The internet and postcolonial politics of representation: pacific traversals
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This critical study of everyday life online shows that there is much more going on than a bunch of people chattering to each other to wile away the time. The internet practitioners who populate the online discussion forums profiled here are from the South Pacific Islands, living in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. A close examination of their wide-ranging discussions on websites such as the Kava Bowl and Polynesian Cafe shows how the everyday interpersonal preoccupations of these populations are imbued with complex postcolonial political economic and sociocultural issues, both online and offline. These have particular permutations of race/ethnicity, sex/gender, and class/status. These forums have been so vibrant for so long because open, public spaces on the worldwide web have been made available by people dedicated to improving the lot of their communities living in the Pacific Islands and overseas. Recurring debates (on the stresses and strains of postcolonial sex-gender roles, contending meanings of democracy and what constitutes self/group identity) trace and articulate the practice of everyday life in a postcolonial and globalising context. Along the way, practitioners create new sorts of friendships, support and community networks, and sociocultural and political self-awareness. Such latter-day Pacific traversals of cyberspace are recreating newer Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on these peoples' own terms and for their own needs.

This study argues that these traversals constitute an emergent postcolonial politics of representation. However, these inclusive and empowering online practices have to contend with powerful corporate strategies that would enclose non-commercial, public (cyber)spaces and places such as these for private profit and increased market share. For there are political and economic forces that would tame and exploit the internet/world-wide web for commercial, military, or political reasons. The point this study makes (one that is made daily by these practitioners) is that the internet belongs to everyone. Hence decisions about its future should not be the exclusive preserve of powerful business, political or technical elites alone.