

Carlos Mondragon

*Climate Policies and Climate Realities in Vanuatu: A critical overview of the past twenty years*

Climate policy, advocacy, and rhetoric have become a dominant feature of official Vanuatu government structures (bureaucracy), policies, and interventions over the past twenty years. On one hand, this reflects the rising international concern about climate change, and is not surprising, given the well-known vulnerability of Vanuatu to extreme climate events – earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis. I argue, however, the rapid adoption of technocratic ideas, structures, and strategies regarding climate change has been overwhelming, and has left very little room for critical feedback or official sensitivity to local practices, ideas and values. While ‘indigenous knowledge’ is celebrated in government rhetoric, there is almost no serious approach to local practices and values. In contrast, the priority has increasingly focused on ‘climate finance’, awareness-raising, and international advocacy – which are activities exclusive to the growing climate bureaucracy of Vanuatu. In this presentation I review those developments and contrast them with local ethnographic cases which point to a much more complex and positive horizon of climate knowledges, practices and adaptive capacities in the relation to climate change. I argue that we, as scholars and privileged analysts of local realities, have a responsibility to make this complexity visible and relevant.