KUSWA: A case-study of indigenous participatory film-making in addressing gender violence and sorcery accusations, Papua New Guinea

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**AHRC / ESRC GCRF Indigenous engagement,
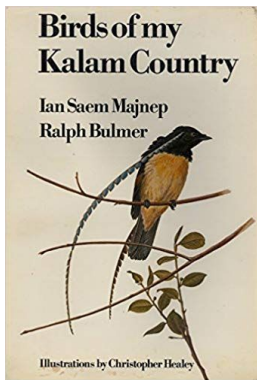research partnerships, and knowledge mobilisation**

Community Filmmaking for
Gender Equality in the Pacific

Preamble parable

Birds of my Kalam Country (1977) is a wonderful collaboration in ornithology and 'indigenous knowledge' between Ian Saem Majnep and Ralph Bulmer, close friends and long-term collaborators who shared a keen interest in the Kalam people's forests in Highland Papua New Guinea. Their book sympathetically juxtaposes scientific and indigenous understandings: zoological species are described and local Kalam myths related. However, the collaboration took an unexpected yet instructive turn when Bulmer was taking Majnep to Auckland airport to catch his flight home to Papua New Guinea. Majnep told Bulmer that the finished manuscript was not complete and not ready for publication, and he insisted on returning to the university to write an Epilogue entitled 'How I walked with my mother and she showed me these places'. The book might tell *what* Majnep knew, but did not yet tell *how* he knew - and so the particular places, persons and relations that constituted his knowledge had to be included, as much to demonstrate the origins and authenticity of his knowledge as to acknowledge the contingency and limited claim that this might also be so for other Kalam speakers. Majnep's compulsion and insistence responded to real-life danger.

Whilst the 'knowledge' of birds and myths might well be common, the persons and relational paths through knowledge had come to Majnep and the connections routing through people and rooting to places were distinctive - their knowledge would not and could not be the same. 'Knowledge' necessarily implicates other people - it originates in certain other people, and a collective of other people can also lay claim. Taken at face value, and by leaving out the *who* and *where*, the 'knowledge' itself said nothing about real meanings or effectiveness - and was therefore unmoored from the groundings that made it knowledge. Majnep was not only his own person - he was acknowledging the vital supporting relations of kins-people, spirits and land through which his person and life were constituted. Majnep's health was as much dependent on remembering this himself as it was on acknowledging this to others. Without the Epilogue, Majnep was mindful of how the published book might expose him to accusations of appropriating other people's knowledge for his own advancement - and mindful perhaps of how this exposure might lead to violence or even to sorcery.

Majnep had to locate his knowledge in particular persons and places to demonstrate *whose* knowledge it was - and equally the persons, relations and places by which being shown the world became knowledge. Knowledge is not *about* the world, it is profoundly *of* the world - it is a constitutive personal and inter-personal capacity (often conceived as a bodily or mind substance) of persons who are made up of other people, other spirits and other places. Knowledge is made of the world & the world is made of knowledge: being mutually constitutive, persons, knowledge and the world are implicated and inseparably made up of the same stuff of life. To engage one part is to accept the consequences in engaging the whole.

The moral of the story here is that an initial assumption of epistemological symmetry and quest for equivalence between knowledges very nearly missed the point of Kalam knowledge and the vital concerns of their life-world. They only had half of the story. Focusing on common characteristics of indigeneity and epistemology can obscure ontological differences. The implications for responsible research engagement to fully understand the social responsibilities of relations and the consequences of actions - *in* vernacular terms and *on* indigenous terms - should be obvious.

KUSWA: "Change can be like cool water flooding over the hot stones in a ground oven"

KUSWA is an indigenous community based organisation established in 2001 by eight women who had experienced gender-based violence and wanted to do something to help other survivors. KUSWA is based in Banana Block, an urban settlement of Goroka in Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea, and now provides interventions and preventional services to survivors of violence, and includes over 1,000 members from many different ethnic groups (see Annex 1: Indigeniety in Papua New Guinea for maps and details of linguistic and ethnic diversity). KUSWA focuses on raising awareness of women's and children's rights, working with service providers to advocate on behalf of women and children survivors, and contributes to improving women's access to justice by providing information sessions on court processes and protections in cases of family and sexual violence. A short video (Sagrista 2014) and a radio programme (Bouscaren 2018) provide accessible introductions to the contexts of KUSWA's work.

In conjunction with the University of Goroka's Centre for Social and Creative Media (CSCM), KUSWA has helped pioneer a participatory approach to digital media story-telling and participatory film-making through the *Yumi Piksa*, *Yumi Kirapim Senis* & *Pawa Meri* projects (Thomas 2011; Spark 2015; Sagrista 2014, 2015; Thomas et al 2016; Thomas, Kauli and Borrey 2018).

Eriko Fufurefa is a Founder and a Director of KUSWA who has developed effective methods in the areas of gender violence and sorcery related violence, which demonstrate the virtues of recognizing the inclusive basis of collective life and of utilizing the relational basis of self-knowledge through reflection of a persons actions in the digital stories and films about other people's circumstances and stories.

This home-grown method draws upon indigenous epistemology and ontology in combination with contemporary religious, government and legal forms. KUSWA's own methods for indigenous engagement, research partnerships, and knowledge mobilisation are offered and explored here as an allegory and example for researchers approaching such contexts - and provide an important lesson of recognizing that indigenous people already have their own protocols for respectful relationships, sharing knowledge, social responsibility and ethical engagement which reflect distinctive epistemologies and ontologies.

The case-study also reflects on what Ginsburg (1999:306) describes as the "social relations of media production", engaging with the complex ways in which people interact with media, both in production and reception, their interests and responses shaped by a variety of subject positions. In the context of the case-study's broader enquiry into how participatory processes can enable people to tell their own stories and to leverage social change, we suggest participatory filmmaking can be effective because it is a relational process, dependent on relations with others, drawing on and creating knowledge through the processes of its making, distribution and use (MacLeod, 2015). Participatory media production can be described as a creative networked social process, a 'knowledge practice' (Grimshaw 2001, 2011) through which ways of knowing "emerge through the very grain of filmmaking" (MacDougall 1998:76). The case-study afforded us all an opportunity to reflect on a series of important questions explored through the wider project: Does KUSWA use or need 'indigenous knowledge'? To what extent do their methods rely upon or engage distinct indigenous ontological life-worlds? Does the assumption that their effectiveness derives from privileged access or close alignment with 'indigenous knowledge' obscure the creativity and work in devising a form of relations that achieves important effects?

KUSWA works through extended networks of partners (e.g. churches, police, courts), funders (e.g. Oxfam), participants (inclusively, on all sides) and researchers (both PNG-based and overseas), and is mindful of how the performance and quality of these relationships implicate each other, and therefore extends this requirement for including consideration for others to those it deals with. The increasing visibility of KUSWA's methods has drawn attention of other funders and researchers who may or may not already know each other, but who are guided to form and negotiate intellectual and social relationships so as to respect prior and on-going work and relationships and to avoid any awkwardness for all concerned. As such, researchers are inducted, included and involved in KUSWA's working practice of inclusivity and the exercise of the 3 R's - *Respect*, *Relationships* and *Reciprocity* (e.g. Thomas 2011). Researchers in our AHRC GCRF team had a variety of relationships with KUSWA and with other researchers: some long-standing, others brand new and held on diverse footings and in some cases not without some tensions and complications. Existing relationships with some of the team acted as a resource for others in the team and provided a basis for developing trust which, of course, takes a good deal of relational work and time to reach an understanding and to clarify expectations, obligations and responsibilities for all. KUSWA has developed protocols and agreements for collaboration which spell out the scope and form of these research relationships and for mobilising knowledges together. It is important to recognise that indigenous peoples already have their own such social mechanisms.

AHRC GCRF Project background
The prevalence of violence against women in the Pacific region is among the highest in the world, whilst women's parliamentary participation is amongst the lowest in the world. Countries across the Pacific region have put in place policy strategies, legal frameworks and a raft of initiatives, but against their own and internationally accepted indicators there has been poor progress towards gender equality, despite the development cooperation efforts of many donors over several decades. What are the cultural contexts shaping the contemporary situation? Why is the current paradigm underpinning gender policy apparently ineffective in grasping the social actions that produce gender inequality in the Pacific? How can participatory processes enable people to analyse, to tell their stories and to leverage social change in their own terms? How can arts, humanities and social science researchers working in collaboration with filmmakers and communities contribute to innovative methods to promote gender equality in the Pacific?

The need for a new approach to gender inequality in the Pacific was recently summed up by Dame Carol Kidu (retired PNG Minister, the sole woman MP throughout her decade's service): the question of 'how we can address rights-based issues within a communal society?' needs to be answered by drawing upon and enabling Pacific people's 'own capacity to resolve things, in perhaps unusual ways'. His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Head of State of Samoa, is one of the foremost Pacific thinkers and a respected expert on Samoan culture and philosophy,

and has developed a method of using 'Samoan indigenous reference' as a means of engaging contemporary issues, and of promoting real dialogue whether critical or commending with one's own cultural assumptions about the world, with the aim of creating an open space for dialogue that avoids both reverential adherence and unthinking abandonment, and to enable future orientations rooted in the cultural creativity of particular peoples and places. Our AHRC GCRF project is focused, then, on emerging indigenous

approaches to research and participatory filmmaking, with an openness to 'perhaps unusual ways' to explore innovative methods of supporting community-led development practice.

1. PNG film-makers' development of culturally effective participatory methods
In PNG, the University of Goroka's *Yumi Piksa* project in 2010 pioneered community responsive documentary film-making grounded in indigenous knowledge (Thomas 2011), led in 2012 to the creation of the Centre for Social and Creative Media (CSCM), and paved the way for the *Yumi Kirapim Senis* and *Pawa Meri* (e.g. Spark 2015) initiatives with much greater attention to vernacular epistemological and collective ways of working (e.g. Thomas et al 2016).

These home-grown PNG participatory film-making projects share affinities with other international participatory film projects focused on women and girls e.g. the African Harnessing the Power of Video (2010), and emerge from, a longer history of community film-making: e.g. the National Film Board of Canada's 1967 Challenge for Change and The Fogo Process (Waugh et al 2010), the 1969 Appalshop project, Stoney and Helfand's The Uprising of '34 (Abrash and Whiteman 1999), and with film activism (e.g. Fuller ed. 2007; Gregory et al 2005; Gregory 2006, 2012). The history of various ways that indigenous peoples around the world have appropriated digital media and visual self-representation as modes of empowerment has been the subject of separate and long-standing debates in film studies (e.g. Atton ed. 2015; Bradley and Petro eds. 2002; Torchin 2012) and in anthropology (e.g. Avni 2006; Ginsburg 1991, 1995, 2004; Weiner 1997).

In bringing these debates into dialogue, our AHRC GCRF project holds two particular questions in mind: Firstly, Weiner emphasizes the 'different relationships between signs, concepts, and sociality in different cultures', and cautions against assuming that Western ontology 'is the same framework as that operating in the representational practices' of indigenous peoples (1997). Secondly, associated with the politics of representation is the capacity for digital media to either entrench or open up particular values and positions, and the care required in approaching the political context and intended uses: 'the technology does not predetermine the outcomes of its use, and it exists in a complex myriad of cultural and social relationships and engagements' (Thomas, 2011).

2. Ethnographic evidence that Pacific gender differentiates relational roles not biological difference
This research builds upon the findings of a recent EU-funded study commissioned by DEVCO/ EuropeAid 'Understanding Gender Inequality Actions in the Pacific: Ethnographic Case-studies and Policy Options' (Crook et al 2016) which worked with and through Pacific people's own concepts, relations, values and analyses of what is a stake in the cultural dynamics and social relations through which the everyday actions of gender inequality are produced.

Our team's research revealed how the conceptual, social and cultural assumptions that underpin the current gender policy paradigm have recognisable origins in Euro-American folk models that reduce 'gender' to the taken-for-granted differences between men and women. Gender in the Pacific is not merely a matter of the biological difference between men and women: the research evidence suggests that it is interactions and relations that gender a person, with informants (from

ten Pacific countries) pointing instead to the importance of differentiating whether a woman is activated as a mother, daughter, sister, cousin, wife, in-law etc in their analyses of events and actions. This difference between a stable gender identity that derives from biological facts, and the temporary and contingent gendering of actions through relations, is in line with the crucial and established insights of anthropological analyses of gender in the Pacific (Strathern 1988). As such, it is important to understand that 'gender' in the Pacific is not simply a matter of the sexed differences between women and men. Gender in the Pacific is relational, performative, reciprocal, circulatory, fluid and dynamic. The gendering of relations and actions in the Pacific amounts to an thorough-going and integrated organizing principle.

Gender inequality in the Pacific is a complex of historical and contemporary relations, values and concepts being remade in a transforming regional context that is responding to globalisation in highly distinctive ways. As Jolly and Lepani (2015) argue 'Pacific women are doubly devalued by masculinist structures that have their origins in both indigenous cultures and the introduced culture of a globalizing capitalism', and it is important to recognize that different cultural assumptions and folk models have been mutually influencing each other for centuries. From the perspective of Pacific peoples themselves - the concepts and assumptions carried by international gender policy, and human rights frameworks provide alternative descriptions of how gender and social responsibilities operate in their own schemes and practices of social life.

Biersack and McIntyre question the alignment of Pacific vernacular conceptualizations of gender violence with international human rights (2016), but gender and development policy has yet to find a way to incorporate and operationalize these research insights and facts of Pacific social life, and to grasp how to promote rights-based issues such as gender inequality within a communal society. As Jolly and Lepani (2015:9) note, 'Traditional forms of social protection in Pacific societies are anchored in indigenous knowledge systems, kinship ties, exchange relationships in the gift economy and a strong sense of belonging through attachments to land and language'. Pacific peoples are doing the cultural translation work between new and old ideas, and new and old social positions, and our research suggests we look to them for answers to design programmes that identify and deal with the issues in the right terms and at the right levels through which change is taking place. Our research casts serious doubt on the conceptual, social and cultural assumptions that underpin the current gender policy paradigms, and also suggests that the dominant theories of change for levering 'individual' and 'societal' behaviour changes misunderstand the tenets of Pacific socialites.

Our AHRC GCRF project has been exploring the wider community's reactions to film screenings in a participatory and structured dialogue which prioritizes the process of film-making as a means to an end, rather than regarding the film endproduct as an end in itself. Rather than leveraging social change by raising awareness externally, these methods focus on enabling participants and communities as agents of their own responses. The project has the objective of developing a joined-up model that combines: 1. action research (to better understand vernacular conceptualizations of gender inequality issues); 2. participatory co-production (to explore specific issues and relations through an artistic format); and 3. community dialogue (to support discussion over issues and means to change).

Indigenous rights, indigenous knowledge
Recognition of the status of indigenous knowledge and the legibility of indigenous life-worlds is, of course, comprehensively bound up in the legal recognition of the rights and political position of indigenous peoples in both international and national contexts. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) recognizes 'the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community (Art. 27). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1976[1966]), recognizes the 'right to self-determination' (Art. 1) and for minority populations and 'to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language' (Art. 27). The

International Labour Organization Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169, 1991[1989]) draws 'attention to the distinctive contributions of indigenous and tribal peoples to the cultural diversity and social and ecological harmony of humankind and to international co-operation and understanding' (Preamble). The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007), affirms 'that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such' (2007:2).

However, as Merry has observed there is 'a fundamental tension within the structure of global reformism and human rights: the contradiction between the desire to maintain cultural diversity and at the same time to achieve progress in terms of equality, rights, and universality' (2006:74). Moves to recognize 'indigenous peoples' by means of certain shared characteristics also serve to diminish their distinctiveness. Writing on 'indigeneity' in the wake of opposition to UNDRIP by four settler states (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United States), Merlan (2009:303) reflects that the 'concept has become internationalized, and "indigeneity" has come to also presuppose a sphere of commonality among those who form a world collectivity of "indigenous peoples" in contrast to their various others'. Attempts at addressing this tension in the human rights approach through processes of 'translation' and 'vernacularlization' have also been explored in the context of gender rights in the Pacific (e.g. Biersack and MacIntyre 2016: 10ff), which is further complicated in PNG, for example, by 'the fact that PNG has over 800 distinct indigenous languages and cultural groups [which] presents immense challenges for the translation of state policies into local contexts' (Jolly and Lepani 2015:50). A common tension between the relational registers of 'universality' and 'diversity' define these recognition spaces: yet these terms both complement and oppose each other, such that to strengthen recognition of one is to weaken recognition of the other. A universalist focus on the shared characteristics of 'indigenous' people or indigenous knowledge or indigenous life-worlds therefore risks undermining the very recognition of distinctiveness motivating the venture to formulate appropriate approaches to indigenous engagement.

Anthropologists are struck by how these conceptual commitments to similarities (e.g. universality) and differences (e.g. diversity) reflect distinctive Euro-American folk-models that define a recognition space for 'individual' personhood through complementary and opposed relational registers: 1. a person is taken to be an individual (in the same way other persons are also individuals), and 2. a person is taken to be a unique individual (different to other persons, who are individual in their own unique way). This relational tension between similarities and differences is fundamental to a cultural folk-model that imagines a person to be an 'individual' (an example of the category) and an 'individual' (a unique person). Anthropologists approach these relational registers (analogies or metaphors) as evidence of highly distinctive cultural theories of the person and kinship (whether 'Melanesian' or 'English', for example), and of the propensity for our own cultural concepts and folk-models to inform, influence and frame the ways we might approach and engage the cultural concepts and folk-models of other peoples (e.g. Strathern 1988, 1992). Our own ontological assumptions - the other half of the story, rarely articulated, often missed - runs the risk of obscuring, eclipsing or displacing the equally valid ontological assumptions of other peoples. It should be clear here that anthropologists would see no coincidence in finding that cultural theories of the person and of social relations inform people's theories of knowledge (epistemology) and theories of being (ontology) as cultural expressions of how analogic relations have created distinctive life-worlds. Anthropologists are attentive to how ethnocentric ideas extend to assumptions made about other peoples, and perhaps it is no coincidence that these specific cultural conceptualizations about the similarities and differences of individual entities should frame international recognition of 'universal human rights', and inform considerations of indigenous peoples.

Euro-American epistemologies that define knowledge as 'justified, true, belief' have developed alongside commitments to a scientific method that seeks to isolate a phenomena or process from any surrounding undue influence, and clearly reflect cultural assumptions that distinguish and separate a domain of natural facts from a domain of social relations and cultural theories. Approaching knowledge as if the world was comprised of facts that are natural and theories that are cultural, leads to screening out the social from knowledge, and to valuing knowledge that is demonstrably independent of particular knowers. Such expectations that knowledge is true regardless of social and cultural context - that knowledge can be separated off from the people doing the knowing - are clearly not assumptions shared by Melanesian knowledge practices. In fact, quite the reverse is the case.

Drawing upon anthropological research in Papua New Guinea, Sillitoe (1998) illustrated a hopeful moment for treating indigenous knowledge (e.g. 'traditional knowledge', 'local knowledge', 'traditional environmental knowledge' etc) as a symmetrical equivalent and basis of an alternative 'revolution' in development: 'it may be a distortion to counterpose global scientific knowledge with indigenous knowledge when in many communities today persons have both at once and when the content and context of indigenous knowledge are subject to change with globalisation' (1998:246). Alongside Sillitoe's recognition that culture is not static and that 'indigenous knowledge is flexible, adaptable and innovative' (2000:4), these themes are echoed by Briggs (2005:111): 'Whilst indigenous knowledge may indeed be represented as a valid and relevant alternative to western science, realistically it needs to be seen as something rather more nuanced, pragmatic and flexible, perhaps even provisional, highly negotiable and dynamic'.

Mercer et al (2009:158) summarise the characterization of indigenous knowledge in the literature as 'a body of knowledge existing within or acquired by local people over a period of time through accumulation of experiences, society–nature relationships, community practices and institutions, and through passing it down through generations'. In providing a genealogy of the ways the indigenous knowledge has been approached, Zent (2009) marks the importance of 'particular social, economic, political, and ecological contexts' (35), and cautions against the 'sleight of hand by which knowledge itself can be severed from culturally situated practice and belief' (36). In reviewing these literatures it is surely instructive that lessons learned are regarded a shareable, and that protocols are readily recognizable, for it suggests that despite their very diverse origins the discourses and practices around 'indigenous knowledge' are somehow comparable and distillations of a common object.

The evolution from Sillitoe's early optimistic position (1998) shows increasing recognition that 'indigenous knowledge' may only be half of the story (e.g. Sillitoe ed. 2007; 2014), and moves towards 'taking alternative views of knowledge into consideration' (2010:24) alongside 'alternative ways of constituting, authorizing, and validating knowledge' (25), such as the Wola people's (PNG) theories of how 'cognition occurs in the chest' (14). In querying the 'presumed universality' of indigenous knowledge (2010:13), Sillitoe ultimately questions whether indigenous knowledge 'itself is a culturally relative concept?' (13) - and returns us to the familiar folk-model concerns over universality and diversity. By illustrating the ways that indigenous knowledge has been approached, and how those approaches have evolved over time, the point here is to acknowledge that indigenous knowledge is only half the story, and to demonstrate that appreciating a full ethnographic understanding of local epistemologies and ontologies is vital.

KUSWA methods for inclusive relations & knowledge reflected through others
KUSWA provides support in the areas of gender-based violence and sorcery-related violence, and works through prevention, community awareness and advocacy by both women and men, leadership training for churches and NGOs in how to help mothers facing a domestic crisis deriving from physical or verbal abuse, and also by convening community processes in parallel with support services such as crisis centres, churches, police, and law courts at different levels. For

example, when a woman and her children become displaced (from her husband's village where she customarily moved following marriage) due to violence or tribal fighting, KUSWA will provide food and support. It is vital that all statements are confidential and kept secret - people feel free to speak and talk out secure from the possibility of creating wider and larger problems. Some victims of gender-based and sorcery-related violence are able to return to their homes where situations are resolved and reconciled in customary ways which often include gift-exchange and compensation. KUSWA will step in to support communities when things don't work out and require the involvement of the police and courts.

During a 2018 visit by our AHRC GCRF project team to the Banana Blok urban settlement in Goroka, Eriko Fuferefa described how Kafe Women (KUSWA) had "been doing their thing" for a while but their work had not been publicized until Jackie Kauli & Verena Thomas facilitated a digital stories project. Through this KUSWA have been able to develop a network of relations with CSCM (University of Goroka), Queensland University of Technology and then beyond, to audiences through the sharing of the project. Eriko emphasized how they have also worked with CSCM students, and how it is good for the students to see the issues in real life. Eriko recognized how the films can have an impact and influence people. At the highest level she wants to present the films and their work to the government. She wants MPs see that it (violence against women) happens in communities, and this reminds the MPs of their communities, and for Eriko this is powerful. Eriko's reflections on their own strategic participation in the filmmaking project recall Ginsburg (1999) who describes this self-conscious process of objectification as a form of "cultural activism", enacted as part of a broader project of political empowerment.

Eriko's experience of 'participatory' and 'community based' media as a networked social process reflects the strengths of this approach to production, one that is multi-authored and developed through collaboration between individuals, organisations and participants, foregrounding "the relational aspects of filmmaking" (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005:7) and acting as a catalyst for knowledge and networks of relations embedded in time and place. Eriko appreciated how the digital stories project had encouraged people to come forward and though the showing of films, they had created networks, such as with the police, other villages, and across the Banana Blok.

Eriko described how she believed in the power of the films and how she felt strongly that PPC was influenced by the films on GBV. She talked about not only the power of the film, but also of the responses to the films and how it connects a viewer to other relations, "it makes people think back to their people" providing a space and opportunity to bring experiences (GBV) "Nobody talks about it" into the world. Here a participatory and collaborative approach has created opportunities for women (and men) to speak, legitimizing participants' experiences and recognizing and validating their local contexts.

Reflecting on the process of being in front of a camera, such as for digital stories, when she reconstructed her own story of GBV, Eriko acknowledged that "it's difficult doing it but it helps people, it helps people to know how we can stand together against this...police and government they respect what we do and support what we do." Eriko cried when she saw herself the first time on film and heard her story. She thought back to herself, to the real story of herself, "I don't like to see it...It's not only me. I tell their stories to feel better...Someone has to do it for the others." Similarly for Roseanne, "if not me affected, it could be someone else. The police are not great. The films encourage people to come forward. Perpetrators say "I won't do this again" when they see the film".

There are two inter-related aspects of KUSWA's work that are particularly important to highlight - *inclusive involvement* and *self-knowledge reflected through others*:

KUSWA has learned that sustainable and workable resolutions require the inclusive involvement

of all those directly and indirectly connected to a case. This means including perpetrators rather than excluding them. Although this can be difficult and complicated, there are two major benefits: Firstly, the problems are addressed rather than displaced, opening a path for a woman and her children to return to a life in their own place where they have access to land, housing, food, water and relational supports through family connections. The experiences of displaced people - often having to live with strangers in unfamiliar places and often involving hunger and anxiety - demonstrate that a good life and well-being derive from the quality of relations with people and places. This emphasis on the family and collective rather than limiting focus to individuals, is a key component to KUSWA's experience and methods and is grounded in the values and concerns of indigenous life-worlds and also evident in PNG's 'Family and Sexual Violence Action Committees': "problems have to be dealt with together when they are small and before they get bigger and become much worse, and helping people see the consequences and hardships that might come to them."

Secondly, perpetrators often undergo a kind of conversion - reporting how being invited to attend "makes them feel special" and how they learn about their actions and learn good things and are able to reflect on how they have been "big-heads - hitting and swearing and raping". Such men often say "You've come and seen us. We're like this, but you've come, seen us and involved us" - and then say that they are sorry, that they were big-heads in the past, and that "God must be with and working through your hands to involve people like us. Now we've changed - now we have this information, we won't be doing this again. We'll stop and we'll instruct others to stop". Such conversions and testaments are powerfully effective, and KUSWA has also been able to take such ex-perpetrators to other events and to other districts: "We don't change them - we treat them just as normal people, just like others. They themselves reflect, say they are sorry and confess".

Although these remarkable methods may appear to share features with other such processes of mediation elsewhere, KUSWA's use of 'reflection' here is highly distinctive and draws its force and effect from indigenous ontology and knowledge-practices, and as such is emphasised as a key component in the process. This prompting, elicitation and creation of self-knowledge through personal 'reflection' requires and depends upon relationality - other people and other stories - and KUSWA has learned to harness images and film as vehicles for telling stories and as a basis for mediating indigenous self-knowledge: "they tell a story that catches people's imagination and interest - people can see themselves in other people's circumstances and other people's stories - and people keep talking about this when they return home and it challenges how they think about their own lives. It's very powerful - these stories through images is very powerful in helping and forcing people to reflect on their own lives and how people they know are effected. Often people cry when they see and realize the connections to themselves". Again, taking what we might assume to be recognizable processes or familiar features of 'reflection' at face-value is to profoundly misunderstand how KUSWA's methods are able to achieve their effects, and would be to grasp only half of the story.

KUSWA's recognition that being with family and maintaining good relations with the owners and spirits of a place as crucial is in keeping with Leach's research on the mutual constitution of persons and land (2003), Hukula's (2017) findings about urban settlements in Port Moresby, and Strathern's insight that relationality provides 'vital supports for all living persons' (1992:11 n4).

KUSWA's recognition that people only gain self-knowledge - and therefore understand their dispositions, capacities and effects - through the mediation of others, that is, by recognizing and reflecting upon their own situation and unfolding story by hearing and seeing the circumstances of other people is crucial to understanding the methods they have developed. Melanesian indigenous knowledge-practices are necessarily revelatory strategies: this thorough-going relational basis of knowledge is in keeping with Harrison's (1990), Lindstrom's (1991) and Crook's (2007) research on Melanesian knowledge-practices, and with the way Strathern (1988) theorises that

self-knowledge through others is a key ontological process.

KUSWA's recognition that perpetrators often undergo a kind of conversion in their self-knowledge and position in relations is not unconnected to Taylor and Araújo's (2016:218) insight that 'sorcery is not simply a component of kastom [customary practices and beliefs] or even of strictly indigenous cosmology and practice, as if often supposed [...] its contemporary transmutations are intimately linked [...] to the male hierarchies of Christianity' (and see e.g. Forsyth and Eves eds. 2015).

Conclusion: Indigenous methods for engagement, partnerships and knowledge
Understanding 'indigenous knowledge' in Melanesia has profoundly challenged social science and humanities scholars to dismantle and decolonize western derived concepts of knowledge (Crook 2007). Policy makers face an equal challenge in accommodating vernacular conceptualizations and terminologies. Knowledge in Melanesia is composed through inter-personal relations and has shared implications for the well-being and livelihoods of other people. Fully entering into indigenous vernacular theorisations demands accepting 'knowledge' as carrying the capacities of persons and the land with it: people are intensely aware of the virtues and vulnerabilities of knowledge as always implicating other relations and other people. To move beyond a social constructionist stance of 'one nature, many cultures' that takes indigenous knowledge as if it were merely a version of science that makes different meanings from the same facts of reality, this case-study is grounded in ethnographic theory and has approached indigenous epistemology as integral to a thorough-going ontological lifeworld. The implications for how indigenous knowledge is figured and for appropriate methods of engagement carry unavoidable and profound ethical responsibilities for researchers entering into lifeworlds in which 'data' carries the very life of people. As such, recognizing the primacy of indigenous knowledge in vernacular terms and the importance of existing relations and partnerships are crucial considerations, and are foregrounded in this case-study which has focused on Kafe Urban Settlers Women's Association (KUSWA).

Examples of knowledge-practices in Melanesia have helped anthropologists to reflect upon and approach the particular cultural habits of relation-making in both kinship (social relations through which people are connected) and knowledge (epistemological assumptions about connections in the world) as tethered together. So for example, connections can be made between the ways in which Euro-Americans regard themselves as individual persons positioned by an overarching society, and the ways that individual facts are given meaning by placement in a context. Connections can also be made here to the notion of how individual entities dwell in a surrounding environment. Such examples reflect a common aesthetic and are manifestations of a thoroughgoing cultural theory or ontological concerns.

Community discussions involve contributing ideas from a particular social position and on the basis of them playing one part in a collective process, and without an expectation that one position will ultimately win out. It perhaps seems counter-intuitive to Euro-Americans that Melanesian peoples hold multiple social identities that are activated by singular relations, but this accompanies an epistemological capacity to simultaneously hold multiple perspectives. This ability to perceive a situation from the points of view of different social actors, and to readily appreciate the interactions of different positions and registers of knowledge is a crucially important resource. Collective discussions then, can have a powerful elicitory effect, drawing out knowledge and drawing people, families and kin groups into becoming involved in a discussion, and an equally important effect of causing self-reflection on a person's own thinking, understanding and involvement. A relational basis for speaking and contributing is necessary, and as much as interactive collective discussions can be exclusionary they can be forcefully elicitory.

Melanesian indigenous knowledges, are relational, interactive, combinatory, elicitory and thoroughly social. These features, characteristics and dynamics are recognisable throughout the

region, and Melanesian peoples clearly have a sophisticated understanding of the potentials afforded by various spaces be they more communal or more contained. It is important to recognise that ready-made venues, spaces and social protocols exist for collective dialogue - and that these have particular purposes, politics and potentials. Whilst any development action or initiative is received into and is responded to by these defining characteristics of Melanesian sociality and knowledge, giving focus to creating spaces to support communal efforts to address issues that communities themselves find difficult has considerable potential, but obviously requires a responsible approach involving deep understanding, careful engagement and respect for local people's ability to appreciate the possibilities and to guide support for them to deal with their own issues. Making new spaces for dialogue necessarily involves a commitment to making space for Melanesian indigenous knowledge practices.

By engaging and thereby becoming part of other people's life-worlds, academic researchers unavoidable intervene in 'knowledge' and must appreciate the local definitions of social responsibilities, and therefore need to fully understand the meaning and effects of their own relations and actions which carry consequences for other people. Continuing to externalize the true human costs and social consequences of academic research onto the lives of other peoples is no longer tenable in a decolonizing academy. All too often the social constructionist paradigm underpins assumptions about other people's and indigenous life-worlds: 'one nature, many cultures' is satisfied to explain cultural difference as a matter of different peoples making different cultural interpretations of the same universal natural facts. Not only does this severely constrain scholarly enquiry and academic practice, it becomes complicit in considerable political consequences by limiting epistemological alternatives and monopolizing ontological possibilities. By limiting the place afforded to other people's creativity and theories of what it is to be human, such approaches consequently also limit our own.

This case-study has afforded a space in which to reflect on the role of vernacular conceptualizations and the pathways and moments in which 'indigenous knowledge' is brought in, considered and made legible, and equally the ways in which such considerations are redundant, excluded or unsuspected. The ambition here was to demonstrate - in perhaps unusual ways - how the approaches in current paradigms risk attending to only half the story & how like Majnep and Bulmer risk missing the point of indigenous knowledge and the vital concerns of indigenous life-worlds. The alternative to social constructionist approaches of 'one nature, many cultures' that apprehend and define the problems and objects in all too familiar epistemological and ontological terms opens up scope to fully recognize the creative achievements of indigenous peoples and life-worlds that are beyond imagination. The challenges for understanding the other half of the story to indigenous engagement, research partnerships, and knowledge mobilisation might be daunting and awesome in equal measure, but are not beyond the ken of arts, humanities and social science scholars willing to be guided into ways of being human beyond their own.

Annex 1: Indigeniety in Papua New Guinea

With more than 800 languages (see Index Map)[1] indigeneity in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is both highly diverse and a ubiquitously accepted self-designation, but is only one amongst many other terms of self-designation which serve different purposes. 'Indigeneity' affords particular connotations and political purposes, but is hardly the most important basis for expressing collective identity in a country where high densities of linguistic and cultural diversity are accompanied by highly specific and flexible identifiers deployed across the range of scale from 'clan' to 'nation'.
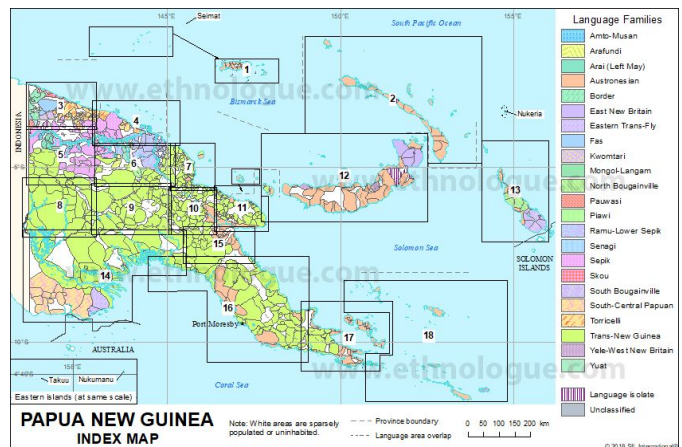

Papua New Guinea's Constitution asserts that:
> Preamble
> 'WE, THE PEOPLE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA—
> · united in one nation
> · pay homage to the memory of our ancestors—the source of our strength and origin of our combined heritage
> · acknowledge the worthy customs and traditional wisdoms of our people—which have come down to us from generation to generation
> · pledge ourselves to guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now.'
>
> Part 2, Sch. 1.2:
> '"custom" means the customs and usages of indigenous inhabitants of the country existing in relation to the matter in question at the time when and the place in relation to which the matter arises, regardless of whether or not the custom or usage has existed from time immemorial;'
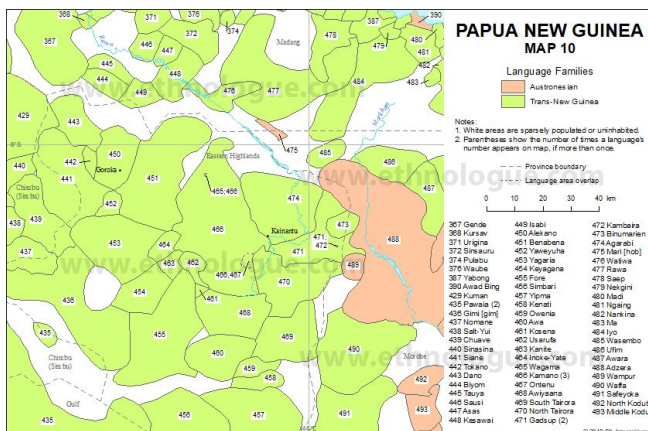
'Non-indigenous' people are very much the minority in PNG, and as such 'indigeneity' does not imply political marginalisation or social discrimination or a historical tradition: Melanesian cultures are fluid, creative, responsive to change, mindful of origins and open to influences of all kinds. The term '*kastam*' in the PNG lingua franca *Tok Pisin* works as a short-hand denotation for 'indigenous knowledge and practice', but means both more and less than these concepts in English.

As such, a country in which 'indigeneity' is both taken for granted and secondary to other registers of self-designation makes for a distinctive example of cultural differences and how they might be approached. Our case-study focuses on the Goroka area of the Eastern Highlands & Map 10[2] above shows the location and context of linguistic and ethnic diversity.

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[1] Source: https://www.ethnologue.com/map/PG_xx

[2] Source: https://www.ethnologue.com/map/PG_10

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