

Plastics Circularity and Waste Management

Ethnography to better comprehend
the plastics crisis in the Pacific –

**Behaviors, Mindsets, Attitudes,
Beliefs, Practices**

Cases from: Tuvalu, Fiji, Vanuatu and
Tonga



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Brief Context

- Pacific Plastics Crisis: urgent actions on the whole lifecycle of plastics- from production to utilization to management
- An additional lens to the developing narrative- human centered stories to supplement and complement the existing studies with ground-verified realities
 - (a) elicit human experiences in the plastics value chain
 - (d) explore and decode the underlying meanings behind plastic waster systems and waste management approaches and behaviors
 - (c) understand the opinions of actors in the plastics ecosystem
 - (d) amplify the ingenuity captured making findings more robust and meaningful



Diving Deeper

- The utilization of vital resources – water for cleansing bottles
- Waste recycling facilities- having appetite for a certain plastic product type
- For how long will beach clean-up campaigns will continue across the region



Diving Deeper

- Local solutions can have an impact, but focusing on legislations should be a priority
- Legislature: nano, micro, meso, macro, mega plastics
- Pacific- policies in place that incentivizes and simultaneously encourages shift in culture



Diving Deeper



- The role and voice of the ‘unpopular’, the marginalized, the underprivileged
- Draw from indigenous knowledge for alternatives to plastics, and legislative reforms for substitutes
- Instilling good values from the very start
- Lack of proper infrastructure to manage wastes generated

Waste Management Challenges- Tuvalu



Diving Deeper

- Product is affordable, convenient and versatile- if others do it, why should I care
- Dealing with Blasé Behavior- tossing trash out of moving car, not my problem, lack of enforcement, ill-informed about the magnitude of the issue
- Disconnects – curriculum, teaching and student behaviors
- Unconcerned ‘unusual’ actors



Fiji Sun. (2019). Rubbish Disposal a Major Concerns for Residents

Nadali-Bau Road Intersection- Nausori- Fiji



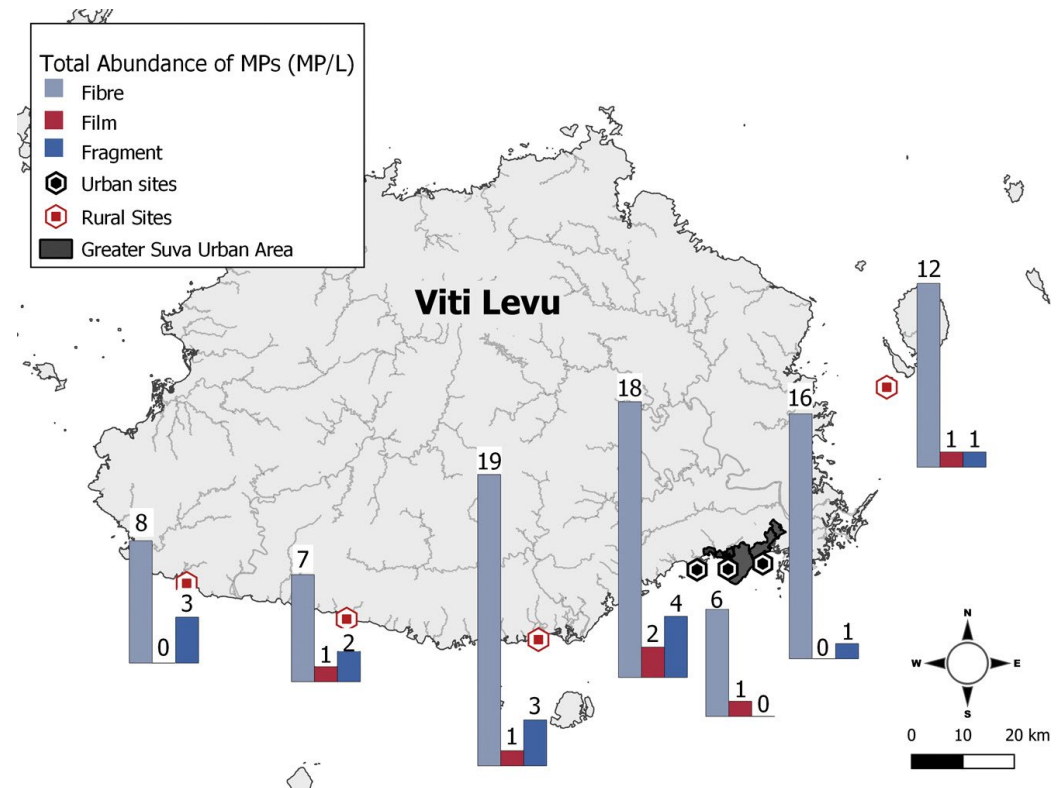
Diving Deeper

- When exigency, reality and livelihood is at crossroads- small business owners, financial feasibility
- Making available biodegradable alternatives, EPR and buy back systems?



Diving Deeper

- Microplastics – emerging area of concern for the Pacific
- Remains understudied in the Pacific SIDs context
- Fibers dominate the form type and are likely related to washing laundry

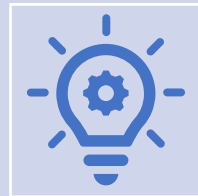


Dehm et al (2020). Microplastics in subsurface coastal waters along the southern coast of Viti Levu in Fiji, South Pacific. Marine Pollution Bulletin. Vol 156.

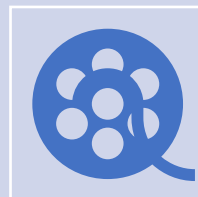
Diving Deeper



A more concrete regional approach



Whilst focusing on the designing of solutions for the end stages is important, a major shift in attention towards the beginning stages of the design and production phases is needed- political will and private sector involvement



Consciousness of culture: how to leverage on innovative and creative ways to developing consciousness of our actions - for example, use of digital media for the need to awareness creation, upcycling, repurposing, incorporating faith and responsible waste disposal



A concerted effort and approach from all actors!

