

Insights on Capitalism from Oceania

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Structured Abstract

Purpose: The authors introduce the chapters of *Engaging with Capitalism* with a discussion of anthropological and other social theory about peoples' approaches to capitalism, especially peoples with vibrant non-capitalist social systems, such as are found in Oceania.

Approach: The introduction is in the form of a review of anthropological and other social theory about interactions between capitalism and non-capitalist social systems.

Findings: The theoretical literature has tended to dichotomize capitalist and non-capitalist societies. While heuristically it is useful to contrast capitalist and non-capitalist social systems, in practice once societies come into the orbit of capitalism people adapt elements of capitalism to suit their aims. Furthermore, societies generally considered thoroughly capitalist also include non-capitalist features. So it is more accurate to think of societies as involving a mix of capitalism and non-capitalism, and the nature of that mix is part of what makes each society distinct.

Social implications: The theoretical dichotomization of societies as capitalist or not, with capitalism understood as being universal, and non-capitalism understood in general terms such as gift economy, is prevalent in public imaginaries. Domestic social policy and international development assistance are often based on this dualistic understanding. Such programs could work better if they were based instead on an understanding that each group of people has a dynamic economic system, which includes capitalist and non-capitalist elements that interact in ways influenced by their history and locality.

Value of paper: The paper provides a conceptual scaffold for thinking about the ways people engage with capitalism.

Category: Conceptual paper

Keywords: capitalism, economic anthropology, anthropological theory, dualisms

The nature of capitalism is an enduring topic for debate. As a social and economic system capitalism has been very effective in generating wealth and technological innovation, but has also been associated with great social inequity and environmental damage. Capitalism's position as 'the' way to do social and economic organization was consolidated with the end of the Cold War, even as its inherent flaws have been highlighted by the escalation of ecological problems arising from growth-oriented capitalism and economic crises such as the 'dot com bust' of 2000, widespread food riots in 2007-2008 and the global financial crisis starting in 2008.

Understandings of the nature of capitalism have shifted over time. Early analyses by Marx and Weber were added to in the second half of the twentieth century when the question of 'development' arose for newly independent former colonies and less wealthy parts of the world (for example, Rostow 1960). Universal and totalizing theories of the spread of capitalism through modernization were superseded by more nuanced theories such as those of Barrington Moore (1966). Policies for facilitating capitalism have also shifted over time, with Keynesianism and *dependencia* gradually losing ground to neoliberalism over the 1970s and 1980s (for example, World Bank 1981). By the 1990s it became clear that several decades of development assistance had not resulted in flourishing capitalist economies in most target countries. The idea of postdevelopment gained attention, in which development was viewed as self-congratulatory and self-seeking on the part of donors, and as disempowering and demeaning for recipients, by positioning them as lacking economic capacity and denying the possibility that there might be valid ways to organize society other than the dominant capitalist model (Sachs 1991).

Nevertheless, people want material improvements in their lives, and in the absence of another viable economic system, have no choice but to continue to seek these through some kind of capitalist development. Persistent difficulties with prevailing development practices as well as the obvious dysfunctions of global financial markets leading to the crisis in 2008, and increasing concern about climate change not being effectively addressed by governments unwilling to tackle economic-nationalist imperatives in the context of world capitalist pressures for growth, has led to debate about changes to capitalism in the global media, academia and policy circles. Alternatives to measuring social progress in the conventional manner of growth in

Gross Domestic Product that have been around for some time, such as the Gross National Happiness Index, and the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index, have received renewed attention. New approaches have also been proposed, such as *Measuring and Fostering Well-Being and Progress: the OECD Roadmap* (OECD 2009) and the *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress* (Stiglitz et al 2009). Tim Jackson's (2009) *Prosperity without Growth* is another high profile entreaty to policy makers to reorganize the way capitalism is administered to address the social and ecological dysfunction that can be caused by it. Thomas Friedman, a journalist and popular author on globalization has proposed change in his assessment of the future world as being *Hot, Flat and Crowded* (2008). On the academic side some of the prominent scholars working in the area include ecological economist Herman E. Daly (2009) and sociologist of capitalist globalization Leslie Sklair (2002).

Anthropology has always been one of the core disciplines informing understandings of capitalism, and many of the theoretical debates within anthropology have been entwined with broader shifts in understanding about the nature of capitalism and economic development. In the anthropological record seminal work by Malinowski (1922) in Melanesia and Firth (1929) in Polynesia provided an early challenge to the notion that 'primitive' economic behavior is irrational and critiqued the supposed universal *homoeconomicus* model of humanity. More recent work by David Graeber and Keith Hart, amongst others, initiated as a response to the 2008 crisis, draws empirical attention to the existence of a plurality of economic forms in any society as against a singular notion of the economy as 'capitalism'. Several of these economic forms are universally distributed across history even if their combination is coloured by the existence of a dominant organizational form in a particular time and space (Hart, 2008, 2009). This work proposes a model of economic improvement that is not predicated on the overthrow of an economy monolithically conceived as capitalism to something which is its antithesis, rather to pay attention to what people are already doing, to alternative economic practices and the combination of different practices, and to give these more emphasis in forging a new direction in economic change.

Anthropology of the peoples of Oceania has particularly interesting perspectives on capitalism and the forms it takes. Non-capitalist social and economic institutions play

a large role in the lives of many of the peoples of Oceania, but at the same time the desire for development is strong. For several decades people have been grappling with how to manage this – to retain the material safety and cultural richness of indigenous non-capitalist societies and economies and to also gain the health, wealth, education and life opportunities the modern capitalist world offers. It is not an easy task, not least because the power of the capitalist discourse is such that non-capitalist social and economic practices may be derided, rendered invisible, or assumed indeed to be capitalist (because that is all one can imagine). Other difficulties arise due to incompatibilities between capitalist and non-capitalist practices and institutions.

Defining Capitalism

One of the things the authors have collectively grappled with through this project is how to define capitalism. Is it a mode of production based on class stratification, with the bourgeoisie owning the means of production and labour exploited for profit and alienated from the commodities they produce? Is it a mode of international trade based on histories of colonialism whereby the former colonizers have set themselves up to be able to extract surpluses from former colonies, or otherwise protect their own economic position of privilege at the expense of the rest of the world?¹ Is capitalism a mindset by which people approach economic activity with the aim of accumulating profits, which may then be reinvested in the activity to accumulate greater profits? Is capitalism defined by the existence of competitive markets for goods and services with prices set by demand relative to supply? Yes. We have found in our case studies that capitalism may be all of these things, with some of these aspects more or less pertinent in given situations.

What we have found, furthermore, is that the practices of particular groups of people cannot be defined as *either* purely capitalist *or* thoroughly non-capitalist. The empirical material we present in this volume demonstrates that elements of capitalism and non-capitalism coexist in social groups, even though they may well be incommensurable. For example, several of the papers detail frictions in societies

¹ Some versions of this definition of capitalism have been discredited as neo-marxist dependency theory, but other versions of the world systems approach are widely considered still pertinent, such as the versions informing world history, for example Eric Wolf's (1982) seminal work, and the global commodity chain approach (see Bair 2008).

where demand sharing is prevalent, but where people are also trying to accumulate material goods. Explicating this coexistence is tricky, not only because the actual practices may be incompatible, but also because the conceptual frameworks for discussing capitalist worldviews and practices vis a vis non-capitalist ones tend to dichotomize. Societies may be described as being based on gift *or* commodity economies. For Melanesianists the question is whether people have become possessive individuals (capitalist) *or* remain relational individuals in their owning and transferring of things.

This tendency to dichotomize societies as one or the other may be traced back to the formalist-substantivist debate in anthropology, which reached its hiatus in the 1960s and by the 1970s ended unresolved. Each side of the debate had a fundamentally different perception of human nature. For the inherently anti-capitalist substantivists (see Dalton 1969; Polanyi 1944; Sahlins 1972) economic systems of the non-capitalist peoples of the world were governed essentially by principles of reciprocity, redistribution and gift exchange, where people did not always make choices nor act out of self-interest. In this view there was no possibility of a universal homo economicus and western-derived models of economics were not seen as cross-culturally applicable. Conversely, formalism, with its impetus in creating a modern scientific anthropology, emphasized the ethnological utility of western analytical tools as, in the strongest formalist formulation, the economic rationality of the maximizing individual is everywhere ubiquitous. In this debate, however, both schools avoided addressing the most enigmatic issue: the assumption that economic rationality and communal reciprocal exchange are mutually exclusive (Wilk and Cliggett 1996).

The dichotomization of societies as capitalist or not breaks down when looking at the empirical material in these chapters, each chapter in the book describes the persistence of non-capitalist social features even in the midst of engaging with capitalism. Material accumulation, emerging class stratification based on property ownership, competitive market activities, and the treating of things as commodities coexist intimately with material egalitarianism, non-class based social relations, the inalienability of land and other property, ongoing gift economies, an emphasis on social reproduction and so on. One challenge, then, is to understand these societies in

Oceania, which are demonstrably non-capitalist in many ways, as also involving elements of capitalism.

A related challenge in writing about the coexistence of capitalist and non-capitalist elements in society is avoid falling uncritically into a conceptualization of engaging with capitalism as a process by which 'tradition' will be progressively replaced with 'modernity'. In early forms of modernization theory it was imagined that capitalism would, because it was a superior form of social organization, overtake non-capitalist forms of social organization all over the world. It has been convincingly argued, however, that capitalism always exists within and is shaped by social frameworks including non-capitalist features. Marx himself acknowledged this, with the idea being more recently expanded on by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000). Where people have a material basis for their non-capitalist social lives, such as that offered by customary tenure in many of the countries of Oceania, the fact of the co-existence of capitalism and non-capitalism is highlighted. Many commentators still see such societies within the universalizing modernization framework and argue that non-capitalist havens of production must be dismantled, to bring people wholly into the material sphere of capitalism (Gosarevski et al 2004).

One of the important insights that postdevelopment scholars and activists highlighted is that people do not necessarily see the wholesale adoption of capitalism, and the abandonment of non-capitalist ways of organizing their economic life as a good idea (Sachs 1991). Even when people take on certain elements of capitalism because they see these elements as beneficial to enabling them to achieve their socio-economic ends, they often do so in ways that strengthen their non-capitalist activities, they continue to prioritize those activities highly, even if they are incompatible with the capitalist activities and stymie them. For example, George Curry has found that the quintessentially capitalist activity of shopkeeping has in some parts of Papua New Guinea been harnessed to the non-capitalist prestige economy, with the result that most of the shops eventually become insolvent (Curry 1999; 2007). Chapters in this volume by Mark Mosko, Shu-Yuan Yang, and Tim Sharp detail the adoption of capitalist practices by groups of people in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines, but within arguably non-capitalist worldviews and organization of social relations. Societies are not static, and engaging with capitalism is one sure route to social

change. The chapters in this book show that in many cases there is more capitalism than there was in the past, but the non-capitalist element remains strong. It is important not to just *assume* that social change *will* result in conversion to a completely or mostly capitalist system, but to question what kind of change is occurring, and whether what might appear to be the adoption of capitalist mindsets and practices similar to those in other countries, is upon closer inspection something still quite different.

A fruitful way of conceptualizing the entanglement of non-capitalist and capitalist economies under modern conditions is to draw on Mauss's idea of the human propensity for merging both self-reliance and social connectedness in a multitude of complex social relationships. For Mauss, the two prerequisites for being human are to be self-reliant to a high degree and to belong to others, merging our identities in a bewildering variety of social relationships (in Hart, 2008). Thus the co-existence of individualistic and communal economic practices, or interestedness and disinterestedness, while often marked by incommensurability, is nonetheless a human trait. Tim Sharp's discussion (this volume) of the simultaneity of competition and cooperation in the Mt Hagen betel nut trade draws attention to this seemingly paradoxical coexistence.

This is not to say that because all societies have elements of capitalism and non-capitalism they are all the same, that there is nothing to worry about in the social change going on around engagements with capitalism, or that the dualisms used to conceptualize economic activities as capitalist or not are of no explanatory use. Rather, we find that particular engagements with capitalism are defined by the ways that certain elements of capitalism and non-capitalism coexist, which are contingent on the cultures, histories and geographies of the people involved and the power differentiations in the context within which they operate. Defining capitalism in this book, therefore, is about explaining how specific groups of people engage with capitalism in combination with other social processes, and the social effects of those engagements.

Dualisms in Thinking About Capitalism

The history of anthropological theory is replete with the construction and defense of grand paradigms that dichotomize capitalist and non-capitalist social features. We have already stated that conceptualizing societies as either capitalist or non-capitalist in their entirety does not match the social realities we see in the cases in this volume. Viewing these dualisms as ideal types, however, with actual societies including interactions between both capitalist and non-capitalist mindsets and practices, these models have heuristic value for helping explain the particularities of societies. Here we consider some of the main theoretical constructs of capitalism and non-capitalism relevant for the engagements covered in this book.

Old and New Property Regimes

Property issues are central to the ways people engage with capitalism.

Anthropological accounts of property have long attempted to link complex property forms with economic activities, political arrangements, ecological considerations and social identity (see Malinowski 1935, Lowie 1921, White 1959 and Harris 1968).

Given this analysis, property can be conceived of as a nexus of social struggle (Hann, 1998). This is particularly the case when property regimes are in the process of changing. In the Pacific three main property transformations are discernible. First, old systems of resource ownership have been abrogated as a result of the dissemination of the liberal notion of private property through colonialism. Second, where customary tenure still persists it does so in a much altered way. Third, new models of ownership, ideas of personhood and forms of exchange have been created. The chapters in this volume are largely concerned with the last two of these possibilities.

Customary tenure is a key theme for property in Oceania and centrally affects engagements with capitalism. For example, having access to land for growing food and building shelter makes for a particular kind of labor, not the landless labor imagined in conventional Marxism, or indeed in many liberal versions of capitalism. Customary resources owners also engage with capitalism in particular ways, for example as *rentiers* in the case of owners of land used for mining or logging. Also, crucially, it can offer a safety net from the vagaries of capitalism. Certainly when cash-earning activities dry up major problems result, but in the absence of state welfare things would be even worse for many people in Oceania without customary tenure.

Yet it is important to recognize that customary tenure is itself reconfigured in the process of capitalist engagement. Negotiations between customary landowners and capitalist enterprises that want access to their land and/or the resources embedded in the land shifts notions and effects of property, even when the national social political and legal frameworks protect customary tenure and all parties intend to operate in good faith within its principles (rather than intending to subvert it). Mining, which is a mainstay of the economy in Papua New Guinea, has required the use of customary land for commercial purposes, and this form of engaging with capitalism has led to changes in the way customary tenure is imagined and operationalized (Macintyre and Foale 2007; Golub 2007). The work of George Curry and Gina Koczberski (2009) shows how growing demand for land for agricultural development in Papua New Guinea has led to customary owners gifting and selling land. While on the surface this might appear to be an alienation of the land from customary tenure to a marketable commodity, their analysis shows that the rights to use of the land remain tied within social relationships, and thus the land is not fully commoditized or alienated.

New models of ownership have also emerged. For instance, the neoliberal emphasis on commodification, which has resulted in a proliferation of newly propertised things, has simultaneously created a space in which new claims to property are constituted. This possibility is discussed in this volume in chapters by Fiona McCormack and Toon Van Meijl in the context of indigenous claims and the reparation of Maori resources. In this process property itself becomes differently modelled and a new class of owners has emerged. In the case of Maori fisheries new forms of private property and customary tenure introduced in the process of the settlement of indigenous claims to fisheries has had far reaching social consequences. The privatization of fishing rights in the form of tradeable quotas has created new possibilities for wealth generation in the commercial fishing sector whereas in the customary sector the possibility of producing fish for exchange has been made illegal by the adoption of a non-reciprocal model of gifting. This new form of customary tenure is a very different construct to that which exists in Papua New Guinea. There customary land can be used as a safety net against the vagaries of capitalism, because people can subsist from it. In New Zealand living off the land alone is much more difficult, and the way customary marine tenure has been handled in the fisheries

settlement actually brings one sector of Maori society (the corporate tribal sector) further into capitalism.

We prefer to consider property in a dynamic manner rather than through the more rigid categories of property rights and legal constructs. Some of the issues raised in the chapters such as quotas in fisheries and questions about the meaning of ownership and transferring of certain kinds of things don't fit comfortably under a rights based property model and in fact might normally be discussed as being about 'gifts/commodities'. We take as a starting point that property is a form of sociality that expresses relationships between persons and things and between persons with respect to things. Yet this relationship is also mutable as the relationship between things and persons is not always clearly demarcated and is subject to change. Property is also a process. For instance, how do people own, hold on to and claim new (or reclaim old) things? What power dynamics are at work and how are people, things and social relations reconstituted in this process? Clearly the exchange of things is implicated in these dynamics. New ways of valuing and transacting objects may emerge which might dispossess former owners, create new opportunities for owning or in many other ways have social consequences. Toon Van Meijl's chapter offers an interesting analysis of the radically changing role of property. He argues that in modern economies the idea of exchanging property in markets, foundational for capitalist economies, is now becoming an anachronism. Although property continues to exist, it is much less likely to be exchanged, which in turn forces suppliers to hold on to property and to seek different ways to generate income from their assets. The modern market system is thus characterized by short-term access agreements between servers and clients operating in network relationships and economic success is increasingly determined by access to resources.

We also concur with the recent body of work which has mounted a critique of the simplistic 'private property as a western form of ownership' thesis (for example Hann 1998, Quiggan 1988, and Von Benda-Beckmann et al 2006). These authors point to the existence of private property in pre-capitalist societies and methods of property transferability that are characteristically similar to those employed in modern market economies. Objects possessed in such a manner 'can be transacted in the market, without moral evaluation' (Hann, 1998: 6). As the chapters in this volume show, in

any one society configurations of ownership may include a complex amalgamation of private, public and communal characteristics.

In Melanesianist circles a key debate about capitalism is whether prevailing notions of personhood have come to be marked by possessive individualism whereby people have full ownership of the things they buy, and all connections to former owners are severed in the transaction, *or* people are still imagined to be individuals with ongoing social connections through the producing, owning and transferring of things.

The chapter in this book by Mark Mosko shows that although the North Mekeo people engage with money and commodities their personhood cannot be usefully analysed by employing the concepts of individualism, particularly possessive individualism. Rather, North Mekeo villagers continue to qualify as composite individuals with respect to the totality of their persons and this is at least partly a consequence of the fact that the alienated products of people's labors, but not the labors themselves, and the money and goods they receive in exchange for them, are viewed as potent aspects of persons, analogous to indigenous wealth and ritual paraphernalia. Dalsgaard addresses possessive individualism as a matter of ideals that people adhere to and will use against each other as ways of acting in a social 'game' with different positions tied to different resources. In his chapter this game is exemplified by the migrant leaders, such as Sitapai, who evoke double standards when they claim to be individualists and preach self-reliance to village kin, yet rely on their kin as automatic wantok-support if they return to contest the election. In his analysis town dwellers more or less act as neoliberal possessive individuals whereas village residents act more or less as social individuals. Yet both positions are entangled with elements of each other.

Commodities and Gifts

Engagements with capitalism in Oceania have often been understood in terms of the indigenous economy being a gift economy, with a commodity economy involving capitalist mindsets and practices having been introduced by colonizers and traders. Chris Gregory, for example, draws on the conceptual framework of gift exchange developed by Mauss and later Sahlins where the gift is viewed as a total social phenomenon and social obligation is centralised. In his earlier work (1982) Gregory emphasizes the incommensurability of gift and commodity economies with the former

directed towards the qualitative maintenance of social relations and the latter deemphasizing all social aspects. What both systems have in common, however, is the drive towards maximization. In gift economies participants give extensively in order to maximize social relations while in commodity economies people maximize material goods and wealth. In Gregory's later work (1997) he reverses his earlier (1982) somewhat impermeable distinction between gift and commodity economies, and argues that in any one society there are different contexts within which people operate with one or the other system in mind.

This conception allowing for the coexistence of both types within societies is pertinent to our understanding of the way in which Pacific peoples negotiate capitalism. In the chapters in this book, however, we question the usefulness of conceptualizing gift and commodity exchanges as inhabiting distinct social spheres and instead focus on the simultaneity of both individualist and communal exchanges in ethnographic and historical contexts. Anton Ploeg's description (this volume), for instance, of the pre-colonial and early colonial way of life of the Me people in the western part of the New Guinea Highlands importantly lays to rest the notion that pre-capitalist economies can be characterized in terms of a pure type of disinterested gifting. Rather Ploeg shows that a desire for material gain and wealth accumulation co-existed with non-capitalist features such as an interest in social reproduction.

Further, we point to the social damage that can be done by applying the idea of societies being 'gift' *or* 'economy' in an ill-informed way in policy. The creation of Maori fisheries, for instance, as either purely about gifting or exclusively concerned with capital gain as legislated for in Maori Customary Fisheries and Maori Commercial Fisheries regulations has made antithetical the realm of 'culture' and the realm of the 'economy'. Here the reality of their coexistence is denied by the regulations, an idealized unnatural dichotomous vision is imposed, which is having negative social impacts (McCormack, this volume).

Of course, this coexistence can be quite disruptive, because the norms and practices of gift systems and those of capitalism can be in direct conflict. Chapters by Yang, Sharp, Bainton and Macintyre, Ploeg, Barclay and Kinch, and Dalsgaard detail situations where demand sharing frustrates attempts to accumulate wealth. People

trying to accumulate may be perceived as contravening fundamental social values, while people demanding to share may be seen as inhibiting social progress. The coexistence of capitalism and non-capitalism, therefore, involves constant negotiation. Bainton and Macintyre's chapter show that some entrepreneurs manage the disjuncture by distancing their business activities or even their whole social lives from relatives who may demand to share their wealth. Dalsgaard's chapter also shows this kind of strategy, but also another strategy whereby men who have accumulated a lot of wealth, if they are also capable leaders in village society, may through social and political leadership share some of their wealth while still keeping most for themselves, and being valued participants in village life. Chapters by Mosko and Bainton and Macintyre demonstrate the social dysfunction that may arise from disjunctures between the two kinds of economic system.

Arjun Appadurai's (1986) work on the value of an object raises important questions about gift economies and their interactions with capitalism. By directing our attention to the object of exchange, Appadurai (1986) highlights the fluidity of the categories of gifts and commodities as an object inheres different value throughout its life as it journeys through diverse social relationships. The value of an object, according to Appadurai, is negotiated and is determined by what participants to the exchange are willing to sacrifice in order to obtain it. Hann, however, argues that this analysis does not go far enough, that value cannot be an end in itself, 'it must lead on to an analysis of the political and social conditions which determine access to scarce goods – in other words to the analysis of distribution and property relations' (1998, 32). This larger concern resonates with the chapters in this volume. For instance Van Meijl's analysis of the settlement of Maori indigenous claims shows how the redistribution of settlement assets has heightened socioeconomic disparities and led to a new class system within Maori society. Kate Barclay and Jeff Kinch's chapter, dealing with fisheries development in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, argues that capitalist development needs to be explained not just in terms of the economic practices and material desires of local cultures, but also national political and economic contexts, transnational development assistance frameworks and nature.

Moral Economies vs Capitalism

The 'communitarian' analysis of economies, which informs the moral economy school, also theorizes differences between capitalist and non-capitalist worldviews and practices. Katz (1997) identifies the origins of the communitarian analysis in Aristotle's normative economic school, which maintains that production for gain corrodes the moral fabric of society. Aristotle's analysis of the classical system suggests that a moral economy and a commodity economy can coexist as two different emphases. Aristotle went on to make a distinction between Oeconomic (procuring those articles that are necessary to existence) and Chrematistic (the art of making money) economic transactions and the subsequent false fusion between the two to illustrate the unnatural association of "money exchanged for money (M-M)" rather than money being used for the purpose for which it was invented, the exchange of commodities (M-C-M) (Marx, 2007 [1867]).

The essential feature of the moral economy as described by Scott (building on the work of writers such as Thompson [1963], Wolf [1982], Chayanov [1925] and Polanyi [1944]) in his analysis of peasant society is the moral content of the subsistence ethic. Briefly, Scott argues that peasants are typically people living close to the margins of survival and this ongoing shortage of necessities gave rise to a 'subsistence' ethic resulting in social arrangements such as '...patterns of reciprocity, forced generosity, communal land and work-sharing (which) helped to even out the inevitable troughs in a family's resources which might otherwise have thrown them below subsistence' (Scott 1976:3). The end result of these social arrangements was to ensure that all within the community were entitled to a living from the available resources. Thus the desire for subsistence security arises out of the peasant economic system and was experienced socially as a conglomeration of moral rights or expectations. In Scott's formulation in the moral economy exchange is intertwined with kinship, religion and political spheres, and is based solely on activities to ensure subsistence, whereas in capitalism the economy is an abstracted domain that directs exchange towards individual maximization of returns or profit.

Although this dichotomization of a moral economy and a capitalist economy is likely overstated in Scott's work, he does usefully draw attention to the frictions that may arise when capitalism is being negotiated. When the moral standard is threatened or ignored, resentment and resistance can be expected. Peasant economies are

encompassed by broader social institutions, including capitalism, with quite different moralities. Capitalist processes and effects, therefore, are experienced as morally wrong and exploitative. The consciousness of a profound moral loss in interacting with capitalism triggers the revitalization of traditional economic practices in resistance. For instance, Thompson argues that the food riots in late 18th century England signified ‘a last desperate effort to re-impose the old paternalist moral economy as against the economy of the free market’ (1991:337). Similarly, Gregory’s (1982, 1997) research highlights the ways in which ceremonial exchange is exaggerated in the context of market expansion. This expansion is also echoed in Wolf’s account of potlatch ceremonies, which proliferated simultaneous with the encroachment of market relations and national legislation developed to stop it (1999). The tension arising from capitalist economic practices in Oceanic societies with strong moral economies, the moral denunciation of those practices, the economic rationality of subsistence security and the efflorescence of gift exchanges as a response to engaging with capitalism all resonate with the cases in this book (see chapters by Boyd, Ploeg, and Bainton and Macintyre).

Socially Embedded Economies

Karl Polanyi’s (1944) work on the laissez faire capitalism practiced particularly by Britain in the decades preceding World War I as being an economic form disembedded from social relationships has led some to assume that capitalism in general is disembedded, as opposed to societies such as those in Oceania where the economy is socially embedded. However, Polanyi’s assertion was actually that all economies tend towards embeddedness, even capitalist ones. The period of laissez faire was a momentary disembedding that was ultimately unsustainable politically because the inequities it caused threatened to contribute to the spread of communism. Polanyi found that land, labour and money cannot be dis-embedded from society because if they were to be treated in a completely market manner this would cause economic and social breakdown. Labour must be protected by state regulation to prevent dysfunctional levels of exploitation. Farmers must be protected with some form of income stability to encourage them to stay on the land and produce food at feasible prices. Central banks are necessary to protect the money supply from instabilities in financial markets. ‘In other words, for the [capitalist] economy to function, it must be embedded in law, politics and morality’ (Curry 2003, 409). The

collapse of communism as a serious threat to capitalism over twenty years ago has possibly enabled another disembedding in the form of neoliberalism, and it may turn out that the global financial crisis and ecological imperatives will cause a re-embedding of capitalism this time.

Another key idea from Polanyi's (1944) work is that economic activities are not socially neutral; even capitalist actors are not motivated solely by the desire to maximize their economic return but also by a range of other concerns. Economic decision-making is profoundly affected by social context, for example, transaction costs may be reduced by certain kinds of social network (Polanyi as paraphrased in Curry 2003). (See also Bair [2008]; Granovetter [1985]; Swedberg [1994]; Swedberg and Granovetter [2001] on social embeddedness) This helps build a conceptual framework that accounts for the coexistence of capitalist and non-capitalist social features, while acknowledging the differences between them, and enables comparing and contrasting between societies in terms of the interaction between capitalism and non-capitalism within them.

Helgason and Palsson (1997) show how even in Iceland, a country that has implemented neoliberal policies more thoroughly than most and thus regulated for socially unencumbered economic activity, the social still impinges on economic activity. They use a spatial topographical metaphor to conceptualize the process of resource commoditization, focussing on 'the pathways, spheres and boundaries that guide the exchange of social things and the discursive environment within which transactions are negotiated' (1997, 451). The authors point out that Icelandic fishers, who seemingly inhabit a world dominated by utilitarian principles and unimpeded by social relations and obligations, nevertheless evoke a moral economy to resist the fictitious commoditization of their fishing rights. Similarly, Prattis (1982), argues that constraints on transactional modes are situational rather than systematic, that non-maximizing strategies are observable in all societies and conversely, that the universality of rational choice and utility maximization cannot be assumed cross-culturally. Salazar (1996) too shows that while farmers in Western Ireland participate in the individualistic and profit-maximising ethos characteristic of capitalist societies, there is still a substantial sphere in which the moral economy and non-commodity transactions take place. Salazar argues that these non-commodity transactions, or gift

exchanges, cannot be subsumed to an individualistic profit-maximizing rationality as to extrapolate an investment logic characteristic of market exchanges undermines the distinctive social framework that incorporates these transactions and simplifies human experience. Conversely, neither can they be subsumed to a collective normative logic as the moral feeling that pervades such social exchanges between neighbours and kin has a very apparent material dimension. In order to transcend this dualism Salazar proposes a conception of generalized reciprocity as a continuum, with at one extreme “pure” contractual relationships, including both monetary exchanges and barter, and at the other extreme, “pure” moral links’. (1996: 131).

One of the insights enabled by viewing economies as socially embedded is that the particularities of local conditions give rise to local variations in capitalism. The notion that capitalism is a universalizing force that takes over non-capitalist societies and reshapes them in a cookie-cutter fashion has been challenged by scholars of globalization. Critiquing the idea that globalization equals the homogenization of culture and economy, they frame capitalism and modernity as phenomena that become hybridized as they are taken up in diverse social contexts. This has been described as ‘posttraditionalism’, whereby precolonial values and institutions persist in postcolonial societies, albeit in much altered form as they have evolved within local forms of modernity (Curry 2003). In addition to capitalism varying because of its hybridization in diverse cultural contexts, capitalism also varies in terms of institutional regimes. The types of regimes considered in the Varieties of Capitalism literature are liberal market, coordinated market, and statist forms of capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001; Boyer 2005; Boyer 2000; Schmidt 2003). Ronald Dore (2000) has been part of work in a related vein, looking at the nature of capitalism in particular states, and noting that there is a difference between the ‘stock market’ capitalism of the Anglo-Saxon countries (mostly the UK and US, but also other English speaking countries such as Australian and New Zealand) as opposed to versions of capitalism in which social welfare is centrally valued by all stakeholders, such as those that emerged in Japan and Germany.

The Varieties of Capitalism literature, however, tends to focus on the national level. Dealing as they do with peoples of Oceania, and mostly being written by anthropologists, the chapters in this book deal with smaller varieties of capitalism.

One of the significant things to note about subnational economic systems, especially those associated with groups of people deemed ‘primitive’, is that these kinds of local economic systems are frequently misunderstood, meaning that the social policies aimed to promote development generally fail (Curry 2003). The chapter by Barclay and Kinch shows how capitalism as it is practiced in the context of development projects in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea involves clientelist mindsets quite divergent from the independent entrepreneurial mindsets assumed in project design. The chapter by Shu-Yuan Yang paper details misunderstandings of the Bugkalot local economy by development planners and settlers in the Philippines. Fiona McCormack writes of the indigenous economies of New Zealand and Hawai’i having adapted and changed as a result of encompassment by a wider capitalist society. New Zealand policy makers for fisheries and social reparations to Maori, however, have misunderstood the indigenous economy, with the result that policy contexts are creating negative social impacts for Maori.

One significant insight from micro level analyses of varieties of capitalism is to think about ‘business’ as one among many livelihood strategies, as opposed to the full time accumulation model of enterprise assumed by the development project designers and policy makers in these chapters. Like customary tenure, in the countries of Oceania that lack government funded welfare safety-nets, multiple income strategies offer much needed diversification to protect against the ebbs and flows of capitalist markets. Eric Wolf (1982) is a seminal thinker about complex interactions between capitalism and local populations. Wolf showed that in syncretic systems with capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production indigenous social forms may be retained, and indeed local people may creatively adapt the capitalist forms confronting them to suit their needs. The multiple income strategies deployed by many households in Oceania may be seen as a way to engage with capitalism and also preserve non-capitalist local social and economic institutions. It could also be argued that having strong non-capitalist spheres underpinned by non-capitalist economic systems coexisting with capitalism could enable forms of development that are more locally appropriate and less socially and ecologically destructive than capitalist development has often been. On the other hand, as Wolf and others have pointed out, the continuing existence of non-capitalist places, often called ‘the village’ in Oceania,

within wider capitalist structures has often enabled capitalists from having to pay for the full life cycle and reproduction of their workers (Curry 2003, 408).

Class in Oceania

A number of anthropologists have pointed to the emergence of class in the Pacific implying a new form of hierarchy (see for example, Gewertz and Errington 1999). This emergence, however, does not signify that class exists in a universal form in either a classic Marxian or Weberian sense. Besnier (2009) points out that although there is now a visible Tongan upper, middle and lower class, these are distinctively Tongan phenomena. Class has not replaced the traditional ranking system, rather it “piggy-backs” on it. For Tongan entrepreneurs, who are often drawn from the ranks of the traditional elite, the line between kin obligations and business is becoming increasingly drawn. Yet for the poor, structures of reciprocity and obligation continue to dominate and may in fact be the only reliable source of wealth. Steffen Dalsgaard’s chapter discusses this tension in relation to the remittance obligations village kin in Manus, Papua New Guinea, place on their urban based relatives and the mitigating strategies used by these migrants. He finds that rather than capitalism supplanting the village economy, or the village economy having the upper hand and utilizing capitalism to its own ends, the situation is best understood as the articulation of two different systems, with hierarchies of wealth and power being implied quite differently in each. People successful in one sphere are not necessarily able to translate that success into the other sphere.

In the early 2000s controversy was raised by economist Helen Hughes and a group of her colleagues when they called for the abolition of customary tenure in Melanesia (Gosarevski et al 2004). Such calls are concerned to make land more available for capitalist development, but they also have resonance for labour. The enclosure of the commons in Europe had the effect of creating a pool of labour available for capitalists. People who had previously been able to hunt, forage or grow what they needed became dependent on a wage. For some of the countries of Oceania, the limited access to schooling means that many people are only able to engage with capitalism from a most disadvantageous position, often as casual unskilled labour. David Boyd’s chapter shows that Irakia Awa people of Papua New Guinea, after several decades of attempts to improve their life opportunities through wage labour

migration, found that their relegation to the ‘bottom of the heap’ resulted in them turning their back on the wage economy and returning to their village to engage with capitalism differently. Without customary tenure that would not be possible, the Irakia Awa and people like them would become totally dependent on the very low wages prevailing in the Papua New Guinean economy, on which it is a struggle to cover the costs of housing, food and education for children such that they might have better life opportunities (Barclay 2012).

The chapter by Nick Bainton and Martha Macintyre about mining on the island of Lihir in Papua New Guinea, shows that people engage with the opportunities brought by mining in a range of ways consonant with class analysis. Some people are waged workers, others are employed more advantageously in technically skilled, administrative or managerial roles, yet others start businesses to service and supply the mine. But the most desired role is as *rentiers*; recognized owners of land that serendipitously ended up being of central importance to the mine, some of whom have become shareholders in the mine and become very wealthy. McCormack’s and Van Meijl’s chapters also show how the people recognized as the legitimate trustees of customary land in New Zealand have thus entrenched their positions of wealth and power, with little benefit flowing to the rest of their communities. All three of these chapters find that engagement with capitalism is exacerbating social divisions and entrenching inequalities along class lines.

The nature of the entrepreneurialism revealed in these chapters, however, shows the limits of attempting to understand class relations in different locations as being essentially the same. The kind of capitalism emerging among Maori with control over customary resources has emerged as a result of the unique set of circumstances in New Zealand that have shaped the settlement to indigenous people based on the Treaty of Waitangi. Here capitalism based on landholdings is thriving, but the business activities emerging from this capital are not necessarily run by Maori or employing Maori, especially in the case of fishing. In Papua New Guinea there is another unique institutional framework, in which large scale capitalist investors such as mining companies must preferentially foster businesses from local landowner groups. Bainton and MacIntyre show that the lack of experience in doing business, in conjunction with systems of sociality that in many ways run counter to sustaining a

business in the medium to long term, mean that most of the attempts to develop business have ended in frustration. The kinds of entrepreneurialism visible in the chapter by Barclay and Kinch constitute yet another variation, with development projects being predicated on expectations of people approaching their business as fulltime, accumulative, independent operators, whereas the political economy of project development encourages them to act as dependent clients, and the prevailing economic realities for coastal fishers means investing fulltime in a fishing business would be a most irrational thing to do.

Implications for Social and Development Policy

The chapters in this volume bring together examples of attempts to forge locally appropriate versions of modernity from around Oceania, to develop ideas that may be used to help with the process of working out development that suits the aspirations and circumstances of particular groups of people. The chapters variously deal with the following questions: How has the market economy been negotiated by groups who also have other systems through which they organize their social and economic life? What has worked for local people in these engagements and what has not, and why?

The first two chapters (Van Meijl and McCormack) illustrate that the ways Maori engage with capitalism in New Zealand is tied up with the settlement of indigenous claims. The resolution of settlements has resulted in the return of resources now restructured in a highly commoditized form. In terms of engaging with the market economy this has 'worked' for a particular corporatized elite section of Maori society while it has disenfranchised others. Yet, this is not a finished process. Kinship links and obligations continue to criss-cross emerging class divisions. And as Van Meijl suggests the new role property has assumed globally in capitalist markets will challenge traditional forms of wealth accumulation. The third chapter by Jane Horan argues that for a specific group of New Zealand Cook Islands women engaging with capitalism, in the form of accessing governmental social and economic development funding (analysed as a type of third way neoliberalism), is a sophisticated means through which to sustain the traditional production of valuable *tivaivai* (textiles). This successful negotiation enhanced the women's *mana* (authority/power/prestige) and ultimately was enabled by the position of a key Cook Island woman and simultaneous

textile group member within the Ministerial department responsible for administering the grant. This straddling facilitated a knowledge of the praxis needed in order to secure a successful grant application, including a neoliberal conception of ‘community’, and the decidedly different understanding of community, valuables and exchange held by Cook Island New Zealanders.

The following two chapters focus on instances of capitalism brought from outside, fisheries development projects in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (Barclay and Kinch), and a mining company in Papua New Guinea (Bainton and Macintyre). These two chapters consider economic engagement from the perspective of the outside engagers, as well as from the local communities engaging with them. The assumptions brought to business development projects by funding bodies are based on capitalist practices and mindsets often quite unlike the practices and mindsets local people bring to their engagements with capitalism, resulting in frustration on both sides. At the same time, however, it is often quite clear that the business model contained in projects is impractical. Mine economies collapse after the inevitable closure of mines and development opportunities can rarely be transferred to another mining location. Coastal fisheries projects have been failing to meet their objectives of establishing sustainable businesses in fishing for decades yet donors and recipients continue to approve new projects containing elements that have been demonstrated to be unworkable. Local people continue to engage with the opportunities offered in these projects, however, because even though the capitalist business aims of projects often founder, they may meet non-capitalist aims people have to obtain cash-bought goods, enhancing their prestige as well as non-capitalist material activities such as providing for relatives. Barclay and Kinch’s main point is that projects could more successfully facilitate development if the local socioeconomic and political contexts of projects were better understood. Bainton and Macintyre’s main point is that the style of engagement with capitalism inculcated by mines is exacerbating social inequalities, leading to wide gaps between those benefiting handsomely from mining investment, and those unable to access the benefits.

The last six chapters of the book take the perspective of particular groups of people and the ways they have interacted with different forms of capitalism coming into, or arising out of, their place. The chapters collectively address the themes of

development, possessive individualism versus relational economies, gift and market exchange, *bisnis*, trade and customary tenure. Mark Mosko's chapter shows that the development North Mekeo are experiencing, despite all the problems that it has generated, to a large extent suits villager's aspirations – aspirations which remain consistent with the primary objective of creating 'fame' (*auafangai*). North Mekeo development is only secondarily about material improvements in themselves (i.e. *a la* 'development') and primarily about the social implications that material betterment creates. Thus to employ notions of possessive individualism (and its subsidiary connotations and implications) in interpreting the North Mekeo experience greatly distorts the reality as experienced by villagers.

Tim Sharp's case study is unique in that it deals with an indigenous product (betelnut) and an indigenously created trade, hence, capitalism has not, in this instance, come from the outside in terms of either manufactured goods or a market economy. Sharp shows how particular 'place-based' practices and understandings infuse how people produce, transact, arrange and remunerate labour, distribute, accumulate, possess and consume. The internal dynamics of competition and cooperation that exist in the interactions amongst Mt Hagen betel nut traders is not the same as the transactional dynamics typically assumed to exist between buyers and sellers. The betel nut trade is socially embedded and an example of a successful social engagement with a contemporary Melanesian market.

In Anton Ploeg's chapter the idea that 'primitive' economies are directed solely towards social concerns is negated. This is an important insight, and although not new, is deserving of critical attention in the attempt to build a post 2008 economy. Ploeg shows clearly how the Me economy in pre-colonial times engaged with concepts and practices typically associated with capitalism yet managed also to sustain important social practices and traditional exchanges, including social reproduction. This then raises the question of whether alienated possessive individualism, or neoliberalist economic policy of contemporary versions of capitalism, which is embedded in social outreach programmes (such as the initiatives discussed in chapters by Barclay and Kinch, Van Meijl, McCormack, and Horan) is 'the way to do' social progress. Perhaps 'the way to do' is better situated in long-standing local concerns, in cultural obligations, in local ideas of material and cultural

needs, in concerns for the environment and in a critical recognition of how contemporary 'western' forms of capitalist engagements tend to entrench new forms of disenfranchisement.

Shu-Yuan Yang discusses the ways Bugkalot people in the mountains of the Philippines have engaged with capitalism as an extension of their local culture. That is, they have not adopted capitalist mindsets about maximizing the accumulation of material wealth, although they have adopted some of the agricultural technologies and consumerist practices associated with capitalism. Rather, the Bugkalot continue to understand economic activity as being motivated by emotions of anger and jealousy in the context of strong norms of egalitarianism. The impetus to improve agricultural incomes or purchase store-bought goods is thus not motivated by a desire to accumulate more *per se*, but rather by anger/jealousy that another person has more than oneself, and a desire to reestablish equality by acquiring the same things. On this level engaging with capitalism seems fairly benign, but Yang also details processes by which the commodification of land and unaccustomed use of financial credit is resulting in the dispossession of Bugkalot people and social discord among them.

Steffen Dalsgaard looks at remittances from migrant workers in Manus, Papua New Guinea, that have historically been a significant source of monetary wealth, and are today regarded as crucial in fostering local development. Remittances are a way of engaging with capitalism that depend on and maintain long-term personal exchange relationships. As such, they must be understood with reference to social and cultural contexts (both traditional and modern), in terms of the distribution of wealth, and resulting social and economic inequalities. The moral and social consequences are particularly felt in the relationship between villagers and returning migrants, who have grown apart from village ideals but often harbor political ambitions once they return.

David Boyd's chapter refutes the notion that 'western' imposed models of capitalist development are simplistically adopted, that local peoples are necessarily victims and that an individualistic model of personhood results from such engagements. Rather, the alternative and decidedly local version of modernity created by the Papuan New Guinean Irakians is based on strong local agency, a village control of wage labour

migrations, new place-based cash generating initiatives, customary tenure, valued traditions and a strong attachment to place.

In sum, the insights on capitalism from Oceania offered by this collection point to the dynamic and complex nature of peoples' economic practices. While elements of capitalism may exist in many societies around the world, the interactions of those elements with other aspects of the political economies and cultures of those societies mean infinite variation. The focus of this collection is on societies often considered non-capitalist, and for whom non-capitalist norms and practices certainly remain strong. Yet all of them are engaging with capitalism, and incorporating capitalist norms and practices into their societies, in some cases intentionally, in others there is less scope for agency. The outcomes for people are also varied – local cultures are invigorated through processes of adaptation but social disharmony also ensues. While a select few are able to succeed as capitalists, many do not have the cultural or human capital to achieve all that they might hope for with capitalism, so participate as marginalized players. Recognizing the diversity of human economic existence as a given, and valuing non-capitalist social formations as valid parts of social life that coexist with capitalism, rather than denigrating them as backward and assuming that everyone needs to attain a universal and complete ideal standard of capitalism, would be good steps in the direction of enabling engagements with capitalism that are more attuned to the needs and desires of particular groups of people.

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