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« Regional identity [...] has been constructed on a foundation of concrete reality. That the sea is as real as you and I [...], that it shapes the character of this planet, that it is a major source of our sustenance, that it is something that we all share in common wherever we are in Oceania – all of these are statements of fact. Yet beyond that level of everyday experience, the sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us. »
(Hau'Ofa, 2015 [1997]: 55-56)

- 1 Often conceived of as separate entities, French overseas territories in the South Pacific, as the subject of this special issue, nevertheless possess interesting regional horizons, which highlight the variety of *political ecosystems* of Oceania¹. The multidimensional facets of human evolution show an Oceanian “Sea of Islands” in constant movement, according to the Tongan intellectual Epli Hau'Ofa (2008 [1993]). His philosophy contributes to the formation of an Oceanian regional identity, based on a shared plan to unite the peoples of the Pacific around the theme of the protection of the South Pacific, whose inhabitants would become the “guardians of the ocean” (Hau'Ofa, 2015 [1997]). The construction of a regional identity does not however seek to hide the diversity of Oceanian societies which are evolving within diverse historical and cultural paths, whilst being increasingly irrigated by waves of international and regional flows. Thus

the dynamics of these societies show that they are not unconsciously dominated by a precolonial subconsciousness (Doumenge, 2001; Wittersheim, 2014), nor are they rooted in time by their colonial heritage or prisoners of a reification of cultures in the wake of movements of modernity and globalization (Wolton, 2013; Babadzan, 1999, 2009).

- 2 Could we, on this basis, assert that the three main French Pacific territories – New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis-and-Futuna – now find themselves in a postcolonial state of existence? If the first two of these territories now figure on the United Nations list of non-self governing territories to be decolonised (Regnault, 2013), they have nonetheless undergone a significant institutional evolution, between the “decolonisation within the Republic” (Mohamed-Gaillard, 2010) but without national independence, and an approach to decolonisation in the sense enshrined in international law, which is favoured by partisans of independence, and whose transitional stages would not necessarily align with the possibilities offered by French law (Leblic, 1993; Regnault, 2013; Faberon, 2008; Graff, 2012; see also the debate between Alain Christnacht, conseiller d’État, et Roch Wamytan, pro-independence Kanak leader [Regnault et Fayaud, 2008 : 108-110]). Two volumes of the JSO (*Journal de la Société des Océanistes – Journal of the Society of Oceanian research*) were dedicated to these two French territories, the first edited by Isabelle Leblic, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the colonisation of New Caledonia (117, 2003) and the second on French Polynesia (119, 2004). As for the territory of Wallis-and-Futuna, this continues to be governed by the law of 29th July 1961, which transformed this former French protectorate into a TOM (Territoire d’Outre-Mer, overseas territory) (See the special Wallis and Fortuna edition of JSO 122-123 edited by Hélène Guiot and Isabelle Leblic).

Map 1. – Oceania

(http://ctig.univlr.fr/Fond_carte/Fond_Oceania2011_Col_Big.png)

- 3 The multidisciplinary movement of post-colonialism (anthropologists, sociologists, historians, political scientists, writers) which appeared in France in the wake of Georges Balandier, investigates the relation of colonised peoples to history, together

with the state of hybridity which arises as a consequence of diverse colonial situations, thereby illustrating most notably the permanent nature of the consequences of colonisation, both in formerly colonised societies as well as in colonising societies, which together feel “a need for a history” (Smouts, 2007). Without dwelling too heavily on the soundness of *post colonial studies*, which are sometimes marked by partisan views or a radical perspective which hinders their uptake (Smouts, 2007), this research has the value of presenting different viewpoints, taking into account the degrees of colonial trauma and the hybridity of social and cultural practices at work in these overseas territories. Thus, the contemporary state of the French Pacific territories is undergoing some interesting social, political and economic dynamics, which researchers seek to highlight by drawing on a relevant interdisciplinary approach which is so necessary to the study of these areas of research. Marked by complexity, they work towards a rejection of colonial or racial prejudices, of an excessively Western culture-centred approach based on different cosmogonic, social and cultural universes, leading to the fact that the ‘search for universals is in fact displaced by these differences’ Monnerie, 2014: 150). With the regional dynamics of the world of Oceania (*cf. infra*) the ‘dynamics of the outside world’ have long been the subject of study in the field of international relations, as an external study founded on the interests of the great powers, to the exclusion of the perceptions of the actors of Oceania (Mohamed-Gaillard, 2012). The lack of attention given to “internal dynamics” has in part been counterbalanced, from the 1980s onwards, by the “Islander-oriented” approach and by taking into account the Oceanian perspectives (Leblic, 1993, 2003; Lal, 2007). However, an interpretation based on the views of Oceania in relation to key international issues remains marginal, both on the international scene and in the domain of *Pacific Studies* (Mohamed-Gaillard, 2012).

- 4 Historical analysis of international relations can still be undertaken from the perspective of the different scales involved, between specific and more general contexts, as has been demonstrated by the historian Sarah Mohamed-Gaillard, editor of a previous volume of the JSO. The edition on *International and Regional relations in Oceania (Relations internationales et régionales en Océanie)*, published in volume 135, offered a list of publications of the review in the domain of international relations, in respect of Oceania. Many editions and numerous articles have been published on these themes by the JSO. We list here the more recent ones, starting with volume 87 which dealt with the geostrategic problems facing Oceania (1988); also the double edition 92-93 relating to the ‘Pacific Way’ and to regional relations (1991); the edition dealing with the challenges in the Pacific (JSO 125, 2007); another volume (JSO 126-127), edited by Jean Trichet and Isabelle Leblic (see Trichet and Leblic, 2008: 5-10) addressed the issue of the environment; contributions by Stephanie Lawson (JSO 109, 1999), Nathalie Mrgudovic (JSO 117, 2003), Guy Agniel (JSO 126-127, 2008: 145-151) and Stéphanie Graff (JSO 134, 2012:61-83). If the study of volume 135 of the JSO demonstrated the strategic and economic vulnerability of the island territories of Oceania in the context of globalization, showing Oceania to be a marginal continent in the international stakes, this volume also highlighted the consolidation of Australasian regional powers, the growing interest on the part of Asiatic powers in the region (Mohamed-Gaillard 2012:180) and the political efforts of development aid (Overton *et al*, 2012). Some other journals have focused on the international dimension of the problem of Oceania, in a less systematic manner. For example, the journal *Hermès* (Barbe and Meltz, 2013)

dedicated a volume to ‘The Pacific world and globalisation’, calling on different specialists in fields relating to linguistics, techniques, the arts, heritage and cultures of Oceania. However, scientific research seeking to study the field of international relations in the Oceania region can be found in the continuity of publications by the JSO on this theme. This present volume is opening up a new approach to the study of Oceanian relation by highlighting the question of regional integration, which surrounds the French territories in the Pacific. In this case, our study is based on a more geopolitically- and institutionally-focused perspective than on a study of the cultural, sociological and anthropological dimensions of the region, aspects which could of course have completed the scope of this study. Scientific research already published on these topics, in particular in the JSO, offer insights into the depth of questions of ethnology in Oceanian societies.

- 5 The articles in this volume focus more specifically on French territories and the problem of regional integration, most particularly in the political and institutional domains. The study aims to highlight certain dynamics in the process of regionalisation in the Pacific, also to record more precisely the true scope of the potentially vague concept of regional integration. This is all the more important since any research into the possibilities of and the factors governing integration has to take into account the question of “who is integrating whom?”². Consideration of this question has to include the actors (political leaders and social actors); it must also address the institutional framework (States, local executive powers, regional and international organisations), not forgetting the different forms of leadership arising from these. More specifically, the description of French policy by France’s representative in the Pacific, M. Christian Lechervy, offers an interesting insight, which brings to the forefront the new regional problems which impact on the integration of French territories into the institutions of Oceania. By considering the stakes on the basis of the specific characters of these territories, we can see that institutional forms of regional integration into the South Pacific do not allow for the same feature of retrocession of sovereignty, which is moreover not always legally full and complete (Kochenov, 2011). However, the formation of a regional identity, which could for example be detected in the places for cultural exchange (Jeux du Pacifique – Pacific Games, Festival des Arts du Pacifique – Festival of Pacific Arts), could be said to support vectors of regional integration in several respects, reaching beyond the cultural domain. In this way, the notion of regional integration can be seen in its wider sense of meeting, exchange and co-operation between two or several territories or States and types of actors in these territories (political, economic, cultural, religious, etc.).

Three territories with spatially and economically different characteristics

- 6 The three main French territories³ in the Pacific – New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis-and-Futuna – each have different characteristics which emphasise their differences in terms of geographical location, population, surface area, statutes or vernacular (Vernaudeau, 2010); however, these differences entail certain ramifications.
- 7 Each of these three territories holds individual institutional statutes: for Wallis-and-Futuna, three kingdoms in the Overseas ‘Collectivity’ (COM - Collectivité d’Outre-Mer) cohabit with a senior administrator; for New Caledonia, there are the statutes of

independence *sui generis* provided for in the Nouméa agreement (1998) (l'Accord de Nouméa); the COM of French Polynesia has statutes for self-governance (2004, revised in 2007). Apart from these, the social and economical characteristics of these three territories are also different. Thus, for example, New Caledonia possesses a dynamic economy, contrary to the two other territories. Centred on the mining sector, due to its large nickel deposits (90% of exports, hence the importance of fluctuating mineral values (see JSO vol 138-139: *les mises en récit de la mine dans le Pacifique – the History of Mining in the Pacific*), the economy of New Caledonia also depends on fishing, aquaculture and agriculture (livestock). With a surface area of 18, 575 km² the territory is distributed between La Grande Terre (16, 361 km²), the îles Loyauté, Belep, île des Pins, to which must be added numerous small islands and reefs, all of which take the exclusive economic zone to 1, 422, 000 km² thereby constituting 13% of the French EEZ (zone économique exclusive – exclusive economic zone).

- 8 The resident population of New Caledonia has a distinctive history, which has brought about a distribution of its population between the native Kanak people (40.3% in 2009); the Europeans (29.2%); the inhabitants of Wallis-and-Futuna (8.7%), Tahitians (2%), Indonesians (1.6%), Vietnamese (1%) or those of Ni-Vanuatu (0.8%). In 2014 this total population included 268,767 inhabitants, of whom two thirds (179,509) lived in and around the city of Nouméa (ISEE – Institute for statistics and economic research for New Caledonia).
- 9 The territory of Wallis-and-Futuna comprises three main islands – the low volcanic island of Wallis, surrounded by a lagoon, is separated by 230km from the high volcanic islands of Futuna and Alofi (uninhabited), which do not have a lagoon. Wallis-and-Futuna has a surface area of 142km², for a EEZ of 300, 000 km². In 2013 there were
- 10 12, 197 inhabitants, of whom two thirds lived on Wallis (STSEE – territorial service for statistics and economic research for Wallis-and-Futuna). The dip in natural growth (with a loss of 2, 750 inhabitants since 2003, or 18% of the essentially Polynesian population) is due mainly to a migratory flow towards the centre of attraction of neighbouring New Caledonia (*cf. infra*); 21, 262 persons declared to be from Wallis or Futuna were found in a 2009 census to be living in New Caledonia, almost the double of the resident population numbers in the Fenua ('country'). The economy of the territory is founded on State aid (about 80% of the budget), and on the public sector, which represents 70% of total paid employment. The local economy is centred around an agriculture of self-sufficiency, complemented by high levels of imports. Despite the presence of an international airport on Wallis, tourism remains very limited.
- 11 For French Polynesia, on the other hand, tourism brings a significant source of income, with pearl culture, fishing or cultivation of vanilla. However, the Polynesian economy remains fragile – unemployment doubled between 2007-2012 – and it continues to rely on State aid (Poirine 2011), whilst the ISPF (French Polynesia Institute for Statistics) demonstrated a level of poverty in terms of standards of living reaching 28% in 2009 (17% of the level of poverty in 2008 in New Caledonia)⁴, together with a reported very unequal distribution of revenues. Spanning a territory of 121 volcanic or coral islands (of which only 76 are inhabited), representing a maritime surface area of 125 km² for
- 12 3, 814km² of land above sea level on 5 archipelagos (Société, Tuamotu, Gambier, Australes, Marquises), French Polynesia possesses an undeniable oceanic advantage in this strategic part of the world. In 2014 its population was 270, 500, slightly higher than that of New Caledonia, where the population density is five times lower. These brief

elements of general information in relation to the three territories allow us to identify their specific features, which do not however preclude the potential for exchanges between the French territories in the region of Oceania. There are, moreover, different expressions of religion in these three societies, which present deeply local specificities, with varying degrees of customs, tradition and perceptions of the sacred, which give rise to distinctive interpretations of the heritage of Christianity introduced by colonisation (Baubérot and Regnault, 2008).

- 13 In effect, the islands of French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis-and-Futuna are developing their long-existing relationships with each other, as well as with their respective neighbours in the Oceania region. This regional environment is clearly disparate, in terms of the individual contexts of territories involved: New Caledonia, located in close proximity to Australia, serves as a buffer between “Near Oceania” and the Melanesian region, whilst French Polynesia, in its vast extension, forms the borders of the region of Oceania to the East, with its archipelagos stretching around “Far Oceania” in terms of the sphere of Polynesian influence.
- 14 It is undeniable that issues can vary according to the individual perspectives of these territories on the subject of regional integration. By virtue of their closer proximity to each other than to Tahiti, New Caledonia and Wallis-and-Futuna have a more well-developed relationship of commercial transactions and migratory flows. Wallis-and-Futuna is located between the two territories, 2, 800 km from French Polynesia and
- 15 2, 000 km from New Caledonia. However, le “Caillou” (the “Pebble” as New Caledonia has been nicknamed) offers a greater pole of attraction for inhabitants of Wallis, due to the difference on both territorial and economic scales between the two countries. The presence of a significant immigrant population in New Caledonia, from Wallis-and-Futuna, is complemented by communities of both Tahitian and Polynesian origin, who migrated according to socio-economic factors. The ‘nickel boom’ of 1969-1970 brought the migration of 15, 700 Europeans, 3, 500 Tahitians and 2, 900 from Wallis-and-Futuna, giving a total of 24, 200 immigrants between 1969 and 1973. In comparison, the building of the Pacific Experimentation Centre in French Polynesia in the early 1960 had already resulted in the migration of 12, 200 people born outside of the territory, between 1962 and 1971. Although this migration did contribute to the transformation of the Polynesian society and economy, it was nevertheless half the size of the migratory flow towards New Caledonia during a very short period. The European and Polynesian migrations may have been viewed by the Melanesians as a new form of colonisation (Rallu and Badchon, 2003), one which accelerated the formulation of Melanesian political demands (Leblic, 1993; Soriano, 2014). The emergence of autonomist and/or pro-independence movements in New Caledonia and in French Polynesia developed a web of relations between the actors of these movements, especially those who were engaged in the fight for the independence of their territory. The whole process was chaotic in New Caledonia following the ‘events’ (les événements, 1984-1988). Political and militant convergences were also formed around the closely-related topic of protests against the nuclear experiments conducted by France at Moruroa and Fangataufa (Tuamotu, French Polynesia), thereby creating a focus of attention for the region at that time (Mrgudovic 2008; Mohamed-Gaillard, 2010). Opposition to the presence of France and to French nuclear tests in the 1970s and 1980s thus served to reinforce the process of regional integration.

- 16 Do exchanges between French Pacific territories attest to the development of a coherent regional policy on the part of France in relation to these three territories? It would rather seem that emerging political and institutional convergences are due, on the one hand, to their status as an overseas collectivity (Collectivité d'Outre-Mer, COM) of the French Republic, but also by virtue of their association with the European Union in their status as an overseas country and territory (PTOM – Pays et Territoire d'Outre-Mer or Overseas Countries and Territories OCTs), a status which encourages regional integration measures in economic, scientific⁵ and cultural terms. The OCTs (French territories and Pitcairn, a British dependency) thus represent a 'European presence' in the Pacific region, according to the terms of the EU in the 2006 document which presents the strategy for the reinforcement of the partnership between the EU and the ACP states – Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (Choi, 2010). Regional identity cannot be described as an 'old chestnut', nor as an institutional pastime: it has to be seen within the scope of a policy for consolidation of strategic presence that is both French and European, even if the limitations of these geopolitical considerations have been well-known and evaluated for quite some time in diplomatic circles (Regnault, 2013 : 235-244).
- 17 A further aspect of regional integration directly involves territorial integration within each of these territories, whose administrative divisions are quite distinct. Regionalisation in these territories essentially concerns New Caledonia (Leblic, 1993: 2004). This institutional option has been proposed in different forms, for different purposes, by the central government, in order to resolve the Caledonian problem, with the intention of causing a division in Kanak nationalist claims following the crisis and political violence among pro-independence Kanak militants and loyalists. It proved to be impossible to implement between 1985 and 1988. However this movement was followed by provincialisation, arising from the Matignon agreements of 1988 (Leblic 1993; Faberon 2003). Representatives of the three provinces (North, South and Loyalty Islands) are members of the Congress of New Caledonia, where they elect a government. Even so, the division of the provinces of New Caledonia into federal units (Faberon 2008), or the organisation into districts subdivided into villages, governed by leaders on Wallis-and-Futuna (Soulé 2003: Guiot and Leblic (eds), JSO 122-123, 2006; Arounès et al., 2011:46), can be seen as different from the centralising power of Papeete and Tahiti in French Polynesia (Merceron and Morschel, 2013), albeit with some convergences in terms of internal regionalisation⁶. Moreover, by virtue of its maritime spread, French Polynesia represents a regional space unto itself, with 121 islands spread across a surface area comparable to that of Western Europe. With their different geography, history and institutions, these territories still possess some features that would favour development of relations amongst them.
- 18 Exchanges that are not only cultural, but also institutional, ministerial and economic, are developing between New Caledonia and French Polynesia. In terms of economic relations between these territories, we can find some factors of convergence in the context of ministerial missions between Tahiti and New Caledonia. These relate to the management of sustainable tourism, (*La Dépêche de Tahiti*, 24 février 2015), or the setting up of relations between Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and employer and union organisations, on questions of lobbying in favour of tax exemption ("Les trois collectivités françaises du Pacifique s'unissent" – the three French Pacific territories seek closer collaboration/ unite - *La Dépêche de Tahiti*, 30 October 2014). This

latter aspect represents a topic for convergence between economic powers of the overseas collectivities as a unified group⁷. They call for the potential of the *eez* to be taken into account by French parliamentarians, especially at the conference on the Overseas Territories of the Pacific and the strategic and economic issues of the region, held at the French National Assembly in November 2014.

- 19 From the economic perspective, the process of regional integration reveals the positive impact of intra-regional trade agreements on the flow of exchanges amongst member states. This type of study also highlights the historical legacy of colonisation in the structuring of exchanges (Ro'i, 2013). Before the recent development of commercial, economic and technocratic exchanges between the *Fenua* ('the country') and the *Pebble*, the long-standing view was that the distance between these two territories
- 20 (4, 700 km) with their different histories and societies, was not favourable to a mutually-beneficial economic integration. There are few commercial exchanges, with the exception of some interaction at the level of employers, because 'family clans' have *business* all stitched up in Nouméa. According to Jacques Lafleur, the former president of the RPCR (*Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République*, a primarily European party), whose political activities within the scope of the Chirac RPR movement were in competition with the Polynesian leader Gaston Flosse, highlighting the rivalry between the two territories in the 1980s and 1990s, when both men were chasing the post of Secretary of State for the South Pacific in Chirac's government in 1986:
'We are completely different. We can have political exchanges, but as far as economic exchanges are concerned, they would be unilateral, as Polynesia does not produce much of anything.' (Lafleur, in Kotra 2009:100)
- 21 It is true that the complementarity between French Polynesia and New Caledonia is far from being an obvious conclusion, however exchanges between the two territories are not intended to be exclusively political or economic. In effect, the exchange of knowledge and wisdom, for example on the occasion of the Oceanian International Documentary Film (FIFO) attests to the richness of cultural exchanges which can be found through artistic creations by actors of the different Oceania territories.

La carte illustre la répartition géographique des membres et observateurs du Forum International du Pacifique (FIP) dans la région du Pacifique Sud-Est. Les îles sont colorées et marquées selon leur statut :

- Groupe du Fer de Lance Mélanésien** (orange) : Iles Salomon, Vanuatu, Nouvelle-Calédonie.
- Groupe des Leaders Polynésiens et Groupe des Parlementaires Polynésiens** (bleu) : Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tokelau, Samoa, Américain-Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Fidji.
- Observateur au FIP** (bleu clair) : Palau, Micronésie.
- Observateur au FIP** (bleu très clair) : Nouvelle-Guinée, Papouasie.
- Membre associé au FIP** (bleu foncé) : Australie.
- Observateur au FIP** (bleu très clair) : Nouvelle-Zélande.
- Membre associé au FIP** (bleu foncé) : Hawaï.
- Membre associé au FIP** (bleu foncé) : Polynésie Française.
- Membre associé au FIP** (bleu foncé) : Pitcairn.

Les légendes indiquent également :

- Micronesia Challenge** (triangle jaune)
- CPS** (ligne verte)
- FIP** (ligne violette)
- Membre associé au FIP** (pointillés)
- Observateur au FIP** (tirets)

Different degrees and characteristics of scales in the context of regional integration

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Melanesian states has since shifted its emphasis to the economic aspect of their co-operation.

- 25 Relations with the FLNKS, the Kanak socialist national liberation movement, which was integrated into the Melanesian organisation from March 1990, nevertheless demonstrate the first political characteristic of a group which has worked to achieve a 'sense of regional identity' for Melanesia. The search for economic integration was subsequently illustrated by the integration of New Caledonia into the Melanesian free-exchange market on July 3rd 1999, on the occasion of the XIIIth summit of the MSG in Port-Vila. This agreement made possible the signature of the Nouméa agreement on 5th May 1998 between the FLNKS, the RPCR and the French government. Moreover, on August 15th 2000 New Caledonia was invited for the first time to participate in the post-forum workshops of the XXXII Pacific Forum in Nauru. Thus, on 15th August 2002 and 16th August 2003, the president of the government of New Caledonia, together with a delegation comprising FLNKS and RPCR, were all able to participate directly in the Pacific Forum at Suva (Fiji) then in Auckland (see in this respect Mrgudovic, 2003; Mohamed-Gaillard 2011; Tabani, 2011; Graff 2012).
- 26 Moreover, the Forum, whose members are all signatory to the ACP/EU agreements, also represents a source of support to the EU regional policy, which is of interest for the signatories due to its provision of technical and financial aids to the Pacific Islands (Fabry, 2005).
- 27 Melanesian regionalism also has relationships with Polynesia, in particular with the Tahitian pro-independence party, the *Tavini Huiraatira* of Oscar Temaru. At the XVth summit of the MSG in the Solomon Islands, on 6th August 2003, Temaru was the honorary guest for the re-enrolment of French Polynesia on the UN list of countries to be decolonised. The MSG continued to support this initiative when in March 2011 the president of the Spearhead group wrote to the president of the Forum to assert his support to pro-independence Tahitians (Regnault, 2013: 199). For their part, the Forum reiterated its 2004 decision, which recognised the principle of self-governance, but encouraged French Polynesia and France to resolve this question by an internal, consensual approach (Regnault, 2013: 201).
- 28 If the Pacific Community represents a body that is more technically-oriented, the reason for the creation of the Pacific Islands Forum was essentially political in nature. Furthermore, regionalism in Oceania has developed alongside the decolonisation movement. The regional position has thus been structured by the rejection of French policy during the Caledonian crisis and by the continuing use of nuclear testing (Mohamed-Gaillard, 2012). The same can be said of the MSG and, more recently, of the two groups of Polynesian leaders and parliamentarians, analysed here by Sémir Al Wardi (pp. 75-88).
- 29 Following the mobilization of the Spearhead Group in the mid-1980s, the president of the government of French Polynesia, Gaston Flosse, had mooted the idea of setting up a 'Federation of Polynesian States', during a visit by Jacques Chirac to Tahiti in September 1985, to respond to the Melanesian movement (Bessar, 2013: 327). In an ironic turn of history, Gaston Flosse, having been returned to office as president of French Polynesia, was elected by his peers, as the most senior of their number, as president of the Pacific Leaders Group, which unites eight Polynesian 'countries'. This initiative proved to be less formal than the creation of a federation, but it still fits with

the search for a Polynesian regional grouping intended to counterbalance the influence of Melanesian organisations. In 1992, on the occasion of the Pacific Arts Festival, as president of the government of French Polynesia, Gaston Flosse declared to a gathering of *wakas* (Polynesian large canoes):

“ We are a single, identical people” (Bessard 2013: 306)

- 30 His diplomatic bias particularly favours the Polynesian side of relations in Oceania, giving centre-stage to the family dimension of bringing together the ‘brothers and sisters of the Pacific’. At the France-Oceania summit in Tahiti in August 2003, Edouard Fritch, the vice president of French Polynesia and former son-in-law of Gaston Flosse, with a mandate to extend an invitation from France to the leaders of Oceania, revealed that the latter had welcomed this initiative:

‘Some have even described this as a historic event, that one member of the family took the trouble to bring together the brothers and sisters of the Pacific’ (Bessard 2103: 306).

- 31 Furthermore, the French Pacific territories are enshrined in French policy in the Pacific, whose composition is subject to fluctuation.... And yet they are also incorporated into European Union policy, as an Overseas country and territory (OCT) associated with the EU, which thus allows them to apply to the European Development Fund (EDF). The French State remains the main sponsor of these funds. Nevertheless, the role of ‘external’ actors, in particular the European Union, contributes to the development of a process of regional integration which constitutes one of the *repositories* of European public policy for development aid. On a par with ‘good governance’ or ‘sustainable development’, the reinforcing of capacity in the domain of “regional integration” is prioritised in EU international co-operation programmes. However, they are not at the same level as political conditions which are sometimes attached to financial and technical aid from the EU, even if the EU is seeking to redress the low level of regional integration of the French overseas territories in their zone (Fabry 2005). The article by Rémy-Louis Budoc (pp. 21-38) is particularly enlightening with respect to the European dimension in the regional integration process involving these three French Pacific territories. Finally, the creation in 2002 of the OCTA, the association of the OCTs in the EU, is intended to guarantee the defence of the interests of the island authorities within the governing body of Europe, even though their geographical distribution and their heterogeneity might seem to put them at a disadvantage in relation to the European technocracy.

An ambiguous concept of regional integration

- 32 The concept of regional integration is designed to be flexible, without entering into debates around neo-functionalism⁸ or neo-regionalism⁹ in theories of international relations. These debates have proved to be occidental-oriented, whilst research tends to focus mostly on states as main actors (Dabène, 2009). Not only does the context under study comprise territories which have been granted different degrees of sovereignty and multiple statutes. The context of research is often linked to the dynamics of the building of the EU, which leads the development of these theories; this situation does not offer conceptual applications of any real interest in the context of research on Oceania. Considering regional integration phenomena in Latin America, Olivier Dabène offers a different definition of regional integration:

‘ [...] In terms of the historical process of the increase in the scale of interaction between political(infra-national, national or supra-national), initiated by actors sharing a common approach, setting objectives and *finding the means to achieve these, and in so doing, contributing voluntarily or involuntarily to the building of a region*” (Dabène, 2009 : <http://www.sciencespo.fr/opalc/content/integration-et-democratie>).

- 33 This approach encompasses the diversity of actors (public and private), of registers (formal and informal) and of scales of interaction in the process, which results either from a deliberate strategy or from an emerging effect, and is likely to bring about the creation of institutions. For example, the idea of a *Pacific Way* (Mara, 1997) made sense for those involved, based on the ideas of seeking consensus and solidarity amongst the peoples of the Pacific. One of its objectives was notably to create a regionalism which would include as a key instrument the South Pacific Forum, which was seeking to contrast sharply with the softer and more limited role of the South Pacific Commission in the political arena.
- 34 The region could be understood as a form of regulation and organisation of relations between the different actors in order to consolidate and facilitate interactions, not simply a framework for exchanges amongst these actors, rather a deliberate construct (Van Lagnehove, 2003). The renewal of analysis of the concept of the region and regionalism highlights the region as a new form of political entity which is multicultural, multidimensional and dynamic, as it forms part of a complex process of construction arising from the deliberate will of the actors. Regionalism therefore aims not only to intensify economic relations but also to give a regional ‘purpose’ to different regional initiatives, be they political, social or cultural (Hau’Ofa, 2015). This form of regionalism is interwoven with flows relating to actors of different sociological profiles, not only those who operate at a ‘high level of integration’, i.e. political leaders, but also actors operating in cultural and economic areas. In this way, ‘bottom-up integration’ (Back, 1998) highlights movements for co-operation, for cross-border transactions and interaction driven by and involving non-state associated actors, for example women’s associations, which are often the originators of cultural initiatives in the region (Cerf, 2007). Despite this, economic power relationships tend to favour French territories compared to their Oceania neighbours, with the exception of Australasian regional powers, in so far as New Caledonia, and to a lesser extent French Polynesia, both have one of the highest GDP per capita of the region, almost as high as that of New Zealand. In that sense, seeking to develop relations with small markets which are barely solvent and produce the same products at a lower cost, is of relatively low economic interest (Gay, 2008 : 106).

Regional integration from colonial heritage to global flows

- 35 In effect, the development of exchanges and of a regional identity with an overall cultural character that would make sense in the South Pacific incorporates a kind of dynamic of ‘postcolonial family reunions’, progressively fed by exchanges of different sorts. Geographical, political and economic diversity apparently separates the territories and political entities of the South Pacific. However, a contemporary ‘renaissance’ movement of regional integration, recalling the pre-colonial history of the Oceania region, marked by numerous exchanges amongst the islands, leads us to re-

examine intra- and extra-territorial exchanges by the French political entities in the South Pacific.

- 36 All the same, the process of regionalisation is enshrined in the long term within relations at the heart of the 'Continent of Islands'. Moreover, the question arises as to whether the flows of the pre-colonial era have any similarities at the root of certain regional developments between the territories, for example, between 'Polynesian countries'. Even if the Pacific of pre-European contact was not really a space for a shared culture, despite the 'lapita cultural complex' (Sand, 2010; Conte, 2013:28) constituting a shared cultural substratum for these peoples, the populations of far Oceania, mainly those of the Polynesian triangle (Hawaiï, Easter Island, New Zealand) have still maintained relations with each other for centuries. They were characterised by a 'great cultural proximity which allowed them to be included in a wider cultural space' (Conte, 2013: 29). Nevertheless, according to Eric Conte, archeologist, it might be too bold to consider the recent formation of groups of political representatives of the Polynesian world as a contemporary echo of historical relations – a myth of a golden age of pre-colonial relations – which might have been eclipsed by the colonial period.
- 37 Marked by the heritage of colonial rationales, regional fragmentation in Oceania can be identified in the conventionally-accepted divisions of this region (Tcherkézoff, 2009), in the division of the territories into administrative constituencies, and in their administrative regimes. This division has brought into existence different legal and administrative systems in accordance with the respective colonial powers. The French territories have remained relatively isolated from their neighbours, in particular as regards colonial and religious rivalries. The strategic and economic stakes in the second half of the 20th century, in the context of an archipelago-based power struggle (Mohamed-Gaillard, 2010) have not encouraged a regional openness towards these territories which are governed by means of 'power stakes' (Mrgudovic, 2008). In Africa, European states had sought to discourage the import and export of goods during the colonial period, so as to control, even to limit, contacts between economic actors belonging to different colonial empires (Grant and Söderbaum, 2003; Meyer, 2006:337). The process of regional integration is *de facto* influenced by the types of relations and exchanges which have developed since that time. The importance of exogenous factors in a regional process which is far from being teleological, in that it can be said to mark a phase of advancement towards the gradual liberalisation of the global economy – regionalism as a 'stage towards international liberalisation' (Meyer 2006: 307) – in terms of the liberal ideology which underpins most theories relating to regionalism. A shift in French political attitudes towards its territories tends nowadays to encourage regional integration. In the past, French policy aimed to keep French overseas territories separate from regional influences, sometimes in quite an inflexible way within the regional institutions of the South Pacific Commission. However, this did not prevent a *rapprochement* between self-governance and pro-independence movements in the French Pacific territories, both amongst themselves and with supporting regional political leaders and movements. Henceforth, French authorities encourage the process of regional integration and participation by its territories in regional governing bodies. This allows France not only to improve its regional image but also to prevent the externalisation of political groups in favour of the UN decolonisation policy (Mohamed-Gaillard, 2010).

- 38 Another approach consists of envisioning regional integration as a factor in the reduction of economic dependency, which leads to inequality or extraversion (Bayart, 1999). Too great an openness towards international markets (Hugon 2003) is of little economic interest for the territories of Oceania. However, a view less centred on the economy would offer an insight into the wishes of the actors of Oceania to create new links between themselves, to renew and develop links of a regional nature, which could make more sense, by comparison with the imposition of unilateral, distant relations which used to exist between numerous Oceanian territories and the colonial powers. As for the independent island states, the interest offered by regionalisation for states at risk of being economically marginalised in the global market (Giesen, 2011) offers a limited commercial dimension, but is not devoid of political benefits. Institutional theories of regionalism demonstrate that institutionalisation and harmonisation of policies are clearly factors in the reduction of uncertainty and the creation of stability of interactions amongst the actors involved. It is not so much a simple question of promoting commercial relationships but rather to develop sectorial policies (environment, culture, health). According to Björn Hettne (2000), this self-protection movement could be described as a modern counter-movement in relation to globalisation. The latter takes up Karl Polanyi's analysis of economic liberalisation: this 'first movement' brings about a subsequent social counter-movement. However, can any conceptualisation of French regional states in the Pacific go quite that far?
- 39 From a maritime perspective, the proximity of neighbouring French political states in the South Pacific does not offer very far-reaching prospects for regional integration, in the occident-centred sense of an essentially political process with regard to a transfer of sovereignty (often a recent acquisition for many states in the region), towards the introduction of a single market and a customs union. New Caledonia lies between Australia and Fiji, whilst also being close to Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. Wallis-and-Futuna is in a relatively central position in Oceania, but its size and lack of infrastructures are hardly likely to encourage more regular exchanges with its neighbours (Tuvalu, Tokelau, Samoa, Tonga or Fiji, its nearest neighbour at 280km to the south-west of Futuna). Whilst Wallis used to be more closely linked to the Tongan model, Futuna used to be more closely inspired by the Samoan model. Colonisation modified the regional dynamics of these territories to make of these three kingdoms a single political entity (Leblic and Guiot, 2004; Angleviel, 2006). French Polynesia, on the eastern periphery of Oceania, is the 'direct' neighbour of territories of diverse statutes: Pitcairn (United Kingdom), Kiribati (independent state) and the Cook Islands (associated with New Zealand). French Polynesia is especially located at the centre of the Polynesian triangle comprising New Zealand, Hawaii and Easter Island, as well as being almost midway on an imaginary axis between Asia and South America. However, the potential for exchanges between the territories and their periphery, which can be seen, for example, in the growing level of participation by these states in regional institutions, belongs to an original dynamic for regional integration, based around a transnational architecture for co-operation. The result is a regional multilateralism based on a balance of Oceanian regional institutions, which is currently in a phase of redefinition, asking the question of verticalisation of regional organisations and their democratisation (Lechervy, 2015).
- 40 Clearly, this integration does not conform to the schema or degree of the form of integration which is at the heart of the formation of the European Union. The regional

integration model is enhanced by an Oceanian vision which does not necessarily have the economy and true competition as founding principles for its burgeoning regional identity, an identity which is rooted in a the passage of time and linked to the ocean, which is reinventing a form of integration at the heart of an Oceanian space (Hau'Ofa 2015). For example, the idea of a "Pacific Union" or an "Oceanian Union", as formulated by Richard Tuheiva, a Polynesian partisan of French sovereignty and Member of the French Senate, who claims that this idea represents a "unifying plan" which could seek support from the world of Francophonie as well as in a shared vision of Oceania, offering French Polynesia a central role in the evolving regional community process (Massau 2011: 152-160). Finally, regional integration raises the question of military security in an Oceania, an increasing object of envy¹⁰; the question of the French Pacific territories is less directly concerned, given the French military presence and the current institutional structure. However, the shift of stakes in the zone brings its own new problems, for example the rise in power of Asiatic countries in the region – sometimes supported by Asiatic diasporas already existing in the French territories – and at the same time, surveillance of commercial fishing practices (China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea: Crocombe, 2007). Ships take advantage of the immensity of the ocean to avoid regulation, thereby extending various forms of ecocide, for example sharks, which are both the unhappy witnesses and financially-rewarding victims.

- 41 Regional integration around French territories thus finds itself at a crossroads of multiple international stakes, whose numerous facets present significant mutations: the question of economic openness in a marginal space in the Asia-Pacific zone, the technological revolution and the problems of climate change. For example, in 2010, the laying along the sea-bed of the fibre optic cable *Honotua* (the open sea link, or the spinal column), between Tahiti and Hawaii, linking French Polynesia to the rest of the global telecommunications network, has been a good example of the insertion of this territory into the globalisation process and has opened up the field of opportunities offered by the digital economy (Laborie, 2013). The goldmine of digital technologies, including the internet, can overcome the scattered nature of the islands of Oceania, encouraging and facilitating regional exchanges. The extension of the cable has however been temporarily delayed («Le câble dans l'impasse », *La Dépêche de Tahiti*, 17 janvier 2015), despite numerous projects, including that of a cable linking French Polynesia and New Caledonia, which would be connected to the Australian network (Argounès et al., 2001). Moreover, the question of the environment, a fundamental issue in Oceania, relies on regional co-operation to address the interdependence of ecological risks. In the context of these multiple global transformations, the vision of an ocean of new opportunities and new limitations, which is gradually evolving for these territories, shows that the margins for co-operation, within the French Pacific and beyond a French-centred perspective, remain extremely important for Oceania. In the view of a *Françocéanité* ("French-Oceania"), the appropriation of new international and regional powers by the Caledonian and Polynesian governments allows for the progressive development of territorial strategies in accordance with the French authorities (Lechervy pp. 105-121).
- 42 Relations can develop, and re-develop, on the basis of these contemporary dynamics in the institutionalisation of regional exchanges between the territories of Oceania, taking new political, economic, social or cultural forms. These forms of the process of regional integration can be studied from different disciplinary and thematic perspectives.

A volume gathering a wide-ranging research concerning regional dynamics

- 43 Rémy-Louis Budoc (pp. 21-38) offers interesting new insights in his analysis of relations between the European Union (EU) and French overseas countries and territories (OCTs), with an in-depth examination of the institutional mysteries surrounding regional integration from the EU perspective, which according to the author “has made the Pacific region a new priority in its foreign policy” (p. 23). In order to study the objectives for modernisation of relations between the OCTs and the EU, including the development of the OCTs whilst differentiating this new policy from the “traditional” EU policy for cooperation and development, Budoc refers to the latest decision of the Overseas Association Decision (OAD), adopted on 23rd November 2013. This ‘change of course in EU - OCTs relations’ relates notably to support for the policy for regional integration of the three French territories within their geographical environment.
- 44 France is most specifically responsible for the interest of the European Union in the region. In effect, the French insertion policy with respect to its South Pacific territories, highlighted by Denise Fisher (pp. 39-48), demonstrates that France has clearly managed to ensure that her Oceanian territories are increasingly becoming the drivers of their own regional insertion, participating in initiatives by regional organisations and in military cooperation programmes, also in cultural and sporting exchanges. This has been made possible by the cessation of nuclear testing in French Polynesia and the putting in place of the Matignon-Oudinot agreements, followed by the Nouméa agreement in New Caledonia. However, according to Denise Fisher, the influence that France is able to exert on these territories is still too great to allow the territories to achieve any real integration into the regional structure.
- 45 Thus, in her assessment of the state of the regional architecture, Tess Newton Cain (pp. 49-58) draws the parallel between the evolution of regional organisations, which seem to fail to reinforce the regional structure, and the emergence of a sub-regionalism which focuses more directly on questions of economic policy. She addresses most specifically the regional organisations comprising the Regional Council of Organisations in the Pacific (CROP), the Pacific Community and the Pacific Islands Forum. A review of the *Pacific Plan*, introduced in 2005 to reinforce the regional structure, has already confirmed that the regional needs to preserve its essentially two-headed structure and organise itself around two main poles, namely politics and technical developments. In the context of this regional reconstruction movement, sub-regionalism seems to go hand in hand with the protection of shared insular interests. In this way, the Nauru agreement of 2001 on the management of fishing, which stipulates that from 1st January 2011, tuna fishing vessels with seine nets and purse seine gear are no longer allowed in one of the richest zones for tuna fishing in the world, now appears to be more attractive than the regional organization (Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency). The eight Pacific island member-state signatories of the Nauru agreement (Papua New-Guinea, Palau, Solomon Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands) now form a veritable cartel for tuna fishing. However, Tess Newton Cain emphasises the tensions that can exist between national and regional interests, for example, in relation to the University of the Pacific. Finally, the place accorded to French and American territories within the

regional architecture is not always completely regulated, a fact which contributes to the perpetual movements of regionalism in the Pacific.

- 46 Exploring sub-regionalism in the South Pacific, Nathalie Mrgudovic (pp. 55-74) analyses the achievements of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) twenty five years after its creation in March 1988 at Port-Vila (Vanuatu). The group was initially intended to carry the national project for construction of new Melanesian states (PNG, Solomon, Vanuatu) and to have a greater influence in the regional balance: the group intended to rely on shared cultural values, based on the *Kastom*, even if the aspirations of Melanesian leaders sometimes took different forms. The determination to promote political emancipation of the Melanesian peoples was expressed through the support of the MSG for the Kanak pro-independence movement (FLNKS): they were subsequently invited to join the group. The economic objective of the group, a vague echo of the concept of 'Melanesian socialism' was to put in place a Melanesian free-trade association. However the limiting of products that could be exchanged, together with Fiji's refusal, until 1998, to join the group, had a negative effect on the completion of this project, as did the MSG refusal to support the pro-independence movement in West Papua. Nathalie Mrgudovic also highlights the ambiguous role of Fiji in relation to the group: whilst the group was weakened by the absence of Fiji, it was both reinforced and threatened by its presence. This being the case, the author wonders whether, on the one hand, the MSG has become a rival or a complementary actor to regional organisations, most particularly to the Pacific Islands Forum; and on the other hand, she questions the direction in which the group will develop its evolution following the rotating presidency of Frank Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji.
- 47 Another sign of Oceanian sub-regionalism, studied by Sémir Al Wardi (pp. 75-88), concerns the formation of the Polynesian Parliamentary Group (GPP), created in March 2013. After several attempts, the Polynesian states and territories managed to create a *rapprochement* whilst simultaneously differentiating themselves from another group, that of the Polynesian Leader Group (GLP). This latter, which was formed two years earlier on the initiative of Gaston Flosse, brings together Polynesian leaders. The author draws a comparison between these two groups, stressing the absence of two 'States belonging to the Polynesian triangle, the two most powerful: the United States (for Hawaii and the American Samoan Islands) and New Zealand' (p.778). This allows for the preservation of a certain degree of balance amongst the (smaller) member states, depriving them at the same time of any financial support from these powers. According to Sémir Al Wardi, the recent emergence of these groups should not be seen as having the intention of competing with the Melanesian and Micronesian groups, all the more so as they are all affected by political instability. It is moreover certain, for the author, that pro-independence Polynesians will use the GLP to convey their demands, just as the FLNKS had done with the MSG. Nevertheless, French Polynesia can find expression through these two groups, given that this does not involve classic considerations of international relations within a state framework. If that were the case, authorisation by France would be required. However, the concerted actions of the two Polynesian groups within the Forum, at the request of Samoa, Nauru, Tuvalu, Solomon and East Timor, in the acceptance by the UN of the re-admission of French Polynesia on the list of non-self-governing territories on 17th May 2013.
- 48 Faced with the growing challenge of environmental transformations (climate change and global warming, pollution, energy sources...) the region of Oceania is tackling these

problems with great interest. The French South Pacific territories are affected by environmental changes. Taking the example of French Polynesia, Rudy Bessard (pp. 89-104) investigates the forms of institutional and political leadership in the relations with environmental change. The State and key political Polynesian leaders are mobilising political resources (institutional, identity and private financing), which sometimes lag behind more recent political stakes and the setting of an agenda to deal with ecological issues. The author stresses the need for the State and its territories to take control of the political stakes involved in environmental changes in the XXIst century, in order to coordinate new forms of public response.

- 49 In the conclusion to this study, his Excellency the French Ambassador to the Pacific, Christian Lechervy, offers a global vision and a conceptualisation of French regional policy in the South Pacific (pp. 105-121). France's 'Pacific Policy' is formed on the basis of several sub-regional strategies based on the search for a greater diplomatic effectiveness for the State in Asia-Pacific. In its 'new project for power' France relies on a multilateral insertion strategy which takes into account the Asia-Pacific, Pacific, Melanesian and Polynesian regions. This plural approach to vectors for regional integration attests to a renewed reflection on the part of the State as regards the region of Oceania, based on the French collectivities of the Pacific.
- 50 Regional integration thus represents a relevant lever for the understanding and cooperation of the French Pacific territories as they face widespread changes relating to global transformations in terms of geopolitical, environmental and technological challenges. We can see from these different approaches that the process of regional integration surrounding the French Pacific territories fluctuates between, on the one hand, an intra- and extra-territorial regional insertion, supported by France and the European union from a geopolitical and strategic perspective, and on the other hand, the development of a regional identity within the institutions of Oceania, with the goal of a shared pan-Oceanian plan which will integrate the French Pacific territories with the "sea of islands" of Oceania.

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NOTES

1. Several articles in this special issue are based on presentations at the 2nd Pacific internet conference at EHESS, Paris, October 3-5, 2013 (2^e colloque e-toile Pacifique à l'EHESS Paris, 3-5 octobre 2013), in the session entitled « L'intégration régionale autour des trois entités françaises » (Regional integration and the three French entities).
2. A question posed by sociologist Bruno Saura concerns the debate surrounding the concept of cultural mix and how it is understood in French Polynesia (Saura, 2008).
3. See the three JSO mentioned, which have already dealt with these questions.
4. These levels represent indicators derived from different methods, which contain numerous points of bias, where the calculated estimation of standards of living do not properly take into account a rural existence and the ever-present traditional economy, in particular outside of urban areas in Papeete and Nouméa, as well as in Wallis-and-Futuna.
5. See, for example, the regional integration project in the European Overseas countries and territories on the theme of integrated management of coastal areas, in the context of the Xth conference of the Pacific Regional Federation of PTOM of the European Union, and in this edition, in the chapter by Rémy-Louis Budoc (pp21-38), which offers a comprehensive overview of these different programmes.
6. Despite some attempts, including that by the Secretary of State for the DOM-TOM, Georges Lemoine (1983-1986), which considered the 'regionalisation of French Polynesia' (in Regnault, 2003 : 114).
7. Lobbying on this point was partially developed by the Overseas Companies Federation (FEDOM).
8. Functionalist and neo-functionalist were developed alongside the construction of the European Union. Attention to the regionalisation process resulted in the overshadowing of other cases of regionalization in other parts of the world.
9. Supporters of neo-regionalism criticise the monodimensional, restricted nature of regionalism as analysed by functionalists, namely as an approach consisting of a description of the process of European integration, then generalizing on the basis of these specificities to produce a standard model intended to be used to evaluate processes of regionalisation taking place elsewhere. (Breslin *et al.*, 2002).
10. Focus of a project led by the research programme 'Gouvernance et développement insulaire' (GDI)(Governance and Island Development), Université de Polynésie française (2015-2017): the authors are researchers associated with this programme.

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