



# **Samoa: Exploring the Linkages between Climate Change and Population Movements**

**Ximena Flores-Palacios**

PhD Candidate

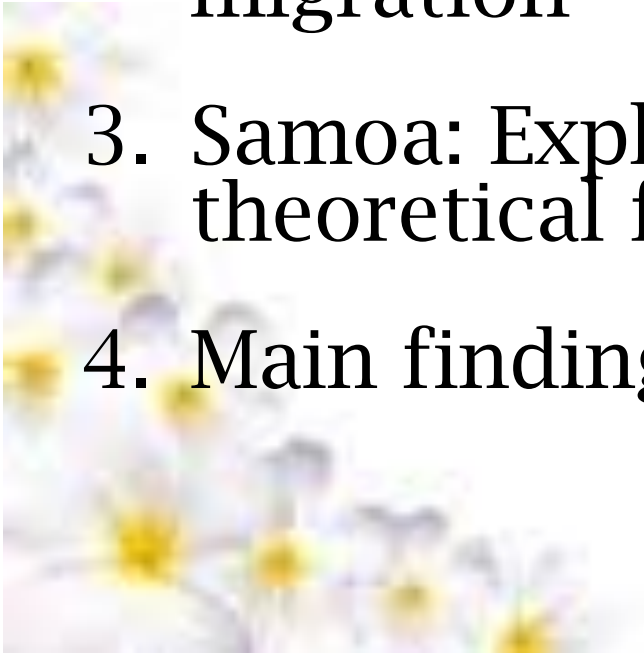
Faculty of Culture and Society (AUT)

CaDDANZ

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# Outline of the presentation

1. Climate change in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)
2. Recent research on 'environmental migration'
3. Samoa: Exploratory research (aim, theoretical framework, methodology)
4. Main findings



# Climate Change in PICTs

- Climate change is one of the most serious challenges the world is facing today and the PICTs are particularly vulnerable
- Climate change in PICTs is an observable phenomenon and it is happening now
- PICTs rank among the most vulnerable in the world to natural disasters
- There is evidence that climate change is causing population movements: people turn to migration as one strategy of adaptation

# Climate change narratives and realities in the PICTs

## The New Zealand Herald

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### Sinking islands call for NZ action

By Isaac Davison @Isaac\_Davison

5:30 AM Tuesday Sep 3, 2013

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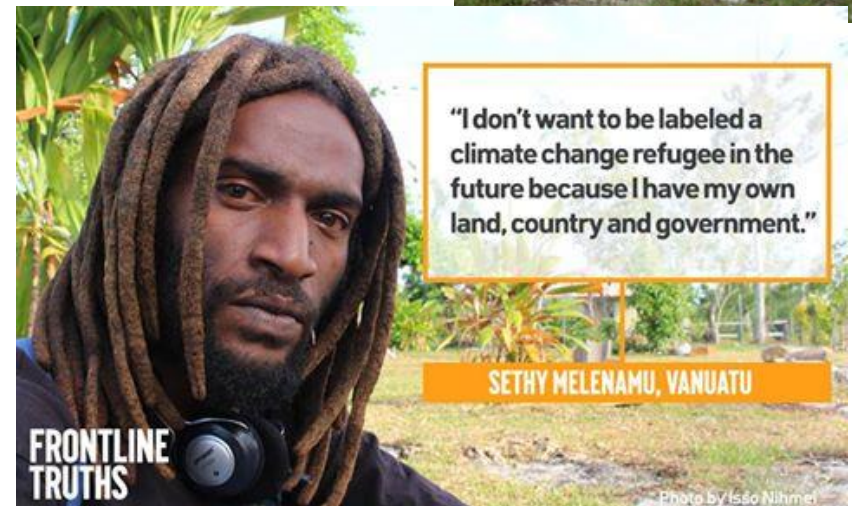
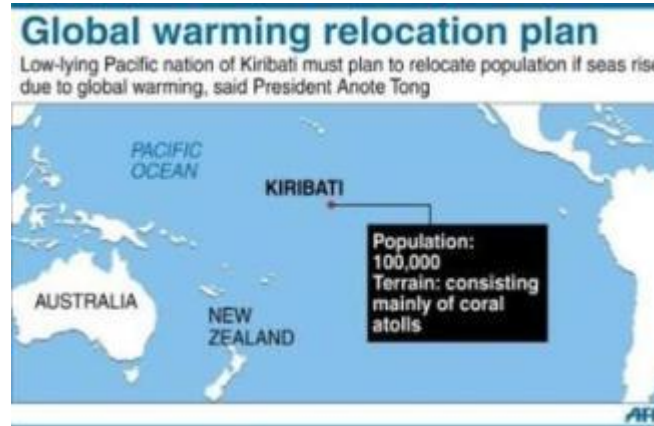
A tiny Pacific island state that is being submerged by rising oceans will tell New Zealand that it is not disposable and urge Prime Minister John Key to show leadership on climate change at a summit beginning today.

The Marshall Islands, a series of 29 coral atolls and islands halfway between Australia and Hawaii, sit just 2m above sea level on average and are vulnerable to rising sea levels and increasingly intense storms and droughts.



+ EXPAND

Sea levels on the Marshall Islands have risen 7mm a year since 1993. The global average is 0.4mm. Photo / AP



# Recent research on environmental migration

- Research remains dispersed and poorly coordinated
- There is ongoing debate on terminologies, definitions and conceptualization of the linkages between **human mobility** and climate change, the environment and natural disasters
- There is debate on the disciplinary domains



# Aim of the research

To explore whether and how climate change is causing internal and international population movements in Samoa

→ Selected village → lenses to look at the phenomenon at the national level

# Research Theoretical Framework

## Synergy of Two Knowledge Systems

(Pacific/Samoan and Western Worldviews)

### Methodology

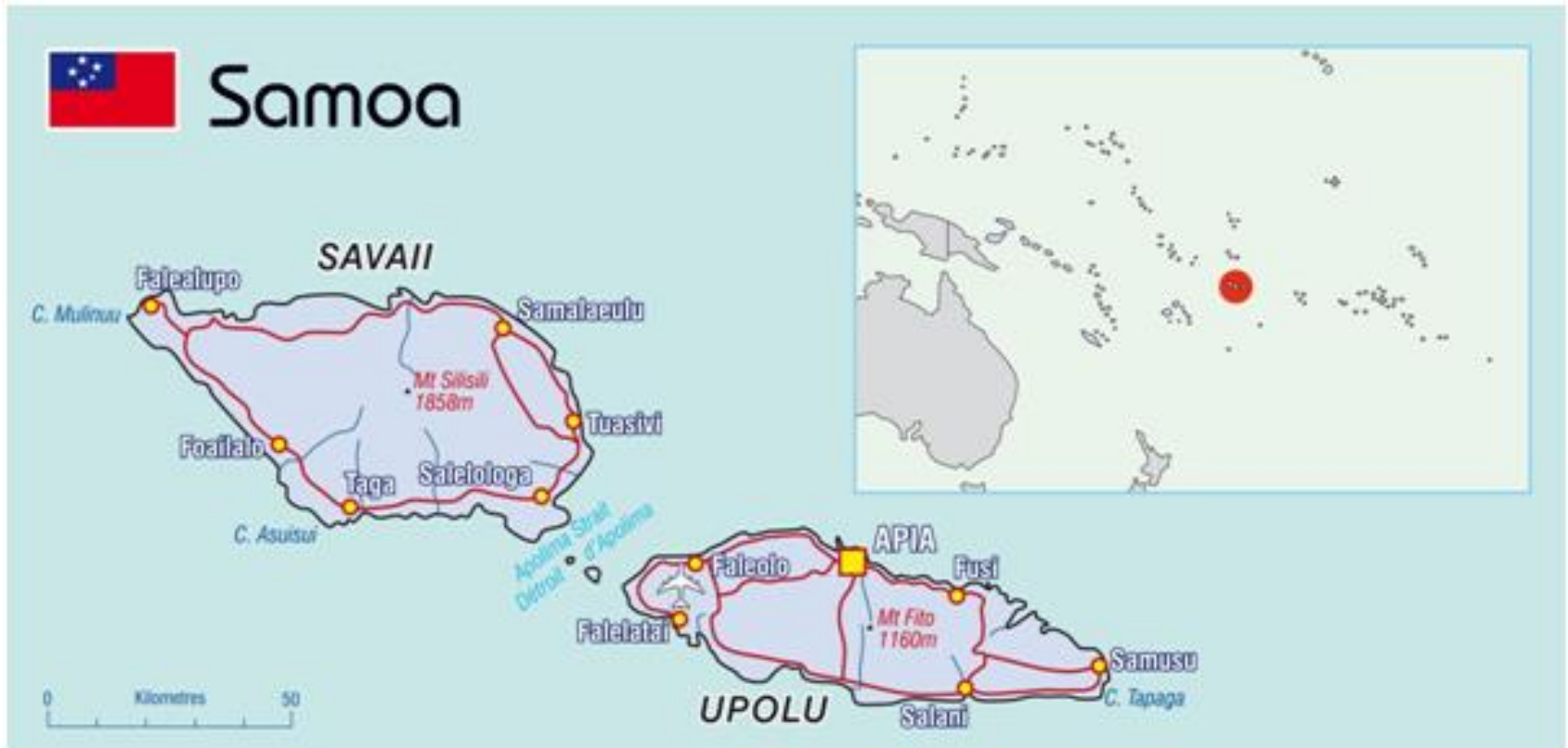
**Exploratory** (one selected village)

**Qualitative** (talanoa, interviews, document review)

**Interdisciplinary** (disciplinary insights)



# SAMOA

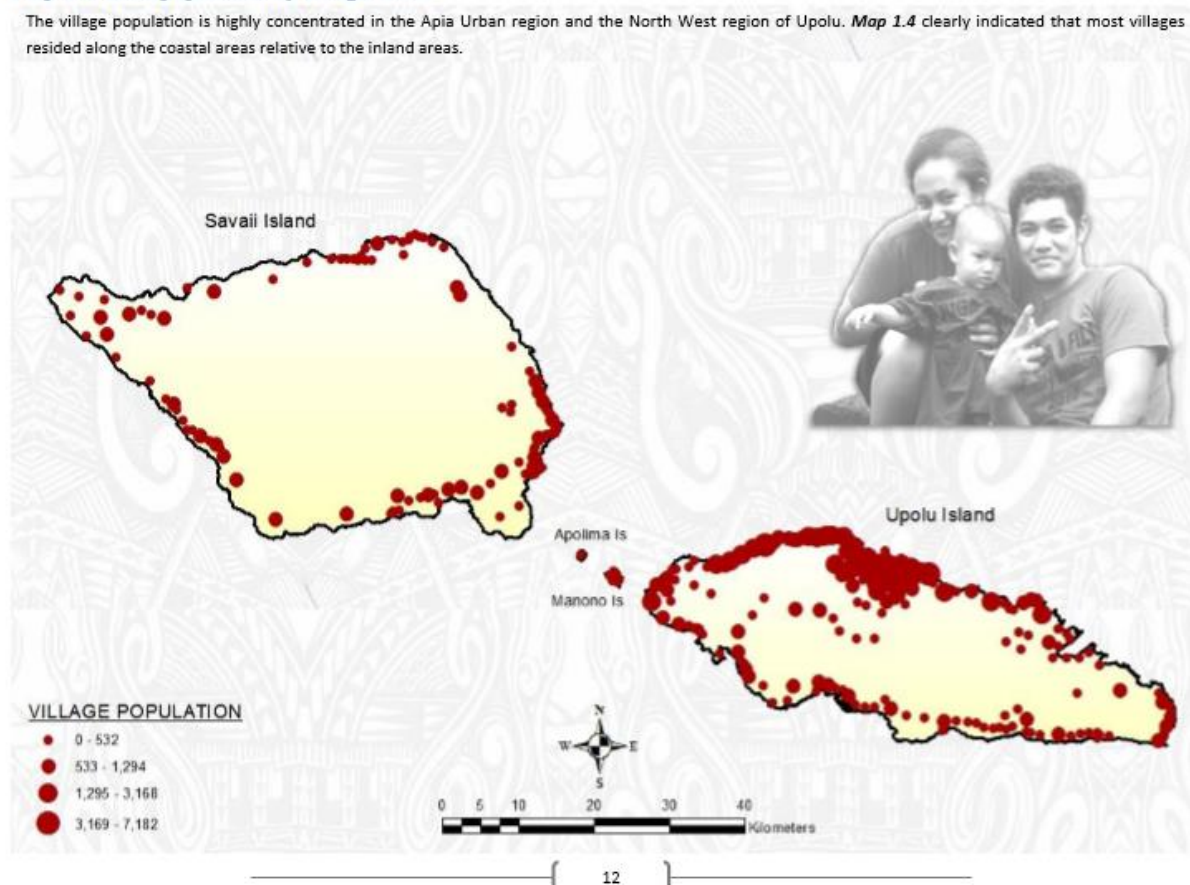




# Population distribution

**Map 1.4: Total population by village, 2011**

The village population is highly concentrated in the Apia Urban region and the North West region of Upolu. *Map 1.4* clearly indicated that most villages resided along the coastal areas relative to the inland areas.



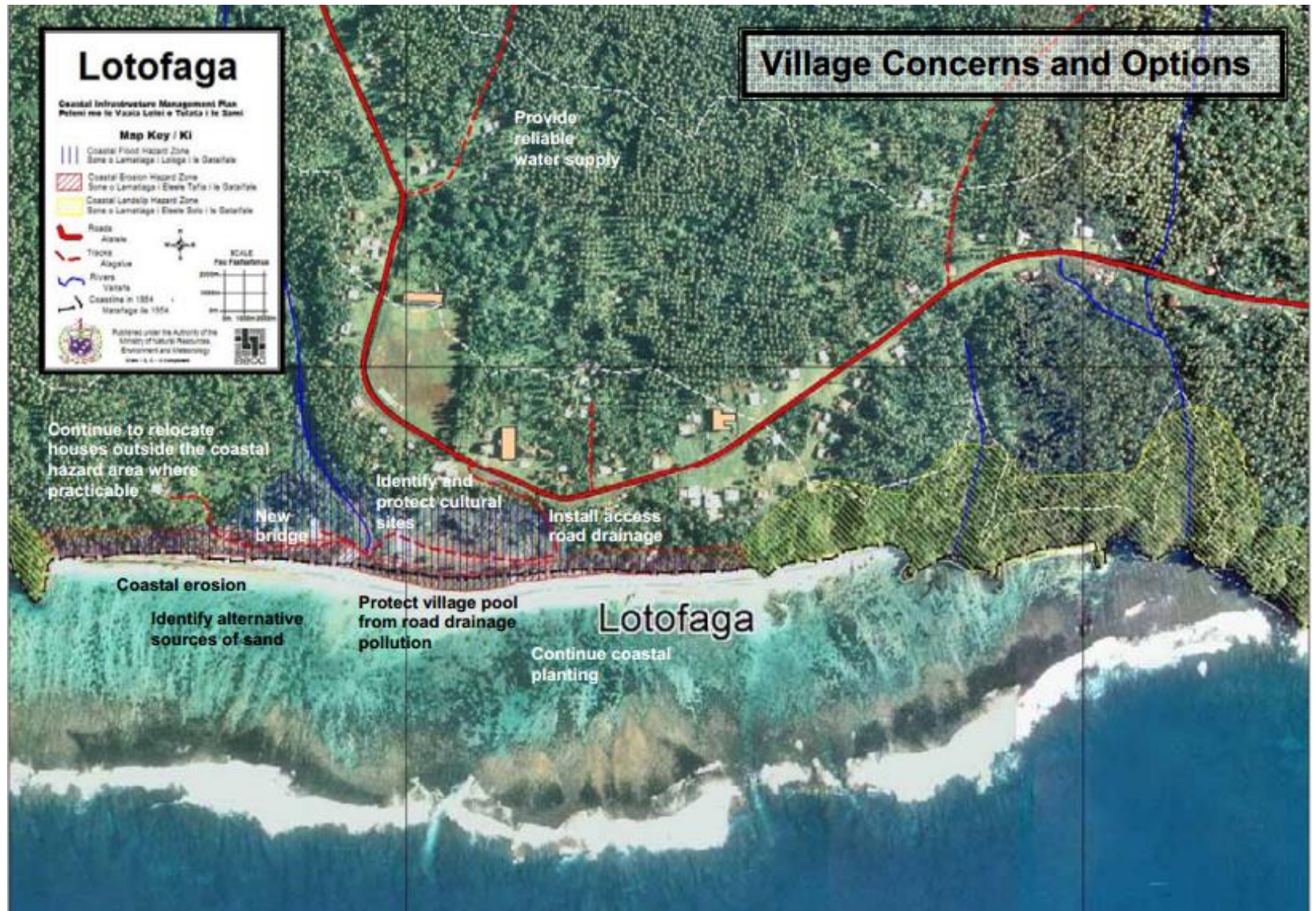
# Aim of Study Village

- **Origin of migration.** The aim was to understand the impact of climate change on people's lives and their migration patterns
- **Destination areas of migration.** The aim was to learn whether climate change had affected families' or individuals' decisions to move to Apia or Auckland

# VILLAGE STUDY - LOTOFAGA







# Main Findings Study Village

Although climate change is affecting people's lives, families are demonstrating great strength and resilience to adapt to CC

- Families are using a mix of traditional and modern technical knowledge
- Families are drawing on their family and village social support systems
- Families are using their customary land tenure entitlements
- Families are using population movements

# Population Movements

- Movements inland (customary lands)
- Rural – urban migration
- Prospects of migration overseas

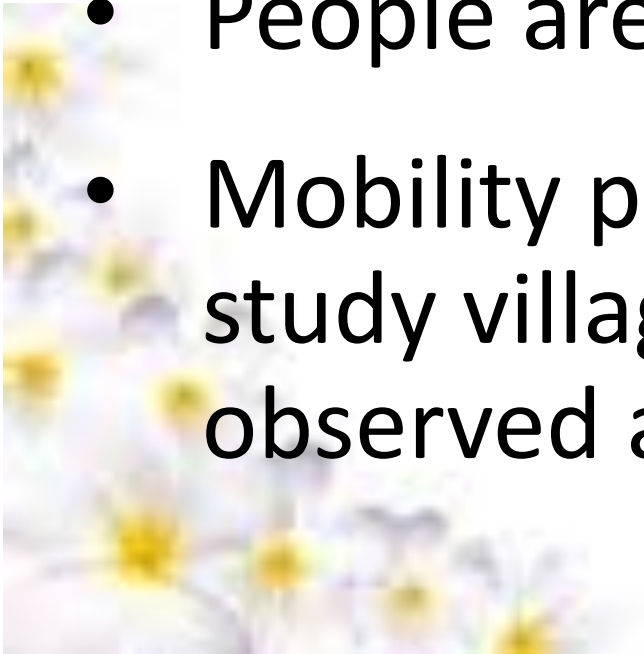


## **One village participant explaining the prospects of migration overseas said:**

People have migrated overseas, mainly to New Zealand and Australia. It might not be to do with climate change but it's a lot to do with economics. But economics rests on environment and natural resources. If people find that their natural resources are not supplying them adequately for their family needs, for the church needs and for their cultural needs, that might be one reason why they move. (AP3)

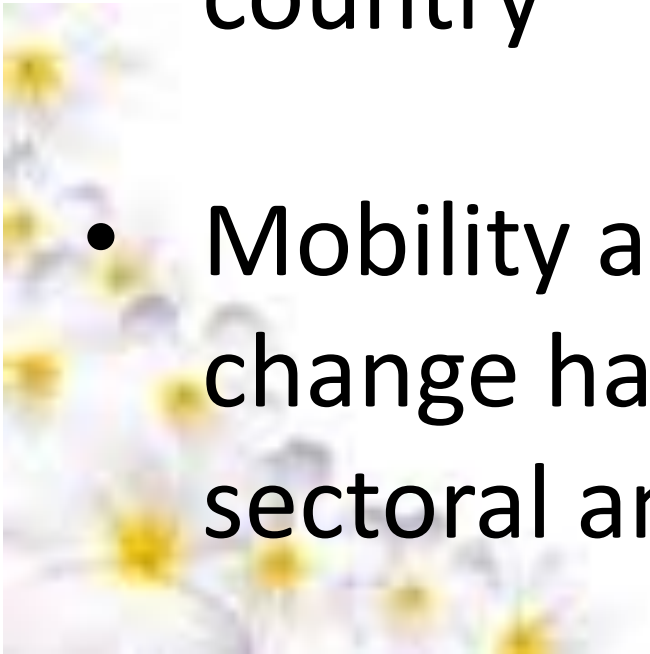
# Findings - National Level

- Climate change is real and it is affecting lives and livelihoods
- People are showing resilience
- Mobility patterns observed in the study village have also been observed at the national level



# Policies at the national level

- Climate change is a priority in the country
- Mobility associated with climate change has yet to be considered in sectoral and development policies



# Policy recommendations to address climate-induced mobility

- Contextualise migration drivers from the point of view of the people in their own social and geographical contexts
- It is necessary a synergy of different knowledge systems
- Traditional knowledge has to be integrated into CC adaptation policies.
- Environmental migration has to be incorporated at the policy level in Samoa.
- Mobility associated to CC cannot be considered the domain of a single discipline, it has to be studied in an interdisciplinary way
- Policies on environmental migration have to start at the village level

# Policy recommendations to address climate-induced mobility

- For potential recipient countries of “environmental migrants” (New Zealand, Australia, USA). There is a need to include “environmental migration” into migration policy discussions.