
EDITOR'S FORUM

**COSMOLOGIES, CITIES, AND
CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF SPACE:
OCEANIC ENLARGEMENTS OF THE WORLD**

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This is a commentary on Epeli Hau'ofa's vision of an extended Oceania. By contrasting a widening "sea of islands" with the current discourse of an ever-shrinking world, I draw attention to a heterotopic terrain of incompatible spaces. I intend to show that the widely accepted narratives and maps of a shrinking world encompass and assure the image of an ever-extending Western sphere. This rhetoric of global shrinkage as a result of an expanding West is denying others the capability to create their own enlarged world. Hau'ofa's critique of a reductionist and diminutive view of Oceania can be seen as a counterversion to presumed neutral and fixed spatial orders. I would like to contribute to Hau'ofa's project of enlarging Oceania by illustrating the connection of cosmologies and cities through examples from the northeastern part of Papua New Guinea, with an emphasis on space as a cultural construction bound to specific forms of power and knowledge.

Juxtapositions

THE PRESENT TEXT should be viewed in the context of the ever-widening "sea of commentaries" that has dissolved the encrusted image of the island world of the Pacific since the appearance of Epeli Hau'ofa's "Our Sea of Islands" (1993b and 1994; see also Waddell, Naidu, and Hau'ofa 1993). When I came across Hau'ofa's 1994 article, I was immediately fascinated by the idea of an extended Oceania.¹ Teresia Teaiwa is certainly right when she

traces the present, trans-Pacific interest in Hau'ofa's thesis to, among other things, his extravagant and sensitive intermediate position as author/scholar, but also to the current trend of displacement, diaspora, and postcoloniality in the academic world (Teaiwa 1996:214). As I recall, it was most of all the poetic power of inversion, the subversive extension of a world made small by highly paid "experts of hopelessness," that triggered in me a stream of associations and stories. I was astonished by the unexpected direction that my thoughts took, by maps that showed me the way, and by the discoveries that became possible through this navigation of chance.

Here, then, is my understanding of "Our Sea of Islands." Hau'ofa objected to the neocolonial discourses of denigration and reduction with which the West constitutes and routinizes the island world of the Pacific. His criticism is directed against the hegemonic dominance of a deterministic perspective based on economy and geography that places in the foreground the isolation, diminutiveness, paucity of resources, and fragmentation of the contemporary island nations of Oceania. For Hau'ofa a trip from Kona to Hilo on Hawai'i Island was a decisive experience, one that allowed him to express a view opposite to the discourses of minimizing that he himself had advocated for quite some time:

I saw such scenes of grandeur as I had not seen before: the eerie blackness of regions covered by recent volcanic eruptions; the remote majesty of Maunaloa, long and smooth, the world's largest volcano; the awesome craters of Kilauea threatening to erupt at any moment; and the lava flow on the coast not far away. Under the aegis of Pele, and before my very eyes, the Big Island was growing, rising from the depths of a mighty sea. The world of Oceania is not small; it is huge and growing bigger every day. (Hau'ofa 1994:151)²

Hau'ofa refers to the cultural history of Oceania, which provides various models of the expanse and size of the previously existing universe of discourse. Moreover, he calls attention to the mobility and border-crossing of today's Pacific Islanders. According to Hau'ofa this mobility, with its disregard for national borders, brings with it an immeasurable expansion of the Oceanic world. He demystifies the reductionist and one-sided view that characterizes parcels of land in the Pacific as single, small, and isolated instead of as a "sea of islands" with the assessment that "smallness is a state of mind" (Hau'ofa 1994:152). His criticism of the Western hegemonic constructions of insular diminutiveness attempts to highlight the fact that such a discourse denies the people of Oceania the ability to create their own spatial reality (see also Hau'ofa 1993a:127).

I wish to take up Hau'ofa's optimistic narrative of Oceania's expansion and, in the first place, juxtapose it with the metanarrative prevalent in the West of an ever-shrinking world. While Hau'ofa did in fact restrict his presentation to Greater Oceania and did not consider the entire world, his premise of the enlargement of Oceania does inevitably lead to the question of how this expanding space fits into the terrain created by Western discourse of a continuously shrinking world concomitant with increasing globalization. It is this diminution as a natural process, as an irrefutable and self-evident fact resulting from the global spread of the economy of late capitalism, political forms of organization, latest information technologies, and newer modes of transportation that is now being brought to the fore. It is this particular teleology, with its authoritative claim to universal truth, that will be exposed and queried by way of contrasting reduction and enlargement. Hau'ofa's Oceanic vision has, in my view, a decentering and undermining effect that reveals presumed neutral spatial orders as being discursive formations, which are constructed under specific conditions of power and knowledge.

Marshall McLuhan's "Global Village"

I shall concentrate on two examples of Western discourse on the shrinking world. My first example is Marshall McLuhan's version of a world getting smaller. The continuous and uncritical usage of the slogan "global village" persuaded me to do a short retrospective of McLuhan's essential ideas. I would like to demonstrate that his theoretical positions, which are the basis of his handy catchword of a shrinking world, are far more questionable than generally acknowledged.

McLuhan's influential idea of an electronic utopia evokes the dramatic scenario of the world imploding into a "global village" with the image of the technological extension of the human organism (1969; 1994). It may be remembered that McLuhan's structural approach led him to make a distinction between a literate, visually oriented society centered on the individual on the one hand and a traditional, nonliterate, oral and collectively organized tribal culture on the other. This media expert was convinced that the emergence of the electronic age and its accompanying ever-increasing compression of the world requires those auditory skills requisite to an oral society, skills that have been virtually lost by the literate—and consequently visually oriented—"civilization." Life within this electronically condensed and increasingly interdependent world in which radio serves as a "tribal drum" will, according to McLuhan, become re-tribalized, that is, placed upon the foundation of a new, post-alphabetical tribal culture. He writes: "But cer-

tainly the electro-magnetic discoveries have recreated the simultaneous 'field' in all human affairs so that the human family now exists under conditions of a 'global village.' We live in a single constricted space resonant with tribal drums" (McLuhan 1969:43).

According to McLuhan the electronic acceleration and its resultant flood of information caught the Western, literate culture unawares. The resulting disorientation is, in his view, comparable to the destabilizing effects of writing on tribal cultures. McLuhan's Anglocentric orientalism becomes particularly clear precisely through the differences in reactions and resistance to the new electronic world that he himself presents. The contrast that McLuhan constructs between visually and individualistically oriented societies as opposed to oral-auditory and total tribal societies pervades a differentiated ranking of cultures by conceptualization. According to McLuhan's typology, England and America belong to those industrialized societies that are most thoroughly anchored in the visually oriented literate culture, having long ago left tribal integration behind them. The introduction of radio, therefore, was of little consequence: only through the introduction of television could signs of change be detected. In fact, an increase in sensitivity to radio as well can be attributed to these changes.

According to McLuhan, Germany and Japan in large measure have retained their collective and tribal consciousness and, like other tribal cultures, react to the rapid expansion of the "electric field" with confusion and uncertainty, in spite of being alphabetized and technically advanced. The demand for *Lebensraum* in former Nazi Germany, for example, was in McLuhan's eyes a consequence of the spatial compression caused by radio and electricity, which led to the revitalization of the archaic-tribal powers permeating the German psyche (McLuhan 1994:301). Russia also tends toward an oral-auditory total society, which McLuhan sees in China and India as well, but most particularly in the tribal societies of (black) Africa.

McLuhan cautions that the implosion due to electricity and temporal acceleration should not be mistaken for a unifying, leveling power. The shrinking of the planet involves the tendency toward decentralization and pluralization and thus represents a countermovement to the centralizing tendencies of an alphabetized culture. I will spare the reader a comprehensive criticism of the continual essentialization of the tribal and the occasionally alarming ideas concerning Fascism in Germany in the thirties and forties. Nevertheless, I consider it important that, in McLuhan's binarily organized textual universe, Western literate "civilization" tends to be associated with individualism, explosion, expansion, and growth, whereas the oral-auditory oriented tribal cultures represent collectivism, implosion, reduction, and the intimacy of village life. The electrified vision of the "global village" designed

in the sixties by McLuhan is a neocolonial theoretical construct that confines indigenous societies to their sites of reduction and smallness.

Global Compression and Postmodernity

The second important example of Western discourse on the shrinking world is David Harvey's recent analysis of the transition from modernity to postmodernity (1989). In his knowledgeable and comprehensive presentation, Harvey argues for a necessary correlation between the appearance of postmodernist forms of cultural expression, the transition from stable Fordism into a system of flexible capital accumulation, and a new phase of time-space compression. His narrative phases out the postwar economic boom by the seventies and envisages an ensuing post-Fordism era of rapid change. A feature that distinguishes the recent form of maximization of profits is a new flexibility in the production process, labor markets, and consumer behavior that is closely linked with technological innovations in transportation and communication. According to Harvey, the decisive factor in the increasing global compression is the acceleration that reduces the time required for capital outlays to yield profits to the investor (1989:182). This acceleration in turnover time enables capital to seize global space, which causes a dramatic change in our perception of time and space. Harvey is convinced that the present economic transformations represent the material basis for postmodern forms of representation. He regards postmodern thought—with its stress on ephemerality, uncertainty, fragmentation, decentralization, and eclecticism—as a response to the advanced global spread of capitalism.

Harvey holds the view that "postmodernity" is characterized by a new phase of time-space compression. He emphasizes the socioeconomic processes that, through their speed, make it possible to overcome the separation of space and time. Harvey illustrates the time-space compression with a specific depiction (1989:241, plate 3.1) that shows a succession of consecutively smaller globes visually representing the shrinking world (see also plate 3.2). He explicitly refers to the popular images of the "global village" and "spaceship earth" that entered common speech after McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller introduced them (Harvey 1989:240). The figurative portrayal of a continually shrinking world can be traced back to the sixties. Harvey himself indicates that he borrowed this depiction from Peter Dicken's *Global Shift* (1986: fig. 4.6). Dicken in turn quotes John McHale's *The Future of the Future* as his source (McHale 1969:58, fig. 1), which in turn relied on various sources from the sixties. McHale's model is based, for example, on the Eurocentric idea of the continuous progress of humanity to ever-higher stages of technical development: from locomotion by foot to jet planes, high-

speed trains, and so forth; from the transmission of oral messages through drums, smoke, and relay runners to radio and transcontinental television; from a world of ruralness and regional limitedness to one of megalopolises and a global society. This technology-centered myth of progress, based on Western rationality, ascribes to the Euro-American vision of history a sense of objectivity: a single, true measure of world events that denies the legitimacy of other historical and spatial versions, or even fails to recognize their existence. The basis here is a hierarchically organized system that gives precedence to unity, homogeneity, continuity, and closedness over heterogeneity, discontinuity, chance, and openness.

The intertextual world maps of Harvey, Dicken, and McHale share the important aspect of the continual contraction of the globe occurring in ever-shorter intervals. This compression shows the global spread of the West as a consequence of technological evolution and increasing acceleration in the various areas of life. It is this practice of a cartography of compression, with its claim to the historical reality of a natural and linear development, that assumes a privileged, objective view of world affairs. The aura of factuality is supported by a positivist halo of modern cartography (see Harley 1992:234–235). The world map is an exemplary product of the objectification that started with the Enlightenment—a process that homogenized and abstracted various spatial practices and narratives into a singular representation of geographic knowledge. Harvey refers to this totalizing claim of cartography with respect to De Certau and Bourdieu (1989:252–254), but fails to recognize its applicability to his own practice of mapping time-space compression. The point being neglected is that the various related world maps of the above-mentioned authors and the associated teleology are culturally bound representations; that they are part of a normalizing and disciplining exercise of power, which creates and routinizes a specific knowledge of the historical and spatial order of the world (see Harley 1992). The representation of the time-space compression, the cartography of a succession of shrinking globes, is a Euro-American form of power/knowledge that carries out the reduction of the world as a consequence of the expansion of the West.

Harvey explains that the universal dominance of capital and the concomitant reduction of spatial separation lead to closer scrutiny of local variation in capitalistic projects, thereby producing greater fragmentation (1989:293–296). In a capitalist world, where the destruction of space through time is a central feature of profit maximization, oppositional movements can control their own place for a limited time at best. It is Harvey's view that, as a consequence of their identity being tied to place and tradition, workers' movements, ethnic minorities, women, or colonized peoples are entangled in the process of fragmentation by the power of capital, without being able to counter-

balance this global power. Even beyond this point, Harvey asserts that the various phenomena such as instability, mutability, and transitoriness that accompany flexible capital accumulation bring into question historical continuities and, in the end, relegate tradition to being a commodity or a part of museum culture (1989:302–303). However, with this analytical assessment, Harvey remains committed to a theoretical position that primarily associates the expansion of the West with the worldwide erosion of cultural differences. This cultural pessimism occurs at the cost of the essentialization of Others. The great narrative of cultural decline and loss (Clifford 1988:14) is an effect of the isolation, fixation, and incarceration of authentic identities within clearly delimited locales.

Harvey's narrative reduces the potential for countermovements to locally restricted fields of action in which genuine traditions have no future. He introduces a theoretical perspective that, by means of the analysis of the flow of capital within our new post-Fordist universe, transports and establishes spatial constructions of reduction and of fragmentation. It is this discursive isolation in the space dominated and compressed by capitalism that denies the Other the capability to create his or her own, enlarged world. Harvey has described globally active capital as the motor of the time-space compression and explicitly stresses that historical materialism still provides the means to analyze these global processes. With this, Harvey turns against postmodern skepticism toward the great narratives and their totalizing claims. According to his view, the relinquishing of historical materialism would lead to the abandonment of an analytical tool that was—and remains—relevant for the present. And he is not alone in this view. Thus, for example, both Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, who have brilliantly reconceptualized the relationship between space and cultural difference in ethnology, believe that the abandonment of the metanarrative of late capitalism would crucially diminish our potential to investigate the Western global hegemony's political dimension (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:19).

In contrast to this, I would like to use Harvey's study as an example to demonstrate that such theoretical models, through their authoritative claim of being *the* sole representation of global reality, are fundamentally involved in the very spread of Western hegemony. Harvey's capital-oriented examination of the time-space compression diverts attention from the fact that it is precisely this analytical approach that is part of the Western "reduction-machine."

Incompatible Spaces

With McLuhan and Harvey on one side and Hau'ofa on the other, we enter a paradoxical terrain, in which reduction and expansion are juxtaposed. How

does the compression of the world through electricity and the extension of the central nervous system or through the power of capital to annihilate space through time—how does this global implosion fit together with a simultaneous enlargement of Oceania? Not at all—and the incompatibility of reduction and extension is precisely what makes this perspective so remarkable. I am interested in this global heterotopia of discordant geographical spaces most of all because, through it, the idea of a fixed, stable space is being challenged. Hau'ofa's questioning of the claim to universality of the Western, economic-deterministic concepts, his well-considered resistance to geographical disciplining by an international jet set of development experts—these challenges expose the construction of spatial reality and make it clear that the order of the world is bound up in a discursive field of knowledge and power. The result of this Oceania-based contestation is a heterotopia of plural world-sizes. According to Foucault, heterotopias are pluralist and historically variable countersites that simultaneously represent, contest, and reverse existent sites (Foucault 1970:xviii, 1986:24). Heterotopian spaces are capable of placing different, mutually incompatible sites next to each other at a single location. Further, they can suspend existing temporalities. Such heterotopias “are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (Foucault 1986:24). They are “zones” (McHale 1989:44) that indicate the boundaries of existing spatial systems and that focus attention on the instability, discontinuity, and ambiguity of spatial orders. In the foreground, moreover, is not exclusively the question of an *epistemology* of space; foremost in this perspective are rather the *ontological* questions and the concomitant systematic deconstruction of one *singular*, objective reality (McHale 1989:9–11, 221).

Skepticism thus seems appropriate when currently everywhere—including in ethnology—the image of a shrinking world is an integral part of the debate about globalization. Ethnology runs the risk of thereby creating tiny ethnotopes of authenticity and small reservations of traditionality. The ethnological exotic-machine can no longer function without friction within the globalization debate and so will become bound to a reduction-machine that maintains the old ethnological dream of refuges for “the traditional/authentic.” One should, in my opinion, assess the scholarly discourses on globalization individually and with caution. The narrative of the global spread of the West is joined to a reduction-machine that, with its artful rhetoric of neutrality, evokes a diminution of distances as a natural consequence of technological innovation and worldwide processes of acceleration (see, for example, Friedman 1994:196). The logocentric conceptions of a “global village” and the increasing compression of the world are coupled with the localization, fixing, and confinement of the Other on fixed, tradition-bound sites, according to

McLuhan and Harvey. Alternative versions of enlargement or contrary conceptualizations of space are not even brought into consideration. Paradoxically, the spread of the West proceeds with the essentialization, separation, and exclusion of the Other. The extension of the West, its dynamism, and global mobility remain enmeshed within the stasis and rootedness of the non-Western societies.

Cosmologies and Cities

Epeli Hau'ofa, with his narrative on the extension of the Oceanic world, has created an important alternative to the Western perspective.³ He supports his idea of the enlargement of Oceania primarily with two lines of argument, which I mentioned briefly at the beginning of this commentary. Thus, for example, he draws attention to the dimension of cultural history and points out that the Oceanic world of precolonial times was in no way as small, circumscribed, and limited as pictured in Western discourse that exclusively centered on is/land surfaces. His presentation makes clear that the narrative traditions and cosmologies of the ancestors of today's Oceania residents contained spatial dimensions that spread far beyond the currently dominant reductionist view. The previous universe encompassed the experience of the tremendous expanse of the ocean as well as the fire-giving and earth-moving powers of the underworld and the heavens with their gods, celestial bodies, and stellar constellations figuring as signposts. Hau'ofa evokes an earlier Oceanic world of connections and contact, an economically, socially, and culturally interwoven sea of islands, the formidable vastness of which was rent asunder, restricted and compressed by the colonial expansion of the West. And he stresses that this colonial expansion was crucial to the rise of today's discourse on the diminution of the Pacific island states.

Just how biased the recent postcolonial reductionism is—with its one-sided view of national boundaries and with its elite perspectives of international and national advisors, bureaucrats, experts, and diplomats that ignore the day-to-day reality of a considerable portion of Oceania's people—is made clear by Hau'ofa's depiction of a further indisputable extension. Thus, in Hau'ofa's view, the expanding world economy after World War II not only created dependencies and needs but also a transnational mobility of Oceania's populations, which allowed for far-reaching economic and social relationships across national boundaries. Under the established hegemonic view of reduction and narrowing, the enlargement of the world is carried out anew by means of labor migration and informal transfer of goods, translocality and interregional networking of kinship. For Hau'ofa it is primarily these multiple processes, sustained by a significant number of the common people of the

various Pacific Islands nations, that are presently involved in the enlargement of the Oceanic world. As he writes: "The world of Oceania may no longer include the heavens and the underworld, but it certainly encompasses the great cities of Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Canada. It is within this expanded world that the extent of the people's resources must be measured" (Hau'ofa 1994:157).

I would like to extend Hau'ofa's exposition of the enlargement of the Oceanic world by advocating a further optimistic turn and connection. To start with I will use the passage just quoted, which I consider remarkable for two reasons. For one, there appears in a passing moment an apparently insignificant, associative field, one that brings together local versions of the heavens and underworld with Western cities. On the other hand, the separation and contrast of past cosmological models and the present metropolises of Western industrial states in the Pacific region is suggested, albeit in a cautious formulation. In Hau'ofa's guarded estimation, concepts of the heavens and the underworld no longer play a part in the expansion of the Oceanic world.⁴ As I see it, however, cosmological horizons in Oceania and urban landscapes in Western countries are not necessarily mutually exclusive.⁵ And it is precisely this interweaving that I wish to introduce into the realm of the conceivable in the following discussion. I am concerned with an ontological formation that in my eyes can be read as a local example of the enlargement of the Oceanic world.

In parts of northeastern Papua New Guinea, a whole range of circulating rumors, guesses, and opinions—but also confidentially expressed convictions and narratives—maintain that the land of the whites is in fact the place of the dead. During my 1988–1990 fieldwork in the hinterland of the Rai Coast as well as in 1996, I was repeatedly confronted with various expressions of this idea. For example, occasioned by the death of a youth some months earlier, I came to learn of the ambivalence toward Christian grave crosses. The elder adoptive brother of the deceased told me of his campaign opposing the erection of a wooden cross over his sibling's grave. To the indignation of the village church leaders, he had held out for months against the erection of the cross because, according to his interpretation, with such an act the spirit of the departed would disappear from the nearby world. The mourning adoptive brother wanted to preserve the nearness of the deceased—a nearness that expressed itself in various signs such as birds' voices and nocturnal sounds as well as in other ways. When the grave finally did receive a cross, the adoptive brother claimed that the intense contact between him and the spirit of the departed broke off. The man explained: "When people die they don't go to heaven or hell. I think that they go to the land of the whites. . . . I am convinced of it. And precisely at this point, when we erect the cross, they go

there. . . . They go away from us" (Field notes, Jethro, 29 December 1988, no. 7:10). Christian grave crosses were occasionally designated as "passports to the world of the whites."

John Kikang, who was active in the spread of cash cropping and Catholicism throughout the region after World War II and who died in February 1997 at a ripe old age in his home village in the hinterland of the Rai Coast, had expanded this conception of life after death through his experiences in trances and dreams. "Hell is here, where we now live," he once said with respect to human life full of privations, hard work, and human offenses. His model of the stages of afterlife had "remaining-here," the "dwelling-nearby," as a sign of sin and guilt and as damnation to hell. To have to stay after death in the nearby rural environment of the village: that was hell. There were places in the otherworld that promised a better existence. Depending on the extent of one's guilt, which could be reduced by prayer performed over decades, a stay in one of the three different, hierarchically arranged purgatories was possible. The first was called *klinpaia*, a place of minor hardships, a moderately urban world that was represented as being equivalent to the provincial capital, Madang. After this came *limbo*, a large city with many tall buildings, comparable to and even designated by Kikang as "Port Moresby." The third stage he called *pulgatori*, a "holy place," to which he added, "that is very close to heaven. . . . That is Australia, you know. There only machines work, [there are] department stores, tool markets. The people are happy. No hard work. Everything is good. So the dead told me. They told me and therefore I know what these places look like." And as a deceased individual once told him that he, the deceased, had just left "Port Moresby" and was in "Australia," Kikang knew that "he has arrived in the city" (Field notes, Kikang, 18 February 1989, no. 35:102–118).

The joining of the otherworld/underworld and Western countries/cities has also found a place in elaborate narratives that can be encountered in different versions along the Rai Coast. Here is one story that a man of about thirty-five told me in 1989:

I have only heard this story. It was just told this way. It seems that a young man was involved in a dispute over a woman and therefore ran off. It is said that he got a passport from a missionary in order to go overseas. Apparently he traveled with two whites. He left Saidor [the district administrative station], went to Madang [the provincial capital] and beyond. They went directly abroad, somewhere to America. Anyway that's what I heard. They apparently traveled by boat overseas. There they came to a large city and the two whites accompanying him came with. On a particular street . . . the two

simply left him standing there. [They] took a speedboat and rode out to an island. The young man was at a loss. How was he supposed to get on now? He thereupon also took a speedboat and went after the other two. [He] arrived on the island and stood on the street. He looked around. He looked for the two men, who were supposed to help him. But the two of them had disappeared. So he stood on the street, till it became late afternoon. Then a white man came up to him. And in the story it is said that it was his [deceased] grandfather. The grandfather questioned him and the young man said: "I came with two men, but they both left me alone. And now I'm looking for the way." Then the white man said: "Okay, come, we'll go to my place." So he took him home with him. They went into the house and greeted the white man's wife. . . . They sat down, spoke with one another for some time and finally the two whites asked: "Where do you come from?" He said: "I have come from PNG. I came with two whites. It went well at first, but when we got here, the two of them left me all alone." The two said nothing. There was supper. After supper [the grandparents] identified themselves. But they did not directly say their names. . . . That the two concealed. But they kept looking at the young man. And the young man did all he could to learn their names. Finally, they gave him a piece of paper. On it he was supposed to write his name. And he wrote his name on this piece of paper. Then both grandparents wrote their names. In reverse. They wrote their names in reverse. The last letters as the first letters. And they said to him that he should find it out. He tried to and finally he succeeded. He found it out, and the two said to him: "The two of us are your [deceased] grandparents." They embraced and wept. They talked about all the[ir] relatives. He stayed at first with them [in the land of the whites]. The next day they said to him: "There is a room there that you may not open." They gave him all the housekeys and went off to work. The young man stayed home and thought: "Why did the two of them tell me that I shouldn't open the door to this room?" He thought hard about it—and while the two were not yet there he opened the door. He opened the door to the room and looked in—but couldn't recognize anything. It was dark inside. In the afternoon the two grandparents came back home. As they were sitting down together to eat they both asked him, "Did you in fact open the door?" They already knew. But it was hard at first for the young man to admit to it. Then he said, "Yes, I opened it." And the two said, "What did you see in there?" And he said, "I didn't see anything at all." They stayed together for some

weeks and finally the two [grandparents] said that now he had to return. They gave him a passport and all that stuff. Then they said: "Get ready, tomorrow you will depart." They sent him back to Papua New Guinea, directly to Saidor. There he underwent a circumcision ritual. Then he came back [to the land of the whites]. When he got there, they let him into the room again. They said to him: "Open the door to this room." And as he opened the door, they asked him, "What do you see?" And he said: "I can see the village, I see my village [on the Rai Coast]." He saw his parents, his relatives, who lived there. Today it is said that he stayed there. In the land of the whites.⁶ (Field notes, Peter, 17 July 1989, no. 122:15–18)

A similar narrative can be found in the more-easterly Sepik region. There, at the beginning of the sixties, the German professor of ethnology Eike Haberland met with an approximately twenty-five-year-old Catholic sailor named Noah (Haberland 1964). The young man told of a trip to Sydney, where he had met deceased relatives. Haberland summarized the story of this young man from the lower Sepik:

As I came on land in Sydney, an acquaintance from my village came up to me and asked if I didn't want to visit my ancestors who lived not far from the city. We took a truck and drove there, which we were only able to do with great difficulty because the Australians had stationed police everywhere on the city limits to prevent Kanakas from visiting their dead relatives. We went on foot into the realm of the dead. It was dark there, but my friend had brought his flashlight along, so that we found the path. The dead relatives, who lived in attractive houses made of cement with roofs of corrugated iron and had everything that one could want, greeted me very cordially. They asked: "Has the Cargo finally arrived?" They were very sad when I said that we still hadn't gotten anything and that the whites and Chinese always take everything away. . . . As I left, the ancestors stuffed my pockets full of pound notes. At the exit of the realm of the dead there stood a policeman; he took the money from me and sent me on board the ship. (Haberland 1964:38–39)⁷

Haberland derogated this narrative as the "autosuggestion" of a "unimaginative and truthful youth" (1964:39).⁸ His attribution of irrationality corresponds to a static conceptualization of cultural difference—a conceptualization that gives priority to the rootedness of people and cultures in fixed, demarcated territories. This "incarceration" of cultures in fixed places (Appa-

durai 1988) clearly draws the line between the “West” and “Papua New Guinea,” between “cities” and “rural regions,” between “center” and “periphery.” Thus it is that Haberland also interprets the young man’s narrative as a tradition-bound attempt of a “native” to come to terms with the presence and (spatial) challenges of a dynamic West. According to the implicit logic of Haberland’s interpretation, this indigenous attempt at an explanation remains in the final analysis nothing more than a transitional phenomenon on the way toward the acceptance of Western rationality.

I, on the other hand, consider the narratives given above to be allegories for the expansion of the world. In extending Hau’ofa’s cautious appraisal, I have used examples from northeastern New Guinea in an attempt to show that the conceptions of heaven and the underworld are also essentially involved in the expansion of the world today. Hau’ofa has primarily given prominence for the present to the recent phenomenon of immigration into the large cities of the Pacific states and concentrated his view on economic activities. I think it is equally important to consider present-oriented versions of heaven and the underworld in order to avoid the cultural pessimism that associates the colonial and missionary pervasion of Oceania primarily with cultural decline. Without denying the disappearance of many former beliefs and practices, I would like to direct attention to the continuing emergence of new discursive universes. Hau’ofa refers to this processual aspect in another place when he notes: “By deliberately omitting our changing traditions from serious discourses . . . , we tend to overlook the fact that most people are still using and adapting them as tools for survival” (1993a:129). Precisely the special combination of heaven and the underworld with the land of the whites and its urban centers appears to me in this context to be particularly instructive. Cultural difference turns out to be not one of an essence that is based on spatial separation and discontinuity, but rather as a product of historical processes and hegemonic influences in a world of connections and contacts (see Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Lavie and Swedenburg 1996). Cosmological considerations can play an important role in the expansion of the Oceanic world and, in my opinion, cannot be separated from economic and political, developmental, and ecological questions.

The amalgamation of spaces, the transgressing of colonial and postcolonial localizations and confinements, as they are formulated in the narratives discussed above, refer to a plurality of spatial constructions. The contrasting of Western narratives of expansion and reduction with the subversive ordering of space by the peoples of Oceania, who have developed their own versions of spatial continuity and discontinuity, points out the constructed character and the politics of Western delimitations. Space thus becomes a flexible event, a negotiable entity within the context of power and knowledge. I believe

that Hau'ofa's counterdiscourse to the Western reduction of the world of Oceania is best seen against this background. I consider his ideas also to be eminently important, because with this counterversion he places the relativity and cultural embedding of the constructions of space directly before our eyes. With this he opens a discursive field and launches a game of spatial truths that initiates a critical reflection about the universality of claims for the Western concept of globalization. His criticism of the logocentric view of the reduction, or shrinking, of the Oceanic space makes clear that space and the exercise of power are closely bound together.

NOTES

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1. The plenary paper of the Third Conference of the European Society for Oceanists in Copenhagen in which Epeli Hau'ofa further developed these ideas with respect to an Oceanic identity stimulated me to join the discussion on his dynamic picture of Oceania (see Hau'ofa 1996).

2. In this context, it should be mentioned that the current, trans-Pacific interest in Hau'ofa's Oceanic visions does have its problematic side. Thus, in 1995, a German church-oriented popular information brochure was published under the heading "Meer der Inseln. Berichte aus der Suedsee" ("Sea of Islands: Reports from the South Sea"). It contains a substantially truncated version of Hau'ofa's article. The German version of the passage cited above, for example, reads:

Mir boten sich Anblicke von einer Erhabenheit, wie ich sie nie zuvor gesehen hatte: das unheimliche Schwarz von Landstrichen, die erst vor kurzem ein Vulkan mit Lava bedeckt hatte; die unnahbare Majestaet des Mauna Loa, des groessten Vulkans der Welt; die ehrfurchterregenden Krater des Kilauea, die jeden Moment erneut auszubrechen drohten; und der Lavastrom an der nahen Kueste—vor meinen eigenen Augen wuchs die Insel aus den Tiefen des Meeres. Die Welt von Ozeanien ist nicht klein—und sie wird jeden Tag groesser. (Pazifik Informationsstelle und Missionswerk der Evang.-Luth. Kirche in Bayern 1995:56)

Those parts of Hau'ofa's text omitted in the German translation are shown below.

I saw such scenes of grandeur as I had not seen before: the eerie blackness of regions covered by recent volcanic eruptions; the remote majesty of Maunaloa, ~~long and smooth~~, the world's largest volcano; the awesome craters of Kilauea threatening to erupt

at any moment; and the lava flow on the coast not far away. Under the aegis of Pele, and before my very eyes, the Big Island was growing, rising from the depths of a mighty sea. The world of Oceania is not small; it is huge and growing bigger every day. (Hau'ofa 1994:151)

In my view these exclusions are grave not only because of their ideological implications, such as the omission of the Hawaiian volcano goddess Pele makes clear, but also because no reference at all is made of the fact that considerable changes were introduced into Hau'ofa's text. Hau'ofa himself commented that this kind of editorial proceeding is just another example of diminution and belittlement.

3. Many ethnographies of changing cultures in Melanesia reveal an extension of the Oceanic world. Navosavakadua's ritual politics in nineteenth-century colonial Fiji, for example, included the renaming of the local landscape according to biblical sites such as "Rome," "Egypt," and many more (Worsley 1968:22; Kaplan 1995:110–111). Kenelm Burridge depicts a sand drawing from Manam as disclosing a complex world of landscapes and seascapes beyond the local sphere, and he gives an account of Mambu's mythical travels to Australia (1960: 10, 188–189). Similarly, Peter Lawrence describes various beliefs and movements in the Madang area that show a wide range of attempts to expand horizons toward heaven and the land of the whites (1964). It should also be noted that the prominent role of ships and airplanes within these movements could be seen as a means of linking other worlds in the effort to enlarge the local universe.

4. See also John O'Carroll's reference to the absence of the sky in Hau'ofa's Oceanic vision (O'Carroll 1993:25).

5. This connection between cities and heaven/underworlds can be found in depictions of cultural change in Papua New Guinea. Albert Maori Kiki, for example, writes in his autobiography: "Some of our people back home refer to Sydney as heaven. It is not a real place to them, but the mysterious city from which the dead send us the 'cargo' which inevitably gets diverted into the hands of the white man" (1968:72). Peter Lawrence, in his *Road Belong Cargo* (1964), deals in detail with the enlargement of the local cosmos in north-eastern Papua New Guinea. In particular, Sydney is described in this context as heaven, home of ancestors and white men (Lawrence 1964:77, 191–192, 237, 242, 251).

6. I have already published two further versions of this narrative in conjunction with a study of recent changes in the secret male initiation rites among the Ngaing living in the hinterland of the Rai Coast (see Kempf 1996).

7. Text translated here into English from the German.

8. The quotations have been translated into English from the German.

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