PACIFIC DATAVIZ CHALLENGE '26

Pacific Islands ARE LOSING the Map

*Le Pacifique Sud perd la carte

BY BENJAMIN BARTHOLET

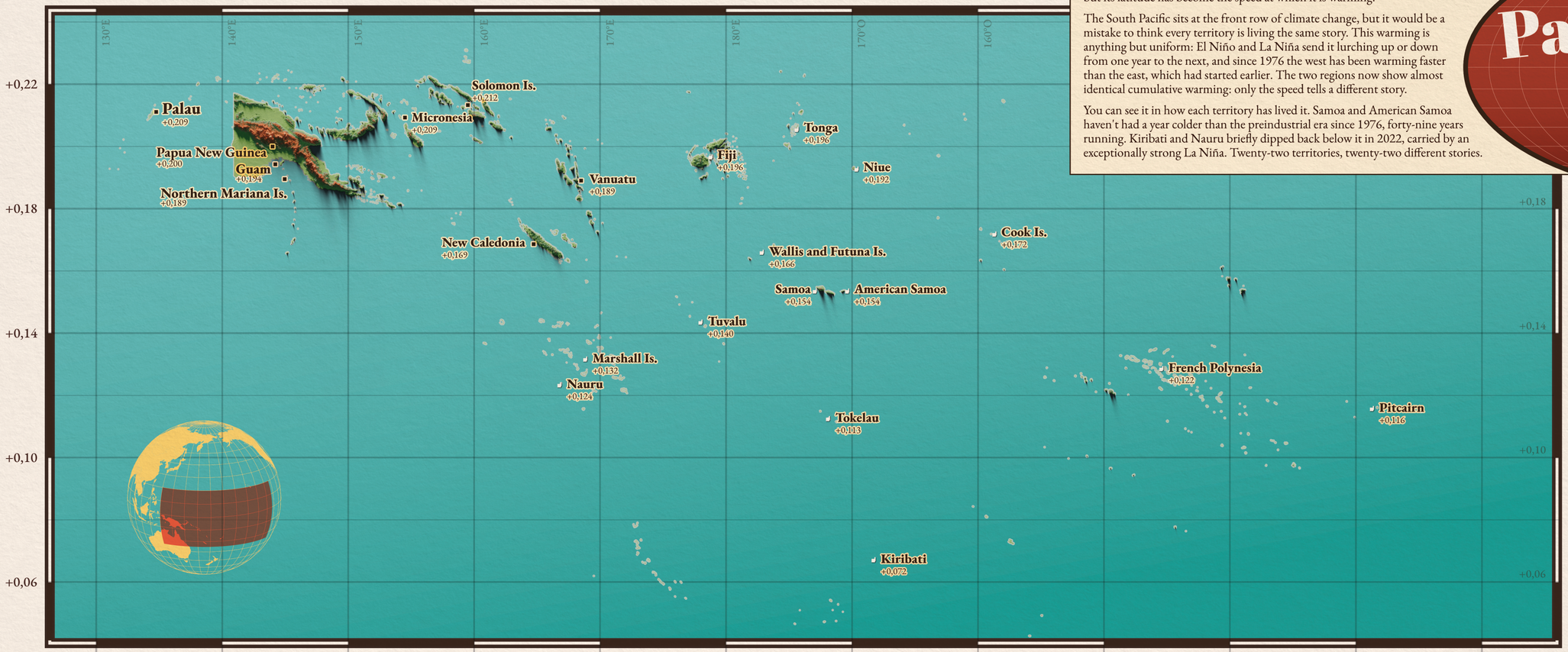
Look closer at this map: it isn't really one. Every territory keeps its true longitude, but its latitude has become the speed at which it is warming.

The South Pacific sits at the front row of climate change, but it would be a mistake to think every territory is living the same story. This warming is anything but uniform: El Niño and La Niña send it lurching up or down from one year to the next, and since 1976 the west has been warming faster than the east, which had started earlier. The two regions now show almost identical cumulative warming: only the speed tells a different story.

You can see it in how each territory has lived it. Samoa and American Samoa haven't had a year colder than the preindustrial era since 1976, forty-nine years running. Kiribati and Nauru briefly dipped back below it in 2022, carried by an exceptionally strong La Niña. Twenty-two territories, twenty-two different stories.

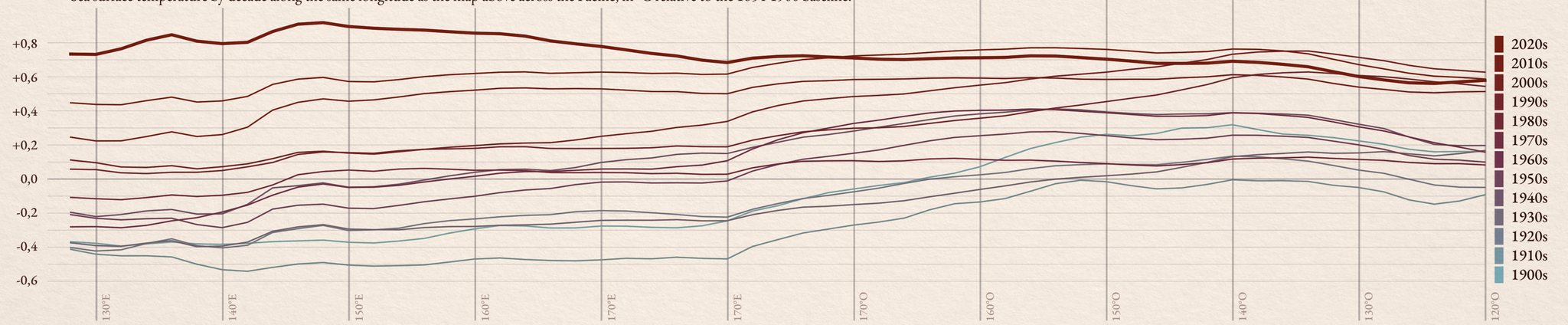
THIS IS NOT A MAP, THIS IS A TRAGIC RACE.

South Pacific territories, latitude remapped by warming speed relative to their 1976-2025 trend, in °C per decade. Longitude unchanged.



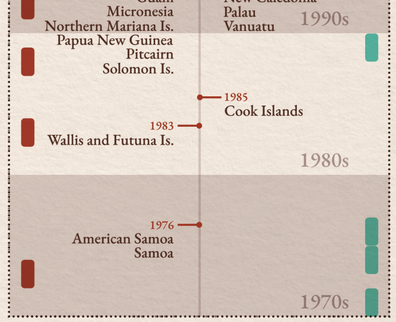
SAME OCEAN, DIFFERENT SPEEDS.

Sea surface temperature by decade along the same longitude as the map above across the Pacific, in °C relative to the 1854-1900 baseline.



WHEN EACH ISLAND LAST RAN COLD.

The most recent year each territory's average temperature fell at or below its 1850-1900 baseline. For most, that year is decades behind us. Moderate to very strong (1-2C° anomaly) El Niño / La Niña events are shown on the sides.



Data Analysis, Data-visualization and Design by Benjamin Bartholet for the Pacific Dataviz Challenge 2026. « Perdre la carte » : old french expression meaning being confused, becoming crazy. | Websites: trab.studio - github.com/telohtrab/islands-are-losing-the-map

Sources: ERSST v5 (NOAA), Surface Temperature Anomaly (ST_ANOM - Pacific Data Hub, SPC), Copernicus DEM GLO-30 (ESA), ONI Index (NOAA CPC via ggweather.com) | Tools: QGIS, Blender (Cycles), Affinity 3, Python (GDAL/OGR, matplotlib, NumPy, pandas, netCDF4) Claude Code has been used as an assistant to the exploratory and coding phase, no visuals have been generated through Artificial Intelligence.