
Book review

The Climate Dispossessed

Justice for the Pacific in Aotearoa?

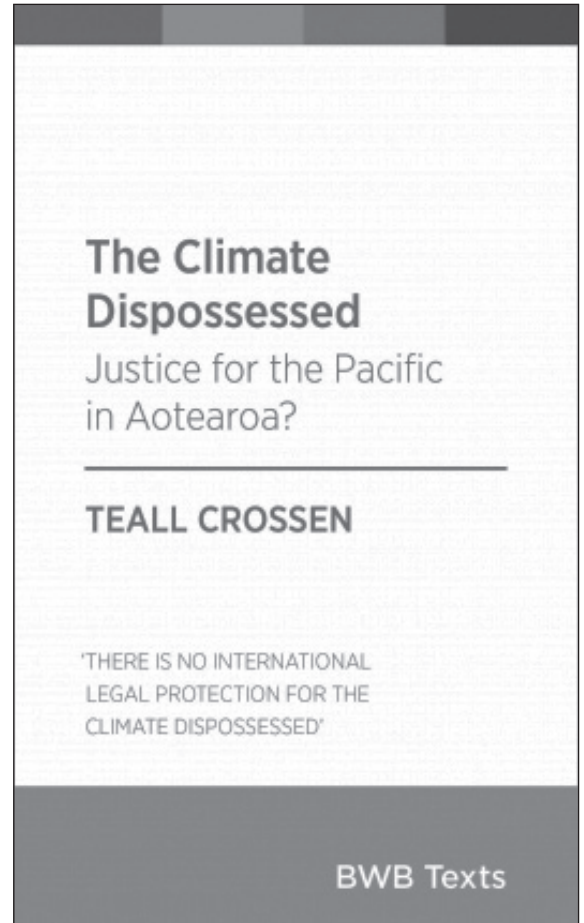
By Teall Crossen

Reviewed by Craig Stevens*

Fridtjof Nansen, in just one event in an action-packed life, led an Arctic expedition in the late 1800s to prove that the sea ice moved in a consistent fashion enough to get to the North Pole. The data from the expedition is proving invaluable in comparison with new data on the evolving nature of the polar region as our climate changes. However, for Nansen more was to follow. The later phase of his life saw him awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for recognising the legal rights of the people dispossessed by war. The so-called Nansen Passport provided people rendered stateless a means of legal identity and enabled travel.

The themes of our changing climate, dispossession and the rights of people come together in Teal Crossen's *The Climate Dispossessed: Justice for the Pacific in Aotearoa?* The book is built around seven chapters that take us from fundamental needs for a healthy society through to the legal realities of giving rights to entire Pacific nations as their homes succumb to rising seas not of their making. In addition, the Aotearoa New Zealand perspective requires consideration from a Treaty of Waitangi standpoint and argues that there is much ground to be recovered.

The author is an environmental lawyer and Green Party politician. Bringing out a non-fiction book on something other than epidemiology during a pandemic is a tough path. However, as acknowledged by many, climate change and global heating have not gone away. In fact, taking a positive view, Covid-19 has provided examples of how communities can cooperate. Also, it has provided unplanned empirical data on how lockdown influences waste, what happens when entire countries dramatically reduce travel, and societal tolerance for cooperation.



Teall Crossen is an environmental lawyer. She has worked with Pacific countries at the climate change negotiations and has advised Forest and Bird and Greenpeace International. Teall currently works for the New Zealand Department of Conservation. She holds a BRS (Lincoln University), LLB (University of Canterbury) and LLM (University of Calgary). Teall stood as a candidate for the Green Party in the 2017 general election and has been selected to stand again in 2020.

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As with many books in BWB Texts series, the compact scale promotes a clarity and focus as there's not much space to muck around. Each chapter starts with an equally compact title and ends with a clear concluding statement. It demonstrates how heterogeneous the region is and each chapter provides a mix of good and bad news. The overarching conclusion brings together the themes of the book and provides some clear steps to take as our changing climate renders iconic island cultures and nations unworkable. In keeping with the accelerating nature of the problem a lot of the activity and details are very recent giving the book a sense of immediacy. With the deluge of information on our changing climate, this human-focused perspective, through the lens of legal rights, makes for a thought-provoking and valuable read.

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