

**Blogging for social change in Papua New Guinea:  
A case study investigation of The Namorong Report.**

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**Attestation of Authorship**

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Signed:

Date:

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## Abstract

The media landscape in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has recently been undergoing a dramatic change. Greater access to mobile media technologies and expanding communications infrastructure are fundamentally altering the ways Papua New Guineans participate in personal and mass communications. A new social media culture is emerging, one characterised by assertive, highly critical Papua New Guineans who are increasingly discontented with a political environment that is often complicit in the exploitation of PNG's natural resources. This research focuses on one important figure in this new vanguard of social media actors: Martyn Namorong, and his blog, The Namorong Report.

By utilising the emerging social media network and strategically engaging in online dialogue, Namorong has become one of PNG's most influential alternative political and social commentators. He challenges conventional understandings of development and actively seeks to alter the political direction and social trajectory of PNG. Using his blog as the specific case for analysis, this research asks the question: how does Martyn Namorong, through his blog, assert himself as an important initiator of social change in PNG?

A calculated rationale organises Namorong's blogging output. Permeating his blog posts is a carefully conceived critique of western-driven development in PNG. Within his criticism, Namorong fosters a shared sense of identity while articulating a model for the equitable development of PNG. Namorong carefully defends his vision using the values and ideas of PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles drawn from the Constitutional Planning Committee Report (1974).

This thesis makes an early contribution to understanding PNG's nascent social media landscape. More broadly it documents a potentially important moment in time, capturing the growing public sentiment of resistance towards the subjugation of Papua New Guineans through resource exploitation and western-conceptions of development, progress, and modernity. It reflects on the potential role of bloggers and social media activists in PNG and the wider Melanesian region at a time where mobile and internet

communications, infrastructure, and services are rapidly altering the social-political landscape.

### **A note on style**

Direct citations from The Namorong Report have frequent grammatical and spelling errors. Any corrections or use of [sic] will be avoided in favour of a 'warts and all' approach. Furthermore, due to the number of references to 'Namong, 2012', this thesis will stray slightly from APA 6 conventions and include specific dates in citations from blog posts, in order to easily differentiate between a large number of posts from the same year.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

Something new and unique is happening in Papua New Guinea (PNG) that this study seeks to capture, document and understand. Over the past eight years, the means for communicating person to person and to a greater public network, outside of the confines of PNG's mainstream media, has changed dramatically. During 2007 the PNG government began to deregulate the previously state managed telecommunications market. The move led to the entrance of service providers Digicel and Citiphone, thus bringing new competition for Telikom's existing mobile subsidiary, Bemobile (Cave, 2012). As competition between providers intensified, prices dropped, infrastructure improved, and the communications sphere began to rapidly change in PNG. Cell phones now represent the most comprehensive PNG-wide communications network, far exceeding television and radio (Logan, 2012). During this period, Digicel also began expanding PNG's mobile internet network, providing cheap, internet capable mobile phones, resulting in rapid growth in mobile internet access. While internet penetration in PNG is still low relative to more developed countries, projections are for it to continue to increase dramatically (Cave, 2012; Logan, 2012). The impact on communications dynamics are significant: young Papua New Guineans are embracing internet access with vigour, and a new generation of social media users are asserting themselves online; reporting; exposing corruption; challenging corporations, government and elite; and organising support and collective action.

This research focuses on the case of one influential online political commentator: Martyn Namorong. Through his blog, The Namorong Report, and his use of social media, Namorong strategically engages the national dialogue. He has subsequently become one of PNG's most influential alternative political and social commentators. Using his blog as the specific case for analysis, this research asks the question: how does Martyn Namorong, through his blog, strive to assert himself as an important initiator of social change in PNG?

This study begins by examining the unique social and political context where Namorong's activism is occurring. It considers the internet's relatively late arrival in PNG and the recent

rise in social media use, the climate of political corruption and exploitation by foreign resource extractors, and the western categorisation of PNG as a developing nation. This thesis will then consider how Namorong uses his blog to actively persuade his audience, to challenge the dominant discourse of development, and to teach and influence the people and politics of PNG. The final chapter will extend this analysis to a broader discussion of the potential of blogs for countering western-driven development and influencing the future direction of PNG and the Melanesian region.

### **1.1 My motivation**

This research is underpinned by a desire to draw attention to something of social and political importance that is currently occurring at this significant moment in PNG's history. I believe that the voice of Martyn Namorong will prove to be very important in the future of PNG.

My motivation to document the case of Martyn Namorong comes from a respect for his relentless dedication to his people, and an admiration for what I see as his striving for social justice for Papua New Guineans, for similarly-placed 'others' on the fringes of modernity, and as an important challenge to the conduct of the West in the developing world. PNG's rich natural resources make it a target for the multinational companies who are exploiting the wealth and resources of the developing world. In this regard, the stakes are high for Papua New Guineans and their future. Around the world numerous nations are emerging out of colonial rule, but the formal acknowledgement of the end of colonial administration has not necessarily meant the end of domination, subordination, and the exploitation of resources and labour. I am motivated by a desire to highlight the efforts of Martyn Namorong because he is challenging these forces by defending PNG's right to determine its own direction and future.

The relentless exploitation of the developing world has been well documented (Escobar, 2004b; Shiva, 2010; Slack, 2004). I believe that those who are challenging and resisting exploitation deserve our attention, assistance, and respect. It is his struggle against exploitation that attracts and inspires me to study Martyn Namorong. As I write this I make no claims to neutrality; like my subject, I too am passionate about global social justice, and

I see its emergence in pockets all over the world as reason to be optimistic about the future of developing nations.

## **1.2 Contextualising the research**

The next section of this chapter gives a brief historical and political overview of PNG. It then introduces Martyn Namorong and situates the research within broader discussions of development, global activism, and emancipatory social movements. It will also introduce critical perspectives of western-driven development and offer a Papua New Guinean perspective on development. This contextualisation is an essential aspect of case study research which, according to Thomas (2011a), is always located within a specific environment and uses a comprehensive understanding of context to better interpret the case itself. This research follows Russell's (2009) claim that blogs are best explored through their intrinsic social and cultural contexts. Understanding the context from where The Namorong Report has emerged is essential for identifying the factors motivating Namorong, and the role he is assuming in the wider social-political landscape.

### **1.2.1 About Papua New Guinea**

The nation of PNG is comprised of the eastern half of the large island of New Guinea and over 600 offshore islands (Sukot, 2008). The mainland is characterised by a vast and variable geography ranging from the tropical savannah of the south coast to the rugged mountainous highlands of the island's interior. Other main islands include New Ireland, New Britain, Manus, and the autonomous region of Bougainville.

With an estimated population of 7.06 million (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2011) PNG has the largest population of Pacific island countries and is the most populous Melanesian nation. Approximately 87% of PNG's population live in rural areas (ADB, 2011), engaging primarily in subsistence lifestyles and the informal cash economy. The capital city, Port Moresby, is PNG's largest urban centre, followed by Lae. These urban centres have populations of about 254,000 and 78,000 respectively (Geddes, 2010).

PNG has had a turbulent colonial history. Territories that are now part of PNG were previously divided between Germany and Britain, who occupied the north and south respectively. Papua, later known as British New Guinea, was annexed by the Queensland Government in 1883 and became a British protectorate in 1884. German New Guinea was relinquished to Australia in 1914. Australia continued its administration until Papua New Guinean independence in 1975. PNG has typically been the largest recipient of Australian aid. Although the amount of aid is decreasing, PNG still remains Australia's second largest aid recipient (Dornan, 2012). Australia's 2012-13 aid budget for PNG was \$492 million (AusAID, 2012).

Like other modern states emerging out of colonisation (Kapusinski, 2002), the modern state of PNG is characterised by a process of unification. This is not a straightforward process. PNG inherited a population made up of over 800 unique language groups; a collection of distinct groups with unique identities (Rooney and Papoutsaki, 2006). PNG's current lingua franca, Tok Pisin, evolved from a pidgin language, developed during communications between traders, European colonisers, and locals. Along with Tok Pisin, English and Hiri Motu are also official languages of PNG.

PNG is endowed with significant natural resource deposits that have been the focus of foreign prospectors since early European visitors explored the area. As well as timber, minerals, and gas, PNG also has significant tuna stocks and extensive fishing grounds (Curran, 2013).

PNG's government is a multi-party parliamentary democracy. Its political parties, however, are not based on the established right or left factions typical of western democracies. Papua New Guinean political parties lack consistent and clear political ideology, and often form unstable and unpredictable parliaments. Elections for the 109 seat national parliament are held every five years. At both the provincial and state level, government is widely viewed by Papua New Guineans as a source of wealth to be tapped by politicians for the benefit of their supporters (Geddes, 2010).

### 1.2.2 Introducing Martyn Awayang Namorong

Martyn Awayang Namorong was born in Baimuru, in the Gulf Province of PNG and grew up in a logging camp owned by Malaysian company, Rimbunan Hijau (Namongong, 2011, March 2). This provided him with a unique experience of overseas corporate presence in remote PNG. He grew up listening to Australian and BBC radio, gaining a high degree of proficiency in the English language as well as his local language (Namongong, 2012, May 29).

In 2002 Namorong went to PNG's capital, Port Moresby, where he completed secondary school studies and finished three years of medical school at the University of Papua New Guinea. After dropping out in 2010, Namorong sold buai (betel nut) in urban markets while blogging regularly at night (Namongong, 2012, September 6).

The first posts on The Namorong Report appeared in April 2009 while Namorong was still a medical school student. Early posts were healthcare oriented, but a more political perspective quickly became apparent. Early on, Namorong demonstrated a natural talent for writing persuasive, highly critical and incisive blog posts. It was not until 2011, however, that Namorong began posting frequently. His focus also shifted slightly, seeing healthcare as just one issue in the greater struggle for the betterment of life for Papua New Guineans.

In early 2011, Namorong's cynicism toward the discourse of development began to emerge as a key theme in his work. He frequently expressed criticism towards the conduct of the PNG government, especially regarding the lack of transparency in public-private sector relationships and the resulting corruption and corroboration with foreign financial interests. Namorong frequently articulated two key perspectives; the first being the failed promises of development, and the second, the grim, impoverished reality of life for the average Papua New Guinean.

In 2011, Namorong won the essay award in the inaugural Crocodile Prize for emerging PNG writers for an essay that was originally published on The Namorong Report. In Namorong's (2011, March 2) anecdotal, biographical essay, he wrote of the realities of life on Port Moresby's streets, and some of the hopeless efforts to bring about positive change to the country. He highlighted the plight of PNG's disenfranchised people; those who have

left school without learning anything about the realities of PNG's economic structure, subsistence farming, and the cash economy. It is these people, Namorong wrote, who fall into a life of crime, having been educated for a social reality that for them does not exist.

Namorong frequently writes about life in the urban marketplace: the talk, the aspirations and frustrations of the capital city's disenfranchised, downtrodden 'squatters'; the outsiders who have left their rural homes in the hope of a better life in Port Moresby. He himself identifies with this group of "internally displaced persons", who have formed new tribes "defined by province, suburbs, sporting codes, schools, school cults, settlements, etc..." (Namorong, 2011, February 28, para. 6). This lived-experience in urban PNG, and Namorong's understanding of PNG's everyday social realities, proved to be important antecedents to becoming a highly motivated political blogger (Namorong, in Hendrie, 2011).

Namorong directs his blogging primarily at the young people of PNG, the university and high school students and those connected to social media and with mobile phones: "A lot of the stuff I say resonates with them" Namorong said in a radio interview, "I know that some students have taken action, basically inspired by what's been written on my blog" (Namorong & Rheeney, 2012, May 22). He believes this group is extremely vulnerable to crime and depression, having been poorly educated for surviving PNG's current social reality (Namorong, 2011, March 2).

In May 2012, Namorong visited Australia on a speaking tour. This tour was made possible by donations from fans and supporters of his writing and of his cause. These included not only blog readers, but a PNG law firm and Melbourne's Victoria University (Jackson, 2012, March 23). On this tour Namorong spoke at universities, talked to the media, met with Papua New Guinean expats, spoke with politicians, and contributed an article to Melbourne's daily, *The Age*, entitled, 'Australia you are not a good friend' (2012, May 24). The success of this trip showed that he was held in high regard by some of Australia's academic and research institutions, and by prominent Australian politicians such as former Green party leader Bob Brown and deputy opposition leader, Julie Bishop (Jackson, 2012, May 18).

While Namorong has been often quoted and interviewed in Australian media, in PNG a 'black mark' has been placed by his name. The privately owned PNG daily, The National, has banned all mentions of Namorong (Jackson, 2012, April 1). This is likely due to Namorong's frequent criticism of Rimbunan Hijau; a prominent Malaysian logging company and owner of The National. Fellow blogger, Nou Vada was also banned from contributing to the paper after merely mentioning Namorong's May tour to Australia in an article in The National about social media in PNG (Jackson, 2012, March 31). The implications of The National's ownership will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Namorong (2012, May 21) believes that the medium of blogging itself allows him to remain autonomous and independent, because he is not supported by an employer, by an advertiser, or an aid or donor programme. He believes this gives him authenticity and legitimacy in the eyes of everyday Papua New Guineans (Namorong, 2012, May 21).

While Namorong shows a belief in the power of blogging, he is clearly disillusioned about parliamentary politics and sceptical as to whether actual change can happen through established political structures. When prompted by Australian media about whether or not he would consider taking political office in PNG, Namorong would not even consider it as an option. He believes his energies are best focused on maximising the power of social media: "I've done a lot more [by blogging] than some of those politicians" (Namorong, 2012, May 22).

### **1.2.3 Querying development**

Martyn Namorong's activism can be viewed within a wider global trend of opposition to the damaging effects of western-driven global economic development, which is characterised by the opening up of markets, privatisation, and the prioritising of free trade agreements between the developed and undeveloped world. According to Firth (2006), globalisation has become synonymous with the spread of neo-liberal economics. Firth (2006) defines neo-liberal globalisation as: "a process characterised by constantly intensifying economic exchanges across national borders, a communications revolution that continues to shrink the globe, and the worldwide shift by governments to neo-liberal economic policies intended to make this globalising process possible" (p. 1).

The policies of the neo-liberal agenda are intrinsically linked to the development agenda (Berthoud, 2010; Escobar, 2004a). There is extensive analysis of how developing nations have been forced to adopt neo-liberal policies by world, and regional banks, and the World Trade Organisation, effectively exposing their land, resources, and labour to exploitation from overseas and multinational corporations (Chan, 2007; Slatter, 2006). Neo-liberal economics and development are both premised on the idea that if an environment is created that is conducive to free trade and liberalisation, development, progress, and prosperity will occur swiftly and naturally for developing nations and their people (Asante, 2009; Berthoud, 2010; Sillitoe, 2000). However, as Rapley (2006) argues, the neo-liberal paradigm is one characterised by growing inequalities: between rich and poor nations, and between the rich and poor people within nations. Petras (1997) argues that neo-liberalism is deliberately exploitative and that it “continues to thrive not because it solves problems, but because it serves the interests of the wealthy and powerful” (p. 188).

Neo-liberal policy, its manifestation in global organisations such as the World Trade Organisation, and its detrimental effects on whole nations and sectors of societies, have become focal points for activists, social movements, and alternative politicking across the globe (Escobar, 2004b; Slatter, 2006). Escobar (2004b) argues that opposition to neo-liberalism and development has spawned new social movements in developing nations across the world. Growing disillusionment on the part of local activists has resulted in a number of campaigners seeking to undermine the discursive power of development, to advocate alternative models of development, and activity strive to protect the interests of their people (Escobar, 2004b; Santos, 2002). Such movements, according to Escobar (2004b), are making steps towards imagining social realities beyond the western definition of ‘Third World’ nations.

This activism is an emerging trend in the Pacific. According to Slatter (2006), NGOs and civil society groups in Pacific island states, have engaged in very little criticism and debate about the growing trend of economic liberalisation in the Pacific. Nor has there been much querying of the motives underpinning the institutions pushing these policies such as the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation, as well as bilateral and multilateral donors. Slatter (2006) argues that regional activists and advocacy groups need to develop a critical focus on development, and the neo-liberal policies

underpinning it, in order to address the root of environmental, political, and economic issues in the Pacific.

### **1.2.3.1 Resource extraction: cause for concern?**

There is ample evidence demonstrating why the foreign resource extraction industry in PNG is threatening the natural environment and the livelihoods of Papua New Guineans. Two reports were released in 2012 that expressed strong condemnation of large-scale resource extraction in PNG. These reports highlighted the scale of impact from certain foreign economic activities, and provided the evidence that is bringing about a response from activists and NGOs, both local and international, concerned with the social and environmental impact of large-scale resource extraction in PNG.

The first report, by Earthworks and MiningWatch Canada (2012), identifies bodies of water most threatened by the dumping of mine tailings. Of the 11 key case studies the report details, five are in PNG. Mine tailings, the spent rock and earth laced with chemicals used to extract desired minerals, are responsible for contaminating drinking water, killing local species, contaminating food resources such as livestock and fish, and destroying areas of forest (Earthworks & MiningWatch Canada, 2012). The report details the scale of mine waste disposal and its most damaging effects.

The report highlights a double standard: companies based in the USA, Canada, and Australia, use practices abroad that are banned in their home countries. Earthworks and MiningWatch Canada (2012) argue that “international companies exploit lax regulations and weak government enforcement in the global south” (p. 28), and in countries like PNG, these companies cut corners, and demonstrate a reluctance to take on the expenses of responsible waste disposal. The report reveals the conscious disregard, by international mining companies, for the well documented adverse social and environmental effects of dumping mine tailings irresponsibly.

Recent ‘land reforms’ and leasing agreements have facilitated corporate access to Papua New Guinean land (Sukot, 2008). Land ownership has unique cultural and historical importance in PNG and Melanesia. Customary land in PNG is organised around family

and clan ownership (Anderson & Lee, 2010). Under this system, land cannot be bought and sold, and remains under the tenure of traditional landowners. Customary land ownership in PNG and other Melanesian nations, argues Sukot (2008), had been the biggest roadblock to the agenda of the foreign corporates interested in 'developing' PNG.

An investigation into special agricultural business leases (SABLS) by Greenpeace (2012) further criticised economic development activities in PNG. SABLS are 99 year leases of PNG customary owned land. The land-leases are given under the premise of agricultural development, touted to increase economic activity in rural areas, give landowners a source of income, and provide employment, welfare, and new facilities. However, a special sublease agreement allowed leaseholders to sublease to logging companies the rights to extract valuable forestry resources for commercial sale. "These subleases", Greenpeace (2012) argues, "are therefore almost entirely to the benefit of the foreign owned companies that secured them" (p. 4). Landowners were reportedly offered no legal advice or support when signing these leases, and the results have brought little economic benefit for landowners or their surrounding communities. Greenpeace (2012) is scathing in its criticism of the government departments responsible for the issuing of SABLS, describing the Department of Lands and Physical Planning as "grossly incompetent, and entirely corrupt" (p. 26), and "a dysfunctional and secretive agency, incapable of delivering the services required of it" (p. 37). Corruption in government departments allowed the exploitation of customary land and the resources upon it, and thoroughly implicated the foreign logging companies that willingly exploited the resulting commercial opportunities.

These reports, by Greenpeace (2012) and Earthworks and MiningWatch Canada (2012), demonstrate how poor government regulation, incompetence and corruption, and the absence of corporate responsibility or ethical practice, has led to social and environmental damage, and exploitation in PNG.

#### **1.2.4 A Papua New Guinean perspective on development**

PNG has a unique national constitution, built around a bespoke set of guiding principles conceived during PNG's shift to independence in 1974. The writers of the Constitutional Planning Committee Report (1974) were made up of elected Papua New Guinean

members of parliament. These members included future prime minister Michael Somare, long serving Bougainville politician John Momis, and Papua New Guinean and Australian academic consultants. Committee members were asked to produce a 'home-grown' constitution in order to meet the specific needs and circumstances of PNG (Constitutional Planning Committee Report [CPCR], 1974). The process involved committee members visiting all regions of PNG as part of a nationwide consultation process. This consultation process sought to capture and achieve consensus about what philosophy of life Papua New Guineans wanted to live by, what kind of economic and social values should be upheld, and what kind of society PNG should be built upon (CPCR, 1974). The direct results from this consultation process were the National Goals and Directive Principles (NGDPs), which outlined a vision for PNG's development trajectory, and were intended to provide an underlying philosophy to the legal constitution of PNG.

The constitution emerged as a highly influential Papua New Guinean social, political, and historical document. It is an eloquent, persuasive and original text that reflects a uniquely Papua New Guinean perspective on development and progress. It marks an important moment in Papua New Guinean history. PNG's constitutional documents also indicate that PNG, at its infancy as a nation and even before independence, held the development of uniquely Papua New Guinean values to be imperative. The CPCR (1974) did not see development as synonymous with material progress, but instead saw development as "human progress" or "the unending process of improvement of every man and woman as a whole person." (National Goals, para. 14). The CPCR (1974) was premised upon Papua New Guinean values, and demonstrated scepticism toward the western political and economic structures that colonisation left behind:

The process of colonisation has been like a huge tidal wave. It has covered our land, submerging the natural life of our people. It leaves much dirt and some useful soil, as it subsides. . . . We must not be afraid to rediscover our art, our culture and our political and social organizations. Wherever possible, we must make full use of our ways to achieve our national goals. We insist on this, despite the popular belief that the only viable means of dealing with the challenges of lack of economic development is through the efficiency of western techniques and institutions. (National Goals, para. 98)

The CPR (1974) appealed directly to the history and traditions of PNG. It argued that there was not a political vacuum before European colonisation occurred (CPCR, 1974). The CPR (1974) saw decolonisation as an opportunity to reinstate Papua New Guinean values in the management and development of the country. It also expressed wariness towards western-driven development and pressure from foreign corporate interests. Committee members took heed of the experience of other developing nations, where “foreign domination of the economy” was “uncritically encouraged”, which in other nations, “has led to very serious social inequalities” (CPCR, 1974, National Goals, para. 67).

The CPR writers were acutely aware of the potential consequences of wholeheartedly accepting the logic of western-driven development. In refusing the terms of western-driven development, Asante (2009) argues that at stake is:

... the integrity of a people’s values, community, and vision of itself.... Each nation must challenge the assertion, must confront the definitions, and must resist the development model that parades one thing but ultimately is meant to remove a people from its own terms. (p. 68)

It is exactly these consequences of western-driven development that the Constitutional Planning Committee Report carefully criticised and attempted to avoid.

Apprehension toward foreign-imposed ideas, and the favouring instead of place-based practices, is characteristic of PNG's constitutional documents:

Development . . . must not be a prefabricated, predetermined set of answers, formulae and solutions by foreigners to the problems and hopes we alone can feel and yearn for. . . . Proper development should take place through institutions and techniques that are not only meaningful to us, but also recognize our human dignity and enhance it. (CPCR, 1974, National Goals, para. 102)

As will be discussed in Chapter 4 Martyn Namorong frequently calls upon the sentiments of the National Goals and Directive Principles in his blog posts; he employs its underlying rationale, language and concepts, and appeals to its significance as a model for Papua New Guinean development. Namorong frequently refers to PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles in his blog posts, for example:

I do not believe these [National] Goals are a rejection of modernity by the writers of the Constitution. Rather, they express a desire to avoid the pitfalls of the greed of western capitalism as witnessed in the current context of global economic crisis. (2011, October 31, para. 12)

### **1.3 Chapter outline**

The remainder of this thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 is a review of literature. Firstly it considers the mainstream media of PNG. Understanding the mainstream media of PNG, particularly its limitations, provides important context for this study, and provides a useful counterpoint for understanding the role of social media and blogs. Literature that discusses social media, particularly blogs, as a tool for activism and PNG's changing media environment is then explored. Chapter 2 also considers the literature around the medium of blogging, particularly its functional affordances and application by activists. Critical perspectives of development are then explored. The western discourse of development is pervasive and powerful and many seminal theorists have challenged it.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology. It justifies the use of case study methodology, particularly the validity of using a single case to make broader comments about the social and political direction of PNG. This chapter then describes the boundaries of this case and explains and justifies the data gathering process. Chapter 3 then discusses the notion of affordances and constraints of media technologies and how this can be applied to blogs as tools for activism. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the rhetoric of activism. An analysis of the rhetorical tools that Martyn Namorong unconsciously includes in his blog will provide key insights into the success of The Namorong Report.

Chapter 4 analyses the data, made up of a one-month snapshot of Namorong's blogging activity. It uses the theoretical window outlined in Chapter 3 to attempt to answer how Namorong, through his blog, has become an important initiator of social change in PNG. Chapter 4 analyses the underlying philosophy, or argument, present in Namorong's blog posts. Chapter 4 describes and analyses specific rhetorical features in Namorong's writing, and relates them to rhetorical characteristics of social movements discussed in Chapter 3.

Part of this analysis is a discussion about The Namorong Report's relationship with other blogs and Twitter.

Chapter 5 concludes this research. It provides an overview of the analysis in Chapter 4, particularly why Martin Namorong appears to be so successful in his attempts, through his blog, to bring about social and political change in PNG. It then broadens the discussion from an investigation of a specific blogger to a discussion about the future of activism, communications, blogging, and development in the region. It concludes with suggestions for future research and a short, biographical epilogue about Martin Namorong.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

In reviewing Namorong's biographical information, evidence of his reach and influence is very much apparent. Namorong has a committed group of supporters, prepared to offer money to fund his visit to Australia in May, 2012. In the past two years, Namorong's influence has been frequently acknowledged by Australian academics, journalists and politicians, PNG's literary sphere, and by the logging company and owners of The National, Rimbunan Hijau, whose ban on Namorong is an admission of his power.

New media users in PNG are taking advantage of improving communications infrastructure, and access to mobile communications devices. A variety of civic actors are now entering the public discourse via blogs, social media, and mobile phones. This chapter has introduced Martyn Namorong as a key figure in this new communications landscape. It has sought to locate the case of Martyn Namorong within a specific social-political context, and at a significant juncture in Papua New Guinean history. By introducing the notion of development, and what it means for PNG, this chapter has briefly articulated the kind of issues Namorong is concerned with, and the discursive environment within which he is strategically engaging. It also highlighted the importance of PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles as an alternative, local-centric perspective on the notion of development. This research uses these important contextual considerations to better understand the specific case of Martyn Namorong and how this context is contributing to his success as an advocate for social change.

## **Chapter 2. Literature review**

This chapter begins by discussing the literature about PNG's mainstream media, recent changes in the media environment, and the role of blogs in this new communications space. A more general discussion of literature on the blogging medium is followed by some perspectives on the influence of internet media on online activism. This chapter then considers perspectives on development as a discourse, namely, the widespread discussion among development critics and post-development theorists that development constitutes a powerful discourse, with many detrimental facets and damaging effects.

### **2.1 The mainstream media of Papua New Guinea**

The mainstream media of PNG have generally been perceived as inadequate in terms of their inability, or unwillingness, to address key issues and defend the public interest. PNG's mainstream media is largely characterised by complications derived from the private media model, financial imperatives, conflicts of interest by media owners and key advertisers, and limited distribution and circulation infrastructure and networks. PNG has a significantly larger mainstream media presence when compared to its Pacific neighbours. According to Rooney and Papoutsaki (2006) this is due to PNG's significantly larger population and the private media model that has allowed established overseas media owners to enter the PNG media market.

PNG's mainstream media is made up of the two foreign owned English language dailies: The National and The Post-Courier, one Tok Pisin weekly: Wantok, the Fijian owned Em-TV network, and a number of both publicly and privately funded radio services (Rooney & Papoutsaki, 2006). Not one of these media outlets can be seen as a truly national media: there is no national radio or television network and the two newspapers cannot be considered 'national' due to poor distribution and readership (Cave, 2012).

PNG's two daily papers are both foreign owned (The Post-Courier by News Limited and The National by a Malaysian conglomerate). Robie (1995b) investigated The National's ownership implications, analysing specific instances where the owners' agenda shaped

the paper's voice. The National, which emerged in 1993, is owned by a subsidiary of the large Malaysian logging group, Rimbunan Hijau. This ownership structure is cause for concern given PNG's vast and rich forests and, as Robie (1995b) notes, the forestry companies' financial interests in PNG. Robie's (1995b) concern is that the newspaper venture was not born out of a traditional commercial media model, but as a mouthpiece for the development of the forestry industry. Bloggers in PNG refer to The National as 'the Daily Log' due to its connection to Malaysian logging interests. The National's agenda was revealed by some PNG bloggers who highlighted a significant and revealing conflict of interest. PNGexposed (2011, September 1), a blog dedicated to investigating corruption in PNG, wrote that:

Once again The National newspaper has forsaken any pretext of journalistic integrity by publishing the rantings of Alan Oxley while failing to mention Oxley is employed by Rimbunan Hijau, the owners of The National, as a spin doctor to publicly defend their logging operations.

So we have Rimbunan Hijau [RH], the Malaysian logging company notorious for its illegal and unsustainable logging operations paying Alan Oxley to pretend he is some sort of independent expert and then using its newspaper, The National, to print Oxley's defence of RH and pretend it is news. (para. 1-2)

This blog post articulates the serious conflict of interest between the presentation of news and information, and the commercial interests of the newspaper's owners. Rooney (2006) also raises concerns over the relationship between industry and the media in PNG, citing further examples of conflicts of interest and the pervasiveness of corporate discourse.

Rooney (2006) argues that the free-market media model in PNG, which is dominated by foreign ownership, is failing to support the democratic function traditionally attributed to the mainstream media model. Foreign ownership of media can bring with it a set of standards, practices, and models that may not suit the character and circumstances of different nations and people (Deane, 2005). The worldwide concentration of media ownership, as Deane (2005) argues, can lead to global media monopolies imposing uniform models and standards on local media environments. These concerns have also been raised in the PNG context by Rooney (2006), Rooney and Papoutsaki (2006) and Robie (1995b).

Matbob, McManus and Papoutsaki (2012) argue that the western journalism paradigm inhibits local voices in favour of elites and imposes a set of often unsuitable conventions and standards. Robie (1995a) argues that journalism in developing nations can benefit from a different set of values to that of western journalism. Western societies' objective style may not be appropriate or applicable in every context and should not be a paradigm that is imposed (Robie 1995b).

A largely foreign owned mediascape has meant a profit driven, commercial model for the news media in PNG. The commercial media model, which typically relies on advertising for its chief source of revenue, has several implications for media producers in PNG. The PNG government, which is a key source of advertising revenue for both the national dailies (Rooney, 2006), presents journalists and editors with a difficult choice whether to risk much needed revenue by expressing criticism of government policy and practice or lose key advertisers and go out of business. According to Rooney and Papoutsaki (2006), this has had implications for the media's role in exposing or criticising poor governance. Large private advertisers have also reacted to bad press by withdrawing advertising funds and further jeopardising newspapers' financial viability (Matbob, 2012). Robie (2008) notes that there is a trend in many Pacific nations for journalists to exercise self-censorship due to a fear that one cannot, or should not, challenge or question those in power. The imposing relationship of advertisers with the press has a significant effect on practising journalists in PNG according to Matbob et. al. (2012) who argue that self-censorship derives directly from the influence of key advertisers, most notably, the government.

The news media's focus on audiences as consumers means a focus on more affluent audiences, mainly in urban areas (Deane, 2005). This has serious implications in PNG due to the country's significant rural population. Compounding the lack of market incentive for the dailies to reach out to rural audiences is the relatively high cost of distribution to these areas due to poor communication and transport networks. Road networks are rudimentary in PNG, making air transport the only real option for delivering media products with a daily expiry date (Matbob, 2012). Whole regions of PNG are left cut off from mainstream media networks and have limited access to information and opportunities to speak due to poor transport and communication infrastructure (Rooney & Papoutsaki, 2006). According to Matbob et. al. (2012) this has left a significant percentage of the population unable to

properly communicate and engage with the very development issues that affect their livelihood and existence. Dixit (2010) argues that:

[this] city-based fixation on hardcore politics . . . means rural reporting or in-depth stories on the failures of state apparatus to deliver basic services and the tragic consequences of this neglect are missing from most capital-centric media in developing countries. (p. 23)

The disenfranchisement of the rural populace of PNG is further exacerbated by issues of literacy and language. Many rural groups are distinguished by their own unique languages and do not speak English or Tok Pisin, while a significant portion of the adult population are non-literate (Rooney and Papoutsaki, 2006).

### **2.1.1 The changing media environment**

Cave (2012) argues that the Pacific Islands region is in the middle of a new information and communication revolution, as Pacific Islanders are increasingly gaining access to new tools for communicating and networking. The introduction of mobile telephones, mobile internet, and social media, according to Logan (2010), represents a significant expansion of the public political space in PNG. Cave (2012), argues that the boom in mobile phone usage has facilitated the rise of social media in the Pacific Islands.

The potential for political engagement and social change through these new communications and organisational tools is being recognised by PNG's bloggers, digital entrepreneurs, and social media groups (Cave, 2012). Growing mobile networks in the Pacific Islands have meant mobile internet is already superceding fixed internet connections (Cave, 2012). Logan (2010) and Cave (2012) argue that the emergence of these new communications technologies have significant potential impacts for PNG and other Pacific Islands nations. In PNG, Facebook discussion groups and blogs have been integral in recent examples of collective action, and have demonstrated their potential impact on government accountability and transparency (Cave, 2012; Logan, 2010).

There is a lack of research on social media usage in PNG. This is a reflection on just how recent the social media phenomenon is for PNG. There is very little literature specifically

about the relatively new phenomena of blogging from, and about, PNG. According to Matbob (2012), social media in PNG has the potential to overcome some of the legal and existential threats when reporting controversial issues that may have arisen in mainstream media reportage. Matbob (2012) argues that there are already several instances where social media users have publicly exposed poor governance and the corrupt actions of political leaders and developers. Discussing briefly the blog PNG Mine Watch, Matbob (2012) hints at its effectiveness at raising awareness about mining projects and related environmental and human rights issues. Cave (2012) argues that increasingly frequent instances of bloggers exposing corruption, and the subsequent mainstream media coverage that sometimes follows, demonstrates the burgeoning role blogs are already playing in upholding transparency and accountability in PNG.

## **2.2 Blogs: a new communications medium**

While there is little written on the blogging phenomenon in PNG, there is an extensive body of literature on blogging in other contexts. This section will consider some perspectives on blogging, particularly in defining and describing the medium, the importance of the context in which blogs are situated, and how blogs are linked to new perspectives on activism and political engagement.

Weblogs (blogs) are an internet tool that emerged after 1994. Blogs rapidly grew in prominence following the release of several blogging software management tools in 1999 that made the technology more accessible for computer users with no understanding of complex HTML or Java code (Gurak, Antonijevic, Johnson, Ratliff, & Reyman, 2004). As well as being technically accessible, blogging content management programs were, and continue to be, free. Gurak et. al. (2004) define blogs as:

web sites that are updated frequently, most often with links to other sites and commentary on the other sites' content. . . . [A]ll posts to the blog are time-stamped with the most recent post at the top, creating a reverse chronological structure governed by spontaneity and novelty. (para. 3)

This definition is primarily a functional one: Gurak et. al. (2004) argue that blogs are not defined by their content, which varies greatly, but are instead best characterised by their

form and function. Kuhn (2007) also argues that blogs are primarily defined in terms of their functional capabilities and affordances, seeing blogs as tools designed to promote interaction between bloggers and readers. Features such as comments, archives, and those that interlink blogs and blog content, encourage a culture of content sharing and discussion (Kuhn, 2007). “The interactivity resulting from these tools and norms make blogs at once a one-to-many and one-to-one communicative environment” (Kuhn, 2007, p.19).

The content of blogs is variable. It ranges from personal musings to political commentary (Farrell & Drezner, 2007). Blogs may be devoted to single topics or issues, or be wide ranging, reflecting the author's varying interests and observations – a change from the carefully controlled information of the professional media (Blood, 2000). Blogs may have single or multiple authors or managers, they may contain solely original content, or may be collections of artefacts found across the internet (Gurak et. al., 2004). Russell (2009) argues that “a blog can be more things than we are presently imagining, a vehicle of democratic expression, yes, but also a means to revive tradition, to explore identity, to conduct public relations” (p. 8). Haas (2006) argues that a significant proportion of blogs are politically themed, while a growing number of professional news outlets are using blogs and many professional journalists operate private blogs.

Blogging is also frequently defined by its relationship to traditional, mainstream, or professional media. A number of studies have discussed the possibilities of blogging as an alternative to, or an influence on, mainstream news and information networks (Allan, Sonwalkar, & Carter, 2007; Katz & Lai, 2009; Lowrey, 2006; Reese, Rutigliano, Hyun, & Jeong, 2007). Katz and Lai (2009) focus on the blogger as ‘citizen journalist’, emphasising a new frame for interpreting and presenting events, often contrary to that of the mainstream media framework. Katz and Lai (2009) find that the role the blogger/citizen journalist performs is very much determined by the political environment in which they are embedded: in states that heavily regulate mainstream media, bloggers are an alternative source of information and advocates of societal change; in more media friendly states, bloggers keep check on the reporting of the mainstream media and offer alternative perspectives. Allan, Sonwalkar, and Carter (2007) also focus on the idea of blogging as an alternative framework to that of the mainstream media, suggesting:

The online reporting of everyday citizens . . . possesses the capability to bring to bear alternative perspectives, context and ideological diversity to news reports, providing internet users with the means to hear distant voices otherwise being marginalized, if not silenced altogether, across uneven mediascapes. (p. 387)

Bloggers fulfil different roles depending on the motivation behind their practice. They may want to address social injustice, censorship, political concerns, and the limited scope, or lack of effectiveness, of the mainstream media. Farrell & Drezner (2007) argue that blogs have an agenda setting power, sometimes leading and influencing mainstream media coverage and are more frequently becoming legitimate sources for news coverage. Journalists and media elites are often readers of blogs, and perhaps most importantly, blogs are rapidly updated and may contain priceless local or inside knowledge (Farrell & Drezner, 2007). There is evidence of this within PNG's mediascape with PNG bloggers being quoted by publications such as The New York Times and The Economist (Cave, 2012), and plagiarised by local media (Tavurvur, 2012, August 15).

Russell (2009) argues that when considering blogging in different parts of the world, scholars must not make the mistake of expecting a uniform experience of blogging based on the experience of the US. Russell (2009) instead argues that blogs need to be explored with careful consideration of the social, political, and communications landscape in which they operate:

By looking at local contexts, we can develop more nuanced assessments of how blogospheres variously serve communications needs, how they exist in relation to one another, where they exist apart as well as where they overlap and how they interact with other forms of communication in the larger media landscape. (p. 8)

Gurak et. al. (2004) see blogs as having the potential to develop new practices of online communication especially in relation to previously established modes of ownership, authorship, the legitimacy of content, and access to information. Rosen (2006), describes blogs as the printing press for the people formerly known as the audience, arguing that the new medium represents an equally epochal moment in publishing history. Gurak et. al.

(2004) propose that scholars look at blogs as an important new rhetorical artefacts in order to extend our understanding of what it means to communicate online.

Russell (2009) warns against attributing democratic values to media technologies like blogs. Similarly, Dahlgren (2005) argues that while internet technologies offer viable possibilities for civic interaction, they are not inherently democratic in character. Furthermore, Dahlgren (2005) and Kohn (2002) extend this discussion to argue that there is reason to question the key function of democracy as the search for rational consensus. Kohn (2002) argues that there is a shared assumption that rational consensus derived through deliberative discussion is the normative basis for democratic politics. Kohn argues that language is imbued with power, and like all forms of power, it is the elite that disproportionately possesses the greatest social capital. Kohn (2002) writes that:

Under the guise of equality and impartiality, deliberative democracy privileges the communicative strategies of elites. By strengthening the conceptual tools of the dominant paradigm, it encourages the reproduction of existing hierarchies. (p. 426)

Dahlgren (2005) and Castells (2007) argue that new communications technologies, and the people using them, have the potential to affect, or challenge power in the wider sphere of public discourse, and in the social production of meaning. New forms of communication, such as blogs, are changing the social space where power is decided (Castells, 2007). Castells (2007) argues that self-produced internet media “makes possible the unlimited diversity and the largely autonomous origin of most of the communication flows that construct, and reconstruct every second the global and local production of meaning in the public mind” (p. 248).

Castells (2007) and Dahlgren (2005) use blogging as an example of how those engaged in political communications on the internet are changing perceptions of what constitutes political engagement. They argue that with new internet and communications technologies, as well as a greater awareness of issues beyond the politics of the nation state, new forms of what constitutes politics, or being political, are being enacted. Both Castells (2007) and Dahlgren (2005) argue that there is a trend toward single issue activism, alternative politics, and a growing apathy toward parliamentary politics. Kahn and Lee (2011) argue it is important to begin a new discussion about what constitutes politics, and they see

activism as “the key lens through which we understand politics, democracy, and social change” (p. 1).

Castells (2007) argues that in recent years, in parallel with waning interest in parliamentary politics, there has been worldwide growth in social movements, in various forms and guises, largely defined by their opposition to the many facets of global capitalism. Within the context of social movements, Dahlgren (2005), argues that citizens are refocusing their political attention outside of the parliamentary system, and are doing so as active expressions of individual values, ideals and identity. The horizontal communication and civic interaction characteristic of internet technologies and cultures, argues Dahlgren (2005), are central to this changing conception of the political.

It is not, however, through technology alone that social movements exist: each movement is its own medium, connecting social actors with society at large (Castells, 2007). The relationship between advocates of social change, and the media they use to speak to, and influence the public, will be a consistent theme throughout this research. Social movements, and the rhetorical functions they perform, will be outlined further in Chapter 3 as a theoretical avenue employed for data analysis in Chapter 4. Chapter 3 will also develop the notion of the affordances of blogging, as a second key theoretical approach to this research.

### **2.3 Development as a discourse**

Development can be seen as a powerful discourse based on a set of founding myths and truths, and a primarily Eurocentric, or western world view. A number of theorists are beginning to challenge the underlying logic of this development model, and instead, are associating development with exploitation of the developing world (Munck & O'Hearn, 1999; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). Development can be considered a collection of institutions and experts, a global geo-political project, a way of understanding history, and a way of defining the nations and people of the world. It is a powerful global discourse defined by its own norms and truths, and ways of representing the world (Escobar, 1995). Fairclough (2001) argues that powerful dominant discourses – such as development, represent a narrowing down of the range of ways of seeing and understanding the world.

Development discourse presents a hegemonic understanding of people, progress and modernity, at the expense of other representations of the world (Escobar, 2004b; Lawson, 2007).

Development discourse is an example of the institutionalised forms of knowledge and power that Michel Foucault identified in his work on discourse and power (Escobar, 1995). In his seminal work on the discourse of development, Escobar (1995) identified institutionalised power structures driven by a single knowledge system that are extremely effective at constructing, and exercising power over, the 'Third World'. Escobar (1995) sees development as "a historically produced discourse" (p. 6) "that creates a space in which only certain things can be said or imagined" (Escobar, 1997, p. 85). Lawson (2007) argues that as a discourse, development recreates the kind of exclusion of 'others' outside western power structures characteristic of colonialism, leaving the voices of those from outside development's institutions with little impact.

A number of thinkers who fall under the bracket of post-development theorists (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997) or development critics (Munck & O'Hearn, 1999), identify and reject the totalising premise of development as a linear narrative, as a promise of western-defined prosperity. Post-development theorists attack the discursive power of development discourse, which is driven by the powerful, underlying myth of progress toward prosperity and modernity. Sachs (2010) argues that "development cannot be separated from the idea that all peoples of the planet are moving along one single track towards some state of maturity, exemplified by the nations 'running in front'" (para. 14). Shanin (1997) unpicks this notion of progress, which has been used to make sense of the disparities among cultures and nations as stages along a linear path of development. The western minds that conceived the world in this way "permitted themselves the arrogance to consider their own achievements the high water mark of progress to date" (Shanin, 1997, p. 68).

Development exemplifies the West's power to define; what is developed and what is undeveloped; what is freedom, law, and civil behaviour; and ultimately what constitutes progress (Sardar, 1999). The narrow, linear view of development and progress, and the power to define it, is a common critique made by development critics, who argue that it denies even the possibility of other trajectories and potentially more equitable societies than those achieved by 'First World' nations (Sachs, 2010; Shanin, 1997; Tucker, 1999).

Development discourse, according to Lawson (2007), is a construct of western development institutions and their 'experts' who legitimise particular development 'truths'. Development 'truths' according to Lawson (2007) draw largely on the West's perception of history and progress and include free trade, open markets, and capitalism. Lowery and Pilger (2010) and Chan (2007) argue that the discourse of development has been used to justify the application of neo-liberal policies and the opening up of 'Third World' resources and labour. Ramonet (1997) argues that development is used as a justification, and a means, for the West to organise the 'Third World' for conditions favourable for the expansion of global capitalism.

There is an overarching motivation among critics of development to counter the hegemony of western-driven development, and uphold the possibility of difference in societies outside of western modernity. Sachs (2010) argues that the monoculture of westernisation "has eroded viable alternatives to the industrial, growth-oriented society and dangerously crippled humankind's capacity to meet an increasingly different future with creative responses" (para. 15). Post-development theorists tend to argue in favour of place-based epistemologies, or "politics of difference" (Escobar, 1995, p. 170), as a direct response to the overbearing nature of western knowledge systems (Escobar, 2001, 2004b; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). Post-development thinkers frequently highlight the new social movements concerned with narrowing concepts of progress and modernity. Such movements are symptomatic of shifts towards new development paradigms in their assertions of autonomy, difference, and the legitimisation of local knowledge and values (Escobar, 2004b; Munck, 1999).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the literature around three key elements of this study: the mainstream media of PNG, its limitations as a means for representing Papua New Guinean concerns, and the emerging new media phenomena; the new medium of blogging and its role in activism and politics; and lastly, the underlying myths and power of development discourse. The following chapter will outline the methodological approach for the remainder of this thesis.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

The purpose of this case study is to investigate how Martyn Namorong is using his blog to advocate social change. As discussed in Chapter 1, liberalisation of PNG's telecommunications sector has stimulated growth in internet access and PNG has subsequently seen a proliferation of new voices emerging through blogs, online discussion groups, and activist networks. This research focuses on the case of one influential online political commentator: Martyn Namorong. The primary focus of this research is his blog, *The Namorong Report*. This thesis considers how Namorong uses the unique affordances of blogging to communicate persuasively: to influence the perceptions of his readers, to challenge dominant discourses, norms and truths, to rally and teach the people of PNG, and ultimately influence the political direction of PNG. Namorong has committed himself to achieving social change in PNG, and with his didactic and persuasive approach, he provides an excellent case study for exploring how one individual is using social media to bring about change.

This chapter will firstly detail and justify the case study methodology used for this research. It will then outline the research design and process. Lastly, it will introduce two key theoretical approaches that will form important 'thinking tools' for unpicking and understanding this case: rhetoric and the rhetorical approach of social movements, and the affordances of media technologies, with an emphasis on the blogging medium.

### **3.1 Why a case study?**

The strength of the case study for this research lies in its ability, as a method of investigation, to conduct in-depth investigations of real life phenomena that are intrinsically involved in a particular context or setting (Thomas, 2011a). Russell (2009) argues that blogs are best interpreted by considering the context in which they operate. This research is an attempt to understand something that is part of the social world – in this case, the social-political world of PNG. Yin (1994) argues that the case study research should attempt to make sense of real-world phenomena, within its real-world context, "when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). The holistic

nature of case study research suits this study, which draws on the interrelationships between the many strands of PNG's social, political, and historical character.

### **3.2 The selection of the case**

As described in Chapter 1, there is something unique and new happening in PNG: cheaper and easier access to internet and internet capable devices and an emerging social media culture in PNG has seen the rise of several influential Papua New Guinean activists and bloggers (Cave, 2012, Logan, 2012, Pascoe, 2012). Observers and commentators have focused on the civic character and political potential of the growing use of social media in PNG. Having been influenced by such observations and through my own experience following events in PNG through local blogs, I recognised an interesting, unique, and relatively new phenomenon in action. A key group of bloggers have demonstrated a strong online presence, powerful rhetoric, a sense of camaraderie, and have received recognition and respect from overseas journalists and observers. From this group of emerging, influential bloggers and social media activists, I have selected Martyn Namorong as a key case. A key case makes no claim of being representative of a wider group, but indicates a strong or significant case from a wider phenomenon (Thomas, 2011b). Chapter 1 outlined Namorong's significance in PNG's sphere of emerging new media voices, making him a viable 'key case' for this study.

By selecting a single case I am able to examine it intensely, from a range of different angles. Through an analysis of one blogger, I may not get a representative understanding of all PNG blogs, but will nevertheless develop some understanding of the dynamics, tensions and motivations of one important, influential social actor.

Case studies are highly context dependent (Thomas, 2011a; Yin, 1994). Chapters 1 and 2 have already contextualised the research, and located the subject of inquiry in a unique social-political environment. An interpretive approach such as case study, Thomas (2011a) argues, marries well with subjects that are deeply immersed in their environment: where the social world is indivisible, complex and should be viewed, in these cases, holistically. The purpose of an interpretive approach, according to Thomas (2011a), is to remain open to new ideas and interpretations that emerge as the researcher becomes immersed in the

subject's situation. This approach aims not to construct a universal truth or 'grand theory' but seeks to explain the subject in its singularity, as an individual phenomenon.

### **3.3 The purpose of this research**

The immediate focus of this research is to address the question of how Martyn Namorong, through his blog, is asserting himself as an important initiator of social change in PNG. The wider purpose of this research is to examine how emerging civic actors are using social media to enter, and attempt to influence, PNG's political space. This is primarily an investigation of bottom-up political processes: it is not an investigation into the use of social media by politicians and PNG's other elites or bureaucratic organisations and institutions. My purpose is to try and explain something unique that is happening: how Martyn Namorong is contributing, influencing, and speaking through his blog, to bring about social change. While this case is not intended to be a representative one, it will still offer some insight into the application of social media for a social-political purpose. There are no fundamental laws or truths about blogging in PNG that this research is trying to represent. Instead, I have chosen to focus on The Namorong Report because I want to analyse its influence and presence in the PNG online media sphere. Insights and inferences will be heavily context and case dependent but will provide another contribution to the growing body of knowledge on how new media is being used in unique, non-western, and politically fragile environments.

### **3.4 Process**

This research is an analysis of Martyn Namorong's online communication during the month of July 2012. It is an analysis of his blogging from a rhetorical perspective. This study specifically does not include any personal interviews or other direct interactions with Martyn Namorong. This position was chosen because it is the rhetorical power of Namorong's online communication that is being analysed, therefore I decided that direct interpersonal communication was not valid for inclusion and could potentially influence my interpretation of his online communication.

The primary data set is a one month 'snapshot' of blogging activity over the month of July 2012. By selecting a month of data at the outset of this research, I was able to follow and record Namorong's social media activity as it happened. This enabled me to carefully observe his online presence. The one month parameter for this study not only includes all blog posts on The Namorong Report, but posts also authored by Namorong that appear on another blog, PNG Attitude, as well as Namorong's Twitter activity. A limited time frame, as recommended by Thomas (2011a), provides a manageable amount of data for the size and scope of this research. At the same time, this limited data set will be comprehensive enough to constitute a robust basis for this research. Furthermore, Namorong has attracted attention both locally and internationally, and as a result, there are a number of interviews and profiles I can draw on to increase the richness of historical, biographical, and contextual information. I have extended the one month parameter of this study to include this important information.

Namorong posted 21 blog posts in the month of June 2012 on The Namorong Report. Nine of those posts were 're-blogged' or syndicated on the aggregate blog, PNG Attitude – a prominent, multi-authored blog in the PNG online sphere. Over the course of the month two different kinds of posts dominate; essays and event driven posts. The essays are long, persuasive pieces that lay out carefully structured arguments. Namorong's essays build on each other, forming a wider, more comprehensive line of reasoning. Event driven posts are shorter and link ideas from his essays to recent events. These posts use news and current events as real-life examples of the issues and ideas his essays theorise about. Namorong also uses the social media activity of others as the basis for some event driven posts; someone else's Facebook post and a Facebook discussion were both turned into posts on The Namorong Report.

The one month 'snapshot' also included Twitter data, which frequently directed users to blog posts. In order to capture data from Twitter, a script was used through Google Documents. This script was set up to automatically gather tweets from Namorong's user profile @Mangiwantok, tweets that mention 'Namorong', and any hyperlinks to The Namorong Report. These search terms captured shortened URL references to The Namorong Report, any mention of Namorong himself, all his own tweets and any users that tweet at Namorong. All tweets were compiled by the script into a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet recorded the tweet itself, the time, any user information, embedded URLs,

and expands shortened URLs. Records were collated as PDF documents from The Namorong Report. Having established a record of media activity, I was able to look for connections and relationships between ideas, purpose, and media, and could identify an underlying strategy and philosophy. The data from this short period of time was further enriched by the background information gathered from a wider range of sources, and a broader time period, that includes interviews, speech transcripts, older blog posts, and newspaper articles.

While wholeness/completeness is important, Thomas (2011a) argues it is impossible to cover every aspect of the case with the same degree of detail. Thomas instead suggests that case study research should be structured by a clear line of enquiry that should dictate direction through a holistic study. The initial scope may be very broad, but a clear line of enquiry gives purpose and narrative to the research. In this study, an organising thread became much clearer as the research developed: I found that Namorong challenged and countered development discourse, unpicking its norms and truths as he demonstrated a desire to influence and motivate his readers. His desire to initiate social change in PNG, primarily through challenging the discourse of development, then emerged as an important organising theme in this study. Furthermore, Namorong's persuasive and challenging language, predominantly featured on his blog, was an important factor that guided this research toward theoretical perspectives on the rhetoric of social movements, and the affordances of the blogging medium.

### **3.5 Theory**

Pierre Bourdieu (in Thomas, 2011b) sees theory as “thinking tools” (p. 515) for analysing and explaining new phenomena. While this research is not an attempt to test or evaluate theory, there are a number of theoretical perspectives that proved useful ‘thinking tools’ for examining the case of Martyn Namorong. The following section is a broader discussion of rhetoric, particularly the specific rhetorical functions of social movements. The affordances of media technologies, specifically the blogging medium, is then discussed as a second theoretical mode of enquiry.

### 3.5.1 Rhetoric

This research recognises the powerful language evident in Martyn Namorong's blog posts, and uses rhetoric as a tool for analysing the persuasive elements of his writing. Since the time of Aristotle, rhetoric has been recognised, and analysed, as a powerful tool for persuading audiences and bringing about social and political change. Scholars of rhetoric have sought to understand the ways that people and organisations use rhetoric to influence, teach, and motivate audiences in specific circumstances, and for specific means (Corbett, 1990). Blain (1994) describes rhetoric as “the tactical use of words to move people to action – support politicians and political programs, to fight wars and sacrifice for causes” (p. 807). As the communications landscape has diverged and become more complex and intertextual, rhetorical studies have expanded from the spoken and written word, to include rhetoric in still images, audio, and film (Gehrke, 2009). This thesis is interested in extending this idea to include the rhetorical capacity of social media, and specifically, the blog.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* described the three means of persuasion orators rely on: fostering perceptions of credibility and moral character (ethos), evoking emotions and appealing to the psychology of the audience (pathos), and articulating a consistent pattern of reasoning (logos) (Matsen, Rollinson, & Sousa, 1990). It is the combination of these notions that defines Aristotelian rhetoric as emotions permeated with reason, persuading toward action, or change. Aristotelian rhetoric holds that emotion is unable to be removed from logic and reason (Wardy, 1996). In this sense, pathos is integrally linked to logos, making the awakening of particular emotions key to audiences accepting reason.

Ethos is a key component of performing rhetoric, and in perceptions of the orator or writer (Reynolds, 1993). Chapter 1 discussed some elements contributing to Namorong's appearance of credibility: his social position as a betel nut seller among the urban poor, his affirmation of Papua New Guinean custom and values, and the perception of independence, autonomy, and solidarity that the blog, as a medium without editorial gatekeepers or financial imperatives, affords him.

Rahe's (1994) interpretation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, highlights the sense of logic and moral justification evident in rhetoric, in describing the notion of logos:

For Aristotle, logos is something more refined than the capacity to make private feelings public: it enables the human being to perform as no other animal can; it makes it possible for him to perceive and make clear to others through reasoned discourse the difference between what is advantageous and what is harmful, between what is just and what is unjust, and between what is good and what is evil. (p. 21)

Namorong's "reasoned discourse", his calculated line of argument, and the moral justification he employs, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Central to the power of rhetoric, and the significance of this research, is the belief that language and socialised communication are foremost in the social production of meaning. As Artz (2011) argues, "practitioners of rhetoric and social activism alike must acknowledge how and to what extent communication contributes to constructing, reinforcing, and changing the current social order, in all of its local and global complexities" (p. 47). It is through this emphasis on the role of communication in shaping public discourse that the rhetorical activism of social movements can be viewed. Furthermore, as argued in Chapter 2, the internet is now a key space where meaning is decided. The blogger, therefore, has potential to enter, and influence, this vast social space.

### **3.5.2 Rhetoric and social movements**

The belief in the rhetorical power of language to enact genuine social change is reflected by the emphasis placed on rhetoric in the study of social movements (Blain, 1994; Cathcart, 1980; Stewart, 1980; Wilkinson, 1976). Cathcart (1980) argues that social movements are inherently rhetorical in nature: "it is the language characterisations which give them meaning and allow us to symbolically place them in a category designated as 'social movement'" (p. 268). McHale (2004) sees social movement activists, advocates, and organisers as "those involved in efforts to influence public opinion and public policy direction" (p. 3), and to re-evaluate social, economic or political conditions. Stewart (1980) uses the term rhetoric to "denote the process by which a social movement seeks . . . to affect the perceptions of target audiences . . . to bring about change in their ways of thinking, feeling and/or acting" (p. 301). Furthermore, it is Stewart's (1980) view that

rhetoric is the primary agency available to arbiters of social change, making social movements essentially rhetorical artefacts.

Stewart's (1980) approach to social movements highlights the essential functions of rhetoric used to advocate social change. Chapter 4 draws upon three of Stewart's five rhetorical functions of social movements – each clearly evident in Namorong's work. These three essential functions of social movements are transforming perceptions of history, transforming perceptions of society, and prescribing courses of action (Stewart, 1980). Two of Stewart's five rhetorical functions of social change are not relevant to this case as they concern social movements that have already concluded, or for analysing interaction between movement actors and their supporters and with opposing institutions – which is beyond the scope of this research.

Changing the audiences' perceptions of history is the first of Stewart's (1980) essential rhetorical functions of social movements evident in Namorong's writing. It is through perceptions of the past, present, and future that audiences can be convinced they are experiencing an intolerable situation, that one is threatening the future, or that a more favourable situation existed in the past (Stewart, 1980). It is through these perceptions of history that a writer may establish a goal, making clear what the movement strives for (Stewart, 1980). In transforming perceptions of history, the writer is also challenging the particular perception of history perpetuated by established orders or the opposition (Stewart, 1980).

Transforming perceptions of society involves altering established norms and truths, and challenging public perceptions of the opposition (Stewart, 1980). McHale (2004) sees social movement activists as those attempting to challenge and alter established political and social frameworks. According to Stewart (1980), social movements must try to alter the self-perceptions of target audiences, encouraging and engendering critical thinkers who will independently challenge the status quo, and ultimately act as agents for social change. Social movements, Stewart (1980) argues, hope to foster moments of self-discovery, leading to a new sense of personal and collective identity. It is this rhetorical process that informs another key function: the creation of "we-they" distinctions and a "shared sense of fate" (Stewart, 1980, p. 303). Blain (1994) similarly argues that social

movements must engage in systems of differentiation, dividing 'us' and 'them', villainising opposition powers, and determining aims and objectives.

The third of Stewart's (1980) rhetorical functions of social movements visible in Namorong's work is the rhetorical strategy of prescribing specific courses of action. According to Stewart (1980) those that seek to enact or resist social change must explain and defend their proposed course of action. After convincing target audiences that an intolerable situation exists, social movement activists must outline a strategy, or plan, to move toward a better situation.

The rhetoric of social movements, argues Stewart (1980), must appeal to the audience in motivating them towards some kind of action. In transforming perceptions of history and society, social movements must convince target audiences that only by acting collectively, can change, or resistance to change, be willed and enacted (Stewart, 1980).

### **3.5.3 The affordances of blogging**

The affordances of a new technology, according to Graves (2007), shape not only some of the applications of that technology, but the associated meaning and value that grows as people use and interact with it. Certain rhetorical tendencies of media technologies prevail in certain contexts, depending on the way emerging technologies are interpreted and used (Graves, 2007). The idea that different technologies develop their own idiosyncrasies in different cultural contexts is central to this research: blogging is emerging as a communication medium which means specific things to the Papua New Guineans who create, and engage with the blog's content.

As outlined in Chapter 2, PNG's mainstream media is complicated by its commercial model and various editorial gatekeepers. Rooney, Papoutsaki, and Pamba (2004), describe PNG as a nation failed by its media, while Matbob (2012) suggests that new media might overcome some of the obstacles hindering PNG's mainstream media. It may be possible to infer that the constraints upon the mainstream media in PNG contribute to the perceived communication affordances of blogging. Namorong himself sees blogging as a tool of liberation. He argues that blogging lacks the kind of gatekeepers that constrain

PNG's mainstream media, and instead affords him a perception of authenticity and legitimacy in the eyes of his readers (Namorong, 2012, May 21). For Namorong (2012, May 21), blogging means being able to write and publish independently, without the professional or commercial gatekeepers that can exercise editorial influence. In spite of his blog's growing popularity, Namorong (2012, May 21) has abstained from charging for advertising space as he believes it would undermine his credibility. Blogging, as a free publishing tool, allows him to publish without consideration of sponsors, advertisers, and owners. Castells (2007) argues that blogs and other self-publishing and networking media afford social movements and civic actors the ability to "build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms" (p. 249). Viewed in the PNG context, blogging represents a fundamental change to the power of publishing, access to an audience, and editorial and creative freedom. Blogging in PNG presents an opportunity for new and critical voices to engage in the national discourse, voices that might have been excluded from the mainstream media. Without gatekeepers such as editors or publishers, Namorong is free to stray from certain journalistic or other stylistic conventions. Namorong's unusual stylistic and formal approaches, as evident in his blog posts, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

As well as perceptions of credibility and authenticity, Chapter 4 will pursue the idea that internet technologies, such as blogs, allow users to curate information, images, quotes, and articles from across a range of sources; to support arguments and to align themselves with other activist movements and figures.

By thinking of blogging in PNG in terms of technological affordances, this research addresses important questions about the relationship between rhetoric and the medium, and between blogs and the mainstream media of PNG. It considers how bloggers might exploit the affordances of the medium for communicating persuasively, and how the blog might influence communication and style.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This case study is motivated by a desire to document, draw attention to, and examine an emerging phenomenon through the case of Martyn Namorong. As well as employing case study methodology, this research uses key theoretical perspectives as 'thinking tools' to strengthen and encourage multiple ways of interpreting the case. This case will primarily be viewed in terms of rhetoric as the use of language to persuade, and in terms of the affordances of the blogging medium for communicating persuasively. By applying theoretical perspectives on the rhetoric of social movements and the affordances of the blogging medium, Chapter 4 will explore and explain the distinct rhetorical features and characteristics of Namorong's approach to blogging for social change.

## Chapter 4. Data analysis

This chapter begins with an introduction to The Namorong Report. It analyses Namorong's blogging activity for the month of July, which also includes syndicated, or 're-blogged', posts on the focal point blog, PNG Attitude. It then considers the rhetorical strategies apparent in Namorong's writing in light of the rhetorical analysis of social movements discussed in Chapter 3. Four key themes that permeate Namorong's July blogging activity, and the calculated, reasoned approach they suggest, will be identified and discussed. Stylistic and formal approaches will then be considered. The rhetorical capacity of the blogging medium will be also be reflected on throughout this chapter, testing earlier suppositions that the medium has particular affordances for PNG bloggers like Namorong.

### 4.1.1 The Namorong Report

Viewing the webpage of The Namorong Report ([www.namorong.blogspot.com](http://www.namorong.blogspot.com)) the reader is immediately presented with two quotations at the head of the page. Bloggers can create their own visual themes, or personalise templates, and Namorong has used this capability to head each page of his blog with quotations. All pages carry a header containing a bold, capitalised quote from Namorong himself, and one from Aung San Suu Kyi:

**“AFTER ALL THE GOLD, COPPER, SILVER, NICKEL, TUNA, AND ALL OTHER RESOURCES ARE DEPLETED, THE ONLY THING LEFT FOR THE STARVING URBAN POOR OF PNG TO EAT IS IT’S ELITE...” Namorong 2012**

"It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it" \_from Freedom from Fear by Aung San Suu Kyi

Home SIGN PETITION AGAINST SEA BED MINING Enter The Crocodile Prize About me

*Figure 1. Header, The Namorong Report.*

This is a strong piece of rhetorical imagery. Namorong's quote itself is provocative, a deliberate attempt to indicate that this is a site of potentially dangerous and radical ideas. The second quote from Aung San Suu Kyi is equally provocative. In a radio interview, Namorong (2012, May 22) explains his use of this quote explicitly; freedom from fear is a personal philosophy, one that underlies his personal ethos, and drives his written provocations: it gives him the confidence to challenge those in power. In unequivocal terms, he says “[t]here is no difference in what drives me to write with what drives a young man to steal a vehicle and get killed by the cops. We both have nothing to lose” (Namorong, in Hendrie, 2011, para. 12). Namorong's commitment to blogging, civic action, and ‘truth’ is unwavering as he mobilises his feeling of having “nothing to lose”:

Once one has lost everything and has no hope of any future prospects one lives recklessly. I'd be glad the day some guy puts a bullet in my head because I told the truth. . . . I don't fear death and that gives me the freedom to write. (Namorong, in Hendrie, 2011, para. 12)

This sentiment demonstrates the intensity of his feeling and his own moral philosophy of freedom from fear. Likening his cause to one of life and death is a powerful ideological standpoint. For Namorong, it is not only the tangible fear of physical reprisal: it means something for him to be able to say “I don't fear death and that gives me the freedom to write”. This is a personal philosophy that allows him conscious freedom from subversion and oppression, and allows him, in his own mind, to speak his truth.

In his page header, he has deliberately placed his own words alongside those of a famous activist. Blain (1994) argues that activists often invoke popular activist figures and heroic martyrs, appealing to the ideas and values they represent. Heroic martyrs referenced in quotes and images “personify in maximalist terms the ideal-typical characteristics of ethical-strategic power subjects who activists emulate in their political actions” (Blain, 1994, 827). Placing his own quotation alongside of that of a heroic martyr indicates a sense of self-righteousness, putting himself on an equal plane. For Namorong to align himself with a heroic martyr is a powerful rhetorical gesture: by associating himself with the legacy and credibility of others, he bolsters his own perception of credibility, or in Aristotelian terms, his ethos.

Namorong has also personalised his Twitter homepage, which carries other, albeit more obscure, allusions to activist imagery:



**Figure 2.** Twitter homepage.

In this image are two key references to both past and existing activist movements. The first activist image is the raised fist in his profile picture: an historic image associated with various revolutionary causes, more recently adopted by the global occupy movement. Secondly, the mask in the background image is a stylised depiction of Guy Fawkes, from the film, *V for Vendetta*. The film and the masked face have both become emblematic of contemporary protest groups and movements (Waites, 2011, October 20).

Being able to easily curate images, quotes, and other allusions to heroic figures and social movements, reflects a unique affordance of social media. Namorong is easily able to invoke past martyrs and activists figures and incorporate the ideas and values they represent on his personalised social media pages simply by a process of cutting and pasting.

Farrell and Drezner (2007) argue that hyperlinks and pageviews are the currency of the blogosphere, and bloggers benefit from a mutual exchange of references, hyperlinks, and reposting other bloggers' posts. Twitter is another useful means of exchanging links and

references. In July Namorong used Twitter to alert followers to his new blog posts, sending 20 tweets announcing and hyperlinking new blog posts on The Namorong Report. He relies more, however, on the active engagement of other users to generate traffic to his blog: during July, other twitter users tweeted 97 hyperlinks to The Namorong Report, thereby expanding Namorong's network of potential readers.

The Namorong Report, however, is the primary means through which Namorong communicates rhetorically; it contains his argument in its fullest form. Through the month of July, Namorong wrote a number of well-developed blog posts in essay form that outlined the historical context of development in PNG. When examined collectively they represent a comprehensive criticism of development in PNG, with historical considerations, specific examples of development projects, and calls for a more localised template for development. Individual essays focus on notions of corporate propaganda, western elitism, and the subversion of Papua New Guineans and Papua New Guinean ideas. These essays are a direct challenge to western, linear perceptions of progress, and thoroughly criticise development's fundamental myths and truths. Concurrently, Namorong proposes an alternative framework for development rooted in the established social and political and economic traditions in PNG: a society and economy based on a landowner system, cautious and careful engagement with foreign investors, and loyalty to the values enshrined in PNG's Constitutional Planning Committee Report (1974).

#### **4.1.2 PNG Attitude**

Nine of Namorong's July posts were syndicated, or 're-blogged', on PNG Attitude ([asopa.typepad.com](http://asopa.typepad.com)). Almost all of them were his longer, more carefully developed posts: seven essays, one piece of political commentary, and one anonymous post featuring an environmental report, were all re-blogged on PNG Attitude in July.

Farrell and Drezner (2007) argue that within spheres of blogs with common interests, certain blogs become 'elite' blogs and subsequently become important nodes of activity in that blogosphere. All blogs are a networked phenomenon that rely on hyperlinks and recommendations from fellow users: "Blogs interact with each other continuously, linking back and forth, disseminating interesting stories, arguments and points of view" (Farrell &

Drezner, 2007, p. 17). Elite blogs, however, are often aggregators of content, and demand the most attention in a particular area of interest (Farrell and Drezner, 2007). In the PNG context, Keith Jackson's blog, PNG Attitude, fits that mould.

Jackson first went to PNG from Australia as a teacher at aged 18, and eventually became head of planning and policy for PNG's National broadcasting commission (PNG Attitude, n.d.). He now operates his own public relations company, specialising in PNG-Australia relations. Jackson is an important figure in the PNG blogosphere and for PNG writers in general. He helped set up the Crocodile Prize for PNG literature that Namorong won in its inaugural year. He recently initiated writing fellowships for young Papua New Guineans. Jackson's blog, PNG Attitude, operates with roughly half Australian and half Papua New Guinean authored content (Fitzpatrick, 2012 Sept. 11). Readers of PNG Attitude reportedly include politicians from Australia, PNG, and further abroad, among other influential people (Fitzpatrick, 2012 Sept. 11).

Farrell and Drezner (2007), argue that a particular 'blogosphere' can benefit from a single, active 'focal point blog' like PNG Attitude; they say that such blogs often operate as filterers of other interesting blog posts thus creating "an important coordination point that allows bloggers and blog readers to coordinate on a mutually beneficial equilibrium" (p. 22). Furthermore, Farrell and Drezner (2007), argue that focal point blogs then become an important intermediary to the traditional 'mediasphere' as journalists and other opinion makers gravitate towards the consolidated atmosphere of focal point blogs that are constantly reiterating and reinforcing key ideas and issues:

The networked structure of the blogosphere allows interesting arguments to make their way to the top of the blogosphere . . . the media only needs to look at the top blogs to obtain a 'summary statistic' about the distribution of opinions on a given political issue. (p. 22)

Another feature of Namorong's syndicated content on PNG Attitude are the discussions that commonly ensue. Two of Namorong's posts were among the 11 most commented on articles on PNG Attitude for the month of July (Jackson, 2012, August 6). Namorong had a significant presence – as a contributor and a commenter, on PNG Attitude during the July data period. Nine posts were syndicated from The Namorong Report, and Namorong was mentioned by others in articles and comments in posts not authored by Namorong 11

times. He himself was also a frequent commenter, especially in response to comments on his own articles. Namorong's presence on PNG Attitude is important because of the significant presence of PNG Attitude in the PNG-Australia blogosphere. Importantly, he also appears in the minds of other readers as a key figure, as one commenter noted: "Real change in PNG can only come from the people and Martyn Namorong and his compatriots are examples of this" (Brown, 2012, July 08, comments section).

Another significant aspect of PNG Attitude is that whole blog posts are written in response to other writers' posts. A series of blog posts then come to constitute a whole discussion in itself, and in the comments section, further clarification, rebuttals and additional arguments are put forth. John Fowke, an "ex-colonial masta" (Fowke, 2012, July 22), wrote two entire posts in response to two of Namorong's syndicated essays: Fowke was explicit about challenging Namorong, addressing him directly in his opening paragraphs. For example, Fowke (2012, July 24) begins:

In his recent writing for PNG Attitude, Martyn Namorong displays views which are penetrating and noteworthy, and which he expresses to great effect.

Martyn has many friends and supporters but seems to have reached the end of the road of reading the entrails of Papua New Guinea's past and pronouncing upon the failures of the present. (para. 1-2)

Fowke (2012, July 24) goes on to praise Namorong, but challenges him to take control, look to the future, and be among those enacting change in PNG:

To achieve a result which will be both valuable and personally satisfying, Martyn, and the many others like him in PNG, must look to the future and ponder upon it. You must link with each other across physical, tribal and occupational barriers on the basis of your common interest and your common level of education and understanding of the principles of change. (para. 26).

Namorong's (2012, July 24c) response in the comments section below this post is telling, as he defends and re-articulates his vision. In his comment, Namorong argues it is essential to consider the historical context, or the story of development, leading to the present situation. He also expresses a way forward: by realising PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles, as the template for development in PNG.

Blogs are frequently talked about for their democratic, conversational character (Kuhn, 2007, Shirky, 2008), but this is not evident on The Namorong Report. Namorong is afforded a space to write largely unchallenged, while selected blog posts are debated, scrutinised, and praised when re-blogged on PNG Attitude. PNG Attitude represents something wholly different from The Namorong Report. There is significant discussion in the form of not only comments, but debate through successive blog posts. PNG Attitude marketed itself on Twitter in this way, as Jackson tweeted: "See Namorong's response to an ex-colonial Masta on tomorrow's PNG Attitude" (PNGAttitude, 2012, July 21). The social dynamic of PNG Attitude is one of interaction and debate, whereas The Namorong Report is not, suggesting that different blogs, despite having the same capabilities, grow into different roles. PNG Attitude is an aggregator of content and a significant site of discussion: a 'focal point blog' in Farrell and Drezner's (2007) terms. PNG Attitude, having a wide range of regular authors, is a key site of discussion for readers and contributors from Australia, PNG, and Papua New Guineans abroad. Namorong's is a (typically) single authored blog, which even though has the same technical capability for discussion (comments section at the bottom of each post), discussion is almost non-existent. Despite having very similar options, very few readers comment on The Namorong Report website. The Namorong Report is a wholly different rhetorical artefact, one in which a single author writes unchallenged by his readers.

Namorong's posts on the aggregate blog, PNG Attitude, are a significant component of his web presence. PNG Attitude is potentially the site where Namorong receives his largest readership. While the statistics are not available to back this up, he is clearly in the minds of contributors and commenters, and his posts provoke significant discussion, debate and responses albeit on other blog site. It is in his long, carefully constructed blog posts that Namorong's core ideas are fully expressed and most clearly articulated. And it was precisely these strong blog posts that were syndicated, or re-blogged, on PNG Attitude.

## 4.2 The rhetoric of The Namorong Report

This section examines the rhetorical strategies apparent in The Namorong Report with reference to the rhetorical theory discussed in Chapter 3. Foremost in this discussion are three of Stewart's (1980) rhetorical functions of social movements: transforming perceptions of history, transforming perceptions of society, and prescribing courses of action. As well as these functions, this section will consider the unique affordances of the blogging medium and key literary devices, including unconventional stylistic elements, subjectivity, and personality, all of which contribute to an air of authenticity and legitimacy, and demonstrate the blogger's freedom from mainstream, professional publishing conventions.

The content of blogs is often described as variable and random, characterised by spontaneity and novelty (Gurak et. al., 2004). Namorong's blog communication, however, is highly strategic. He uses traditional tools of persuasion to create a discursive environment conducive to social change: one where Papua New Guineans are encouraged to experience a sense of self-worth, the established norms of western development and corporate discourse are demystified, and a more equitable Papua New Guinean society is imagined for the future.

There is structure and continuity throughout Namorong's blog posts that suggests a calculated, although perhaps unconscious, line of argument. Namorong's blog posts build on each other: the argument put forth in one essay is strategically embedded in the next in a kind of on-going manifesto. At the foot of one post, Namorong (2012, July 24b) hyperlinks four of his own essays together for further reading, suggesting that they are a structured, complementary series of articles and when read in succession, form a wider, more comprehensive argument.

A key component of Aristotelian rhetoric is the continual presence of reasoned discourse, or *logos*. The logical flow in Namorong's blog output reflects this key mode of persuasion. More than being a mere argument from reason, however, it is an argument imbued with moral justification. As Rahe (1994) argues, what defines the writer or orators' *logos* is a reasoned distinction between what is advantageous and what is harmful. Namorong's blog

posts, when read in succession, reflect both a calculated argument, and a moral justification.

Namorong's posts during the July data range suggested an established core logic: his argument is carefully and deliberately re-articulated and re-contextualised using a range of approaches and examples. In this sense, The Namorong Report is not a mismatched collection of rants or random outbursts: there is continuity to his message as an on-going political expression. It is precisely this sense of continuity, and consistency in thought, that leaves a strong impression of strategy, focus, and intent, indicative of the language of persuasion.

Four recurring themes from The Namorong Report will be discussed in the following sections. These themes are; describing an imbalance in power and resources, challenging the discourse of development, building a shared sense of identity, and advocating an alternative. These themes, which permeate Namorong's July blog posts, suggest a preconceived, calculated line of reason with a strong moral belief in doing what is right.

After detailing these four core themes of Namorong's argument, the remainder of the chapter looks at stylistic elements and literary devices that reveal aspects of the blogging medium that further allow Namorong to communicate persuasively.

#### **4.2.1 Imbalance in power and resources**

As a person “at the vanguard of efforts to shift the public framework used to evaluate social, political, or economic conditions”, Namorong fits McHale's (2004) definition of a “social movement activist” (p. 3). In evaluating socio-political conditions in PNG, Namorong attempts to convince his audience that an intolerable situation currently exists and warrants immediate action. Identifying an intolerable situation is a key rhetorical function of social movements (Stewart, 1980). Namorong argues that there is an imbalance in power and access to resources that will continue under the current model of development. Namorong (2012, July 3) calls for a “redistribution of wealth and power in Papua New Guinea” (para. 16) – a theme that continues throughout his blog posts. Namorong establishes a clear connection between inequality in PNG and the current model of

development. The imbalance of power and access to resources, according to Namorong (2012, July 22) means “PNG's National Government is supported largely by money made by foreign mining companies and resource exploiters” (para. 19). Democracy in PNG, according to Namorong (2012, July 13), is in the hands of the “money men” (para. 21): PNG's parliament serves the interests of those that provide the greatest share of the nation's capital. The interests of the people are placed second to those of industry; a logic demonstrated by the government's commitment to economic growth but failure to improve the basic living standards and services of the people (Namorong, 2012, July 13). It is precisely this situation that Namorong continually tries to convince his readers is intolerable for the people of PNG.

Namorong (2012, July 10b) directly appealed to this impression of the current situation in the context of the then upcoming national election, stating that:

your vote does not matter unless you change this model of development where wealth and resources are controlled by very few people who are unwilling to distribute such wealth. If national wealth is redistributed, what follows is a redistribution of Power. (para.7)

The current situation compels him to respond, revolt, and advocate an alternative vision of progress and development. Namorong (2012, July 10b) is motivated by what he sees as an unequal distribution of wealth and power in PNG. He argues that those in advantageous positions seek to maintain existing power relations in order to continue to prosper. Namorong argues that this imbalance is exacerbated and exploited through the politics and discourse of development. His stated goal for development in PNG is the creation of an equitable society where wealth and resources are shared (Namorong, 2012, July 20). Equitable development, to Namorong, is the local generation and distribution of wealth; addressing the basic needs of everyday Papua New Guineans, which includes education, healthcare, and support for land rights; the nurturing of local industries, institutions and infrastructure; addressing the imbalance of political power and access to resources; resisting dependence and dictation from overseas political and corporate interests; and the political empowerment of PNG's largely impoverished majority. He sees this model for development described in the National Goals and Directive Principles written during the decolonisation of PNG (Namorong, 2012, July 13).

### 4.2.2 Challenging the discourse of development

Demystifying the discourse of development is an important didactic aspect of Namorong's writing. He actively seeks to educate readers by giving them the means to identify and denounce the underlying myths and promises of development. Namorong deconstructs the discourse of development, reveals the ways that language subverts, and in doing so, highlights the real objectives of those promising development and progress.

Stewart (1980) argues that a key rhetorical function employed by arbiters of social change is the altering of perceptions of past, present and future. A number of institutions such as governments, professional groups, and media typically reinforce dominant perceptions of history (Stewart, 1980). As discussed in Chapter 2, the discourse of development fosters and maintains a particular perspective of history that is best characterised by a linear narrative of growth and progress; that all nations and people are on a single path towards western modernity. Dominant perceptions of development have become synonymous with this uniform narrative of progress which holds that development is always inherently good. According to this view, development is progress, and this progress is teleological – moving from a poor way of life to an improved state of society (Escobar, 1995; 1997). It is this seductive promise of future wealth and improved social circumstance that underpins the desire for, and the pervasive logic of, development.

Namorong disputes this single, linear narrative of development. Namorong (2012, July 24a) challenges the idea that the extraction of natural resources by overseas companies is an essential step toward modernity: "It is not necessary that we handover our resources to foreigners in order to see progress" (para. 14). Namorong (2012, July 24a) continually attempts to alter his audience's perceptions of future progress:

I know there are many Papua New Guineans out there dreaming of being rich. But ask yourself, how will you gain wealth if foreigners are in charge of the sources of wealth? How will you develop your country if you don't have control of the resources necessary for creating developmental activities.  
(para. 23)

The challenge for Namorong is to alter his audience's perception of history, to change how Papua New Guineans think about notions of growth, progress, and development.

Namorong attempts to alter perceptions of history and progress in order to convince his audience that an intolerable situation currently exists and action is required now. He is actively engaged in differentiating between the rhetoric of universal prosperity through development, and the realities of prosperity, which is largely experienced only by a small elite, and usually to the detriment of the impoverished majority.

As well as dominant perceptions of history, Namorong challenges other norms and truths associated with development. Stewart (1980) argues that challenging dominant norms and truths is a key process in delegitimising the opposition and other obstacles to social change. Namorong deconstructs and demystifies the way corporations and elites with commercial interests in PNG use the notions of growth, progress, and development – all inherently positive in development discourse, to convince the public that their interests (corporate and public) are mutual. He challenges the discourse (propaganda in his terms) of economic development and the lack of development outcomes following recent years of strong economic growth. In PNG, landowners are encouraged by foreign corporations to relinquish customary land in exchange for job opportunities and 'progress' that is justified by the promise of economic growth:

Over the past 10 years, PNG has had consecutive years of economic growth, without improvement of social services and well being. Any objective Papua New Guinean would therefore see that while these parasites promise economic growth, what they mean is a growth in their profits as they suck out your land, resources and cultural heritage. (Namorong, July 13, para. 20)

Namorong (2012, July 22) challenges this idea further, appealing to PNG's unique social structure and its incongruence to western modernity:

For landless Europeans, Economic Growth and Job Creation are important so that they can work in order to pay their Bank loans. This landless European model followed by much of the West is not necessarily applicable in PNG.

Yet, everything Papua New Guineans have been taught from primary school to university is based on a type of society where people are essentially Landless Peasants. The idea that 'yu nid long skul gut na kisim wok' is European. Many young Papua New Guineans are being 'trained' for an

economic reality that does not exist - skul pepa blong yu skul pepa nating.  
(para. 16-17)

Namorong is criticising the epistemology of development; questioning the favouring of western ideas and experience instead of local values and practices. He argues that different nations and their unique histories and cultures may forge a path of development different to that experienced, or propounded, by the West: "I'm highlighting the fact that different cultures, societies, geographical locations and historical contexts need their own unique sets of ideas to progress" (Namorong, July 24a, para. 10).

Namorong asks whose interests are being served and how these interests have been justified in the minds of Papua New Guineans through development discourse. Namorong (2012, July 13) calls it the corporation's economy: "that economic model that talks about economic growth but fails to improve the lives of people and pays them slave wages" (para. 23). He describes the realities of what this model of growth actually means for the people and illuminates the ways that language shapes the perceptions of Papua New Guineans in favour of this model of progress. Development, under these terms, ultimately undermines the interests of landowners and promotes the interests of overseas corporations: "the Propaganda machine keeps telling them [landowners] they have nothing and need to turn over land for so called development purposes" (Namorong, 2012, July 13, para.17). He expresses here a genuine desire to protect the interests of Papua New Guineans whose interests are manipulated by the language of developers keen to justify their own desire to take advantage of PNG's resources. Namorong (2012, July 13) argues that corporate propaganda is the reason why Papua New Guineans are not always in support of their and the nation's interests: "They just call it advertising these days so that you think they have a legitimate right to make you undermine your interests and promote theirs" (para. 14). Namorong continually challenges the rhetoric of corporations with financial interests in PNG. He argues that Papua New Guineans are being told to be grateful for a job opportunity for a company whose revenue typically ends up offshore.

Stewart (1980) argues that a key rhetorical function of social movements is to shape perceptions of the opposition. Namorong does this effectively by carefully characterising the foreign companies seeking to profit from PNG's resources and climate of relaxed regulation. He frequently describes them as parasites and foreign resource exploiters. The

demonising of foreign resource extractors is furthered by consistent reminders of environmental disasters and examples of poor practice from resource companies. Namorong (2012, July 10a) questions the moral integrity of overseas companies operating in PNG:

The Ramu mine will dump 100 million tonnes of toxic wastes into the waters of Basamak Bay in the Rai Coast area. . . . Environmental issues aside, let's ask ourselves whether Queensland based Highlands Pacific would ever be allowed to dumped such large amounts of toxic mine wastes off the Gold Coast. Would the Australian people and their Government tolerate this? (para. 7-8)

Namorong (2012, July 24a) cites examples of environmental disasters that have come as a result of resource development projects and suggests why Papua New Guineans continue to let such exploitation go unchallenged:

Look no further than Panguna, the Fly River, the Watut River, RH logging Camps, Ramu Mine, SABLs, etc . . . . The reason you don't perceive it as violence is because you've been trained to think that it's ok – just collateral damage. (para. 25)

Citing specific examples of environmental and social damage grounds his argument in a Papua New Guinean social reality. It boosts his credibility and lends moral reason to his argument.

Namorong (2012, July 10a) also challenges readers to reflect on their own prejudices. He asks readers to consider how dominant norms and truths have affected their own perceptions of history and society:

A lot of sheeple continue to make the mistake of defending ideals or religious beliefs even though these so called set of values end up destroying lives of people. The effect of these double standards is that people fail to have a perspective of the harmful effects of their prejudices. . . . For as long as you defend a flawed system and a model of development that isn't working for Papua New Guineans, you will never get the 'change' you so dearly desire! (para. 12-20)

Furthermore, Namorong (2012, July 10a) tells his readers to ask questions of those who tell Papua New Guineans what they want, or should do: “My intention is to highlight to Papua New Guineans the need to be weary of those who preach about ‘doing what’s right’, including myself of course” (para. 11).

By deconstructing the discourse of development, Namorong is making a direct attempt to delegitimise the opposition, giving readers the motivation, and intellectual perspective, to question corporate development discourse. Stripping the opposition of their legitimacy is an essential component of the persuasive rhetoric of activism (Stewart, 1980). Namorong constantly reminds readers of the legacy of foreign corporate presence in PNG – the poor environmental and social practice and unfulfilled promises of local benefits, ultimately delegitimising foreign corporate development and the flawed narrative of progress it supports.

#### 4.2.2.1 Development as violence

One of Namorong's most potent indictments of development is his equating development with violence. He uses this particular notion in three separate posts in July in an unabashed outpouring of sentiment and passion. To refer to development as violence is a powerful rhetorical image that demonstrates Namorong's subjectivities, his desire to persuade, and his belief about what is just. Namorong's poem, *The Nature of Violence in #PNG* (2012, July 11), based on the refrain, “Violence is . . .”, highlights the destructive symptoms of the West's model of development and the apathy and misfocus of Papua New Guineans. It talks about violence as the double standards in PNG's society, where Papua New Guineans are angered by the relative trivialities of life while remaining ignorant to the more destructive crimes enacted in the name of development:

Violence is when Papua New Guineans tolerate NPF [National Provincial Fund] thieves

Yet they'd kill someone who stole two kina. . . .

Violence is when the Police attack landowners in Pomio

But fail to remove illegal loggers in Pomio. (Namorong, 2012, July11)

Namorong (2012, July 11) is highlighting what he sees as society's double standards in the hope of changing readers' values and attitudes. He is deliberately directing his readers' attention to much more pertinent instances of injustice.

Namorong (2012, July 24a) reveals the genealogy of this notion of development as violence by explicitly referencing Mahatma Gandhi's idea of poverty as violence. Gandhi described poverty as the worst form of violence, arguing that poverty could easily be abolished through the equitable distribution of wealth, and that those who choose to inflict poverty are therefore the worst criminals in the world (Allen, 2001). Namorong (2012, July 24a) writes that "the West's model of development is a form of violence" (para. 25) because it creates economic disparity and perpetuates the unequal distribution of wealth:

poverty is just a symptom of economic disparity also referred to as economic violence. And economic violence is a product of the greed of a few elite. And the elite have used the western Model of Development to enrich themselves.  
(para. 27)

Namorong (2012, July 24a) also reminds readers about the effect of development discourse in how this violence has been allowed to occur: "The reason you don't perceive it as violence is because you've been trained to think that it's ok – just collateral damage" (para. 25).

This also links back to the key refrain in *The Nature of Violence in #PNG* (Namorong, 2012, July 11): "Violence is when they make you defend their model of development / Because they've fooled you into thinking they're right".

In referring to development as a form of violence, Namorong displays no obvious attempt at neutrality or detachment. In describing development as an act of violence inflicted upon Papua New Guineans, he is appealing to the people to resist – to defend themselves and their right to autonomy and difference. Namorong simultaneously encourages self-reflection and criticism, asking Papua New Guineans to reflect on their own prejudices, aiming to foster the same critical perspective of development in his readers.

#### 4.2.2.2 Didacticism and sermonising

At times Namorong teaches and moralises excessively – openly seeking to influence his audience. Those seeking social change, according to Stewart (1980), are faced with the challenge of altering audience perceptions of sometimes well-established norms and truths. *The road to Hell is paved with religion and westernization* (Namorong, 2012, July 24a), is laced with strong rhetorical attacks on westernisation, development, and colonisation. Here Namorong blatantly sermonises, dedicating an entire essay to defining and explaining the role of subversion in colonisation and western-driven development. It is an angry, passionate piece; its opening passage immediately sets a strong tone:

When the greedy White ruling class decided to loot the rest of the world's nations of their wealth they carried with them, their Laws, their customs, their Government, their Technology, their diseases and their Religion. The greatest lessons about how the west and by extension the western model of development work can be found in the way they shamelessly conducted themselves in other peoples land. (Namorong, 2012, July 24a, para. 1)

*Road to Hell* tells a story: a historical narrative that discredits and demonises those behind the exploitation of colonies – now former colonies, by the West. Namorong employs the narrative of religion as a path to salvation as an analogy to the narrative of western-driven development. He is trying to articulate the scale and continued legacy of colonisation and western imperialism through both religion and development. In this essay, Namorong parallels the story of development to the perhaps more familiar narratives of colonisation and religious colonisation. The analogy of 'getting to heaven' by terms dictated by someone else is a powerful and controversial one within the context of PNG: it has a historical familiarity with PNG's largely Christian population and strong links to the colonial agenda. Christianity, Namorong argues, states that you must give your wealth to the church in order to get to heaven. Namorong (2012, July 24a) takes this idea and applies it to the promise of development: "Papua New Guineans are being hoodwinked today into paying a lot of indulgences (resources exploited by foreigners) in order to get to heaven (see development)" (para. 12).

Namorong challenges the idea that PNG must give in to the ways of western-driven development in order for PNG to progress. According to Namorong (2012, July 24a), both

the promises of religion and development are propositions propagated by people in power who seek to hold on to their prosperity and influence. He argues that both involve indoctrinating the minds of the public and both lead to mass manipulation for greed. Namorong uses this analogy to demonstrate how populations can be subverted by propaganda, fear, and the promise of emancipation. He argues that Papua New Guineans have been subverted into defending the exploitation of resources by foreigners in the name of development. Namorong (2012, July 24a) blatantly takes a didactic approach in explaining the concept of subversion and its effects on Papua New Guineans:

I'm deliberately using the word SUBVERSION or SUBVERT because to subvert a population is to make the population think that it is acting in its best Interest while at the same time undermining its interest. In simple English: they make you think you're helping yourself when in fact you're harming yourself. (para. 6)

Namorong appears to be more than willing to make it clear that he is seeking to actively influence readers. *Road to hell*, when re-blogged on PNG Attitude (Namorong, 2012, July 25), attracted 20 comments from readers. Several people commented negatively, clearly upset with Namorong's treatment of religion: "Martyn is vomiting his hatred against the Catholic church and whiteman's treatment towards himself" (Motong, 2012, July 25, comments section). Others responded in a much more positive light, understanding that the essay was predominantly a criticism of the western model of development and the concept of subversion. There were enough comments to provoke a general response from Namorong (2012, July 28), in which he sought to clarify his argument further:

We've been taught to believe that European Imperialism (Including Christian imperialism) was done in our best interest whereas the purpose of imperialism is contrary. Many have as a result been subverted. Even though they were told to "think outside the box" they've been 'trained' not to question religion and the 'goodness' of westernization. This article highlights the context by which PNG has lost control of its own development path as a result of the colonial disruption. By understanding the past, we can move forward as a nation without falling into the trap of the western model of development. (comments section)

Namorong is again re-articulating his primary message in another way: by employing Christianity's narrative of salvation, as an analogy to the promise of development. Namorong is also furthering his attempts to create free thinking Papua New Guineans, who are able to see false promises being made by those in power, be they religious leaders, corporate elites, or politicians. He is openly trying to educate and influence readers, even providing counter-arguments and further clarification in response to comments from readers who disagree.

#### **4.2.3 Fostering a collective identity**

Namorong seeks to foster a sense of pride and identity in being Papua New Guinean by appealing to the unique history and customs of PNG. He specifically wants his readers to unite and take action to create a more equitable future for PNG. His appeals to notions of collectivism and cooperation reflect another powerful rhetorical strategy.

Stewart (1980) argues: "Social movements must attempt to alter the self-perceptions of target audiences so that supporters and potential supporters come to believe in their self-worth and ability to bring about urgent change" (pp. 302-3).

Stewart's (1980) claims that arbiters of social change must affect feelings of pride and power in order to realise a new sense of personal identity among supporters. In fostering a collective identity, and defining and delegitimising an opposition, arbiters of social change create strong "'we-they' distinctions" (Stewart, 1980, p. 303). This is strengthened further, Stewart (1980) argues, by evoking a shared sense of fate.

Namorong passionately defends and advocates Papua New Guinean knowledge, custom, and solutions. He does so through regular use of Tok Pisin phrases, references to PNG's constitutional documents, and by invoking positive images of Papua New Guinean history. Through such references to Papua New Guinean culture, Namorong strengthens the collective identity of Papua New Guineans, and instils feelings of pride.

Namorong actively counters what he sees as a self-perception of inferiority, as a nation and people, compared to the developed. He challenges development discourse's power to

define: “[Development] creates the idea that some cultures are inferior to other cultures. It classifies inferior cultures as undeveloped and superior cultures as developed” (Namorong, 2012, July 20, para. 3). This theme is frequently repeated throughout his writing. In another blog post, Namorong (2012, July 22) writes: “The root of the story of ‘Development’ in Papua New Guinea is when some black bush kanakas were told that they were inferior to Europeans and therefore needed to ‘develop’” (para. 14). In countering this definition, Namorong reminds readers that prior to colonisation, Papua New Guinean and Melanesian cultures were independent and capable of sharing wealth and resources (2012, July 20). Namorong thus engages in a process of legitimising the local: making Papua New Guineans believe in their ability to determine their own course of progress and development.

Namorong also weaves Tok Pisin phrases, idiom, and expressions in to his writing. In the following, Namorong (2012, July 22) directly addresses his Papua New Guinean audience, asking a direct question – another powerful rhetorical device, to his Tok Pisin speaking readers:

Ask yourself when your country will be free of Aid dependency not just from other countries, but also from Churches and NGOs. Wanem taim bai yumi sanap long tupela leg blong mipela? (para. 4).

This rhetorical question is made particularly powerful through its direct address to Papua New Guinean Tok Pisin readers. It is a statement that connects Namorong with his Papua New Guinean readers, evoking a sense of shared identity.

Namorong (2012, July 24b) also uses local idiom to express his point of view, this time providing a translation for non Tok Pisin speakers: “There is a saying ‘noken pul long kanu long wanpla sait tasol’ - don't just paddle on one side of the canoe” (para. 11). His inclusion of Tok Pisin phrases performs an important rhetorical function: strengthening a shared, Papua New Guinean identity.

Namorong's frequent references to PNG's 1974 constitutional documents also perform important rhetorical functions: looking back favourably on carefully articulated Papua New Guinean values; creating a sense of national pride, identity and unity; challenging the discourse of western development; and underpinning Namorong's prescribed course of

action. The vision of development outlined in PNG's 1974 constitutional documents also allows Namorong to demonstrate how the last three decades have delineated from this proposed path of development, arming him with evidence of how one logic of development has prospered at the expense of another.

Namorong (2012, July 3) writes: “there are a few of us who see the Darkness of the Neon Lights that the Constitutional Planning Committee saw in 1974” (para 16), making an important reference to the following passage from the National Goals and Directive Principles (CPCR, 1974):

We see the darkness of neon lights. We see the despair and loneliness in urban cities. We see the alienation of man from man that is the result of the present machine orientated economy. We see true social security and man's happiness being diminished in the name of economic progress. We caution therefore that large-scale industries should be pursued only after very careful and thorough consideration of the likely consequences upon the social and spiritual fabric of our people. (National Goals, para. 116)

“The darkness of neon lights” has become somewhat of a refrain among Papua New Guinean bloggers and activists: the phrase is frequently referenced by ActNowPNG, Our Pacific Ways, the Masalai blog, and by several authors on the blog, PNG Attitude.

By re-articulating the language and values enshrined in PNG's constitution, Namorong seeks to remind Papua New Guineans of a uniquely PNG way of thinking about development: a way of thinking independently. He is also challenging the normalised notions of development by introducing ideas such as economic independence, self-reliance, and Papua New Guinean ways, all of which are part of PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles (CPCR, 1974).

Namorong continually builds on a shared sense of identity by appealing to the unique character of PNG, its history, language and people. His use of Tok Pisin phrases, positive evocations of Papua New Guinean history and independence, and the language and logic of PNG's constitutional documents, fosters a sense of collective identity. In doing this, Namorong legitimises the local, in an attempt to persuade Papua New Guineans to believe that their ideas, knowledge, and customs are not subordinate to the overbearing

knowledge structures of development discourse. His appeals to the founding documents of PNG reflect a strong sense of pride and Papua New Guinean solidarity, feelings that he hopes to imbue in his audience.

#### **4.2.4 Advocating an alternative**

The fairy-tale narrative of poverty to prosperity is a seductive one; a story of emancipation from the perils of an impoverished society. Namorong, however, delegitimises this narrative, debunking the promise of social progress through the extraction of resources by foreign companies. He argues that this model is detrimental to the majority of Papua New Guineans and fails to deliver the outcomes Papua New Guineans want the most. Namorong challenges this narrative of progress while also convincing his audience that there is a better, more equitable future possible for Papua New Guineans. In challenging this narrative and advocating an alternative Namorong can be seen to be unconsciously employing another of Stewart's (1980) rhetorical function of social movements. Namorong introduces a different model for progress, one that appeals to local epistemologies, practices, and custom. While he is keen to have readers perceive aspects of the pre-European era in a positive light, Namorong (2012, July 22) makes sure he is not viewed as a primitivist:

I'm not saying that we should start going back long taim blong tumbuna [back to the time of our ancestors]. What has to happen is that we recognize that there are unique difference between western and Melanesian societies. (para. 18)

Namorong (2012, July 10b; 2012 July 22) argues that those who contribute the greatest share of capital to the government enjoy the greatest influence in the management and direction of PNG. He also attributes this scenario to the current model of development “where wealth and resources are controlled by very few people who are unwilling to distribute such wealth” (Namorong, 2012, July 10b, para. 7). Namorong (2012, July 22) counters this situation by introducing an alternative, promoting it as the foundation for a more equitable society where wealth and resources are shared among Papua New Guineans and reliance on foreign corporations is reduced:

The people of PNG need to change this economic reality by contributing revenue to the government. This is National Sovereignty and Self Reliance, as opposed to 'Development' where outsiders determine whether you get improved schools and healthcare or they get "improved investment environment" such as tax holidays for miners. (para. 20)

Recognising that the majority of Papua New Guineans live in rural areas, and acknowledging the importance of land ownership in Papua New Guinean and Melanesian culture, Namorong (2012, July 22) advocates development through supporting rural industries and local entrepreneurship. The rural economy empowers citizens not only economically but politically too through economic independence:

What is most appropriate is to create the conditions necessary for Papua New Guineans to work their land, make a profit and pay taxes to the government. PNG's National Government is supported largely by money made by foreign mining companies and resource exploiters. The implication of this is that the miners and foreign exploiters have greater political capital than Papua New Guinean citizens. (Namorong, 2012, July 22, para. 19)

According to Namorong, if PNG is economically independent (local industry and economy contributes the greatest percentage of wealth to the nation), political independence will follow (the government serves the interests of whoever provides the state with the greatest capital). For Namorong, economic independence requires self-reliance. This is an integral part of his criticism of the current development model, which Namorong (2012, July 22) argues, fosters a culture of dependency:

The reason we're not achieving this [self-reliance] is that we're using what I refer to as the Dependency Model of Development. What it does is that it creates the perception that you Papua New Guineans are an inferior people who need outsiders to come and solve your problems. (para. 5)

Namorong (2012, July 19) argues that the state requires resources (capital) to operate and "if corporations supply the resource needs of the state, the state protects the interests of corporations" (para. 13). Furthermore, he argues, "if citizens supply the resource needs of the state, the state protects the interests of its citizens" (Namorong, 2012, July 19, para. 13). In order for power to be in the hands of the people, the people of PNG must be the

heart of the nation's economy and revenue base: "If the Authority [government] has its needs [capital] supplied by its people, then it will express the will of the people" (Namorong, 2012, July 19, para. 7).

Namorong champions economic development based on landowners generating their own industry and wealth independently through the utilisation of their land. Namorong (2012, July 19) argues that "local ownership is crucial to having the General Will of the People being expressed through a Political Authority" (para. 10). Developing the informal, cash based 'people's economy' would give citizens greater political capital and would reduce the government's dependency on revenue from the extractive industries (Namorong, 2012, July 19).

In advocating an alternative model of development, Namorong frequently alludes to the ideas and language of the National Goals and Directive Principles (NGDPs) from PNG's constitutional documents. His recurring appeals to 'national sovereignty' and 'self-reliance' directly reference one of PNG's five NGDPs. Namorong's concept of equitable development is also borrowed from the NGDPs (CPCR, 1974):

No particular area or grouping of people should be developed at the expense of another, materially or in other ways. There should always be an equitable distribution and balanced sharing of all the benefits and opportunities the national has to offer. (National Goals, para. 16)

In advocating an alternative, Namorong uses PNG's constitutional documents to lend credibility to his vision. He uses such documents to legitimise the local, engender critical perspectives, and advocate self-reliance. Namorong refers back to PNG's constitutional documents to put into the imaginations of Papua New Guineans the idea that an alternative model of development exists, has already been articulated, and is compatible with Papua New Guinean ways.

Namorong's aim for greater equality and public participation in the development and future of PNG draws heavily from PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles (NGDPs). The writers of the NGDPs saw Papua New Guinean independence as an opportunity to transfer power back into the hands of the people, giving Papua New Guineans the power to express and uphold their own social values, and an opportunity to define their own

social and economic goals (CPCR, 1974). In order for this to happen, the will of the people needs to be expressed and the voices of the people need to re-join the political conversation. Namorong sees the rural people as under-represented, their importance underestimated and unacknowledged, and their rights and customs taken advantage of. The writers of the constitution firmly stated that no Papua New Guineans are to be excluded from the development process, or the resulting social and material benefits of development (CPCR, 1974).

By evoking the images, logic, and power of PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles (NGDPs), Namorong lends credibility to his argument while fostering a shared sense of national pride and identity. Because the NGDPs already establish an alternative to the logic of western-driven development, Namorong's task is made slightly easier: he has an established, credible document to call upon in his articulation of an alternative model for development.

Namorong's alternative model of development is premised on an equitable share of access to resources and the material benefits they produce. He seeks to empower the rural majority through supporting rural industries. If PNG's rural populace are contributing to the wealth of the nation, greater political power is handed to the people and reliance on foreign economic activity is reduced.

#### **4.3 Challenges to traditional literary approaches**

One of the strengths of the blogging medium is its editorial flexibility. Blogs can accommodate a variety of written forms and styles. An individual blogger can post without editorial, structural, or stylistic constraints. Namorong makes full use of this flexibility, shifting between different modes of address, even within single blog posts.

An example of this flexibility and lack of convention is the post, *Is #PNG headed for a post election power struggle?* (2012, July 5). In this post Namorong uses two distinctive styles of communication. First he makes a relatively conventional comment on the political stand-off between Michael Somare and Peter O'Neil – both of whom, prior to the election, had fought bitterly over who legitimately held the role of prime minister. This is followed

immediately by a poem that engages the same issue in a very different way. Namorong (2012, July 5) first reports Somare's claims that, if elected, he would put O'Neil in jail, and then laments the political jostle to form a government and the relentless punishing of political rivals. The ensuing poem then begins:

I don't know what's crazy  
What's not normal about a frenzy  
For Power and for Glory  
In this Papua New Guinean story

Somare says he'll put O'Neil behind bars  
He's wounded with battle scars  
Dating from many years  
Of meddling in Political affairs.

In these two stanzas, Namorong reflects on a familiar “Papua New Guinean story” of personal battles for political power and the wounds Somare still carries from his over 30 years of politicking. Namorong (2012, July 5) is critical of the idea that Papua New Guineans have only two choices for Prime Minister, and reminds readers that “PNG is bigger than two men” and “with a great plan. . . we can. . . put this chaos to an end”. The poem ends with a somewhat emancipatory image of a new leader, directing PNG to a much more appealing future. Again, Namorong (2012, July 5) presents two different expressions of the future: the detrimental “Papua New Guinean story” of fierce personal politics, and a contrasting vision of safety and peace:

Great captains are born for times like this  
Guiding the ship through rough seas  
Into a harbour of safety and peace  
Where it's passengers can be at ease.

Another poem, *The Nature of Violence in #PNG* (Namorong, 2012, July 11) encapsulates some of the core ideas presented in Namorong's essays, but articulates them in a markedly different way. His use of poetry demonstrates the different ways that he is trying to appeal to the minds of his Papua New Guinean readers. Namorong's relatively frequent use of poetry suggests that he believes it to be a legitimate means of persuasion, to be usefully employed alongside his essays.

Namorong's writing also contains frequent references to events in his own life. For example, *The Port Moresby kids that inspire me* (2012, July 27), takes a personal anecdote and frames it in terms of the wider argument Namorong made throughout his July posts. The anecdote concerns his younger brother and his rugby team, who without the benefit of a trainer, supervisor, or team manager, have reached the semi-finals of a local competition. Namorong (2012, July 27) then relates this to his broader argument: "I've been writing about the importance of PNG being self reliant and have laid out in my recent articles, how the people in this country ended up being dependent on 'outsiders to bring development'" (para. 3).

Namorong (2012, July 27) uses the story of his brother's rugby team to demonstrate the concept of self-reliance, the kids' absence of entitlement, and the ability to succeed on their own:

I hope these kids never get disempowered like the rest of the sheeple of PNG, when they grow up. These kids inspire me. They're my little heroes, who see a world of possibilities when everyone else has been colonized into mental slavery. Instead of the usual refrain of "mipela ino inap..." they've stretched the boundaries of possibilities. Yes we can, PNG! (para. 6)

Using personal anecdotes, obvious subjectivities, and feelings of pride make this another piece of communication that strays from conventional political commentary, while still making a wider political point. It also contributes to Namorong's personal moral character, or ethos, by grounding his writing in a personal, everyday Papua New Guinean experience. It challenges his Papua New Guinean readers to reflect on themselves, asking them whether or not they are waiting in expectation for someone else to solve their problems.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to analyse Namorong's blog posts in terms of their inherent rhetorical character, and the unique capabilities of the blogging medium.

Within the July data range, posts from The Namorong Report, were frequently re-blogged on the focal point blog, PNG Attitude, where an entirely different blogging environment was evident. Despite having the same potential capabilities, the discussion, debate, and comments present on PNG Attitude were almost entirely absent on The Namorong Report. This suggested that blogs can assume different roles within the same communications sphere.

Four key underlying themes permeate Namorong's July blog posts, suggesting a thought-out, organised argument imbued with moral reason. In identifying an imbalance in wealth and power, Namorong draws attention to the connection between the logic of western-driven economic development and the exploitation of resources in PNG. Namorong's essays also contain a carefully conceived critique of western-driven development, its discursive power, and everyday effects. Embedded in his criticism, are expressions of Papua New Guinean, and Melanesian identity. Furthermore, Namorong advocates an alternative path of development for PNG, one with a decidedly greater moral character, which Namorong carefully defends using PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles.

Namorong challenges the perceptions of history and society embedded in development discourse. He disputes the narrative and promise of development as a dominant world view. Namorong counters the discourse of development by debunking its underlying myths and highlighting the disastrous legacy of large-scale resource development in PNG. In challenging the discourse of development, Namorong blatantly sermonises. He clearly means to influence and motivate readers towards a different way of thinking.

In advocating an alternative, Namorong appeals to a romantic moment in PNG's history and a genuine Papua New Guinean artefact; the National Goals and Directive Principles (NDGPs) from the Constitutional Planning Committee Report (1974). He evokes both the language and logic of the NGDPs in his criticism of development, and in his affirmation of Papua New Guinean social values and solidarity. In appealing to this moment in PNG history, and the words, perspectives, and conclusions of this document, Namorong strengthens his own argument, builds on a shared sense of identity, and puts forth an important ingredient in the rhetoric of social change: an alternative.

In his challenge to the discourse of progress and development, and his depictions of an alternative to western-driven development, Namorong presents a conflict between two rhetorical projections of the future: one that benefits the majority of Papua New Guineans, and one that continues to fail to deliver development outcomes, leaves a destructive legacy, and further enriches a small elite. In this sense, Namorong is asking his Papua New Guinean audience which future they want. There is both a sense of shared fate here and another key rhetorical function – the willing of target audiences to believe that only they, through collective action, can achieve the kind of future they desire. By encouraging readers to think critically about the discourse of growth, development, and progress, Namorong is creating a new set of expectations in Papua New Guineans, further enhancing feelings of self-worth, pride and collective power.

There are a number of aspects of Namorong's actual style and content that constitute a further rhetorical function: the perception of authenticity and legitimacy. By inserting himself in his work – his subjectivities, biography, frustrations and biases, Namorong fosters an image of himself as an authentic, credible advocate for social change. As a self-publishing medium, the blog allows Namorong to remain unconstrained from the stylistic, editorial, and financial restraints that characterise the professional media. The lack of publishing constraints allows Namorong to employ different modes of address.

Namorong's use of poetry is significant, taking complex issues from his essays and re-articulating them in an entirely different form. Being able to self-publish with full autonomy and independence has allowed Namorong to express himself freely and develop his image of authenticity and legitimacy.

## **Chapter 5. Conclusions**

The aim of this final chapter is to reiterate the research question, review how this thesis has addressed this question, summarise the findings, and propose suggestions for future research. The possible implications of a new, local-centric development dialogue are then discussed. This chapter also considers how The Namorong Report might contribute to a changing discourse of development in PNG, and across the region. It then considers the future of communications in the region, putting forth the view that blogging, alongside other internet media, will continue to play an important role as digital network infrastructure and access to mobile devices and services in PNG continue to improve.

My final concluding remarks will follow. The case of Martyn Namorong demonstrates how blogs in PNG are being used to advocate social change by positioning themselves as sites of counter-discourse and resistance to dominant ways of seeing and understanding development, the 'Third World', modernity, and the West. A rejection of western development discourse holds a mirror up to the West, illuminating its flaws, unravelling its constitutive myths, and highlighting its imperfections. It offers the kind of outside criticism of western modernity through the lens of those being slowly directed towards it. Finally, this chapter includes a biographical epilogue of Martyn Namorong.

### **5.1 Overview of the research**

The motivation for this research came from observing a new social-political phenomenon in PNG. Deregulation in PNG's telecommunications market has spurred an expanding communications infrastructure and lower prices for mobile devices and services, contributing to a new communications landscape in PNG. This new media environment has been widely used by the young Papua New Guineans who are using internet and mobile communications technologies to enter the national dialogue, challenge elites, act as watchdogs where the mainstream media has failed to do so, and organise protests and coordinate civic action. Within this changing media environment, Martyn Namorong has emerged as an important figure in the national discourse and was selected as a key case for this study.

This research asked how Martyn Namorong, through his blog, The Namorong Report, is asserting himself as an important initiator of social change in PNG. In order to investigate this case, a one month 'snapshot' of Namorong's blogging activity was recorded and analysed.

To better explore, understand, and document this case, this research highlighted the discursive environment in which the case could be located; in terms of the dominant, western discourse of development, and the uniquely Papua New Guinean perspective on development articulated in PNG's constitutional documents. Considerable weight was also placed on discussions of power in the discourse of development, and the academic and civic blocks challenging the hegemonic, dominative aspects of this discourse. In reviewing relevant literature, this research also used the mainstream media in PNG as a counterpoint for understanding the work of non-professional bloggers and social media actors like Martyn Namorong.

To understand how Namorong is asserting himself as a key initiator of social change, this research considered what the blogging medium itself afforded him. In order to do this, this study reviewed some of the literature on blogging, outlining its definitive features and capabilities. The affordances of the blogging medium were then introduced as a theoretical mode of enquiry. Taking the view that technologies, and their various applications, evolve with the cultures and people that use them, this study looked for the technological affordances that allowed Namorong, through blogging, to become a key voice challenging the discourse of development in PNG.

To further understand and explain Namorong's pursuit of social change, rhetoric, or the use of language to persuade, was used as another theoretical consideration. This research used some perspectives on classical rhetoric and the rhetoric of social movements as a critical mode of enquiry. By looking at Namorong's blogging activity in terms of its rhetorical character, this research was able to identify some of the ways Namorong is using language to initiate social change.

## 5.2 Summary of findings

This research stands as a unique, context-dependent case demonstrating the rhetorical capacity of the blog for social change. This study made a number of preliminary findings about the rhetorical capacity of blogging, in the PNG context, and some early inferences on the culture of blogging in PNG.

This research found that the blogging medium allowed Namorong to write without editorial constraint. In his pursuit of social change in PNG, Namorong exploited the freedom his blog afforded him to communicate persuasively, to attempt to teach, rally, and provoke his Papua New Guinean readers. He effectively communicates his ideas through regular blog posts, building a comprehensive, well organised argument. This argument permeates his blogging output, threading his frequent blog posts with a consistent line of reasoning. The blogging medium allows Namorong to repeat his argument, constantly rearticulating it in response to new events and information. It is this ability to keep reiterating key points, to keep reminding readers of an alternative, and to keep chipping away at the dominant discourse of development that Namorong believes has colonised the minds of Papua New Guineans, that makes the blog such an effective tool for him to try and bring about social change.

This research found that Namorong not only communicates through his own blog, but also has a considerable presence on the aggregate, focal point blog, PNG Attitude. The social dynamic of PNG Attitude was markedly different to that of The Namorong Report: comments, interactive elements, and the reasoned dialogue and responses that typified PNG Attitude, were almost entirely absent from The Namorong Report. This important difference between the two blogs Namorong posts on demonstrates the varied roles that different blog sites assume.

A number of capabilities of the blogging medium emerged as important means for asserting character and credibility. Namorong, through social media technologies, was easily able to collate quotes and images from across the internet and history. He used this to place himself alongside other past and contemporary martyrs, in a powerful, self-aggrandising way that contributed to the greater perception of his own moral credibility. The nature of blogging, as a self-publishing medium, means that those who want to create

and foster a certain public image of themselves can do so by remaining independent of editors, sources of revenue, and other gatekeepers characteristic of professionally published media. In contrast to the voices coming from PNG's mainstream media – complicated by the influence of advertisers, owners, and the corporate discourse of development, the blogger is immediately afforded an initial perception of credibility.

The case of Martyn Namorong has shown how one committed individual can foster, and maintain, a perception of credibility and legitimacy through the medium of blogging. Credibility and legitimacy are particularly important when juxtaposed alongside the mainstream media in PNG. I have argued, alongside several theorists, that PNG's mainstream media is continually failing its people, largely due to strong commercial imperatives. This study has hinted that blogging in PNG is understood and defined in comparison to the mainstream media of PNG, because bloggers approach the medium within the wider context of news and journalism. Those who read blogs, and those who blog, see and understand the medium not only through its own unique affordances, but in terms of what distinguishes it from the negative qualities of the mainstream media.

This case has shown how Namorong, primarily through his blog, is creating a discursive environment specifically focused on bringing about social change. Through successive blog posts, Namorong is able to freely build a comprehensive challenge to development in PNG. This research found that Namorong's blog posts were organised around a thought out, consistent argument imbued with moral reason. In contrast to common perceptions of blogging as a spontaneous, impulsive, and conversational activity (Gurak et. al., 2004), Namorong's blogging activity shows a calculated approach and a didactic, sermonising tone. He carefully critiques western-driven development, its discursive power, and highlights its real effects. Namorong laces his criticism with a shared sense of Papua New Guinean and Melanesian identity. Furthermore, he frequently articulates an alternative development model for PNG, one premised on creating a more equitable society. Equitable development for the people of PNG, and Papua New Guinean autonomy in this process, is key to Namorong's vision. He carefully defends this using the values and beliefs enshrined in PNG's National Goals and Directive Principles. By specifically employing the logic, and evoking the language and sentiment, of PNG's constitutional documents, Namorong legitimises the local, adds moral validity to his own line of

argument, and provides an alternative vision: an essential function of Stewart's (1980) rhetoric of social movements.

The case of Martyn Namorong shows how the blogging medium enabled a young man from PNG's urban underclass, without political or media connections, to rapidly become a key voice in the national discourse. Blogging has allowed Namorong to enter and influence a new communications sphere, one in which he is freely able to be persuasive and didactic. The relatively unconstrained nature of the medium, in terms of editorial and financial gatekeepers, has allowed Namorong to employ a variety of modes of address, each contributing to his ability to persuade and influence. This case has demonstrated how blogging, for a young Papua New Guinean, can be a powerful, emancipatory tool for initiating social change.

### **5.3 Evaluation of the research's contribution**

As an exploratory study, this thesis makes an early contribution to understanding the role of blogs in PNG's changing social and political environment. This research anticipates an exciting new epoch in PNG: a changing discourse of development, greater expectations upon corporates and PNG's politicians, and a changing communications landscape with useful new avenues for political engagement. This research has sought to draw attention to what might be the early stages of a significant change in direction for PNG.

This research does not represent a comprehensive understanding of the blogging phenomena in PNG, but captures in some detail a single, unique case. To quantify the role and effect of the wider blogging experience in PNG, one would have to look at many blogs. As the first case analysis of a Papua New Guinean blog, this research begins this process, and serves as a useful example of PNG's blogging culture. Future studies of PNG blogs might use this study for a comparative case analysis, as either a contemporary comparative study, or to be looked back on in a study considering changes over time.

This research made an important connection between the medium of blogging, and the rhetoric of social change. It showed how the blog can be used to communicate persuasively, free from editorial gatekeepers. It stands as an example of the capacity of

the blog, as a tool for advocating social change, specifically within the social and political culture of PNG.

This research also made a contribution to the academic field of post-development theory, or critical development studies. The case of Martyn Namorong represents another example of individuals and groups on the fringes of modernity challenging and resisting the discourse of development, asserting their autonomy, and their right to difference.

This research drew attention to one of the unique facets of PNG's development dialogue. Embedded in Martyn Namorong's challenge to the discourse of development, is an important Papua New Guinean historical artefact: the National Goals and Directive Principles (NGDPs) of the Constitutional Planning Committee Report (1974). This research has shown how PNG's constitutional documents, especially the NGDPs, have a continued legacy for PNG's contemporary political activists.

As a single case, and an exploratory study, there are obvious limitations to this research. Due to limitations in the scope afforded by a masters thesis, there are aspects of this case that have been unable to be covered. This study has not traced actual changes in the perceptions of readers. It is difficult to quantify the actual reach and effect of The Namorong Report, especially without visiting PNG. As an exploratory case, however, it seemed pertinent to first document and detail, establishing some early foundations for future research.

A further limitation of the research came from my own beliefs about colonisation and development, which heavily influenced my selection of the subject of this study. My own admiration for Namorong must be acknowledged, and that this study is very much a tribute to his cause.

## 5.4 Future research

I would like to propose several avenues for future research. The results of this research would be strengthened by similar investigations into other Papua New Guineans at the vanguard of both social change and new media use in PNG. Case studies of other blogs would eventually constitute a greater understanding of the character of blogging in PNG, and as the practice develops, capturing moments in time would offer points for comparison and indicate changes. There is significant scope for future researchers to closely examine the burgeoning communications and media landscape of PNG, and the way that social media are being appropriated into its social and political fabric. Papua New Guineans are embracing Facebook at a rapid rate as Facebook capable mobile phones are flooding the market (Cave, 2012). Facebook discussion groups such as SharpTalk, would make excellent cases for analysis, and for documenting another unique, emerging phenomena in PNG. Future studies could also look at the relationship between media technologies and Papua New Guinean activists and protesters, as could the links with Papua New Guinean diaspora – often university students, who are also engaging politically online (Logan, 2012).

During the 2012 national election, PNG's politicians used social media for the first time, creating their own Facebook and Twitter profiles. A retrospective analysis of the 2012 election and a prospective analysis of the likely 2017 election will provide numerous opportunities for research into the role of social media in Papua New Guinean parliamentary politics.

Cave (2012) and Logan (2012) both analyse the role of social media and mobile phones in organising, mobilising, and politically charging one of the largest public protests in PNG's recent history. Capturing, mapping, and analysing social media data around a protest event would offer further opportunities for analysis, and could form useful counter-examples to similar events in other parts of the world, namely, the recent uprisings in Arab nations.

The most important avenue for future research, however, would be conducted in PNG. Speaking to other emerging bloggers and their readers, measuring the depth and reach of key blogger's profiles and their ideas, and how they are affecting the beliefs and attitudes

of Papua New Guineans, across a range of urban and rural environments, would provide some extremely important elements missing from this research.

### **5.3 Development, blogging, and the region's future**

Martyn Namorong is part of a growing movement of activists and leaders who are challenging the underlying western construct of development. At the recent 2013 G7+ conference held in Dili, Timor-Leste, where the regions' leaders discussed the future of world development beyond the 2015 expiration of the Millennium Development Goals, Timor-Leste's Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão offered some insight into challenges for the region in his opening address. Soni (2013, March 13) argued that Gusmão's speech recognised that strength, peace, and regional stability and cooperation were essential to ensuring that the region is not prised apart and taken advantage of. Gusmão (2013) directly challenged the neo-liberal agenda in development:

And we must explore how – in this modern and globalised world – mainstream economic theories are imposed on, or absorbed by, the poor and the weak when these theories cause such harm and only serve the interest of the strong and powerful. (para. 14)

Fittingly Gusmão (2013) said that “great ideas can come from the most unexpected of places . . . from the youngest person or from the smallest nation” (para. 37). It is here that he acknowledges the ideas and forms of knowledge perhaps outside of dominant development discourse, as the possible sites where new solutions emerge. It was particularly remarkable that the Prime Minister of a developing nation publicly challenged one of the pervading aspects of the development project at a significant development forum. Is this the beginning of the gradual demystifying of the underlying premise of progress, and a change in the discourse of development, particularly in the Melanesian and Pacific regions?

In April, 2013, PNG's internet gateway provider, Telikom, announced they would be reducing wholesale prices to internet service providers by 68%, continuing a recent trend toward lower mobile communication prices (Rungula, 2013, March 29). Furthermore, the advancing National Transmission Network, a nationwide project that if completed, will see

high speed internet services spread across the country over an expanding internet network infrastructure. There is reason to believe that mobile internet services will see similar growth rates as that of mobile phones as services develop and prices continue to reduce (Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 2012). It is quite possible, as PNG develops according to the technologies of the times, that more traditional media networks such as television and print, cease to be relevant as PNG moves to a modern, mobile-centric national communication network. This development, along with the already expansive and continually growing mobile phone network, will mean that PNG's communications landscape will be entirely unique, having bypassed the television and print networks that have traditionally be so powerful in 'First World' countries like Australia and New Zealand.

With internet coverage and access improving in PNG and the wider region, blogging and social media technologies will continue to have an increasingly important political and social role. Blogs such as PNG Attitude and PNG MineWatch have established themselves as reliable daily news and blog aggregates and spaces for emerging Papua New Guinean writers and journalists. Key blogging figures such as Martyn Namorong, Emmanuel Narokobi, Leonard Fong Roka, and Nou Vada continue to assert themselves as key critics, commentators, visionaries, and arbiters of social change. The righteous image of the PNG blogger, as a credible and authentic voice, is likely to encourage more Papua New Guineans to join the online conversation.

Bloggers and social media activists, as they rise in prominence as Namorong has, have the potential to lead with new ideas, provide the criticism of political and corporate elites that is essential for the development of PNG as an independent nation. Bloggers and activists in PNG are already making known publicly the routine damage caused by some corporates in PNG, making it more difficult for corporations to cut corners and act irresponsibly. The expanding network of communications in PNG will aid those activists monitoring and making public the transgressions by corporates, forcing them to improve their behaviour in the face of growing sentiment and reports of misconduct and malpractice.

It is PNG's bloggers who are already assuming these monitoring and watchdog roles: PNG MineWatch, for example, remains a committed watchdog to the resource industry in PNG. Coupled with the powerful, emancipatory rhetoric of bloggers like Namorong who are

articulating an alternative vision for PNG, bloggers have a significant role in determining the character of PNG's future: they have an opportunity to lead, and inspire by example, a cohort of emerging leaders and activists, who will contribute to widespread social and political change in the region.

## **5.5 Final remarks**

Development is still the key issue socially and politically in PNG. The continued effort of activists like Namorong, however, has the potential to redefine the term in everyday Papua New Guinean discourse, which would force political leaders to adapt their outlook and approach to development. Namorong is attempting to fundamentally alter the terms for discussion by presenting a counter-discourse; one that attempts to shift power from the dominant western logic of development, to one devised through a Papua New Guinean experience. Widespread changes in public discourse typically precede changes in political direction (Shirky, 2011), so for Namorong, creating a social-political environment where Papua New Guineans are thinking outside of the dominant discourse of development becomes an essential prerequisite to social change in PNG.

As has been previously discussed, development discourse defines the 'Third World' as a point in time on the inevitable path towards the modernity of the 'First World' (Sachs, 2010; Shanin, 1997; Tucker, 1999). This is a dominant world-view that permeates not only western perceptions of history and society, but has colonised the minds of the 'Third World' too. Namorong attacks this dominating world-view. He challenges the fundamental assumption that all societies, nations, and cultures are on a familiar trajectory towards western-defined progress and modernity. Challenging and undermining these dominant perceptions, in the minds of Papua New Guineans, is a huge task and, as this research has shown, Namorong has undertaken it with courage and conviction.

The increasing public delegitimisation of development is probably the greatest potential effect of Namorong's writing. It is this that is the strongest focus for his growing network of supporters. It undermines the established justifications for the extraction of wealth and resources by foreign corporates by debunking the myths of development and progress as purely western conceptions, based on a particular interpretation of the West's history.

In delegitimising this self-justifying premise of western-driven development, Namorong is transfiguring development, offering a different set of organising principles based on Papua New Guinean ideas, ultimately premised on equitable development and the affirmation of identity in difference. The task undertaken by Namorong is to decolonise the minds of Papua New Guineans, and by delegitimising the discourse of development, Namorong hopes Papua New Guineans will be free to think and make decisions independently, and to demand that their politicians and leaders do so too.

Papua New Guineans can observe lessons learnt by other nations that have yielded to development by the terms of western modernity. PNG is in a position to avoid the pitfalls of development that many other countries have fallen in, and those like Namorong, who are expressing these flaws in the development model, argue there is an opportunity to take a better path.

For PNG, whose resources are of great interest to the governments and resource companies of Australia, China, the USA, and Canada (Curran, 2013), solidarity is paramount in ensuring the kind of future for PNG that the writers of PNG's constitutional documents articulated. For PNG to achieve its own conception of equitable development, its citizens and leaders need to be able to not only imagine outside of the myths of western development, but resist its forward influence and construct and enforce policy and legislation that ensure this.

The resistance to western-driven development, by those being subjected to it, is an affirmation of identity and solidarity in the face of a growing global hegemony. It is a statement of autonomy; the ability for a nation or of people to determine their own future, instead of a prescribed and imposed conception of modernity. A public rejection of the western model of development would represent a revolution in the way Papua New Guineans conceive social, political, and economic development, and could lead to a widespread re-structure of the logic underpinning the regions' development.

An important aspect of such optimistic predictions is the fact that a group of Papua New Guinean leaders, through public consultation, have already articulated a viable, local-centric alternative to the western model of development. PNG's National Goals and

Directive Principles (NGDPs) (CPCR, 1974), represent both a criticism of western-driven development, and a uniquely Papua New Guinean philosophy of progress. Activists like Namorong have an existing manifesto to appeal to, one that is integral and intimate in the history of the independent nation of PNG. It is perhaps then true that because an alternative, Papua New Guinean framework for progress already exists, the goal is to reacquaint the public with its poetic idealism, and advocate it as an improvement on the current model of development.

## 5.6 Epilogue

In September 2012, Namorong announced on his blog his plans to return to his home province to live a more private life. He lamented the crackdown on betel nut sellers like himself and the everyday struggles of life in Port Moresby for the city's urban squatters "that breaks the human soul at a certain point" (Namorong, 2012, September 6, para. 6). Life as a self-proclaimed idealist was also hurting Namorong, and he saw a need to adapt and be pragmatic in order to survive. His blog posts almost immediately ceased, which was unsettling, as my subject of enquiry and my much admired hero appeared to have signed off for the last time.

He had hinted however, that a new role, and new opportunities awaited him in his home province:

the current political climate in the province also presents opportunities for constructive dialogue amongst all stakeholders for a way forward for the Province. I hope to join the development discourse when I go back home. (2012, September 6, para. 10)

I felt a sense of optimism from this statement and looked forward to news of Namorong's new endeavours. This news also caused me to reflect on the nature of the blogger, and my own high expectations of Namorong. I had almost forgotten that he was a person subjected to the same kind of life-altering events that affect all people. I realised that I had almost expected him to write indefinitely, forgetting that his vocation was one undertaken in his spare time, and that he must also have pressing realities to deal with in his offline world. I found I had created a heroic image of the blogger as a persisting online effigy.

Namorong's blogging legacy eventually prevailed: in September 2012, he was announced the online, and overall winner of the United Nations Development Program's Excellence in Anti-Corruption Reporting Awards for his work uncovering land-rights abuses and corruption in the issuing of Special Agricultural Business Leases. The award came with a prize of a laptop, and a paid two week visit to Australia to be mentored by journalists and academics. This trip, in February of 2013, provided another opportunity for him to speak at conferences, universities, and in the media.

Namorong, returned revitalised, with a renewed sense of purpose. He created a new visual theme for The Namorong Report, and his posts have again become more frequent.

During his time back in home in the western Province, Namorong undertook a six-month community development role with Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) – a venture often damned by Namorong in his criticism of foreign miners in PNG. The destructive legacy of OTML under the control of BHP Billiton is well acknowledged, and a new phase, with the PNG government as majority shareholder, has begun. Its current ventures include addressing the environmental and social damage the mine has caused, ensuring a more responsible future for the mine, and widespread community consultation.

Namorong (2013, March 28) carefully justified his involvement with a company with such a damned reputation. He argued the damaged cause during BHP's management of the mine will remain for 200 years, and under PNG management, the mine could continue to operate in a decidedly more responsible manner. Namorong argued that for the PNG government to now close the mine would mean that all the damage inflicted by BHP would have been for nothing. Namorong's new pragmatism is driven by a belief that under Papua New Guinean ownership, some positive outcomes can be salvaged from an unfavourable, undesirable situation.

How would an activist, an idealist, take on this role? Namorong (2013, March 28) saw it as a valuable experience, offering insight into the political economy of PNG's resource sector. His new endeavours reflect a person searching for political experience, new perspectives, and opportunities to extract benefits for Papua New Guineans.

Watch this space. One thing is certain, Namorong will not stop using social media to interact with, and influence, the people of Papua New Guinea.

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