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***‘Em i Stap Bilong En Yet’*: Not-Sharing, Social Inequalities and Changing Ethical Life Among Wampar**

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Introduction

This chapter will consider changes in the ethical dimensions of collective life among Wampar, Markham Valley, Papua New Guinea (PNG), based on discussions of ‘thick ethical concepts’ such as ‘stinginess’, ‘shame’ or ‘gossip’ recorded in the 1970s, as well as ethnographic vignettes from fieldwork in 2013 and 2017/18.¹ I focus on different economic activities: on transfers of food, money and consumer goods including sharing, distribution and perceived violations of reciprocity—themes that have been discussed in the literature on Melanesia under the keyword of ‘moral equivalence’ (Burridge 1969; Barker 2007). More recently, ethics has become a ‘hot topic’ in anthropology (cf. Mattingly and Throop 2018), with diverse theoretical approaches (Mahmood 2012; Laidlaw 2014; Mattingly 2014; Keane 2016) and empirically based contributions, out of which only a few focus on morality in Melanesia (e.g. Read 1955;

1 For feedback and discussion on the topic of this paper, I thank Don Gardner, Doris Bacalzo, Willem Church and Tobias Schwoerer; participants of colloquia at the Departments of Ethnology in Hamburg, and Lucerne; and of the workshops on social inequalities at the 2017 and 2019 conferences of the Association for Anthropology in Oceania.

Barker 2007; Robbins 2013; Busse and Sharp 2019). In this chapter, I will try to link the ethnography of current discourses on ethics and social inequality among Wampar-speakers in the Markham Valley to recent anthropological debates.

In the context of anticipated large-scale resource extraction, expectations of upward mobility and participation in the global economy increase drastically in the local population. Wampar experience changes resulting from immigration, urban growth and other effects on their social and physical environment. During the prospecting phase of mining, subcontractors and companies selling machinery, fences, catering and logistics to mining companies open opportunities for some local families and not for others. The middle-class lifestyle known from adverts, movies and visits to town seems to become available to Wampar villagers. The prospecting phase often takes decades and can produce greater changes to local social relations and, perhaps, to the environment, than actual resource extraction. The effects of 'pre-mining', as well as mining itself, connect issues described in this chapter to other chapters in this volume describing situations closer to mining (Church, Chapter 3) or even those remote from it (Knauff, Chapter 6).

Growing economic inequality, increased consumption of industrial products, and the conspicuous presence of global capital is hard to miss in the coastal area around Lae, PNG's second city, which has been exposed to colonial and missionary presence for a century (Fischer 1992; Beer and Church 2019). Early ethnography (Fischer 1975) indicates that social relations among Wampar at that time could be characterised as emphasising equivalence in a Burridgean sense (Burridge 1969; Knauff 2007). This involved favouring sister exchange in marriage, or delayed exchange in bridewealth (often after the birth of one or more children), and a stress on sharing. Negotiations of such relations in the growing presence of global capitalism have become a topic of discussion among Wampar, as among many (even most) other ethnic groups in PNG. Today, sister exchange has been given up (Beer 2015), and bridewealth negotiations have become more flexible and pragmatic, at least partly due to the interethnic situation of many married couples. However, underlying ethical assumptions about sharing as formulated in early Wampar ethnography are still evident in the context of growing social inequalities. Although now embedded in Christian morality, non-sharing remains negatively evaluated and subject to social sanctions such as gossip and sorcery accusations.

In the literature on PNG, the desire for 'development' and 'modernity' has been described and discussed in detail. Among Wampar over the last 20 years, positions vis-à-vis large-scale capital-intensive projects have been diverse and heterogeneous: some criticise the loss of commitment to close-knit kin ties and the community, as well as to land and gardening as a subsistence economy. In this context 'greed', 'stinginess' and the avoidance of sharing are discussed. These discourses on the state of social relations are not new, as I will show, but they have become more frequent and urgent as Wampar, positioned differently in emerging social hierarchies, reflect on social relations and their positions within these hierarchies.

Stinginess, Greed and Gossip

Sensitivity to transfers of valued items between people is a human universal (cf. Antweiler 2016: 110ff; Keane 2016: 15), and interpersonal as well as intergroup transfers are always likely to reflect existing relations and to affect their ongoing trajectory as recipients and givers negotiate the significance of the transfer and its social context.

Transfers, then, cannot be of one piece: in addition to variations in the quantitative dimensions of the transfer as a dimension of their significance (relative to a socio-economic context, social norms), the motivations of the transferor and the reactions of the transferee, as well as the wider social ramifications of these, make for differences between transfers. Sharing, for example, does not usually involve a concern for reciprocity, while reciprocal relations need entail no sharing, beyond a mutual concern to service and continue the relationships involved.

Recently, scholars (Woodburn 1998; Widlok 2013; Schnegg 2015) have expressed some concern with anthropology's tendency to focus on reciprocal relations and the values associated with them as the most significant social form. Here I focus on Wampar responses to transfers, as these relate to who shares what with whom, with a view to showing how the increased circulation of money and commodities has affected evaluations of folks relative to an understanding of Wampar traditions in the context of increasing social inequalities. With more money circulating and the significance it has for life chances, problems of free-riding have become more apparent and violations of values are frequently discussed.

Early Wampar texts portray a person who does not share with others, and is thus categorised as greedy and/or stingy, as becoming the subject of gossip that, rightly, occasions feelings of shame. Wampar generally try to avoid a reputation for stinginess through generosity, but often suspect or accuse others of this failing. In this section, I will discuss in detail talk involving ethical concepts such as stinginess and greed, and the gossip it promotes, as couched in the Wampar language, since some do not have an equivalent in Tok Pisin (TP, the most widespread lingua franca in PNG). If there are such equivalents, for example on ‘gossip’ (*tok baksait* in TP), I will discuss them too because they are essential to emerging national discourses. The terms, and discussions of them, that I present were given to Hans Fischer by his interlocutors in the 1970s. The terms are still in use and I have heard them in conversations, conflicts and diverse everyday social interactions during fieldwork from the late 1990s to 2018. I present my own material in the present tense, despite the span over which it was collected, but do so only for the sake of the reader—it does not mean my interlocutors in Gabsongkeg village are people ‘frozen in time’, as will become clear in the following section on global entanglements and their consequences.

The Wampar make use of the sense of smell to talk about stinginess. *Muteran* means ‘to smell’ or ‘to stink’, as well as ‘to be stingy with something’: *Mpi ongan emar, imut*, ‘If a pig dies, it stinks’, or *Ngaeng o kai gea imut inin en gaen*, ‘That man is stingy with banana’.² Stinginess encompasses a wide range of behaviours, including the demand that somebody asks before taking food. The use of *muteran* connotes that stinginess is like a strong, offensive stench as described in the following texts, which Hans Fischer recorded in the 1970s.³

Stingy [*muteran*] man and stingy woman do not let others take their things, like their banana, coconuts, betel nuts, betel pepper, their possessions, their sugar cane, or their garden products. If somebody takes something from them, they grumble: ‘Who told you that you could take my betel nuts, pick my betel pepper or break my sugar cane? You have to ask me first, and then you can

2 *Imut* is specifically used for decomposing human and animal corpse but not for general unpleasant body odours of living organisms, which are labelled *renen ferentseng* or *ufin* (*funufineran*, emanating a bad smell, *rain ufin*, fart).

3 Unless otherwise indicated, the following quotes are from unpublished transcripts of texts recorded by Hans Fischer in 1976. His interlocutors were Gufose–Immanuel (1935–?) and Kupik–Emonteng (1915–1990).

take it.' If a woman has good manners, and things are taken from her, she'll not say anything at all. If she hears about someone taking something, she'll just say: 'It's just one thing. It's everyone's thing. It's not something for only sisters or brothers; it's for everyone.'

The stingy person, they imply, acquires a reputation that follows them around like a bad smell. The use of *imut* also alludes to the fact that having something and not sharing it is in many cases difficult to hide. The vocabulary for odours of highly desirable foods that should be shared is more sophisticated than in English or German. The delicious smell of roasted meat (or other roasted food) *ntsedz* is, for example, a specific smell term. It describes smells that can be perceived from a great distance, revealing the preparation of highly appreciated food. Therefore, one either must share with household members and kin, or roast meat or fish in the garden, or at night:

There is a woman who is a very stingy woman. She does not even give food or anything else to her parents-in-law. When she goes fishing and takes the catch home, she does not unpack the fish but keeps them (in her bamboo tube). It's only when her in-laws are asleep that she takes everything out. She unpacks the fish and cooks it while everyone is asleep so that her parents-in-law do not see anything. She also only eats by herself. She puts the leftovers away, and on the next day, when her parents-in-law have gone away, she brings out the food, cooks it for her children and eats with them or with her husband. When she prepares food, she does not give anything to her parents-in-law. They just sit there, and she eats. She eats while looking somewhere else and does not say anything.

Wampar language has two further expressions that overlap with 'stingy' and are used less frequently. One, *rai dangi*, has 'to be jealous' as its pivotal meaning (also 'overprotective', 'thrifty').⁴ *Rai dangi* is frequently used to talk about people who are possessive or easily become jealous in a relationship; it is used to talk about sexual jealousy or of couples who spend too much time together. It can also be used for money and things: *Yai umu raum dangi en moneng*, 'you are jealous (stingy, thrifty) with money' (*mangalim* something or to be envious, TP). Alternatively, it can be used in the sense that somebody is too firmly attached to things:

4 Burbank (2014) discusses translations of 'envy' and 'jealousy' in different languages and sociocultural contexts and the basic inequity aversion and negative social comparison that is expressed in one or more 'emotives'.

When people see a stingy woman or a stingy man, they say to each other: 'Do not take their things or keep their things because they are a stingy person. Whatever your eyes see, it actually "belongs" to them. If you take it, you will hear from them that it is not right.'

The second expression is *mara gwarog* (literally 'loving eyes', akin to TP *ai gris*), mainly meaning 'to like, to love, to desire': *Ngaeng imu mara gwarog en moneng*, 'the man loves (saves) money'. This phrase can be used like 'stingy' or 'greedy', as well as implying that somebody desires money too much. For men and women being stingy concerning guests, and especially in-laws, is considered particularly negative:

Another man is like this: When he got some meat, he would not give anything to his parents-in-law or his brother-in-law. When he brings it home, his wife cooks it, and they eat together without giving anything to his in-laws. When they finish eating, he says to his wife: 'Put my leftovers away. When you cook again, I will eat them.'

If a man with good manners is married to a stingy woman, then when she eats, she just looks down, and does not call other people or the sisters or the brothers of her husband to give them the leftovers. She does not call over other people.

Stingy people avert their eyes (*samasam-eran*) and say nothing when the circumstances raise the matter of sharing. When their attitude is known to fellow Wampar, a stingy person is expected to be ashamed. However, people have different sensitivities and some care more about their reputation than others. Shame or embarrassment are often expressed and given as a reason to stay away from social events for a couple of weeks or months depending on how serious the conflict was. Even if a person is not ashamed, her/his kin might be and expect her or him to maintain a low profile.

Wampar described the opposite of stinginess as 'having good manners, being generous' (*mpe*), which can be said of men and women (*ngaeng* or *afi a mpe*):

When somebody from another village visits his brother or cousin, but is not given any banana or betel nuts, he might approach the son of his brother or cousin who'll give him something. If his stingy brother or cousin comes to visit him, he still gives them something anyway, so that they eat and chew betel, and drink coconut water. He still takes care of them. This is a man with good manners.

Shaming through gossip (or reputational questioning) was and still is a widespread negative response to non-social behaviour. The most important term for gossip is *yawin* (*tok baksait* TP),⁵ 'gossip, defamation, slander, character assassination, untrue tales'. *Edza amu yawin en a gea*, 'I gossip about him'. *Afi imu yawin en eran*, 'The women slandered each other'. *Dzob yawin* can be translated as 'defamatory talk', it covers 'true' and 'false' stories about a person, about which the persons concerned might or might not know about; it is also used in a biblical sense *Oteg a dzob yawin*, 'Do not bear false witness' (The Bible Society of Papua New Guinea 1984). Some Wampar explained that it can have the same meaning as *dzob muam*, 'untruth' or 'untrue tale'. As it says in another text: *Ngaeng Wampar ges etao dzob yawin efa ram a furan ongan*, 'The Wampar see *dzob yawin* as something bad'. At the same time, it is part of endless everyday discussions about the behaviours of others. People accuse each other of *yawin*, and there is *yawin* about people practising too much *yawin*.

Someone ashamed by gossip, bows his/her head or turns away on meeting somebody, or actively avoids others altogether. As Wampar say, an embarrassed person 'hides his/her face'. The proper verb is *meatseran*, 'to be ashamed of, to be embarrassed'; also 'to be shy, to feel embarrassed'. *Edza ameats* then means 'I am ashamed'; the noun is *meats*, 'shame'. There are several specific phrases formed with *meats*, such as possessives, *gea meats*, 'his shame'; *ifu en a meats*, 'he suffers from shame' (or: 'is afraid of shame'); *engap en a meats*, 'he is ruined by shame'; or *erem a meats ari garagab ongan*, 'he gives shame to another man'.⁶ *Ngaeng imu ram a furan da emeats egwaro*, 'A man who has done something bad, is ashamed and looks down'. *Ngaeng engop en a meats, esesaran*, 'When a man is ashamed, he turns away'. There are different situations when people feel ashamed: When someone has stolen something, and it becomes generally known,

5 There are further terms for gossip: *dzob gangkan* 'insignificant speech' or *dzob inin* 'gossip, tattle'; *mpu-ran* 'to chat, talk glibly, chatter'; *rawedz-eran* 'to talk about many things, chat' (cf. Fischer and Beer 2021).

6 Shame is frequently used to characterise interactions between boys and girls, men and women as well as topics related to sexuality and pregnancy. For instance: *Garafu afi emeats en a garafu maro debareg gentet inin*, 'Girls are ashamed in front of boys and stay away from them'. *Afi uri gea emeats en sun en a ntsigintsigeran*, 'This woman is ashamed of being close to her husband'. *Afi fureran emeats en mpomeran a gab ofo, da esesefa gab inin*, 'Pregnant women are ashamed of walking through the village, therefore they walk only outside the village'. A newly married woman or a woman who has given birth recently is also feeling embarrassed. Women and men among themselves are not ashamed when they are naked, although women should never undress entirely. These feelings of embarrassment have consequences for rules regarding washing in the small streams around the village and the river: washing places for men and women are strictly separated. Although men sometimes pass a washing place of women, they will look away, will not greet, and pretend they have not seen anybody.

not only the thief but also his relatives suffer shame. If people are ashamed of having wronged somebody, they will give food to that person, but only after having stayed away from others for a period. On such an occasion, they shake hands and eat with him and his relatives.

Imagine a man is ashamed because he shot other people's pig or killed their dog or stole their sweet potatoes, yams or taro. People will abuse him, shame him, and he does not go to them or ask them for anything because he is ashamed. Only later, will he give them food, shakes their hands and eats with them. Then his shame is over.'

Sometimes the shamed person leaves the village for a time:

If somebody does something terrible and is very ashamed, then he goes away and looks for work with white people. When there are problems with a woman, or he killed someone else's pig or just any pig, then he is humiliated.

In the 1970s, Fischer's interlocutors explained that one 'has shame in the blood' as well as 'in one's head'; it occupies one's thoughts, but is also a bodily sensation. Even if nobody saw who did it, if the news spreads that something has been stolen the thief feels shame, and it takes time until the shame is gone and his 'skin becomes whole again' (orig.: 'Shame is over, and his skin comes back', *Meats empes a gea rene gangkan wasif eama*).

Fischer's texts show that quite specific ideas about 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour were widely discussed and formed an important part of the fabric of sociality. In discussing behaviours and social situations, people simultaneously argued about the facts and about the values they implicate: stinginess, good manners/generosity and greed. These 'thick' emic concepts (Williams 2006 [1985]: 129ff) were used to characterise interpersonal relations based on transfers, all of which are integral to egalitarian social relations. Such concepts, as Bernard Williams emphasised, are evaluative and action-guiding, but also depend upon the facts of people's actions and motivations (ibid.: 140–41):

Of course, exactly what reason for action is provided, and to whom, depends on the situation, in ways that may well be governed by this and by other ethical concepts, but some general connection with action is clear enough. We may say, summarily, that [thick ethical] concepts are 'action-guiding'. (ibid.: 140)

Being a 'smelly person' provides others with reasons for sanctions of that person's antisocial behaviours through gossip and shaming, which might encourage that person to avoid others or change his or her behaviours.

Today the dependence of individual Wampar on immediate social networks has become weaker than in the 1970s. For most people, it is not difficult to leave the village for some time, they can stay with relatives or friends in distant places or the next town and return to the village after enough time has passed for whatever conflict has cooled down or is even forgotten.⁷ With growing economic inequalities, some wealthy people based on their standing and economic influence can also limit to some degree the damage that gossip can do, as discussed below in the case of Matias, a wealthy landowner who has plots in most important places along the highway and owns the land of the market.

Thus, social sanctions have lost something of their effectiveness. However, thick ethical concepts still play an essential role in everyday discourses among Wampar-speakers and affect people's social standing. Their significance is particularly reflected in the socialisation of Wampar children who are continually encouraged to share and not to be stingy. In today's transformed economic environment, these thick ethical notions might still support egalitarian ideals such as sharing with others and being generous in redistributive events, but, at the same time, these events (e.g. children's birthday parties, weddings, funerals) provide opportunities for conspicuous consumption and competition.

Global Entanglements and Their Consequences

I argue that social inequalities tending to develop under increasing capital investment and consumerism in the Markham Valley seem to be inevitable, but their consequences do not unfold as a unilinear process, as some of the economics and political science literature on globalisation and/or 'modernity' presumed (cf. Lewellen 2002): resistance in local contexts is common, and different long-term historical developments reflect local specificities.

7 Census data has shown that many Wampar have more than one household in which they stay for some time for economic or other reasons. Several interethnic couples maintain households in the place of origin of each partner and children of such unions can continue to use both affiliations.

Populations in the Markham Valley have interacted with outside forces since the end of the nineteenth century. Early in the 1920s, some Wampar individuals had close contact with the Lutheran mission and to the representatives of colonial administration, which enabled them to access educational resources not available to most others. Access to education, permanent cash income from employment in town, or extra income from investments in raising chickens or in local shops have increased economic inequality over the decades. In 2017, I investigated a random sample of 30 households from my census and found great differences in access to education and health services, as well as in standards of housing (mosquito safe or not), access to clean water and electricity, as well as in the foods consumed. The female head of a migrant's household reported, for example, that she and her children went to bed hungry several nights every week, while others enjoyed modern, well-furnished houses and had rice, noodles and fish or meat, in addition to soft drinks, on a daily basis. Census data from other Wampar villages, collected by Schwoerer and Church shows that the residents of Gabsongkeg were comparatively well-off.

How have Wampar obligations to share and reciprocate, and the negotiations they involve, changed with the introduction of money, consumerism and growing inequalities in the context of anticipated wealth from mining? I will describe in more detail the case of an in-married former medically trained woman who has been active in PNG's Women's Micro Bank Limited (WMBL), as well as in the development of children's birthday and fundraising parties as new communal events of distribution. I discuss the consequences of (perceived) violations of expected behaviour in transfers and the challenges to, and persistence of, thick ethical concepts under conditions of growing social and economic inequalities.

Disputed Behaviours: A Case Study

Gertrud is from a province in PNG, which, like the Markham Valley, is an early contacted and modernised coastal area with relatively high prestige in national, ethnic hierarchies. She met her future husband Topom-Matias in 1988 during a basketball tournament in one of PNG's major mining sites, where he worked as an engineer. The couple moved into her home because housing in the mining compound was for men only. A year later, when Gertrud was expecting their first child, the couple separated and went back to their respective relatives. Some months later, after Gertrud had given birth to their son, she followed Topom-Matias

to Gabsongkeg. In 2014, she worked in one of Lae's hospitals while her husband had a series of contracts at various mines. The couple had two more children, built a house and settled in Gabsongkeg. Gertrud and Topom-Matias are exemplary of an emerging PNG middle class and their aspirations (cf. Gewertz and Errington 1999). For extended periods, they lived in PNG's mining sites, where Topom-Matias had found work. Gertrud began to import and sell garden products from the Markham Valley to families of workers living at the sites. Topom-Matias used to say that his children have 'the best of both worlds', for they can inherit land in Gabsongkeg and in Gertrud's village of origin, where land ideally stays in the matriline.

Gertrud joined her husband on and off for several months at the mining sites, alternating with extended periods with their children in Gabsongkeg. Topom-Matias died while working at a mine. Since his death, Gertrud has remained with her three children in Gabsongkeg, although in 2018 only her 16-year-old son remained at home. He attended a new private primary school near the Highlands Highway run by Seventh-day Adventists because his mother believed it is superior to the public school in Gabsongkeg. Both her older children moved to Lae after their marriages.

In 1995, Harry, one of Gertrud's brothers, who had also married a Wampar woman and was living in Gabsongkeg, became ill during a visit to their village of origin. After his return to Gabsongkeg, his health improved, but he died suddenly one night in 2007. Some Wampar attributed both Topom-Matias's and Harry's deaths to sorcery. This reflects a more general Wampar view that powerful sorcery is prevalent in particular ethnic groups, which is itself supported by migrants' sometimes tense relations with relatives back home, as is common in PNG. Gertrud herself said it is generally dangerous for migrants to visit their relatives back home because of jealousy and the availability of sorcery. Some of her neighbours were more specific and said that Gertrud's uncle used sorcery on those who declined his requests for financial support. Sharing income and/or consumer goods with relatives back home is an expectation that migrants cannot always meet; and they are in a position to discount or ignore it if they want. Several migrants anticipated jealousy, anger and the danger of sorcery for that reason when they plan visits home. Gertrud herself declared that she would not take her children to her village of origin, out of fear for their health, and has never done so. Some of her relatives have, though, gone for visits and to attend funerals in Gabsongkeg.

Discussions among other Wampar about Gertrud's behaviour during visits of her relatives included suggestions that she did not look after them properly, so that her Wampar affines had to do it. A woman told me she thought that Gertrud had not visited her village of origin because she is no longer welcome, adding that her relatives knew of—and here she used the English phrase—Gertrud's 'personality problem', her self-centredness and want of generosity. Affinal relatives also criticised her for beating her children and refusing to treat them to little snacks or gifts from town. In short, she was said to be stingy, reluctant to help others and pursued her own financial and business interests and plans.

What else was behind Gertrud's 'personality problem'? As an educated woman, she often emphasised that Wampar are unwilling to invest the time and effort required to improve their standard of living. Still, she said, she enjoys life in the village. Gertrud did not want to go back to work in Lae, despite her professional qualifications, because she did not want to live in town or to commute; she felt that village life would be better for her children (and grandchildren). Instead, she turned to the small business opportunities that living in Gabsongkeg offers: raising and selling chickens, planting cocoa or melons and, lately, establishing a small, permanent shack at the Nadzab market from which she sells food and drinks. Most mornings, at an early hour, she could be seen waiting on the little forest road leading from Gabsongkeg to the highway for transport to take her and her wares to the market. Many Wampar criticised her rigid commitment to these activities, as was shown one morning when Gertrud waited for transport, at dawn, near the compound of a close relative of her in-laws who had died during the night. Mourning was just about to start. Traditionally, the market would be entirely closed at least for a day after mourning ceremonies began; this is no longer the case, but those close to the deceased are still expected to join in when mourning starts (cf. Beer and Church 2019).⁸ A senior, influential man criticised Gertrud in public for her attempt to continue 'business as usual'. Another added *Em i stap bilong en yet*, which means 'she only thinks of herself'. Female relatives

8 Several changes contributed to these new marketing practices: the market is no longer used only by Gabsongkeg vendors, the owner of the land does not care much for the church community in Gabsongkeg and as a result the appointed *maket komiti* enforced market closures only rarely and a growing number of people ignore them. Still, many Wampar families expect that relatives of a deceased person do not go to the market to sell their products but take part in the preparations for the funeral.

discussed her failure to contribute to meals in her in-law's household, where she frequently ate in the evenings. Portrayed as a classic free rider, her reputation as *afi muteran* was widespread.⁹

I heard rumours that Gertrud privately lent money to fellow Gabsongkeg people at high rates of interest, but I could not confirm this. She was, though, an active member and treasurer of the Gabsongkeg group of the Women's Micro Bank Limited (WMBL), which, since 2014, has been licensed and regulated by the Bank of PNG.¹⁰ Gertrud visited its crowded town office regularly and was head of the local members' 'group' in the village, but when I asked her about WMBL's interest rates, she could not tell me. A Wampar who had worked for many years in a bank in Port Moresby explained that the WMBL did not pay any interest on savings.

Gertrud was very excited that the bank would release shares in its own finance company and that they would be available for everybody soon.¹¹ Nobody, though, could explain the advantages of the shares, or what shareholders might get in return in the future. The same applied to shares people could buy of the landowner business group that will run the PNG Biomass plantations (see Schwoerer, this volume). Gurum, an elderly Wampar woman who had a WMBL savings book since 2014, for example, used 300 of her 551 kina on her account to buy shares, but had only an entry in her passbook to prove it. Since 2014, Gurum has paid 119 kina in fees to WMBL, and paid 300 for shares, but she was unsure how to access her remaining funds if the need arose. These examples do not reflect on Gertrud, but the inscrutability of banking practices help explain some of the villagers' suspicion that Gertrud acts in questionable ways.

9 I also came into conflict with her because she broke a promise to help an older, nearly blind female relative keep an appointment with an eye doctor in Lae, on a day when I could not take her. I and others expected her to do what she promised, especially as she received medical education and understood the importance of continuity of treatment.

10 The chairperson of this group was the wealthiest woman in Gabsongkeg, whom I will introduce in the next section.

11 See the WMBL brochure (www.womenmicrobank.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/shares_brochure.pdf), which said that they were only available till the end of November 2017. In October 2019 the WMBL received a loan of PGK830,000 (USD243,785) from the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) (www.uncdf.org/article/5077/womens-microbank-in-papua-new-guinea-receives-loan-from-uncdf).

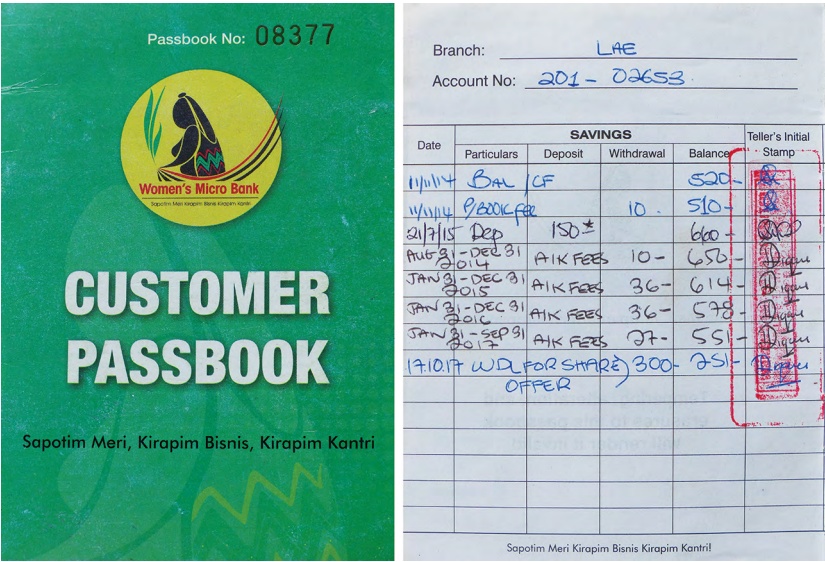


Figure 5.1 Gurum's savings book for the WMBL.

Source: Photos by Bettina Beer, 2017.

Financialisation in Gabsongkeg included not only the WMBL, but also the opening of a branch of the Bank of South Pacific in Anna's store, who is one of the wealthiest persons in Gabsongkeg; founding of and activities by the Gabsongkeg Resource Owners Association (GROA); and emerging business initiatives such as the Gabsongkeg Development Foundation (GDF). Some fast money scams also operated in Gabsongkeg, such as the initiative of an individual who collected money from fellow villagers to prosecute Japan to pay compensation for damage done during the Second World War. Many Wampar cannot see a difference between WMBL and other initiatives promising financial returns. John Cox (2018: 51) describes the similarity between pyramid selling, fast money scams and microfinance schemes: they 'draw on similar visions of prosperity and present themselves as a reliable route out of poverty'. Caroline Schuster (2015) analysed the entanglement of a Ponzi scheme elite and the microfinance non-governmental organisation (NGO) she studied in Paraguay. Authors working in South America, South Africa or Melanesia on schemes, scams and gambling show that distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate financial spheres are notoriously difficult to draw and to sustain. These (fast) money schemes thrive in the discursive space of development, poverty and stark wealth differentials. It is not surprising,

in the context of the increasing presence of companies, land sales and thoughts about the ever-larger sums of money flowing through Morobe Province, that desires for monetary wealth find a fertile ground to grow.

Gertrud told me that she knew people gossiped about her. She explained it in terms of the contrast between her activities and those of her peers: her involvement with diverse projects based outside the village make it often impossible for her to join communal activities. Gertrud also claimed that many Wampar do not understand how, through their own efforts, they could improve their economic situation, complaining that only a few women had followed her recommendation and opened accounts with the WMBL. Gertrud herself noticed that her perceived indifference to expectations of reciprocity in the broader social field affected her reputation, but she regarded fellow villagers as too backward to understand her work. In the postcolonial context of large-scale capital projects, when it comes to control of family budgets, to investments and to land access, use and sales, gender relations become conspicuous in the context of growing inequalities (described in detail for Wampar of the Gabsongkeg area in Beer 2018).

Money scams such as U-Vistract (Cox 2018) or the above-mentioned Japanese war compensation scam, microloans and other financing instruments promising 'development' have been mushrooming in PNG over the last 20 years. At the same time, ways of life have diversified as a result of differential involvement with capitalist economies. This has led to differing positions in negotiations of transfers in social relations: a shop owner cannot give her goods to relatives for free, and people mobilise their networks for new economic projects. Complaints about Gertrud's behaviour are not so different from the examples given to Hans Fischer: she does not help her in-laws or visitors as she should and takes from others more than she gives. Problems of free-riding and stinginess can be found in any social world, but her persistent attempts to involve others in new schemes beyond their understanding has no precedent in Fischer's work of the 1970s to 1990s. Today, the amount of money available and growing need for it makes the advantages and costs of free-riding greater and more apparent. The work with NGOs and different kinds of government-funded projects reflects new social inequalities in education and access to information and institutions on a regional and national level. Although Gertrud is not the only woman working with the WMBL or

comparable financial institutions, her reputation ('personality problem') leads to more suspicion and gossip than in cases of other women working with the bank.

Children's Birthdays and Fundraising Parties

A story of social change from traditional community spirit to individualistic behaviour and the 'decline of traditional values', as expressed by some Wampar, is an integral aspect of contemporary ethnography of social change. Several types of communal feasts (e.g. bridewealth, funerals) are still held, and coexist with newly established social events (modern weddings, Lutheran church events like *sanisim basket*¹² or fundraising parties), which emphasise exchange, mutual help and sharing. In a context of consumerism and the negotiation of relations, these new events demonstrate that people remain concerned with maintaining good relations with neighbours, friends and kin, despite the accumulation of financial and cultural capital that tends to entrench inequalities. They open possibilities for sharing as well as for conspicuous, competitive consumption. Thus, sharing and redistribution should not be understood as antithetical to inequality. On the contrary, events in which they feature contribute to the growing significance of class distinctions in PNG. However, they can provide temporary relief as they offer food for people in need, such as disabled, non-married or older people whose gardens provide only the minimum food security. Simultaneously, they are underlining the growing differences as a social, acknowledged fact.

Since roughly 2000, some families have begun to celebrate their children's birthdays by throwing a party; not every year, or for every child, but when well-off parents (in agreement with the extended family) decide it is time to do something special and invite others to participate.¹³ Sometimes, a family sends out a formal invitation card. Other tokens of modernity and middle-class affluence, such as personalised birthday cakes or video documentation of the event, also feature.

12 These are events when members of two congregations or church sub-groups meet to begin or end a project; for example, to formally open a new church building, have a workshop or visit each other. Both sides take food and net bags or baskets to exchange. The church has its novel history of emphasising sharing and other values, especially given that Christianity has a complicated history with authority and wealth. Pentecostalism, new evangelical born-again churches add further dimensions (Jorgensen 2005; Cox and Macintyre 2014).

13 The decision to celebrate a birthday is similar to the decision to present bridewealth, although the latter involves two families coming to an agreement.



Figure 5.2 Formal birthday party invitation card.

The reverse of the card reads: 'You are cordially invited to attend NAME's 10th Birthday Party to be held at NAME's place, Gabsongkeg Village [Nadzab] on SATURDAY 02 March 2002 Time 2.00 PM rsvp NAME and phone number.'

Source: Photo by Bettina Beer, 2002.

Elaborate birthday parties are reported to be part of new middle-class repertoires in such different contexts as PNG, Namibia (Pauli 2018) and the US (Clarke 2007). The emphasis on parent–child relationships is central to notions of the family, and are taken to be closely connected to the advent of consumerism.¹⁴ Among the Wampanar, birthday parties do not (yet) include personalised gift-giving by the guests outside the nuclear family; they centre on the distribution and consumption of mostly modern drinks and foods (including personalised birthday cakes, bought in town), although hosts offer some traditional foods as well.¹⁵ Invitation cards (Figure 5.2) are also part of the new middle-class repertoire. Yet poor relatives and neighbours are not excluded from such feasts, even if the order in which they are served indicates their relative standing.

14 A 'modern'—very exceptional—wedding with specific wedding attire of the couple, a cake and a feast with much food and many guests has been celebrated (and photo documented) in Gabsongkeg too (cf. for social positioning, class and weddings in Namibia Pauli 2018, 2019).

15 In Dzirifasing some of the guests give birthday gifts.

However, birthday parties and modern, elaborate mourning ceremonies are not straightforward levelling mechanisms vis-à-vis emerging social inequalities; they are also part of the growing importance of consumerism. These patterns of conspicuous consumption also contribute to the growing emphasis among the Wampar of the nuclear family as a central unit in social life. Related ideas and practices tend to limit moral obligations to a smaller unit than the patriline and *sagaseg*-centred networks, which were the main point of reference in many realms of everyday life. On the other hand, egocentric networks are extended by these new social events, as neighbours, distant and in-married relatives, friends, co-workers or temporary visitors are part of the celebration. They are invited and help with the preparation of food, while the communal meal is the most crucial part of the event (which might last a whole day).

Fundraising parties are another new type of event, the point of which is to help individual families raise money for school fees. Education is seen by most Wampar as crucial to upward mobility and has been proven to be so since the 1920s, when missionaries established the first bible and later elementary schools in the area. The payment of school fees (and often of parents' additional contributions, when teachers do not receive pay, buildings have to be repaired, or toilets built) have been a constant concern of people in PNG.¹⁶ Higher secondary and tertiary education, which require living away from home, involve particularly high costs for parents who have restricted access to wage labour and money-making opportunities. Since around 2007, when the betelnut economy collapsed, households with children of school age have faced significant financial difficulties in educating their children.

In order to help meet education costs, parents and their close kin have begun organising big meals as 'fundraising parties'. Guests make a monetary contribution, although some might contribute garden products. The foods usually consist of banana and garden products, with the addition of rice and some meat such as sausages, chicken or pork, if funds allow; the form and spirit of the get-together are very similar to

16 In 2012, Peter O'Neill introduced a Tuition Fee Free (TFF) policy, which has never really worked in many regions (cf. edu.pngfacts.com/education-news/tuition-fees-two-years-late-for-school). Delayed payments of teachers, neglect of school buildings and sanitation made parents' work and financial contributions unavoidable even during TFF times. Since 2018, tuition fees have been reintroduced in several places.

other organised collective meals. The event involves the sharing of work, the provision of garden produce and, most importantly, the collection of money for individual projects.

'Fundraising parties' are not evaluated in the way Gertrud's activities are: many Wampar see them as a legitimate way to share the work and burden of the money economy. Fundraising parties not only show that Wampar see the life chances of future generations as depending on cash income and education, they also show that old and newly created opportunities are used for conspicuous consumption, extending networks beyond the village, which are also seen as a part of contemporary social life. Today's collective meals at bridewealth celebrations, weddings, birthday parties or funerals are social events involving between 50 and a few hundred people. They are much bigger than birthdays or fundraising parties and have grown with the money economy. Funerals can last for up to a week, long enough to allow migrant Wampar to return from other provinces to the village. During the first day and night food is served to all visitors. Related families send garden products, pigs and cash in advance and the women who will help to prepare the food likewise gather at the household where the funeral is to be celebrated many hours before it begins. The hosting of church gatherings is another significant communal event, as when, for example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) hosted the District Youth Conference in Dzifasing in 2017: the whole village contributed heaps of bananas, and the more prosperous villagers donated large amounts of cash or cows and pigs, which were consumed by Dzifasing villagers and the attendees of the church event.

Collective meals were mentioned in Fischer's texts on violations of reciprocity in transfers of food or money, as means to restore 'moral equivalence', to end a period of shame, or mark the reconciliation of families. At local village courts, magistrates' decisions regarding conflicts nearly always include the organisation of a joint meal in addition to the payment of a fine. In the current situation, they have become another opportunity display wealth and underline social differentiations that have not existed before. All these examples show that collective events have grown into important occasions to display social status, defend a position in social hierarchies or to aim at upward mobility in a context of growing social inequalities.

The Local Elite, New Middle Classes and Discourses on Not-Sharing

As differences in wealth among Wampar families have become more apparent, feelings of relative deprivation have spread too. As the gap between levels of desire for new consumer goods and the means to get them has steadily widened for most but not all Wampar, discussions of values and the behaviours that they should motivate have become more frequent; egoistic behaviour has become more often subject to gossip, and general reflections about social change are part of everyday conversations. Often, they are triggered by imaginations of what the future will bring when ‘mining comes’. Social change and the diversification of values are issues repeatedly raised by Wampar themselves, and generalisations about their social behaviour are more difficult to make than in former times. Wampar reflections on specific changes of behaviour and values provide claims about and evaluations of shared (and non-shared) desires and beliefs, and the grounds of social interaction (cf. Beer and Bender 2015).

Discourses of envy, jealousy and stinginess in the context of social change are not only crucial to relatively impoverished Wampar, but also to the wealthiest Wampar families, who stress the scale and importance of the projects they sponsor as expressions of their concern for ‘the community’ and their wish to share. They are still embedded in one social field with people who have less and must handle jealousy and inequality in everyday life.

When I surveyed Gabsongkeg Wampar about wealthy families, all named the same four individuals, although the order in which they were listed varied slightly.¹⁷ Everybody agreed that there were four ‘wealthy’ residents: Matias, Anna, Seref and Yadzu—three men and one woman. I knew all of them well from earlier fieldwork, but during my current research, it was difficult for me to make appointments for lengthy discussions with them. Only after repeated attempts, and enlisting the moral support of their

17 We conducted a household survey in 30 households in four of the Wampar villages, which in Gabsongkeg included one of the wealthiest persons. Our survey shows that differences within Gabsongkeg between poor and wealthy households are substantial and that the agreement of Wampar from Gabsongkeg on the wealthiest four matches the results of my survey interviews.

kin, could I get three of these long-standing acquaintances to find time to talk to me; Matias, one of the four, in fact, never granted my request for a meeting.¹⁸

Matias is one of the wealthiest landowners: his plots are large and in a very advantageous location; moreover he owns a transport company and receives rent from the stallholders at the busy Nadzab market. Furthermore, he has sold and leased a lot of prime land along the Highlands Highway (cf. similar arrangements in peri-urban Melanesia; McDonnell et al. 2017).

Matias consistently avoided direct contact with me: his relatives said he was not home or was ill when I called at his house in person, and when I called his phone, he said he could not speak because he had to deal with one urgent family problem or another. Matias's household is located outside the main village, near the Highlands Highway, and he rarely attends public meetings, Sunday service or other social events. He has created an image of a person outside the usual moral networks; only ever in the company of a few close relatives (mostly sons), he seemed separate from the rest of the village. When he is seen in public, he is usually drunk. In 2017/18 he was involved in an ongoing court case resulting from accusations of incest, which were, no doubt, the family difficulties he mentioned. Gossip and rumours seemed not to bother him or his sons very much, and I sometimes had the impression he even fostered them.

I managed to conduct formal interviews with two of those ranked among the wealthiest in my surveys—Anna, a woman in her early 40s, and Seref, a man in his late 50s—only after repeated requests that they make time in their busy schedules for me. Both interviews were striking for the emphasis these entrepreneurs placed on their Christian faith and their commitment to the advance of the 'Gabsongkeg community'. Their strongly felt need to 'give back' was a topic both raised several times during the interviews. During my stay in Gabsongkeg, it became clear that they did not just talk about 'giving back to the community'; in fact, they financed and organised several projects that solved current village problems. When, for example, the narrow gravel road covering the 3 kilometres between Gabsongkeg and the main highway needed repair, Anna used her trucks and employees to transport stones and fill the worst holes; she established a well for safe drinking water, which was publicly accessible and planned

18 In 20 years of fieldwork, this was the first time anybody refused outright to support my work by talking to me.

more; she held the position of treasurer in the Gabsongkeg Resource Owner Association (GROA); was chairperson of WMBL; and gave her time to other demanding communal tasks. Likewise, Seref, her male counterpart, had purchased a large passenger-truck for the ELC Wampar Seket,¹⁹ which he drove himself when it was required. He also worked for GROA and took part in many public social events, providing food, firewood, transport and whatever was needed to ensure their success. Both, of course, also benefited from their commitments: Anna used the public road to transport goods to and from her stores in the village and at the airport. Seref and his wife took part in a church-organised tour of Israel. Both affirmed their commitment to Christian morality in general and to the long-established (and still influential) Lutheran Church in the village. Anna, the businesswoman, for example, refuses to allow alcohol to be sold in her three stores.

Although Yadzu is the fourth wealthiest person named in my surveys, he is less visible in community activities and associations than those discussed above. He runs the most successful cocoa fermenter in Gabsongkeg and owns its most lucrative bottle shops. I talked only briefly to him as he is a very busy man and spent much time in town; his wife and several relatives working for him also granted me interviews. This man has ‘adopted’ several unrelated Wampar and non-Wampar—he looks after them and their families, sharing the fruits of his land and income with them. They all emphasised that his fermenter helped Gabsongkeg cocoa growers to get better prices; his entrepreneurial activities and the network of relatives and workers it embraces was presented as a successful business model.

Interviews showed that several newly rich were preoccupied with ‘giving back to the community’ and that they were aware of the criticism that violations of moral equivalence provoked, which is not to suggest that helping was instrumentally motivated. Resulting attempts to improve problems in the village (water, employment for relatives, sharing of food at larger events) cannot really mask the consequences of social inequalities and help disadvantaged families, although the gap between haves and have-nots widens remarkably, as our survey data of 30 Wampar households in Gabsongkeg shows. Keir Martin (2013) described land politics, the emergence of family-based interests and the use of the term ‘big shots’ as an evaluative term for the new rich (and which contrasts

19 Other Wampar said the local Member of Parliament (MP) had purchased it.

with the 'traditional big men') after the volcano eruption in Matupit on the Gazelle Peninsula. He suggests that the moral dilemmas based in demands for reciprocity under transformed economic circumstances have not been acknowledged sufficiently in the literature on Melanesia (ibid.: 25). I have never heard 'big shot' in Gabsongkeg, although the critique of corrupt politicians and regional elites has a lot in common with discourses in Matupit. Bruce Knauf (2007: 68) argues that among Tangu (as described in Kenelm Burridge's ethnography) the moral system in place is both intensified and challenged as a dimension of a broader historical dialectic.

Conclusion

In my contribution to this volume, I describe changes in transfers of food, money and consumer goods as they are both related to and implicated in growing social inequalities that are developing under increasing capital investment and consumerism among Wampar and immigrants in a suburbanising location near the city of Lae in PNG. Violations of social expectations concerning reciprocity and the sanctioning of them are not new among Wampar-speakers, as the early texts recorded by Hans Fischer show. Today, the amount of money available and the growing need for it make the advantages and costs of free-riding greater and more apparent.

Life chances (education, medical treatment, transport) depend increasingly on cash, and its unequal distribution impacts on social inequalities in future generations. In the current situation, new dimensions of social inequalities emerge: wealthy people, whose income and livelihoods do not depend as much on the support of others to clear a garden and live off its products as before, have more resources to extend their networks outside the context of the village. Thus, they are less dependent on social support and can be more ruthless in advantaging themselves even more: the rich can get richer without really trying, while the poor go backwards relative to the wealth (which itself generates ill-feeling). They can also use the opportunities of traditional social events such as funerals, shared meals after conflicts, or the handing over of a bride price, as well as new birthday parties, weddings or sports events, to not only display conspicuous consumption but to confirm their 'middle-class' position in

today's social hierarchies. Their motivations and desires to do so result from the described changes and are not independent of the context in which they manifest themselves.

Wampar and widespread national discourses in PNG on 'elites, new middle classes and the grassroots' or 'tradition (*kastom* TP) and modernity' show different ways people try to position themselves and see others in a context of rapid economic and social change. Bruce Knauff (2007) uses Burridge's notion of 'moral equivalence' in his comparison of social change among Tangu and Gebusi to refer to mechanisms to restore and maintain balance in social relations. Negotiations around the equivalence of persons and sharing were and are still the basis for sociality in Wampar networks, although the significance of cash income and the monetary economy pose new challenges, as described above. Many Wampar are themselves aware of the transformation of motivations that has accompanied their increased integration into the nation state and a market economy: nowadays some actively try to avoid or curtail expectations that were integral to their social relations and networks only 20 years ago.²⁰ Gertrud's attempts to establish a small business and the gains she sought from the financial market are read in these terms, as is the behaviour of Matias, the wealthy landowner who refused to discuss his businesses with me, who does not follow basic communal rules and in many respects positions himself beyond village sociality. By contrast, other members of the local elite are concerned with the state of the community and express the need 'to give something back' to the community.

Gossip, blaming and shaming were effective means to maintain social cohesion and still bother some Wampar today; complaints of selfishness and threats of social sanctions are present. People often reacted with withdrawal followed by reintegration. The degree to which these sanctions have teeth has changed as Wampar are no longer as dependent on their immediate social network as before. After disputes, from small conflicts to severe crimes, Wampar often leave the village and stay with relatives or friends in town or another province. Census data collected over the last decades strongly supports this observation. Some families—due to the increasing number of interethnic marriages—even maintain households and close social networks in two places a long way apart. Or, as the example of one of the wealthiest landowners shows, with enough resources and

20 This was especially a vital lesson to learn for shop owners in the villages who at first wanted not to give all their goods away to kin, but be able to start a small *bisnis* (cf. Curry 2005).

support from people who depend on them, one can even stay and cut off relations outside the closest network. Today anti-hierarchical strategies are failing to contain rising inequality. In the past, being socially sanctioned and isolating was not merely shameful, it was also potentially deleterious. With the amount of money flowing around, a wealthy person does not need as many social connections (or can be more selective about what they are). Pairing changing moral discourse with the changing material necessities adds a new dimension of political economy to the discussions on ethics under capitalism.

The ethnography shows how different segments of local social fields can or cannot engage the encompassing global processes to different degrees and in different ways, depending on a host of social factors. The upshot of such initial differentiating processes is frequently the production of significant social and economic demarcations, which itself is crucial to the generation of more entrenched social contrasts in the medium and longer term.

I suggest that the social inequalities developing under increasing capital investment linked to international markets and spreading global consumerism in the Markham Valley are one reason among others for the changes in social relations described. Emerging social hierarchies are also based on colonial and mission history, as well as the geography of economic differences related to the proximity to the Highlands Highway (Beer and Church 2019) and Lae city, with their markets and locally circulating capital. The village of Gabsongkeg has a prominent position related to all these conditions: it was closest to the former mission station, to the Lae city airport and one of the biggest highway markets on the way to the highlands. Growing desires for consumer goods, which are less frequently shared than, for example, garden products, are implicated in today's perceived violations of reciprocity, theft and fraud, as well as in hasty investments in various 'fast money' schemes, or the establishment of risky business ventures. They also lead to new competitive social events, such as children's birthday parties, weddings and fundraising parties for school fees, which have become part of the aspirations of PNG's middle classes. Furthermore, increasing cash flows and consumerism increase the efflorescence of traditional distributive events like funerals, the hosting of church conferences, or the organisation of and participation in sports 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 critical among relatively impoverished Wampar, as well as among the wealthiest, who seek to emphasise the scale of the projects they finance and the concern for the community that motivates them.

In 2007 John Barker wrote that the primary concern in the Melanesian ethnography of morality is with the interface between ‘indigenous village life and the ethical orientations associated with “modernity”’ (2007: 1). Our ethnography of the emergence of social inequalities shows that notions of ‘*kastom*’ and ‘modernity’, the ‘local’ and ‘global’, have become part of Wampar concerns, but are too vague to analyse mechanisms of transformations of social fields. More than 10 years after the publication of Barker’s volume, questions of ethical orientations of migrants, local middle classes, national elites and the growing social inequalities in the political economy associated with a region strongly influenced by mining revenues have become even more prominent.

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