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– ARTICLE –

Rethinking Hinterlands in Polynesia

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ABSTRACT

Hinterland studies demonstrate the capacity to highlight nuance in regional and temporal variation in the Polynesian past. This Special Issue highlights a group of papers which focus on recent topics and themes drawn from case studies situated in different parts of the Polynesian region. In this article, we summarize the history of hinterland studies, introduce the articles and themes from the Special Issue, and, finally, consider the future of hinterland studies, providing thoughts on a compelling but under-studied avenue of inquiry.

Keywords: hinterlands; agency; regional dynamics; spatial dynamics; core-periphery

INTRODUCTION

The origins of this volume lie in a symposium we organized at the 2019 Society for American Archaeology (SAA) Annual Meeting entitled 'Rethinking Hinterlands in Polynesia.' The focus of the symposium was to explore how archaeologists have begun to prioritize areas outside of central places as important subjects for understanding variability at the regional scale. Once defined by their roles as places of resource extraction and often considered places of cultural stagnation, many researchers now see hinterlands as potential loci of dynamic social negotiation. By delimiting the scope of the session to Polynesia, these papers focus on a region with deeply shared ancestral traditions and, thus, allow for better control in interrogating divergences and convergences among various social formations (Kirch and Green 1987). By convening this session, our goals were to explore which social, economic, political, or ideological attributes best define Polynesian hinterlands, as well as which characteristics distinguish such places from core regions.

The papers in this volume present a range of approaches to studying the role and unique characteristics of hinterlands in Polynesia. In terms of geography, the scope of these papers is intentionally wide (Figure 1). While the most common geographical focus is the Hawaiian Islands, other papers examine hinterlands in relation to East Polynesia (Society Islands, New Zealand) and West Polynesia (Sāmoa). The authors utilize a range of methods to pursue varied aims. Several studies, including those of Hommon, Grieg and Walter, and Kahn, review existing archaeological, ethnohistorical, and ethnographic data and arrive at new understandings of how core-hinterland relationships were conceived of by the people who lived in these disparate archipelagoes. These studies also shift our frame of reference toward exploring how novel ways of characterizing places outside the core may enable us to arrive at interpretations that would otherwise not be possible. As such, these studies illustrate the importance of critically considering how fresh perspectives can add to our existing knowledge and understandings of the available data. We argue, as do Hall *et al.* (2011: 237), that the explicit re-consideration and deployment of these concepts are integral components of theory-building and theory-testing.

HISTORY OF HINTERLAND STUDIES

In order to situate hinterlands more broadly within archaeological and anthropological discussions, it is necessary to define what the hinterlands are not. Stemming from a political economy approach to explain the spread of capitalism, Wallerstein's (1974) elaboration of World-System Theory (WST) was broadly applied to a range of historical and archaeological research contexts (Hall and Chase-Dunn 1993; Hall *et al.* 2011). WST's most influential component was the elucidation of core-periphery dynamics, where the core-regions of metropoles extract resources from satellite peripheries in a largely top-down, unidirectional manner (Frank 1966, 1975; Wallerstein 1974). Initially proposed as a theoretical framework for explaining the spread of capitalism, WST was quickly adapted to investigations of pre-capitalist societies (Hall and Chase-Dunn 1993), a mode of analysis which saw frequent critique (Graeber 2001; McGuire 1996; Van Dyke 2007).

Dissatisfaction also emerged around WST's core-periphery duality (e.g., Hobsbawm 2007). Several archaeologists have proposed new models moving beyond the power binary of core-periphery models, including Renfrew's (1986) peer-polity model or more recent discussions of homelands versus heartlands (Sullivan and Bayman 2007).

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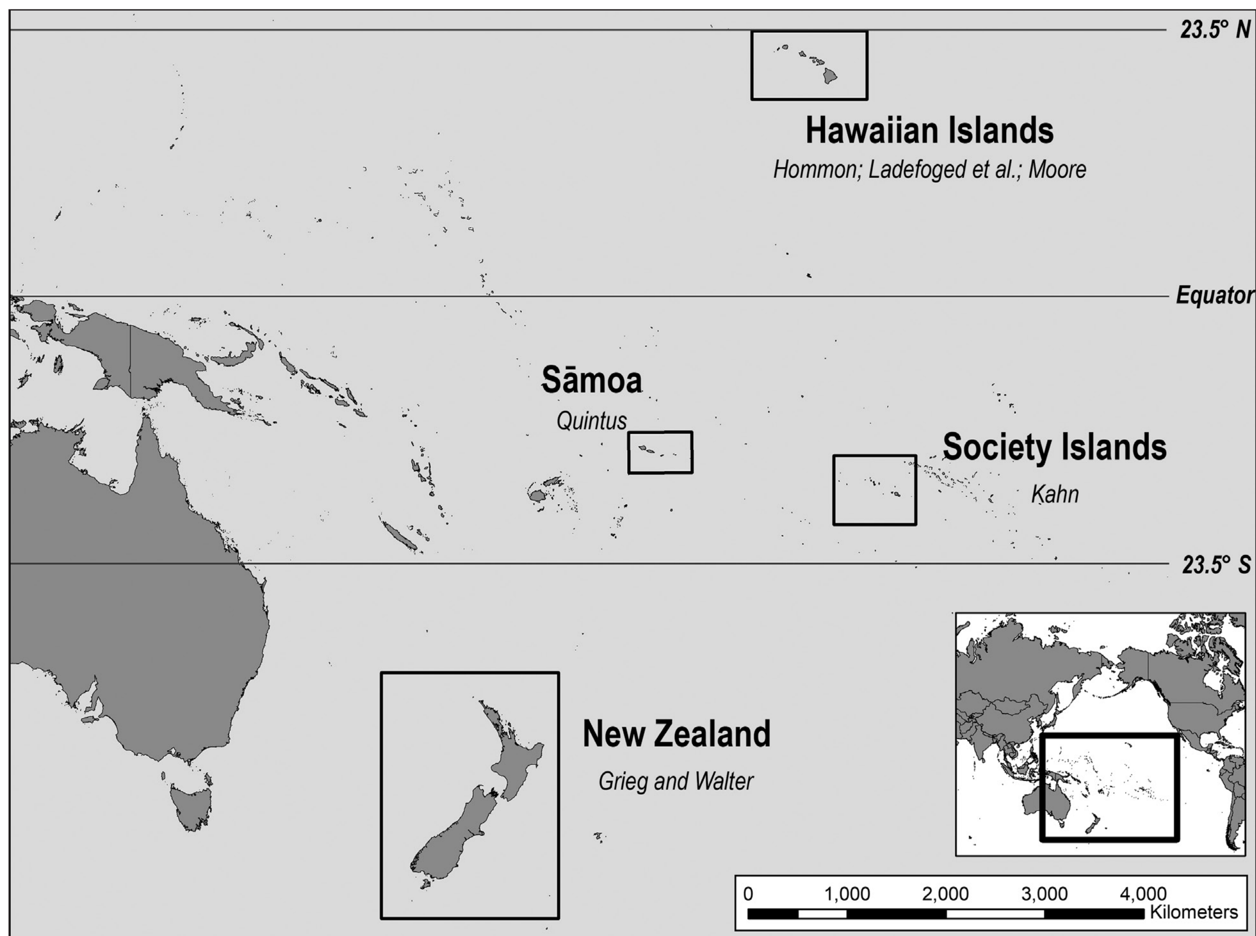

Figure 1. Area map of Polynesian, showing the location of studies in this issue.

Others have argued that binary models of core-periphery relationships restrict analysis of variation, social flexibility, and the individual and collective agency of the non-elite (Crumley 2003, 2017; DeMarrais and Earle 2017) and indigenous populations (Doxater 2004). Equally problematical, WST implies discrete boundaries delineating cores and peripheries and a clear sociopolitical integration between social groups (Paynter 1989: 380), despite 'boundaries' that are, in practice, blurred, shifting, and negotiated (Hall *et al.* 2011; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995; McGuire 1996; McGuire *et al.* 1994; Rodseth and Parker 2005).

Wallerstein's (1974) use of the term 'hinterland' conceptualizes a region outside of and not yet integrated into the World-System. However, subsequent studies frame hinterlands as zones that are connected to, but not fully subordinate to the World-System. The flows of power and authority are often uneven and decentralized among and between both individuals and social organizations (Bondarenko *et al.* 2004; Lane 2007; Schortman 2014). Models of complex chiefdoms frequently obscure commoner agency and, more specifically, the motivations of a non-elite agricultural producing class to cooperate with an elite, non-producing class (DeMarrais and Earle 2017; Pauketat 2007). In contrast, DeMarrais and Earle (2017) address the many ways in which large groups of commoners can collectively negotiate for their own interests with the elite.

Gills and Frank's (1990) definition of the Centre-Periphery-Hinterland concept argues for a more dynamic, integrated hinterland engaged in social and political negotiations. Rather than regarding hinterlands as subordinated zones of extraction for the core (Paynter 1985), they can be viewed as having socioeconomic and sociopolitical relationships with the core, while at the same time maintaining some degree of sociopolitical autonomy. Looking beyond monolithic neo-evolutionary models of state-society, recent research highlights the spatial and temporal diversity of social formations (e.g., Chapman 2003; Field *et al.* 2010; Kujit and Goodale 2009; Wengrow and Graeber 2015). When hinterlands are seen as non-discrete boundary zones, residents become active agents in individual and collective negotiation, both internally and with the core (Cowgill 2000; McGuire 1996; McGuire *et al.* 1994; Simon 1955).

Many factors, either individually or combined, shape hinterlands. Often, the environmental conditions and the nature of resource distribution can favor cooperation among distinct corporate groups who actively resist

regional consolidation (Gills and Frank 1990; Hageman and Lohse 2003; Wernke 2007). Alternatively, a hinterland can be a product of distance from the core and the concomitant lack of a regular elite presence, where the efficacy of efforts to extend authority diminish over geographic space (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996). Places outside of daily elite oversight facilitate, and often necessitate, place-based decision making as part of a process which is not strictly hierarchical (Quintus and Lincoln 2018). Ethnographic data drawn from Polynesia suggest that the social marginality furnished a degree of autonomy and capacity to resist incorporation (Lepofsky and Kahn 2011; Malo 1951; Sahlins 1972; Tuljapurkar *et al.*2007).

Yet the hinterland concept is multivalent. It may be framed around economic terms (Luxemburg 2003; Wallerstein 1974). Or it may also be framed in demographic terms, with a low density of population and structures in contrast to the dense urban areas of cores (Cowgill 2004; Hutson *et al.* 2017; Storey 2006). Vogel *et al.* (2015) demonstrates how hinterlands may be structured by environmental and socioeconomic factors, which can be queried statistically. One unifying quality connecting these various conceptions is that hinterlands, however defined, remain understudied archaeologically (Keay *et al.* 2014; Vogel *et al.* 2015). In this paper, we advocate for the utility of the hinterland concept in exploring nuanced temporal and spatial variation in Polynesian social formations with fluid structures of power and authroity, moving beyond normative, universal models.

HINTERLAND STUDIES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

The earliest accounts of the Pacific Island region were influenced by uncritical observations heavily influenced by Enlightenment thought (Adler 2008; Douglas 2006, 2009; Palmeri 2016). Those using early neo-evolutionary perspectives made explicit efforts to develop universal models of social organization combining evolutionary or stadial models (Comte 1893) with archaeological and anthropological approaches (e.g., Service 1962, 1975) often based on ethnographic rather than archaeological data (Earle and Spriggs 2015). Earle (1987) was an early archaeological proponent of using Pacific Island case studies in models of sociopolitical evolution and complexity. While neo-evolutionary research advanced archaeological understanding of social formations, unilineal models examined social hierarchy at the expense of variation in social flexibility (Crumley 2003), emphasizing hierarchy as the central element in the emergence of complexity (Brock and Sanger 2017). In the Pacific Islands, cultural evolution informed studies which priveleged elites as drivers of sociopolitical change (e.g. Goldman 1955, 1970; Hayden 1983; Sahlins 1958, 1963; Service 1975; Steward 1977). It is only until recently that scholars have applied bottom up approches to modeling transformations of socio-political complexity in Polynesian chiefdoms (Dye 2010).

Over three decades ago, archaeologists and anthropologists confronted assumptions that cultural uniformity existed in pre-contact Polynesian chiefdoms. Patrick Kirch and others, such as Timothy Earle and Nicholas Thomas, began to problematize anthropological accounts of social complexity in Polynesia (Earle 1991; Kirch 1991; Thomas 1990). Kirch (1984, 1997) pointed to significant intra- and inter-island environmental variability, notably contrasts between areas where more productive wetland agriculture could be carried out versus areas where less productive dryland agriculture dominated. Indeed, Kirch's (1994) Wet versus Dry hypothesis of socio-political development in Polynesia largely derived from this notion that environmental variability could directly impact socio-political variability.

In an article entitled 'Regional Variation and Local Style: A Neglected Dimension in Hawaiian Prehistory,' Kirch (1990a) explored regional variability in the Hawaiian archipelago as a means of refining or adding nuance to normative models and illuminating aspects of cultural change. Here, Kirch advanced that differing local styles of material culture, such as with fishhooks and poi pounders, likely represented intentional displays of local identities. Uniformity across archipelagoes could not be assumed, as environmental variation, geographic distance, and degree of island isolation could lead to the development of localized practices, as could purposeful invention of local styles to express local identities (Kirch 1990b). While hinterlands did not play into discussions of regional diversity at this time, these early works questioning regional variability laid the groundwork for discussions such as those that emerge in this special issue.

In the 1990s and 2000s, studies of Polynesian socio-political variability and regional diversity in settlement and subsistence practices abounded (Allen 1994, 2004, 2009; Allen and Kahn 2010; Aswani and Graves 1998; Barber 1996; Baer *et al*. 2008; Dixon *et al*. 1995; Graves and Sweeney 1993; Kirch 2010; Walter 2004). In Hawai'i, much of the discussion was focused on drylands, the *aina malo'o*, where dryland kalo and sweet potato were cultivated. The first incarnation of the Kahikinui research project on Maui expressly viewed this *moku* as an arid landscape with restricted coastal resources. Kahikinui was defined as both an environmental and cultural hinterland. As Kirch noted (1997b: 4), such *aina malo'o* 'required special methods and techniques for creating a viable subsistence economy'. Yet despite this, intensive archaeological survey in Kahikinui revealed a diversity of residential, ritual, and subsistence complexes, problematizing the notion that these ostensibly 'marginal' areas saw limited use. Early models argued that intensive use of marginal zones was linked to population pressure, economic factors such as changes in land tenure and labor patterns, and political centralization in the core regions. Subsequent works such as those by Hommon (1986, 2013) began to model core to hinterland relationships in the Hawaiian archipelago. His salubrious core hypothesis (2013, 2014) suggested that regions rich in resources would

have been settled early by high-ranking junior chiefs from core settlements, with less desirable regions settled later.

Native Hawaiian historian David Malo (1951) describes the *kuaʻāina*, the back country or out-district, as both a region subject to demands from the courts as well as a location where local subsistence and material needs were always met with abundance. Kirch (2014) draws upon the concept of *kuaʻāina* in discussion of Kahikinui, Maui. While Kirch suggests that some archaeologists might describe the poorer region of Maui as a periphery (Kirch 2014:xvi), we argue that the Kahikinui case study falls within the themes represented by hinterland research. With the lack of water and other natural resources, the chiefly authority of the core had little interest in the region, yet its Hawaiian residents extensively modified a vast, resource-poor landscape.

Recent investigations into places at the margins in Polynesia have taken a more active, agent-based approach, teasing out push versus pull factors or constraints and opportunities for both commoners and elite alike. For instance, while some agriculturally unproductive areas may be perceived by some as marginal or undesirable, other might view these areas favorably based on other characteristics, such as access to specific raw materials and resources pertaining to craft production (Tuljapurkar *et al.* 2007). Increased social and political autonomy may also provide a pull factor (Hommon 2013; Lepofsky and Kahn 2011). Put simply by Malo (1951), 'some people preferred the country to the court (92).' Malo suggests that hinterland residents consciously identified certain benefits, such as increased access to resources, less strict social regulation, and self-direction in daily activities, all of which can be characterized as pull factors.

In terms of investigating regional social variability, Lepofsky and Kahn (2011) published a Society Island study balancing bottom up views of commoner agency with top down views of elite demands. They explored how remote high altitude ecological settings within major valleys, such as that of ʻOpunohu Valley, Moʻorea, provided social benefits for residence and subsistence. In these marginal areas, commoners could work lands outside of the direct control of surveilling elites, while at the same time developing innovative subsistence strategies built upon traditional ecological knowledge. On the island of Tahiti, Tamara Maric (2012) suggested similar practices for the inland settlement and use of high altitude, hard to access interior zones. While Taharuʻu Plateau might be considered marginal given its high altitude, the region provides easy access to high quality stone for adze production in the upper Papenoʻo Valley. Teihomanono Plateau also has extensive flatlands suitable for habitation, access to water, and is highly defensible, unlike the nearby upper Papenoʻo Valley which has steep slopes, high rainfall, and a colder micro-climate (Maric 2012:153).

Finally in a Miloliʻi Valley study from Kauaʻi, Hawaiian Islands, Kahn and colleagues (2016) examined the degree to which island-wide and archipelago-wide patterns of diversity were related to landscape accessibility, local resource availability, centre-to-centre relationships or centre-to-hinterland relationships. The study questioned how hinterlands differed from core areas with respect to sociopolitical organization and settlement and subsistence histories. The Miloliʻi case study put forth that Kauaʻi's hinterland regions themselves exhibited variability, both in terms of available resources and their degree of insulation and integration into regional sociopolitical structures.

So how are we to define Polynesian hinterlands? Is the most important characteristic their spatial distance from regional centres? Or does having marginal or unpredictable resources matter more? And to what extent are hinterlands defined in terms of being less integrated into regional economies and hierarchies, and thus having less stable alliances? Settlement of the hinterlands is likely to be characterized by some admixture of push factors, such as population pressure, with pull factors, such as ecological opportunism (Kirch 1992:48–49). The intent of this special issue is to critically reflect upon and elucidate what a hinterland is and how it might be explicitly defined in the Polynesian region.

OVERVIEW OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The contributors to this Special Issue all presented papers in the symposium. Two authors of this Special Issue, Kahn and Ladefoged, served as Discussants for the symposium but have submitted papers for this issue presenting case studies on the Society Islands and Hawaiʻi, respectively. In preparing the papers for this volume, we asked the authors to reflect on three areas and focus their discussions therein. First, we asked session participants to consider how the hinterlands as defined in each case study fit within a larger social context. We asked the authors to be explicit about what types of systems or networks (e.g., economic, political, ideological), each paper addressed and to explain how each case study relates to this larger framework. Second, we asked authors to consider how their papers represent a departure from previous approaches to studying hinterlands in Polynesia, and how they offer contrasting perspectives to conventional views on hinterlands and their residents. Finally, we requested that session participants consider how their papers illustrate the significance of hinterlands and other less visible places and their residents, either to the study region or to the field of archaeology in general. Below, we summarize some of the ways in which others have attempted to contend with the concept of the hinterland.

KEY THEMES OF THE PAPERS

Environmental context

There is widespread agreement among the authors that the identification of a place as a hinterland is deeply linked to its environmental setting. A key issue illustrated by the

papers in the volume is that they draw on differing ideas about what makes a place a 'hinterland.' Each of the papers in the volume attempts to move beyond static notions of core vs. hinterland toward models that emphasize how complex core-hinterland relationships can be. Hinterlands have often been defined based on the presence of marginal environmental conditions. In Hawaiian archaeology, for example, hinterlands have often been defined based on what they are not – salubrious cores on large islands where populations aggregated and that served as seats for chiefly rulers (Hommon 2013). Conversely, the places considered to be hinterlands may be considered less resource-rich than their core counterparts. Although, as Moore notes, sometimes hinterlands provide access to special resources. Leeward zones, with their lower rates of rainfall than windward areas, often fall under this designation, as do areas with steep slopes or other factors that inhibit cultivation and other economic activities. Under another line of thinking, hinterlands are considered places separated from core regions by great distances or rugged terrain, as indicated by Kahn. Though, as Moore's Kaua'i study notes, the remoteness of hinterlands was not an absolute in the post-contact era.

Spatial dynamics in core-hinterland relationships

Beyond considering how environmental factors help define which areas may be considered hinterlands, these papers also consider how living in a hinterland affected the social and political positioning of various members in society. The papers in this issue clearly exhibit tensions on how to define hinterlands and how to model their social relations to cores or other regions. This is likely because hinterland-core relations were not static but instead subject to change significantly through time. Moore privileges social distance, noting how hinterlands are typically far away from regional centres, at the margins of economic, political, or ideological norms. Grieg and Walter argue that core-hinterland relationships in pre-contact and early post-contact New Zealand were contingent on historical events, and they offer several case studies to illustrate how unique circumstances created multiple versions of core-hinterland relationships. Their study also highlights the multivalent nature of these relationships. Alternatively, Kahn demonstrates how hinterland residents in resource-poor regions can maintain settlement viability through integration into networks of regional exchange, ensuring their material needs are met while subsisting outside of oppressive oversight.

Archaeological variation in the hinterlands

The papers by Ladefoged *et al.*, Quintus, Kahn, and Moore each offer innovative ways of using archaeological data to examine questions related to core-hinterland relationships. Ladefoged *et al.* and Quintus focus on variability in architectural features, in papers that draw heavily on the settlement pattern studies paradigm. Ladefoged *et al.* use varied methods, ranging from measuring the spacing between agricultural plots to assessing the density of residential features and ritual features, to examine the differences between core and hinterland zones of Leeward Kohala, Hawaii Island. Quintus's paper also considers the distribution of architectural features on the landscape, mapping out the spatial contexts of features in Ofu and Olosega to identify analytical communities and their inter- and intra-socio-political relationships. In contrast, Moore employs an analysis of domestic artifacts to characterize the household economy of Hawaiians on the Nā Pali Coast of Kaua'i Island. In her study, domestic artifact assemblages are used to compare the types of economic and social connections maintained by the residents of Nā Pali Coast with those of Hawaiian communities in other parts of the archipelago. Kahn demonstrates how hinterland residents maintained aspects of local identity even while under control of neighboring cores.

Multi-scalar approaches

Importantly, the authors in this issue define hinterlands at a variety of different scales. The most common approach is to evaluate the hinterlands as regions of individual islands. Kahn considers the presence of hinterlands in the Society Islands at multiple scales – island-specific, archipelago-specific, and extra-archipelago. Ladefoged *et al.* take the novel approach of considering different localities within the Leeward Kohala Field System as core and hinterland, seeking to identify differences in architectural metrics between central and outlying areas of the field system. Quintus, moreover, notes that emic views of Manu'a were characterized by 'the presence of multi-scalar geographical identity-making, wherein individuals thought first of their village, then of their island, then of Manu'a as a whole separated from the rest of the archipelago.' It is also important to note that the quality of a place as a hinterland is a matter of degree. Moore, for example, emphasizes the differences between rural areas well suited to participating in regional trade network and other areas, such as the Nā Pali Coast of Kaua'i Island, that are geographically so separate as to lie along the edges of such networks.

Kahn importantly notes the need for multi-scalar approaches to understand socioeconomic variation among hinterlands and the relationships between cores and hinterlands. From an emic perspective in the Mā'ohi hinterlands, some note that faraway places were often considered places for exiles. However, in other areas, such as high-altitude cloud forests, the separation of these places from daily living attributed to them a sense of sacred liminality. Quintus point towards the unique ways that ritual power and ritualized passage through liminal landscapes could be materialized, calling attention to variability in regional political centralization and alliances. Finally, both Hommon and Greig and Walter illustrate how hinterlands are

nested within regional settlement hierarchies that themselves shifted through time and space. Hommon highlights changes to social distance by the annual movement of the elites, while Grieg and Walter take a long-term temporal perspective.

Local agency

On a related note, several of the papers privilege views that portray the residents of hinterlands in active rather than passive terms. Whether we call such zones hinterlands, marginal areas, peripheries, or liminal zones, these are places where diverse actors come into play, be they junior ranking elites, craftsmen, or commoner farmers and fishers. Understanding the agency of such groups at multiple scales and in multiple aspects of everyday life will add to our ability to provide nuanced interpretations of sociopolitical organization in the Pacific Islands. Ladefoged *et al.* highlights the opportunity for commoners to exercise autonomy, albeit in negotiation with environmental and political factors. In the Society Islands, Kahn argues that residents of the hinterlands were active agents able to construct local and distinct identities. For Moore, local, individual decisions in the hinterlands structured the degree of integration into the market economy. By extension, the hinterlands, often characterized by push factors, can also provide a draw for those residents. Further, as argued by Grieg and Walter, hinterlands and their regional relationships are deeply intertwined with local histories, events, and individuals.

Recommendations on future hinterland studies

Given the varied approacches to hinterland studies outlined above, we suggest that several important considerations are necessary to effectively deploy hinterland studies as a useful anthropological tool. We argue that researchers must be explicit in how they define and deploy the hinterland concept. While each author approaches the hinterlands differently, they each are explicit in defining and deploying the hinterland concept and how it influences the methodological considerations of their research.

Moving forward, there is much work to refine our loose definitions and to investigate variation within and between hinterlands. There is some agreement that hinterlands should be viewed along a continuum, with more need to explore diversity of hinterland formations through space and time. While necessarily complicated and multivalent, we believe that critical inquiry into regions outside centralized economic and political cores will beneficially build upon decades of research of sociopolitical formations by elucidating temporally and spatially nuacned models of the past.

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