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Future Thinking Through Regenerative Tourism Education in Samoa: Experiential Learning Perspectives with Australian University Students



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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the importance of embedding future thinking, on the ground, experiential learning into the higher education curriculum. While sustainable tourism has focused on alternative forms of tourism that have less impacts on natural environments and host communities, these approaches have not gone far enough to address issues stemming from capitalist growth models. Instead, we argue that tourism researchers and professionals need to focus on implementing models that ‘regenerate’, not merely ‘sustain’ destinations. Students will be future professionals in the industry and need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to drive more responsible forms of tourism. The article summarises the initial expectations to final reflections from a recent trip to Samoa, with a group of 18 students from the University of Newcastle Australia, who are also co-authors of this article. The main purpose of the trip was for students to better understand issues related to how climate change (as a result of unequal resource exploitation and impacts) is a key issue that directly affects low lying islands such as Samoa and to consider the enablers and barriers for solving environmental challenges that incorporate cultural, societal and community knowledge. Students visited local organisations including businesses, NGOs, NFPs to gain a sense of working on the ground towards regenerative futures. These insights were gained into regenerative tourism through their involvement with the local community of Moata’a with a three day immersive homestay experience and engaged in strengthening partnerships between the University of Newcastle and local communities and businesses.

KEYWORDS: Experiential education, regenerative tourism, sustainability, climate change, Samoa

Introduction

The current ecological crisis requires future thinking away from capitalist growth models that perpetuate social inequality and environmental destruction (Everingham & Chassagne 2020). Key to building sustainable tourism futures and responsible tourism is finding the balance between commercial interests and ecological, social and cultural sustainability in all stages of

the tourism lifecycle. Practicing sustainable tourism involves addressing complex issues, including the consideration of different stakeholders, optimising community capabilities, incorporating sustainable supply chains into tourism design; and monitoring impacts of tourism, socially, culturally and environmentally (Lai, Hsu, & Wearing, 2016; Hall, 2019; Moscardo, 2008).

To what extent, however, are these complex issues related to building sustainable and responsible futures being incorporated into the higher education system for future tourism industry professionals and experts? As Loverioa et al (2022) point out, the link between high environmental awareness and concern is inextricably tied to education. Higher education experiences that centre commitment to sustainability is one factor that will increase students' level of care for the commitment and consequent pro-environmental and social behaviour (Loverioa et al., 2022). However, the question remains as to whether students' learning experiences in the predominantly classroom environment can be translated into a long-term and continuing commitment to sustainability manifested in their professional careers while remaining hopeful despite of the overwhelming challenges they face.

Although the university sector spouts ideals of nurturing future thinking in students to take on global challenges, research shows that future thinking is not necessarily being prioritised in the university sector (Alexander, 2020). Many of the global challenges society is facing have a root cause in the neoliberal values embraced by the majority of policy makers, practitioners, and consumers (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). However measures guided by neoliberal values that emphasis efficiency in the production process and maximum outputs are still deeply embedded in tertiary education (Edelheim, 2020).

We argue that students need to be provided with the kinds of skills and knowledge that centre new thinking and building responsible practices for the challenges that humanity is facing (and also students are/will be facing) that are exacerbated due to the disjunction of humans, society, culture and economy from nature, accelerated by the prevalence of the neoliberal paradigm. A major issue confronting contemporary tourism practices is the excessive and unequal distribution of the utilisation/exploitation of resources to support all aspects of tourism development driven by a capitalist agenda of growth and profit leading to undesirable environmental, social and economic outcomes (Cave & Dredge, 2020). To address this issue, teaching and learning should be focused on identifying and promoting responsible tourism practices that emphasise the need to regenerate tourism resources in destination communities. Students also need to learn relevant skills and knowledge that can empower them and establish a sense of agency so that they don't feel powerless and hopeless to shape their futures. Experiential learning in the field can lead to transformative 'deep learning' through the emotional journeys and affective bonds that students experience in relation to people and place in tourism contexts (Hayes et al., 2020).

While sustainability is increasingly being incorporated into higher education curriculum, the term sustainability has also been co-opted to mean business as usual. Too often in so-called 'sustainable' models, the main focus is on sustaining growth and profits via increasing tourist numbers and revenue. Sustainability has come to mean 'sustaining growth' (Higgins-Desbiolles 2010). Moreover the prevalence of greenwashing sustainability continues to mislead consumers through the focus on incorporating discourses of sustainability into marketing gimmicks rather than implementing necessary practices that are required for a truly sustainable tourism (Font et al 2017). And yet even the notion of sustainability is no longer sufficient to address the current and future crises facing the world because what is left to

sustain has degenerated to such a point that it will require tourism stakeholders to experiment with different ways of thinking and practices that can regenerate nature rather than merely 'sustain' what little is left (see Really, what's the difference? 'Sustainable tourism' vs regenerative Tourism, The Good Tourism Blog, <https://goodtourismblog.com/2022/09/really-whats-the-difference-sustainable-tourism-vs-regenerative-tourism/>).

Instead tourism needs to become more responsible, and focus on what individuals, organisations and governments can do to maximise the positive economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism (Cheer et al., 2021). As per the key focus of this journal, determining and prioritising important issues locally is key for collective global responses. It is also about stakeholders working together to co-create value and develop a better future.

University education then, should focus on equipping students with the thinking and skills needed in relation to alternative economic models. Regenerative economic thinking for example, provides new economic paradigms that address root causes of unsustainability, steering resource production and consumption towards the regeneration of society, economy, culture and environment (Alves et al., 2022). Regenerative tourism focuses on tourism from a systems view that sees tourism as only able to flourish when the regenerative capacity of the social-ecological system(s) within which tourism is embedded can be sustained to continuously provide the resources essential to supporting related activities (Chapin, 2009; Nyaupane, Poudel, & Timothy, 2018). New forms of responsible tourism that regenerate the natural environment give more equitable returns to a more inclusive group of stakeholders; including the non-human world. Tourism scholars and practitioners who are concerned about sustainability should now be focusing on regenerative tourism that centre circular business models and more localised forms tourism (see Sørensen, & Bærenholdt, 2020; Caterina-Knorr & Everingham 2021; Everingham & Francis-Coan 2022). This urgently needs to be taught in all levels of education and particularly higher education to better prepare students to take on the wicked problem of resource overconsumption and degradation experienced by many destinations.

Methodology

With these issues in mind, a group of 18 Australian students from the University of Newcastle underwent an experiential learning trip to Samoa, November 2022, funded by the Australian DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) under the New Colombo Scholarship scheme. Students underwent a competitive process to gain entry into the program based on an E.O.I process. They were fully funded by DFAT to undertake the course which was titled 'International Study Experience'. The main purpose of the trip was for students to learn insights from organisations, tourism businesses, and communities in Samoan society and how they are coping with global challenges that incorporate cultural, societal and community knowledge. The focus of the grant application was to get students to better understand issues related to how climate change (as a result of unequal resource exploitation and impacts) is a key issue that directly affects low lying islands such as Samoa. The students learnt about environmental and social issues from the ground, through speaking and learning from organisations dealing with waste (SRWMA), regenerating local industry through a focus on agribusiness (Women in Business Development Inc.) and beauty products using local crops, regenerating soil by helping farmers transition away from toxic fertile to organics farming, and Secretariate of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) which acts as a knowledge hub for cutting edge climate resilience and sustainability across the

Pacific Region. Students were also introduced to diverse economic tourism models such as community based tourism with a family run traditional fale. The students had the privilege of being the first cohort to be hosted by the Moata'a village in a first of its kind regenerative tourism initiative. This involved a local homestay, learning about traditional arts, crafts and food, and doing a beach rubbish clean up and planting mangroves.

Findings

The following article summarises some of these experiences, from the initial expectations to final reflections from the student perspectives who are also co-authors of this article. The purpose is to illustrate how such an experiential learning journey could transform students and forge their future thinking and commitment to responsible/regenerative resource use. Students had the task of thinking about these issues specifically their role as global citizens in relation to future thinking and commitment to responsible tourism, with a focus on regenerative tourism.

The Samoan context: small island nations and environmental injustice

Pacific Island nations are characterised as part of the Global South due to the politically and culturally marginalised status of these countries (Dados & Connell, 2012), and are a main draw card of international tourism. Prior to COVID-19, international tourism significantly contributed to Samoa's economy and accounted for 24.5% of its GDP in 2019 (PSDI, 2021). In the meantime, tourism is a major contributor to environmental impacts on Pacific islands.

Samoan people have a traditional and ethical relationship with their natural environment (Techera, 2006) that is deeply rooted in their traditional belief systems and affects their everyday relationships with and management of resources. A nuanced understanding of local knowledge and participation is needed to enhance and strengthen community resilience against global challenges such as climate change, and to better manage resources for regenerative tourism. Understanding of place and culture is key to bringing forth solutions to such complex issues.

Students were introduced to the role of traditional knowledge in guiding regenerative tourism and forging community resilience in the face of threats from climate change because this is knowledge that has been developed over grand time scales and long term human interactions with local environment. Therefore, an introduction to Samoan culture and environmental expertise was the first step in this experiential learning trip.

The following sections overview some of the learning experiences of the trip in relation to global citizenship, regenerative tourism and on the ground experiential learning for future thinking.

Global citizenship and positionality

Critical literature on global citizenship education emphasises the need to embed notions of systemic injustice, collective action and solidarity across borders into the pedagogical approaches adopted by these programme (Andreotti, 2015). Pre-departure, students were asked to reflect on their expectations in light of these critical notions of 'global citizenship'. For Mathew this meant:

deeply listening to the people and place of Samoa. It is my hope that my own understanding of relation to land and seascape will be broadened. It is my expectation that I will enjoy the time I have there. It is my intention to hear out the faint and the loud – especially in regards to business sustainability in the area – but so too community sustainability. I expect myself to reserve judgement, but to honestly inquire and connect-dots from the perspectives I hold. I wish for myself to develop close relationships with the people I meet. I know our current undertaking is supported by the work of many Samoans – this cannot be understated.

Students reflected on how citizens of the world should be educated about the environmental injustices of those communities who are being directly affected by our climate crisis today and yet contribute the least to emissions (Parks & Roberts, 2006; Zafra-Calvo et al., 2020). Moreover inherent injustice is perpetuated through the negation of the rich knowledge that these communities hold within global climate change policies. Critical global citizenship education should foreground Indigenous ecological knowledge and knowledge from the Global South. However these knowledge systems have typically been invisibilised and or/negated, including in the higher education system.

Education should involve local and Indigenous Knowledge and practice at its core (Cass).

The importance of acknowledging local and Indigenous land management practices as key for future thinking was acknowledged:

Indigenous practices for land management need to be implemented into law and legislation. Indigenous knowledge is invaluable for the environment and should be respected and become common knowledge (Cass).

This trip will offer a unique opportunity to deepen understandings about place-based adaptive strategies, local resilience and utilisation of local resources and knowledge (Athea).

Further to this point Bailey explains:

Today's students are the problem solvers of tomorrow, and a diverse pool of knowledge is something that has both been ignored and required to solve the great problems that present themselves on the local and international stages. Indigenous knowledges and practices have been developed for thousands of years, over 70,000 for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Over this time lessons are learnt and information is gathered on massive scales.

Reflecting on some of the readings in relation to the importance of valuing Indigenous land management and tourism, Brodie expects that global citizenship education should provide nuanced place based local knowledge that can help drive localised solutions to climate change:

Although Samoa is one culture, each village experiences climate change differently, this is also shown on a global scale. There is a necessity to be

inclusive when delivering global citizenship education because everywhere is affected differently. There is a division of importance depending on location, therefore, should be incorporated in the design of how education is disseminated. This instigates community action based on local knowledge to implement sustainability plans in response the climate change, but the design can be applied interculturally.

In relation to travelling to Samoa, students were cognisant of the environmental injustice of the realities of extreme adverse climate change effects, and the importance of foregrounding place based strategies and knowledge systems as suggested by scholars such as Schweizer et al. (2013) to deal with such crises. As Bailey mentioned:

It's important to understand the ways in which the Samoan communities make decisions that can facilitate change.

In light of these critical notions of global citizenship, students reflected on their responsibilities in relation to the trip in Samoa:

I hope to build ethical solidarities with local communities (Athea).

Regenerative tourism

While there are many positives to the sustainable tourism agenda, it has also been criticised for merely serving economic growth paradigms and thus perpetuating environmental destruction and social inequality. Regenerative tourism aims to address these criticisms by taking more holistic regenerative development approaches that draw on multiple knowledge lineages including western science and Indigenous perspectives (Bellato et al., 2021). Regenerative tourism not only prioritises community and ecological wellbeing, but it also drives innovation (Bellato et al., 2021).

Introducing students to future thinking models such as regenerative tourism was a large component of the trip:

After spending 13 years working in the travel and tourism industry, I had been confronted with the stark realisation of how the industry was contributing to global warming, climate change and biodiversity degradation (Tracey).

I believe this experience alone will make me an even more compassionate and empathetic person. It will also be amazing to experience this from a business and tourism perspective. There is so much power in tourism. Currently, tourism is often a degenerative and harmful practice to the environment and culture. It is also often harmful to locals as they often will not benefit economically from tourism, as is the case with holiday cruises. However, tourism can be empowering, regenerative, and be done with a purpose. I believe that educational tourism will be an important way to improve environmental relationships and implement real environmental change generationally (Cass).

I first heard about the trip to Samoa in Paul Hodge's 'Rethinking development' class.

He explained how this could be an opportunity for students to participate in a program that aimed to change the mindset of tourism. He mentioned the term 'regenerative tourism', which implied that sustainable tourism was no longer enough. It was time for tourists like me, who are privileged and take away so much, to give back and contribute to the environment and people we visit (Penny).

Students had the opportunity to experience a local community initiative where the village of Moata'a was able to experiment with hosting students for the first time and introducing them to regenerative tourism activities such as cultural arts and crafts, local cooking, cleaning up the beach and planting mangroves. Students expressed their excitement pre-trip to learn about these on the ground regenerative practices and to learn more about local culture:

I do hope to learn more about mangroves and the Samoan citizens relationship with them. They are one of my favourite trees on account of their ability to thrive in such harsh conditions such as changing water and salinity levels, as well as what they provide to both natural fauna and flora, as well as to human beings. The important ecosystems they house have always been undervalued, supporting other life in all stages. On top of this, the protection to coastlines, of which the majority of people live nearby of across the world, from rising sea levels and erosion is again undervalued. I am most excited to actually plant them, it is something that I have always wanted to do (as well as plant coral). I hope to learn more about mangroves and their role, especially for smaller island nations such as Samoa (Bailey).

The community based forms of tourism that students experienced, in the form of homestay with the Moata'a village, as well as the family run traditional Fale style tourism, allowed students to reflect on the stark contrast with resort style tourism. Resort tourism typically is typically a more extractive form of tourism that does not necessarily benefit locals and has negative effects on natural environments (Cowburn et al. 2018; Woosnam & Erul 2016).

I found growth model tourism was most common in large scale operations, such as Taumasina. Places such as these seem to follow the capitalist agenda, with an emphasis on growth and profit. This was reflected in the high prices, low wages, and luxury appeal. This is starkly contrasted to the family owned Fales that were run as a businesses to extenuate traditional culture and support a local family. Both follow a model of western ideals of tourism yet to differing degrees. High income tourism is a major aspect of capitalist ideas of western management (Athea).

While resort style tourism may not be regenerative in the sense of locally operated and tends to have a lot of unsustainable practices, regenerative models should also try to build bridges with various stakeholders (Hardman, 2010) and resorts can play an important role in facilitating regenerative tourism projects. For example, Taumasina Resort supports local coral restoration projects and Return to Paradise Resort has a marine reserve where they are working repopulating the ocean with giant clams and turtles:

Today we helped restore coral just of the beach of the Taumasina resort. We had a local tell us first hand the changes he has seen throughout the years and in particular how the coral has slowly faded away. To me this was a wakeup call and

offered me the chance to see first hand the effects the rising sea temperatures have had on the reefs (James).

We visited the giant clams and also during the coral restoration, this is helping to regenerate the flora and fauna that had been impacted from fishing. They are attempting to shift away from fishing as a livelihood and a way to make money and instead to making that livelihood helping to restore these areas. They are looking to expand many of these areas so that these spaces that have been impacted by coral bleaching and overfishing can begin to be restored (Tilleah).

We went to the giant clams today which was awesome. Seeing them along with turtles and fish made me reflect on the symbiotic relationship all species have with one another and the importance of ensuring there is always a balance. This further put the emphasis for me on the effects of climate change and how it can strongly disturb this balance and ultimately lead to the destruction of an ecosystem (James).

Regenerative models should also contribute to the well-being of local communities. Students were able to reflect on the ways in which Covid-19 highlighted problems of tourism dependency, and how the lockdowns gave locals a sense of enjoying their own country as a tourist:

COVID-19 did affect Samoan tourism and it was interesting to hear from the STA (Samoan Tourism Authority) that resorts would discount prices for locals to stay at the resorts so that they could continue to have a flow of income (Tilleah).

Students also gained an understanding that regenerative tourism takes a systems view – and that nature and culture cannot be disconnected in working towards regenerative futures:

One thing that was completely unexpected within the trip was the topic of cultural regeneration. My expectation revolved solely around environmental regeneration, yet this international experience showed me how interlinked the social and cultural is within environmental sustainability and tourism. I was pleasantly surprised by this, and I feel my perspective has been broadened to now include this within my regenerative discourse. I shall take this into my work in the future (Athea).

It became clear to me that regenerative tourism is a social movement that can only enhance the world we live in (Penny).

Future thinking for future career

Over a decade ago Sheldon et al. (2008) called for tourism education to be future thinking in order to adapt to significant societal and industry changes. Tourism students should be getting an education that equips them with the skills to lead the industry towards responsible tourism models. The Tourism Education futures initiative (TEFI) states five categories of skills should be empathised for industry leaders: Destination stewardship skills, political skills, ethical skills, enhanced human resource skills and dynamic business skills Sheldon et al (2008). Many students are aware of the need to learn such real world skills to be future

leaders, particularly in careers related to sustainability, as Kelly states in her motivation to undertake the trip:

I decided to do this trip as I am passionate about travel and learning about sustainable practices. I am excited to learn from the local knowledge of the Samoan people in the context of climate change. I am interested in this program as it will provide an opportunity of growth in my experience and professional training. The program aligns with my career goals of working with industry experts and collaborating with local community. I expect to gain vital local knowledge from the Samoan people along with learning about their everyday lives. I am wanting to learn about innovations and the type of business that exists in Samoa.

Students found the real world on the ground learning inspiring, which furthered their passion for working and having a future career in sustainability and regeneration:

I think that having international experience is a great advantage for my future career. Whilst I am still not sure what I want to do, if I were to look into something that involved working with the international community, international experience, especially one like this, would be greatly beneficial as it is something that not many people are able to say they've done something like this. Further, the skills we have developed whilst we were away will be greatly beneficial for any career that I go into. Being thrown into a new culture, in a new country, with people that I had never met before can be intimidating, but I was able to overcome this and have an amazing time, which are skills that are so important to have. Not only this, but there are also so many new areas of work that I might pursue a career in that I haven't thought about before this trip, I've realised there are so many different areas within sustainability and regeneration that the possibilities are endless. Sustainability and regeneration is an area that is emerging out of necessity and so many jobs are going along with that and I might be able to pursue a position in the future that may not even exist right now. An opportunity like this is very rare and it was the experience of a lifetime that I was so fortunate to have been elective to participate in and that will greatly help me in any future endeavour that I choose to undertake (Tilleah).

A career in regeneration involves working towards holistic models that centre the well-being of nature and people. As Cass says, she is now passionate a career in regeneration and hopes to accomplish this through:

- 1) the rehabilitation and conservation of vegetated habitats,
- 2) reducing plastic pollution/managing and moving current plastic pollution,
- 3) advocating for the rights of nature, and
- 4) improving communication and education among people to inspire change through spreading love and respect for nature.

Education for real world learning

I think a lot of my pre-trip expectations did line up with many of the on the ground findings in Samoa. We immersed ourselves in the Samoan culture and experienced their way of life. From traditional dancing to traditional food, we got to experience it all. This was something I expected and am so lucky to have experiences. We got to help them prepare lunch for us as well as participate in dances, weave baskets and headbands, drink Kava and so much more, which is a learning experience that you just cannot get in a classroom (Tilleah).

The importance of real world learning was evident from day one, when students were introduced to staff at STA (Samoa Tourism Authority). Students were given a briefing of the practices that were being introduced to travel and tourism operators to assist with sustainability within the tourism industry. These included:

- Assistance in managing waste and energy within their businesses
- Implementing of water refilling stations instead of using/selling single use water bottles
- Training in plastic pollution
- Encouraging tourism operations to save energy by using traditional methods, such as cooking the traditional Umu, which use open fire to heat rocks for cooking, instead of using gas or electric ovens.

I found it interesting to see these practices either being used, being introduced, or being spoken about in planning at different locations that we visited, both tourism industries and other locations (such as SRWMA). I am not sure if I would describe these as practices as 'western' as such and would possibly describe them as 'global' practices as I feel that these conversations are happening globally as we continue to solve climate related issues (Tracy).

Experiential learning on the ground is a transformative experience for students. Learning 'in the field' challenges students to think critically about the complexities of tourism issues with multidimensional and holistic viewpoints, drawing on from perspectives from various stakeholders (Bowen & Dallah 2020). Bowen & Dallen (2020) also found that such real world learning was effective in developing strategic partnerships that can be bridged across nations. Hayes et al (2020) argue that experiential tourism education works to internalise moral obligations within students, hence producing graduates who can enhance the sustainability of the industry by acting as stewards for resources and communities who are affected by tourism impacts. This can be seen through Tracy's reflections around her own moral obligations in her future career in the tourism sector:

I do feel torn to which direction I am headed. My current workplace is tourism based; and I can see elements of both sustainable and regenerative tourism practices there and would love an opportunity to drive those focuses within my position. Both Dr. Everingham and Dr. Lai have pushed me to ask for these opportunities within my workplace and I aim to speak with management in the new year about these ideas. I believe that hands on projects will assist me with learning how to blend my passions for tourism with my environmental degree. I will also be looking into how I could possibly use subject SCIE3500 - Research Integrated Learning, to continue in my learnings and research of environmentally sustainable and regenerative tourism practices (Tracy).

Learning directly from other cultures in an immersive environment was one of the key reasons Grace and Lu Lu decided to come on the trip:

I believe this type of learning, that being, an international tour is one of the most engaging ways students can learn and immerse themselves into the Indigenous culture and learn first-hand the practices that shape their culture. Often you can read, watch and listen to various forms of information regarding different cultures practices but these can often be unrealistic, misinformed or not accurate (Grace).

I hope to not just learn but to fully immerse myself into the traditional Samoan culture and practices and learn about their history and where they plan to take these traditional practices in the future. I also strive to learn about the current situation of tourism in Samoa and the ways in which this could be potentially enhanced... specifically the ways in which they navigate sustainability and environmental practices. I endeavour to learn about what sustainability looks like for our nation (Australia) in the future and what we can do as young adults to make things better before it is too late (Lu Lu).

There was no doubt students could see the value of real word educational learning, and believed that the university should be incorporating more of it within the curriculum. This would not only benefit students from Australia – but perhaps even assist build capacity and partnerships that would also benefit Samoans, As Tracy points out:

Nathan (General manager) from the Taumeasina Island Resort is incorporating internships in his business with Business Studies students from the University of Newcastle, and there could be opportunities to expand this program and others like it to bring in other disciplines such as the sciences, sustainability, and tourism. Imagine as a UON student being able to spend a semester studying at the National University of Samoa, while working at a Samoan resort or tourism operator. This could also be an ideal model to assist some of the resorts and tourism operators in rebuilding after the pandemic.

Entrepreneurial Learning

Historically, marginalised communities – such as those in the Global South are more likely to become ‘necessity entrepreneurs’ as they are often excluded from mainstream opportunities (Rae 2017). Community solidarity in the periphery – such as Global South can provide a key context for regenerative forms of entrepreneurship (Rae 2017) that are community orientated (Cahn 2008). Tracy was struck by the community orientated entrepreneurial approach:

One of the interesting conversations that I am still pondering is how one of their staff explained that to successfully support the women in Samoa, that they not only need to support the women, but the men and children in those families too. To support each of the family members in understanding the important roles that the women play, was an integral part of supporting women to become entrepreneurs.

For too long, Pacific peoples have been derogatively labelled as ‘poor at business’ and not inclined to be entrepreneurial (Movono et al., 2022). However, this view ignores historical factors such as the legacies of colonial policies that have contributed to low levels of local

ownership in the region (Movono et al., 2022). Despite these structural inequalities Pacific Island people already have strong resilience in the face of environmental and community resilience and unique forms of entrepreneurship in Samoa have diverse livelihood outcomes (Cahn, 2008).

Students visited numerous local businesses that gave them unique on the ground insights into these 'other' forms of entrepreneurship, inspiring students in regard to their own entrepreneurial journeys:

I really valued visiting Mailelani, seeing how a small business operates in Samoa, whilst exporting to a global market. You often think that behind a flashy website is a warehouse with machinery that pumps out the products in perfect form. However, it's nearly never like this in the early days. It was so inspiring to see the family use their own house as their workshop and produce an internationally renowned product and its packaging with their own hands. It reminded me of how much time and effort it takes to start a business (James).

Women in business was a great look into the dynamics of biosecurity and organic exports of produce such as taro, coconut, coco... Seeing how they were trying to educate farmers to move to organic practices allowing them to market international. It was so interesting to be able to witness such early on trade issues of a developing country. Their push for encouraging farmers to try gain different value from their staples (e.g. coconut, taro, bananas = chips, oils...) really made me reflect on how little they have developed in regard to trade and export (James).

Students had first hand experience learning on the ground about Samoa in integrating sustainability into their society, as well as the barriers to such implementation:

Samoa was integrating sustainability and we saw this through both SPREP and SWRMA. SWRMA in particular was so interesting as we got to see glass ground down to almost sand to make bricks, we got to see their different recycling initiatives, such as what they are doing through schools and also the beautiful jewellery they make out of plastic. On top of this we got to assist with coral restoration which was something I was really looking forward to, and we're looking at ways other tourists can be involved in this in order to help with regenerative tourism. However, I think that due to the lack of funding and awareness of some of these initiatives, they are not doing as well as they could be, I also think for initiatives such as the coral restoration, more funding and research would help assist in finding better ways to conduct them, for example the zip ties and metal tables are not very environmentally friendly as the metal corrodes and algae can grow on the zip ties which results in fish eating them and ingesting micro-plastics. However, these initiatives are so important and are at the foundation of what we were helping to assist with when helping with Samoa's regenerative tourism (Tilleah).

Each place, community, company, or association that we visited we were consistently reminded of the export of workers from Samoa to Australia and New Zealand. It was said that a Samoan person could work in Australia/NZ for 6 months and earn the same amount of money that they would earn in Samoa when working for 10 years. Hearing about this so frequently and from a variety of

people and industries, represents the diverse impacts this has on Samoa and neighbouring island states (Tracy).

In the morning we went to the agricultural and export centre. This was a great insight into the logistics of exporting Samoan goods to Australia. This made me reflect on how hard it can be for smaller island nations to enter the Australian consumer market. Later in the day we went to the recycling plant which was the highlight of my trip. It was awesome to see the innovation used of turning used glass into concrete. This made me reflect on other alternative that could be made using glass and plastic and how there are numerous potential options that have not been tapped into yet (James).

Lastly, seeing first hand on the ground, the creative and resilient ways that local communities were dealing with sustainability challenges in Samoa, inspired the students to work on these challenges in their own professional careers:

Seeing first hand the effects pollution and plastic waste can have on the environment inspires me to come up with innovative ways to solve the issue (James)

Conclusion

The tourism industry, driven by neoliberal capitalist models of growth contain inherent inequalities in relation to environmental injustice, is underpinned by unequal mobilities and is one of the most significant contributors globally to carbon emissions (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Sustainable tourism is still couched within irresponsible tourism models where the idea of 'tourism as an industry' is couched within destructive catch - up economic growth models, where profits rarely 'trickle down'. Indeed environmental and social inequalities which have been exacerbated by climate change is something in which global citizenship education should take on as an ethical obligation.

The Pacific islands feel the impacts of rising sea levels and intensified natural disasters despite contributing the least to these environmental impacts. Many Pacific communities are losing livelihoods, cultures and homes due to climate. In short, Indo Pacific countries are experiencing the most extreme effects of climate change, despite having contributed the least to total greenhouse emissions. Yet, Pacific island communities have strong resilience. Far from being passive victims, the rich legacies of Indo Pacific culture contains visions of leadership and community to deal with crises. Innovative solutions to such complex problems requires learning from a diversity of knowledge systems and social/ cultural experiences with crises. Global challenges are multi-scalar, involving local and global actions. Dealing with such complexities involves being cognisant of multiple experiences, worldviews and knowledge systems.

Educating students around these issues is vital for addressing the current ecological crises as the shift away from extractive capitalist economic growth models is needed to address these issues. Diverse economic thinking which centres the wellbeing of nature and communities opens up exciting new pathways for doing business and learning from communities in places like Samoa can open up more regenerative futures. Not only did students learn relevant skills and knowledge that can empower them in their future careers, they also experienced a sense

of agency and hope to contribute to better futures for people and planet. The experiences of the 18 Australian university students clearly shows how important experiential learning can be for understanding not only the barriers but also the solutions to work towards real world change. Experiential learning experiences that focus on future thinking in relation to global challenges need to be incorporated into educational models and practices.

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