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Capital and Inequality in Rural Papua New Guinea

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Introduction

As international capital inserts itself across the Pacific, its benefits and burdens tend to be unequally distributed among governments, corporations and different groupings of local people. The emergence of inequality is clear enough in itself—the ongoing conflict and controversy surrounding the distribution of gains from extractive and other capital-intensive projects and their negative social and environmental impacts speak to this. However, there is ambiguity in how capital-intensive projects, coupled with the social contexts and pre-existing inequalities in which they operate, shape the form, magnitude and persistence of these inequalities.

In this edited volume, we will present accounts of how capital-intensive projects in the mining, oil and gas, and agro-industry sectors unfold to generate specific inequalities across diverse settings in rural and semi-rural Papua New Guinea (PNG). We focus on the beginnings of such

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projects, as imaginations and socio-political transformations in their anticipation often have major repercussions on the way they impact the people involved and set precedents for the distribution of gains and losses. The ‘beginning’ of a mine can stretch over decades of prospection and sales of the mine from one multinational corporation to the next before extraction even begins.

We thus follow the processes that reinforce existing inequalities, and create novel inequalities, through the presence of capital-intensive projects from their inception. We are also interested in how those inequalities become reproduced over generations. We intend to show that the complexities generated by each project and their interaction, in a regional context, pose challenges to interpretation that can only be handled through intensive, ongoing, long-term and longitudinal ethnographic investigations.

Studying Social Inequality

The study of social inequality at national and international levels focuses on capital, wealth and other economic factors relevant to ‘life chances’ in a globalised world. In such a world, these factors are also relevant to people’s experience of stratification within a local setting (in conjunction with gender, ethnicity, age and other categorical distinctions). However, the relational characteristics of social fields and the positions of people within them (the various forms of ‘cultural capital’) are relevant to life chances, especially in non-market or only partially marketised economies. The significance of inequalities in social processes and human well-being have been contested since before the social sciences came into being, and they remain so (Payne 2017). Nevertheless, the extent of wealth inequalities and inequalities in mortality and longevity within and between nation states are well enough understood for these to become objects of policy for international institutions and nation states (Houweling et al. 2001; Soubbottina 2004; European Trade Union Institute 2012; Keeley 2015), as well as, more recently, for large transnational corporations (TNCs): for example, via concepts of ‘corporate social responsibility’ and ‘sustainable development’ (Rondinelli and Berry 2000; Jenkins and Yakovleva 2006; Gilberthorpe and Banks 2012).

The study of inequality and its modes, which used to be a staple of political anthropology (e.g. Berreman and Zaretsky 1981; Tilly 1998, 2001), suffered somewhat with the turn from ‘grand narratives’ and the

‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ that they entailed. Nevertheless, there has been some resistance to these post-structuralist perspectives and the views held to justify them. Furthermore, post-structuralist insights generate their own hermeneutics of suspicion in detecting the exclusions and discrimination tacitly incorporated into habitual modes of thought and analysis, which sometimes silence local voices or discount non-Western modes of agency. Thus, many older concerns relevant to issues of inequality are actually more prominent than formerly, not only because of the social ramifications of globalised capitalism, but also because of an increased sensitivity to the need to take account of the various modes of agency at work in the generation of inequality. The implication of broad and narrow social processes in the production and reproduction of inequalities therefore remains a focus for research. Theorising contemporary currents of globalisation and its significance for various kinds of inequality has, accordingly, remained a feature of the social sciences, including anthropology (e.g. Friedman 1994; Biersack and Greenberg 2006; Schuerkens 2010; Hann and Hart 2011; Friedman and Friedman 2013). In the ethnography of Melanesia, such concerns have also received careful treatment (e.g. Akin and Robbins 1999; Knauff 1999, 2002; LiPuma 2000; Robbins and Wardlow 2005; Wardlow 2006, 2020; West 2016; Bainton et al. 2021).

Anthropological theory and research have been integral to broader discussions about modernity and development, just as national and international interventions aimed at improving local conditions for communities ‘in need’ have always been of interest to anthropological theorists and ethnographic researchers. Today, both empirical research and anthropological high theory continue to address inequality and its relation to social conditions, be they pre-modern, modern or post-modern configurations (e.g. Scheper-Hughes 1993; Friedman 2000; Tsing 2005; Ferguson 2006; Li 2007; Smith et al. 2010). With the mistrust of older grand narratives there is a greater emphasis on social engagement, political commitment and amelioration of life conditions as a basis for research in the writings of sociocultural anthropologists, but older ideals of emancipatory critique grounded in systematic objectivist analysis continue to be represented in anthropology (e.g. Durrenberger 2012). Accordingly, concerns about inequality find expression in almost all parts of the contemporary anthropological scene, in explicit and implicit formulations. And with the increased theoretical stress on ethnography as the engine of anthropological thought, newer kinds of studies (of corporations and market mechanisms) have diversified the social domains and discursive fields relevant to issues of inequality.

The research results presented in this volume are focused upon the transformation of modes of inequality as a historically (relatively) non-market local economy is drawn into intimate and routine relations with the global circulation of capital implicated in large-scale extractive and large-scale plantation projects. All contributors seek to provide an ethnographic account of the processes that transform patterns of inequality among people indirectly and directly exposed to large-scale capital-intensive projects—such as a mine, a biomass or a liquid natural gas project—on a quotidian basis.

Ethnography of Small-Scale Life-Worlds

The research presented in this volume is a contribution to the anthropology of the encompassment of local, situated ways of life by institutions of globalised capital and the frictions thereby engendered (Tsing 2005). Broadly practice-theoretic, its focus is on the social micro-processes through which historically novel forms of inequality become entrenched under local manifestations of global capital imperatives. In that respect it is continuous with traditions of critical investigation and analysis that are as old as the social sciences, and evokes the ‘Manchester School’ strands in the anthropology of Africa that charted and questioned—if, often, only implicitly—the impact of European investments on local cultures (Burawoy 2000). However, today’s globalised economy demands understandings of the relationship between inequality and ‘community development’ initiatives, for, in an officially decolonised world, state and international standards require assessments of large-scale projects prior to and during their development (World Bank 2004). Anthropological and sociological investigations of large-scale developments reflect these interests (Kirsch 2006; Benson and Kirsch 2010; Shamir 2010; Bainton and Macintyre 2013; Banks et al. 2013; Gilberthorpe 2013a; Welker 2014).

Through this volume, we contribute to the understanding of the formation and transformation of local-level inequalities resulting from the anticipation of, and interaction and engagement with, large-scale globally financed projects. Filer (2007: 139–40) once likened projects of the ‘Melanesian version of “heavy industry”’ to a four-legged ‘creature’ or ‘beast’, composed of the mining industry, the oil and gas industry, the logging industry and the oil palm industry (or, in fact, any large-scale agro-

industrial plantation industry). This volume explores three of the four industries: mining, oil and gas, and large-scale agro-industrial plantations. A question we probe is whether the specific type of inequality that develops depends on which kind of industry people are facing. Mining, for example, is relatively localised in contrast to the other industries, and this has often led to a concentration of wealth from compensation and royalties among a select few officially recognised 'landowners', whereas in logging and agro-industrial developments, which cover vast areas and where compensation is much lower and often only accrues to a few members of the state elite, local inequalities may be less pronounced or take different forms through the impoverishment of the displaced landowners. But, although mines are localised, their impacts need not be: through subcontractors (security firms, dealers in machinery and fencing, transport firms, catering and cleaning companies) and the effects of waste on the environment, the social compass of a mine's effects are considerable.

This volume not only expands the corpus of empirical knowledge on resource extraction and large-scale plantations, but also attempts to reveal connections between these different types of industry, by, for example, showing how plantation projects articulate with other similarly internationally financed projects, like mining. One of the projects observed (PNG Biomass) involves the investment of an oil and gas company (Oil Search) in eucalyptus plantations for the supply of fuel for electricity generation, aimed at satisfying the considerable power requirements of new and existing mining projects. In PNG, at least, this diversification strategy was pioneered by mining company Placer, which built up the country's biggest tree plantation (Healey 1967). By observing linkages between the sectors, we seek to bring attention to the cumulative impact of simultaneous and globally linked capital-intensive projects, and their impact on local life-worlds.

We focus on rural and peri-urban areas of PNG, where the processes leading to the creation of novel forms of inequality associated with capital-intensive projects are more pronounced than in urban areas. We recognise, of course, that rural PNG has never been disconnected from the rest of the national and international economy. After all, there has been a long history of migration from rural to urban areas (or to mining and plantation projects elsewhere), with feedback effects in both directions (Strathern 1975; Levine and Levine 1979; Curry and Koczberski 1998). The Australian colonial government had already promoted labour migrations to plantations, which had repercussions

for local social relations (Hayano 1979; Boyd 1981; Ward 1990). At the same time, peri-urban areas, particularly around the larger cities and towns, have become more and more drawn into new social and economic relations (Beer 2017). Nevertheless, peri-urban and rural areas are often transformed at a significantly accelerated pace by the arrival of large-scale, capital-intensive projects, as we will show in this volume.

All contributions to this volume thus offer new perspectives on a continuing engagement with anthropological debates regarding the discipline's place in academic and policy discourses on issues of inequality, and how anthropologists in practice are implicated in the processes of ameliorating or, sometimes, exacerbating these issues. Through a multi-sited (in the case of the chapters on Wampar), comparative and longitudinal ethnography that is informed by long-term fieldwork, the research results suggest further possibilities for refining ethnographic research methods addressing inequalities, especially in their articulation in today's contexts of a global political economy. Methodologically, this volume engages modes intended to bridge gaps in access to knowledge, by trying to involve people in the communities where anthropologists do their studies (in the villages and in local academic institutions) through this open-access publication.

Most of the authors have been working on different topics in their field sites for decades, which gives their contributions the historical depth necessary to identify social change and inequalities. Moreover, their long-term perspective enables a differentiation between economic bubbles (such as the vanilla boom in the East Sepik Province) and long-term economic impacts leading to lasting social inequalities.

Large-Scale Capital and Social Inequality in PNG

Inequality has been a significant theme in the anthropology of New Guinea since the middle of the twentieth century. Earlier studies (Modjeska 1982; Strathern 1982; Godelier 1986; Errington and Gewertz 1987; Strathern 1987; Gewertz and Errington 1999) provide a rich starting point for considering the articulation of significant differences between pre-existing categories and groupings of people (connected to cultural values, gender, gift circulation and production regimes) and the development of

various configurations of differentiation (between generations, genders or communities) associated with large-scale mining and other resource extraction projects (Filer 1990; Hyndman 1994a; Bonnell 1999; Bainton 2009; Johnson 2011; Bainton and Macintyre 2013; Gilberthorpe 2013a; Hemer 2013). These changes of configurations have to be compared with changes occurring elsewhere in PNG due to more general trends, ranging from colonialism (Fitzpatrick 1980), the introduction of cash crops and small-scale capitalist enterprises (Epstein 1968; Finney 1973) to the advent of modernity and urbanisation (Levine and Levine 1979). Gewertz and Errington (1998: 345) diagnosed a

shift in the nature of inequality in Papua New Guinea; a shift whereby differences in life's circumstances and prospects were increasingly understood in class terms. No longer seen as relatively transitory, these differences were shifting from degree to kind, commensurate to incommensurate ... Simply put, there was general recognition that an indigenous urban elite was both well established and self-perpetuating, largely as the product of a highly restrictive western-style education ...

In PNG, which has many mining ventures as well as oil and gas fields, anthropologists and allied social scientists have been prominent as consultants (Banks 1999; Filer 1999a; Burton 2000; Macintyre 2003; Bainton 2009), as ethnographers of the effects of large-scale projects on local communities (Hyndman 1994a; Jorgensen 1997; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1997; Kirsch 2006; Bainton 2010; Jacka 2015a) and as a source of reflexive insight into the nature of such encounters (Gerritsen and Macintyre 1991; Filer 1999b; Ballard and Banks 2003; Rumsey and Weiner 2004; Filer and Macintyre 2006; Golub 2007a, 2014; Weiner 2007; Bainton and Macintyre 2013; Gilberthorpe 2013b; Jacka 2018; Bainton 2021). The body of work produced by anthropologists of mining has reflected on environmental impacts, the resistance and transformation of social practices in place prior to projects, the reconfiguration of imagined futures and the lives of workers involved in a local Melanesian setting, whether as labourers (Imbun 2000, 2006; Filer 2021) or executives (Golub and Rhee 2013). Issues relevant to concerns about justice (distribution of risk, costs and benefits, generational and gender inequalities) have been conspicuous in these writings, even when not explicit. A prominent concern for local communities, as well as for non-governmental organisations, governments and corporations sensitive to their international image, has been the environmental damage that has

often occurred in areas that the state will not or cannot protect (Hyndman 1994a, 2001; Kirsch 2001, 2007, 2008, 2014; Ballard and Banks 2003; Jacka 2018).

PNG has a long, often fraught, history of mining (Healey 1967; Nelson 1976; Halvaksz 2006, 2008). However, it was only with the local resistance to the Panguna mine on Bougainville, and the civil war to which it led, that social scientists attended to the impact of large-scale resource extraction on local communities in PNG. These events had a profound impact on how resource extraction companies, and the PNG state, seek to mitigate the risk of conflict, with anthropologists prominent in conducting social impact studies (Filer 1999a; Burton 2000; Macintyre 2003; Weiner 2007; Burton et al. 2012). Anthropologists who had previously conducted research among the people later affected by resource extraction (Hyndman 1994a, 1994b; Jorgensen 1997, 2006; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1997) also began investigating how mines impact on the environment and existing patterns of livelihood, especially after the unprecedented environmental destruction of the Fly River by tailings from the Ok Tedi mine (Banks 2002; Hyndman 2005; Kirsch 2006, 2007, 2008). Others have documented the new economic opportunities mines offer individuals, households and communities, not only as employees (Imbun 2000, 2006; Macintyre 2011; Filer 2021) but also as entrepreneurs or rentiers living off compensation payments (Banks 1996, 1999; Filer 1997; Bainton and Macintyre 2013; Gilberthorpe 2014).

Large-scale mining in PNG has not led to the widespread pauperisation found in Africa or South America, for the state recognises the rights of customary landowners to compensation for the use of their land. During negotiations for the establishment of the Porgera mine in 1988 and 1989, the state instituted the so-called 'development forum', a series of tripartite discussions between the state, the developer and the local landowners to agree on the distribution of benefits from the mine, which has become the norm for further negotiations (Filer 2008). The forced closure of the Panguna mine in 1989 had further strengthened the position of landowners elsewhere in PNG, who have been successfully negotiating for additional benefits in the form of equity positions, trust funds for future generations, preferential employment and business spin-offs (Banks 1996, 2003; Filer 1999b, 2008, 2012a; Gilberthorpe and Banks 2012; Imbun 2013; Golub 2014; Jackson 2015; Banks et al. 2017). There is an inherent paradox in that some of the most detrimental socio-economic changes in mining areas in PNG (e.g. large-scale in-migration, violence and crime,

substance abuse, sexual violence) are due to exactly the benefits that flow from the mine to local landowners. This in turn leads the mining companies to invest in ‘corporate community development’ programs that are inherently conservative in nature, and support ‘traditional’ institutions (Banks et al. 2013, 2017).

Who counts as a rightful landowner and stands to benefit from these opportunities is highly contested, however. The advent of resource extraction has invariably led to a reframing of local social forms to meet the expectations of the state and companies (Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1997; Jorgensen 2007; Gilberthorpe 2013a; Bacalzo et al. 2014; Minnegal et al. 2015; Minnegal and Dwyer 2017; Skrzypek 2020, 2021), including the invention or ‘forging’ (Golub 2007b) of unilineal descent groups out of previously fluid cognatic fields (Guddemi 1997; Jorgensen 1997; Ernst 1999; Golub 2007a, 2014; Weiner 2007). Ballard and Banks (2003:297) go so far as to state that ‘local communities are only summoned into being or defined as such by the presence or potential presence of a mining project’. This jostling also creates losers between and within communities and regions, losers that are affected by the negative impacts, but receive none of the benefits of large-scale projects. They observe how others gain wealth, while they suffer, and the resentment this generates has already sparked conflicts, as, for example, around the Porgera mine (Jacka 2001, 2015b, 2019; Golub 2021), around the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in Hela Province (Main and Fletcher 2018; Main 2021a, 2021b), and already much earlier at the Panguna mine on Bougainville—where, as Filer (1990) has shown, compensation flowed to individual titleholders (usually older males) whose failure to redistribute these payments among their kin completely marginalised younger adults, who were then at the forefront of a radical movement that eventually forced the closure of the mine.

Women have also often been politically sidelined in negotiations between landowners and mining companies and have not been able to participate in the new economic opportunities created by the mine to the extent that men have (Beer 2018). Where land was lost to mining or where agriculture was given up entirely, women have further lost social status as they no longer contribute to the household economy and have therefore become more dependent on their men. Most of the negative social impacts of the mine, from large-scale in-migration and alcohol-induced violence to increases in polygyny and extramarital affairs, have disproportionately

affected women and children (Hyndman 1994b; Bonnell 1999; Macintyre 2003; Johnson 2011; Menzies and Harley 2012; Hemer 2017; Wardlow 2019, 2020).

But even among those who stand to benefit from large-scale capital-intensive projects, there is a wide diversity of outcomes, partly due to the politics of distributions of these benefits. A study of the financial benefits from the Porgera gold mine (Johnson 2012) has shown that, while payments from the mining company to various stakeholders and the government can be tracked, there is a fundamental lack of data on how that money is further distributed and spent by landowners and the national and sub-national government. Those who reach a position to distribute benefits often stand to disproportionately gain from them, and this development has much to do with the local history of contact and engagement with the extractive company. It is the early brokers, mainly men who are better educated than their peers, who set in motion a development that ends in them—or sometimes their children—holding important positions in the structures set up to distribute benefits (Golub 2014; see also Church, this volume; Dwyer and Minnegal, this volume).

Exactly how the distribution of mining ‘benefits’ articulates with pre-existing and newly emerging patterns of inequality between local communities and, subsequently, how the distribution and consumption mechanisms initiated by development processes transform and differentiate culturally defined units, therefore remain topics of great analytical significance (Ballard and Banks 2003; Banks 2009, 2019; Golub 2014; Bainton and Owen 2019). Bainton and Macintyre (2016), for example, described how revenue-rich Lihirians spent vast sums on elaborate customary rituals and ceremonial distributions as well as on four-wheel-drive vehicles. For the less cash-fortunate, the surplus from mining was elusive: small business did not lead to mining-based prosperity, and small-scale entrepreneurs then expressed their disappointment in destructive acts such as allowing ‘chickens to die, smashing the can crusher and letting several hectares of vegetables to rot in the ground’ (Bainton and Macintyre 2013: 156), acts that Bainton and Macintyre characterise as ‘ferocious egalitarianism’. As royalties and compensation payments are concentrated in a few ‘affected communities’ on the main island, this has generated resentment among the other communities who criticise the people living in the ‘affected communities’ as ‘greedy show-offs’ (Bainton 2009: 23). Most Lihirians expressed dissatisfaction with social inequality and had to cope with the fact that aspirations for moral

equality and material wealth were denied: their anger was mostly directed at the mining company and national government (Bainton 2010). How, why and with what consequences do long-lasting, systematic inequalities in life chances distinguish members of different categories of persons in these settings (Tilly 1998)? Such questions have been difficult to answer for local contexts in PNG.

In contrast to that on mining, the literature on the socio-economic effects of large-scale plantations on local communities in PNG is limited in scope, despite the fact that plantations have a long history in PNG (Lewis 1996). There has been previous research in PNG on plantations dedicated to oil palm (Koczberski and Curry 2005; Koczberski 2007; Koczberski et al. 2012, 2018; Tammisto 2018), coconuts (Panoff 1990), commercial sugar cane (Errington and Gewertz 2004) and (mainly smallholder) coffee (Sexton 1986; West 2012) and cocoa (Curry et al. 2007, 2012). It too has documented various aspects of inequality that develop with the introduction of such plantation schemes. The issue of inequality is much more attenuated in contrast to that existing around mining and oil and gas projects, but it nevertheless arises, and is clearly visible, especially on oil palm or sugar cane plantations, which depend on a clear labour hierarchy between workers, supervisors and managers (Errington and Gewertz 2004; Tammisto 2018). The creation of a whole landscape of plantations, which crowds out previously existing forms of livelihoods, has been likened by Li (2018), in another context in Indonesia, to a form of ‘infrastructural violence’, as it introduces a series of predatory labour relations and choke points for the capture of rent, creating stark differences in life chances.

In addition to the unequal distribution of benefits from these projects, one of the main dangers lurking behind large-scale plantations is the dispossession of customary landowners due to the large demand for land for these projects. Thus, a lot of recent attention to plantation projects in PNG has focused on the mechanisms known as Special Agricultural Business Leases (SABLs), through which agro-industrial companies have acquired long-term leases over land without the knowledge or consent of most of the local people (Filer 2011a, 2011b, 2012b, 2017; Nelson et al. 2014; Gabriel et al. 2017). Some of these projects were a front to engage in logging, to take out the valuable timber, and then never or only perfunctorily set up oil palm or rubber plantations, leaving behind dusty

or water-logged and quickly deteriorating roads, a desolate landscape and shattered dreams of development (Global Witness 2017, 2020; Roberts 2019).

These negative effects are even more pronounced in descriptions of the socio-economic impacts of industrial tree plantations for wood and energy production, which are among the fastest growing monocultures worldwide and have been promoted as carbon sinks. In a review article on the socio-economic effects of industrial tree plantations, Charnley (2005) demonstrates that the establishment of industrial tree plantations often leads to concentration of land ownership, loss of customary access to local resources and socio-economic decline. While large rural landowners and a few plantation employees might benefit, job creation is usually not sufficient for sustainable community development, and is often not available to the more marginalised members of the community (Charnley 2005; Malkamäki et al. 2018). Industrial tree plantations also have a propensity to create a large number of social conflicts. Recent literature reviews on such conflicts (Gerber 2011; Malkamäki et al. 2018), as well as a number of classical and more recent case studies on the establishment of industrial tree plantations (Guha 1990; Peluso 1992; Barney 2004; Gerber et al. 2009; Gerber and Veuthey 2010; Lyons and Westoby 2014; Richards and Lyons 2016), have shown that the majority of these conflicts are due to the displacement of local smallholders and the curtailment of their use of the local ecosystem and thus a significant portion of their livelihood.

This Volume

The five case studies in this volume come from two distinct areas within rural PNG: the mostly rural but increasingly peri-urban Markham Valley in Morobe Province, and the rural and very remote northeastern corner of Western Province. This volume is thus not only a comparison between different forms of large-scale capital-intensive projects, but also a comparison between the two biggest provinces in PNG: Western Province, the largest province by land area; and Morobe Province, the most populous. The two provinces have had rather divergent histories in terms of engagement with large-scale extractive projects, and occupy different positions in the economic landscape of PNG.

Morobe Province saw one of the earliest engagements with large-scale mining in PNG, with the discovery of gold at Edie Creek in the early 1920s, the subsequent gold rush after 1926, and the installation of large-scale dredging operations in the 1930s (Healey 1967; Nelson 1976). After the Second World War, the Markham Valley quickly became the most important area in PNG for cattle ranching (Connell 1979) and mechanised farming, first by expatriate planters, but soon also by local entrepreneurs (Crocombe and Hogbin 1963; Jackson 1965; Fischer 1996; Lütke 1999). With the completion of the Highlands Highway in 1965, the city of Lae became the gateway to the most densely populated areas of the country, and quickly developed into PNG's most important port and industrial centre. Large-scale extractive industry in the form of mining has only recently made a comeback in Morobe Province, with the development of the Hidden Valley mine and the Wafi-Golpu prospect.

In contrast to Morobe, Western Province was an economic backwater for the whole of the colonial era. Plantation development, so central for the economic life of colonial Papua, remained miniscule in the Western Division (Lewis 1996), and logging only took place on a small scale, with the first foreign-owned large-scale logging companies only becoming interested in the area in the 1980s (Wood 1996). This all changed with the development of the Ok Tedi mine (Hyndman 1994b), and the resulting large-scale environmental catastrophe caused by the pollution of the Fly River (Kirsch 2001). Despite the many years of operation of the Ok Tedi mine, however, Western Province remains one of the most impoverished provinces, with the third-lowest per capita income in PNG (Allen et al. 2005).

Three contributions to this volume also take advantage of a unique contingency: the Wampar in the Markham Valley, an ethnic group that has been studied in depth over decades, is soon to become integral to two large-scale projects: mining and industrial tree plantations (biomass and palm oil). Chapters 2, 3 and 5 refer to long-term research among Wampar and their engagement with large-scale economic projects. Schwoerer, Church and Beer have extensive and recent experience of the communities being drawn into these projects and try to chart the processes whereby social life becomes substantially redefined by its encompassment by the rationales of several TNCs.

The first two chapters, by Schwoerer and Church, focus on claims to ownership of land as one of the central features through which inequalities develop. Land is perennially contested, and with capitalist interests in the mix, conflicts only multiply, which also creates new hierarchies of power and dependence within landowning groups, as both cases show. Tobias Schwoerer shows in Chapter 2 how recent changes in PNG's Land Act and the concurrent development of large-scale industrial tree plantations in the Markham Valley have generated widespread conflicts centred around land that accentuate social, economic and political inequalities within and between social groups among the Wampar. Under current land regulations in PNG, plantation companies can directly engage with customary landowners to access customary land for their purposes. The landowners' decisions to enter into an agreement with one of the two companies competing for land for tree plantations (oil palm and eucalyptus) are shaped by unequal flows of information and existing political alliances. The desire of many Wampar to engage with a company is as much generated by promises of wealth as by the opportunity to secure a legal collective title over their claims to land. Both companies offer to facilitate registrations of Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs) for the customary landowners to access their land. As companies compete, this has led to the duplication of ILG applications within a clan, contrary to the widely circulating notion among government officials that only one ILG can be approved per clan. This form of land registration, in which only parts of a clan are represented in an ILG, threatens to exclude social groups with competing claims, and thus creates novel inequalities, as the first ILG to successfully incorporate and register a title to land tends to set precedents and could dispossess others from rights to land or exclude them from decision-making powers.

Willem Church analyses in Chapter 3 how legal competition around extractive projects can lead to political inequality before such projects begin. By examining three formative periods in the history of the proposed Wafi-Golpu copper/gold mine in Morobe Province, he argues that this competition constitutes a positive feedback process that drives the assembly of politically unequal factions among customary land claimants. The chapter recounts how there was a wide range of possibilities as to who exactly would eventually benefit from Wafi-Golpu when prospecting first began in 1977. However, as cases moved through the courts and communities became settled in the vicinity of the mine, early incumbents became increasingly socially, economically and legally entrenched. In turn, well connected and educated individuals were those

best placed to draw together the coalitions necessary to challenge or defend incumbent positions. In the case of Wafi-Golpu, the result of this history has been hierarchical factions, topped by antagonistic members of the local elite, linked to their followers in networks of clientelistic dependence, all perfectly set up for the lopsided distribution of mining benefits. By recounting this case, Church argues that positive feedback in this process explains why the specific beneficiaries of a given project are highly contingent on idiosyncratic historical events, while economic inequality itself is far more robust with respect to local cultural, political and ecological differences across PNG.

Monica Minnegal and Peter Dwyer present a case study from the PNG Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in Chapter 4 and focus on an element already present in the first two chapters: the question of leadership and who ultimately will represent the community in negotiations with project developers. As an extractive industry consolidates in a greenfield, particular men tend to emerge as brokers, acting to negotiate relations between members of their own community and representatives of the state, the companies and neighbouring communities. To the extent that such men are recognised and feted by outsiders, they are vulnerable to becoming complicit in, or submerged by, an ethos of inequality that, initially, they sought to manage on behalf of their constituents. In contexts of these kinds, those men may contribute both to differentiating the domains that they purport to bridge and to enhancing inequalities in their home communities. Such brokers may be powerful, but they are also morally ambiguous individuals—people who cross social boundaries and whose motives and loyalties are thus always open to question. Ultimately, then, these men may experience a personal sense of alienation, failure and loss.

The next two chapters are focused on the effects that anticipation and ideas of a possible future have on people not yet, or only partially, affected by increasing inequalities, and the repercussions this has on ideas of morality. In Chapter 5, Bettina Beer considers changes in the ethical life of the Wampar of the Markham Valley, based on discussions of stinginess and gossip about sharing of food recorded in the 1970s, as well as ethnographic vignettes from fieldwork in 2013 and 2017. She suggests that the social inequalities tending to develop under increasing capital investment and consumerism in the Markham Valley are one reason among others for the changes of values described. The growing importance of money and the desire for consumer goods are implicated in

perceived violations of reciprocity, land sales, theft and fraud, as well as in hasty investments in various ‘fast money’ schemes, or the establishment of risky business ventures. Growing social inequality also leads to new forms of competitive displays of wealth, such as children’s birthday parties and fundraising events for school fees (or journeys to sports/church events). As feelings of relative deprivation have spread, and the gap between the desire for goods and the means to get them has steadily widened, discussions of values and the behaviours that they should motivate have become more frequent. These discourses are ubiquitous among relatively impoverished Wampar, but also among the wealthiest, who seek to emphasise the scale of the projects they finance and the concern for the community that motivates them.

Bruce Knauft, in Chapter 6, explores the effects that ripple outwards from areas most directly impacted by mining or petroleum/LNG projects into surrounding areas, and the entrainments of expectation and experienced inequality among peoples not directly impacted by the primary activities of resource extraction. In the Strickland-Bosavi area of PNG, as in many other rural areas in the country, the mere promise of resource development produces cultural dynamics and inequalities that are nonetheless evident. Knauft links the resonating chain of expectations and inequalities that both connect and differentiate areas more or less directly impacted by large-scale resource extraction—its promise, expectation and anticipation. Thereby exposed are the larger dynamics and trajectories of inequality that both connect and polarise peoples who are taken to benefit more, or less, from resource extraction. This throws into relief the illusion that the impact of major resource extraction projects is primarily at the centre of the resource site and its immediately surrounding areas.

In the afterword, Chapter 7, Glenn Banks takes up the themes of this volume and discusses them in relation to his own empirical work on inequalities in the Porgera Valley in the early 1990s. He discerns three central strands running through most of the case studies: the importance of land as a factor in the development of novel inequalities; the issue of leadership and its contested nature in representing the communities affected by resource developments; and the various information flows that structure—but also contest the morality of—inequalities. He combines these reflections with household surveys conducted around the Porgera gold mine in the early to mid-1990s and again in 2019, and finds that persistent inequality is structured around the four axes of geography, gender, hierarchy and residential status.

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