a voice in NZ politics and represent their perspectives in the NZ politics (Barker & Coffé, 2016).

The composition of NZ population is another important fact to consider when looking at NZ influence and relevance for the Pacific. In 2013, the ethnic composition of NZ consisted of 74% Europeans, 15% Māori's, 7.4% Pacific peoples and 13% from others (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). The share of Pacific communities in NZ is expected to increase to 10% in 2026. Samoans make up the largest Pacific peoples ethnic group with 46.7% of all Pacific peoples (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). This equals a total of 144.138 people, in comparison, roughly 190.000 Samoans are living on Samoa. These numbers outline the significance of Pacific peoples living in NZ. Looking at the numbers for the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau NZ importance to the countries gets even more significance. Roughly 60.000 Cook Islanders are living in NZ in comparison to 15.000 in the Cook Islands. 24.000 people from Niue call NZ their home while there is a population of 1.600 in Niue itself. Numbers are further significant for Tokelau as there are 7.000 people with Tokelauan descent in NZ while Tokelau remains a population of 1.200. Tonga has a population of 104.000 citizens at the same time there are an additional 60.300 people of Tongan descent living in NZ (Statistics New Zealand, 2014; United Nations, 2014). These outlined numbers are just the highlights of Pacific communities in NZ while all PICs do have people ties to NZ. The influence of the Pacific community on NZ offers a picture on the country's importance to the PICs. NZ perceives the Pacific peoples to build an opportunity to widen their engagement in the Pacific region (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign

Affairs and Trade, 2017). NZ's extensive people-to-people links with the Pacific region and their interaction opens for further understanding between the actors. This can enhance the construction of a collective identity and offers potential to increase the overall political dialogue between parties.

5.2.5 Foreign policy efforts in the Pacific

Besides the extensive diplomatic network and the large communities of Pacific peoples in NZ does the country direct its foreign policy efforts mainly towards the PICs. These efforts seek to ensure the stability and prosperity in the region. Close to 60% of NZ's entire development aid efforts are directed towards the Pacific to ensure a positive development of its direct neighbourhood which equals between 15-20% of the Polynesian PICs' economic activity (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015). NZ outlines in a report that its objectives in the PICs base on its historical engagement, the large Pacific community in NZ, regional knowledge, experiences and a "*Pacific identity*" (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015, p. 14). NZ's strong focus on the Pacific in its foreign policy makes the country a reliable partner of the region (Keating, 2018).

The policy priorities of NZ for the Pacific region base on its perceptions of key issues in the region. NZ outlines its cooperation with the Pacific to address regional issues inclusively by involving PICs perspectives into the development of aid approaches. NZ works to strengthen the impact of its domestic and international positions in the PICs. The country engages with the PICs to promote sustainability and effectiveness of their policies. On international level does NZ perceive itself as an advocate for the Pacific by considering themselves as a "*champion ... for development issues affecting small island developing states*" (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018g). Another important policy priority of NZ in the Pacific region is the cooperation with other donors in the region. NZ seeks to coordinate donors with lesser knowledge of the region. This reflects the opportunity for the EU and NZ to enhance their interaction with the PICs jointly. It further underpins the possibility of cooperation as NZ wants "*to have the EU in the Pacific because we [NZ] see them as a really good partner, they operate the ways in development and politics that we [NZ] think are good for the region*" (Interview D). This means that NZ perceives the EU to be a right partner in the region due their shared identity and values. The likeness of the partners on a range of terms of their individuality leads NZ to perceive the EU's involvement in the Pacific to be positive. This offers insights into the NZ perspective of the EU's involvement in the PICs and opens the opportunity for the EU to further build on its partnership with NZ to enhance their interactions with the PICs.

5.2.6 Bilateral commitments for development

Conclusions on joint commitments for development further strengthen the bilateral relationship between NZ and some of the PICs. The commitments incorporate shared visions of cooperation of the PICs governments and NZ on a bilateral basis. These documents outline the respective responsibilities for an effective collaboration. The bilateral development aid cooperations underpin the previously mentioned comprehensive engagement of NZ in the PICs with all PICs (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018f). This offers another point of NZ-PICs interaction and cooperation which contributes to their overall political relationship.

5.2.7 NZ's comprehensive development cooperation

NZ works on Pacific-wide initiatives that address both the region and its different countries and includes areas as amongst others governance, climate change, energy, economic and sustainable fish resource management. A range of NZ agencies involved in the PICs coordinate these initiatives. An important initiative of the NZ ministry for foreign affairs is the possibility for 10.500 people yearly to work in the country as seasonal migrants, most of which come from PICs. These workers can attend training which is not available in their home countries. The ministry describes the working scheme as a success as it does not only benefit the workers themselves but also the respective Pacific countries' economy and helps to meet the labour needs in NZ (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018h).

Further areas of NZ interaction with the PICs are amongst other aviation, maritime safety and security, education, the health sector, and to enhance justice and judicial independence (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018h). The education cooperation as an example offers an extensive NZ scholarship programme directed towards PICs citizens in NZ and the Pacific (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018k).

All in all, *“there are 30 New Zealand agencies”* involved in the Pacific (Interview B). The extensive involvement of NZ agencies in the PICs offers extensive interactions between the respective agents. As the collaboration between NZ and PICs agents builds on issues of mutual interest, they construct regimes built on the grounds of sectoral collective identity. A long range of other programmes between NZ and the different PICs adds to the construction of close ties to the region. By this, the cooperation between NZ and the PICs builds on a comprehensive set of bilateral and multilateral programmes. Country-specific development priorities coordinate the bilateral incentives. NZ perceives the multilateral cooperation with

the PICs as an essential factor that ensures the countries' efficiency in their interactions (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015). The following sections address these in more detail.

5.2.8 Multilateral partnerships

NZ and the PICs are enmeshed in a web of regional arrangements constructed through historical developments over the past two centuries. Through the last decades, the relationships flourished and the independence of the PICs resulted in the broader membership of PICs in the UN. Today, the UN incentives build a frame for collaboration on various programmes in the region. While the genesis of NZ-PICs relations was unbalanced, the Pacific countries strived for more equity and fairness in their relation to the bigger neighbour, which resulted in the creation of the PIF (Lawson, 2017).

Another multilateral partnership achievement that shows a misbalance between NZ and the PICs is the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus agreement. It is a trade agreement between eleven Pacific countries which includes Australia besides some of the larger PICs. While NZ perceives the agreement positively, critical voices from academics see the agreement as unbalanced in favour of NZ and Australia. These voices doubt a positive effect for the PICs and especially no advancements on deep-seated challenges (Dornan, 2017). It shows that the multilateral cooperation between NZ and the PICs is not always one of an equal footing and the NZ involvement cannot be perceived as solely positive. It highlights that NZ does not always have the right understanding of the PICs and is also subject to its reality. However, keeping these perspectives in mind does NZ still offers reliable insights through its established multilateral and bilateral ties (Kelly, 2013).

5.2.9 PIF

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is the most important Pacific region political consisting of 18 members. Namely, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, NZ, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. In 2016, the PIF admitted full membership to the French overseas territories of French Polynesia and New Caledonia (La France en Nouvelle Zélande, 2017). The PIF granted associate membership to Tokelau. There are various observers to the PIF including the ACP Group and the UN. Since 1989 the PIF has held post-forum dialogues with key partners of the region. While some EU member states participated since the post-forum dialogues' creation, the EU itself joined the channel of communication in 2000 (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2018d). The head of government of the respective host country holds the circulating chair of the annual PIF meeting until the next meeting. The

leaders of the named countries gather during the meeting and discuss jointly identified topics. The NZ foreign ministry perceives the forum leaders' meeting as "*the most important appointment on the regional calendar*" (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018d). The PIF created a Secretariat (PIFS) to the forum in 1972. Today, the communication and decisions of the annual PIF leaders meeting and ministerial meetings deliver the PIFS' mandate. The PIFS holds the mandate to implement frameworks of Pacific regionalism (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2018c).

The interaction of the agents of the actors at the PIF offers a broad platform to bring forward their ideas and interests. This offers the opportunity for the involved actors to increase their political relationship and jointly address issues of mutual interests which can contribute to enhancing a collective identity in the Pacific.

5.2.9.1 Framework for Pacific regionalism

In 2014, the leaders of the PIF endorsed the Pacific Framework for Regionalism that commits the PIF members to elevate their partnership beyond regional cooperation. The framework aims to create more profound forms of regional integration and ensure safety, prosperity and harmony in the Pacific region. The effort intends to set out a framework to identify and implement regional priorities. The secretariat outlines that the PIF members shall reach this through focused interaction on a political level (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2014b). The 'Blue Pacific' is the core driver of action to advance the PIF leaders' ideas under the framework. The Blue Pacific is used as a term of the PIF leaders to describe the efforts to create a 'Pacific oceanic continent' involving the PICs and other regional territories. The leaders of the PIF see the Blue Pacific as a collective action for Pacific regionalism and recognise the Blue Pacific as an opportunity to shape a collective identity of the entire Pacific region (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2017a). The secretary-general of the PIFS described the Blue Pacific incentive as a pathway to increase the resilience in the Pacific (Taylor, 2017). The perspective of the forum members does further underline the value of dialogues with its observers and forum dialogue partners. The leaders seek to reinvigorate these interactions to ensure robust and meaningful engagement of these partners (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2017a).

5.2.9.2 NZ at the PIF

NZ plays a crucial role in shaping regional developments in the Pacific amongst others by being an essential contributor to the PIF budget. The push of NZ to bring forward the PIF has helped the PICs to work together in a more explicit form of cooperation. Through this did NZ enhance the Pacific regional cooperation and collective identity. NZ sees itself as a homogenous actor at the PIF with the same importance as "*any of the other countries there [PIF]*" (Interview D). An NZ agent did further say that the country "*certainly wouldn't*

see ourselves [NZ] as using the Forum to drive changes the Pacific doesn't want" (Interview D). This shows a picture that NZ perceives itself as a member as any other and would not lead the other actors into an unwanted path-dependency. NZ's perception shows that the country deems it necessary to outline that it is an equal partner to the region and does not want to be perceived as more important than the PICs just because of its political and economic size.

Other perspectives show a picture of NZ's involvement at the PIF to focus too much on its priorities and interests. Thereby NZ and Australia, the two big PIF members, are determining the forums' direction at the expense of the smaller forum members (Lynch, 2010). The PICs do follow the lead of the more developed and well-connected bigger forum members (Lawson, 2017). However, to gain feedback on their development aid to the PICs, NZ volunteered in 2014 as a first development partner to undergo a review of its efforts. The PIFS coordinated the review and aimed at improving NZ's development cooperation with the PICs. The review of the PIF members builds on the principle of interaction where knowledge sharing and teachings were important pillars for the assessment of NZ's efforts (Tonga Daily News, 2014).

The PIF peer review of NZ expresses both positive and negative aspects of the countries' engagement in the Pacific region. It states that NZ considers capabilities and contexts of the different PICs when engaging in development work. The Pacific countries do further perceive NZ as an effective partner when it comes to the cooperation and activities of other donors in the region (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015). The review outlines NZ's efforts to generate a good understanding of the PICs regarding culture and interests. NZ's bilateral joint communication for developments are assessed as an opportunity for the PICs while outlining the importance to ensure policy dialogue that addresses the partner's ideas and needs (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015).

The review addresses the current lack and future necessity of opinion leaders, especially academics, to broaden the perceptions of NZ on the areas of cooperation and contribute to the implementation of NZ's projects in the region. The review encourages NZ to support the PICs government 'capacity and institutional building initiatives'. The close cooperation between NZ and the PICs through the PIF is a firm basis that benefits the evolvement of even closer ties in the region (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015).

The cooperation's of NZ's government agencies with the Pacific are evaluated to contribute to regional alignment and coherence on matters of common interest. The strive for clear outcomes and accountability of NZ is a hurdle for close alignment with the Pacific agenda (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015). The review team sees a full alignment of NZ and Pacific regional priorities as unlikely as long no effective framework supports a common regional approach. The proposals of the Pacific Framework for Regionalism

could endorse this and elevate regionalism in the Pacific (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015). This shows different perspectives of NZ's involvement in the PICs. On the one hand, is NZ perceived to be a beneficial partner for the region, on the other hand, is there still room for improvement in their interaction and relationship. However, this offers an insight that while NZ has an overall good political relationship and understanding of the Pacific the country also has shortcomings. Nevertheless, the country is in the position to support the EU's efforts as its understanding of the region exceeds the EU's'.

5.2.9.3 EU at the PIF

The PIFS is the most significant implementing partner of the EU in the Pacific. Besides the interaction with the PICs through the ACP agreement, the EU perceives it as the most significant point of regional interaction (European External Action Service, 2016c). The EU uses its membership of the post-forum dialogue as a point of communication to address their ideas and planned activities in the Pacific region for the upcoming year. The EU's involvement at the post-forum dialogue is a positive contribution to construct closer ties with the region solely because it offers interaction with the PICs and the EU sees the dialogue as a stage to evaluate its efforts in the region (European External Action Service, 2017).

5.2.9.3.1 2007 EU-PIF Joint Declaration

Following the 2007 post-forum dialogues the EU and PIF countries issued the Joint EU-PIF Nuku'alofa Declaration. A special dialogue which was the first higher-level political meeting between the EU and the PIF issued the declaration. On the Pacific side, the forum troika in the constellation of the prime minister of Tonga, ministers from Niue and Papua New Guinea and the secretary-general of the PIF attended the meeting. The Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid and the Ambassador of the Portuguese Presidency led the delegation of the EU. Representatives from other EU member states and Pacific forum countries did further attend the meeting (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2007). The parties of the joint declaration agreed to enhance their political dialogue to create a more structured interaction and increase the EU's visibility in the Pacific and the other way around. During the meeting the parties recalled the 2006 strategy for a strengthened partnership and concluded a *“strong tradition of co-operation and trust between the EU and the Pacific Island countries and that a Political Dialogue based on this foundation could make a valuable contribution ... in the Pacific”* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2007). This shows the Pacific perspective on their relationship with the EU and that they expect the interactions with the EU to be beneficial for the Pacific. Further, the highlighted tradition of cooperation trust between the actors shows a picture that the actors encourage another to increased interaction while valuing the current efforts.

The actors agreed on a troika for triennial meetings on the ministerial level and annual senior official meetings at the PIFS. The areas of dialogue include areas such as good governance, regional issues, regional security, trade and other topics identified through consensus. Since the EU gained membership in the post-forum dialogue in 2000, the EU-PIF Ministerial Troika is the first and only additional EU-PIF dialogue mechanism (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2007). However, the success of this dialogue mechanism is doubtful since the EU still lacks to match the reality of its interactions with their expectations (Tavola, 2017).

5.2.9.3.2 EU's misunderstandings at the post-forum dialogue

The 2017 post-forum dialogues offer an exemplary instance for the EU's lack of understanding of the PICs. On the floor of the meeting, the Prime Minister of Samoa expressed some frustration at the speed, nuance and tone in the EU's development aid processes in the Pacific. This was perceived as ungrateful by the EU which resulted in hurt feelings on behalf of the EU. However, the NZ perspective on the Samoan criticism pictures a different reality of the incidence. From their perspective, the critiques should be understood in a Pacific context. It is somewhat unusual that a PIC would criticise a country outside of its Pacific family openly. *"In the Pacific context, if someone is prepared to be honest with you and talk robustly that is quite a big step in the relationship"* (Interview B). This shows a difference in the perceptions of the EU and NZ. NZ perceives the unexpected feedback from the Prime Minister of Samoa to offer a possibility to identify areas for future cooperation.

EU Commissioners do regularly visit the post-forum dialogue besides the EU's resident agents in the Pacific. This would be perceived positively by NZ as they see the involvement at leader's level as important for the PICs. As mentioned in an interview, would it be important to *"find some kind of framework for Pacific-EU interaction at the leadership level"* (Interview D). This shows NZ attitude towards the EU level of agent interactions and outlines a definite shortcoming. The leader interaction could elevate the EU-PICs political relationship and send a signal of recognition and appreciation to the PICs.

5.3 EU – NZ partnership

This chapter analyses the relationship between the EU and NZ. The different sections address the constructed bilateral and multilateral ties which in sum offer an understanding of the current relationship between the actors. This offers a basis for the discussion by identifying the EU's partnership with NZ which builds a basis to foster the EU's political relationship with the PICs.

5.3.1 Construction of a diplomatic relationship

The communication between NZ and the EU started in the early days of the European Community. The close historical ties to Europe have helped to establish close political relations to the EU. The actors share a joint commitment to a rule-based system which gives them a certain level of mutual trust (Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, 2016). The developments of their relationship reached a milestone in 1960 by the accreditation of an NZ ambassador to the European Commission for the first time. The establishment of lines of official communication flourished and the importance of regular interaction became evident. These flexible and informal encounters of the agents are convened ever since 1975. They offer an opportunity for political leaders to exchange knowledge and perspectives on international developments while addressing the state of their relationship. The discussions and proposals of mutual interest are followed up and reported on by the actors' agents (Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, 2016). The predecessor of the EU accredited its delegation in Canberra to NZ in 1984 which was followed by the first political statement of cooperation in 1999, the Joint Declaration on Relations (Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, 2016). With an advancing relationship did the NZ government invite the EU to open a delegation in Wellington which was acquiesced in 2004 though without appointing a resident ambassador. An update of their political statement by a more detailed declaration of actions for the EU and NZ in 2007 got named the Joint Declaration on Relations and Cooperation. This updated version included areas such as human rights, development and economic cooperation and climate change. Since then, the partners negotiated several comprehensive sectoral agreements.

The construction of close relations between the EU and NZ took another milestone since 2012 when the actors started negotiations for an overarching political treaty, the Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation (PARC). The agreement was concluded in 2015, officially signed in 2016 and valid since 1 January 2017. This is the first political agreement that governs their overall relationship (European External Action Service, 2016f). I will reflect on the PARC in the later process of the analysis.

The achievements in the relationship between the actors led to an upgrade of the EU's delegation to NZ in 2016 by appointing the first EU resident ambassador to NZ. The political dialogues grew concurrent and in 2015 the NZ Prime Minister John Key, the President of the European Union Council and the President of the European Commission jointly announced the launch of a process to create an EU-NZ Free Trade Agreement (FTA) (Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, 2016). The same year, the EU delegation to NZ opened a satellite facility called Europe House in Auckland. It provides space for conferences, exhibitions, business and cultural associations, and various kinds of events for the EU member

states and more generally for occasions related to the EU. The partners expect this to promote their partnership, interaction and cultural links (European External Action Service, 2016b).

The historically constructed ties between the EU and NZ have led the two to become partners and develop similar value systems and perspectives on a broad range of areas. The akin viewpoints are on the domestic, regional and international level as the further analysis will show.

5.3.2 Latest EU – NZ interactions relations

The current EU – NZ relations are based on various aspects of shared ideas and interaction. At the end of February 2018, agents from the two sides met for their inaugural Joint Committee meeting established in the PARC. They reaffirmed their commitment to a close friend- and partnership. The conclusion of the annual meeting noted that the bilateral relations are excellent, and the EU and NZ expect to deepen these ties over the years to come (Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, 2018). In April 2018, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini received the NZ Minister for Foreign Affairs Winston Peters where the two counterparts reaffirmed their commitment to the global rule-based system and exchanged perspectives on the Pacific regional developments (European External Action Service, 2016a).

NZ and the EU perceive each other as like-minded partners that share various goals and align on positions on a broad spectrum of global issues (Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, 2016). They are both involved in multinational organisations such as the World Trade Organization and the UN. As analysed before, the partners are both involved in the PIF which the EU perceives as the “*most significant inter-governmental regional organisation in the Pacific*” (European External Action Service, 2016d). This shows the importance of the PIF for the EU’s multilateral efforts in the Pacific.

5.3.2.1 PARC

The PARC is a comprehensive agreement that involves many areas of cooperation and is a framework for a reliable and effective bilateral engagement between NZ and the EU. When signed on 5 October 2016, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy said the PARC “*reflects the increasingly close friendship and cooperation that has developed [...] in recent years*”. “*We want to expand our partnership over the coming decades*”, she continued (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016). The NZ counterpart Foreign Minister McCully said “*NZ has longstanding cultural, political and economic ties to Europe ... This Agreement reinforces our shared values ... and continued cooperation*” (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018b). This shows that the perceptions

of NZ and the EU align around the degree of their partnership as both perceive another as a close partner with a particular collective identity. The partnership is based on shared values and perspectives and is constructed through decades of interaction.

The PARC reaffirms the commitments of the parties to democratic principles and human rights as well as good governance and the rule of law. The agreement emphasises the comprehensive nature of the relationship and builds a framework to promote the future development of the partnership. The parties confirmed their desire and the collective will to elevate their political cooperation and dialogue. They want to intensify the cooperation in areas of mutual interest and benefit which also includes on the regional and global level (European External Action Service, 2016e). The PARC is based on principles of equal partnership, mutual respect and consensus. The agreement also outlines their commitment to shared values and the UN Charter.

The PARC thereby underpins the created collective identity of the partners on different terms of their individuality. The outline common goals and interests are a driver for the future development of their political relationship.

5.3.2.1.1 The interaction between the agents of the actors

The dialogue between the EU and NZ is agreed to be on a regular basis and shall be enhanced where possible and said to be through exchange, contact and consultations at all hierarchical levels of agents. This includes regular meetings amongst others at leader's level, ministerial level and interaction at subunits. On foreign minister level, the dialogue aims at being held at least annually. The European Parliament and the New Zealand Parliament are further interacting and cooperating through interactions between the parliamentarians (European External Action Service, 2016e). In February 2018, a Joint Committee established by the PARC met for the first time and highlighted the excellent state of the relationship on the basis of shared principles and shared values. The EU and NZ perspectives see close alignment on various global issues and shared perspectives on key strategic issues (Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, 2018). The parties reaffirmed their commitment to keeping close cooperation in the Pacific. The already delivered results of their partnership on the PICs access to renewable energies got particular emphasis.

The partners agreed to enhance the knowledge of the others' respective cultures and create closer people-to-people links. This involves the endeavour of policy dialogue to promote intercultural communication on all levels including organisations and individuals. The parties also used the meeting to note the importance of an effective rule-based system on trade and addressed the preparations for the launch of their FTA

negotiations and discussed the current economic relations (Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, 2018).

5.3.2.1.2 PARC on the cooperation at international regimes

Besides the joint commitment to democratic values, the rule of law and human rights, NZ and the EU penned their objectives to promote, coordinate and collaborate on these in multilateral regimes and third countries. The similar socially constructed value and belief systems of the partners offer a basis to for joint approaches areas in multilateral regimes. The parties outline their relationship to be helpful for a broader reach for their respective ideas and interests in multilateral regimes. The parties' cooperation in regional and international regimes is determined by exchanging perspectives on policy issues and information sharing on issues of mutual interest. The political dialogue between the partners shall be used to coordinate positions on regional and international regimes and ensure that joint activities in the Pacific have a more significant impact (European External Action Service, 2016f). The partners agreed on cooperation with a range of other international regimes among others with the World Trade Organization and the before mentioned PIF (European External Action Service, 2016f).

5.3.2.1.3 Environmental and climate change cooperation

The EU and NZ do further outline their commitment to cooperate on sustainable development, energy and environment. The importance of these subjects is prevailing in current debates in international regimes on future challenges such as at the 2017 UN Climate Change Conference. The PARC offers a framework to work jointly on environmental issues and natural resources. The partners want to promote the protection of the environment in regional and international context. Climate change is another subject of the agreement that the partners address "*as a global and urgent concern that requires collective action*" (European External Action Service 2016f, p. 42). This shows that the EU perceives climate change as a matter that requires a collective response. The PARC addresses this and it shows that NZ shares the EU's perspective on this policy area. The EU and NZ support international agreements and incentives such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. They acknowledge the importance to address global environmental challenges and the significance of the sustainable development of the energy sector and agree to share of best practices in the energy sectors. The partner's highlight that regular biennial communication on the senior official level supports the dialogue on this subject (European External Action Service, 2016f).

The cooperation shows that both partners perceive climate change as an important issue and they see the need to counteract global warming collectively. This identifies the interaction in this area to be a driver for

cooperation which expands the bilateral framework into international regimes. The communication between the agents of the two partners is thereby crucial to ensure the effectiveness to act upon issues of common interest.

5.3.2.2 Constructing closer ties through an FTA

The intention to establish an FTA further enhances the interactions between the EU and NZ. The partners currently assess the scope of negotiations after the conclusion of public consultations on both sides. As of May 2018, they are in the process of getting their respective mandates for the negotiations. In his State of the Union Address in September 2017 the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker announced that the FTA between the EU and NZ should be initiated, and negotiations concluded before the end of the current European Commission's mandate in late 2019 (European Commission, 2017). As like-minded partners in many aspects, the FTA enhances the ties between the parties and brings them even closer together. The commitment to agree on an FTA reflects on the constructed ties by showing a mutual interest to align their partnership further and decrease the barriers between them.

5.3.3 EU – NZ cooperation in the Pacific

“The EU is one of New Zealand’s most important and active partners in the Pacific”

(New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018c)

The EU and NZ commit themselves to work together for the sustainable development of the Pacific region. The shared values and similar perspectives make NZ and the EU partners in Pacific aid and development. The two perceive each other as one of the most important and active allies in the Pacific (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018c). NZ works actively to coordinate its efforts in the Pacific with the EU and sees the EU as an essential partner for the region. At the same time does NZ perceive the joint efforts in the PICs as an opportunity to strengthen its ties with the EU. As addressed in previous sections, there is a row of joint NZ-EU efforts in the Pacific amongst others the outlined ambitions in the PARC and the EU's involvement in the post-forum dialogue. NZ and the EU are further working on joint incentives initiated through interaction and shared goals of the two partners. NZ perceives that the “*EU is a very important partner for the region [Pacific]*” which means that the NZ is interested in the EU's involvement in the region and sees this engagement positive (Interview D).

Communication between the agents of the actors builds the core to elevate the partnership and collective identity of the actors. The interactions base on jointly identified ideas to address a specific aspect of

cooperation. The partners hold conversations on how to improve and increase their involvement to find new opportunities for collaboration.

The EU and NZ cooperate on different areas in the Pacific. The operational assistance of NZ when EU agents visited the PICs is another example of the partners' cooperation in the PICs. In 2016, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, went on a joint Pacific mission together with the NZ Minister of Foreign Affairs, Murray McCully. The high-level diplomats looked for new opportunities of cooperation while visiting various PICs. The NZ Air Force conducted the operational implications of the visit. In 2017 when EU's Post-Cotonou High-Level Facilitator "*Pascal Lamy was down in the region, for the post ACP discussions, we [NZ] supported his engagement, provided him with some information and support as well*" (Interview D). The practical cooperation of the partners to increase their efficiency to work with the Pacific region is shows mutual understanding of the importance to cooperate. Through this, NZ showed the effort to support the EU's political engagement in the region. NZ recognises that "*the EU's footprint is smaller than ours [NZ] in the Pacific and how can we [NZ] make sure that their [EU] engagement with the Pacific is useful to inform their [EU] own position on how to support the Pacific*" (Interview D). This shows NZ interest for the EU to better understand the Pacific context and ideas. NZ positions itself as a partner to increase the EU's understanding of the PICs to enhance the EU efficiency of their engagement. It further offers a picture of comrade and recognition as the EU as a valuable partner for NZ in the PICs.

However, the coordination and collaboration on development aid is the backbone of the joint efforts to increase the prosperity and safety of the region. Within the EU-NZ partnership for the Pacific region, climate change and sustainable energy are perhaps the best examples to show how the sectoral cooperation of the partners can benefit the PICs and the EU's efficiency in its regional projects.

5.3.3.1 Climate change and renewable energies

Both EU and NZ agents identify climate change as a major and imminent threat facing the Pacific region in the interviews (Interview C and Interview D). However, both parties agree that responses to climate change go hand in hand with lowering carbon emissions and the sustainable energy production (Pacific Energy Conference, 2016). The PICs are located relatively geographically remote and generate large shares of their supply through the combustion of climate-harmful fuels. Besides the construction of less vulnerable energy supply of the PICs, including environmental considerations, the EU and NZ intend to develop a more sustainable energy supply for the PICs. That said, the EU is NZ's most important partner in the Pacific in the energy sector (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018c).

5.3.3.2 Pacific Energy Conference

In 2013 and 2016, NZ and the EU co-hosted the Pacific Energy Conference to raise support for energy initiatives in the Pacific. These initiatives focused on the areas of renewable energy, energy access and energy efficiency for the PICs. Together, the summits contributed with \$2 billion for investments into reliable, clean and affordable energies in the region. The investments have a time span for projects between 2013 and 2024. The investments have clearly outlined goals among others to generate 50% renewables energy in Polynesia by 2024 (Pacific Energy Conference, 2016). The summit attendees recognised sustainable energies as a valuable response to climate change. Therefore, the improvement of energy resilience and sustainability in the Pacific contributes to pledges made under the Paris Agreement. The outcome of the second summit describes NZ's role as one beyond its financial and operational pledges. The summit attendees perceive NZ as a valuable partner of the PICs to coordinate and attract further donors through its developed partnerships with other countries (Pacific Energy Conference, 2016). It shows how the interaction between the EU and NZ on this area can lead to a positive contribution for the Pacific. This might take positive influence as well on the relationship with the PICs as they might perceive the efforts as useful and helpful. At the same time does this increase the agent interaction just by the fact that the EU and NZ engage on a new project with the PICs.

Samoa increased its share of renewable energy to almost 100% achieved through the EU-NZ cooperation and funding of mainly photovoltaic energy projects. The NZ foreign ministry and the EU delegation in NZ and Fiji coordinated the collaboration on the implementation of these projects. Given insights from an EU agent: *“The technical development expertise was mainly in the [EU] delegation in Suva because the [EU] delegation in Wellington does not deal on a day to day basis with development assistance. Now the staff working on that were in Suva, whereas the day to day liaison with MFAT [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade] took place in Wellington, was carried out by the Delegation in Wellington”* (Interview C). From this perspective, the NZ delegation took part in the decisions of the EU for the Pacific which Fiji usually coordinates. The cooperation on renewable energies shows an example of how the cooperation with NZ derived from the ties in the country can contribute to the EU's interaction in the Pacific. At the same time, this leaves open an opportunity to foster the interaction between the different EU and NZ agents involved in the region. The dialogue between different sectors offers opportunities to reflect on perspectives that the agents might not have done before. This can enrich the overall reflections of the EU and NZ and support to find more adequate approaches to the PICs. Furthermore, can this support the creation of collective identity of the partners on a sectoral basis.

5.4 NZ as a partner for the EU's efforts in the PICs

This chapter analyses the partnership between the EU and NZ as a basis to foster the EU's ties with the PICs. The sections address the different perspectives on the EU's shortcomings in the PICs, NZ's knowledge of the PICs realities and outline NZ to be a pertinent partner for the EU's efforts. This offers a basis for the discussion as it addresses the possibility for the EU to benefit from its partnership with NZ to foster its political relationship with the Pacific.

5.4.1 NZ perspectives on the EU's shortcomings in the PICs

“It's [the Pacific] a long way away from Europe ... and you just can't really understand until you see it” – (Interview B)

NZ perceives the involvement as often ineffective and not based on an understanding of the region while generally valuing the fact that the EU interacts with the PICs. NZ criticises the EU for not understanding the Pacific which might be due to the physical distance between the decision-making agents in Brussels and the PICs. This suggests that the EU takes decisions without sufficient understanding of the PICs to be able to reflect on their ideas, culture and interest.

As approached earlier in the findings the EU is criticised for its shortcomings to address the Pacific needs and particularities. The shortcomings come especially evident in its development aid engagement. NZ agents perceive the *“the aid rules that the EU uses are quite demanding and combats them [PICs] at times”* (Interview D). The approach of the EU overwhelms the relatively limited PICs authorities and causes frustration in the PICs themselves and the broader region. As described previously, the EU's efforts in the PICs are often seen as inadequate which the EU tries to improve through its renewed Cotonou Agreement. The EU is self-aware of its troubles to deal with the Pacific and currently looks to improve its political relationship with the Pacific. The EU evaluates their involvement and collects feedback from the PICs and works to improve the understanding of the Pacific. A different perspective to assist the EU to understand the Pacific interests and culture could support the overall relationship with the Pacific.

Besides its efforts in the outlined agreements, even twelve years after the first penned intentions to elevate the EU-PICs political relationship still lacks a fundamental understanding of the EU for the regional ideas and culture. As a concrete example, in the words of interviewee B, it *“was not the EU's finest hours taking the EU's mission out of Honiara”*. The closure of the office in the Solomon Islands was a wrong signal to send to the PICs regarding their partnership. The EU's ideas and interest to increase its relationship with the PICs and simultaneously to downgrade their presence in the region do not link together. From a PICs

perspective, this might send a signal to them being less important for the further EU foreign strategy. This also decreases the points of interaction between the EU and the PICs which lowers the opportunities to exchange ideas and interests.

As interviewee B puts it, “*what makes good sense and seems to be good practice in Brussels is often just not practical on the ground in the Pacific*” (Interview B). This suggests that NZ sees another shortcoming of the EU’s interaction in the Pacific in the lack to take account of the regional context. The particularities of the relatively small and distinct PICs are not understood by the EU which amongst others leads to struggles with the effectiveness of their efforts in the region. This lack of understanding shows that the EU’s reality differs greatly from the reality of the PICs. The EU seems restricted in their perspective of how to enhance the political relationship and how to be more effective in their efforts in the PICs. The NZ angle further criticises the EU’s efforts as their lack of understanding the Pacific context led the EU efforts to have “*fuelled corruption rather than solved problems*” (Interview B). This means that the EU’s efforts lead to the opposite of the intended as the attempts to support the development of the PICs fuelled the creation of further problems.

The EU is involved in interactions on the regional level such as the PIF. The EU’s limited perspective on the regional context and culture is exemplified by the incident between Prime Minister of Samoa and the EU at the post-forum dialogue. The EU’s perception of the situation was slightly different than from that of NZ who perceives themselves as understanding the region better. The EU’s agents were offended by the Samoan criticism without acknowledging the positive sense behind the comments. The NZ perspective saw this incident as a positive step to foster the political relationship between the actors.

The interaction between the EU and the PICs is primarily through the EU’s agents in the region and at the European External Action Service. While the Pacific head of governments and states attend the post-forum dialogue, the EU’s highest-ranking agents are commissioners. NZ perspective on the level of interaction is that the EU should “*find some kind of framework for Pacific-EU interaction at the leadership level*” (Interview D). This leaves open a shortcoming when it comes to the agent interaction with the PICs. While the PICs offer leader level interaction, the EU does lack to offer interaction with their highest-level agents. It would therefore send a signal of valuation and recognition if the President of the European Council or European Commission visited the region or attended meetings with their PICs counterparts.

The EU engages in the Pacific while the perception of their approach differs between their reality and the one of NZ. To overcome these issues in the EU’s approach, the interaction between the agents of the EU and the PICs needs to be improved as they build the basis to foster their relationship further. An improved

interaction might help to exchange ideas and interests with the region as well as create more intersections for collective identity.

5.4.2 Perceptions of NZ's knowledge of the PICs

The NZ understanding of the PICs derived from the historical and political links which place the country in an excellent position to support the EU's efforts to elevate their political relationship with the PICs. The historically constructed ties and the geographical location of NZ lead the country to have a good sense of identification with the PICs (Baker, 2015). NZ acknowledges that the perception of identification differs across the Pacific and the PICs will give different answers as “*it depends on which bits of the Pacific*” is asked (Interview B). NZ engages with the PICs on all political levels which includes leaders level interaction. The extensive physical representation of NZ is a valuable point of interaction between the parties and opens for broad communication between the agents of the actors. The EU sees the diplomatic network of NZ in the PICs as a “*huge effort from a country the size of New Zealand*” (Interview A). Comparing the EU with the NZ interaction in the PICs, interviewee C describes that “*New Zealand has the benefit of being a represent nation of many more parts of the Pacific than the EU does*”. That means, NZ has a broader influence and outreach in the PICs, and the EU agent perceives NZ as an actor with broad points of interaction with the PICs which even outnumbers its interactions. Therefore, NZ could be a valuable partner to increase the points of interactions of the EU.

NZ's extensive network of governmental agencies involved in the PICs offers another basis for the interactions between agents in the respective policy areas. NZ perceives this involvement to be influential as through their interaction with the PICs “*in a lot of the sectors ... the default is to adopt a New Zealand policy approach*” (Interview B). The adoption of PICs to the policies of NZ leads to the creation of a sectoral collective identity between NZ and the PICs which helps them to gain knowledge and understanding for each other's ideas and interests. The extensive official channels of interaction do therefore offer the benefit to NZ to be in the position to gain in-depth insights into the PICs ideas and identity. NZ works actively towards a better understanding of the PICs and will further increase its understanding.

Another source for NZ's understanding of the PICs derives from its involvement in regional regimes that collectively address challenges and ideas. The involvement of NZ in these regimes such as the PIF leads them to gain a deeper understanding of the PICs through engaging on an eye-to-eye basis with these countries while working on issues of mutual interest. The interaction between the actors is regular and the ideas of the PICs are picked up by NZ which leads them to gain knowledge of the region. The interaction between the actors, or more precisely its agents, means that the experiences and teachings from each other

are reciprocate. Therefore, the construction of the political relationship between the actors through interaction leads to an increased understanding of one another. This puts NZ in a position that they can identify effective approaches to cooperate with the PICs.

NZ's understanding of the PICs might further be a reason for the fact that when the country "*conducts its diplomacy it tends to be much softer ... than others*" (Interview A). This suggests that the EU perceives NZ as a thoughtful partner of the PICs that seeks to interact on a respectful level with the PICs. This puts the country into the position of being an advocate for Pacific interests and a role model on how to find successful approaches to the region.

NZ pledges most of their foreign policy efforts to the Pacific region which reflects the large share of their development aid directed towards the region. The distribution and coordination of these efforts have constructed interactions that leave NZ with knowledge about the PICs. Their knowledge of the region leads NZ to be able to view issues from a perspective that might be closer to the PICs perspective than many others. An EU agent perceives NZ to be "*seen by the PICs as a reliable partner*" which might be due to a legitimate approach to the Pacific (Interview C). The approach of NZ towards the PICs might therefore have more of a contextual fit than many other actors in the Pacific.

The country has the opportunity to further strengthen their regional knowledge by, amongst others, involving the Pacific communities in NZ. As outlined by an EU agent, "*there is a Pacific voice in New Zealand politics and I think that that's a positive thing*" (Interview A). This puts the Pacific communities in NZ into the spotlight as they offer a point of reflection to enhance the understanding of the country with the PICs. The EU perspective sees the Pacific peoples' engagement in NZ politics as positive. At the same time, the Pacific communities in NZ might be an opportunity for the EU to foster their understanding and interaction with the region.

NZ's extensive interaction and approach in the PICs lead the country into a position to be able to understand the PICs' ideas and interests. It leads NZ to perceive itself as a legitim actor on the international stage that successfully helps others to understand the PICs better. "*The world looks for our expertise on our region and we are helping them to understand it*" (Interview D). NZ has understanding and knowledge on the Pacific and shares this knowledge with other actors that want to be involved in the region but lack a strategic approach to reach their interests. NZ's understanding of the region might therefore be able to support another actors' involvement in the Pacific. This perspective sets NZ into the position to be an advocate for the PICs regarding cooperation with other actors on the world stage.

5.4.3 NZ as a partner for the EU in the PICs

“We [NZ] have a very longstanding and quite deep relationship with the EU”

(Interview D)

The historical ties between the EU and NZ and the close people-to-people links led to the evolution of a partnership with a collective identity on different terms of their individuality. The two partners constructed their relations building on shared values which reach from shared interests on democracy to the international rule of law. The partners do, further, share ideas and interests on other issues on the global stage including amongst others shared opinions on climate change and preserving the environment. In many aspects the partners are like-minded, and their relationship evolved towards a deeper friendship. The like-mindedness and the tendency towards a collective identity of the partners are supported by NZ's perspective that *“if it weren't for geography New Zealand would be on a short list of countries that the EU would want to join them”* (Interview D). This means that NZ can identify itself with the EU and sees its values and ideas as valuable for the PICs. The partners perceive each other as reliable actors which evolved through teachings of previous interactions of the actors and the lasting stability of the relations. The findings showed that the bilateral relationship between the EU and NZ are in a good state and the mutual trust and respect builds a basis for the partners to extend their cooperation past the already identified objectives and leaves them open to come forward with new ideas to increase their collaboration on issues of mutual interest.

The partnership between the EU and NZ led the partners to identify common ideas on and approaches to the Pacific. The partners both outlined their interest in working towards the sustainable development of the Pacific region while interacting to coordinate these efforts. As a part of the region, NZ is involved in a row of Pacific regional regimes while the EU takes more of an advisory function in the aftermath of decisions. This means that NZ is directly involved in the Pacific decision making which leaves NZ with broader influence in the region.

The EU-NZ cooperation on climate change and renewable energies showed an excellent example of how their cooperation in the Pacific is perceived positively by the PICs. The EU's perspective sees that the *“partnership with New Zealand has definitely benefitted us [EU] and our partners in the Pacific [PICs]”* (Interview C). The partners agree that they can effectively work together in the Pacific and that their cooperation in the region is mutually beneficial. The EU, further, perceives the cooperation with NZ in the region to as appreciated by the PICs. As an EU agent said, the partnership on renewable energies was *“looked at a very positive line by our partners in the PICs”* (Interview C). This shows that the EU

perspective perceives their involvement in cooperation with NZ as effective and beneficial for the Pacific. That said, the EU might be optimistic that future collaboration with NZ in the PICs would be perceived as successful by the Pacific. This offers a basis for future EU-NZ cooperation in the Pacific.

Additionally, the collaboration on renewable energies might have been seen positive from a Pacific perspective due to an eased interaction with the EU and NZ. An interviewee explained the working process and collaboration of the EU and NZ (Interview D). A joint meeting with the EU and NZ relieved the limited PICs authorities' capacities and meant lesser bureaucratic efforts of the PICs. Both the EU delegation in NZ and in Fiji in collaboration with the NZ authorities coordinated the implementation of energy projects of the EU and NZ. The technical development of the projects was conducted by the Fiji delegation while the delegation in NZ coordinated the communication with NZ. This shows the ability of NZ and the EU to work together in the Pacific region and outlines the relevance of the Wellington delegation to engage with issues of Pacific interest to increase interactions and gather knowledge. NZ perceives the EU as crucial for the achievement of a successful result of the renewable energy efforts in the Pacific as NZ *"couldn't have done that without an EU partnership"* (Interview B). This offers an opportunity for the EU to combine its efforts from its delegation in Fiji and Wellington to enhance its effectiveness for projects in the Pacific.

The operational assistance of NZ for the high-level EU visitors to the Pacific offers another example of NZ's support for the engagement of the EU in the Pacific. The fact that NZ assisted the EU in getting their agents around when on a visit in the region shows another commitment of NZ to the political values and ideas of the EU. NZ showed unity with the EU by demonstrating their assistance for the EU's political interaction efforts in the Pacific. The outlined partnership, the mutual trust and the successful experiences of the EU and NZ collaboration in the Pacific shows a picture of NZ as a valuable partner for the EU regarding its engagement in the Pacific region.

6 Discussion

This chapter aims to discuss the opportunities for the EU to foster its political relationship with the PICs through the partnership with NZ. The discussion is based on the previously identified areas of interaction in the findings. During this section, I will discuss different opportunities to raise awareness and advance the relationship between the EU and the PICs.

“We want to have the EU in the Pacific because we see them as a really good partner, they operate the ways in development and politics that we think are good for the region” (Interview D)

The knowledge and regional affiliation of NZ is a key factor that equips the country with knowledge and insights into the PICs perspectives which makes the country an advocate for Pacific interests. The partnership between the EU and NZ and the concomitant communication between their agents offer opportunities to overcome shortcomings of the EU's approach and understanding of the PICs. Therefore, the interplay of the different reality of the EU and NZ can enhance the reflections and interpretations of interests and ideas of the PICs. NZ's position to foster the political relationship between the EU and the PICs is grounded in its comprehensive understanding of the PICs. The actors perceive one another as an eligible partner to cooperate in the PICs which has proven practical functioning especially in the collective approach on renewable energies. The partnership between the EU and NZ leads the partners to share ideas and interests for approaches in the Pacific. In this sense, the partners align and create a certain level of collective identity for their approach towards the PICs.

6.1 The EU's agreements with the PICs

The EU has formal agreements in place with the PICs that base on both bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The regional agreements concluded between the EU and the PICs show an interest of the EU in the Pacific and lead towards a positive direction to foster the political relationship between the actors. The EU-PICs agreements from 2006, 2007, and 2012 show the intention to work together with the PICs and foster the development of interactions. The agreements offer points for communication between their agents which can be a basis to address and align around shared ideas. While these agreements and the EU-ACP objectives have a good intention, the practical implementation of these objectives have often shown not to be as efficient and appreciated as the EU anticipated. This means that the EU pledges ambitious efforts through their agreements but lacks to fulfil these intentions. The agreements between the EU and the PICs pledge efforts to increase their dialogues and agent interaction. However, the communication is still perceived to be insufficient. The EU reiterates intentions to enhance the political relationship with the Pacific which might be perceived positively by the PICs. Nevertheless, the continuous lack to reach these goals and the critiques from other perspectives such as NZ should lead the EU to reconsider their approach to the Pacific and seek new ways to change their partnership.

Taking into consideration the comprehensive commitments of the PARC, the partnership could assist the EU to formulate agreements with the Pacific that leads to more effective and reflected outcomes. NZs

approach to the PICs seems to be more reasonable and based on a better cultural understanding of the PICs. In that sense, the EU can benefit from its interactions with NZ to reach better working agreements with the Pacific. The fact that many EU positions are at the top end of NZ's policy priorities contributes to boost NZ's interest in supporting the effectiveness of the agreements between the EU and the PICs. NZ could advocate or consult the EU to formulate agreements that take better consideration of the Pacific context. Simultaneously, this leads NZ into to position of being able to identify weaknesses of the EU's efforts and point these out to achieve more effective agreements. An area the NZ perspective sees as especially important is a *“good outcome to the post-Cotonou negotiations with the ACP countries and an outcome that takes adequate considerations of the needs and particularities of the Pacific circumstances”* (Interview D). This said, NZ seems to be sceptical that the EU will address the Pacific pillar of the new ACP agreement in an adequate manner. While the EU is aware of the ACP agreement's lack to address the Pacific circumstances, the NZ perspective offers feedback on the perceptions of the EU. Through this, NZ can act as a partner to provide feedback for the weaknesses of the EU's agreements with the Pacific through its understanding of the Pacific realities. Parts of the agreements where the EU lacked effectiveness for a long time could be reformulated and adjusted through consultancy with NZ. This could help the EU to negotiate paragraphs of future agreements that are more likely to reach a successful interaction with the PICs.

The EU further interacts with the PICs through the regional political regimes with particular emphasis on the PIF. The involvement of the EU at the post-forum dialogue is a valuable point of interaction, however, the EU faults knowledge of the Pacific perspective. This is an area where the relationship with NZ comes into play. The increased exchange with NZ on the PICs interests can support the EU to gain a better understanding of the Pacific identity and culture. The European approach on cooperation might not always be perceived as helpful by the PICs and NZ could assist to overcome these barriers by advocating between the actors. NZs explicit intentions to cooperate with the EU in the Pacific means that NZ could support the EU's efforts at multilateral regimes. An opportunity for the EU might be the cooperation on regionalism. The EU is an expert on regionalism due to its experiences and own composition which offers opportunities for the Pacific regional structures to benefit from this knowledge. As said in an interview does the EU have *“a very specific expertise on regionalism that can be deployed to assist the Pacific nations”* (Interview A). The EU's perspective opens an opportunity for the PICs to receive assistance on how to enhance their regionalism. The EU perceives itself as an expert on regionalism and perceives this knowledge valuable to contribute to the enhancement of regionalism in the Pacific. This could result in close agent interactions and lead the parties to create a collective identity on the basis of their shared interests on regionalism. It offers further opportunities for the EU to gain new perspectives for their future agreements with the PICs

and to better understand their ideas. That said, NZ's specific understanding of both the EU and the PICs realities makes the country a possible advocate to transfer the EUs knowledge on regionalism and its formation towards the PICs.

6.2 Sectorial cooperation's

Both partners perceive the previous sectorial cooperation between NZ and the EU in the PICs as successful, they announced to increase and broaden the cooperation on the sectoral basis. The cooperation on renewable energies in the PICs has shown to create a collective identity as the shared ideas of the EU and NZ leads to a successful interaction that resulted in beneficial outcomes for all actors. The actors perceive climate change and renewable energies as priorities of their interests and their strong alignment on this sector opens opportunities for further cooperation. The interaction of the agents in these projects might be especially significant as this leads the parties to create further ties of communications in areas where they might not have previously been exchanging ideas and interests. These operational areas of interaction are therefore good examples on how to proceed to foster the political relationship between the EU and the PICs. Other areas of cooperation with shared perspectives will most likely follow this incentive. This would further enhance the collective identity creation between the actors. It can also benefit the EU-PICs political relationship if the EU ensures to be open-minded for the PICs perspective in future projects. For this reason, the sectorial cooperation in the PICs between NZ and the EU offers potentials to foster the EU-PICs political relationship in the short term. These sectorial cooperation's that base on tangible, operational projects seem to be appealing to foster the EU-PICs political relationship because both partners can see immediate effects of the interactions.

NZ adds further value in this partnership through its extensive interaction with PICs agencies. This could support the EU and the PICs to determine additional sectors for cooperation. The perspective and understanding of NZ for both other actors puts NZ into the position to propose ideas of cooperation where the country identifies shared interests or concerns. The cooperation of NZ and PICs agencies might further offer leads for the EU agents to identify useful PICs counterparts to communicate on ideas in their respective working areas. For NZ this might increase the collective identity with both parties as it increases the common interactions and exchange of ideas and interests for future cooperation's. That said, vice versa this could open space for the formation of collective identity on some terms of the EU's and PICs individuality.

6.3 Ambassadorial-level agents

The bilateral interaction between the EU and the PICs is an essential point of communication that offers opportunities to exchange ideas and interests directly and helps to stay involved with one another. A collaboration with NZ should therefore not aim to decrease the bilateral activities but rather to extend these through increased interaction and understanding between the EU and the PICs. The partnership between the EU and NZ can contribute to foster the interaction with the PICs through regular conducted interaction between NZ and the PICs heads of missions in NZ. In 2017, the NZ foreign ministry invited the EU ambassador to attend the PICs heads of missions meeting in Wellington which was perceived as useful by the EU. This offers an opportunity for the EU to increase their understanding of the Pacific ideas, culture, identity and interests. The agent interaction at ambassadorial level helps all involved actors to increase their understanding of the others' ideas and interests. It offers a platform to exchange perceptions on issues of mutual interest and address misperceptions. While NZ enables the meeting through its respective networks, the country benefits from the EU participation as it offers an opportunity for NZ to include its perspective when the PICs and the EU exchange their ideas. This means that the parties have another regime in which they can align their perceptions on issues of common interest and bring forward their ideas.

The constellation with NZ, the PICs and the EU might enhance their mutual cultural understanding to ensure to interpret problems similar ways. For example, the incident with the Samoan Prime Minister at the post-dialogue forum could have been interpreted differently by the EU if they had had a better understanding of the Pacific context. At the same time an increased understanding could also support the PICs to anticipate the EU's perception of their expressed concerns and ideas. However, this form of interaction between the EU and the PICs is not regularly, and the EU might perceive it useful to follow this lead and increase its efforts to be more involved in the PICs heads of mission's meetings in Wellington.

6.4 Cooperation of agents across the Pacific

The interactions between the EU and the PICs in NZ is currently limited to the meeting at the ambassadorial level already mentioned which opens for opportunities to expand these. The EU delegation in Fiji coordinates the general Pacific engagement of the EU while the NZ delegation solely engages with NZ concerns. The division of the EU delegations' tasks in NZ and the Pacific exacerbates the benefits of including collective opportunities to increase their relationship with the PICs that can be identified from NZ. While keeping the bilateral interaction between the EU and the PICs upright, closer cooperation of the EU delegations in NZ and Fiji could contribute to creating a more reflected understanding for ideas and interests of the PICs. Thereby, the PICs agents in NZ, the NZ agents and the EU agents in Suva and

Wellington could enhance their cooperation to identify new ideas to collaborate. The benefit of such a regime would be that the EU could combine and correlate their knowledge from both settings to enhance their reflections. The construction of such a regime would foster the interaction between the actors immense and open the opportunity for dialogues on a broader spectrum. Especially agents in the lower hierarchical levels might increase their exchange of knowledge and contribute to further develop a collective identity between the actors. This might benefit the coordination on smaller projects and incentives and enhance the interaction of the agents of the actors. Simultaneously a broader interaction could also lead to a better inclusion of civil societies and contribute to enhanced people-to-people links.

The EU and the PICs might both perceive NZ as a partner of trust that can understandably advocate for their respective ideas to the other. Wellington offers a big network of diplomatic representations and has the infrastructure to support potential operational outcomes of interactions. As an example was joint EU-NZ efforts on the Pacific Energy Conference planned and conducted in NZ. This cooperation opened other actors in the world to gain new perspectives on the issues and interests of the PICs. This might have been perceived positively by the PICs. The creation of a regime that includes the parties' agents from across the region would contribute to overall interaction and understanding for another.

6.5 Pacific communities in NZ

Large Pacific communities in NZ offer opportunities for Pacific insights and understanding which the EU previously might not have discovered. Interaction with the Pacific communities in NZ can contribute to the EU's knowledge of the PICs ideas and identity. The broad spectrum of PICs peoples in NZ can foster the EU's political relationship with the PICs by increasing the interaction and people-to-people ties. Increased interaction between EU agents and the Pacific communities might offer a platform to share ideas and make terms of their individuality more explicit. The interaction on NZ territory might not be perceived to subvert the NZ integrity because NZ perceives the EU as a partner and wants to foster its engagement in the Pacific. This opens the possibility to come forward with ideas that have not previously been taken into consideration. NZ as a host can ensure to include its perspective into these dialogues.

The broad representation of Pacific communities in NZ means that the EU can get impressions of PICs realities without costly and effortful approaches such as visiting the different PICs. It does not mean that this kind of interaction can replace the interaction with the PICs themselves, but it can contribute to better prepare the agents of the actors to find more effective and formative approaches. The interaction with the Pacific communities in NZ might further be perceived as a particular interest of the EU in the ideas and issues of the PICs which could send positive signals to their home countries. The interaction with the Pacific

communities might increase the construction of a strengthened relationship by merely establishing ties in the shape of a new regime that opens for debate on the future relationship. This offers an additional channel of communication between the actors to bring forward shared ideas which could enhance their collective identity. In this aspect, NZ can contribute to foster dialogues between the EU and the PICs by enabling and contributing to the organisation of interactions between its Pacific communities and the EU. That said, the social constructed between the actors can be further enhanced through additional points of interaction with the Pacific communities in NZ.

6.6 Agent interaction on a leadership level

*“Find some kind of framework for Pacific-EU interaction at the leadership level” –
(Interview D)*

The EU’s partnership with NZ can further contribute to identifying additional relevant levels of interaction with the PICs that the EU currently misses out. The interaction between the EU and the PICs is on various hierarchical levels. However, NZ identifies a shortcoming in shape of the lack of interaction on the highest level. The NZ perspective acknowledges that there might be more vital and relevant areas in the world that the EU leaders use their time on. Nevertheless, as NZ identifies could the interaction between the leaders of the EU and the PICs be an essential step to foster their political relationship. NZ understands that yearly meetings between presidents of the EU and their counterparts in the PICs are not realistic when looking at the significance of the Pacific region to the EU in comparison to other regions such as Africa. NZ has specific insights into the EU’s reality in that there are more urgent matters which the EU leaders are engaging. Regarding this insight, NZ sees the relevance of these meetings to increase the EU’s political relationship with the PICs. This shows that the NZ perspective reflects on the EU’s perceptions of priorities but simultaneously identifies that the EU is coming short on an area which they nevertheless should address.

During an interview, the interaction on leadership level was not only identified but also a solution to this issue was recommended by the NZ agent (Interview D) which the 2006 strategy for a strengthened partnership also addressed. An option to enhance the EU’s interaction with the PICs and to show a degree of recognition and value to the PICs could be four-yearly meetings on a leadership level. An example of how to conduct these meetings are the Japanese efforts in addition to its post-forum dialogue participation. The Japanese Prime Minister meets his PICs and other PIF countries’ counterparts every four years. This four-yearly format could be adopted by the EU which might further elevate the political relationship between the EU and the PICs. The EU will have its reasons why this kind of interactions has not been

established. Nevertheless, NZ perceives it to be in the EU's "*interest and ours [NZ] and the regions [Pacific] to have that kind of dialogue to develop*" (Interview D).

7 Conclusion

The social constructivist theoretical lens led to identify that the EU's partnership with NZ might be pertinent to foster its political relationship with the PICs in different ways. The Pacific knowledge and its sense of identification with the PICs put NZ into the position to be able to identify effective approaches to cooperate with the PICs. With these insights in mind, the country could support the EU to identify its shortcomings and misunderstandings with the PICs. NZ's comprehensive understanding of the PICs' realities can enhance the EU's reflections of the Pacific context when bringing forward ideas and proposals for cooperation. The sharing of knowledge and insights by NZ agents might help the EU to increase the contextual fit of their approaches and enhance their ability to interpret Pacific ideas better. This could obviate future misjudgements such as occurred at the PIF post-forum dialogue.

The EU's expectations and pledges of efforts in the PICs do not always match with reality as these intentions lack efficiency and understanding of the Pacific context. The NZ approach also lacks shortcomings and is not the 'true' way to approach the PICs, nevertheless, the NZ approach is comparatively more prudent and based on better contextual understanding. As NZ has a better relationship and understanding of the PICs it makes the country an important partner for the EU.

NZ's comprehensive relationship and shared interests with the Pacific make the country a valuable partner for the EU's interaction with the PICs. In that sense, the EU might benefit from its ties with NZ to reach more effective agreements with the Pacific as NZ could advocate or consult the EU to reach more adequate considerations of the Pacific context.

While the EU seems to be in a certain flounder on how to improve its political relationship with the PICs the partnership with NZ could be supportive to identify new approaches to the PICs. In this sense, NZ could contribute to overcoming existing barriers between the EU and the PICs by backing promising ideas. NZ's explicit intentions to cooperate with the EU in the Pacific means that the country could support the EU's efforts at Pacific regional regimes. While the weak Pacific regional structures could benefit from the EU's knowledge on the formation of regionalism NZ could play a role to ensure that the transfer of knowledge is useful in the regional framework. This could be especially relevant for the Pacific's efforts on the Blue Pacific.

The previous sectorial cooperation between NZ and the EU in the PICs was perceived as successful by both partners, and they announced intentions to increase and broaden such cooperation. This opens opportunities for the EU to broaden their interactions with the PICs while enhancing the outlook for the efficiency of these activities. The interaction of the agents in these projects are especially important for the enhancement of the relationships between the actors. The interactions establish further ties of communication in areas where the actors might not previously have been exchanging their ideas and interests. The extensive involvement of NZ agencies in the PICs might thereby offer valuable leads for the EU's agents to identify PICs counterparts to establish dialogues in their respective working areas.

NZ can further contribute to foster the political relationship between the EU and the PICs by offering a platform for the EU's ambassador in Wellington to increase the interaction with the NZ located PICs counterparts. It would offer another regime in which the agents can align their perspectives on issues of common interest and jointly bring forward ideas for change. At the same time, NZ could contribute to establishing a regime for discussions between agents from across the Pacific including the EU's agents from Suva and Wellington. The comprehensive diplomatic network of PICs in NZ offers an opportunity for NZ and the EU to assemble their agents and the PICs agents in NZ to conduct joint meetings. Involving EU agents from Suva and Wellington as well as their NZ and PICs counterparts could combine and correlate knowledge from the different settings and lead to enhance the effectiveness of the collaborations. The construction of such a regime could ease the access to keep a dialogue with the different relevant agents and bring together agents with different specialisations.

The EU's partnership with NZ can further contribute to identifying additional relevant levels of interaction with the PICs that the EU currently might not be aware or see the importance. The interaction between the EU and the PICs is on various hierarchical levels. However, NZ identifies a shortcoming in shape of the lack of interaction on the highest level. This shows how NZ can contribute with reflections on the shortcomings of the EU while simultaneously come forward with practical solutions to address these opportunities. Therefore, the interaction at leadership level should be on the EU's agenda when evaluating ideas on how to strengthen their political relationship with the Pacific.

The large proportion of Pacific communities in NZ offers opportunities to gain Pacific insights and understanding. To establish interactions with the Pacific communities in NZ might additionally contribute to the EU's knowledge of the PICs ideas and identity. The Pacific communities can support the construction of a strengthened political relationship by opening a regime for debates on the future political relationship between the EU and the PICs. Through these means would the EU be able to gain insights into the interests

of the Pacific societies. NZ has an essential role in this opportunity as it can support interactions between the EU and the Pacific communities. NZ can do this by identifying and initiating dialogues between its Pacific communities and the EU where the country deems necessary reflections.

7.1 Implications

The research is generalisable to different aspects of the EU and NZ involvements with the PICs. The research has relevance for the EU, NZ and the PICs as reading this paper from the different perspectives can support insights into the current shortcomings and recognise opportunities on how to overcome these. The respective agents could benefit from these insights to increase their awareness of possibilities where to initiate a change. While the paper primarily is based on an analysis directed towards the EU, the findings can benefit the NZ or the PICs agents by assessing the findings from their respective perspectives.

From an EU perspective, the paper can draw awareness to the importance of NZ when looking for new approaches on how to improve their political relationship with the PICs. The EU agents might benefit from the insights as they currently miss out on opportunities to increase their efficiency in the Pacific that can be enhanced through the NZ's diplomatic ties, stance and understanding of the region. For the EU it might be especially interesting to look at increasing their interactions and understanding with the PICs using NZ based points of contacts.

From an NZ perspective, the research can be useful to acknowledge its important stance in the EU-PICs relationship. Insights from the paper could bring attention to the opportunities in connection with the Pacific communities in NZ and on opportunities of its extensive PICs diplomatic network in the country.

From a PICs perspective, the research can draw attention towards the inherent opportunities of their engagement in NZ when it comes to interaction with the EU. Its representations in NZ and a vast number of Pacific peoples living in the country can contribute to the change in their relationship with the EU. The research draws further attention to the relevance of the different PICs to collaborate to ensure their voices get heard on global stage. The cooperation with external actors in the region such as NZ or the EU offers an opportunity to ensure these voices get heard.

7.2 Outlook

The research reflects on the current relationship between the EU, NZ and the PICs from mostly an EU and NZ perspectives which leads to a shortcoming of the PICs perspective. Further research could be carried out to focus on the Pacific perspectives on how to foster their political relationship with the EU. The

research addresses a few opportunities for increased interactions and leaves space for further research to identify other areas and concrete approaches and steps to enhance the EU-PICs political relationship. It requires a more in context understanding of the PICs to be able to recommend a change which suggests that further research should be conducted from the Pacific region itself. Furthermore, research could be carried out in an action research together with agents from the different actors to address more concrete steps and approaches on how to foster the political relationships and ensure a practical implementation of these.

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List of Appendences

Interview A

EU Ambassador to New Zealand

Why do you think that the EU should be involved in the South Pacific Island region?

I would say the EU needs to be involved in the Pacific more generally, but the South Pacific is part of that region. I think we are at a stage where in terms of strategic partners in the Pacific it is important as a choice for the countries it serves but also for major powers of which the EU is certainly one. I think we have seen especially since the elections in the US some hesitation as the direction of US policy. China is obviously expanding its presence in the Pacific, and the EU would be a useful partner for the Pacific and Australasian nations. I have to say that this is not a matter of antagonism against China, but it is a matter of a healthy balance of strategic involvement. More than that we also must look at strategic questions in the region. The Pacific is made up of 12 relatively small countries, all which face climate change as a major challenge, all of which have major problems as regards the margin of globalization and integration into the world economy. There we also have to point out that we have a significant French population in the Pacific.

If we take the first one first, as climate change and oceans are concerned. The geographical spread of the Pacific despite the low population nevertheless means that if we have to have a global policy on preserving the world's oceans and after all that which was the driver of the major conference in Malta last year, inevitably that means we cannot ignore such a huge expanse of the ocean. That goes from everything from international legality, the UN convention of the law of the sea, through climate change, through conservation of biodiversity and also through preservation of fisheries and what we call blue economy. In that case we cannot be absent such a huge proportion of the world's oceans. Secondly, and in particular in regards of the countries it serves, many of whom are small island developing states we have committed to combating climate change. The Paris Agreement is a major achievement, but nobody thinks the Paris Agreement is sufficient. We have to increase our commitment to the small island developing states in which case it is absolutely impossible to be absent from the Pacific. And thirdly, we have to look at New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna. We have an important Member State presence in the Pacific. All of the reasons, I would argue, mean that we have to continue our commitment in the Pacific, far away from Europe, because it is part of the EU as a Global Actor. Now, nobody says we can do this on our own and I do think anybody would pretend the EU has the intention that the EU has the intention to be a completely independent actor in the Pacific. We need partners, and with New Zealand we have a partner who is well accepted in the Pacific, but it doesn't suffer from what some think can be seen in terms of Australia, a degree of some resentment about Australia being the major regional partner. That is just the way things work regionally. With New Zealand we share values, we share visions and we work together as I am sure we will discuss later, very effectively in regards to development assistance in the Pacific.

How would you evaluate the EU in the Pacific region compared to other regions in the world especially like the close neighbourhood?

Inevitably politicians will look to the close neighbourhood where the degree of variety of threats to our border, to our own stability can seem much more imminent, and indeed they are, but I think that politicians tempt to look at the short term. But politicians who only tempt to look at the short term tempt to be footnotes in history, politicians who look to the long term write history. We have adopted a global strategy and if we are to be taken seriously as a global actor we have to operate outside the strict boundaries of our immediate neighbourhood. I think on that point it is important to note that our immediate problems in our immediate

neighbourhood are also related to wider problems, migration is not something that comes let's say from Turkey or Libya but from sources much further afield. If we take the case of Libya, which I now reasonably self (Ambassador to the area) the migrants itself are not Libyans, they come from west Africa, the horn of Africa, and even further afield, Iraq, Afghanistan etc. We can't simply limit ourselves to our immediate neighbourhood or even the neighbours of our neighbours when we are dealing with global problems. I think increasingly we see in the case of migration that, yes of course the immediate proxy that causes a civil war for instance Syria, Horn of Africa and indeed in west Africa. But what causes this conflict, and I would argue that climate change is becoming and ever more important factor and that we will have to look at climate change including its on knock on effects on our immediate borders, we have to look at it globally. That means we cannot be absent from the Pacific for the reasons that I numerated earlier when discussing the partnership in the Pacific.

How would you evaluate the current involvement of the EU in the region?

I think we have been present in the Pacific for a long time, it has to be said. Let's not forget that the ACP grouping is not a new grouping. Indeed, the roots of the Cotonou convention and its predecessors go back to the Treaty of Rome. We have been present in the Pacific for a long time. Part of that is the legacy of Colonialism, but I think of late, I think we are now in a new Phase looking at how we bring that partnership we modernize that partnership to cope with today's world. That was the reason why Pascal Lamy, for instance was here in July. He met with the Pacific partners, but I think it is also important to note that he met with New Zealand and Australia as our partners in the Pacific. And we will be looking towards creating a new partnership when we will be renewing the Cotonou Agreement. But I think that is only one element. We are not a development agency that is part of our important policy towards, but I think we are becoming an important actors through the world in regards of political stability and there we have clearly build the common foreign and security policy but we also have the common security and defence policy. We have operations in the various parts of the world. I am not saying that we are necessarily having to have operations in the Pacific but neither we are looking to bring these on in a broad spectrum, looking at the causes at conflict, looking at mediation, prevention. I think were we can work very effectively with Pacific partners, with Australia and New Zealand. And looking at potential conflict situations in the Pacific as indeed we can work with other partners in the world, so we should see it as a policy towards.

Now you mentioned the involvement of New Zealand in the Pacific, especially on political stability. What would you say the main focus points of the EU should be of the next decades?

I think the biggest challenge we face, and which is the root of many of the other challenges we face, which are only in some cases manifestations of the existential challenges of climate change. We have to provide a real partnership which will allow the Pacific Nations, the Pacific region to confront climate change both in terms of mitigation and adaptation. I think that would be a key contribution.

How should the EU proceed in these topics?

Well, we have already the partnership with New Zealand, the energy partnership. The general direction is to expand our partnership in terms of for instance agriculture, in terms of other forms of sustainable economic developments and that englobes everything, dealing with climate change, mitigating it where possible, adapting to where necessary but also and most importantly helping to provide the Pacific Nations with a hope for the future. They can become part of what is evermore a connected world, which is a bit of a cliché, but when we look at the Pacific Nations is that faces connectivity. Globalization is a challenge to our world but especially in the Pacific. There are a number of hurdles which mean that process of globalization is really a huge challenge. When you take for instance take countries of Africa, 50+ nations who are contiguous represent a growing proportion of the world population, the argument that you can see

globalization has its own impact, it has its own energy its own emphatic, but in the Pacific, we are talking about a question of ten million scattered over 12 countries. It is much more difficult to get on that bus than is elsewhere, so connectivity is also a huge challenge. We have to look at specific solutions for the Pacific.

What would these specific solutions include?

I'm not, I mean we could go into smaller details on that, but I think we have to recognize for the parameters and work from there. Obviously, development assistance will be part of that, trade will be part of it, but also looking at specific solution for small island developing states. That includes from making sure their voices are heard multilateral, but also adapting wider policies to take on their concerns and that will filter through eventually to specific policies. But just to take one global policy that we pursue for the past, almost a decade now, which is in the regards of fisheries. Fisheries are extremely important for an ocean region and there we have been very committed to perusing the actions against what we call IUU fishing which is illegal, unregistered fishing because that is a huge danger to these countries. Both in terms of their sovereignty but also in terms of their economic future. There I think we can help promote those policies to ensure that these countries who are smaller have huge economic zones. In fact, a matter of example, New Zealand has the world largest exclusive economic zone. That means a combination of ensuring that the oceans are viable, ensuring that fishing is viable and ensuring that benefits are crude to the stains because that is a key to the future. Whether it is domestic fishing but also the management of fishing vessels that come from elsewhere. There I think we should be concentrating on that as well as the other aspects we discussed earlier.

When you mentioned how New Zealand comes into perspective, you mentioned values, a common vision, multilateralism and also economic zones, fisheries. Do you think that New Zealand would be the right partner for the EU to bridge towards the pacific?

Yes. I think New Zealand is a Pacific nation, sees itself as Pacific nation. In fact, it concentrates its development assistance and its diplomatic deployment in the Pacific. It was noticeable recently, we had a meeting with Pacific heads of missions as MFAT. The presence, just the simple physical presence of New Zealand in the Pacific region is impressive. They have resident missions in 9 out of the 12 countries. Which given the size of many of them is a huge effort from a country the size of New Zealand. I think that many of the issues face the higher nations in the Pacific are close to the concerns of New Zealand even, so it is an OECD member. Let's not forget that New Zealand does have in the form of Cook Islands and Niue a direct stake in the South Pacific in particular, not forget Tokelau.

You mentioned that New Zealand would be a potential partner. How about New Zealand's stance in the Pacific? I have heard wider critics of academics that New Zealand is not a voice of the Pacific as they have a different approach as the small islands.

First of all. Not only is New Zealand a partner in the future but is already a partner. The second point, yes I have heard some critics practically in academia, making criticism of New Zealand's policies in the Pacific. I would argue that when you look at the way New Zealand conducts its diplomacy it tends to be much softer, much more low key, less megaphone diplomacy and wagging its fingers at the Pacific than others who I wont mention. I think sometimes academia is a comfortable place to make criticism from but I overall think New Zealand plays a very positive role in the Pacific and is appreciated amongst the pacific states themselves. If not necessary the New Zealand academia, but the important one is that the countries themselves and the political classes in those countries appreciate New Zealand's role.

Taking New Zealand as an important partner. How would you evaluate the importance of the Pacifikas [Pacific people] in New Zealand?

The Pacificas, and that includes people of Cook Islands, Tonga and Niue, represent an important part of the New Zealand population. I think more so than they do elsewhere, it is New Zealand is almost the first port of call for many nationals from the Pacific Nations both as temporary workers, as short term migrant workers but let's not forget the important New Zealand communities who have a Pacific origin in addition to of course the Maori who are themselves of Pacific origin. There is a Pacifica voice in New Zealand politics and I think that that's a positive thing and regarded as such by all parties in the New Zealand political spectrum.

How would you describe the EU's stance in the region in relation to other major actors?

We touched on it at the start. I think there are strong voices that speak up through the Pacific. I think we still have to make a case. I think it's a case which can be heard in some Member States, I think in particular France and Germany who have historical, let's be franc, Colonial links to the region. I think we still have to work harder to make the case in other Member States who don't necessarily have that historical, colonial link to the region. For the reasons that I gave as respond to your first couple of questions. We have to make that case more coherently, so it's not something which I think is generally accepted. My own feeling that within the EU institutions that that case is understood. I think it is probably the case amongst some of our Member States, but we have to recognize the reality that the Pacific does not come high on the agenda amongst the majority of our Member States. So, it is our job as advocates of the Pacific and the involvement in the Pacific and necessity of partnership in the Pacific to make that case. It is not something that has been done, it is something we still have to do.

Would the EU act independent or in cooperation with other actors?

It has to be in cooperation. And as I said earlier, it is not a matter of being antagonistic to other actors. It is a matter of being pragmatic and seeking coalitions on different issues. This isn't some 19th century great game. Not least because the issues and in particular coming back to climate change, are not a game and it is not a matter of strategic position. It is a matter of global importance and as a global actor, committed to the multilateral solutions and processes. Then we have to work with partners. So, it is not a matter of being seen as antagonistic to China, or the US or anyone else. It is a matter of getting agreement on the importance of the Pacific and working on specific issues with other strategic actors. There really is not a matter of some sort of imperialist wanting to be present to the Pacific to be waving the flag, no we have to be much more pragmatic than that.

That would mean cooperating with partner that not share many common values?

Ambassador Savage: Of course. We said that already. One incentive is the One Belt, One Road incentive. Where we have to think very pragmatic when responding to the importance of infrastructure, when recognizing China as a global player and its contribution to economic development. We have differences on certain issues with China, but that doesn't mean that that is a major reaction, a negativity to everything that China proposes. No, as I said in my answer earlier, we have to look on at things on a case to case basis.

Taking the relevance of working together with other actors and also Pacific actors in regional groupings. How would you evaluate the role of the EU as a dialogue partner at the PIF?

I think it is important to recognize, here I have to be a bit careful, I think it is fair to say without it being a criticism, that the regional architecture in the Pacific is less clear than it is elsewhere. Thinking of for instance Africa, for instance all the Caribbean where there is a much clearer and better-defined series of regional structures. And there are many reasons for that and some of which are connected to the point of connectivity I discussed earlier. Maybe a vast region the very small population with what I have to say a

migration magnet with the South in particular. So, there are problems which don't facilitate the building of a regional architecture in the Pacific but I think there are improvements that can be made. In particular the link between political solidarity amongst leaders and that carrying through to effective institutional action at a regional level.

How would you see the future of the EU as partner at the PIF?

Ambassador Savage: There is PIF, but there are many other regional actors. I think what we have to look for is to help the Pacific nations to build effective regional structures. Those will probably be based on the ones that exist already, but they also have to take into account specific problems of the Pacific. We are not there yet, that will be one of the tasks I think, one of the important tasks, of the future. There I think we have a natural advantage in the EU itself as a regional structure and its commitment to regionalism. We have a very specific expertise on regionalism that can be deployed to assist the Pacific nations.

How comes the new ACP agreement into play, what shall that involve?

No decision has been made, we are very much at a consulting phase. I don't think that it for the EU, or though it is an important actor in the process, the ACP itself has an agency, the countries of the ACP countries have their own views. So, it is really important that we reach an consensus on how the ACP moves forward. It is not something that can be decided unilaterally. Our feeling, which I understand is to some extent shared by important ACP nations, is that we need to modernize our partnership. The current thinking in the EU is about creating separate pillars under an umbrella in other words, rather than having one global agreement which applies as much in the Caribbean as it does in the Pacific and Africa. That we have 3 separate pillars. I'm saying that's the thinking in Europe which doesn't necessary mean that that is going to happen, but I think everybody recognizes that that relationship needs to be modernized.

Looking at the three different pillars with a focus on the Pacific. What do you think needs to be modernized?

I mean we touched on a lot of the issues already. Regionalism, the development of Pacific regionalism. I think the acuteness of the challenge of climate change, connectivity and working with the Pacific and the partners to ensure that the benefits of globalization can actually reach these very small nations. That's not an easy challenge and it also needs it to recognize that so far that hasn't been the case. Only seen how in areas in diverse South America, South East Asia the benefits of globalization and indeed the downsides of globalization is tangible, that is not so evident in the Pacific.

Interview B

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Divisional Manager of the Pacific Regional Division of the Pacific Branch – Pacific and Development Group

How would you describe New Zealand's stance in the Pacific? As a PIC or what is the stance?

I think the situation is changing and for us I think we see New Zealand as a partner and member of the Pacific region. Internally some of our own language is changed over the last 5 years or so from being a donor to being a partner and being a PICs. If I think of a few concrete examples, New Zealand was admitted as a full member of the Pacific's Health Ministers Meeting this year, rather than as a donor. We give an awful lot of money to help in the Pacific, but we have also 9 direct "randoms" of understanding with the Pacific countries for provision of direct health care services. So, as the region gets more and more integrated you see a little bit of, like, what happened in the EU and their every days in terms of regionalization of services and integration of services. I like to describe New Zealand as a Pacific country sitting in a Pacific neighbourhood. In the region there is still a divide between Pacific small island developing states and Pacific Countries. I would say New Zealand is definitely a Pacific Country but not a small Island developing state.

How do you think the other Pacific Island Countries perceive New Zealand, as a part of these nations or outstanding?

It depends on which bits of the Pacific, so for us, and you get a different answer if you ask Australia, because of the wider population set up and the diaspora of the population and because of the way the demographic is trending. If you asked first the realm countries they will see New Zealand as a Pacific country, so Tokelau, Cooks and Niue, they are all part of New Zealand's realm, they have a constitutional type. I think they would see New Zealand as a Pacific country and themselves as an extension. If you ask Polynesia, they would say a strong Pacific neighbour because we have so many shared population and in some cases the population is bigger in New Zealand than it is back on their home islands. I think as soon as you get up to Fiji, Fiji is its own special case, in terms of regional politics. Once you further pass then to Melanesia, they probably see New Zealand as a partner in the region but outside of the a Pacific island countries. That would be my guess.

How much influence do you think New Zealand policies have on the region?

Quiet a lot. We had something called the Pacific Framework which was an internal official working document and that was based on the fact that there are 30 New Zealand agencies. From police to customs, to health and education, to statistics, working directly in the Pacific every day. We are really aware that in a lot of the sectors, particularly in the public service sector I would say, and in particular in Polynesia and the realm the default is to adopt a New Zealand policy approach. If we look at something like aviation security in the Pacific, there is a tendency certainly in Polynesia to use New Zealand provided equipment because it works with New Zealand aviation regulation, it works for the US, so the major tourist parts are covered by the regulations. With that comes all of the security, the security policy and everything else. And certainly, true in the defence space, customs space and police space as well. There is a gap I think between the kind of governance policies, the ways of making a country operational, where New Zealand is quite influential because we see ourselves as a country who creates good policies and has the space to do that. Another good example of that is the Pacific Island Forum, as in fact in a study to identify New Zealand to our Prime Ministers department to look at the policy project that we underwent ourselves in the last couple of years to learn from it. I think in the international policy space you can sometimes see gaps. Over the last few years climate change has been a good example of a gap where the Pacific had a very strong view. Under

previous government we took a view that was not entirely aligned with the Pacific view. It had a lot of commonality, but it was really distinct. It wasn't a shared the Pacific view. I think if we look fisheries, we do have a shared Pacific view. If you look oceans we have shared Pacific views. There is a number of issues where we are looking into the realm if we have a common foreign policy amongst the Pacific countries. I think there will always be a gap. In the same as there is in the EU, I think there will be issues on where there is strong agreement and makes sense to have a regional agreement and those discussions New Zealand's way of doing things tends to be influential because it often makes sense. Australia is also highly influential besides that they push a little bit harder than we do. But there are also key areas where we don't have commonality.

Would you say New Zealand can act as a voice of the Pacific region or as negotiator?

We have done on some issues. If I think in my own career, before I did this job, I did oceans and climate change and environment. I did the UN more generally. On a number of oceans issues for example if I think back to Rio + 20 in 2010, we basically were the advocate for Pacifica's interest. I think the difference over the last years is that the Pacific has had a really big year on the international stage. Due to the number of high profile roles. Fiji has had the presidency of the general assembly, they chaired COP23, they chaired the oceans process. It has been a really big year. Through some of that you saw what we have talked about a little bit, which is a strong Pacific voice coming through. We have been working on making sure that we are connected in to that Pacific voice.

How do you think the EU comes into play? Should the EU be involved?

I think the EU doesn't have a chance as long France is in the Pacific. There is a definite. If I have a look at the role the EU plays in the regional meeting space, you have a primary (one of the four primary) defence partner is from an EU country. In that space there isn't really an option. I think if we looked at it from a geostrategic view. If I would be the EU I would like to retain the influence in the Pacific. If you look at everything else that's going on in the region that may seem like a little backwater of the world, with only small countries but it is pretty strategical important. I think the area that we do see the EU active and does care about is in the issues fisheries, and issues related to oceans and climate change. From a planetary health perspective, the Pacific has one of the planetary health mechanisms sitting right in the middle. When we look at the post-Cotonou environment and what the EU does next and that's negotiation. I have been consistent in advocating for the EU to remain strongly engaged. And to understand that along with Africa, I understand all of the pull with Africa and I understand the enormous and proximate geographical pull relating to the refugee pull. I understand all of that attention and I also think that the EU would want a strategic foot in the Pacific because once you take it out is hard to put it back in. One of the things that was most notable this years and I talked with Pascal Lamy about it when he was here, which he has acknowledged was not the EU's finest hours, taking the EU's mission out of Honiara the week Lamy flew down. It was a very unfortunate signal to send for something that wouldn't have been difficult for a few months to at least see how to transition it out. It was a very interesting example to me of a Brussels reaction that wasn't grounded in the understanding of what the EU was gaining in terms of strategic advantage of being involved in the Pacific.

How would you evaluate the current involvement of the EU in the Pacific?

Where I see it in a really positive space is in the science and technical cooperation space. I think it is in a re-evaluation phase and I think so because of the post-Cotonou negotiations and because the EU's attention is distracted or taken up by other things that seem more immediate. And BREXIT of course as a big piece of that as well. The EU as a strategic partner vs the EU as a donor in the Pacific is a really interesting question in the Pacific. What makes good sense and seems to be good practice in Brussels is often just not

practical on the ground in the Pacific. The EU is struggling to deal with some of these questions of... There is an enormous amount of money and good will but sometimes the systems and processes that come along with it for very good reasons. We have been advising that there needs to be a little bit of flexibility and give and take so you are getting the learnings and gains from that relationship.

You said that New Zealand could help the EU to understand the Pacific better. Where would you say comes New Zealand into play when looking from an EU perspective at the Pacific?

One of the things that we have encouraged the EU to do is to remain engaged with the regional architecture. It is very tempting as a donor to try to get that maximum bilateral leverage out. We can really see; New Zealand and Australia do co-fund a lot of architecture because for a number of microstates we realized that we will only be able to achieve good governance with regional institutions. We have been encouraging the EU for example on the human rights front, or gender rights front or fisheries front to be investing in either the forum secretariat or the secretariat of the Pacific Community and those technical agencies to underpin some of the wider political negotiations that are going on. That is something the EU has definitely done but there is space to do a bit more.

And you think that New Zealand would be a negotiator or translator for the EU to understand the regional problems?

Tend to say a translator than a negotiator. For New Zealand, the Pacific is by far the hugest amount of our development investment that takes up 60% of our development assistance. It takes up much more than 60% of our development focus when we are talking about the prioritization and what we want to achieve. It is hand in *blood* with our foreign policies objectives in terms of the stability of our own neighbourhood. In that space we are putting in quite a lot of effort to make sure that other donors coming into the region, and the EU is obviously one of the major donors, are well coordinated. If I think back to where we were 4-5 years ago on the oceans front in the Pacific. Oceans was the big issue before climate change was the big issue because no one wanted to talk about climate change, so people talked about oceans. You had so much money pouring into the region, but it was incredible uncoordinated and, in some instances, lead to bad governance outcome because you fuelled corruption rather than solved problems. We spend a lot of time of helping them and Charlotte McGouy the other person you talk to, I have someone else in my team who is dedicated to us trying to affect policies and other donors. And us making other donor in the region more coordinated and making sure that the money that is coming in is helping to solve problems rather than creating them. And some very small and in some cases some very under supported government structures of some really small states, to make sure that money that is coming in is going to the right place. That's what we are focusing on and are talking to the EU about what our priorities are. What we see as the potential big wins that the EU could demonstrate progress on something like renewable energies is a tangible example on of that. If you look at the EU's investment on renewables energies in the Pacific it has matched and leveraged of the work that we have done. It has matched and leveraged on some of our bilateral programs. That has been a successful example of a powerful donor partnership that is giving some tangible results. For a country like Tokelau to go to 90% renewables energies within 4 years' time frame is an extraordinary transformation and couldn't have done that without an EU partnership.

You are mentioning a lot about the EU as a donor. Before you said donor vs strategic partner in the Pacific. Where do you think this "partner" comes in taking away the economical donor part and focusing on the political aspects?

I think we are in a development phase. EU strategic partnership with the region, it is a long way away from Europe. Having lived in Europe for a long time. It is easy to see that it is hard. I don't think anyone understands the Pacific until you visit, and you see some of the challenges on the ground and you see some

of the realities on the ground as well. I've spent a lot of time in Europe trying to explain to people what it was like and you just can't really understand until you see it. I think you can't understand a country like Kiribati and how climate change influences Kiribati until you go there and see what that means. What I'm saying in a geostrategic sense is that I don't yet see the EU really understanding a Pacific perspective and one of the things that I wonder is that I know it is really hard for the EU to coordinate amongst themselves and it takes a lot of time to get all of the states to an agreement. Sometimes I wonder if the EU where they were having spent so much time and energy on agreeing amongst themselves if there is really the capacity to engage with a set of vary different states. When we talk about the Pacific it's a bit like when we talk about Africa. Africa is 54 different countries, the Pacific is 14 different states and they are really, really different. The nuance of understanding, I think, is not to understand the difference between Fiji and Samoa, that's straight forward. But understanding the difference between Kiribati, Tuvalu and Tonga is harder because you are not actually in here and seeing it you will not have the understanding of the people and culture.

You were coming in on regionalism and that it is hard to coordinate for the different [EU] member states' approach to the Pacific and it might be slow. How would you think the PIF comes into play or where are the chances to increase their involvement and make a difference?

I think there is a real opportunity in that space. If you look up what the Pacific Islands Forum has done over the last year. It has reframed the way it makes policy in a regional sense based on the back of the leader's decisions. Leaders meet now, and they put a lot of effort in and we put a lot of effort in. Leaders meet in September every year and they agree on for what their priorities are for the year. And in these priorities, there is a lot of commonality of what the EU sees issues in. The top three this year is climate change, fisheries and connectivity. All of these areas are where the EU has strong interest and often technical expertise behind it. The Forum is then going through a process of on the key issues for leaders working through what the agreed policy is, so an officials mechanism. In some way it is similar to what Brussels does but on a much more small scale. (We would turn up on those last week) and talking about how we actually moving forward in policy sense on some of the things our leaders regard as priorities. There is some space I think for someone like the EU to be partnering with the Forum Secretariat and say actually in this space leaders have said they want to do more on connectivity where we [NZ] can partner with the EU to look at something like that.

How do you evaluate the EU at the PIF. Do you think the EU should be involved more? Or stay as partner?

I think as a partner is a good place for the EU to be. It is always sensitive discussion in the Forum on who is in and who is out. But like the EU in some way, expect it's on the other side of the world. You [EU] can be really influential as a partner.

We looked at the EU in the region and you mentioned other partners in the region. Also at the PIF there are other partners such as Russia, China or USA. Where would you say is the EU's stance in the Pacific compared to other major actors?

I'm sure people talked with you about the dynamics from this years' Forum. One of the dynamics that I saw at this Forum was that China is clearly an influential partner and donor in the Pacific. One of the reasons for it is so influential is that it is easy to scale up investments or to get money for ideas quickly with much less accountability. There is this speed and scale versus an EU approach of discussing ideas or like a World Bank approach or New Zealand approach. You discuss the idea, you do a good concept design, you have all the expertise and then you down a slow track for money. I have a slightly different take on the exchange that happened between the Prime Minister of Samoa and the EU on the floor of the meeting when he sort

of expressed some of his frustration at the speed and nuance and tone of the EU processes. Because I think it is a good thing that he said it in the meeting. I think previously, that is an evaluation of Pacific diplomacy, previously even five years ago people would have been polite and said nothing but just be annoyed. Now he said this so there is something to work with the EU in the Pacific context. I talked with the French ambassador about this as well. There is a few hurt feelings in Brussels and there is a few hurt feelings on behalf of the EU. In the Pacific context, if someone is prepared to be honest with you and talk robustly that is quite a big step in the relationship. You sort of do that with your family, but the Pacific has never done this outside the region. When I work in New York, we have robust discussion within the Pacific grouping, but they never make it on the floor of a meeting. New Zealand and Australia do it because we are just to do it. Unless it is Fiji, you would rarely see a strong view expressed by a Pacific leader in a meeting. For me, looking at the way the EU operates at the moment, we have been relatively robust too in our discussions in terms of some of the mechanisms and processes to do the opposite effect of what you intend to do if one of the objectives of donating is to get some good bilateral leverage or multilateral leverage as well. As the package you [EU] put around it is so unresponsive to the actual environment in the Pacific and the actual capacity that exists to absorb that money. So, if there is one person in the Cook Islands who manages all of that money flowing in, then reporting every quarter is not reasonable expectations. That is where practicality meets pragmatism I think.

The EU and other actors in the region. What approach should be chosen? How should New Zealand's relations with the major actors in the Pacific be handled?

What we do or the approach that I've been advocating for is that where we have interests we partner with people. The EU has some really great shared values with New Zealand in gender, human rights, and other values and governance based processes. There is a natural point of connection that we [EU and NZ] should be partner with in the Pacific. Another area where there is some natural partnership is around the technical and science bit. The EU has an enormous capacity for science. I would be interested to see to move into the next edge of operational climate change work in the region. On oceans certification, on cost and erosion, on food security and crops. If we look at the work Germany is doing, there is an amazing work that is coming out and some impressive work that is rolling out in the Pacific context. And the work that the EU is already doing on fish stocks in the Pacific. There is some really positive and influential platform there that will be transformational for the Pacific. If we get them wrong it would be absolutely disastrous, if we fish the fish and don't have any more tuna then that's it. It's pretty much the last tuna resource there is left in the world. Some of the work the EU is doing helps underpin signs of negotiations to manage that stock sustainably. For me that would be one of the areas where New Zealand is looking to partner.

You think that some policies from the EU could be transferred to the Pacific were New Zealand could be a negotiator or actor as well?

Yes. But it also includes a degree of flexibility because it is such a different environment of operation. If you look at the EU's smallest states, they are still an awful lot bigger than some the biggest states in the Pacific. There is very different scales of capacity.

What would you say are the main points for the EU to work on in the Pacific region with New Zealand as a partner?

I think sector focusses is really good. The work on renewables energies has been really good. The work on connectivity and ICT if you look at submarine cable network that is proposed or envisioned to go into the Pacific in the next ten years will give pretty much connectivity across the region. With that comes a massive opportunity and the EU is well positioned to help to make the most of some of that opportunity. At the same time balancing some of the risks around cyber security and other things. There is some risk that we can help

manage probably in the security space because infrastructure is a regional approach now. Making the most of connectivity issues in terms of health or education or human rights and freedom of media reporting to some of these closer societies would be really good advantages. I think there is traditional package of issues relating to oceans and fisheries where we don't always see eye to eye with the EU, but we have some common interests. I think we will continue with the EU a set of shared law of the sea issues and law of the sea is the rules of the road in the Pacific because that is how the Pacific is made up.

Interview C

European External Action Service - Advisor in the Asia-Pacific Department of the EEAS / Former Ambassador of the EU to the Pacific

How is your current posting different to your posting as EU Ambassador to the Pacific?

Currently I am advisor in the Asia-Pacific Department of the EEAS and I am working on some issues which I have been worked on before in Suva but with a broader geographical focus with strategic communications. I am working on advising on how the EU can upgrade its relations with the Pacific Island countries as well. But I will be likely to be leaving the EEAS shortly to the re-join Europe Aid which is the Development Cooperation, I'll be the Director General there.

When you went to the Pacific, was it a personal preference or was it decided upon you?

I had no longstanding desire to go to the Pacific, I must admit. But the Pacific's delegation job was published outside the normal rotation. Every year in the EEAS there is a whole list of Ambassador jobs that is published, and the position in Fiji wasn't in that package because the post was vacant. I think it was published in something like December where all of the other post have already come up the July before. I hesitated about applying for this job, I wanted to become Head of a Delegation, but I knew nothing about the Pacific. But when I looked into, where Fiji was, what the responsibilities are going to be, I got quite excited, and certainly pleased that it happened.

Do you think the EU involvement in the Pacific is a united approach or is there own interests of the Member States that colludes? As in 28+1 or EU?

I think the European Union does work as one in the Pacific, perhaps more though than in another geographical region. The member states have a very limited presence. In Fiji there are two Member States Embassies, France and the UK. There is also a charge de affairs from Spain and there is the German Development Agency GIZ, the other Member States are not present. And the EU Delegation in Fiji covers most of the Pacific from Suva and the Member States are not present in many other countries in the Pacific. I think the British and French have embassies in Papua New Guinea, French have an Embassy in Vanuatu and the British in the Solomon Islands, but that is it. I think that does make for the EU really representing the EU interests through the Pacific, it works quite well.

Now you mentioned the big Member States having representation in the Pacific, and you mentioned France. France has territory in the Pacific. Is France following its own interest or is the EU the coordinator in the Pacific?

Clearly France has its own interest in the Pacific due to their three overseas territories in the Pacific. New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallace and Fortuna. We work very closely with France and these territories on regional integration issues. The fact that New Caledonia and French Polynesia are now full members of the Pacific Island Forum means that there are more opportunities for integration, economically, of the overseas countries and territories in the Pacific than there were before. That is something that the EU very much supports. The EU sees the fact that there are 500.000 EU citizens in the Pacific in New Caledonia and French Polynesia, as an opportunity to get our message across and to use the territories as a representative of the EU.

We digged into France and the EU. How well do you think is the EEAS is equipped to tackle EU-Pacific relation looking at the composition of the EEAS. Is there self-interest, especially looking at France or other stakeholders?

I think that as far as the Pacific is concerned there are not terribly strong desires in the Member States to push forward on their own. I think the Pacific is of relatively limited economic interest. Certainly, we consider it to be of great strategic interest, because of the growing presence of other powers in the Pacific. We have worked pretty well with the Pacific Island countries on issues such as climate change, we have mutual interest of working together with the Pacific Island Countries. I think where in other parts of the world, different Member States have very key interest, let's stay in trade relations, in pushing their companies themselves where there is a certain competition among the national companies in the Member States. In the Pacific, because of the limited presence of the Member States industry, that is not a problem.

From my experience in New Zealand I know that it is sometimes hard to make the case of the importance in the Pacific compared to the EU's direct neighbourhood. How important is it for the EU to be involved in the South Pacific?

I think it is important to maintain and even enhance our presence and activity in the Pacific. For a very long time the EU has been seen as a reliable developing partner to the Pacific Island Countries. The Delegation to Suva was set up in 1975 and has been managing developing efforts across the Pacific. What we are seeking to do now is to upgrade and enhance our relationship to make it more political because we do have a lot of interest in, as I mentioned before, climate change. Maritime security is another area where we can enhance our cooperation. Political security is a challenge across the Pacific. We can work together on ocean governance. I think we can join forces with the Pacific island countries in international forums, in particular the United Nations, in order to make our views of what developments we want to see to actually take place.

How would you evaluate the current involvement and where should it develop towards?

I think the development aid needs to continue. I think it is an important time in the relation between the EU and the Pacific because we are shortly to negotiate a new agreement which will replace the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. The Cotonou Agreement that governs the relation with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. We are waiting for the EU Member States to negotiate with the EEAS to begin negotiating with the ACP countries to go forward on what a new agreement shall involve. For that reason, the way we see it, it will become more a political relation, however the development cooperation will continue, but we will seek to develop a closer partnership around issues which are of mutual interest. For the Pacific we can anticipate climate change, maritime security, ocean governance, renewable energy and so on. There is an interest from both sides to work towards.

You mentioned the ACP agreement. What do you say on critiques in the margins of the evaluation of the current ACP agreement?

I think political dialogue in the Pacific works well on a country basis and we have in the last few years very effective political dialogue with Pacific Island Countries, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Kiribati, PNG, Solomon's, and so on. Where we need to do more work is on political dialogue with the PIC as a group. There is room to improve the way we interact on a strategic and political level with for example the PIF, which represents the PIC, and there is also room for us to interact with the sub-regional groups of the PIC like the Melanesian Spearhead Group, the Polynesian Leaders Forum and the Micronesian Island Forum. Certainly, I think there is an opportunity to work more closely together on political and strategic issues with groupings of countries not just with countries alone.

You mentioned the PIF. What is the relevance of the EU as dialogue partner?

We provide a lot of development cooperation to the Pacific, as I said before, and the PIF secretariat is responsible for coordination of that development cooperation making sure there is that there is, let's say on

the Pacific site, effective organization of the planning and delivery of this assistance. I think the other facts on development cooperation on critical strategic importance, both the Pacific and the EU. Climate resilience, renewable energies, human rights, the reinstating and reinforcing democracy. All of these issues would benefit from discussion at a relatively high level between the EU and the PIF leaders. It is not just the secretariat but the chair of the Pacific. There is this Chairmanship that changes each year, the current chair is Samoa, the next one will be Nauru, the last one was Fijian. So, there is what they call a troika. What I would want, or think will happen is that we will establish a system of dialogue with these representatives of these PIC as a group.

You mean especially the chairman?

Yes, together with the PIF Secretary General but also than the leaders of these countries. They clearly, as it Samoa has the political lead at the PIF by chairing, so we need to speak to the Premier of Samoa not only in his capacity not only as Prime minister of Samoa but also as leader of the PIF group.

As you know I had the pleasure to be working for Bernard (EU Ambassador to New Zealand), so my interest is New Zealand in the Pacific as it is a Pacific country and important in the Pacific. Where do you see the relevance of New Zealand for the pacific, especially looking from the perspective of you having been the EU Ambassador to the Pacific?

While I was the Pacific, while in Suva, we established a very good Partnership with New Zealand around renewables energies across the Pacific. In a number of PICs we established joint programmes supporting the development of renewable energies, taking in sober energies. In for example I think it was the EU of providing renewable energies to the southern group of islands and New Zealand for the north, or the other way around. We worked very effectively together. I think New Zealand has the benefit of being a represent nation of many more parts of the Pacific than the EU does. They have high commission, in Kiribati, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, places where we can't go. We have, I think, technical expertise, we have funding which we can add to the New Zealand outreach to work effectively together in that way. New Zealand is seen by the PIC as a reliable partner. I think to a certain degree it is seen as a Pacific Island Nation and partly because of the huge presence of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand, in particular Auckland which is the biggest Pacific Islander city. Our partnership with New Zealand has definitely benefitted us and our partners in the Pacific.

You said in the Delegation in Fiji you worked with New Zealand on renewable energies. Where was the relation with the EU Delegation in NZ?

The technical development expertise was mainly in the Delegation in Suva, because the Delegation in Wellington does not deal on a day to day basis with development assistance. Now the staff working on that were in Suva, whereas the day to day liaison with MFAT took place in Wellington, was carried out by the Delegation in Wellington. There were a number of very useful and high-profile events. There was the Renewable Energy Summit, the first one took place in 2013, there was another one in 2017, they were both in Auckland and brought together people from all over the Pacific to how together we could upgrade the capacity of renewable energies. We carried out in the last few years two missions around the Pacific on New Zealand efforts playing with former Minister McCully and the European Commissioner for Development, now Mr Mimica, and before Mr Piebalgs, visiting a number of countries where EU and New Zealand were working together. I think the partnership was looked at a very positive line by our partners in the PIC because they could see that it was no longer necessary for them to have a meeting with the EU on renewable energies and another one with New Zealand, everything was combined, and we were able to coordinate the support effectively.

Do you think the cooperation between the Delegations to the Pacific and New Zealand should work more closely and use New Zealand as sort of a bridge for the Pacific? As you mentioned the development cooperation but there is also the political dimension.

I think more on the development cooperation side as the political cooperation side. I mean we certainly, the EU and New Zealand, can see eye to eye on strategic issues but I think on political dialogue we would retain as bilateral initiatives between the EU and PIC. I think as far as development cooperation is concerned we should try to expand our cooperation out of renewable energy sectors and we are seeking to do this now in forestry I think in the Solomon Islands and there are other opportunities related to the environment, climate change and so on.

You said it would be more a development than political. But if we look at politics, the EU and New Zealand have similar approaches when looking at core values – rule of law, democracy, human rights.

I think we need to maintain our relationship with the Pacific on a basis of the EU and the Pacific Islands. And you mentioned as a bridge and that's where New Zealand is a conduit (channel) and I think that would create a certain distance between the EU and PIC which would not necessary be beneficial. That we work close with New Zealand is good, but we need to maintain our direct relationship with the PIC.

Taking the cooperation on renewable energies into perspective. You said a political cooperation is still not possible but there are other areas as climate change, ocean governance, do you think these would a tendency where the EU could cooperate with New Zealand to reach out into the Pacific (so the PIC gets a better understanding of the EU)?

Yes. I think that partnership is very beneficial. It is not only on issues on issues such as renewable energies and climate change, but we work effectively with New Zealand as a partner. In Fiji for example we both, together with Australia and Japan, we supported the development of the parliament following the elections in 2013. We work together also for providing support for the election, so we can work effectively in more political areas.

End of interview part 1 – 9.30-10.00

Do you think all Member States of the EU see the relevance of the Pacific?

I think that interest in the Pacific varies a lot but nearly all Member States have an Embassy in Australia, 8 in New Zealand, and from Canberra and Wellington, Member States with various degrees of interest come to the Pacific. When I was working in Suva I used to visit Canberra or Wellington every few months for conferences etc. to be able to update the EU Heads of Mission of what was going on in the Pacific. And there was a Heads of Mission meeting in Wellington for example I was trying to combine the trip to New Zealand and then Bernard (or Michalis before) would set a meeting on the Pacific. I was always surprised on the level of interest that the Member States showed in the Pacific. Last time I went to Canberra, maybe a year ago, there was the Heads of Mission meeting and they stopped and had a coffee and we moved on to the Pacific and nearly all the Member States listened to what we had to say on the Pacific. So there is quite a lot of interest, even the smaller Member States who clearly don't have the resources to cover the Pacific as perhaps they would like to. And I know that some of them do not have diplomatic relations with some of the PIC so they tend to rely on the EU presence to inform what's going on and to represent their country. Whenever there was a trip of one of the Ambassadors or High Commissioner's from one of the Member States to one of the Pacific Islands, we tried to organize trips, so they could see some EU cooperation projects we were implementing. It was good for our visibility also with for example the Austrian Ambassadors visit to Kiribati that we organized for him to go and waved the European flag a little bit when

we showed him projects we do. I think the fact that they are nearly all of them in Australia and a number of them in New Zealand does help them to maintain at least an eye on what's going on in the Pacific. I don't think that there is very much a separation between the Member States who have historically have a presence or interest in the Pacific. I mean in some extent it also depends on the Ambassador himself, how much involvement and interest they have in the Pacific.

Would you say there is dissent when looking at the ACP Agreement and its future outline – focusing on the P (Pacific)?

I think we will find out in the next week because the EEAS and Commission have presented a draft negotiating mandate to the Member States and that gives of how we see as being in the EU in the Pacific compact, other words the Pacific pillar. I don't really want to preamp what the Member States will be saying about that. I don't imagine there will be opposition on what priorities we have proposed for our relationship with the Pacific, but this is the time the negotiations take place. The ACP Group in the Council has a very heavy Agenda between now and May, every week they will be discussing development aspects of the negotiating mandate.

Is EU internal dissents taking influence on the ACP Agreement?

A: I don't think whatever prioritization of national concerns that may be happening in some of the Member States with some parts of the world, does not affect the Pacific because it's such a distant outpost of our foreign policy. They don't even have specific eastern or central European Member State who says let's not do this in the Pacific. They are seeing things from an EU perspective because they don't have the presence not the expertise and they really very much relying on the EU. I notice whenever we go to COASI (the working group that deals with Asia and the Pacific) a lot of Member States are very interested in the knowledge on what opportunities or challenges there are but in particular when they don't have own representations.

Do you think the future strategy of the EU is taking in account the critiques of the current ACP agreement?

What the EEAS is proposing with the ACP countries to replace the Cotonou agreement takes into account the evaluation of what worked and what not worked. I know that sometimes the EU procedures for management of development aid are a bit drowning for a bunch of Pacific Islands but also for other partners in different parts of the world. I don't think that the purpose of a Cotonou agreement is to rewrite the financial procedures that we have because there is a financial regulation that covers the way money is paid by the EU that covers what ever type of expenses we have. That financial regulation is decided by the EU Member States and you have to bear in mind that the EU has a great number of control bodies looking at how we spend money and that translates in perhaps more exacting procedures than other donors face. As far as the Pacific is concerned, in most of the Pacific countries its worth bearing in mind that we are moving towards budget support. We are for example involved in budget support in Fiji, in Samoa in Tonga, Marshall Islands, Cook Islands. Which means we pay money in cash to the partner countries against the matrix of reform. (Budget support, we will sit down with the partner Government and decide the basis of a sectorial strategy if a partner Government for a strategy of renewable energies for example. If we have let's say 10 million for that country for the next for years, we will give them the money directly into the budget. And you can do whatever they want with it. In order the money to be dispersed we have to see that you are achieving some of these actions which you have set out in your plan. Every few months we sit around the table and have a policy dialogue with the partner Government around the reform agenda for this specific set. They may say in 2 years we will have 90% of our electricity generated from renewable energies, we say okay if you do that and 2-3 other things... in two years' time we will pay you this touch of the budget

support. This means they get money, we don't check how it is spent, they don't need to use any EU procedures in order to spend that money. It doesn't matter on how they spent that money, what matters to us is that our funds are helping to ensure that the reforms take place.) Those countries where we have budget support are certainly finding that EU procedures are to a large extent irrelevant whether that complicates or not, they don't have to use it. Except when sometimes we provide an additional budget for them to recruit technical assistance for example for the national authorizing office. There we do insist some certain procedures to recruit consultancy. The vast bulk of the money, 95%, in a lot of the Pacific countries is going into budget support which means the procedures don't go into. The budget support is also changing the relationship, I think it is important in the frame of our evolving relationship in the Pacific. Because rather sitting in Suva checking that the procedures get followed and checking invoices, rather than doing that we are sitting in a meeting room with the government representatives and talking reforms. That means a growing maturity with our relationship with the partner government. That is policy dialogue on a sectorial basis. When we consider that a sectorial basis we are engaging in policy dialogue around budget support and at the same time we are having political dialogue on an annual basis with the Pacific countries in line with article 8/10 (Cotonou Agreement). Article commits us and the ACP countries to have a political dialogue, which in the Pacific we were a little bit slow to get off the ground because the logistics in the Pacific, but that is certainly changing.

How does the EU perceive the involvement of other major actors that might use a different, more a short-term approach of development aid?

We work very closely with all donors that we are equal to work with. Through sharing information and exploiting possibilities for shared financing, dividing our workload or for agreeing for which sectors we focus on. In most Pacific countries we find that this is accepted. Talking about Fiji for example, as Australia focusing on education and the EU on sugar and the kiwis may focus on health or whatever. But there is generally speaking the notion of labour which indicates that there is a clear understanding that we work together with other donors. Some of them we call emerging donors are less transparent in the way they do business and China is clearly very present in the PIC which is in the countries Taiwan is not present in. Those provides assistance in the countries which recognizes Taiwan. It was one of the first times, New Zealand was able to join to the implemented program with China in the Cook Islands. I'm not sure on how the implementation on this collaboration between New Zealand and China has turned out, that you need to ask MFAT. But if we do try to get close to China to understand what their planning is but so far it's not proved to be terribly easy.

Seeing it is not terribly easy to work together with these actors. Where do you see the opportunities for the EU?

China provides most of its support in infrastructure, building roads building buildings. The do soft things as well but the bulk of the support goes in infrastructure. We don't work in infrastructure. SO the areas in which we will, let's say, come up against China as a donor with which we need to, let's say, agree on who does what, is relatively limited because they already work in different sectors.

Do you see opportunity for the EU and China working together where the EU would jump on the day to day operations of the China built infrastructure?

In a country where we are providing budget support if the beneficiary country wants to use some of the budget support in order to finance the current costs of financing (let's say) the current costs of management hospital, it's up to the government. But I think it is unlikely that we would say okay, China built this hospital and we will now cover all the costs of recruiting staff.

That would further not be that case that a cooperation with China would happen?

You should look at what the kiwis and China did together in the Cook Islands, I think it was in the water sector in Rarotonga. It was an attempt to work with China, look at that.

We talked about the Pacifica in New Zealand before. As former Ambassador to the Pacific you might be well aware of this. What relevance do the Pacificas in New Zealand have for the EU when looking at the Pacific?

I don't know.

Mostly from what I know. When Pacifica's go to New Zealand they get a scholarship from New Zealand, they get highly educated. If I say more I probably lead you too much towards what I was looking for.

Well, if New Zealand is able to train Pacific Islanders who then go back to their countries to provide an increased capacity to manage funds, we would be more than happy. Was that the right answer?

That was something I was looking for. Do you see the opportunity for the EU to invest in human capital and open a university to educate Pacifica's?

I don't think that we would ever finance a university in the Pacific or New Zealand. What we might do or do with some of the partner countries is provide support for capacities. Some of these funds find their ways into New Zealand institutions that are training Pacificas.

An overseas campus, such as in Bali, wouldn't be an option for Pacifica's and Europeans to study together at a campus?

Well, we have the ERASMUS as you might know, and we have been trying to get uptake of that program in the Pacific. It is not easy that being quite a number of students from the Pacific, mainly from the university of south pacific in Suva, who have carried out their masters or research in the EU. Also University of Auckland, don't know of Denmark. But not as many I like, I was quite disappointed of the numbers and it is quite difficult to attract Europeans to study in the Pacific. There are some European students in Suva but not that many. We have specific ERASMUS programs.

So out of your expertise you see the option to invest in human capital in the Pacific and try to upgrade the project down there, looking at the ERASMUS?

Yes, we are trying to do that but there are certain barriers, the biggest one is distance but perhaps also the perception that European students may have on the lack of the education down there. I mean some of the courses that the University of South Pacific are fully certified and recognized, others are not.

Why I am saying this is from personal experience studying at the University of Flensburg which had an overseas campus on Bali, of course Bali might be a bit more attractive destination than the South Pacific. But, I can see a lot of potential for the Pacific and was wondering why there are so many Pacifica's going to New Zealand if the EU could increase its involvement in the Pacific? Universities with EU and Pacific's?

I don't really see this ever happen. I don't see an European University to set up a campus there, it would be great but it is just too far. And in Australia and New Zealand, its their neighbours. I mean a lot of Pacific students also go to Hawaii.

I used pretty much all of your time so I try to finish it off as fast as possible. What do you think was the most important lessons that you took from your time being in the Pacific?

I think the PIC are important partner for the EU. Or are potentially very important partners to work together on the global issues such as climate change, maritime security, ocean governance, environmental issues and so one. We need to work to, let's say, raise our cooperation from one which is predominantly focussing on development cooperation to have more of a political relationship with the Pacific as a whole. We have quite close strategic/political relations with the countries itself, but the Pacific as a whole which is presented by for example by the PIF, we need to talk to them as strategical, political partners.

Have any of your thoughts of the EU approach or involvement changed since you are back at the HQ?

It is easier to realize being back here that everything that is going on, that everything that is going on in the world, everything that is going on in the world especially with our close neighbourhood, it is difficult with our leaders to find time to focus on a very distant partner.

So you say the EEAS needs to give the region more attention?

Yes, but it is easy to recognize the difficulty of that when you also have Libya, Syria , all sorts of challenges, Iraq, much nearer to the EU. A much more greedy impact on the EEAS.

Any additional comments on the EU involvement in the Pacific with New Zealand as partner?

I think we have covered everything. But I mean New Zealand is a strong partner, our partnership will continue to strengthen.

Interview D

New Zealand Ambassador to the EU, Sweden and NATO

Why are you Ambassador to the EU, NATO and Sweden, why these three?

A lot of history basically. We opened an Embassy in Belgium many years ago, but from the 1960s onwards the EU has been a really important partner. The largest chunk of what this Delegation here does is the EU. I have the title as Ambassador of the EU for that reason. We are working with NATO for 20 years which has been on military equipment, we have troops since 16 years in Afghanistan and there has been a strong relation with NATO there and we are looking at the future relationship with NATO at the moment, so that's the second title. And Sweden is so to say an axe in the history. We had a mission in Sweden for a short period, but we had a change in government who decided to reduce the footprint. They closed the Embassy in Sweden and rather than switch the accreditation back to De Haag, where it has been done historically. They said that Brussels is our biggest post and most important one in Europe with the most senior Ambassador, so they switched the accreditation to Brussels. That is why we have Sweden for that reason. I don't do Belgium, but my Deputy is the New Zealand Ambassador to Belgian, Bulgaria, Luxemburg, Lithuania and now Moldova. That to say, a lot of our relationship with Belgium is about world war 1 and about enumeration. There is a heavy agenda on that. We had that for the last few years, so having someone who is able to spend time instead of being torn in a bunch of different ways. And the other representations are all relatively small ones to engage so we don't have the money to have posts in every single EU capital, so the accreditations are spread around, and these ones make sense in terms of travel access of the different places.

The EU and NATO are connected because the NATO has its HQ in Brussels or is there a different reason why?

It is for the location of the NATO headquarters being in Brussels.

Does that mean that the three dividing of the responsibilities of New Zealand means that the EU is less important than other partners such as the US or China (and Mongolia)?

I spent at least 80% doing EU so that is the largest part of the patch, so Dane does Sweden and the NATO is stuck with one of our colleagues and a defence attach who works with that as well. I guess it's a fair question, but I wouldn't use the US or China as equivalence in the sense that in the US we have got Washington, we have got Los Angeles and Honolulu we have got posts. In China we have 6 posts across the greater China region, so there is some staff to focus on a very of economic, security interest. With the EU it is not like a country so you are dealing with a whole bunch of technical issues, so it is sort of a different relationship where we are trying to build a relationship that is different when we are building with a country.

How is it being Ambassador to an union?

It's quite clearly is, well look at diplomacy normally is about country to country relationship. Or you accredited from a country to an institution, usually UN institutions. New York, Geneva, Dublin, OECD is slightly different but those sorts of things. The different with the EU is that you are not a chair member of that institution, so you sit aside the EU and try to engage with the group. Which is a collection of 28, soon to be 27, who are focused on their particular interests and problems. Their only interest in third parties is if the third countries create problems for them or if they want something from the third parties. So we are sort

of on the outside hammering for attention. So, you ask how we effectively engage with an institution with this sort. So, a lot what we do is building up relationship with people that matter for us, are important to us. Focusing on our narrative where in the areas where New Zealand offers something useful for the EU. Trying to create a stronger relationship where our Free Trade Agreement comes in, where the Pacific stuff comes in, trying to solve problems where it comes in.

You said you build up a relation with important people. These people are EU but also its Member States nationals. Do you feel that you have more contact to some nationals than others, especially the big Members such as Germany, France or England or is it a common EU approach?

If you look at the Commission or Council, it doesn't matter where people come from its about what they do. We have a particular close relationship with the EEAS, DG Trade, DG Climate (Dane spend a month there when he first arrived), DG Agri, it is a range of areas where we have relations with. It doesn't matter what the nationality is of people that we are trying to work with, it just doesn't matter. We work with them and we afford, if the Parliament historically, it is fair to say that we did have a comfort zone with the Brits, we speak our language, they come from the same kind of legal background, we have got the commonwealth connection. We have to think of the Friends of New Zealand which was formed in 2012 which was led by a Brit and there are a lot of Brits who were involved in that in the early days. SO there was a to go to group of people that were pretty easy for us to connect with across the different parties and what we deliberately have tried to do is that we have friends across all of the Member States across the Member States. And that we have the ability to engage with people from a whole range of different backgrounds, interests, parties so we are trying not relying on the easy but to get out and get known and connected with people from a whole range of background. In terms of big players, Germany is certainly really important to us because they are a key country in terms of wherever the EU goes. We have after the Brits the French group and Germans in the Parliament. France is being a harder nut to crack, though they are really important, and we don't try away from trying but the French seems to be a bit more nationalistic. Which means its sometimes a bit challenging in getting in and engaging. Smaller ones, some of the very small ones, have a whole lot to do with in the parliament, we found that the Nordic countries and the Baltics who are to be the ones who see the world very similar to the way we see it, so they are the ones that it is easy to get alongside. Spain and Portugal increasing in the same kind of space.

You are talking about the relationship with the different Member States across Europe. How would you evaluate the partnership between New Zealand and the EU, especially since the new Partnership Agreement in 2016?

I think we have a very longstanding and quite deep relationship with the EU. I think we are in the relatively small group of countries they would say share values deeply with the EU. We cut a joke, if it weren't for geography New Zealand would be on a short list of countries that the EU would want to join them, because we are in the top induces for all the different things in the world. We have cooperated across a whole range of different areas with the EU, we don't have any life problems with the EU. We have points on which we debate things. You know, the EU has just developed new rules about access to the Schengen Zone where we had some interest that we had to presume and prosecute. We were talking with them about interest we have that weren't aligning neatly with the interest that they would have. We have had in the past, not recently, we have had problems around butter access, which you are probably aware of from the mission in Wellington, but we have always find ways through these sorts of problems. I think if you talk with EU officials about New Zealand they would say, we mean what we say, they can work with us, we peruse things that are interest to the Europe in a whole range of different areas. One area that really bought that

home was when we were on the UN Security Council in 2015/2016, we worked extremely closely with the EEAS and Member States around the big issues and there was a lot of sharing both ways for sharing perspectives on information's which I think worked very well and just underpinned that sense of comrade. The one thing that we don't have is a Free Trade Agreement, which is the largest chunk of the work that I do. We are one of six WTO members who have not a Free Trade Agreement that is under way or live such as Australia, Russia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan. So, it is rather a weird little group to be in. We are on the verge to get out of this and hopefully the mandate for the FTA being adapted in the next few months. But that's been a strange place for a country like us to be, looking at all the sorts of people around the place with different interests who managed to get underway with an agreement ahead of us.

Now I'm going to involve Dane a bit as well. You said that the New Zealand could have been a candidate for the EU if it would be that geographically remote from the EU. That implies that New Zealand has their own neighbourhood and importance of their direct surroundings. How would you evaluate New Zealand's involvement in this direct neighbourhood, in the Pacific?

The Pacific is our backyard it geographically where we are. Our first people, the Maori, are Polynesians and the Polynesians are through a large chunk of that region. If you go back further in time the Maoris are just thrifted down through Taipei, the Philippines and Indonesia across the Pacific and down to New Zealand, finally. So, we got extensive kind of people to people links and cultural and historical links in the region. We have been at different points of imperial powers in the Pacific, we took on the German territorial of Samoa after World War 1. We had the Cook's (Islands), Niue and Tokelau's as parts of the realms with parts of New Zealand. The Cooks and Niue are now self-copying and self-free association which means they do their own thing, but they have people access to New Zealand. Tokelau decided as it is more small and vulnerable. We have got very large Pacific communities in New Zealand. Auckland as for example is for a long time the largest Polynesian city in the world. Or we have got more Cook Islanders and Niue's living in New Zealand than there are in their own countries. There are close to be as many Samoans in New Zealand as there are in Samoa. So, there is, you know, a huge Pacific community. Fiji, Guineans, was got inflexes of manly Indian Fijian to New Zealand as well. So, we have got sort of another Pacific dimension sitting there. In terms of the way the world is developed, we have had a very prominent role in representing the west, I suppose, in the Pacific in the post-WW2, where Australia has played a lead role in the development of the region. We were assisting when there were problems there. We had military involved in the Solomon Islands, RAMSI Mission for many years that now finished. We are first responder when there are disasters. We head out with our aircrafts and capabilities to check for illegal fishing. We are supporting Pacific institutions, principally the South Pacific Forum and their bodies and the South Pacific Commission. Trying to ensure they are for purpose and well-staffed for delivering real benefits for the Pacific. Our largest aid program is carrying out in the Pacific which is 700 million dollars in the year if not even more, it is 60% of the budget. So that is a big part of it. We have got posts in most of the Pacific Island Countries and relocations where we don't have posts. Into the other ones we don't have posts is Nauru, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Federal States of Micronesia and Palau, I think everywhere else we are covered. French Polynesia we cover from New Caledonia. So, we are very extensive down there, I mean we and the Australians have the widest diplomat network in the Pacific. We work on issues of real importance to them, climate change being top of the list and try and support them with when they got needs with third countries. We have helped them in dialogue with China about ensuring that Chinas aid is responsive to Pacific needs. We engaged the Americans, making sure they are properly engaged in different parts in the Pacific. With the EU we will come to, we have worked closely with sustainability and climate change in particular. With the Australians we have a close dialogue, with the French we cooperate on disaster relief. We had a

conference with the French back with the nuclear testing diaspora, well that is past now since they stopped nuclear testing. They are much more cooperative, and the French are now the only colonial left in the Pacific, as the British have given up all their territories except Pitcairn Islands which is managed by Wellington the High Commission. Whether you are talking political or economic development or global issues based, there is a whole lot of stuff that is important for us to do in the region. We are very conscious with fragile and undeveloped partners and some of them have very little prospect of being self-sufficient. Because it is our backyard it has to be a very big part of our focus. As to the rest of the world we are continuous we are aware that this is something where the rest of the world looks for our expertise on our region and we are helping them to understand it. In political terms too, I think the world become more continuous that the Pacific is not a bad voting bloc in the United Nations. We have often people approaching us and asking how to speak with the Pacific.

Deputy Head of Mission: I suppose there is nothing really further to add except that the element of our work is to try to raise the profile of some of the concerns they have. The perfect example is when we were on the UN Security Council, one thing we did is we held an open debate on security concern concerning small island developing states which haven't happen before because of the capacity and size of some of those small Pacific states they really only have a high profile in very specific problems such as climate change which is a really good example. So, we try to help wherever we can to raise that profile or advance their interest where it is appropriate, we do that as well.

So, does that mean New Zealand is a voice for the PIC?

I would probably avoid saying that we are the voice rather than saying we are the megaphone for the voice. Helping to make their voice louder I would probably argue. It's are issues that they are concerned about or that they are identifying, and we can help raise the profile of those. They don't like fraternalism and they don't like being taking for granted, which is true for any country. That's spot on. And they are also different, we talk about the Pacific as region but, you know, we got very distinct subsets within that region and different attitudes, priorities, sizes and potential so that makes it a complex region to navigate.

When you look at the region and New Zealand in regional Groupings, especially in the PIF. Where would you say is New Zealand's importance or stance there?

I would probably say no more than any of the other countries there. We certainly wouldn't see ourselves as using the Forum to drive changes the Pacific doesn't want. So, some of the key issues in the Forum Agenda recently have been one to be identified by the Pacific, climate change and fisheries. We in New Zealand and Australia have come in and played the role that we have supported the Pacific trying to achieve the regional goals on things like that through more of renewable energies or more integrated and better managed fisheries systems. So, I mean it is a critically useful Forum for us to get a good steer for how the region can improve the livelihoods and the politics I suppose of region as a whole. So, in that kind of forum, even though we are bigger and more developed, we are not any more important and we certainly wouldn't be any more vocal or any more engaged than any of the others.

Not more engaged than others. But especially for the EU and New Zealand that have strong shared values. How would you say do these values, as namely human rights, international rule of law, democratic principles in general, how would that come into play when we are looking at the regionalism in the Pacific. Does New Zealand come forward with these ideas and promoting these?

We try not to give a soapbox and do megaphone diplomacy. If you google megaphone diplomacy New Zealand you find ministers say we don't do, we don't like because it gets peoples backs up and it looks like bullying it looks like hectoring. We feel it is far better to show by our behaviour what we stand for. So, we are talking the PIC whether it's the matter of Fiji or Tuvalu, we try and listen a lot and not to space for prudes. And we try to understand what their concerns are and see what we can do to help, where help is requested. Through that we are providing help with police for example, community policing which gives you an idea of people behave from one to another. We did a whole stuff for institution building, which comes back to what Dane was talking about. Making sure the institutions are fit for purpose to achieve fisheries objectives, or environmental objectives or just good use of the fragile and few resources the Pacific has through the Forum Secretariat or whatever. That's the kind of way we do it. We don't get out there and say here is New Zealand's human rights report for the Pacific Islands. It is a big grate, because they wouldn't say that. Just a different way of doing that.

Going back towards the EU. The EU is not a PIF Member of course but it is a partner. How would you evaluate the EU at the PIF from New Zealand perspective?

The EU is a very important partner for the region in general. It is not only about the forum, it is about the relationships that EU Member States collectively and individually have. You got diplomatic representations that covers the region. You clearly touching on the French territories which is incurably important, the EU is managing now or to say managing projects in the future. You have delivered huge amounts of resources to help the Pacific in areas that important to them, climate change, energies, fisheries, health, budget support. In particular budget support because it gives them more freedom to operate and exist. We appreciate all of that. You have as Member States, you have quite a few Missions, I don't have a number in my head, but especially French and British missions across and lots of accreditations to New Zealand and Australia so you are well represented in the region in that sense. In terms of PIF, the main interaction point is the post forum dialogue where you come along and participate. We had the Commissioner for Development coming, the Commissioner for climate Change. We think it's very useful and important, we encouraged it. We further encouraged the leader level engagement where Federica Mogherini had that in New York but to get someone more senior would be great. We value it, we welcome it. It hasn't been without challenges at times, the Pacific have found that the aid rules that the EU uses are quite demanding and combats them at times. We had conversations about that. There have been challenges about order in particular. We have been looked to as donors of second resort because the EU as set into find shortcomings and that is not something that we welcomed. There is a problem that should be sorted out between the EU and the Pacific countries it selves (26:45). There have been some real problems around fisheries with some EU expectations irremediably a bit great for countries with the capacity of some of the PICs. I think Andrew (EEAS) knows all about that, if you ask him he would say the same thing. You know, EU officials and all sort of stuck with rules created for other contexts because they are navigating. So, I think they find us helpful when we come forward and say, well you know, by the way XYZ is something you need to look at.

Deputy Head of Mission: Well it is an interesting one because the EU very self-aware that it has troubles to kind of deal with the Pacific based on the development rules and how the Pacific actually can meet those rules with capacity constraints and so on. But it is not to say that they are trying very hard to resolve those issues which is very rare trying where everything happens near you is taking a long time and that it is getting 28 Member States to agree to spent money in other countries more easily.

You said the EU is stuck in context and it is hard for the EU to see what is important in the Pacific. Would you say that New Zealand could act as a bridge between the PIC and the EU?

Yeah. That is what I have been looking to when I talked about this being part of a valuable proposition. I think we are respected as a country that is respected for taking the Pacific seriously. A country who wants to understand them and help others understand the region. Engage effectively with us. We have Pacific dialogue with the EU, with some of the Member States, with the Chinese, Japanese, the Koreans, the Australians, the Americans. You know, we are trying to help people understand.

Where do you see the opportunities for the EU in the Pacific with New Zealand as a partner?

Well, as a partner I think the work we have been doing in climate change and energy is perhaps the best example. We have co-hosted two pledging conferences in Auckland about sustainable energy and each one pledged around 2 billion New Zealand dollars which means 4 billion New Zealand dollars from two meetings which is quite a lot. It's just under 3 billion euros which is a pretty sizeable sum. Together through the project we have implemented solar and wind and other projects which have weaned the Pacific off, to some degree, from its fossil fuel addiction, which is good for them. Because when you look at small countries the proportions of their national budget spent on import of energy supplies is really huge. Then there is the climate change impact the Pacific Islands that -canaries in the cold ones- that into all of us into sea level rise and storm and all that kind of stuff. So, doing things that show that we are there taking a responsible part in moving away from fossil fuels, together I think we have done a really good job there. There is still working to go but we have done well.

You mentioned a lot of development aid and renewable energies. Do you see a future partnership between the EU and New Zealand that could be beneficial for both regarding the political dialogue in the Pacific?

We already agreed that we will look in areas beyond energies, what have we further of partnership, Agriculture that was adapted in Vanuatu as well, so there is a go to expand on that. But we have a new Government that is in place for 100 days and there I have just seen this morning a reference on the possibility that some of our aid programs will move towards partly leviathan which may mean some changes about how we go on things. So, if we move into that direction how does that mean that we relate to partners again so that will be a bit of a refresh and rethinking in conversations. In the business field the EEAS has been doing economic partnership agreement with the Pacific, they have been putting this on ice for the moment because what you were trying to get was a bit demanding for the region. We have just done a thing called PACER Plus with Australia which provides better trade opportunities for the Pacific with Australia and New Zealand. But there is bound to be some prospects for doing business together in the region.

Deputy Head of Mission: There is also the element of supporting the EU's political engagement in the region. So when, was it Mimica, came down for the Pacific Mission. Getting around the Pacific isn't easy, the EU doesn't have a lot of mission to arrange things n staff. So, our Minister and Commissioner Mimica did a joint trip into the Pacific and we supported the EU's engagement there using New Zealand Air Force planes. When Pascal Lamy was down in the region, for the post ACP discussions, we supported his engagement, provided him with some information and support as well. So, we are also in that space recognizing the EU's footprint is smaller than ours in the Pacific and how can we make sure that their engagement with the Pacific is useful to inform their own position on how to support the Pacific. There is that element of work as well.

You think there is the option to go beyond logistical support of New Zealand and away from only development aid but towards political support in the region? Maybe through University education?

Well, if you wanted to fund students coming to New Zealand that we would be happy for. If you want to learn from our experience how we have done that, again we would be happy to share that with the EU how we structured. If you want to do a meeting involving one of your Presidents with the Pacific leaders and the logistics within the region itself is too hard, I'm sure that if you ask New Zealand if you can help is, we will probably say sure let's do it. I think the thing is that the EU needs to sort of talk to us and say here is this thing that looking at, thinking of doing, can New Zealand join us, can New Zealand assist us, or do you have some advice for us in terms of taking this forward in terms of partnership and friendship we would be very happy to engage. And there aren't really barriers around, we talk very openly and freely with the EU. We don't have any suspicions, we don't have any concerns, so it is an really comfortable discussion on the Pacific.

Deputy Head of Mission: Because behind all of that is our own selfish interest because we want to have the EU in the Pacific because we see them as a really good partner, they operate the ways in development and politics that we think are good for the region. So, the more we can do that the Pacific is on their radar and that they are engaged, they are useful to the Pacific and to us as well as a player in the region.

Two days ago, I was sitting in Copenhagen in a lecture by an Bulgarian Author, Ivan Krastev, who wrote a book "After Europe" where he claims that Europe is way too less experimental nowadays compared to back in the 1950's. Do you think the EU is too less experimental in the Pacific, that they just are going for the known or is the EU pushing forward and coming up with ideas? Because you said that the EU needs to take incentives.

Look, that is a really hard one to answer because it depends on the context within the institutions, it depends on the priorities attached to the Pacific, it depends on the individuals here in Brussels and in the Pacific are doing things. So, it is not possible to give a kind of, this is the answer, the response, it just depends. And frankly, we don't know enough about the detail of what we are doing here is, we don't know nothing about the detail, we need a particular project on how things are working out together before we can give you a comment that would be fair or informed about whether they are experimental or not. You know Andrew (EEAS) and Julian Wilson, who is the Ambassador of Suva, they are the people who can tell you how experimental they were to be able. How much support they got from Brussels for that, how much appetite there was from the Member States or sort of a big bauld approach, how the Pacific related to the other parts of the ACP. I mean there is a whole bunch of other questions that we can dig into around that one.

Which learnings from your current posting as Ambassador can you take that you haven't had before when looking at it from back home. Is there any learnings or advice you would give to the EU for what to change?

What have I learned about the way the EU operates and what advice I would give to the EU in eyes of that? That's a big one. Well, I would say... It's not all about the family, the EU focusses much about the family the 28. There are countries outside them that matter in ways big and small, and making sure that the EU find appropriate ways to engage with them because those countries are important. And that is not just spending time in a meeting, they are good at that. I mean I can't complain, I get to see everyone I want, not exactly always when I want to, but I get to see them which is great. But the bigger challenge you have got is, if the EU is doing something it takes quite a long time for the EU to create a position. It goes through the EEAS, the Council, the Parliament and once that position is finished, agreed, you can't move it. And we and others, both bilateral and multilateral processes see that, and it can be incredibly frustrating. It means it is very difficult often to have the EU take account of interests that sit outside those of the 28 or to change

tag. You know there might be better results if the EU takes a slightly different approach. I'm not quite sure how the EU would change, because within a family of 27/28 you always have a cap structure that get there, and these structures make sense, they work, they just take a hell of a long time. But having some ability to engage more effectively with the outside world would be very positive, but I don't, I mean I would make a lot of money if I had a practical suggestion on how that might work. But I think if you talk to other people too that would be... that is the largest challenge people face when engaging with the EU.

Would you say it is harder to cooperate with the EU because takes longer in decision making and is less flexible as other actors such as... China?

Again, it depends on the issue. Climate change we have set close to the EU position for the last half dozen years or so and we have not had any real problems working with the EU. We have gotten closer and closer we have talked about cooperative activities. We have now changed our policy, our position domestically which puts us at the top end where the EU's positions are. I don't think that will fit with our policies to work closely, so you got that kind of example. If you take the other end, if you go back 30 years the EU's approach to subsidies was way different to ours because we dropped ours in 1994 and you still had very high subsidies for agriculture and we have problems with that. I mean the markets are a liberal playing field which thanks to governmental intervention, uneconomic farming practices were permitted and all consequences of that. Progressive the EU has reduced the subsidies they pay for farming products, we have remained a zero base for ours. But the gap in perspective and concern is significant, we still say that we would prefer a subsidy free approach from Europe. But we are not complaining on the kind of level of subsidies and the way you manage them now. It is much more sensitive. And in fact, in the WTO context you are working along with us to trying to get other countries to reduce and better manage their subsidies, so we have come together. So, two examples to show it really depends on the different situation. You mentioned China, is it easy to work with China? China is quite special. China is very different from Europe or the US or New Zealand and other countries that we work with as Japan. And the ability to influence Chinese positions is also quite limited often because of the... who you speak to, do they understand, do they want to change tag. Different values, different approaches. With China we have put in effort and worked quite successfully I think in different areas. But it's a different set of challenges to what we have with the EU or US or Japan or big friends in the Pacific elsewhere.

Thank you. I don't want to go further into China. Is there any last comments you want to give on the EU involvements in the Pacific? If you could take anything up what would it be?

Deputy Head of Mission: We don't have further comments, but we can send you some information on our involvement in the Pacific if you want that. We also have a bit online and other public sources that I could provide you with.

Thank you. I will switch the recording devices off now.

Just one more thing. Wish list with Europe. A good outcome to the post Cotonou negotiations with the ACP countries and an outcome that takes adequate considerations of the needs and particularities of the Pacific circumstances, that would be important. And it will be hard at the same time, Africa is the biggest, most popular part of the ACP and there are particular reasons. Migration etc. which is why Europe really wants to do some important things there and we have no problems with that at all. It is just to make sure that the P part in ACP is not forgotten, that's one. Second on the wish list is to simplify the procedures so it is not so crushing for these tiny bureaucracies and people who are often not that well educated to manage dealing with an institution like the EU. That would be important. A third would be to find some kind of framework

for Pacific-EU interaction at the leadership level I often thought the Japanese PALM Summit is a good forum, that's where the Japanese Prime Minister once every four years meets these Pacific Island Countries, that's a healthy thing to do. I think, you know, it would be in your interest and ours and the regions to have that kind of dialogue to develop. It fits in with the post Cotonou framework as well, because if significant amounts of your tax payers' money go into the Pacific you want to be sure that it is being spent appropriately and in line with the wishes of your partners and so on. So those have been my three wishes.