

From Local to National: Discourses Reporting Hawaii as the First State to Enact a Law That Aligns with the Paris Climate Agreement

ローカル・メディアからナショナル・メディアへパリ協定の履行を目指す州法を定めた最初の州としてのハワイ報道におけるディスコース—

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2017年6月1日に米国のトランプ政権は大統領選での公約を実現するためパリ協定からの離脱を表明した。その後6月6日にハワイ州知事のディビッド・イゲはパリ協定の履行を目指す州法に全米で初めて署名し、全米のみならず世界的に大きく報道された。州法への署名の際に行ったスピーチにおいて知事は、ハワイは地理的な特徴により気候変動による影響を大きく受けることに特に言及している。

全国を対象とするナショナル・メディアと特定の地方や地域を対象とするローカル・メディアとでは同じ事象であっても報道の内容や構成が異なることが少なくない。国土が広く、州による風土が大きく異なりなおかつ州の主権が大きいアメリカ合衆国ではことにその傾向が強い。全米の中でも独自の地理的特徴と歴史的・民族的背景を持つハワイ州での、連邦政府の判断に対抗する州法の成立という出来事をローカル・メディアとナショナル・メディアがどのように報道しているかを比較し、ローカル・メディアにより発信される地域独自の概念や論調、そして価値体系がナショナルレベルにまで報道されているのかどうかを問う。

本稿ではインターネット上のニュースメディアにおいて、ハワイの地理的特徴とテキストのディスコースの特徴がいかに組み合わせられてパリ協定を支持する州政府の決断を報道しているかを考察する。ことに、テキストのディスコースと自然環境の特徴とが、気候変動と戦うためにハワイのアイデンティティーをいかに用いているのかを分析する。分析の結果、ローカル・メディアにおいてはハワイ語の語彙・用語・概念が多用されていることがわかったが、ナショナル・メディアでの報道では必ずしもハワイ固有の用語や概念は紹介されていなかった。

1. Introduction

Scholars of climate change have devised ingenious strategies to transcend the United States' infamous inability to pass binding climate change resolution (Bryner & Duffy 2012). Others, speaking more generally have called for a mobilization to fight climate change, akin to the effort used by citizens in the Allied Powers during World War II (Gilding 2011). Others have pondered humanities' inability to comprehend the magnitude of what is happening and act effectively before

it is too late (Dodds 2011).

It is hard to say which is more surprising: a.) the United States initially signing to a binding—albeit watered-down to fit U.S. interests—Paris Climate Accord; or b.) Trump’s decision to withdraw on June 28th, 2017. The latter of course was promised by Donald Trump during his campaign and fits with a pattern of dismantling all of Barack Obama’s achievements. Perhaps more of a positive surprise—to people living outside of Hawaii—would be governor David Ige having the State of Hawaii become the first state legislature to commit to the Paris Accord in the face of Donald Trump’s voiding of it at the national level.

As per the motives, Ige’s decision is less surprising and more practical. The Hawaiian Islands may be more immediately sensitive to climate change than other American cities far from the ocean like Omaha, Nebraska, or at a high altitude like Denver, Colorado, Salt Lake City, Utah, or Boise, Idaho. At the same time, the concentration of wealth and capital that Trump has represented since he was elected—in contrast to his election promises—has frequently operated on the destruction of lived spaces (Smith 2008) and by displacing people from relatively harmonious and culturally defined ecologically appropriate relations (Polyani 1944/2000).

The idea of relatively harmonious and ecologically appropriate relations is not necessarily absent from media outlets—at least moving leftward from liberal to progressive media outlets on the Internet. At the same time, what this means for actual political action remains ambiguous. Media on its own does not cause people to act. Indeed, Ige was not necessarily compelled by the media alone, reasons given include Hawaii’s vulnerability to global climate change which can be expected to supersede concerns over media content. Yet, interestingly, the media evokes not just relatively harmonious and ecologically appropriate relations to land in Hawaii, but at times evokes, if not a Hawaiian indigenous viewpoint, Polynesian identity, to support Hawaii’s decision to stay in the Paris Accord after the national exit. In light of this, this paper asks how textual discourse and environmental features are combined to support state legislation in favor of the Paris climate agreement. In particular, how does this construct of textual discourse and natural features use local or Hawaiian identity to fight climate change? In this paper, authors investigate English media’s construction of discourses to report Hawaii’s decision.

2. Theory and Method

This paper looks for evidence of Hawaiian terms and culture in discussions of Hawaii’s decision to stay in the Paris Climate Accord. However, narrowing down and finding such terms required both a theoretical focus and a subsequent epistemology. The theory combines Karl Polyani’s idea of the creation of fictitious commodities, especially of land and labor as a starting point to understand what we are looking for. This is combined with a focused discourse analysis of relevant texts.

Polyani's work was written about mid-nineteenth century Britain, when the urban working class was created by eradicating people from rural life which was relatively sustainable and contained closer ties to ecology than the emerging industrial society. Since Hawaii is a mixed rural and urban society, which has maintained quite a bit of the former in its culture, Polyani's work helps focus on what is happening. Looking at Hawaii in more detail, the loss of both agricultural and urban livelihoods due to a variety of factors has already caused a large exodus of Native Hawaiians and local residents of the state of Hawaii to mainland U.S. cities. Rising sea levels are likely to make more of Hawaii uninhabitable and create more out-migration. Trump's assertion of pulling out of the Paris Climate Accord is done in the name of protecting U.S. industry. Hence it is done in the name of capital at the expense of places like Hawaii that will suffer extensive damage, dislocation, and loss of rural, ecological relations to the land if climate change proceeds as expected. Therefore, Polyani's work helps us focus on some of the human consequences of climate change—hence being forced off the land—but also on what type of environmentalism is being displaced and how to look at it in cultural texts: indigenous cultural terms that express environmentalism.

To be politically effective, environmental texts must be repetitive. In sum, they must be capable of reaching a wide audience and likely to be heard by politicians. Thus, this paper analyzes discourse. Being that the Hawaiian Islands are small and somewhat removed from the orbit of mainstream U.S. discourse, this paper uses mini-discourse which focuses on discourse created in order to change things and with a more deliberate bent to it. Hence, the paper focuses on discourse by smaller media and N.P.O.s, many of which may have a personal stake in crafting discourse which saves their lives and cultures. The paper also looks at broader, less intentional discourses in major national papers like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Yet, we are looking at a type of discourse that is somewhat purposeful.

To analyze this discourse, it was necessary to read a variety of articles. Many of these were available electronically. We focused on a few things. We started from general questions and moved to specific questions.

The general questions had to do with how local governments interact with the federal government and national U.S. media. The general questions were:

1. What discourses do local governments issue in interacting with federal decisions?
2. How are local governments that oppose federal decisions trying to convince national media?

These questions looked at specific things to do with larger political phenomenon. The specific questions aimed to elicit more group and individual phenomena. The specific questions were:

1. How did the Hawaii local media report the role of Hawaii in general regarding issues of climate change?
2. How did Hawaii (Hawaii state/governor) justify its decision?

3. How did the U.S. national papers report Hawaii's decision?

These questions thus focus on the entities or subjects of discourse—which groups and individuals wrote the discourse either in Hawaii or in various U.S. cities?

3. Findings

3.1 Specific Question 1

Specific Question 1: Hawaii Local Media: How did the Hawaii local media report the role of Hawaii in general regarding issues of climate change? In particular, how does this construct of textual discourse and natural features use local or Hawaiian identity to fight climate change?

In order to examine these questions, local newspapers in Hawaii and online news sources about Hawaii were searched in October 2017. Five signed articles on climate change were chosen from *Honolulu Civil Beat*, *Maui Time*, *Big Island Now*, and *Hawaii Tribune Herald* (the list of primary sources is at the end of this paper).

This mini-discourse rested upon previous discourses in the media that supported the idea of Hawaii as a center of climate change research. This can be seen in the following headlines: “New University of Hawaii study says climate change is contributing to increased hurricane activity” (*Maui Time* October 3, 2017 by Suzanne Kayian); “Hawai'i helped fuel the science behind the historic Paris climate agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions, the foundation release stated. Since 1957, a small lab atop Mauna Loa has been recording the increasing carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere” (Lordan, Deborah. 2017. UPDATE: Hawai'i Leaders Weigh In on Trump's Paris Accord Decision. *Big Island Now* June 1, 2017).

These headlines clearly show a discursive context for Hawaii to be seen as a source of climate change science, though not based on the natural or cultural features of Hawaii. The local media also focused on the threats posed by climate change to Hawaii. These too were not necessarily based on Hawaiian or Polynesian culture or landscape: “Climate models tell us Hawaii will see more strong El Niños, and more hurricanes, as the world continues to warm” (Chip Fletcher. 2017. We Need To Pay Attention To The New Hawaii Climate Commission, *Honolulu Civil Beat* October 16, 2017); “Hawai'i is directly in the crosshairs for the most significant effects of climate change: more severe storms, rising sea levels, and hotter temperatures, the Blue Planet Foundation press release stated.” (citing Senator English) (Lordan, Deborah. 2017. UPDATE: Hawai'i Leaders Weigh In on Trump's Paris Accord Decision. *Big Island Now* June 1, 2017); “The sea level is rising as we speak,” the paper quotes Sam Lemmo, administrator of DLNR's Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands, as saying, “We're having to really dance on our feet and adapt to the rapidly changing conditions around us.” (Anthony Pignataro, 2017. As climate change accelerates, Hawaii prepares report on potential sea level rise damage. *Maui Time* August 22, 2017). Rather than expressing vulnerability to the loss of

culture, these articles show a vulnerability to the loss of land and extreme weather.

Perhaps closer to the point, where natural resources can be seen as culturally important and defined, is an insistence that natural resources are not commodities (this runs counter to Trump's assertion that the health of the earth comes second to the U.S. economy). Some media outlets portray land and ecology as something that is not a natural resource or commodity. This goes toward a pre-colonization Native Hawaiian view of the land which was not based on Western property law. To this extent, *Big Island Now* quotes Hawaii State Senator English: "With our way of life here and across the Pacific being left vulnerable to sea level rise and climate change, we simply cannot leave our future in the hands of those who may be misinformed and misguided." (Lordan, Deborah. 2017. UPDATE: Hawai'i Leaders Weigh In on Trump's Paris Accord Decision. *Big Island Now* June 1, 2017). The important point here is the idea of a 'way of life' in Hawaii and other Pacific Islands being under threat. What is at stake is not simply a loss of commercial or agricultural real estate.

To this extent, local media in Hawaii has echoed the environmentalist 'limits to growth' discourse espoused by The Club of Rome in the early 1970s which assumed that human economies would face severe environmental crises if they grew unchecked (Meadows, et al 2004). For example, after mentioning urban land loss from climate change an article in *Hawaii Tribune Herald* mentions the destruction of fish ponds as a result of climate change; this is a destruction of traditional Hawaiian ecology thus referring back to the loss of autonomy over land and labor (especially in regard to the carbon farming mentioned earlier in this presentation). (Ivy Ashe. 2017. Taking on climate change: Bill would align state strategies with those of Paris accord, create interagency commission. *Hawaii Tribune Herald* May 8, 2017.)

The abovementioned ideas that nature is not a commodity and there are limits to growth echoes theories of 'fictitious commodities' raised by Karl Polanyi (1944/2000) where traditional cultures are forcibly removed from traditional relations from the land. This is apparent in Senator English's assertion of losing 'our way of life' and in the mention of fishponds being destroyed. Perhaps in contrast to what Polanyi mentions, certain media in Hawaii opposes this commodification of land and instead assumes that the environment is not secondary to U.S. national economic interests. Some overall findings for how the local media in Hawaii reported about climate change are as follows: Climate change is a real, present threat for Hawaii; Hawaii's leadership in climate change science; Natural resources as non-commodities; and a Limits to growth discourse: i.e. against unlimited growth. These show Hawaii as related directly both to climate change, which could be expected, but also more so they subtly bring in a discourse that opposes a complete commodification of the land and that is amiable to culture and linguistic expression of Hawaiian identity in relation to opposing climate change in textual sources.

3.2 Specific Question 2: How did Hawaii (Hawaii state/governor) justify its decision?

How did Hawaii (The state government and governor) justify its decision? How were textual discourse and environmental features combined to support state legislation in favor of the Paris climate agreement? Two primary sources were examined to answer these questions. The Hawaii Governor's remarks before signing the bills (June 6, 2017), and the governor's statement on Paris Climate Accord (June 1, 2017) announced on the governor's page on the Hawaii State Website.

In the Hawaii Governor's remarks (June 6, 2017) before signing the bills, Governor Ige mentioned a couple of things to address Hawaii's stance on the issues of climate change: "Climate change is real, regardless of what others may say"; "Many of the greatest challenges of our day hit us first, and that means that we also need to be first when it comes to creating solutions"; "Tides are getting higher, biodiversity is shrinking, coral is bleaching, coastlines are eroding, weather is becoming more extreme. We must acknowledge these realities at home. That is why Hawaii is united in its political leadership on tackling climate change."; "We are testing grounds – as an island state, we are especially aware of the limits of our natural environment."

Prior to signing the bills, Governor Ige's statement was posted on the Hawaii State website. "Hawaii'i and other Pacific Islands are already experiencing the impact of rising sea levels and natural disasters. That's why my administration and the Legislature are already taking concrete steps to implement the Paris Accord. Hawaii'i will continue to fulfill its kuleana on reaching our energy, water, land and other sustainability goals to make island Earth a home for all. The innovation economy is driven by technology, clean energy, and green jobs. We will continue to lead on this transformation and work collaboratively with people around the world."

Next, in order to consider how this discourse influences policy, we ask how textual discourse and environmental features are combined to support state legislation in favor of the Paris climate agreement. The Hawaii Governor's short statement summarizes (replicate) many pre-existing local discourses on climate change (Hawaii's leadership, vulnerability, how climate change is real, non-commodity/Limits to Growth discourse).

For instance, the statement "We will continue to lead on this transformation" clearly shows Hawaii's leadership in climate change science. And the parts "Hawaii's geographical features that makes the state very sensitive to the impact of climate change" and "Hawaii's vulnerability owing to geographical features" and "Hit us first" emphasize the vulnerability of Hawaii. Also, the statement "climate change is real" emphasizes how it is a truth, factual, and a present threat. The statement goes, "We are the testing grounds — as an island state, we are especially aware of the limits of our natural environment." This echoes the non-commodification of land and limits to growth discourses previously mentioned in this article.

In these statements of governor Ige, Hawaiian terms and Hawaiian concepts, way of life is

employed. For example, governor Ige said, the state had a “kuleana,” or responsibility, to the Earth. Also, when he mentions “Hawaii and other Pacific islands...”, he introduces Pan Pacific identity.

3.3 Specific Question 3: How did the U.S. national papers report Hawaii’s decision?

How did U.S. national papers report Hawaii’s decision? How were the Hawaii Governor’s messages conveyed? In order to answer the questions, newspaper articles reporting on Governor Ige’s signing the bills around June 6th, or 7th 2017, preferably signed articles in US quality papers, or news sources were selected. Four articles in four different newspapers, namely, *Washington Post* (WP), *New York Times* (NYT), *Los Angeles Times* (LAT), and *Reuters* (R) were chosen for analyses.

All four articles not surprisingly cite Hawaii state governor Ige’s remarks since they are more concerned with issues that affect the United States as a whole. The remarks that mention and emphasize Hawaii’s geographical characteristics were cited; “We are testing grounds – as an island state, we are especially aware of the limits of our natural environment” (cited in NYT). Discourses in articles also follows its trends describing Hawaii’s geographical features and emphasizing its vulnerability for climate change; “As a series of low-lying islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii is particularly vulnerable to global warming.” (LAT); Hawaii is on the front lines of climate change (NYT); “First and foremost, for Hawaii in particular, the science really speaks clearly,” Lerner said. “Due to its vulnerability and relative isolation, it needs to move forward on these issues.” (WP).

Another aspect that was mentioned in the articles was Hawaii’s leadership in climate science as in “Scientists at the University of Hawaii said in April that sea-level rise driven by global warming will cause flooding of low-lying areas in the state dozens of times per year by 2050 and increase the risk of dangerous interactions between tropical storms and seasonal high tides (Reuters).” Also, the discourse about how climate change is real and present is employed as in “A shortage of fresh water, ocean acidification and shoreline loss as the threats that the state faces as a result of climate change (NYT).”

The abovementioned articles seem to use a slightly different discourse when discussing environmental issues in Hawaii. In light of the fact that local newspapers focused specifically on Hawaiian places it is useful to focus on whether or not national newspapers used Hawaiian terms and concepts that were often observed in local media in Hawaii. The use of Hawaiian words is not unusual for media discourse in regional Hawaii papers as well as in the news about Hawaii in state-wide papers in Hawaii. Hawaiian has been an official language of the state since 1978, and although it has only about 8,000 speakers currently, Hawaiian language has had a symbolic status in Hawaii, especially since the cultural and political Hawaiian Renaissance in the early 1970s (Higgins & Furukawa 2012:181). But do these linguistic practices carry over into national newspapers, or do national papers use a separate discourse?

Unlike the local media in Hawaii, national level quality papers did not introduce terms and concepts in Hawaiian (except, for place names for obvious reasons) other than an article in *Washington Post*. It introduced the term “malama honua” as in “In Hawaiian, it [Malama Honua] means to care for Island Earth, a mission especially important to Pacific Islanders and whose home economy is under constant threat from the rising seas and coral bleaching caused by a warming planet.”(WP). It also introduced the Hawaiian way of life as in “The second, House bill 1578, established the Carbon Farming Task Force within the state’s Office of Planning, to support the development of sustainable agriculture practices in Hawaii, a skill native islanders had once mastered before planes, freighters and Amazon linked them to the mainland” (WP).

In sum, the ways Hawaii’s decision was reported varies depending on individual journalists. Hawaii’s vulnerability is reported by all four sources. Interestingly, local media reporting the issues of climate change rarely discuss geographical vulnerability. Possibly because it may not be something newsworthy for readers in Hawaii because it is a well-known fact for them. *The Washington Post* included many of the points Hawaii issued (Hawaiian terms, native Hawaiian concepts), while the other three sources omit most of the references.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, discourses on climate change used to report the state of Hawaii’s decision to support the Paris Accord appearing in newspapers and online news sources were analyzed. The aim was to observe how the local discourse, which has different historical and geographical traits as well as different ethnic dynamics, was conveyed in mainstream national newspaper media.

Hawaiian local media made it discursively possible, perhaps even foreshadowed, or made it believable, that climate change science and protest is based on Native Hawaiian cultural ideas. This is a fairly anti-commodification discourse that places Hawaii in opposition to mainland ideas (see the first question).

All three types of news—newspapers local to Hawaii, quotations of Hawaii governor Ige, and signed articles in quality national newspapers—focused on the vulnerability of the land to climate change. There were mentions of various types of effects. These types of effects often could be explained in language which was not specific to Hawaii. However, was language specific to Hawaii used in all three types of news sources?

Despite the frequent use of Hawaiian language terms in local newspapers, national newspapers analyzed in this paper mostly did not use Hawaiian language terms. When they did this was done by some authors and not others suggesting that it was not systematic. This suggests that while concern for climate change in Hawaii was expressed in all three types of news sources, it is not often expressed in cultural terms in U.S. national newspapers and may miss some of the non-scientific,

non-environmental consequences of climate change for Hawaii.

To some degree all three types of news sources mentioned in some way the idea that land is not a commodity and instead is something needed to survive. This sometimes was expressed in terms of a 'limits to growth' idea which deprioritized economic growth in general, or in the more cultural expressions of the value of land which expressed a pre-capitalist use of land similar to that mentioned by Polyani (1944/2000) which is more in harmony with nature and less commercialized.

Considering the limited space for each news article, it may not be reasonable or possible to introduce Hawaiian terms and concepts relevant to this news. However, by omitting the mention of the Hawaiian way of life, the national media is missing the unique voice from the state of Hawaii regarding Hawaii's environmental philosophy.

NOTES

1. As per spelling of 'Hawaii', Hawaii state promotes the spelling with the okina or glottal stop between the two i's. In this paper, the version that was used in each primary source is used when citing from the primary source. Otherwise, the version without the okina is used.

PRIMARY SOURCES

(All the primary sources are last accessed on October 30, 2019.)

For Specific Question 1

Chip Fletcher. We need to pay attention to the new Hawaii climate commission *Honolulu Civil Beat* October 16, 2017.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2017/10/we-need-to-pay-attention-to-the-new-hawaii-climate-commission/>

Suzanne Kayian, New University of Hawaii study says climate change is contributing to increased hurricane activity *Maui Time* October 3, 2017.

<https://mauitime.com/news/science-and-environment/new-university-of-hawaii-study-says-climate-change-is-contributing-to-increased-hurricane-activity/>

Anthony Pignataro, As climate change accelerates, Hawaii prepares report on potential sea level rise damage. *Maui Time* August 22, 2017.

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<https://www.hawaiitribune-herald.com/2017/05/08/hawaii-news/taking-on-climate-change-bill-would-align-state-strategies-with-those-of-paris-accord-create-interagency-commission/>

For Specific Question 2

Hawaii Governor's remarks before signing the bills (June 6, 2017)

Governor David Y. Ige's statement on Paris Climate Accord (Posted June 1, 2017)

<http://governor.hawaii.gov/featured/statement-from-governor-david-ige/>

For Specific Question 3

Katie Mettler, 'Malama Honua,' Hawaii says, as it becomes first state to pass laws supporting Paris accord, *Washington Post* June 7, 2017. (WP)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/06/07/malama-honua-hawaii-says-as-it-becomes-first-state-to-pass-laws-supporting-paris-accord/>

Jonah Engel Bromwich, Defying Trump, Hawaii Becomes First State to Pass Law Committing to Paris Climate Accord. *The New York Times* June 7, 2017. (NYT)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/07/climate/hawaii-climate-paris-trump.html>

Kurtis Lee, Hawaii rebels against Trump with a law to uphold the spirit of the Paris climate accord, *The Los Angeles Times* June 7, 2017. (LAT)

<https://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-hawaii-paris-accord-20170607-story.html>

Tom James, Hawaii enacts law committing to goals of Paris climate accord. *Reuters* June 7, 2017. (Reuters)

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-climatechange-hawaii-idUSKBN18Y37E?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>

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