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Reflecting on Resource-Driven Inequalities

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> Inequality does not follow a deterministic process. In a sense, both Marx and Kuznets were wrong. There are powerful forces pushing alternately in the direction of rising or shrinking inequality. Which one dominates depends on the institutions and policies that societies choose to adopt. (Picketty and Saez 2014: 842–3)

Introduction

Inequality is a central concern of economics and the social sciences across most of the West right now. The statement above by economists Thomas Picketty and Emmanuel Saez points to questions beyond an assumed naturalism or inevitability in the development of inequality. They make a case for the significance of deliberate policy interventions and of existing institutions in shaping the development of novel forms of inequality within societies. Examination of instruments such as tax regimes and interventions such as social protection networks in many parts of the world clearly provides support for this argument. In Melanesia, though, where state policy and presence is much less overt in people's lives, there is less evidence that formal policy and institutions are the dominant influences on the rise or fall of inequality. Indeed, what limited work that has been done points to a remarkably stubborn level of inequality (Bainton and McDougall 2021), despite changes in policy and some dramatic rises in economic growth (UNDP 2014). In a developmental

sense, the redistributive aspects of growth have been an increasing focus of attention (Maxwell 2003), with rising inequality a critical constraint on poverty alleviation. The question then becomes: what drives inequality, and how does the argument of Picketty and Saez regarding the central importance of institutions and policies translate into Melanesia, with rapidly evolving social and economic contexts produced in the main by resource extraction?

This important collection, based around three chapters derived from the work of the Swiss National Science Foundation–funded project among the Wampar in the Northeast of Papua New Guinea (PNG), provides insights into the micro- and meso-level processes by which individuals and communities in Papua New Guinea seek to capture a share—sometimes what appears as a disproportionate share—of the economic benefits of extractive industries. One of the most frequent observations regarding resource developments in the Pacific—particularly mining—is that they drive the development of 'novel inequalities' among adjacent and affected communities. As Knauft in his chapter (Chapter 6) notes, resource development becomes 'the pinnacle not only of fantasised projection, but also of ultimate inequity bequeathed by modern development'. The chapters here use deep, fine-grained ethnographic material to extend this basic argument in various ways, examining the implications—social, cultural and moral—of these processes and outcomes to better understand the ways in which extraction drives transformation of small-scale societies in PNG. Most of the chapters are focused on the early or pre-stages of extractive projects, where the anticipation of transformations, in a positive sense, are highest and the developing inequalities are at their most novel.

This work, and other recent material on inequality and resource development in Melanesia (see Bainton et al. 2021), speak directly to two common claims regarding large-scale resource exploitation in the region. Firstly, the fact that inequalities arise is a recognition that there are some in the communities who do well from these developments, and that social and economic stratification within the community appears to be a corollary of mineral development. In itself this is an important inflection on broader generalisations about mining (and other extractive industries) as forms of development that bring 'nothing but despair' to indigenous communities in the region (and indeed globally). Clearly there are some in the communities who do well, economically at least, from these developments, whose lot is more than 'despair'. Understanding the processes by which this happens—and how despair can be mitigated or avoided—is clearly a priority for communities and policy makers.

Secondly, most of the chapters focus on the development and influence of leaders within these communities. Big men/brokers/representatives/agents are all forms of leadership—some of which are novel, and some more traditional—that come to the fore around these resource developments. Typically, in both popular and academic work on resource development, labels such as 'elites', 'representatives', 'brokers' or 'middle-men' come with the implication that this stratification and the processes behind it can be easily understood and categorised (as 'elite formation', for example). And there is also usually a dark moral undertone to this discourse, with negative judgements cast on the people involved—'corrupt' is perhaps the most deployed of the adjectives—that implies that these people's position and subsequent wealth comes at the expense of a broader 'grassroots' community. The chapters here illustrate—several directly—the complexity, nuance and dynamic variability that often accompanies these positionalities in the Melanesian context, particularly over time, and especially in the context of resource development.

This afterword picks up on three closely related threads that run through the contributions to the volume, all of which, in settings like PNG, complicate Picketty and Saez's focus on 'institutions and policy': first, issues around land and its paradoxical effects on inequality; second, a further exploration of the issue of representation and leadership as processes that affect inequality within communities; and finally the ways in which forms of communication in Melanesian societies structure the perceptions of inequality in these contexts. I then briefly add a few notes to reinforce these threads from older empirical work on inequality I conducted at the Porgera gold mine in the early 1990s, before revisiting the contribution of this volume to our understanding of inequality in the contemporary world.

Land as a Central (Melanesian) Organising Frame

To pick up Picketty and Saez's 'institutions and policies' in the Melanesian context, explicit expressions of these directed at inequality are (for the most part) absent, largely because like much of the rest of Melanesia, the terrain of inequality is a 'policy-free' zone. What the chapters in this volume show, though, is that there are a variety of malleable and loosely bounded practices at the local level that produce, maintain and drive inequalities within mine-affected communities, and well beyond.

Most significantly, land sits at the centre of the contextual frame within which novel inequalities arise and play out. This is because the customary forms of land tenure in Melanesia that cover between 86 and 97 per cent of the land area (depending how you count it) encompass a wide variety of systems across the hundreds of equally varied customary groups that make up the region's social landscape. Land also sits at the core of what some describe as the 'myth' of Melanesian egalitarianism, with a popular political sentiment being that because of people's links to land, no one is poor, or at least no one goes hungry. The close links between traditional 'institutions and policies' around land and the broader norms and structures of traditional societies are a critical component of contemporary patterns and processes of wealth and poverty in these communities. Overlaying these local societal structures—and indeed often reshaping them profoundly—are the contemporary state-based processes that seek to transform tenure arrangements away from 'custom'. These have been a point of contention from before Independence in PNG. There are a number of formal, state-driven pathways by which this can occur (there is not space here to go into the details and differences between Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs), agency agreements, Special Agricultural Business Leases (SABL) and Clan Land Usage Agreements (CLUA) etc., but see Schwoerer's Chapter 2, this volume, and Weiner and Glaskin 2007), each backed by legislation and particular institutional forms. Each of these regularise and formalise patterns of land 'ownership' that, as the authors of these chapters note, have implications for novel social and economic inclusions and exclusions—and the reshaping of relationships between people and land—within these communities.

Resource development brings wealth, but how that wealth (and the cost) is distributed across a population is also tied to the institutions of state (through legislated processes around royalty and other benefit distribution, compensation), the particular nature of the resource project and its land requirements, and the political manipulation of these institutions and rules (mostly rules about land) by the power dynamics that exist within the local society. It is these structures and interplays of power—intimately connected to land—that are so beautifully explored in the preceding chapters. As Knauft notes, land is the one potentially valuable commodity that many remote Melanesian communities have in the globalised world, hence claims to and ownership of this land are seen as key to creating a 'modern' future. Once this claim-making becomes a trajectory on which some or all in the community embark, all the processes that others in this

volume describe start to kick in: the (re)construction of histories, micro-politics, connections and sheer serendipity begin to produce exclusions, inclusions and inequalities.

Tobias Schwoerer (Chapter 2) clearly points to the central importance of land and particularly the opportunities that strategically located land opens up for groups to engage with extraction and, through this, with a (mostly imagined) modernity. The key point he makes, though, is that extractive projects and possibilities become a central means of securing claims to land, through the various legalistic mechanisms and entities he describes: ILGs, CLUAs, VCLRs (Voluntary Customary Land Registration), etc. Loose and evolving groups become fixed entities (Tom Ernst's (1999) 'entification') with their identities tied to discrete tracts of land, in an idealised sense, though really in a practical sense. There is an active generation of 'exclusions' and inequalities through these various legal processes and strategies, typically as a 'by-product' of others pursuing their own agendas.

Leadership, Representation and Brokership

As noted above, one of the key factors that is exposed in the preceding chapters is leadership and its diverse, ambiguous and almost invariably contested nature within the various communities. Who gets to speak, and for whom, is perhaps the central problem of these large-scale resource developments in Melanesia, and the localised examples given in the volume here of 'institutions and policies' around leadership show the variations across Melanesia from one community to another. Indeed, individual aspirations towards leadership or representation reflect a process in which these 'leaders' create an idealised sense of what and how they want 'their' community to be, a process that is constantly evolving and regularly challenged.

In the PNG context, the institutions and policies around these roles sit at the intersection of the 'modern' and the 'traditional'. As noted above, new state forms of corporate groups, each requiring different forms and processes to determine group representation, arise out of the new institutional–legal forms that are brought about by evolving state policy and regulation; hence the ILGs and CLUAs require quite distinct processes and legal forms of representation, and come with differing

levels of responsibility to 'represent'. The internal processes in each case—complete with highly contested decisions around who gets to be represented, and by whom—are likely to drive particular patterns and forms of inequality, some of which are likely to change through time, while others will persist. Each of the chapters in the volume has explored aspects of the question of leadership from different perspectives.

Willem Church's chapter (Chapter 3) is implicitly rather than explicitly focused on leadership, as it seeks to develop a model of how inequality becomes embedded in these novel contexts through a process of 'stratifying factional competition'. What this does is link questions of representation and authority back to the question of institutions and policy. The key argument he makes is that the creation and transformation of factions within communities is a competitive process, not between discrete, bounded pre-existing social units present before mining arrives, but rather fractional competition and conflict drives the formation of novel social units, or particular fractional forms. This chapter presents a fine-grained description of legal cases going back over 40 years that illustrates how legal entities and exclusions/inequalities evolved and became increasingly robust and entrenched through engagement in these legal processes. In this context, conflict is as much a driver of the formation of these novel social units as the social units are of conflict: factional competition is then a dynamic feedback process co-creating the very organisations involved in the competition.

The place of the legal systems, the instruments of institutions (ILGs, etc.), and the back-and-forth between traditional and modern forms and positions of leadership then becomes central to the development of forms of inequality. Willem concludes that while corruption and a lack of coordination are often seen as a failure of governance in this space, they can from a local perspective actually represent successful coordination by parties that are benefiting from the status quo.

Meanwhile, Schwoerer (Chapter 2) points to the importance of education for leadership, with typically more educated and often ex-government officers better positioned to more aggressively pursue opportunities for novel forms of wealth. Again, the influence of the state—through education accessibility and quality—plays into leadership and inequality. The inequalities in access and the benefits that these modern leaders are able to secure are not always novel, and often entrench rather than transcend pre-existing enmities and disputes.

Monica Minnegal and Peter Dwyer (Chapter 4) shift the geographic focus, as well as the thematic focus, by providing a beautifully written life history of a leader ('broker' or 'middle-man') that illustrates the processes that both drive and are a consequence of inequality. This account highlights how such liminally positioned brokers/leaders/representatives are at once powerful, morally ambiguous and ultimately vulnerable to alienation, failure and loss. Such positioning means that their actions constantly involve both the navigation and the generation of inequalities. Minnegal and Dwyer also emphasise the role of these leaders/'brokers' in the epistemological and ontological shifts that are transforming Febi and Kubo into 'new kinds of people' that, as they come into being, also generate novel inequalities (and often a profound sense of loss). In a similar focus on the moral dimensions of leadership in such societies, Bettina Beer (Chapter 5) highlights how the claims by leaders of 'giving back' to their communities doesn't deter local evaluatory processes that are highly relational; hence understandings of wealth are often opaque in terms of people being more or less wealthy than others believe.

In sum, then, the leadership contests that emerge, often between long-established (traditional, if you like) forms of leadership and the 'novel' forms of leadership that arise as a result of the structuring and conditioning of communities in line with—or sometimes in opposition to—the legislative, regulatory and judicial needs of the state and resource developers (which are more typically pursued by the better educated and connected members of the community), are critical to shaping the dynamics of community responses and the rise of inequalities.

Communication and Its Manifestations

Finally, in terms of connective themes, the communication of information, and moral messages, is critical to the ways in which locally inflected forms of inequality develop in these contexts. Again, localised 'institutions and policies' dominate in environments where more formal channels and means of communication from central actors are limited, if they are present at all. Formal government communication channels (such as mining wardens and local-level government) are infrequently used and are subject to being co-opted by the demands of local political actors. Hence in Schwoerer's chapter (Chapter 2) is the concern with the ways in which information (and misinformation) flows within communities, between

state and corporate actors and communities, to become a 'swirling mass of rumours and expectations, misunderstandings and confusions' creating an information-poor, high-trust decision-making environment. Church's case study (Chapter 3) points also to the ways in which information flows are deliberately restricted and contained by those seeking to capture benefit streams.

Beer's chapter (Chapter 5) is also concerned with information flows and their implications among the Wampar, in the context of evolving inequalities. The unique insight this chapter offers is how inequality reflects and inflects the moral world of Melanesia. It rises as the dark side of development, with a sense of the loss of community and the rupture of the networks of relationships that so completely structure and give meaning to lives in these societies. She highlights how shaming of individuals for the perceived breaking of moral codes around Melanesian sharing can be a means of containing some exclusive forms of wealth accumulation. At other times, much of the evaluatory 'work' in communities is typically based on 'gossip' (and as reflected more broadly in the region, cf. Brison 1992), which can drive conflict, but can also be equally important for developing often ephemeral forms of social cohesion. As Bruce Knauft (Chapter 6) notes, 'actual information and accurate news pales beside the force of cultural and imaginative projection'.

Inequality and Change at Porgera, 1992–2019

In Chapter 6, Bruce Knauft draws on the splendid accounts of change and conflict at the Porgera gold mine in Enga Province by Golub (2014) and Jacka (2015) to illustrate (respectively) the simultaneous social transformations underway: the rising material wealth alongside abject squalor around the mine, and the strong geographic divide between the Ipili in the upper valley (where the mine from which wealth flows is located) and the marginalised but adjacent and socially interconnected lower Porgera areas. These trajectories are long-standing: a household survey and other reports I completed with a team from University of Papua New Guinea at Porgera in the early to mid-1990s (within two years of the mine starting production) already pointed to several axes of 'novel' inequality that were becoming apparent and entrenched. The reports were subsequently published as chapters in Filer (1999). Similar household-

level work around the Freeport mine in West Papua in the late 1990s that I was involved in (Banks 2000) mirrored many of the findings discussed below.

This Porgera work identified that:

> In terms of poverty, the total amount of cash flowing into the valley has increased dramatically since the mine became established. On a per capita basis, average incomes are likely to be three to four times higher in real terms within the Porgera area, even given the population growth. But such an assessment conceals massive inequalities within the population at Porgera, inequalities that have increased spectacularly compared to the pre-mine situation. (Banks 2005: 136)

This work identified four overlapping and intersecting axes of inequality that had developed or been heightened by the presence of the mine: geography, hierarchy, gender and residential status (Banks 2005; Jackson and Banks 2002). In terms of geography, the rigidly defined and surveyed mining and infrastructure lease boundaries were critical in driving the development of novel inequalities within the community (more so than the more flexible social boundaries of landowning units). 'Ownership' of strategic pieces of land (the mine site, or the location of associated infrastructure such as camps, waste dumps and even roads) clearly conveyed significant economic and political advantages to some communities. Hence:

> Geographically those groups living within the Special Mining Lease have been at the center of the economic relationship with the company, in particular receiving very large amounts of compensation [for land lost to the mine development] … At a lower level still, within the mining lease, the distribution of compensation money has not been even either, with some clans receiving greater amounts of compensation money as they have lost access to the largest portions of land to the mine development. (Banks 2005:136)

In the Porgeran case, and in contrast to some of the material described in the earlier chapters, the boundaries of the corporate groups ('clans') became fixed at an early stage, but the real contest became one over group membership, exacerbated due to the Ipili form of cognatic descent whereby on paper at least, membership of a group could flow through

an individual's mother's or father's line, back at least two generations. This significantly extended the social field of individuals who could make claims to 'belonging' to the affected groups.

Within the residential communities (which, as Golub (2014), Jacka (2015), Burton (2014), myself (1997) and others have described, are far from discrete bounded groups of 'landowners'), there were stark differences in wealth within the population across these geographic domains. Two key factors in this appeared to be gender, and what I described as 'hierarchy'—which referred to leadership and status within these communities (both of which had strong pre-colonial reference points). On the latter, one extreme case was noted:

> for the largest compensation payment made in 1992 (K 520,000), two recognized clan leaders or 'big men' acquired 75 percent of the value of the payment directly, and their children were among others on the distribution list. It is not unusual for big men to appear on the distribution lists of compensation payments for several separate clans. The records of royalty payments to the SML [Special Mining Lease] landowners illustrate the same process. (Banks 2005: 136)

The process evident in Schwoerer's chapter, and indeed throughout this volume, whereby the more vocal and forceful individuals and families are typically able to secure more access to rights and wealth is clearly reflected by similar processes at Porgera. Hence individuals—including some born outside the immediate vicinity—were able to use a combination of negotiating skills, networks, influence and cognatic and affinal rights to claim a share of royalty payments and other revenue streams from across multiple clan territories.

Gender was another critical marker of inequality across the early work. Average female income in the surveys was less than a third of the average male income (Banks 2005). This was resented by most of the women themselves (Bonnell 1999), but is a finding that also matches much of the literature on development in PNG (and indeed historically worldwide). While pre-contact gender-based roles and inequalities have been the subject of much anthropological discussion and may not have been a simple matter, relative inequality in material terms increased for most women around the Porgera mine. Given the more recent reports from Porgera of human rights abuses directed towards women (Human Rights Watch 2011), it is clear that for most women at Porgera, mining

has disproportionately impacted on them. Beer's chapter in this volume, with a much more fine-grained analysis, highlights both the varied range of effects of resource developments on the diverse livelihoods of women, as well as the ways in which material changes in circumstances become translated through 'tok' into a much more complex, multifaceted and often contradictory understanding and experience of inequality among these women.

The final axis of inequality explored in the earlier work was the evolving differences between Porgerans and the many more recent migrants who had moved into the area in the post-mining phase. Some of the definitional boundaries between 'local' and 'migrant' were blurred even at that early stage, partly as a result of the movement of people from surrounding areas into Porgera during the extended exploration period (from the 1950s onwards) (Banks 1997; Bainton and Banks 2018). Even using a crude marker of 'recent migrant' ('were they born in Porgera'), though, showed some revealing differences:

> One survey showed that the migrants had an income 50 percent greater than Porgerans over the two week period of the survey (Banks 1999). Breaking down the figures by source of income, the migrants earned a greater amount from mining company wages (K 106 compared to K 44 for Porgerans). In addition the surveys found that as well as generally earning more cash, the migrants had fewer gardens, and were more likely to own a business in Porgera than were the original landowners. (Banks 2005: 137)

Subsequently, a recent (Jinks et al. 2019) revisit of adjoining communities pointed to the continuing presence of inequalities in the community (one household of the 21 surveyed accounted for 28.5 per cent of the fortnightly income in the community adjacent to the SML), and mirrored the findings in relation to migrants and 'locals': 'three of the four households with a fortnightly income of over K2,000 were non-landowners …, while six of the seven with incomes of K500 or under were landowner households' (2019: 28). The ability of these migrant non-landowner households to generate incomes greater than locals has long been a point of contention and conflict. It is one of the key reasons too why people move to be closer to these resource projects. As Knauft (Chapter 6) notes: 'most people in rural PNG fantasise and project, but more practically and immediately they yearn … for the amazing wealth they perceive in other areas beyond their own'. And it is a far-reaching effect, as a 'sense of being left behind or left out is often at the heart of conflicts and disputes

… in areas far distant' (Knauft this volume) from the resource extraction sites; indeed they can be sparked, as Knauft notes, by connections to and movements towards distant *possible* extraction projects.

As a result of the patterns of geographic, social inequality noted above, the early survey work found substantial income inequalities within the community. Hence 10 per cent of households in an early survey earned 59 per cent of the total sample income reported, while the lower 50 per cent of the sample earned just 2 per cent of the total income (Banks 1999): 'Eighteen percent had received no money over the fortnightly period, and another 10 percent less than K 10' (Banks 2005: 137). The cash income then was stratifying the community into novel configurations of households, individuals and larger groups (the putative Porgeran 'sub-clans').

The analysis also argued that there were two other factors at work that influenced both the extent of material inequality and its evaluation by people within communities (reflecting the difference that Knauft notes between inequality and inequity). First:

> despite the broad geographic patterns noted, it was apparent from the surveys that there are more marked differences within each of the Porgeran communities than between them, reflecting the influence of hierarchy, gender, and residential status. (Banks 2005: 137)

Second, and following from this, the early survey work also pointed to another key influence within these communities, arguing that while '"trickle down" does not necessarily provide more egalitarian outcomes among traditional societies than in economist's models of modern ones' (Banks 2005: 137), there was evidence that redistribution was occurring to an extent within the affected populations. Colin Filer (1990) had famously commented in relation to the Bougainville crisis that a lack of distribution of mine-derived revenue streams within Melanesian societies was due to the fact that they simply had no appropriate traditions to draw on when it came to distributing this novel wealth. Traditional mechanisms for the distribution of the objects of customary trade and exchange (pigs, pearl shells, dog teeth, etc.), could not, according to Filer, be expected to provide a basis for the equitable distribution of millions of kina in cash (examples of which have been noted above). The sheer scale of this novel wealth then, produces tensions that traditional ways of balancing and managing relationships simply cannot handle. The Porgera surveys

(both the historical and the more recent one) showed that despite Filer's caution here, there are still traditional norms of distribution that operate to mitigate some of the material inequalities that mine wealth generates. Hence:

> The most common source of income for individuals in the surveys was from household members or other wantoks and indeed for a quarter of the sample this was the only source of income (Banks 1999). Although the sums involved were often small, there was an element of redistribution occurring within the community. (Banks 2005: 138)

Likewise there were elements of redistribution evident within the exaggerated forms of traditional exchange that appeared at Porgera—bride price and compensation payments increased exponentially, and mining revenues underpinned this growth. Bainton (2010) found the same with mortuary feasting events on Lihir. Societal values of obligations to care for kin still functioned here, although they typically did little to smooth out the extremes in inequality that had been created, and often nurtured culturally specific forms of dependency. Dependency in the modern Western sense carries a heavy moral load, with the neoliberal ethos of individualistic pursuit of wealth and happiness demonising dependency and forms of interconnected communal constructions of society. In Melanesian societies where relationality is central, the relationship between dependency and reciprocity is more complex. Indeed, as is made obvious in Beer's, Knauft's and Minnegal and Dwyer's chapters, the moral load is often on those with wealth to accept and maintain relationships of dependency with kin and others. Much of the clamour and social chaos around resource projects in Melanesia results from the active reshaping of relationships and the values tied to them, and the calculated drive to establish relations of dependency—as a foothold, or a more permanent state (cf. Ferguson 2015 in the African context)—is a significant component of this. Stress and fracturing of norms (Melanesian societal institutions, if you like) of kinship, reciprocity and dependency (see Beer's chapter) in these contexts can shatter the moral codes that tie these communities together.

As the Porgera case above shows, relative inequalities are critical to development prospects, even where absolute wealth increases and absolute poverty drops within communities. The socially determined and geographic inequalities collide with, build on and articulate with polarising processes within these various communities to construct

a complex web of material and discursive and different segments of the community, and internally between different inequities. In this context, as Knauft notes in Chapter 6, the 'abrogation of meaningful reciprocity' (between the developers and differently positioned individuals within the community) sit at the heart of the processes of 'social disintegration' (Filer 1990), tensions and conflicts.

There is a flip side to the wealth that does flow unequally into these communities, and the inequalities that result. The agreements and policies that sit behind the various revenue streams direct the bulk of the compensation and royalty flows to individuals and communities that have had their land altered, destroyed or alienated by resource development, alongside other forms of transformation and dislocation in their lives. In much of the discourse around wealthy, greedy, rapacious resource landowners, there is often insufficient recognition by observers (company, government, the broader public and many academics) that the mining leaseholders' wealth has come at a cost. To talk (as economists often do) of royalties and dividends as 'unearned resource rents' is to belittle the profound cultural and emotional loss that typically accompanies the loss of land and, as explored in the chapters above, the shifts within society that accompany mining development.

Conclusion: Inequality, Institutions, Policy and Nuance

As is obvious from the chapters in this volume, the disparities generated through the unequal distribution of revenues, and the interplay with group formation and local identity politics is a key driver of conflict around resource extraction projects. The chapters here productively shift the focus of the debate around inequality from an individualistic/societal one (the frame within which Picketty and Saez's opening statement arises) to one constructed around a more Melanesian form of relationality. Not only is 'relative inequality' (or inequity, as Knauft notes) a key concept, but more fundamentally a relational view of the world, based on an understanding that foregrounds relationships—between people, land, materiality and the spirit world—forces us to rethink the processes and levers that frame and construct inequality. As Beer notes:

> 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 [and economic] factors. The upshot of such initial differential processes is frequently the production of significant social and economic demarcations, which itself is crucial to the generation of more entrenched social contracts in the medium and longer term. (Beer, this volume)

The ethnographic focus on practices is able to be used so productively within this volume to interrogate broader discussions of inequality precisely because these relationships across multiple levels and contexts are so fine-grained, complex and diverse. Any worthwhile examination of inequality within the evolving global systems needs to pay heed to the nuance of cultural contexts, relationships and lived practices, not just national institutions and policy.

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