

ARTICLE

The Visual Grammar of Online Faith-linked Climate Activism

Case studies of grassroots “moana” theologies in Oceania

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Abstract

Climate change is dramatically impacting communities. Grassroots and indigenous faith-linked organizations in the Pacific are responding by using digital technologies to share stories and to advocate for justice. Most digital research occurs in the USA and Europe. However, the study of grassroots and indigenous digital activism yields important ecclesial insights about the nature of eco-theologies generated in the Global South. This paper presents research on online grassroots digital activism by three faith-linked groupings in Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Fiji. Theologically, case studies of grassroots digital activism provide vivid illustrations of how public theologies might engage missionally with the multifaceted challenges facing contemporary society. Methodologically, the use of visual images in faith-linked digital activism is interpreted by applying concepts of “visual grammar” to digital images. The results indicate that the visual images of digital activist organizations in the Pacific centre an ocean or “moana” eco-praxis that is immersive, communal and prayerful. Theoretically, the research challenges existing Eurocentric theorizations of digital activism and centres local and indigenous meaning-making as primary sources in decolonial knowledge-making. Ecclesiologically, the praxis of these digital activist organizations demonstrates how digital technologies contribute to new forms of Christian organizing and the role of gender and lay leadership in the mission of God in a climate emergency.

Keywords: Climate justice, Creation, Digital activism, Ecotheology, Public theology, Social media, Visual grammar

Introduction

From space, the Pacific glitters in ocean blue. Across an expanse of 162 million square kilometres, the world’s largest body of water covers some 30% of the earth’s surface. The waters of Oceania are critical for climate regulation and biodiversity,

providing half the world's oxygen and supporting a rich complexity of marine life. Around one-quarter of the world's languages are present in the Pacific, making the region one of the most linguistically complex areas of the world (Lynch 1998: 25) and a significant resource for global eco-theologies.

The islands, species and peoples of this liquid continent are vulnerable to changes in climate. A recent World Meteorological Organization report (2024) detailed sea surface temperatures that have risen three times faster in the Pacific than the global average since 1980. The impacts from "restless seas" (Kekea 2023) present unprecedented challenges for all species, human and non-human.

Pacific countries call for Pacific solutions to global challenges. Tupou et al. (2023) observed the invisibility of Pacific peoples' lived experiences and the need for research that makes visible the distinct, place-based ways that local communities respond to climate distress. Pacific solutions include spiritualities that are holistic and communal, "grounded in the experiences, stories, faith and wisdom" of communities (Pacific Conference of Churches 2024: 6). Pacific solutions are theological, developing theomoana, God the Ocean, as a metaphor that opens new ways of seeing and understanding (Halapua 2008: 90–5). Hence, Pacific spirituality and theology offer unique insights as the mission of God is discerned in climate justice.

This paper examines the unique contribution of Pacific eco-praxis and how across the liquid continent, Pacific communities are utilising faith-linked digital initiatives to activate for change. This article applies visual grammar analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021) to examine the online visual images of three faith-based eco-justice initiatives in Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Fiji, in dialogue with ocean or "moana" theologies. This paper documents a digital eco-praxis that is immersive, communal and prayerful and outlines the implications for digital activism, global eco-theologies and ecclesial mission.

Theorizing Liquid Places, Digital Activism and Public Theologies

Researching digital faith-linked climate activism in the Pacific draws on literature in various domains, including theories of liquid places, typologies of digital activism, and the development of public eco-theologies. I will describe key themes in each domain and the implications for researching digital faith-linked eco-praxis in Oceania.

Theorizing Liquid Places

The role of oceans in Christian theology is gaining increased attention. Pope Leo XIV (2025) recently announced an Apostleship of the Sea. It was a move not only to promote the pastoral care of "people of the sea" but also to express concerns about how climate change impacts humanity. In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis (2015: 25) wrote

that many of “the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as ... fishing.” Pope Francis saw oceans and seas not only as physical realities but as making visible a relational ontology, in which “our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us” (Francis 2015: 1).

Climate change disturbs the common home shared by all species, human and non-human. Indigenous communities speak with distress about how climate change is impacting their land and incomes, and destroying ancestral connections. Willox et al. (2012: 546) detailed how climate change is a global phenomenon that requires context-specific responses that value place-linked understandings. “People are not only *from* a particular place, but they are also *of* the place; that is, their identities, well-being, livelihoods, histories, and emotion-spiritual connections are emergent from the lands on which they live.” For Oceanic people, waters are an extension of “self, avoiding the creation of a colonial ideology founded in binary oppositions” (Ingersoll 2016:145). The result is an expansive identity that weaves connections, past, present and future.

The call to theorize a liquid Pacific continent in ways that learn with and from indigenous wisdom and lived experience invites the study of online grassroots digital activism by faith-linked organizations in Oceania. Local communities, as they activate for sustainability in Tonga, promote the work of Christian leaders as citizen climate scientists in the Solomon Islands and nurture digital creators in Fiji, are expressing contextual Pacific solutions. The study of these faith-linked activist networks can elevate indigenous ways of enacting mission and offer ecclesial insights into how lay leaders use communicative skills honed in visual and digital environments to activate for justice.x

Typologies of Digital Activism

The role of digital technologies in Christian ministry and mission is also gaining attention. Pope Leo XIV recently called the church to be wise in navigating digital cultures. He applied the call of Jesus to “go and mend the nets” not only to ministry toward “people of the sea” but also in online mission. Digital missionaries and influencers are to weave “networks of relationships ... where we can mend what has been broken ... networks that liberate and save” (Leo XIV, 2025). Kurlberg, Vo and Afshari (n.d. para. 40) call for the church to consider the use of digital technology “to remain a faithful witness in a digital age.”

While there are plenty of examples of online toxic discourse, it is clear that faith-linked organizations are actively exploring the use of online platforms to activate for change. Technologies like streaming, Virtual Reality, apps, artificial intelligence, gaming, activism and social media provide mission opportunities and raise critical

questions regarding mission in digital cultures (Taylor 2026). Campbell and Boone (2025: 61–2) document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and argue that technology is now an essential component in ecclesial life. At the same time, they also observe that digital divides remain, including between generations within congregations, among smaller and rural congregations and across cultures and contexts. The reality is that most digital research occurs in the USA and Europe (Neumayer and Rossi 2016), making the study of grassroots and indigenous activism a priority.

Digital activism has been theorized by Neumayer and Svensson (2014) as occurring in four domains. First, a **salon activism** where online platforms like Facebook are used to make visible demands for change. Neumayer and Svensson (2014: 139–40) detail how salon activism generates support for and recognition of other types of activism. **Contentious activism** involves engaging in digital civil disobedience, for example, hacking websites or sending threats through digital media. **Law-abiding activism** is expressed in digital campaigns and petitions that fall within legal boundaries, while **Gandhian activism** is willing to enact civil disobedience to effect change.

This fourfold typology of digital activism suggested by Neumayer and Svensson (2014) is helpful. First, because it describes a range of ways to participate in digital activism. Second, because the researchers call for further fine-grained case studies to nuance the typology, which is consistent with the work of this paper. Third, Neumayer and Rossi observe that most research into digital activism occurs in Europe and North America and the need for research into diverse cultural contexts. In the words of Titifanue et al (2017: 146), there is a need for research into “online activism in the Pacific region”. Fourth, research into Pacific activism provides a constructive response to the current dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies and typologies. Beginning with indigenous and grassroots case studies provides a foundation for developing globally sensitive and indigenous- shaped typologies of digital activism and eco-theologies of praxis.

The Development of Public Eco-theologies

Sebastian Kim describes a range of ways in which theology and Christian churches are responding to climate change as public eco-theologies (2011: 62–76). He outlines four strands of eco-theology that have emerged. **Social ecology** understands public theology as a socio-political struggle for the liberation of creation. **Creation theology** sees public theology as restoring the interconnectedness of all things. **Eco-feminism** advocates for a feminist spirituality that overcomes dualisms. **Eco-spirituality** understands public theology as integrating with the work of the Spirit in creation. For Kim, these four strands are distinct. However, they are closely related, and several strands can be present in the work of an individual. Kim argued that public eco-theologies are a contextual response to climate change that invite new ways of understanding relationships between God, humanity and nature.

These possibilities are amplified when eco-theologies from the global church, including non-Western contexts, are considered. A significant eco-theological resource from the Pacific is the concept of the Pacific household of God. Samoan theologian Ama'amalele Tofaeono described the household of God as "a contextual eco-theology" (2000: 19), a creation-linked philosophy that could reconstitute Christian doctrines of creation and redemption. The household is a translation of *aiga*, a Samoan word for a community in relationship. *Aiga* speaks not only of the social unit in a village embodied in communal ties with generations but also of a bio-geographical place that celebrates the sharing of resources. "Every part of the *aiga* is sustained and generated by an interdependent web of sustaining richness of a specific locality, and every member is entitled to share in its blessings" (Tofaeono, 2000: 32).

Building on the household of God, Winston Halapua (2008) developed *theom-oana*, God the Ocean, as a theological metaphor that draws on insights from the moana, or ocean. Halapua drew on the narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 to describe the ways in which oceans are the source of interconnected life, in which "there is the potential to see ourselves" (2008: 38–9). For Halapua (2008: 41), the call of the moana is to "unprecedented adventures in faith as we move towards the unseen future."

A feature of moana theologies is the reframing of who is my neighbour. The *Tuākoi 'Lei Declaration* was released by the Pacific Conference of Churches in 2024. The phrase *tuākoi 'lei* is translated from the Tuvaluan phrase for "Good Neighbour" or "Loving Neighbour." It draws on research by Maina Talia (2022), who argued that in an increasingly inter-connected world, the call to be a "loving Neighbour" assumes a common humanity. The result is a common humanity, distinctively framed in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37).

Observing the rise of eco-theologies among church communities in the Solomon Islands, Bobbette (2023: 100) described how indigenous Christians in the Pacific were contextualising Christianity. Ecotheology in the Pacific becomes a decolonial form of Christianity that draws on Pacific histories of environmental knowledge. Hence, this paper undertakes research that begins with grassroots digital activism in the Pacific. Such an approach elevates local theologies of mission as gifts and resources in a climate emergency. It also provides ways for digital activism to think beyond and against existing Eurocentric imaginations.

Methodologies for Researching Indigenous Digital Activism

Studying indigenous digital activism involves research methods including developing case studies, visual grammar analysis, "we-search," scavenge ethnography and researcher reflexivity.

My research uses case study methods. Theologian Elaine Graham (2013: xvii) argued that case studies of grassroots activism offer “vivid illustrations” of how to respond to the multi-faceted challenges facing contemporary society. While protest and media technologies increasingly combine social network analysis with quantitative digital data analysis contexts (Tufekci 2017), fine-grained case studies that draw on mixed methods can illuminate the particular and amplify lived experience and local wisdom. In developing case studies, I used purposive sampling to bring diverse contexts and different online platforms into conversation.

Second, social media and digital technologies often utilise visual images to increase engagement and deliver vital information. Kress and van Leeuwen (2021: 4) argue that visual images, like writing, have a grammar, defined as the “social-semiotic resource of a particular group, the group’s explicit and implicit knowledge about this resource, and its use in the practices of that group.” I have drawn on Kress and van Leeuwen and applied tools of colour, perspective, framing and composition to interpret the visual grammar of the online activities of Christian organizations (Taylor 2025).

Third, my research approach drew on scavenge ethnography (Niang 2024), a research approach anchored in black and indigenous studies. Scavenge ethnography recognizes the scarcity of resources in marginal groups. It responds to scarcity, including time, by working with existing work. In this study, I “scavenged” by utilizing existing online resources, including online articles and interviews with activists.

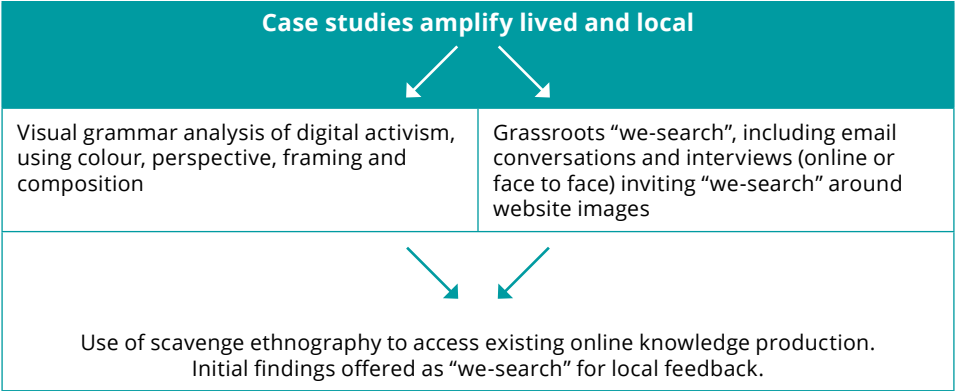


Figure 1 Mixed methods for researching digital activism (drawn from Taylor (forthcoming))

Finally, in approaching this research, my self-location as a researcher is important. I position myself as an outsider. While I have been shaped by cross-cultural experience, including being raised in Papua New Guinea, living along the banks of the Aramia River, Western Province, as an adult, I was educated in Western cultural

contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand. Several years ago, I was invited to undertake a review of theological education for the Anglican Diocese of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. During the research, members of the Diocese of Polynesia consistently called for the church to prioritize climate resilience. When that project finished, I continued to ponder how what I heard from participants in the research could influence where, what and how I researched.

In reflecting on my positionality as a researcher, Pacific theologian Sef Carroll (2022: 414) provided a helpful frame with her argument that ecotheologies require internal work to recover Pacific indigenous epistemologies and external work in advocacy and climate justice. My hope is that my external work not only amplifies indigenous eco-theologies but also deconstructs Eurocentric approaches to ecotheologies and digital activism.

Visualising Grassroots Moana Digital Activisms

Three case studies of online grassroots digital activism by three Pacific faith-linked organisations were chosen. No Pelesitiki – Kingdom of Tonga (NPC-T) uses Facebook to activate for sustainability in Tonga. The Anglican Church of Melanesia Environment Observatory hosts an Environmental Observatory Programme (EOP) website to promote the work of Christian leaders as citizen climate scientists in the Solomon Islands. “Pasefika Rising” is a music video created by musicians in Fiji that portrays Pacific solutions as an immersion in the waters of Oceania.

The case studies share a similar context, that of a liquid “blue” continent. They come from three nations and use three different social media platforms. They share ecclesial connections but in different configurations: a diocesan initiative (EOP), an ecclesially-linked organization (NPC-T) and an artist collective.

No Pelesitiki Campaign – Kingdom of Tonga and Social Media Activism

No Pelesitiki – Kingdom of Tonga (NPC-T) describes itself on Facebook as “a campaign to reduce and eliminate single-use plastic products from Tonga and promote local.” It is **digital** through the Facebook page, which offers visual images of offline action, along with memes focused on alternative approaches to sustainability. It is **faith-linked** through connections with the Anglican Diocese of Polynesia and St Paul’s Anglican Church youth group (for example 24 November 2023). It is **activist** as it invites local people to take action for their local community by “picking up rubbish at the ... foreshore this Saturday morning” (4 April 2023).

Analysis of Header Image

The cover photo from the NPC-T Facebook site provides a starting point for visual grammar analysis. Tools of colour, perspective, framing and composition can be used to analyse an image which has been chosen by these activists as representative of their organization.



Figure 2 Cover image from No Pelesitiki Campaign – Kingdom of Tonga Facebook

The **colours** in this header image are natural. There is no evidence of manipulation of colour or background to de-contextualize. The visual grammar being presented involves ordinary people in a specific local context, the Kingdom of Tonga, acting in their local community to pick up rubbish. The **perspective** of the header image involves the group of people looking directly at the camera, and thus the viewer. There are plenty of smiles, suggesting a warm welcome. The viewer is at the same eye level as the participants, generating a mutuality of gaze. The photograph is action-oriented, with everyone using the shared hand gesture. In the background of the **framing** is the sea. This indirectly references the focus of climate change in the Pacific, in rising levels and increased severity of weather events. However, the participants have their backs to the sea, perhaps suggesting a willingness to act, rather than stand helpless in the face of “restless seas” (Kekea, 2023). Turning to **composition**, the people are in a tightly packed group, with a range of ages, including younger people and adults. The group’s differently coloured clothing suggests an individuality among the different participants.

Overall, the visual digital activism of NPC-T portrays a friendly, smiling community of ordinary people. They are smiling, perhaps inviting the viewer to join in shared action. The visual grammar is of an activism that is **communal and participatory**.

Scrolling “Visual Grammar”

When people engage online, a common approach is to scroll, viewing a series of Facebook posts over time. Hence, visual grammar analysis includes looking for patterns among multiple visual images from individual posts over time periods. The table below gathers data from six months of posts on the No Pelesitiki Campaign – Kingdom of Tonga, as a way of establishing visual patterns.

Table 1 Patterns and themes across NP-KT Facebook posts

	6 months July-December 2023		6 months January-June 2024	
	Number	Themes	Number	Themes
Videos	3	Local recycling activity and community innovation.	7	Local recycling activity and community innovation.
Events	17	Local communities picking up rubbish. Workshops where NPC-T partners with other groups.	6	Local communities picking up rubbish. Workshops where NPC-T partners with other groups.
Infographics	0		4	Infographics encouraging recycling and encouragement to apply these in Tonga.
News	3	News including the sudden death of Eleni Levin-Tevi, a co-founder of NPC-T	4	News about recycling, including a crushed glass bottle machine that could transform local building processes.
Total	24		21	

Every post was focused in some way on the “future-making possibilities” around recycling. The phrase “future-making possibilities” is from Niang (2024: 61), who uses it to describe theory as a liberating practice. Applied to NPC-T, they are drawing on digital eco-praxis to activate for liberative practices of recycling to address local needs.

Another theme was partnership in knowledge-sharing. Many of the posts described partners, including the local Anglican Parish (27 October), wider Anglican bodies (for example, 24 November), government organizations (for example 29 September) and other groups (for example 1 November). Posts expressed gratitude to partners including the Ministry of Tourism for a workshop which was “imparting knowledge and inspiring young budding plastic recyclers” (30 December). Partnerships with and among communities are central to their activism.

Their knowledge sharing about “future-making possibilities” was grounded in theology. Posts described the picking up of rubbish as a way of “Caring for God’s Creation Season” (29 September). Another post described the need to teach “our children the responsibility of being good stewards of our environment and Godly responsibility to keeping our nation clean” (27 October). This post was linked to a further post showing an adult standing beside a young adult in a hoodie, several teenagers and a child (28 October). Their activism understood “godly responsibility” as involving generations together learning to be good stewards.

As the viewer scrolls, the visual grammar of the social media posts aggregates. Themes important to these activists include theologies of God caring for creation, learning across generations and affirming partnerships. Their climate activism, offline in picking up rubbish and online in advocating for recycling, visually expresses a holistic and communal spirituality, with partners and across generations.

Green Apostles and Citizen Science Activism

The Anglican Diocese of Melanesia has embraced novel approaches to climate change, including attaching weather monitoring stations to local churches and training “Green Apostles” as citizen scientists (Ashworth 2021; Axford 2019). In a nation of over a thousand islands yet few weather stations, using local churches and widening daily prayer practices to include recording of weather data offers innovative eco-praxis that centres local responses to climate distress. The project is **digital** through a website, which describes the project and lists monitoring sites (Environmental Observatory Project, N.d). It is **faith-linked** to the Anglican Diocese of Melanesia (Bobbette 2019; 2023). It is **activist** as a “community-linked initiative empowering local people, schools, rural-linked institutions and religious orders through participatory training to acquire simple knowledge, skills and methods of collecting and managing local climate data information” (Fataka 2024–25).

Analysis of Header Image

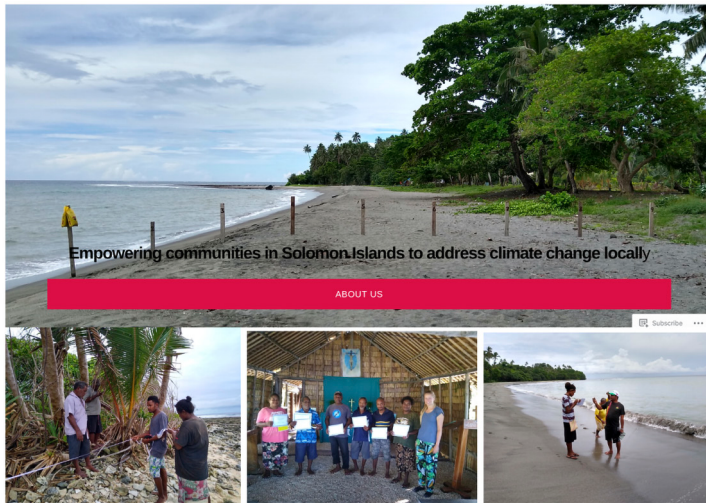


Figure 3 Images from the front page of the Environmental Observatory Project website

Four images on the website's front page provide a starting point for visual grammar analysis. The **colours** are mostly natural and include a palette of ocean blue, yellow sand and green trees. Stretched between the ocean and the green trees is a line of poles. These are emphasised by the "about us" header and the words "empowering communities in Solomon Islands to address climate change locally." A line of poles will not hold back the "restless seas" described by indigenous peoples (Melanesian Mission, n.d.). Rather, the text of the website is placing hope in empowered local communities. The dominance of ocean blue in three of the four images invites reflection on the title "Green Apostles". While "green has become the central theme of church engagements with ecological issues", the challenges of our blue planet require Christianity "to display its blue hues alongside ... other colours that speak of diverse ecological realities" (Maggang, 2022: 323, 324).³

These locally empowered communities are visually portrayed in three smaller images. All the images are at eye level, placing the viewer with a medium-range **perspective** on people gathered. Two of the images portray people at work. One of the images includes a person holding pen and paper, and others holding a tape

3 My thanks to the reviewers for inviting me to think more carefully about the colours of green and blue and their implications for decolonizing contemporary eco-theologies.

measure and providing data. It only takes two people to do these tasks, yet more people are present. This suggests a communal approach to the data gathering. Almost all of the people are barefoot, which perhaps suggests a connection to place, in ways consistent with the call for context-specific responses which value place-linked understandings (Wilcox et al. 2012: 546)

The middle image is from inside a building. It is presumably a church, given that behind the people is an altar cross and above them a crucifix. The people are holding certificates to represent their training (likely as “Green Apostles”) to undertake the data gathering depicted in the other two images.

Together, these three visual images make visible the “empowered communities” at work. The church is central to the “about us” of the EOP. The church is visually portrayed as a place of side-by-side participant learning. Following the learning, the church sends people outdoors to undertake the data gathering portrayed in the other images. Outdoors, at the intersection of blue sea and green land, participants engage in collaborative action of measuring, recording and supporting.

Scrolling the “Visual Grammar” of the Gallery

The website also has a gallery of visual images (<https://acomobservatory.wordpress.com/gallery/>). The images can be analysed for patterns, which in this case include groups of people working collectively on citizen science (see Appendix: Visual Grammar Analysis of the EOP Gallery). All but one of the 29 images is taken outdoors. The most common backdrop (52%; n=15) is of a combination of blue sea, green vegetation and sand or rocks. Four of the visual images point to the impact of climate change, with houses lying in water or partially uprooted trees toppling toward roads. People appear in many (76%; n=22) of the visual images. The groups of people consist of a mix of male and female and a range of ages, including school children and adults, of predominantly Melanesian descent. Almost invariably, the people are in groups (66%; n=19), working together in shared activity of data gathering. Their collaborative work is portrayed through images of rain gauges attached to buildings, poles being dug into sand, people recording on paper or holding tape measures.

The overall pattern of citizen science is consistent with the theme of the header image. The church is being visually portrayed as gathering groups of people to learn about work outdoors in shared tasks of data gathering. Hence, visual grammar analysis of the EOP confirms the claims by Bobbette (2023: 100) that the environmental observatories are a “series of possibilities for re-imagining the production of climate knowledge”. The teaching of science in a church and the weaving of faith and prayer offer different ways of conceiving faith, science, indigenous knowledge and digital activism.

“Pasefika Rising” and Music Video Activism

“Pasefika Rising” is an original music video that sings of Pacific solutions rising from the waters of Oceania (Bhagwan et al. 2024a). Two of the key contributors are the family of Rev James Bhagwan, the General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches.⁴

The lyrics move between lamenting a neo-colonial Pacific in which countries lack self-determination and expressing a call to pray for oceans of peace and justice. When interviewed about the song, lyricist Antonia Bhagwan described how “words matter” and the need for “telling and showing something” from human experience (JayEsBee2 2025). This resonates with the 2024 *Tuākoī ‘Lei Declaration* that affirmed the vitality of sharing climate experience stories.

The song’s title, “Pasefika Rising”, is a clever play on words, evoking a sense of something new emerging from ocean water. What is instructive is how the video portrays rising seas not as a threat but as an opportunity for “currents” of solidarity, liberty and equality to emerge.

Sequencing the “Visual Grammar” of “Pasefika Rising”

The visuals in the video offer four different seascapes. In one seascape, the viewer is looking down on calm and slowly moving water (DoW). In a second seascape, the viewer is looking across at crashing waves (CW). A third seascape involves a camera moving underwater across a seabed (USB). In a fourth seascape, the camera is immersed and about to break into a blue sky (Im).



Figure 4 Screen capture by researcher of the four moana sequences on the “Pasefika Rising” music video

4 The lyrics are credited to Antonia Bhagwan and music to Francisco Bhagwan, along with Ben Masi-rewa and Ju Ben.

The sequences give visual voice, both physically and theologically, to the Pacific as a liquid continent. In relation to place, all four seascapes share water as a unifying motif and the lived experience of Oceanic peoples.

However, the colour palette of the seascapes is visually diverse. As is evident in Table 2, the colours of the moana include light blues (Im), white-capped waves (CW), tranquil green (USB) and swirling emeralds (USB).

Table 2 Moana, or ocean, sequences in the video of “Pasefika rising”

Seascape	DoW	USB	CW	DoW	Im	USB	CW	DoW	USB	CW	DoW	Im	
Time (seconds)	22	15	20	18	37	12	16	32	14	15	46	45	

Analysis of colours speaks to the diversity of liquid environments. It resonates with the carefully curated chapter titles of *Decolonisation and the Pacific* (Banivanua-Mar 2016), which uses words like currents, wellsprings, churn and saltwater to verbalize the diversity inherent in an oceanic geography.⁵

The different visual images of the moana seascapes invite the viewer to reflect on how they experience the Pacific. Visually, one can experience Pacific waters looking down on them from a distance (DoW and CW). Or one can feel like they are pushed and pulled by underwater currents (USB). Finally, one can sense they are rising toward the surface, about to break through into a blue-skied reality (Im). These contrasts challenge those who make policy and create eco-theologies from a distance. At the same time, they affirm the need for Pacific solutions. In the music video, the immersion seascape sequences (Im) are accompanied by a chorus of sung voices. Many voices, immersed in the moana, harmonize together about a rising to freedom and equality. This shared hope is amplified by the sense in the visual of a rising toward the surface.

Indigenous eco-praxis as missional activism

My analysis of these three case studies demonstrates a digital eco-praxis that centres an ocean or “moana” theology that is immersive rather than distanced and activisms that are communal, prayerful and mutual. The results can be discussed in relation to

5 Referencing the following chapter headings in full: “Currents: the well springs of decolonisation”, “Churn : restlessness and world government between the wars” and “Saltwater: the separation of people and territory”.

the nature of eco-theologies generated in the Global South, how digital technologies contribute to new forms of Christian ecclesial organizing, the role of gender and lay leadership in the mission of God in a climate emergency and the interplay between offline and online activism. I will also discuss how the patterns present in my visual grammar analysis resonate with the ocean or “moana” theologies emerging from the Pacific.

First, the results centre decolonial digital eco-praxis. The immersive standpoints, holistic spirituality, and collective approaches to activism of these Pacific eco-theologies are consistent with Bobbette’s claim that Oceania is “already undergoing this process of fitting, transforming, moulding, and arranging old stories with those of today” (2019: 567). At the same time, the theories of immersion, collective partnerships and holistic spirituality in these Pacific digital eco-theologies challenge the four-fold typology of Neumayer and Svensson.

Second, digital technologies contribute to new forms of Christian organizing. Each case study has ecclesial connections, including with local congregations (NPC-T and EOP), dioceses (NPC-T and EOP), ecumenical bodies (PR) or mission groups (NPC-T and EOP). In each case, the activist groups work through partnerships and function as networks of prophetic praxis rather than express themselves in traditional ecclesial structures. As such, they provide insights into how the church, whether in local expressions or as ecclesial systems, might organise to enact a mission of climate justice. The organizations do not activate alone. Rather, they value partnerships, which becomes an outworking of Winston Halapua’s description of “moana” theology, particularly in understanding the ocean as a sharing in interconnected life (2008).

Third, the case studies point to the role of lay leadership in the mission of God in a climate emergency. While these activist organisations are ecclesially connected, their eco-praxis is being embodied by lay people in both function and role. In relation to function, there is no evidence of clerical vestments or liturgical practices of preaching or worship leading. Rather, particularly in the EOP case study, the church is certifying “Green Apostles” who embrace new forms of daily prayer through data gathering. In role, the skills and tasks of digital activists include social media storytelling (NPC-T), data gathering (EOP) and music and video making (PR). These activist organizations make visible different kinds of leadership that will be required for the Christian church to embody the *missio dei* by activating for climate justice in digital cultures.

Fourth, women play a significant role in each of the three case studies. The co-founder of NPC-T was Eleni Levin-Tevi. Women are present in 19 of the 22 gallery photos in EOP. Women play equal roles alongside men in recording data and being trained as Green Apostles. The lyrics of “Pasefika Rising” were penned by Antonia Bhagwan “telling and showing something” from human experience (JayEsBee2

2025). Hence, these activisms provide ways, as it says in Acts 2:17-18, for daughters to prophesy and receive the Holy Spirit. The case studies speak to the shape of gender in developing moana eco-theologies.

Fifth, there is a woven interplay between offline and online in each of the three case studies. The online storytelling of NPC-T is informed by the offline picking up of rubbish. The climate data being recorded by the Green Apostles is intended to be placed in a digital repository. The PR song and video are made offline to be shared online. Even the making of the song becomes online content (Bhagwan et al., 2024b). It is impossible to separate the offline worlds from the online digital activism. This makes sense of the *Tuākoī 'Lei Declaration* (Pacific Conference of Churches, 2024), translated from the Tuvaluan phrase for “Good Neighbour” or “Loving Neighbour”. The three case studies embody a “loving Neighbour” praxis. They locate Pacific people not as victims of climate change but as active, weaving together the online in digital activism and the offline in picking up rubbish, expanding scientific knowledge through data gathering and creating music and video of Pacific “currents” of solidarity, liberty and equality.

Concluding remarks

These case studies demonstrate how digital eco-praxis in the Pacific is a significant resource for constructing global eco-theologies, enacting ecclesial practice and theorizing digital activism.

Visual grammar analysis provides ways to read the online activism of three Oceanic digital faith-linked groups as immersive, communal and prayerful and discern areas of convergence with established Oceanic eco-theologies and ecclesiologies. A Pacific eco-praxis that is immersive, communal and holistic offers rich insights for global eco-theologies.

The case studies provide insights into how the church as both local expressions and as ecclesial systems can organise to enact a mission of climate justice through embracing partnerships. The findings make visible new forms of lay leadership. Digital storytelling, citizen science and video making can enable the Christian church to embody the *missio dei* and activate for climate justice in digital cultures. Digital eco-praxis is a significant source in decolonial knowledge-making, placing Pacific activist communities at the “vanguard of global climate processes” (Bobbette 2019: 566).

The findings in relation to theorising digital activism invite further research into how grassroots and indigenous eco-praxis can inform digital activism typologies, including Neumayer and Svennson’s fourfold typology. These case studies demonstrate a visual grammar of online faith-linked climate activism amid Pasefika’s rising seas.

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Appendix: Visual Grammar Analysis of the EOP Gallery

Visual analysis occurred by identifying keywords to describe each of the twenty-nine visual images at <https://acomobservatory.wordpress.com/gallery/>. The keywords were then aggregated into themes like outdoors, people, science and nature.

Image 1 Building Gauge – equipment for data gathering		Image 2 Building Gauge– equipment for data gathering Sea Sand Forest	
Image 3 Poles in row (equipment for data gathering) Sea Sand Forest	Image 4 Pole (equipment for data gathering) People (4; 3 men) Sea Sand	Image 5 Pole (equipment for data gathering) 1 person (male) barefoot Sand Sea in distance	
Image 6 Poles in row (equipment for data gathering) Sea Sand People (1)	Image 7 People (1 male, 1 female, 1 unclear) Action of data gathering (pen, paper, digital device) Sea Sand	Image 8 People (1 male, 1 female) Action of data gathering (pen, paper, digital device) Sea Sand	

Image 9 People (1 male, 2 female) Action of data gathering (pen, paper, digital device) Sea Sand Forest	Image 10 People (2 female, 2 male) Action of data gathering (pen, paper, digital device) Sand Forest	Image 11 People (1 female, 1 male) Action of data gathering (pen, paper, digital device) Sand Forest
Image 12 People (1 female, 4 male) Action of data gathering (pen, paper, digital device, rain gauge on pole) Forest	Image 13 People (1 female, 3 male) Action of data gathering (tape measure) Rocks on beach Sea Forest	Image 14 People (row facing camera) holding certificates 2 female, 5 male Concrete steps
Image 15 People (row facing camera) holding certificates 3 female, 4 male Inside church (crucifixion image and cross), colour green material backdrop and on altar	Image 16 People (1 female, 3 male) Action of data gathering (pen, paper, tape measure) Sand and rocks Forest Sea	Image 17 Close-up of previous People (1 female, 3 male) Action of data gathering (pen, paper, tape measure) Sand and rocks Forest Sea
Image 18 Building with 2 men seated inside Gauge – equipment for data gathering	Image 19 People (1 female, 32male) Action of data gathering (pen, paper) Sand Forest	Image 20 People (4 male) Standing around a cake
Image 21 People in 2 rows 11 + 6; 2 female so 15 male Outside – signs in background	Image 22 Houses Water inundating	Image 23 Houses Water inundating
Image 24 Forest Road Trees uprooted lying over road Sea	Image 25 Forest Road Sea	Image 26 15 children in uniform (6 female, 4 male, rest unclear) Teacher pointing. 4 exercise books
Image 27 School children gathered around rain gauge on pole 7 (6 female, 1 unclear)	Image 28 School children gathered around rain gauge on pole 11 (4 female, 3 male, 4 unclear)	Image 29 Crowd of school children gathered around holes in sand Sand Sea