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INTERSTICES 26

Beyond the fixed: Sāmoan digital spaces, errantry, and decolonising architecture

Introduction: Online *siapo* as spatial production

Online *siapo* produced and circulated by Sāmoan women in digital environments constitutes a form of spatial production. Digital *siapo* refers to digitised or digitally produced representations of *siapo*, while online *siapo* describes the posting, circulation, and encounter with those images across social media platforms.¹ This article asks how *siapo* operates architecturally when it appears in digital environments rather than in built or ceremonial settings. Unlike a *fale* (house) or *malae* (ceremonial ground), social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook do not offer a stable architectural site. Yet online *siapo* produces what might be understood as a space without fixed territorial ground: a digital interior lined through pattern, memory, cultural reference, relation formed through hashtags, and diasporic self-making. Its architectural significance lies in this act of lining. Online *siapo* composes a relational digital space in which Sāmoan identity can be oriented, recognised, and enacted.

Siapo is painted barkcloth used functionally and ceremonially in Sāmoa and within Sāmoan diasporic communities. In the terminology adopted here, undecorated barkcloth is referred to as *tapa* and decorated barkcloth as *siapo*. The production of *tapa* and the decoration of *siapo* have historically been associated primarily with women's labour and creative practice.² *Siapo* may line domestic and civic interiors, mark ceremonial exchange, and activate relational space. Although Pacific textile scholarship has recognised its role in delineating and activating Sāmoan social space, its architectural implications have received only limited sustained attention.³ This omission matters because *siapo* does not appear in space as a passive material-cultural object. It contributes to the partitioning, organisation, lining, and activation of relational space.

Vā is central to this argument because it frames space not as contained emptiness or neutral distance, but as a relational field through which people, practices, objects, obligations, ancestors, and places are connected.⁴ Sāmoan writer and cultural theorist Mauaiaivao Albert Wendt describes *vā* as the space of betweenness that gives people and things meaning through relation rather than separation.⁵ In this sense, *siapo* is not merely placed within space; it participates in the tending and activation of *vā*. Online *siapo* extends this spatial function

into digital environments, producing relational sites that are not anchored to a single physical location, territorial ground, or fixed boundary. These sites are activated through practice, pattern, memory, identity, digital circulation, and *vā*.

Extending findings from doctoral research on Sāmoan digital space-making, this article places online *siapo* in critical dialogue with the concepts of errantry and relation developed by Martinican poet, novelist, and philosopher Édouard Glissant.⁶ Glissant develops these concepts in relation to a Caribbean history marked by slavery, colonisation, forced displacement, creolisation, and archipelagic connection. His thinking emerges within a wider Caribbean anticolonial intellectual tradition. Glissant is not used here to replace Sāmoan spatial theory or to frame diaspora as equivalent to rootlessness or exile. Rather, errantry is approached as a companion concept for considering how diasporic spatial practices move across media, memory, image, platform, embodied knowledge, and place without becoming detached from relation. Glissant's archipelagic thought is useful here as a non-totalising way of thinking about connections between distinct places, forms, and identities. It does not require those differences to be resolved into a single origin or universal category. Glissant's English translator Betsy Wing explains that errantry is not idle wandering but includes "a sense of sacred motivation": movement remains purposive even when it is not directed towards territorial possession.⁷ This offers a moment of resonance, rather than equivalence, with Pacific barkcloth traditions, whose ceremonial and functional circulation carries kinship, memory, obligation, and cultural value across island and diasporic contexts. Read together, errantry and relation support an understanding of diasporic Sāmoan identity as mobile without being rootless, and relational without being detached from place. Online *siapo* is errant not because it lacks grounding, but because it moves among material and digital forms, homeland and diaspora, memory and platform, while remaining held through *vā*.

Online *siapo* therefore participates in spatial production: it makes diasporic space without relying upon fixed territorial ground, physical enclosure, or built form. This claim also intervenes in decolonial architectural history. As architectural historian Itohan Osayimwese argues, decolonisation requires more than adding previously excluded objects and subjects to an existing canon; it requires questioning the categories, archives, and disciplinary hierarchies through which architecture has been recognised.⁸ When built form, architectural authorship, enclosure, and material permanence are privileged as architecture's primary evidence, practices organised through textile, ceremony, exchange, memory, gendered labour, and digital circulation are rendered peripheral. Online *siapo* tests these disciplinary divisions by moving between textile and spatial practice, material and digital form, and cultural expression and architectural production. The decolonial contribution of this article therefore lies in changing architecture's terms of recognition and redistributing epistemic authority towards Pacific feminist accounts of how space is already made through relation and the tending of *vā*.

The article therefore argues that online *siapo*—particularly as produced and circulated by Sāmoan women—should be understood as a Pacific feminist spatial practice: a gendered and embodied form of diasporic knowledge that lines digital space, activates *vā*, and changes the terms that architectural history recognises as forms of space-making that are relational, temporal, diasporic, and digital.

Siapo, vā, and the architectural problem

Pacific art scholar Anne E. Guernsey Allen has shown how *siapo* and other textiles mark boundaries, status, ceremony, and social relation within Sāmoan spaces. Related work by anthropologists Heather E. Young-Leslie and Ping-Ann Addo, and by anthropologist and historian of Pacific art Nicholas Thomas, places barkcloth within wider Pacific histories of material adaptation, exchange, and cultural value.⁹ Within architectural scholarship, however, *siapo* has received limited sustained attention as a practice of spatial production. Allen's more recent discussion of Sāmoan textiles and architectural space is an important exception, but the broader disciplinary treatment of *siapo* has continued to privilege its status as craft, ornament, textile, or material-cultural object.¹⁰

Within European architectural theory, architect and architectural theorist Gottfried Semper's account of architecture's four elements provides a revealing point of comparison. Semper associates enclosure with textile production and understands woven boundaries as conceptually prior to masonry walls. His account was informed by a Caribbean hut from Trinidad displayed at London's Great Exhibition of 1851, which he encountered as a colonial exhibition object rather than within its lived social, ceremonial, and environmental setting. By abstracting the hut into evidence for a general genealogy of architecture, Semper translated a culturally situated building practice into a universalising European theoretical framework.¹¹ The comparison with *siapo* has limits, however, because Semper's theory does not account for the gendered and relational knowledge through which *siapo* as textile practice operates in Sāmoan contexts. Although his genealogy can help architecture recognise lining, binding, partitioning, and surface-making as architecturally operative rather than merely decorative, Semper should not become the authority through which *siapo* is finally validated, in the construction of this article's argument. For Semper's spatiality remains one of enclosure as opposed to that of connection. *Siapo*'s spatial significance is already articulated through Sāmoan practices of ceremony, exchange, gendered production, and *vā*. The value of the comparison lies instead in exposing a disciplinary inconsistency: architecture can elevate textile principles when they are mediated through canonising European theory while continuing to marginalise Pacific women's textile practices as craft rather than spatial production.¹²

The architectural problem is therefore not simply that *siapo* has been overlooked by architectural historians and theorists. Rather, the categories through which architecture recognises spatial production have often been too narrow to account for Sāmoan practices organised through relation, ceremony, exchange, gendered labour, and embodied knowledge. When architecture is identified primarily with built form, enclosure, fixity, material permanence, and professional authorship, the spatial work performed by *siapo* becomes difficult to recognise. The exchange and display of *siapo* may therefore be spatially active within Sāmoan worlds while remaining partially illegible within dominant architectural frameworks. This illegibility reproduces colonial hierarchies concerning what is considered worthy of architectural study. It is also gendered: the treatment of *siapo* as textile, surface, or ornament has obscured the architectural knowledge embedded in women's creative and relational practices.¹³

Vā provides a different starting point for recognising this spatial work. Wendt describes *vā* not as empty separation but as the relational space that gives people

and things meaning through context. The interdisciplinary Pacific scholars and practitioners contributing to *Vā Moana* extend this account by showing how *vā* connects living people, ancestors, places, obligations, and cosmologies across time, including under diasporic conditions. *Vā* can therefore accommodate spatial realities that are simultaneously located and mobile, rooted and routed, errant and relational. Yet relationality should not be romanticised as inherently harmonious. *Vā* requires tending, negotiation, as well as attention to power; relationships may connect people while also maintaining boundaries, hierarchies, and gendered obligations.¹⁴

Online *siapo* still sharpens this architectural problem because digital platforms do not provide the stable ground, enclosure, or physical boundedness conventionally associated with architectural sites. Yet online *siapo* continues to organise relations through pattern, memory, identity, cultural reference, circulation, and exchange. Drawing on the dataset and conceptual framework developed through earlier doctoral research, this article approaches online *siapo* as an extension of Sāmoan spatial production into digital environments.¹⁵

Errantry, relation, and diaspora: Terms of use

Glissant's concepts of errantry and relation are used here to reconsider how Sāmoan spatialities might contribute to a more relational and decolonial architectural discourse.¹⁶ They are not considered substitutes for Sāmoan space concepts, but as companion terms that help articulate how diasporic digital practices move across places, media, memories, and identities without being reduced to territorial fixity. Errantry is especially useful for describing movement that does not seek territorial possession, while relation provides a way of understanding identity and knowledge as constituted through ongoing encounters.

Diaspora is not treated here as equivalent to exile. Sāmoan communities in Aotearoa New Zealand include migrants and later-generation descendants whose relationships with Sāmoa are mediated differently through family, language, ceremony, memory, travel, digital culture, and place-based knowledge. Jamaican-born British cultural theorist Stuart Hall approaches diasporic cultural identity not as an essence preserved unchanged after migration, but as an ongoing production shaped through history, difference, and representation.¹⁷ Diasporic identity is therefore neither culturally empty nor guaranteed by uninterrupted access to an origin. It is continually produced through social and cultural relations.

Errantry helps describe movement within this condition, but it is not a synonym for Sāmoan diasporic experience or exile. Glissant distinguishes errantry both from territorial conquest and from the losses associated with exile. The errant journey seeks relation rather than possession and does not require identity to close around a single, exclusive root.¹⁸ In this article, errantry names the movement of cultural knowledge across material and digital forms, homelands and diasporic locations, and individual memories and collective vocabularies. Relation describes what prevents this movement from becoming mere dispersal: identities and meanings are constituted through encounters without being reduced to sameness. Online *siapo* is therefore errant not because it lacks cultural grounding, but because that grounding is repeatedly activated through changing relations.

Glissant's archipelagic thought also challenges colonial spatial imaginaries that represent islands as isolated, remote, and peripheral. Literary scholar Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, whose comparative work spans Caribbean and Pacific literatures, similarly demonstrates how islandness has been shaped by cultural and political assumptions, including colonial cartographies that separate islands from the oceanic relations through which they are constituted.¹⁹ Although Martinique and Sāmoa are culturally, geographically, historically, and politically distinct, Glissant's relational archipelagic imaginary can be placed in dialogue with Pacific writer and anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa's account of Oceania as a "sea of islands": a connected world formed through voyaging, exchange, genealogy, and oceanic mobility.²⁰ This comparison does not collapse or flatten the distinct histories of the Caribbean and Pacific. Rather, it brings into view a shared resistance to colonial spatial imaginaries of island isolation. Read together, these concepts support an understanding of diasporic Sāmoan identity as mobile without being rootless and relational without being detached from place.

Online *siapo*: Method and case studies

This article revisits a dataset of fifty social media posts that were publicly accessible at the time of collection and identified through the hashtag *#siapo*. The posts were selected through purposive sampling and coded according to platform, description, title, hashtags, other tags, followers, date, dimensions, and URL. Rather than classifying the visual characteristics of the barkcloth images, the analysis focused on their accompanying language, particularly the ways in which hashtags situated online *siapo* in relation to identity, family, cultural affiliation, and exchange.²¹ Technical communication scholars Alice R. Daer, Rebecca Hoffman, and Seth Goodman describe hashtags as metacommunicative devices whose functions extend beyond classification and searchability. Hashtags, they argue, have evolved as a rhetorical practice that can also frame a post, emphasise aspects of its meaning, and connect it to wider conversations.²² Viewing hashtags as rhetorical indicators, that is, signals contextual information alongside a post, the study found that the hashtags accompanying *siapo* posts were primarily concerned with *emphasis* and *identity*. Three cases are examined here to show how online *siapo* operates through errantry and relation. Together, they demonstrate how digitisation, visual adaptation, captioning, and hashtag practices allow cultural knowledge and diasporic identities to move across media and locations that are not anchored in territory. Errantry helps describe this movement, while relation identifies the ongoing encounters through which these digital spaces acquire meaning.

The analysis was informed by an Indigenous feminist concern with how disciplinary systems make some forms of knowledge visible while rendering others peripheral. Māori scholar of Indigenous education and decolonising methodologies Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that decolonising research requires scrutiny of the categories, institutions, and methods through which Indigenous knowledge is authorised, extracted, or marginalised. Native Hawaiian feminist scholar Lisa Kahaleole Hall similarly argues that colonialism operates through gendered and sexualised forms that reconstitute Indigenous identities in disempowering ways.²³ Feminism is used here not simply to recover women as producers, but to examine how production, objects, practices, and spatial meanings become gendered through relation. Applied here, this approach asks how architectural

discourse has rendered women's textile and digital practices visible as culture while leaving their spatial knowledge largely illegible as architecture. My position as a diasporic Sāmoan woman informed this interpretation, particularly my attention to forms of spatial knowledge that established architectural categories have struggled to recognise.

The account of continuity and change in Sāmoan material culture developed by New Zealand ethnologist and museum curator Roger Neich provides a basis for interpreting the movement of *siapo* into digital environments. Neich observes that ancestral principles, forms, and cultural intentions may persist even as producers adopt materials and techniques appropriate to changed circumstances.²⁴ Digital production and social media circulation therefore need not be treated as evidence of diminished authenticity. Online *siapo* can instead be approached as an adaptive textile practice through which embodied cultural knowledge moves among material, visual, and digital forms.

Case study 1: Gender, sport, and errant diasporic affiliation

The first case is a 2018 Instagram post advertising an original hand-painted artwork for sale. The online *siapo* has a rectangular format and reconfigures the Golden State Warriors logo, a professional American basketball team based in Oakland, California, through visual conventions associated with *siapo* and *masi*. The hashtags #kd and #warriors refer to Kevin Durant, then a forward for the Golden State Warriors, and American professional basketball. At the same time, the hashtags #tapacloth and #siapo and #handpainted draw on traditional *siapo* by emphasising the hand-painted quality of the work and the use of brown pigments. Here, *siapo*-associated forms connect Pacific cultural expression to a contemporary urban sporting environment that is neither territorially Sāmoan nor culturally singular. These recognisable formal and material qualities position the work within Sāmoan and wider Pacific relational fields, while its sporting references connect it to contemporary urban and commercial culture.

The post therefore brings together visual and social registers that might otherwise be classified separately: Pacific barkcloth, American professional sport, commercial exchange, urban affiliation, and diasporic cultural identification. Rather than representing a singular or territorially fixed Sāmoan identity, the work places *siapo*-associated forms within a contemporary urban sporting context. Sports-development researcher Andrew Grainger's discussion of sport, race, and representation helps situate such associations within wider relations of cultural power.²⁵ Social anthropologist and printmaker Roderick Ewins's analysis of barkcloth and masculinity shows that *siapo* and *masi* are gender-multivalent forms that can mediate aspects of male identity.²⁶ Although this post does not function primarily as evidence of women's authorship, its inclusion follows from, rather than departs from, the article's feminist method. A visual and material practice historically associated with women's production can also mediate Pacific masculinities through sporting and commercial circulation. Distinguishing the gendered conditions of production from the gendered meanings *siapo* acquires through circulation prevents it from being treated as intrinsically feminine and reveals how gender is relationally constituted through production, use, representation, and exchange.²⁷

Read through errantry, the image moves among Pacific visual traditions, American sporting culture, commercial circulation, and diasporic identification without resolving these elements into one stable territorial identity. Read through relation, its meaning is produced through the conjunction of motifs, hashtags, artisanal labour, sporting affiliation, and circulation for sale. Architecturally, the post activates a digital relational field in which cultural form, urban sport, masculinity, and commerce encounter one another.

Case study 2: UrbanNesian hashtags, errant Pacific affiliation, and relational economy

The second case examines a Tumblr record posted by UrbanNesian on 20 June 2014 and titled *UrbanNesian Siapo Print*.²⁸ The digitally composed image uses repeated stylised frangipani and geometric motifs in turquoise to form a rectangular field, with variations in opacity producing overlapping blocks across the surface. The word *Siapo* appears prominently in stylised typography and is enclosed by a yellow border. The post is accompanied by tags including *siapo*, *tapa*, *kapa*, *ngatu*, *masi*, *samoa*, *tonga*, *hawaii*, *aloha*, *urbannesian*, *urbangraphics*, *urbanart*, *design*, *samoanart*, *polynesian*, and *hawaiinei*. These tags perform what the study identifies as identity emphasis: a rhetorical function through which layered and fluid expressions of cultural identity and embodiment are made visible. The gathering of these terms situates the online *siapo* within overlapping Pacific, diasporic, artistic, and urban fields. In particular, the tags bring several culturally specific barkcloth vocabularies—*siapo*, *tapa*, *kapa*, *ngatu*, and *masi*—into relation within a single digital post. Their co-presence does not necessarily mean that the producer privileges a general Pacific identity over culturally specific affiliations, nor does it indicate a rejection of cultural specificity. Instead, the post shows how digital circulation can place distinct cultural forms and vocabularies in encounter with one another. This clustering may be understood as a relational economy of naming and circulation, in which cultural terms retain their differences while acquiring additional meaning through proximity, exchange, and movement. It also gestures towards historical and contemporary networks of inter-Pacific exchange.

Read through errantry, the post moves across visual traditions, cultural terms, technologies, and urban contexts without resolving them into one fixed identity. Read through relation, the significance of these affiliations emerges through their juxtaposition and circulation. The post therefore does more than represent a digitally adapted *siapo* surface. Through repetition, opacity, typography, naming, and tagging, it organises a relational field in which multiple Pacific identities and barkcloth traditions are encountered together. Architecturally, the post composes a digital interior through pattern, typography, naming, and juxtaposition, allowing several Pacific affiliations to be encountered within one relational field.

Case study 3: Diasporic relational naming and family

Another post in the dataset, uploaded by the Instagram account *rosievai*, shows a close-up of barkcloth accompanied by the caption “Something’s [*sic*] are worth more than gold,” a hibiscus emoji, and the hashtags *#Tapa*, *#Siapo*, and *#FamilyIsForever*. The hashtags do more than identify the object. Together, they situate the image within an affective and relational field connecting barkcloth,

cultural value, and family. When I presented this post at an anthropology conference, an audience member questioned my description of the barkcloth as *siapo*, reading its visual characteristics instead as Tongan *ngatu*. I realised that I had followed the uploader's use of #*Siapo* rather than classifying the object solely according to its presumed visual provenance. This encounter exposed a methodological tension between material attribution and diasporic relational naming. The audience member attended to the textile's visual and cultural specificity, while my analysis had followed the uploader's own use of #*Siapo*. These approaches answer different questions: one asks about the probable cultural provenance of the barkcloth; the other asks how the image was named, connected, and circulated within a diasporic digital setting. The uploader's caption and hashtags perform a related but different operation: they connect the image to overlapping vocabularies of *tapa*, *siapo*, family, memory, and value.²⁹

Here, embodied knowledge refers to cultural knowledge carried through making, memory, recognition, display, exchange, and relational obligation. In diasporic contexts, such knowledge need not be confined to uninterrupted access to customary materials, homeland locations, or ceremonial settings. It may also be encountered and enacted through family interiors, remembered patterns, photographs, digital images, captions, and hashtags. The digital does not replace embodied cultural knowledge; it becomes one of the environments in which that knowledge is recalled, adapted, circulated, and recognised. Analysis of the wider dataset identified recurring themes of diasporic identity, embodied cultural knowledge, family, and relational connection. These findings support the argument that the posting and circulation of online *siapo* can operate simultaneously as self-making and space-making.³⁰

Read through errantry and relation, the Rosie post is not culturally rootless. Rather, it moves among visual form, cultural terminology, digital circulation, family memory, and diasporic recognition. Its hashtags create connections without resolving them into a singular identity: barkcloth and platform, cultural knowledge and family feeling, material form and digital image, individual expression and collective recognition are brought into relation. *Vā* remains the primary Sāmoan spatial framework; Glissant's terms help articulate how these relations move across diasporic and digital conditions.³¹

The architectural significance of the Rosie post lies in this relational work. The image does not merely represent barkcloth within a neutral digital container. Through its caption, hashtags, circulation, and recognition, it helps to line and activate the digital environment. It produces an orientation through which users encounter cultural form in relation to family, identity, memory, and other users. Online *siapo* therefore participates in spatial production: it makes diasporic space without relying upon permanent ground, physical enclosure, or built form.

Across the three cases, online *siapo* undertakes distinct but connected forms of relational work. The first brings Pacific barkcloth into encounter with sport, masculinity, commerce, and urban affiliation. The second gathers multiple Pacific visual and linguistic traditions without resolving their differences into a single identity. The third connects barkcloth to family, memory, cultural value, and diasporic naming. Together, the cases show that online *siapo* is not a stable visual category but a spatial practice enacted through making, adapting, captioning, tagging, circulating, and recognising.

This argument requires a shift from understanding architecture primarily as material enclosure towards recognising architecture as the organisation and activation of spatial relations, whether online or in person. When architectural history privileges the tangible, fixed, measured, and permanent, spatial practices organised through textile, exchange, gendered labour, memory, and digital circulation become difficult to recognise.³² The wider dataset demonstrates that Sāmoan women's cultural production is also spatial production, while the three cases illustrate how multiple gendered meanings emerge through the production and circulation of online *siapo*. It does not ask to be admitted into architecture as an unusual digital object; rather, it reveals the limitations of architectural categories that have obscured relational and gendered forms of space-making. Read through *vā*, errantry, and relation, online *siapo* is mobile without being rootless and adaptive without being culturally empty. It carries embodied knowledge across changing material and technological conditions while producing relational settings for diasporic belonging. Its decolonial significance lies not merely in opposing Eurocentric architectural discourse, but in centring a Pacific feminist account of how space is already made through relation, cultural practice, and women's creative labour.

Implications for decolonising architectural discourse

Recent decolonial architectural scholarship has demonstrated that architecture's disciplinary categories are not historically neutral.³³ Colonialism shaped not only buildings, territories, and institutions, but also the terms through which architectural knowledge was organised: distinctions between modern and traditional, centre and periphery, architecture and craft, and expert and vernacular knowledge. Architectural historians Irene Cheng and Charles L. Davis II, together with architect and scholar Mabel O. Wilson, show that racial thought was constitutive of modern architectural discourse, informing concepts such as progress, character, climate, style, civilisation, and national identity.³⁴ Architectural historian Itohan Osayimwese similarly argues that decolonial architectural history must do more than add previously excluded objects and subjects to an existing canon. It must also reconsider the methods, archives, geographical boundaries, and disciplinary categories through which architectural history itself is produced.³⁵

This distinction is central to the present argument. Recognising online *siapo* as architecture does not simply require adding a new object to an otherwise unchanged discipline. It requires questioning why built form, enclosure, material permanence, and authorship have been treated as primary evidence of architectural production, while textile, ceremony, exchange, memory, gendered labour, and digital circulation have remained peripheral. Glissant's concepts of errantry and relation support this shift by challenging systems of knowledge organised around singular roots, territorial possession, and closure. They do not, however, substitute for an Indigenous decolonial method. Architect, urbanist, and architectural historian Yat Ming Loo describes decolonisation in architecture as a process of questioning and dismantling inherited hierarchies of space, power, and knowledge, including binaries such as centre and periphery, East and West, and modern and traditional.³⁶ Online *siapo* tests these disciplinary divisions by moving between textile and spatial practice, material and digital form, cultural expression and architectural production. Smith further clarifies that decolonisation concerns not only the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, but also

the transformation of the structures through which knowledge is gathered, interpreted, classified, and authorised.³⁷ In this article, that transformation begins by taking *vā* seriously as spatial theory rather than treating it as cultural context added to an architectural analysis. *Vā* identifies space as relational and as requiring activation, care, negotiation, and maintenance.

Recent Pacific architectural scholarship develops this proposition as a matter of practice. Tongan architect, researcher, and architectural historian Charmaine 'Ilaiū Talei positions *vā* as a praxis capable of shaping architectural work from conception and design through procurement, construction, and occupation. Further, in collaborative work with Sāmoan architect, researcher, and theorist Pesetā Fa'amatuāinu To'oto'ole'aava Lama Tone, 'Ilaiū Talei considers how Pacific genealogical relations and placemaking practices can inform architecture in Aotearoa.³⁸ This scholarship does not merely illustrate a decolonial theory developed elsewhere. It creates Pacific terms through which architectural research and practice can themselves be reorganised.

Anthropological approaches to materiality further complicate any simple opposition between material object and social relation. Anthropologist Daniel Miller's work approaches materiality not as inert substance, but as participating in the processes through which social worlds and identities are constituted.³⁹ Architectural anthropologist Marcel Vellinga similarly argues that architecture's material, social, and symbolic dimensions cannot be understood in isolation from one another.⁴⁰ Read alongside *vā*, these approaches help clarify that online *siapo* does not become immaterial when it circulates digitally. Rather, its materiality is extended across barkcloth, image, screen, platform, caption, hashtag, and circulation. *Vā* adds a specifically Sāmoan account of how these forms become spatially meaningful through relation, care, obligation, and embodied practice.

From this perspective, *siapo* does not need to be translated into a conventional architectural object in order to become spatially significant, nor does its digitisation make it immaterial. Its making, exchange, display, recognition, and circulation already organise relations among people, memories, identities, obligations, and places. Online *siapo* extends this spatial work into digital environments. Its architectural force lies in its capacity to line and activate a relational field without depending upon permanent enclosure or territorial ground. The decolonial contribution of this article therefore lies in changing architecture's terms of recognition. Online *siapo* makes visible a form of spatial production carried through Sāmoan women's embodied and relational knowledge. It illustrates that architecture's inherited emphasis on the fixed, measurable, professionally authored, and materially permanent has obscured practices through which space is also made: through textile, memory, circulation, naming, exchange, and the tending of *vā*. Decolonising architectural discourse in this context means not simply making the discipline more inclusive but allowing Sāmoan spatial concepts and practices to alter what the discipline understands architecture to be.

Conclusion

This article has argued that online *siapo* constitutes a form of Sāmoan spatial production. Its architectural significance lies not in its resemblance to a building or conformity to inherited categories of object, ornament, or craft, but in its capacity to line, connect, orient, and activate digital space through Sāmoan relational values.

Reading online *siapo* through *vā*, errantry, and relation reveals a spatial practice that is mobile without being rootless, diasporic without being reducible to exile, and digital without being detached from embodied cultural knowledge. *Vā* provides the primary spatial framework: space is produced and sustained through relations among people, practices, obligations, memories, ancestors, and places. Glissant's errantry and relation operate as companion concepts, helping to articulate how those relations move across media, geography, and diasporic experience without requiring identity to become fixed around a single point of origin.

The article makes two related contributions. First, it identifies Sāmoan women's production and circulation of online *siapo* as a gendered form of architectural knowledge. Second, it demonstrates how Indigenous Pacific spatial concepts challenge architectural frameworks organised around territorial ground, material permanence, enclosure, and professional authorship. Online *siapo* does not seek admission into architecture as a marginal digital supplement. Instead, it reveals that architecture's established categories have been too narrow to recognise spatial practices already operating through relation, textile, memory, identity, and exchange.

To describe online *siapo* as a Pacific feminist spatial practice is therefore to make both a spatial and political claim. The practices through which Sāmoan women create, post, tag, circulate, and recognise *siapo* do not merely represent diasporic identity; they participate in making the relational environments through which that identity is lived, negotiated, and renewed. Their significance lies not only in making women's cultural production more visible, but in showing that such production is already spatial and architectural. Online *siapo* therefore demonstrates that an architecture without fixed ground need not be without place, embodiment, or cultural accountability. It may instead be held through *vā*: oriented through cultural memory, sustained through exchange, and continually remade through relation.

NOTES

1. Marie Karamia Müller, "Siapo Online: A Gendered Analysis of Digital Space," PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2018, ii, 1–2.
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3. Anne E. Guernsey Allen, "The Tie That Binds: 'siapo,' Western Cloth, and Samoan Social Space," *Pacific Arts*, nos. 3–5 (2007): 94–103; Müller, "Siapo Online," 1–2.
4. Lana Lopesi, A.-Chr. Engels-Schwarzpaul, Emily Parr, Arielle Walker, Billie Lythberg, and Albert L. Refiti, "Tōmua Introduction: Vā, Wā and the Spaces in Between," in *Vā Moana: Space and Relationality in Pacific Thought and Identity*, edited by Albert L. Refiti, A.-Chr. Engels-Schwarzpaul, Lana Lopesi, Billie Lythberg, Arielle Walker, and Emily Parr (ANU Press, 2026), 1–15; Albert L. Refiti, "Vā Atoa and the Ever-Moving-Present in the Samoan Cosmogony Solo o le Vā," in *Vā Moana*, 17–38, <https://doi.org/10.22459/VM.2026>.
5. Mauaiva Albert Wendt, "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," *Span*, nos. 42–43 (1996): 15–29, especially 15; Lopesi et al., "Tōmua Introduction," in *Vā Moana*, 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.22459/VM.2026>.
6. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (University of Michigan Press, 1997), 5–22.
7. Betsy Wing, translator's note, in Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 211.
8. Itohan Osayimwese, "From Postcolonial to Decolonial Architectural History: A Method," *kritische berichte* 49, no. 3 (2021): 16–38, <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/kb/article/download/109690/105160>.
9. Allen, "Tie That Binds," 94–103; Young-Leslie and Addo, "Introduction," 12–21; Nicholas Thomas, *Tapa: Barkcloth Paintings from the Pacific* (Ikona Gallery and Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, 2013).
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