

# **Land, Power, Change:**

## Entanglements of Custom and Modernity in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Victoria Stead**

School of Global, Urban and Social Studies,  
Design and Social Context  
RMIT University, Melbourne  
April 2013



# Declaration

I declare that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Victoria Stead

April 2013

Sections from three chapters of this thesis have been published elsewhere. The majority of Chapter Four was published in 2012 as 'Embedded in the Land: Customary Social Relations and Practices of Resilience in an East Timorese Community' in *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 23(2): 229-247. Large parts of Chapter Five, and sections of Chapter Two have been published as 'Greeting the State: Entanglements of Custom and Modernity on Papua New Guinea's Rai Coast' in *Anthropological Forum: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Comparative Sociology* 23(1) (forthcoming 2013). Sections of Chapter Seven will appear as 'The Price of Fish: Problematising Discourses of Prosperity at the Pacific Marine Industrial Zone' in Jonathan Ritchie and Michelle Verso, eds., *Securing a Prosperous Future: Papers from the second annual Alfred Deakin Research Institute Papua New Guinea Symposium, 2012*, Goolwa: Crawford House Publishing (forthcoming 2013). I am grateful to the editors and publishers for their permission to reprint the material here.

# Acknowledgments

The completion of this thesis has been possible only because of the support of a tremendous number of people—many more than I have space to name here. At home, I have been fortunate to have two thoughtful and committed supervisors. Damian Grenfell has challenged me, encouraged me, prompted me to explore new angles, and reigned me in when my enthusiasm for new angles went spiraling out of control (often all in the space of a single meeting). Kim Humphrey has been a much-valued second supervisor, intervening at all the right moments with sharp insights and gentle provocations. I thank all of my colleagues at the Globalism Research Centre at RMIT for giving me such a stimulating intellectual home. Particularly, I am grateful for the spectacular community of PhD students and early career researchers of which I have been lucky to be a part—Anna Trembath and Mayra Walsh (both of whom have also been with me at key points of my field work in Timor-Leste), Erin Wilson, Andy Scerri, Anne McNevin, Elizabeth Kath, Rachel Sharples and Robin Cameron.

In the field, my thanks go out to the many informants and friends who have taught me so much over the past four years, hosting me in their homes and communities, and sharing their time and knowledge. In PNG, particularly, my friends at the Bismarck Ramu Group have provided unfailing support, both material and emotional, across the past four years. John, Rosa, Yat, Barry, Tamana, Poin, Gigi, Maggie, Howard, Annie, JW, Frank, Bailal—you have my heartfelt respect. In Timor-Leste, my thanks go particularly to Carmenesa Noronha, a generous friend and colleague, and to my two local research assistants, Avito Julio Hendriques and Ambrosio Dias Fernandes. Across both countries, I extend my gratitude to the leaders and residents of the communities where I have spent time. In PNG—Sausi, Rempi, Nobnob, Siar, Bongu, and Riwo. In Timor-Leste—Cacavei, Aitarak Laran, Farol, Bebora.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to my family. My parents, Ian and Linda Stead, taught me to ask questions about the world, and my brother Timothy was my companion at Sunday dinner family book club. My step-daughter Libby, for whom this project has taken quite literally half a lifetime, has borne my repeated absences with extraordinary good grace, and been a constant source of joy throughout. Above all, my thanks go to my partner James Oliver, for his love, patience and kindness.



# Contents

Declaration .....	iii
Acknowledgments .....	v
Abstract .....	1
1. Introduction.....	3
<b>Entanglement: An Intellectual and Methodological Framework .....</b>	<b>33</b>
2. Approaching custom and modernity.....	35
3. Methodology: An ethnography of entangled social relations .....	61
<b>Land and Power .....</b>	<b>81</b>
4. Embedded in the land: Customary social relations and connection to land .....	83
5. Greeting the state: Ambivalent entanglement and cartographies of power .....	109
<b>Becoming Landowners in Papua New Guinea .....</b>	<b>139</b>
6. Relations of property and the codification of customary connection to land .....	141
7. Making Land Work? The economic and cultural politics of development.....	169
<b>Becoming Landowners in Timor-Leste.....</b>	<b>195</b>
8. Land titling, state-building, and urban-rural imaginaries.....	197
9. Becoming squatters: the eviction of Aitarak Laran .....	225
10. Conclusion .....	251
References.....	267





## Abstract

This thesis develops a critical account of encounters between *customary* and *modern* forms of relationship to land in two Melanesian countries, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. Specifically, it asks: what are the implications of these encounters for relations of power?

In both Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, customary land tenures provide the dominant mechanism for the organization of land. Nevertheless, processes of globalization, state- and nation-building are catalysing the extension of modern forms of connection to land, anchored in an understanding of land as property and as an economic resource to be utilized within capitalist, and specifically neoliberal, relations of production and 'development'. As different forms of connection to land intersect, so too are differing forms of identity and belonging, differing visions of the world and of the self, brought into contestation. Across the thesis, *entanglement* is developed as a core theoretical concept, speaking to the dynamic and ambivalent nature of this contested social field. Through a metaphor of entanglement, the customary and modern are conceptualized as ontologically distinct patterns of practice and meaning; forms of social relations that cut across the boundaries of social groups rather than being synonymous with them.

Methodologically, the thesis is positioned in the iterative space between generalizing theory and on-the-ground particularity, drawing together social theoretical enquiry with multi-sited ethnographic research in remote, urban, and peri-urban communities. Theory, anchored in the concept and metaphor of *entanglement*, is developed to the extent that such a mode of thinking can offer a particular quality of illumination upon processes and experiences that are also local and contingent.

So positioned, the thesis argues that the entanglement of customary and modern forms of connection to land destabilise structures of power in ways that create multiple possibilities for their reconfiguration. At a level of generality, there is a dominant tendency towards the diminishing autonomy of local communities, as power and decision-making capacity shifts to the sites, agents and processes of the state and globalising capital, and as customary ways of life—including forms of connection to land—are ideologically and normatively devalued. In theoretical terms, the abstracted nature of modern social relations lends them a coercive capacity over less abstracted, customary ones. Nonetheless, customary forms of sociality are also able to accommodate a considerable degree of abstraction. Entanglements, then, also generate new possibilities for the rearticulation and reassertion of customary connection to land, and of the forms of power and authority to which that connection gives rise.



# 1. Introduction

---

The four of them are sitting around a table—three Papua New Guinean men and a white woman, a lawyer. The men are representatives of some of the landowning clans in a community, Kurumbukari, in the northern province of Madang. The community is being forcibly relocated from its lands, moved off to make way for a nickel and cobalt mine being built by a foreign-owned company. With a tarpaulin, a box of nails, some tinned rations and 500 kina (about 200 Australian dollars) each family is being forced from its home and its gardens with instructions to build a temporary shelter away from the mine site. The Ramu mine has been contentious since it was first proposed, and now that construction is underway it is the subject of a barrage of complex lawsuits by different landowning groups. The three men are named as plaintiffs in one of these cases, which is why they're sitting here at the table with their lawyer, in the offices of a local NGO just outside of Madang town. The men are 'landowners' by virtue of the enshrinement in the country's constitution of the inalienability of customary land, which is to say, land that is accessed, used and passed down according to indigenous, genealogically organised systems. Faced with their eviction from land that has for generations underpinned their lives, their culture, and their identities, the clans who these men represent are anguished. The problem, though, is that several years ago the landowners signed an agreement, a memorandum of understanding, agreeing to the mine being built. It was a big ritual event, with representatives from the company and the clans. Pigs were killed and eaten, and newspaper reporters invited to witness the signing. Now, the men's lawyer is trying to prepare affidavits for the upcoming trial, and is asking them what they thought they were signing when they signed the MOU. 'But what did you *think* it was?' she asks. 'What did you *think* it was going to do?' 'What did you think it *meant*?' She can't get an answer. She repeats the questions in different languages, to each of the men in turn, but they can't reply. 'What did you think you were signing?' she asks. The men just look at her silently.

Watching this interaction, it bothered me, and it bothered me for a long time afterwards. The looks which the men gave the lawyer were not looks of incomprehension in the sense of not having understood the words or the intention of the questions she was asking. Their expressions did not seem blank, but rather laden beyond the point of being able to be expressed through words. At least, they seemed beyond the types of words, written in the types of ways, which the affidavit called for.

Taken as a metaphor, the silence of the three men speaks of difference encountered and incommensurable, but the contours of this difference are not easily pinned down. It will not do to simply draw the lines between the Papua New Guinean men and their white lawyer, or between the landowners and the company. Of course, these lines can be drawn and are often very real and very raw. Difference does come face-to-face in the form of indigene and developer, coloniser and colonised, insider and outsider, but also within communities, within moments and places, and even within people themselves. Evading easy categorisation, these slippery lines of difference became harder to theorise. I want to suggest that, at least in part, the anguish of the three men can be situated in the encounter of two very different forms of relationship to their land—customary and modern—which, *at that moment*, were irreconcilable. These two different understandings were not held by the landowners on the one hand and the lawyer on the other—though this is not to say that there were not stark lines of difference present within that encounter—but rather both existed, messily and in tension, in the lives and subjectivities of the three men, and of the communities they represented. Their land was deeply and profoundly bound up in their sense of self and in their very life; something from which the idea of alienation was not even conceivable. And yet, in their negotiations with the company which was now evicting them, they had also used their land as an asset, an economic resource which could be traded in the hope of securing access to the objects and symbols of ‘development’—money, cars, new clothes, schools and health clinics.

Understanding these tensions requires recognising that there are ways of being and belonging—*customary* and *modern*—that are fundamentally different but nonetheless intertwined in dynamic co-existence; in what I am calling here *entanglements*. In contemporary Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, and indeed in many other places besides,

these different ways of being are being brought increasingly into encounter with one another through processes of globalization, and state- and nation-building. These encounters, and the processes of change which are catalysing them, are deeply political—creating and transforming relationships of power, generating new cartographies of centrality and marginality, and bringing into contestation different visions of the world and of the self. Especially in places where customary forms of land tenure have long been dominant, deeply intertwined with senses of self and relationships with others, land now becomes a crucible upon which social relations, power and culture are reconfigured and reimagined.

Drawing together theoretical inquiry with multi-sited ethnographic research in Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea, this thesis offers an account of the nature of the encounter between customary and modern forms of relationship to land and, particularly, the implications of such encounters for power. My argument is that the entanglement of modern and customary forms of connection to land destabilises structures of power, in ways that create multiple possibilities for their reconfiguration. There is a dominant tendency, I suggest, towards the diminishing autonomy of local communities, as power and decision-making capacity shifts to the sites, agents and processes of the nation-state and globalising capital, and as customary ways of life (including connection to land) are devalued or rendered invisible through hegemonic ideologies which privilege the modern. Nonetheless, I argue that these hegemonies are not complete, and that the entanglement of the customary and the modern also creates new opportunities for the reassertion of local autonomy, particularly through the rearticulation of customary forms of authority and customary connection to land.

In making this argument, the concept of entanglement is crucial. I use it here to speak of the intertwining of structurally and ontologically distinct forms of social relations, in ways which cut across the boundaries of delimited social groups (be they nations, clans, communities, or ethnic groups), rather than being synonymous with them.<sup>1</sup> Rather than ascribing the

---

<sup>1</sup> The way in which I am employing the concept of ‘entanglement’—as a framework for understanding the intersection of customary and modern social relations—is, as far as I am aware, unique. The term has, however, also been utilised within other literature, both sociological and anthropological. While the usages and conceptual frameworks of these works are markedly distinct from my own, there is in each instance a broadly common interest in themes of difference, convergence and negotiation. Most notably, Tim Ingold (2008, 2010, 2011) employs ‘entanglement’—together with the concept of ‘meshwork’—to theorise the intertwined lines and movements connecting humans and the material world of *things*. To the extent that Ingold is concerned with this materiality of human existence, and with the lived interconnections between people and land, there are resonances with my own

descriptors 'customary' or 'modern' to opposing groups, or to opposing times or places, my argument is that we can instead recognise that the customary and the modern represent instantiated patterns of practice that are dynamically intertwined. Understanding the customary and the modern in this way—as ontologically distinct forms of social relations—allows us to move past the unhelpful dichotomising of custom and modernity without having to abandon using these terms as descriptors of significant social difference. Entanglements of customary and modern social relations can be considered across multiple levels of scale and collectivity, as contingent expressions of processes of social change that are also generally and broadly occurring. In Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, as across the Melanesian Pacific and indeed across much of the non-Western world, such entanglement is being propelled, particularly, by processes of globalization, state- and nation-building, processes that cannot be considered outside of historical experiences of colonialism, and which also bring into play changing forms of embodiment, practices and ideologies of 'development', and transformations associated with urbanisation.

As a metaphor, *entanglement* is intended to speak to the complex and multiple ways in which social difference is experienced, negotiated, lived and contested. Through a language of entanglements, I mean to give expression both to the existence of significant and substantive social difference in the world, and of the creative and multiple ways in which people enact

---

concerns. Nonetheless, working within a broadly phenomenological tradition, his use of entanglement differs from my own emphasis on ontology and social relations. Similarly with Ian Hodder's (2012) work on material culture and the 'entangled' relations between people and things.

Within postcolonial studies, Latin American scholar Ramón Grosfoguel (2003, 2008) has used the concept of entanglement to theorise what he terms the 'coloniality of power', in terms of an entanglement of multiple forms of global hierarchies—including sexual, gender, epistemic, class, linguistic, racial and ethnic hierarchies—with particular attention paid to the racial/ethnic hierarchy of European/non-European as that which 'traversally reconfigures' (2008: 6) other relations of domination and resistance. Also on the theme of power, Sharp, Routledge, Philo and Paddison (2000) speak of the entangled relationship between domination and resistance. Both of these works have relevance for this text, but this is primarily due to their concern with power, rather than their usage of 'entanglement'.

Finally, other scholars have also used the term 'entangled' to refer to the intertwining of colonial or Western and indigenous cultures, including Nicholas Thomas (1991) in his study of material culture and practices of exchange in the Pacific, and Hock and Mackenthun (2012) in their work on forms of knowledge. Göran Therborn (2003) discusses 'entangled modernities' within the context of the multiple modernities framework (a framework which is critiqued in detail Chapter Two of this thesis). Ichijo and Spohn (2005) meanwhile invoke the idea of entanglement in relation to the intertwining of national and trans-national identities within Europe. In each of these cases, however, 'entanglement' is deployed in a largely descriptive way, and is not developed substantially as a concept or theoretical device.

agency in response to that difference. Within entanglements we can detect moments of clash and incommensurability, but also instances of collusion, hybridity, compromise and creative reconfiguration. It is in this entangled multiplicity that we can best see the complexity and flux of global processes of social change. Envisioned in this way, my intention is to offer a more complex picture of social change and difference than approaches such as that of ‘multiple modernities’ theorists (Arnason 2001; Casanova 2011; Eisenstadt 2000, 2002; Kaya 2004; Knauft 2002a; Robbins and Wardlow 2005; Taylor and Lee n.d.; Wagner 2000) who, in rendering all social difference as variants of the modern, often fail to recognise the presence of other, non-modern ways of being, collapsing structural tensions and contradictions into a ‘flat pluralism’ (James 2006: 46). Nor, I suggest, is it adequate to look *only* to moments of contradiction, such was the case amongst scholars working within the now largely discredited parameters of Modernisation Theory (for example Gluckman 1961; Lerner 1958), and as remains the case in many sociological approaches (for example Albrow 1996; Bauman 2000; Giddens 1991) which, I would suggest, perpetuate many of Modernisation Theory’s dichotomising and Eurocentric assumptions. Rather, we need to look to the possibilities inherent within entanglements for both juncture and disjuncture, for both incommensurability and creative collusion. The literature mentioned briefly here is discussed, along with other relevant literature, in Chapter Two of the thesis (‘Approaching Social Difference’). That chapter also develops in more detail the concept of entanglement as the basis for an alternative theoretical approach.

In developing the argument of this thesis—that the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land destabilises structures of power in ways that create multiple possibilities for their reconfiguration—a number of subsidiary arguments need to be made. Firstly, the argument is made that customary and modern forms of social relations (including forms of relationship to land) are materially and analytically distinct. Secondly, that social connection to land within customary communities is central to the ways in which such communities constitute themselves and sustain relationships and belonging across time. Thirdly, that the customary and the modern involve very different structures of power, including different *cartographies of power*, by which I mean to refer to the spatial articulations of centrality and marginality. This, I argue, is an important factor in understanding how modern forms of connection to land (land as an alienable resource, individual property ownership, land titling and mapping) so often come to reframe and dominate customary ones. Fourthly, I argue that the dynamics of power evident within the entanglement of customary

and modern forms of relationship also include a strong ideological dimension, through which modern forms of relationship to land—and modern forms of sociality more generally—are privileged over customary ones. These hegemonic imaginings are not complete, however. The fifth sub-argument made in the thesis is that the *ambivalence* of entanglements also creates opportunities for the creative rearticulation of the customary.

In making these arguments, the thesis also develops a series of arguments about the nature of abstraction and social relations. In this sense, the thesis operates simultaneously at both an empirical and theoretical level. Expressed in theoretical terms, the argument of this thesis is this: the entanglement of custom and modernity is an entanglement of less and more abstracted forms of social relations. Modern social relations are often able to enact a coercive capacity over customary forms of sociality, through incorporating and reframing them within their more expansive, and encompassing, level of abstraction. Nonetheless, while customary forms of sociality give priority to social relations that are less abstracted than modern ones, they are also able to accommodate significant degrees of social abstraction, specifically through enacting strategies that tie abstracted social relations to ones that are anchored in place and material particularity. It is in this way that practices of connection to land can be, and are being, deployed creatively by communities as a means of reasserting and rearticulating custom in the face of modernising processes of change.

A theoretical framework of abstraction allows us to understand both how it is that the modern is so often able to reframe or enact violence (both physical and symbolic) against customary practices and ways of life, and also how customary communities are able to creatively resist, respond to, or negotiate the modern. The ways in which social abstraction is dealt with in the following chapters, however, differs in some important ways from the assumptions about modernity that permeate much social theory. It is important then to explore briefly some of this literature, and to contextualise this thesis within it. Indeed, as a multi-disciplinary project—located primarily across anthropology and sociology, but also drawing on political studies and geography—this thesis needs to be located within a range of literatures. Discussion of these literatures takes place across the thesis, but it is important nonetheless to introduce at this point some of the key conceptual tools upon which my argument depends. From here, then, this chapter turns to consider some of these key concepts that are developed and employed within the thesis, including social abstraction, the ‘customary’ and ‘modern’



(this aspect is developed in much more detail in the next chapter), and ambivalence. A brief discussion following this locates the thesis in terms of its empirical context—land in contemporary Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste—and in relation to other literature dealing with this same topic. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the chapters that follow it. An examination of *power*, as a key concept, is incorporated into the body of the thesis, and discussed in particular detail in Chapter Five, ‘Greeting the State: Ambivalent Entanglement and the Assertion of Autonomy’.

## **Abstraction and social relations**

It has become something of a truism to comment that social relations are more abstracted now than they previously were. This quality of increased spatial extension in human interactions has been accounted for by social theorists in varied ways. One of the most influential theorists of the modern, Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991), for example, writes of the ‘disembedding’ of space from place within modernity, and of the increasingly ‘remote’ (as opposed to face-to-face) social relations stretched across time and space. Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]), writing about the modern nation, famously theorises it as an ‘imagined community’, within which ties of shared identity could be felt with those whom one might never meet. He points particularly to the role played by the development of print-capitalism, the intersection of more abstracted form of communication and production which enabled people to know of, and imagine themselves connected to, others across a vast geographical territory. James C. Scott (1998), in an historical account of the emergence of the modern state, describes the processes of ‘abstraction and simplification’ which are necessary for ‘making legible’ the complexity of social life within a centralised system of bureaucratic administration.

Under conditions of contemporary globalization, the academic consensus seems to be that social relations have become more abstracted still. The notion of *deterritorialization*, developed first by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988) and subsequently taken up by others including Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Nikos Papastergiadis (2000), has become widely used in accounts of globalization to suggest a decoupling of social relations—particularly culture and identity—from place. Instead of sociality emerging out of shared proximity, we are urged now to consider social relations constituted through flows, scapes and

networks. Appadurai, in this vein, suggests that we think of contemporary sociality in terms of five *scapes*, or global cultural flows, of people, finance, media, technology and ideas. John Urry (2000, 2007) and Manuel Castells (1989, 2000) emphasise the role of new communication and information technologies as the means through social relations are now constituted. Common to these and other accounts is recognition of social relationships extending over more expansive spatial distances, increasingly abstracted from the particularity of place and face-to-face proximity. Theorists differ on whether globalization should be located within modernity or some variety or other of postmodernity, and there is debate too over the extent to which the nation-state is compromised by the emergence of more deterritorialized social configurations. The foundational premise, though, that social relations are becoming more abstracted, is widely agreed.

As much as it may have become received wisdom in the academy, however, this foundational premise deserves more critical attention. What is problematic is not the suggestion that social relations are abstracted under conditions of modernity, or indeed postmodernity, but rather the (usually implicit) assumption that more abstracted relations are *replacing* less abstracted ones. Immersion within some contemporary literature could lead you to believe not just that space has been disembedded from place, that forms of immaterial labour (Lazzarato 1996) are expanding or that communication technologies are mediating more spatially extended forms of social connection, but that place itself has been conquered, material labour and production vanquished, and embodied social interaction rendered all but meaningless. The preoccupation with immateriality is bordering on intellectual fetishism. It obscures continuities in its rush to herald the new, and in doing so also reveals a bias towards the experiences of the Global North. Everywhere, the physical, material conditions and sites of human existence remain important in people's lived realities: the community of the nation may be imagined, but it is imagined by embodied, emplaced people; online communications are still had, ultimately, by people in particular geographical locations using physical pieces of hardware, the production and distribution of which will have involved the material labour of others. And on a global scale, the abstracted, disembodied relations with which so much social theory has become enamoured are disproportionately concentrated in the North. The post-industrial societies in the contemporary world are in large part so because industrial production has been outsourced to the Global South, and it is in the South as well that we find disproportionately concentrated those people and communities whose embodied, material connection to land and place is foundational to their lives and livelihoods. A language of deterritorialization—or of

the abstraction or spatial extension of relationships—can offer useful insights into key aspects of contemporary global experience, but it is dangerous if, in doing so, it obscures others. Rather than see in the contemporary world a shifting from the less abstracted to the more abstracted, the approach of this thesis is to look instead to the dynamic interplay of the less *and* the more, of the disembodied and the face-to-face, of social relations extended across space and those that are ‘embedded in the land’ (Chapter Four).

In doing so, this thesis might be considered as a contribution to what has been a resurgence of interest in materiality in recent years, including the materiality of land, landscape and environment (Bamford 1998; Descola 1992; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Ingold 2000, 2011). We can point as well to the turn to the body (for example Csordas 1994a; Hillis 1999; Sundén 2003; Turner 2008), which has sought to reemphasise the importance of embodiment, and to critique the assumptions of Cartesian dualism. Aspects of this literature are discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, which considers forms of embodiment in relation to customary forms of connection to land. Likewise, theorists such as Doreen Massey (1994), Arturo Escobar (2001) and Edward Casey (1993, 1997) have led a renewed engagement with *place*. Relevant here, too, is Donna Haraway’s (2003) concept of ‘naturecultures’, which seeks to move beyond the nature/culture dualism. My own work on connection to land, and the reassertion of customary forms of belonging within the context of entanglement, sits in conversation with much of this literature. At the same time, however, where much of the ‘new materialism’ (Coole and Frost 2010; DeLanda 2006; van der Tuin and Dolphijn 2010) has been strongly framed by cultural studies—and also largely focussed on Western social contexts—my own interest in materiality retains an interest in social structures, a broadly sociological orientation to social relations (as opposed to a primary focus on culture), and seeks to move outside a Western-centric focus.

### **The customary and the modern**

While the following chapter engages in detail with my usage of the terms ‘customary’ and ‘modern’, some brief comments here serve to prefigure that larger discussion. In the first instance, in approaching the customary and the modern as forms of *social relations*, my own usage diverges from those who employ the terms—particularly ‘modern’—as descriptors of an

epoch. This is a tendency evident, for example, within much contemporary social theorising. Speaking generally, sociology has historically had a strong Eurocentric focus, with customary or traditional ways of life persistently branded as the 'premodern' (Giddens 1991 is a good example). The assumption within much of this thinking has been that (the universal) we are living in a modern age—or indeed a postmodern one, depending on your intellectual bent—and ideas of 'traditional' or 'customary' society speak to the past, rather than the present. Against this epochal rendering of social difference, the premise of this thesis is that we need to look instead to the ways that these structurally distinct ways of being intersect across both time and space. Recognising the 'coevalness' (Fabian 1983) of the customary and the modern demands as well that the customary be valued in its own terms, not relegated to modernity's past, or rendered through a language of deficit.

A second point to be made is that in framing a discussion in terms of customary and modern forms of connection to land, my intention is to move beyond what is often encompassed within reference to customary or modern 'tenure systems'. To give an example, it is commonly stated that 97 percent of land in Papua New Guinea is held under customary tenure. Technically correct, this captures little of the complexity of how land is used, understood and engaged with. A particular area of land may be 'customary land', in the sense that it is outside of the administration of the state, held, governed and organised by a clan or other 'landowning' group according to customary practices and laws, but this is not to say that the people within that group do not also engage with their land in ways that are modern. They may, for example, utilise their land as an economic asset and enter into long-term leases with mining companies, as was the case with the Kurumbukari clans whose story opened this Introduction. At the same time, people living on alienated or freehold land may also draw upon elements of custom in their engagement with their land. This is the case, for instance, amongst some informants in the urban capital of Timor-Leste, Dili (Chapter 8), who employ customarily derived practices of inheritance and overlaying use rights in their relationship to land that they otherwise own, in a modern sense, as *property*. A limited focus on land tenure systems fails to capture the complexities of these changing forms of relationship to land. Moreover, it also struggles to account for the political dimensions of these changes. As Benedict Kerkvliet has written elsewhere, in the context of patterns of land use in the Philippines, changes in modes of production and rural livelihoods are overwhelmingly discussed in terms of their economic aspects, while the politics of these changes are frequently overlooked (1990: 3). Expanding our focus to consider forms of connection to land through a

more broadly social lens allows us, in turn, to engage with questions of power as well as of ontology.

A third, and related point concerns the recognition of what I describe throughout this thesis as the *dual life* of custom and modernity, which is to say the ways that they function both as material patterns of practice and meaning *and* as ideas, or imaginaries, of what those patterns of social relations do, could, or should look like. In this regard, it is important to recognise that notions such as ‘customary land’, ‘customary land tenure’, and ‘landowner’ are themselves products of the modern. ‘The customary’, as Weiner and Glaskin (2007b: 2) have argued, ‘is a product of the expansion of state and capital formations, rather than foreign or external to it’ (cf. Weiner 2006). In arguing as such, Weiner and Glaskin position themselves within a body of recent anthropological scholarship which has been concerned with the constructed nature of both ‘custom’ and ‘modernity’—with ‘invented traditions’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), the emergence of the Melanesian category of *kastom* (Demian 2003; Foster 1995; Jolly 1994; Keesing 1989; Kirsch 2006), or the functioning of modernity as a ‘myth’ (Ferguson 1999; Pigg 1996). Nonetheless, an argument developed across this thesis is that we need to look both to the subjective and the objective dimensions of custom and modernity, and, importantly, to the intersection of these dimensions.

It may well be the case that ideas or representations of ‘custom’ are *elicited* through the modern, as Weiner and Glaskin suggest, but it does not follow automatically that the forms of social life, identity, belonging and meaning which such ideas are intended to speak to are themselves simply products of the modern (however much they may be entangled with modern forms of sociality). This argument is further developed, amongst other places, in Chapter Six, in relation to local communities in Madang Province PNG who are utilising a language of ‘land groups’ and ‘clans’ in order to leverage land claims against the state and a Philippines tuna fishing company. We need to accord space within our analytical frameworks both for the signifiers and discourses that people employ, *and* the material relations, forms of culture and meaning to which they seek to give expression. However unwittingly, the argument that custom is elicited by the modern accords an ontological priority to the latter that must be recognised as problematic. The manner in which I am using the terms ‘customary’ and ‘modern’, then, seeks to remain attentive to both their subjective and objective dimensions. It is oriented moreover towards the critical space that falls between, on

the one hand, an essentialising structuralism, and on the other, a relativism that is both politically and theoretically disabling. This is a space, I suggest, that remains under theorised.

Oriented in this way, I employ 'the modern' in the following chapters to refer to a broad patterning of social relations which has at its core: the bureaucratic organisation of the public sphere—the corporation and the state as key organisational units of market and polity—and the patriarchal nuclear family organising the private sphere; mass industrial production, which in its dominant articulation appears as capitalism; a reliance on written text as a means of communication and collective memory; a subjectivity forged upon rationalism, individualism and the separation of the social and the natural worlds; an impulse toward abstraction and universalism; a philosophical and epistemological orientation towards 'progress'; and a belief in self-made possibility unencumbered by natural or divine constraints. This definition agrees with Latin American scholar José Maurício Domingues' (2009) understanding of modernity as an 'institutional and imaginary matrix'. So understood, the modern emerged only as a coherent social formation in the latter half of the eighteenth century, although its roots are visible earlier on. It was evident first in Europe, although as Eric Wolf (1997 [1982]) has masterfully documented, its emergence was possible only on the back of connections and patterns of relations between Europe and those areas of the world subsequently erased from modernity's meta-narrative—the 'people without history'. Nowhere, though, in Europe or elsewhere, does modernity exist as a completed enterprise. As much as it is true that there is nowhere in the world now untouched by the modern, it does not follow that everywhere the customary is obliterated.

I use 'the customary' to refer to a common patterning of social relations at the broadest level, one which continues to dominate in the everyday lived realities of many people in the world. Its distinguishing features are a mutually-constitutive relationship between what, in modernity's terms, came later to be separated as the natural and the social worlds; collectivist subjectivities which are both genealogically-based and place-bound, extending across time from its beginning to its end; kinship-based forms of social organisation embedded in connection to place and land; oral modes of communication and memory; subsistence or hunter-gatherer modes of production; reciprocal patterns of exchange; and an understanding of agency and possibility limited by structures of hierarchy and constraint beyond human powers of making or unmaking. Conceptualised as such, use of 'the customary' is intended in

no way to collapse or obscure the spectacular diversity in forms and expressions, which the term encompasses. It is, rather, to suggest a common resonance amongst such diverse articulations. As Paul James (2006) has argued, different forms of social relations are marked by fundamentally different understandings of embodiment, spatiality, temporality and epistemology, and it is on this basis that he suggests we can speak of them as 'ontological formations' (on embodiment, cf. Cregan, 2006). To speak of the customary as a structural category need not, and should not, imply homogenisation, but rather recognition of the contingency of the modern, and of the existence of social difference at the most foundational levels of human being-in-the-world.

## **Ambivalence**

The concept of ambivalence is an important one within this thesis, and it speaks to a key quality of entanglement. In this context, 'ambivalence' refers to the destabilisation which emerges from the dynamic co-existence of different ways on being in the world, to the contending possibilities, forms of value, and understandings of land and life which exist uneasily alongside each other. This ambivalence is evident, for instance, in the story of the Kurumbukari landowners, for whom land was both (in a modern sense) an alienable resource and commodity, and (in a customary sense) an inalienable site of culture and belonging. Ambivalence speaks to the co-existence of contending 'truths'. It speaks to the intersection of social structures and ontologies which are marked by incommensurabilities but which are also—in the day-to-day realities of people, communities, and nation-states—negotiated, lived with, through, and across.

The concept of ambivalence has a history within various literatures in the social sciences, and this has relevance for the present discussion. One useful treatment comes from Ihor Zielyk, who defines ambivalence as referring to 'situations in which actors' perception and valuation of a social object contains conflicting elements' (1966: 58). So defined, Zielyk distinguishes ambivalence from ambiguity, which speaks instead to a cognitive condition resulting from 'insufficient or confused knowledge' (p.58). With ambivalence, by contrast, 'the problem...is not one of inadequate knowledge but of conflicting valuations, of an inconsistent stand taken by a subject vis-à-vis a social object' (p.58). Useful to think with, Zielyk is nonetheless not

concerned with questions of modernity, custom, or significant social change. Elsewhere, and more directly related to the particular theoretical concern of this thesis, Junge (2008) writes that the notion of ambivalence has often been invoked within sociological theory as an affect of social change and transformation, although he suggests that this has mostly been implicit. Accordingly, he points to a generalised ambivalence described by the classical theorists in the discipline—Durkheim, Simmel, Weber and Tönnies—in relation to the benefits or costs of industrialisation and modernisation. This is important, as it suggests particularly a connection with the dialectical quality of modernity, but it is also important to note that this framing of ambivalence, as uncertainty, is more generalised than my own usage. While it is significant to see ambivalence in this sense as a core quality of modernity (or of responses to modernity's promises), here I seek to employ ambivalence in a more precise way, locating it not simply as a product of the modern but as a particular quality of the entanglement of the modern with the customary. We might also note, as well, that malleability, contestation and indeterminacy are important features of customary systems, including of customary forms of connection to land (see Chapter Six). To this extent, it is far from satisfactory to look only to modernity as a source of ambivalence, as it is these characteristics of customary life that also feed into the ambivalence of entanglement, and which may be intensified, as Fitzpatrick and Barnes (2010) argue, in conditions of postcolonial plurality.

More recently, Zygmunt Bauman (1991) has taken up the notion of ambivalence in relation to social transformation. He offers a much more extensive development of the concept, although like the classical theorists discussed above, he is limited by a modernist bias. For Bauman, ambivalence emerges in the figure of the *stranger*, who challenges the categorisations of 'friend' and 'enemy', undermining the spatial and relational ordering of the world to which this categorisation gives rise (inside/outside, order/chaos). This is a threat which Bauman locates squarely within modernity—particularly late, or what he subsequently terms 'liquid' modernity (cf. Bauman 2000). It is the expansiveness, flux and mobility of modern society, he suggests, which provides the conditions within which the stranger becomes permanent, and hence seriously threatening—embodied for instance in the figure of the migrant. Thus, Bauman draws a distinction between modern and 'pre-modern' communities (again, the careless teleology of Eurocentric social theory!). For our purposes, Bauman's theorisation is useful because it locates ambivalence as a quality of the intersection of social difference. His recognition of the tension within modernity between the ideal of the united *inside* (territory, nation, culture, ethnicity) and the reality of its disunity has relevance, too, for this thesis.



Particularly, this theme of modernity's own contradictions emerges again in Chapter Nine, in the context of nation-building and urbanisation in Timor-Leste, and the ambivalence felt by those communities for whom Independence has failed to deliver on its promises. Yet, the fact that Bauman locates ambivalence solely within modernity—the oppositional and teleological categorisation he draws between the modern and 'pre-modern' does not allow him to do otherwise—ultimately limits the utility of his work for this present study.

A less Eurocentric account of ambivalence emerges if we move outside sociology and social theory, and into postcolonial and cultural studies. Here, Homi Bhabha (1994) locates ambivalence within the 'agonism' (particularly pp.145-174) of colonialism. Ambivalence is produced, he argues,

within the rules of dominating discourses, as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power—hierarchy, normalization, marginalisation, and so forth. For colonial domination is achieved through a process of disavowal that denies the chaos of its intervention as *Enstellung*, its dislocatory presence in order to preserve the authority of its identity in the teleological narratives of historical and political evolutionism (Bhabha 1994: 158).

Within the intersection of social difference catalysed through colonialism—which is a modernising process—difference is both disavowed and rearticulated. This gives rise, in Bhabha's understanding, to hybridity and to 'mimicry', which is 'at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance' (p. 172). Significantly, Bhabha locates ambivalence in relation to *power*, in terms of both the power of 'dominating discourses' which disavow the disruption they cause to indigenous cultures, and the possibilities for power of dominated groups in speaking back to these discourses.

Following Bhabha, we can see the ambivalence of entanglement as a source of conflict and insecurity, but also creative possibility. The dynamic co-existence of forms of sociality, ways of being and belonging, forms and objects of value, creates multiple possibilities for agency. Recognising this allows us a way through the artificial polarization of structuralism and post-structuralism (recognising that Bhabha, drawing heavily on post-structuralism, would perhaps be little interested in such a reconciliation). Structures have some causal power; they shape

and condition the forms of practice and expression that people employ. Structure always exists, however, in dialectical relationship to agency, and in the entanglement of social structures the possibilities for radical making and remaking are massively expanded. Mary Douglas tells us that ‘any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins’ (2002[1966]: 121), and to this we might add that any structure (of practice as well as of ideas) is also vulnerable in its moments of overlap. A multiplicity of social forms invites—demands—agency. Not in the sense of the liberal doctrine of choice—relationships and cultural expressions chosen at will like so many boxes of cereal in a supermarket aisle—but in the sense of dynamic, shifting negotiation and contestation between often conflicting imperatives, desires and understandings which must be come to terms with. In this project of active making and remaking of the world, the entanglement of social formations highlights the contingency of each, lays bare what might be otherwise considered natural, given, ‘the way things are’.

### **Locating the thesis: the context and the sites**

The fieldwork for this thesis took place in multiple sites in two countries, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. These two countries were chosen because they are both broadly Melanesian (with Timor-Leste sitting on the cusp of Melanesia and Asia), and share key commonalities in terms of the predominance of customary land tenures. More practically, they were both countries in which I had prior research experience. The decision to conduct research in two countries—as well in multiple sites within those countries—reflects a desire to move beyond the site-specific focus of much contemporary Pacific anthropology, to draw comparisons across multiple lines and planes in the hope of being able to speak to the theme of entanglement at a broader level of generality.<sup>2</sup>

Considered at the level of the nation-state, there are interesting comparisons to be made between Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, and these are revealing of different elements of

---

<sup>2</sup> This approach to comparison resonates in key ways with the approach taken in some other works by Melanesianists. Notable here are Michael Lambek and Andrew Strathern’s (1998) edited compilation *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*; Alan Rumsey and James F. Weiner’s (2001) edited collection, *Space, Narrative and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*; as well as James F. Weiner and Katie Glaskin’s (2007a) edited *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*.

the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land. In the first instance, Timor-Leste is more recently post-colonial, having achieved its Independence in 2002 after a violent period of Indonesian occupation from 1975-1999 (following 400 years of more benign, but still significant occupation by Portugal). This colonial experience sparked a vigorous struggle that culminated in an Independence referendum in 1999. Papua New Guinea, in contrast, gained Independence from Australia in 1975, in a process that was much less violent and socially traumatic. Indeed, while Timor-Leste has experienced multiple periods of conflict (violent retaliations by Indonesian-armed militias in 1999 were followed by months of civil conflict in 2006), Papua New Guinea's history has (with the notable exception of the conflict in what is now the Autonomous Region of Bougainville) been relatively free of these experiences of conflict. Differing colonial experiences also meant the nation-states of Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea came into being within quite different global contexts, with neoliberalism a prominent influence on the early years of East Timorese statehood in a way that it was not in 1975, when the writers of the Papua New Guinean constitution laid down their vision for small-scale development embedded in Melanesian culture—the 'Melanesian Way'—and the enshrinement of the inalienable, customary land tenure across the vast majority of the country. This vision may have given way quickly to a neoliberal model of big business and resource extraction, but the founding of the state in this way has also left important legacies, in terms of both the legal and ideological underpinnings of land systems in the country. The particular colonial experiences of the two countries have also generated another significant difference in that Timor-Leste has experienced significantly higher levels of population displacement than has Papua New Guinea. Timor-Leste's colonial histories have also resulted in the overlaying of multiple bases for making land claims—Portuguese-issued land titles, Indonesian-issued land titles, customary connection, and current occupancy (Fitzpatrick 2002)—which is less a feature of Papua New Guinean land relations. Nonetheless, customary forms of connection to land remain the primary basis for the organisation and governance of land in Timor-Leste, as they are in Papua New Guinea.

If customary land tenures—uncodified, and largely outside the administrative (if not political) reach of the state—remain dominant in both countries, it is also the case that in both countries programs of land reform are currently underway which would substantially change this fact. After previous attempts to introduce systems for the registration of customary land in 1995 and 2001 were rendered unsuccessful by the presence of widespread popular opposition, two pieces of land reform legislation have recently been passed by the Papua New Guinean

parliament. The *Land Groups Incorporation (Amendment) Act 2009* and the *Land Registration (Customary Land) (Amendment) Act 2009* (Customary Land Act), both of which came into effect in 2012, allow for the registration of customary land, and further entrench Incorporated Land Groups as the dominant mechanism for the ‘mobilisation’ of land held under customary tenure for development projects (with development understood here as business led, primarily resource extractive industry). Incorporated Land Groups, which give legal identities to customary landowner groups (a process necessarily of transformation, not simply translation) are already a prominent feature of the political and cultural landscape in PNG. So too are long-term (normally 99 year) leases that nominally retain the ‘ownership’ of land in the hands of customary groups, but also transform the nature of people’s connection to land through rendering it as an economic commodity to be used within capitalist systems of production and exchange. The modernising effects of the codification of customary land tenure and land groups are examined in Chapter Six, ‘Relations of Property and the Codification of Customary Connection to Land’. The extension of capitalist systems of production and exchange, and the devaluing of customary subsistence practices is a focus of Chapter Seven, “‘Making Land Work’? The Economic and Cultural Politics of Development’.

The focus of Papua New Guinean land reform programs on rural areas reflects the significance in the country of large-scale resource-extractive industry, notably mining, logging, oil palm, and industrial fishing activity, which is overwhelmingly concentrated within rural areas. In Timor-Leste, in contrast, land reform processes have to date been largely focussed on urban and peri-urban spaces where the effects of population displacement and post-conflict dynamics are most acutely felt. From 2008-2012, a major land reform project—Strengthening Property Rights in Timor-Leste, branded locally as *Ita Nia Rai*, a Tetum term which means ‘Our Land’—collected and documented land claims on individual parcels of land across Timor-Leste’s urban and peri-urban centres as a precursor to the issuing of land titles. Privileging modernist relations of property, the process both reflects and reinforces an imaginary of modern urban spaces and customary rural ones, a distinction that, as we will see in Chapters 8 and 9, has significant subjective traction across the country, even as it is confounded in the practice of everyday life. Outside the urban, a proposed Land Law (still, at the time of writing, in the process of development) includes provisions for establishing legal regimes of Community Property and Community Protection Zones. As in Papua New Guinea, these forms of codification of customary connection to land have effects that are transformative, rooted as they are in modernist relations of property, systems of law and governance, and

understandings of subjectivity. Privileging modernist sites and forms of power, they lend themselves to the diminishing of local autonomy. In both countries, however, the complex reality is that customary and modern forms of connection to land are already entangled. Given this reality, various forms of codification of connection to land can be rendered necessary, and indeed for some desirable, even as these very processes can also have effects that are destabilising or destructive. It is this deeply conflicted landscape that local communities in both Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste are increasingly required to negotiate.

If processes of entanglement extend across both of these countries, however, they are far from uniform. Considered at the level of the *local*, comparisons between research sites within the two countries also speak to the unevenness and complexity of the entanglement of forms of connection to land. Within Papua New Guinea, research was concentrated in Madang Province, on the northern coast of the country, and I travelled primarily between three peri-urban and remote communities as well as spending time in the township and living on the grounds of a local non-governmental organisation, the Bismarck Ramu Group. In Timor-Leste, a much smaller country, I moved between the capital Dili and a community in Lospalos District to the east of the country, as well as conducting interviews with multiple informants in the Districts of Liquica and Manatuto (located to Dili's west and east respectively) who were negotiating the *Ita Nia Rai* land claims collection and titling process (elsewhere, participant observation was the primary method employed).

Methodologically, the research design drew on frameworks of global ethnography (Burawoy 2001; Burawoy et. al., 2000), multi-sited ethnography (Falzon 2009; Marcus 1995) and other critical approaches to 'site' in a globalizing world (Gille 2001; Tsing 2005), employing elements of comparative methodologies but recognising as well that there are no distinct locales any more (if there ever were) and that the blurred edges, overlaps, gaps and journeys between places and stories must not be overlooked for the sake of analytical ease (see Chapter Three for a more detailed outline of my methodology). Places, as Doreen Massey reminds us, are not well thought of as areas with boundaries around them, but rather

imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and

understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself (1994: 154).

Drawing on Massey's notion of place, Zsuzsa Gille (2001) has argued convincingly that it offers a basis for reconceptualising site in conditions of globalization. The process of ethnographic fieldwork confirmed for me the necessity of approaching 'site' in this way. Even exploring people's connection to land—that most physical, immovable of things—it proved impossible to stay within the lines of geographically distinct locations. People move, in the first instance—between villages or provinces or between urban and rural places, even between countries—and their movements create relationships and trajectories that can span great distances. At the same time other people do not move, or move less often or less far, and so the politics of mobility became a critical point of concern. Following stories or histories took me from one place to another, or else criss-crossing within places, while civil society organisations and activist networks spilt over the edges of locality. Approaching 'site' relationally allowed me to accommodate this fluidity of scale and form. To talk about the local it was necessary to talk about the global, but also to look between and beyond these geographical levels of analysis.

## **The structure and scope of the thesis**

Before outlining briefly the specific focus of each of the following chapters, it is useful here to make a few general comments about what this thesis does, and does not, intend to achieve. The thesis is targeted, above all, at several gaps within existing literature. In terms of its broader theoretical concerns, it seeks to fill a gap that exists between essentialising structural approaches to questions of modernity and custom, and overly relativized accounts which, as I argue in Chapter Two, often fail to engage in sufficient analytical depth with the themes they employ. This is the case, particularly, with anthropological works within the field of Pacific Studies that have been focused on local specificity at the expense of theoretical generality, including accounts within the 'multiple modernities' paradigm. This should not be read as a criticism of site-specificity and attention to the local and particular. To the contrary, the kind of thick description that is a feature of site-specific ethnography is deeply important, and the production of this kind of work is one of anthropology's greatest strengths. Different relations of breadth and depth, however, produce different insights. My argument here is simply that we need to foster conversations between different kinds of research, which take as their focus

different levels of scale, and different relations between the empirical and theoretical. In drawing together a multi-sited ethnography with a detailed theoretical framework, oriented towards concepts and experiences that are generalizable as well as particular, my intention is to offer a contribution to an existing body of work that has not necessarily been oriented in this way. Similarly, in positioning this thesis within an inter-disciplinary space—sitting across the fields of political studies, anthropology and sociology—I also hope to generate exchanges between fields that have not, in recent years, had as much to say to one another as perhaps they ought.

In terms of its particular empirical focus—on forms of social connection to land within two Melanesian countries—this thesis is also oriented towards a number of key gaps within the relevant literature. In the first instance, there is a somewhat surprising lack of monographs dealing with the theme of land. One reason for this, I would suggest, reflects the relative lack of engagement with generalising theory, and the site-specific focus of much recent Pacific ethnography. There are, in this vein, a considerable number of focussed, shorter studies (journal articles, chapters and reports) that take up the theme of social connection to land within the context of particular local places. In Papua New Guinea, these include Paul Sillitoe's (1999) ethnography of land tenure and identity amongst the Wola in Southern Highlands, Dwyer and Minnegal's (1999) comparative study of land use-rights in two Western Province villages, Brown, Brookfield and Grau's (1990) longitudinal study of the changing land tenure systems of a particular sub-clan in Simbu Province, and Sandra Bamford's (1998) work on connection to land amongst the Kamea people in Gulf Province. Weiner and Glaskin's (2007a) edited volume on Incorporated Land Groups in Papua New Guinea and Australia develops an important argument in relation to particular aspects of connection to land (the eliciting of custom and codification of land tenure). Again, though, as an edited volume it consists primarily of distinct pieces focussed on particular local sites.

Aside from relatively focussed, site-specific studies, a range of literature deals with various component elements of what I am referring to here in broad terms as 'social connection to land'. These more narrowly defined areas of inquiry include the relationship between customary land law and modern Western law (Nonggorr 1993; Zorn 1992; Weiner and Glaskin 2007a), and the tensions between customary and modern understandings of 'property' (Strathern 2009; Weiner 2002; cf. related discussions in Hirsch and Strathern 2006 on

intellectual property), including property relations in the particular context of large-scale resource extractive industry (Ballard 1997; Macintyre and Foale 2007). Koczberski and Curry (2004, 2005) meanwhile, have been concerned particularly with land use strategies amongst migrant communities working in resource development projects such as oil palm plantations. Elsewhere, a considerable body of literature exists in relation to proposed land reforms in Papua New Guinea, and to vigorous debates about the relative merits of customary versus individual freehold titles, in relation particularly to economic development (Allen 2008; Curtin, Holzkecht and Larmour 2003; Fairhead, Kauzi and Yala 2009; Fingleton 2005; Gosarevski, Hughes and Windybank 2004a, 2004b; Hughes 2003, 2004; Laklau 1995; Lea 2009; Yala, Chand and Duncan 2010). These works, and others like them, form an important body of literature that is drawn on across the following chapters. Nonetheless, their focus on particular elements of connection to land still leaves unexplored a broader question—of the changing nature of land understood in a general sense, and of the nature of *interconnections* between the different dimensions of social relationship to land (land as belonging, land as property, land as national homeland, land as territory). This, I am suggesting, is an important and generative question to pursue. Much of this literature, moreover (with the exception of much of the literature on property relations) has tended to be theoretically thin, while literature on land reform has often had quite a narrow, policy-oriented focus, and (particularly amongst the scholars advocating the privatisation or reform of land tenure) a strongly economic and modernist bias that I will argue against throughout this thesis.

In Timor-Leste, land issues relating to development have been much less of interest to scholars than in Papua New Guinea, reflecting the relative lack of on-land resource extractive industry.<sup>3</sup> As in Papua New Guinea, however, debates over land reform have stimulated a significant volume of academic work.<sup>4</sup> Much of this literature has tended to have a legalistic framing, oriented particularly to issues of land conflict resolution, and the development of a legal

---

<sup>3</sup> The primary resource activity in Timor-Leste is currently the exploitation of offshore petroleum fields. There are, however, plans to develop onshore facilities to process these resources, and additional prospective areas of resource industry include bioagriculture. Some coffee growing and processing activity also takes place.

<sup>4</sup> Where much of the literature on land (and particularly land reform) in Papua New Guinea is concentrated in the period between the late 1990s to the early 2000s, when debate about land tenure (and Australia's foreign policy position in relation to land and development in PNG) was at its most intense, literature on land in Timor-Leste tends to be concentrated in the last ten years. This reflects the effective barring of foreign researchers from Timor-Leste during the period of Indonesian occupation, 1975-1999. Important ethnographies of Timor-Leste based on research from the pre-1975 period, which include observations on connection to land, include Hicks (2004[1976]) and Traube (1986).



property and titling regime (Carson 2007; De Sousa 2005; Fitzpatrick 2001, 2002, 2008, 2010; Harrington 2007; Nixon 2009; Williams 2009; Yoder 2003). This work has often failed, I suggest, to sufficiently recognise the contingency of its modernist framing, and of notions such as property and land rights. In terms of anthropological studies, a significant body of literature has emerged out of the Comparative Austronesian Project at the Australian National University (for example Fox 2006; Fox and Sather 2006; McWilliam 2007; Vischer 2009). These works are richly detailed and insightful ethnographic studies. As with much of the literature on land in Papua New Guinea discussed above, however, they have tended to emphasise ethnographic thick description over theoretical inquiry, and have also tended to adhere to a particular model of site-specific ethnography, located within a specific cultural-linguistic focus (the Austronesian region). To the extent that I am concerned to draw ethnographic description into a conversation with social theory, and to approach particular localities as (contingent and necessarily partial) sites of illumination upon broader dynamics of social change, the framing of this present work diverges in key ways from the focus of the Comparative Austronesian Project. Other ethnographic studies with relevance to this thesis, but which are similarly focused on site-specific empirical study, include Bovensiepen (2009), Pannell (2006), and the contributions to McWilliam and Traube's edited volume *Land and Life in Timor-Leste* (2011a). Important contributions to the study of land and resource management in Timor-Leste include Jackson and Palmer (2012) and Palmer and de Carvalho (2008). Recently, too, a number of important studies have emerged which have drawn together ethnographic inquiry with a comparative legal approach, looking particularly at relationships between property and customary forms of connection to land (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010); Fitzpatrick and McWilliam 2005; Fitzpatrick, McWilliam and Barnes 2013). As with literature on property relations in Papua New Guinea, the focus of this literature is narrower than my own. Nonetheless, there are important resonances between these recent studies and aspects of my own work, which will be discussed throughout the thesis (see for example Chapter Four).

In summary, then, what this thesis does that is unique within the literature on land in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste is approach land in its generality, looking not simply at land in terms of property, or nationalism, or development, or customary culture, but rather at the ways that land sits within the nexus of multiple processes of transformation, change and contestation. What it does that is unique, also, is to draw this empirical exploration into a conversation with social theory, approaching land through an analytical framework of entanglement. In doing so, it does not simply seek to fill a gap within existing literature on land

in Melanesia, but also addresses itself to a gap within existing literature on modernity and custom—the gap, discussed previously in this Introduction, between overly structuralist, and overly relativised accounts of social difference. The thesis also makes an original contribution through explicitly linking these concerns—transformations to land in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, and the nature of the entanglement of custom and modernity—with questions of power, looking particularly to the power relations between local communities, nation-states and globalising capital within contexts of entanglement.

The breadth of the present work nonetheless generates its own limitations. The first of these is that some degree of ethnographic depth is necessarily lost in the extension across disciplinary, geographic, and conceptual distances. On this count, I can only reiterate a point made earlier, which is that the thesis is intended to offer a particular level of insight into a much broader conversation amongst scholars in the Pacific and beyond. Working across multiple sites means that I have not spent the time in each field site that some anthropologists might hold to be a necessary minimum (in total, ten months of fieldwork was conducted across the two countries). Nonetheless, in drawing together multiple sites and experiences, and in looking to comparisons across multiple levels of scale, I hope that I have been able to generate insights of a sort that are generally possible within the classical model of site-specific ethnography—insights, for instance, into the unevenness of modernising processes, into the multiplicity of possible ways in which relationships of power can be reconfigured within entanglements, into the intersections of different processes of change and different places, as well as into the strong resonances to be found amongst communities whose lives, notwithstanding other significant differences, share a common quality of what Rumsey (2001: 17) describes as ‘landedness’.

A second limitation to the present work, and one of which I am keenly aware, is that it does not address the issue of gender in a substantive way. As many academics writing about both Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste (for example Bamford 1998; Strathern 1988) have told us—not to mention informants within those countries—the intersection of land and gender throws up complex and important questions. Land is a key site within which gender identities are created and performed, and gender is in turn a critical element in the maintenance of both physical and spiritual landscapes. The transformations of social connection to land through modernising processes of state- and nation-building, development and globalisation are all

having significant, gendered effects. Some (for example Narciso and Henriques 2010; Thu, Scott and Van Niel 2007) have called for land reforms and land rights for women in the interests of 'gender equality', or 'development' (often without reflexively considering the particular ontological framing of such concepts), but some women in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste also tell stories about how their lives are becoming more difficult, not less difficult, as modernist forms of social relations, production and exchange, and codifications of land (including through the creation of 'land rights') are extended. When complex and relationally contingent evaluations of land use-rights give way, for instance, to abstracted ideal-type understandings of patrilineality or matrilineality, the rigidification of custom can work to exclude women from claiming entitlements to land. The gendered implications of changing forms of connection to land deserves detailed and nuanced inquiry, but given the already broad scope of the current work it simply has not been possible to incorporate such inquiry into this thesis. This would, certainly, be an important topic for further research.

### *The structure of the following chapters*

The substantive chapters of the thesis are grouped within four sections. Chapters Two and Three establish the theoretical and methodological framework for the thesis, which is in turn carried forward in to the more ethnographically grounded chapters that follow. Chapter Two, 'Approaching Custom and Modernity', develops the intellectual framework within which custom and modernity are theorised. Existing approaches to the relationship between custom and modernity are assessed, and the concept of entanglements offered as a means of moving past the unhelpful dichotomising of 'custom' and 'modernity' without having to abandon these categories as descriptors of actually existing patterns of practice and meaning. Building on this, Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach of the thesis. Social relations, I argue, include modes of inquiry and communication, and to this extent research is itself implicated within—and generative of—entanglements of custom and modernity. As such, it is also implicated within relations of power. Here, consistent with the argument developed across this thesis, I argue that entanglements of social relations within research can disempower local communities, privileging written modes of communication and modernist epistemologies above oral, embodied, and place-bound knowledge practices. Nevertheless, research also creates possibilities for articulating and asserting the importance of customary knowledge and experience. Local communities are not simply passive objects of inquiry, but can also engage actively and strategically within research encounters in ways that are empowering. While

these are not evenly weighted possibilities, it is suggested that ethnography, in being oriented towards local and customary forms of knowledge even as it is itself framed in modernist terms, offers possibilities for contributing towards the empowerment of communities.

Chapters Four and Five are grouped together under the heading 'Land and Power', and they provide an exploration of these two key aspects of the thesis through detailed ethnographic analysis, as well as through more theoretical means. Chapter Four, 'Embedded in the Land: Customary Social Relations and Connection to Land' develops an account of customary forms of connection to land. Through a case study of a rural subsistence community in Timor-Leste, Cacavei, I argue that the relationship between land and people within customary communities is understood as being mutually constitutive, and that this is a key distinguishing factor between customary and modern forms of relationship to land. Practices of connection to land offer means of accessing and performing kinship relationships beyond the genealogical present, namely with (disembodied) ancestors and with the yet unborn. Through practices of connection to land—including sacred rituals, oral story telling, subsistence agriculture and patterns of residence—people perform and perpetuate their collective subjectivities and relations of belonging. The mutually constitutive relationship between people and land allows a substantial degree of flexibility in forms of social organization. In Cacavei, this mutability in forms of social organisation goes some way to explaining the community's resilience in spite of forced displacement and cultural disruption during Indonesian occupation. It is argued that this mutability might be considered more broadly as a source of resilience for customary communities grappling with modernizing processes of change.

Moving from Timor-Leste to Papua New Guinea, Chapter Five, 'Greeting the State: Ambivalent Entanglement and the Assertion of Autonomy on Papua New Guinea's Rai Coast', develops the concept of entanglement empirically, demonstrating that customary and modern social relations, including relationships to land, are being brought into entanglement with one another, and that these entanglements are ambivalent and cut across the boundaries of delimited social groups. Power is examined as a quality of social relations, and the argument made that customary and modern forms of social relations involve different forms and articulations of power, including distinct *cartographies of centrality and marginality*. Secondly, and continuing the interest in power, the chapter demonstrates that the ambivalence of entanglement generates possibilities for creative strategies through which local communities

are able to reassert their autonomy. These two arguments are developed through an ethnographic analysis of an encounter between a group of villagers in a mine-affected region on Papua New Guinea's northern Rai Coast, and a delegation of government representatives. Deriving pride from the visit of the delegation and the performance of modern institutional power that it entailed, the villagers nonetheless acted consciously to reposition that power in relation to a discourse of custom and attachment to place. Doing so they acted to subvert their own experience of perceived marginality from the centres (cultural and geographic) of modern power, asserting a competing cartography of centrality and marginality based on customary connection to land.

Chapters Six and Seven consider the process through which communities in Papua New Guinea are 'Becoming Landowners'. The first of these two chapters, 'Relations of Property and the Codification of Customary Connection to Land', focuses particularly on the transformation of people's connection to land through the relations of property and land ownership. Ethnographic material here comes from the Rempi, Nobnob and Siar communities in Madang Province, who are each negotiating the presence of large-scale tuna fishing and canning industry. The communities' experiences highlight vividly the ambivalences and dilemmas of entanglement. As they are drawn into the extended spatial relations of modernist economies and polities, customary practices through which rights to use or access land are determined and adjudicated can prove insufficient in protecting the interests of local communities against the power and interests of others, particularly external corporate actors. In these circumstances, forms of modernist codification of custom can become both necessary and desirable. 'Landowner' becomes an identity to be wielded against both state and company, a legal basis from which to claim rights, and a position from which to participate within the social (political, economic, and cultural) relations of state, nation and globe. Nonetheless, the process of becoming 'customary landowners' is in many ways incommensurate with customary forms of connection. Beyond considering the relationships between local communities and the state and capital, this chapter also extends the study of entanglements to consider their implications for power relations *within* communities, arguing that power often goes to those best able to translate across ontological difference.

The Rempi, Nobnob and Siar communities in Madang remain the focus of Chapter Seven, 'Making Land Work? The Economic and Cultural Politics of Development'. Here, *development* is

considered as a modernising process in relation to land that also has a strong normative and ideological dimension. Hegemonic discourses and practices of development—which are overwhelmingly neoliberal—privilege modernist forms of relationship to land over customary ones. They do this through compelling, or seeking to compel, the registration or titling of customary land, and through emphasising a narrow, economic understanding of land as a material resource to be utilised within capitalist practices of production. Local community autonomy is diminished as customary practices of land use and economic production are increasingly determined by the state and the operations of global capital. Rendering communities through a language of deficit, discourses and practices of development devalue existing customary forms of production and exchange, forms of sociality, belonging and identity. Within modernist cartographies of production, I argue, the choices and actions which local Papua New Guineans and East Timorese make about their lives—and the values attached to different lives and choices—are increasingly shaped by decisions, actions, people, and flows of goods, finance, culture and ideas which have their bases elsewhere. Entanglements, however, also create possibilities for the generation of counter-hegemonic discourses, including those that advocate alternative models, and visions, of development.

The final section of the thesis, 'Becoming Landowners in Timor-Leste', considers the intersection of various modernising processes in relation to land—state-building, development, and nation-building—from the particular vantage point of urban Timor-Leste. Urbanisation, then, is also introduced as a modernising process affecting land, both in the context of the experiences of people living in urban and peri-urban spaces, and in terms of the relationships (material and subjective) between urban and rural parts of the country. In Chapter Eight, 'Land Titling, State-Building and Urban-Rural Imaginaries', examination of the Ita Nia Rai land claims collection process reveals the presence of pervasive urban-rural imaginaries. Urban spaces are being privileged as sites of modernisation, positioned in relation to rural places that are in turn rendered as sites of custom. Through such constructions, customary forms of social relations in rural areas are devalued, and customary sociality in urban spaces rendered invisible. Ethnographic analysis of local engagements with the Ita Nia Rai land reform process, however, reveals the erroneousness of the constructed opposition between 'modern' urban spaces and 'customary' rural ones. Urban and rural places are shown to be dynamically connected, and customary social relations, while maligned or ignored within elite discourses, are shown to be, in practice, an important part of urban life.

Chapter Nine, 'Becoming Squatters: Contesting State and Nation in the City', takes as its focus the ethnographic analysis of the contestation between a community in urban Dili, Aitarak Laran, and the East Timorese state which is attempting to evict them in order to make way for a National Library and Cultural Centre. In the extension of state authority and modernist property relations across the space of the city, the residents of Aitarak Laran have found themselves constructed as 'illegal occupiers' of state land. The terms in which the community and their civil society allies articulated their opposition to the government's plan were almost exclusively modernist, involving invocations of rights, of the promises of national Independence and of the state-citizen relationship. Analysis of the community's contestation of their eviction, however, also reveals a deep ambivalence emerging from a disjuncture between the community's hopes for Independence, and their experience of what that Independence had in fact delivered them. Ultimately, the staging of the community's contest in modern terms had the effect of affirming the authority of the modern nation-state, and reinforcing the hegemonic rendering of 'modern' urban spaces in contrast to 'customary' rural ones. In this respect, the experience of the Aitarak Laran community serves as something of a cautionary tale.

Finally, Chapter Ten provides a conclusion to the thesis. Drawing together the themes from the preceding chapters, and pointing to key points of resonance and divergence between the multiple communities in both Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, I return here to two inter-related questions addressed in the thesis: firstly, the nature of encounters between customary and modern forms of relationship to land; and secondly, the implications of these encounters for relations of power. Emphasising the destabilisation and deep ambivalence present within entanglements, I argue here that we need to avoid easy or simplistic answers to these questions. The processes of change with which contemporary Pacific communities have to contend are complex and challenging. Nonetheless, while there are no easy answers either for those communities, or for us as academics seeking to understand these processes of change, my conclusion here is that those strategies which are best enabling local communities to hold on to their autonomy are those which are grounded in continuing, customary practices of connection to land.





# **Entanglement: An Intellectual and Methodological Framework**



## 2. Approaching custom and modernity

---

April 2010, a couple of days after arriving in Madang, I am flicking through a copy of one of Papua New Guinea's national daily newspapers, the Post-Courier. There's an article, 'Boots and All for Lazarus', which is a one-page human interest story about a disabled man, Jim Lazarus, from Alakuli village in the Kompiam district of Enga Province, who lost a leg in an accident and now makes a living repairing boots and other footwear in Wabag township (Kili 2010). There's a half-page colour photo of Lazarus—with a boot—and a caption below describing him, in the mildly patronising language of human interest stories everywhere, as 'chatting and laughing...with an outgoing personality'. The article tells how he lost his lower leg when he 'disobeyed traditional beliefs and customs and entered an area that was and still is considered sacred to his people and chopped down a tree.' As he was doing so, another tree fell on him, smashing his bones and severing his leg at the knee. Lazarus is quoted as saying, 'No human being or animal ever goes into this sacred area. It is said that this place has magical powers which bring a curse to those that enter.' As a description of causation this is presented quite matter-of-factly, not framed as a belief or as Lazarus' subjective interpretation of events, but simply as an objective journalistic account of what happened: Lazarus walked into a sacred, prohibited area of land, and a tree fell down and crushed his leg. Lazarus himself goes on to say, 'I was very lucky...I think the Lord was with me that day', explaining that he was able to stay conscious and call for help from nearby relatives, who carried him on a stretcher for a day to a mission station, where a Mission Aviation Fellowship Cesena plane flew him to the Mount Hagen hospital. He eventually returned from the hospital to Alakuli village, where he stayed until an outbreak of tribal fighting prompted him to flee to Wabag because he felt he was too vulnerable because of his disability. There, he learnt to repair footwear from some youths from Chimbu Province, and from then onwards has supported himself and his family in this way. The article concludes with a call for disabled people in PNG to enjoy the same rights as able-bodied people.

So a man from a remote village loses his leg because he breaches customary laws and invokes a curse by crossing into sacred land. He survives by the grace of the Christian god, and is flown by missionary plane to a hospital in the nearest major urban centre. He returns to the village only to be forced out by inter-tribal fighting, and makes his way to a township where he is able to make a living in the informal cash economy. His story is written up by a journalism student for one of the main national daily papers, framed by a call for the modern state to do more to protect the human rights of the disabled. Compressed into the half-page story of Jim Lazarus and his boots is a spectacular multiplicity of subjectivities, cosmologies, forms of social relations and ways of understanding the world. Such multiplicity is woven through the social fabric of the Pacific—albeit invariably in shifting configurations—and it has always appeared to me (an outsider to customary culture, white, modern in my upbringing and ontology) as a curious mix of familiarity and difference. The demands of critical, and particularly indigenous scholars (Smith 1999; Trask 1991) that we pay attention to the differences between the epistemologies and positionings of (outsider) researchers and researched peoples, must ring loudly in our ears. But it is also true that difference is never absolute and dichotomies are very rarely representative of people's lived experiences.

Sitting reading the newspaper in Madang, there was much about Lazarus' story that made me aware of my own otherness as an outsider-researcher in the place: the understanding of certain areas of land as sacred; Lazarus' explanation of his disability as the result of his own breach of customary law; passing mentions of tribal fighting. But there were also aspects of the narrative which were familiar: the trope of the journalistic human interest story; recourse to a rights discourse; even, harking back to my childhood of Sunday mornings spent at church, the invocation of God's mercy and the doing of good deeds by his disciples. Customary and modern forms of sociality are *analytically* distinct, but as instantiated patterns of practice and meaning neither is homogenous. They do not exist—are not experienced—as consecutive epochs, but rather in dynamic and shifting entanglements. These entanglements exist across multiple levels of scale—local and trans-local, regional, global and at the level of the nation-state—with the customary and the modern in each contingent instance arranged in different configurations of dominance and marginality. It is true, as Anthony Giddens (1990: 4) insists, there is no place in the world untouched by modernity, but it does not follow—as he assumes it does—that 'the modes of life brought into being by modernity have swept us away from *all* traditional types of social order'.

## The purpose of this chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to develop an intellectual framework for exploring the intersection of customary and modern forms of connection to land. Being both ethnographic and social theoretical, this thesis involves considerations of both on-the-ground particularity and generalising analytical categories, and aside from stretching to accommodate both of these things, a key methodological imperative is also to position them in relation to each other. In relation to geographical scale, too, the thesis moves across significant distances, considering the relationship between the local and the global as much as the levels between (for instance the national and the regional). Neither 'ethnography-theory' nor 'local-global' represent sets of antagonistic categories, and nor can they be mapped straightforwardly on to each other. Certainly, to introduce another set of categories which we need to resist the tendency to dichotomize, they cannot be mapped onto 'customary-modern'. This is to say, ethnography (particularity) does not equal the local does not equal the customary; and theory (structure) does not equal the global does not equal the modern. What all of these sets of categories do have in common, however, is that they are all concerned with differing levels of abstraction. Consistent with the argument presented in the Introduction—that we should not assume a qualitative break between lesser and more abstracted forms of sociality—here too we need to look to the mutually-informing relationships both within and between different articulations of scale, ontology and method.

This chapter proceeds by considering some of the ways in which social difference have been approached within the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. To the extent that the empirical focus of this thesis is the Pacific, Pacific Studies provides something of an anchor throughout the chapter, but the discussion also moves beyond its confines periodically and seeks to locate the area-studies approach itself within a broader intellectual context. Surveying this literature, I am attuned particularly to the ways in which notions of 'the modern' and 'the customary' have been approached and theorised. It is worth noting, however, that particularly within Modernisation Theory and much contemporary sociology, the types of sociality I describe as 'customary' have been described instead in terms of 'traditional' society. In the following discussion, I understand these terms to be broadly equivalent in relation to the forms of sociality they seek to describe, even if there are significant differences within and across both of these categories in the ways that such sociality is understood and valued. My

own preference for 'customary' (over 'traditional') reflects the traction of this concept within much Pacific Studies literature as well as in local Pacific Islands discourses (as evident, for instance, in ideas of 'customary land' and 'customary landowner').

The argument of the chapter is that approaches to social difference have tended to swing too wildly between essentialism and relativism. That is to say, there has not been enough consideration paid to those mutually informing relationships, mentioned above, between different articulations of scale, ontology, and method. Modernity and custom have been pegged either as totalising and dichotomously opposed structures, or as subjectively constructed myths or discourses. In practice they are both, existing and functioning at the level of discourse and idea, *and* as descriptors of actually existing patterns of practice. This dual life of custom and modernity is what has been too often missed. In identifying and mapping this gap, I propose a framework of entangled forms of social relations as a means of moving past the unhelpful dichotomising of custom and modernity without having to abandon these terms as analytical markers of structurally and fundamentally different ways of being in the world. The intellectual framework outlined in this chapter provides the basis from which I develop the argument of this thesis, which is that customary and modern forms of connection to land are being brought into dynamic entanglements, destabilising structures of power in ways that create multiple possibilities for their reconfiguration. While there is a dominant tendency towards the diminishing of local autonomy—as power shifts from communities to the sites, agents and processes of the nation-state and globalising capital, and as customary ways of life are devalued through hegemonic understandings—the ambivalence of entanglement also creates new possibilities for reasserting customary ways of life, forms of connection to land, and articulations of power.

In attempting to position myself across both sociology and anthropology, my intention is to draw on the strengths of both, and to compel dialogue between the two areas of scholarship. The strength of anthropology has historically been its attention to ethnographic detail, to exploring and giving expression to social and cultural diversity, but it has also been marked too often by an aversion to theory, particularly following the postmodern turn which began in the 1970s. Notwithstanding the recent move towards anthropology 'at home' (Jackson 1987; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Messerschmidt 1981; Peirano 1998), an orientation towards localised sites of Otherness away from Western shores has meant that the discipline's

treatment of 'modernity' has often been analytically thin. Within sociology the inverse has often been the case. Here the tradition of social theory and an empirical focus on Western and European sites has encouraged a rich history of theorising the nature of modernity, but it has also encouraged a Eurocentric frame, with a myriad of other human experiences lumped together in a generic category of the 'pre-modern', given little critical attention and accorded little importance. This is, of course, to speak at a level of broad generalisation, but such generalisations can be useful sometimes, especially if in revealing broad patterns they also suggest possibilities for remaking them. Exploring key patterns and intellectual trends in both disciplines is intended to furnish a critique, but also to point to the influence upon my own thinking of a diverse of literature and intellectual traditions. Nevertheless, intellectual breadth and depth often exist in proportional relationship to each other, and in trying to reach across wide spaces—geographically, methodologically and conceptually—I have necessarily had to sacrifice some depth. I owe a particular debt to anthropologists and other scholars in the Pacific whose focussed work has provided rich inspiration for my own, more sprawling, offering. Clifford Geertz argues, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973: 25), that 'studies do build on other studies, not in the sense that they take up where the others leave off, but in the sense that, better informed and better conceptualized, they plunge more deeply into the same things.' In my case, I am suggesting that, better informed, it is possible to plunge more *expansively*.

### **First contacts: The Pacific as a site of difference**

Within scholarship and public discourses on the Pacific region, a concern with the intersection of difference is recurring and deep-seated. Such intersections are imagined in various ways: in terms of multiplicity as well as opposition, of gaps as well as of overlaps. As with other regions and places, this imagining has often been closely bound up in the imagining and experience of colonialism. Historically, and certainly during the long period of colonialist exploration and 'discovery', which in the Pacific extended from the 16<sup>th</sup> century through to the 20<sup>th</sup>, the starkest articulation of difference has been through the notion of 'first contacts'. In the imagining of first contacts—the first encounters between Pacific peoples and foreign (usually European) explorers and missionaries—the Other was given dramatic, embodied form. As late as the 1930s in Papua New Guinea, Australian gold prospectors were 'opening up' the New Guinea Highlands, documenting their interactions with the highland communities they

‘discovered’. The published account of Michael Leahy, an Australian who led some of these latter expeditions, *The Land that Time Forgot* (1937), is characteristic of both the sensationalizing of the highland ‘native’ and of the colonial rendering of colonised peoples as outside of Western, modern experience—‘forgotten’ by time, left behind in the onward march of human Progress.

In more recent years, scholars have held up to the light this concept of first contacts, challenging its essentializing of difference, pointing to the mutuality involved in those early interactions and to the complex and dynamic contours of difference, then and now. In revisiting ‘first encounters’ the historian Greg Denning (1988 [1980], 2004) takes the image of the beach—so quintessential in its Pacific-ness—re-imagining it as the space of meetings, crossings and transformations. As the site where Islanders and Europeans came face-to-face, the beach is ‘a double-edged space, in-between; an exit space that is also an entry space; a space where edginess rules’ (Denning 2004: 16). In his evocative notion of ‘beach crossings’ Denning invokes beaches both metaphorical and literal, gesturing to the meeting of difference not only in those mythicized moments of initial encounter, but also across time, within the self as well as within and between distinct peoples. In another reimagining of first contacts, Margaret Jolly and Serge Tchekézo (2009) critique the notion for its teleological emphasis on *first* meetings, and like Denning they note that encounters between Islander and foreigner occurred not only in the ‘brush of bodies’ (p.3) but also at the level of imagination, in the visions each had of the other, the ideas and cosmologies which informed how difference was approached and received. Instead of ‘first contacts’, they offer the notion of ‘encounters’:

By highlighting the idea of encounter we hope to stress the mutuality inherent in such meetings of bodies, and of minds. This is not to say that such encounters were moments of easy understanding or pacific exchanges... But, even in the midst of massacre and revenge, there was a meeting of meanings, of bodies and minds, where-by pre-existing understandings, preconceptions from both sides of the encounter, were engaged and brought into confrontation and dialogue, mutual influence and ultimately mutual transformation (Jolly and Tchekézo 2009: 1).

Jolly and Tchekézo challenge, too, the privileging of the meetings of Islanders and Europeans over the myriad of meetings, contacts and exchanges which occurred between Pacific peoples long before the arrivals of Europeans on Pacific shores were deemed to have marked the beginning of Pacific history.



In a similar vein Michelle Keown (2007: 3) comments that the concept of 'translation'—from the Latin verb *transfere*, meaning 'to carry across'—resonates within the Pacific particularly because it has as much to say about intra-Pacific exchanges—'criss-crossing patterns of migration and cultural exchange'—as it does about exchanges between Pacific Islanders and foreigners. As much as us/them identifications can underscore very real structures of relationship, and offer a powerful basis for counter-hegemonic assertions of power as much as hegemonic ones, in and of themselves the figures of coloniser and colonised fail to adequately capture the complex contours of social and cultural difference in the Pacific

They fail, as well, because in the mutually affecting intersection of social difference there is a blurring of edges that makes sharp and clear distinctions difficult to sustain. A recent collection of work by young Pacific scholars (Tamaira 2009b) explores the concept of 'the space between'. Writing in the preface to the collection, A. Marata Tamaira considers the concept from the perspective of her own experience as the child of a 'bicultural union' between a Maori father and English mother. 'The space between', she suggests, 'is a prevalent metaphor in the Pacific': it is 'an intermediary site—a liminal zone marked not only by tension and transformation but also by confluences and connections' (2009a: 1). In fact, while Tamaira and others in the volume position themselves 'between' cultural difference, what they describe within their writing is not just between, but also across. Bodies and lives become meeting places for different cultures, values, relations, ideas and identities, and this multiplicity can be experienced both positively and negatively. In one sense the imagery of the *space between* is nebulous enough to communicate this quality of ambivalence, but its imprecision is also indicative of the difficulty that seems to be encountered in trying to conceptualise the dynamics and contours of social difference across the region.

Through narratives of 'beach crossings', 'oceanic encounters' and 'the space between', scholars such as Jolly and Tcherkézoff, Dening and Tamaira have sought to reinscribe Pacific peoples as active and creative human agents, who do not simply passively receive but negotiate and respond to encounters with difference from within their own dynamic, contingent social and cultural contexts. These works put paid to essentializing and dichotomized readings of social difference, showing the trajectories of such difference to be

instead multiple and intersecting. They have portrayed these complex landscapes richly, with thick description, empathy, intelligence, even poetry. What these works do not necessarily do, however, is provide an account of the nature of the difference encountered. While empirically rich, they are often analytically thin, offering little opportunity to extrapolate beyond the particularities they describe and to make theoretical claims about broader social patterns of change. Does this matter? Certainly, empirical work does not need theory in order to be of value, but theory does allow us to do things that empirically focussed work does not. Particularly, it allows us to make claims about the world beyond the level of local particularity, to make analytical insights which offer us understandings of broader social processes, and ultimately of ourselves as much as of others. Abstracted away from particularities of place and context, theory (at its best) provides understandings of the world that allow us to imagine its remaking.

### **Modernity versus tradition**

Particularly within contemporary anthropology, wariness towards the use of broad analytical categories is in no small part a reaction to the crudity with which such categories have been deployed previously and elsewhere. Most notable was the Modernisation Theory of the 1950s and 1960s, which secured firmly the use of 'modernity' as an analytical term within the social sciences. Of course 'modern' had long been in usage as an adjective and as a way of distinguishing self from constructed Other—Habermas (1983) describes the use of the term by Christian converts in fifth century Rome to distinguish themselves from the 'barbarians' of antiquity. What Modernisation Theory did was to position the term within a developmentalist framework. It purported to offer an explanation for the 'backwardness' of, particularly, African and Asian societies, and to point to the ways—urbanisation, the development of capitalist industry and trade—through which those societies might hope to inch closer towards the esteemed heights of the industrialised, modernised West. Standing alongside the capitalist and the colonial administrator in this supposedly benevolent exercise was the social scientist. Alongside economists (most notably Rostow 1960) and intellectuals in the new post-war field of development studies, anthropologists played a critical role in providing the data used as 'evidence' to support Modernisation Theory's claims (Ferguson 1999).

Through the lens of Modernisation Theory the idea of the modern took on certain aspects. It became, in the first instance, normative: a marker not just of difference, but of what was good, desirable, *better*. Secondly, then, it was also relational: modern was to be understood in opposition to traditional, much as was the coloniser with the colonised other. Thirdly, modernisation came to be understood as a teleological process. That is, the traditional was not just other to the modern, it was also prior to it, and so the hope was offered to the 'backward', 'primitive' people of the world that they might progress along the path. The burgeoning cities and industrial centres of Europe's African colonies, for example, became beacons of progress and optimism for those who saw in them the 'African Industrial Revolution' (Gluckman 1961). Of course, becoming modern demanded shedding—shunning—the traditional. The title of one of Modernisation Theory's key texts, David Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society: The Modernizing of the Middle East* (1958) provides a neat summation of the intellectual sentiment: the traditional represented the past and the modern the present and the future. Any plurality of the two was to be explained only as the messy period of (inevitable) transition from one to the other.

Early critiques of Modernisation Theory came from the rival paradigm of Dependency Theory. Framed largely by a Marxist political economy, theorists such as Paul Baran (1957) and Andre Gunder Frank (1967) opposed the emphasis on capitalist development, instead fingering capitalism itself as the cause of 'underdevelopment' in the world. Useful as it was in highlighting relationships of power and historical patterns of exploitation, however, Dependency Theory was no less teleological than Modernisation Theory. With the publication of Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (1983), this developmentalist framework began to be challenged. Critiquing the approach to temporality within anthropology in particular, Fabian took issue with what he called the 'denial of coevalness'—the construction of social and cultural differences as evidence of different evolutionary stages. 'What are opposed', he wrote (1983: 155), 'are not the same societies at different stages of development, but different societies facing each other at the same Time.' As Doreen Massey (2005: 69) has since noted, the 'temporal convening of space' which Fabian was critiquing represents a thoroughly modern discourse, a critical part of the hegemonic narrative of modernity. Space is conceptualised as divided into distinct, bounded places, and *difference* so understood is interpreted as chronologically arranged. In demanding a recognition of the coterminality of difference, Fabian and subsequent postcolonial critiques

(Hall 1996; Featherstone, Lash and Robertson 1995) challenged both the teleological and normative assumptions of Modernisation Theory.

Nevertheless, a teleological and epochal approach to forms of sociality has persisted in many quarters. Particularly within sociology, the focus of which has historically been on those societies which, to borrow Stacy Leigh Pigg's expression, 'claim to be the home of modernity' (1996: 163), there has been a strong tendency towards such a linear reading of history. Anthony Giddens' work is exemplary of this tendency to posit a 'Great Divide' between the modern and 'pre-modern'. Modernity, Giddens (1991) argues, is a period of human history, and a fundamentally discontinuist one at that. The dynamism of modernity comes from its separation of time and space, the development of disembedding mechanisms which lift out social relations from localised contexts and reorganise them across large time-space distances, and the reflexive appropriation of knowledge which moves social life away from 'fixed' tradition. Modern society finds its institutional expression in capitalism, industrialism, apparatuses of surveillance, and control of the means of violence. Approaching modernity as such, Giddens positions himself squarely within a sociological tradition which builds upon the insights of Marx, Durkheim and Weber. There is little sense that these dynamics and institutions which he identifies might be felt unevenly across the world, and little possibility that they might co-exist with other forms of social organisation, relationship, or identity. 'Modernity', Giddens tells us, 'is a post-traditional order' (1991: 2).

Giddens is able to relegate the 'pre-modern' to history in large part because he is so crudely dismissive of it. Valorising reflexivity as a feature of modernity, and particularly of late modernity (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994; Giddens 1990, 1991), Giddens seems at times to want to assign all capacity for agency to the modern. The 'traditional', or 'pre-modern', is presented as fixed, immobile, and constraining. Jeffrey Alexander (1996), in a critique of Giddens and Ulrich Beck's accounts of 'reflexive modernization', accuses the two of reproducing the simplistic tenets of 1950s and 1960s Modernisation Theory. Giddens, he argues, 'recapitulates early modernization theory's simplistic account of tradition as dogmatic, repetitive, ritualistic, irrational, and elitist' (Alexander 1996: 135-6). Denying the flexibility, responsiveness and capacity for innovation of customary forms of sociality, Giddens simply relegates them to the past.

Although the intellectual content varies, in his epochal approach to modernity Giddens' theorizing resembles that of others including Marshall Berman (1983) and Jurgen Habermas (1987), and those working generally within the Marxist or Weberian traditions. The periodization of social relations resonates, too, with those theorists who have pronounced the succession of the modern age with some other—whether that be the postmodern era of Jean-François Lyotard (1984) and others, Martin Albrow's (1996) 'global age', or some other variety of epoch—or, similar to Giddens himself, some new period within modernity itself, be this Ulrich Beck's (1992) emerging 'risk society' or Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) 'liquid modernity'. Diverse as these works may be, they have tended to be broadly in agreement with Giddens' dismissal of the non-modern as the 'pre-modern', uninteresting and archaic. As Rena Lederman (1998: 440-1) has commented, within this strand of sociological thinking 'pre-modern' becomes a 'residual category', a 'hodgepodge of the exotic, the rural, the tribal'. What much sociology has exhibited—notwithstanding the significant, and relatively recent, contributions of postcolonial and other critical scholars within the discipline—has been a blatant Western-centric bias, fixated on metaphors of rupture and largely oblivious to the dynamic continuities of customary ways of being.

### **Anthropology and the cultural turn**

Where notions of modernity vs. tradition and metaphors of clash have offered rigid, often essentialised accounts of the nature of social difference (even if unwittingly so), contemporary anthropology has been much more inclined towards highlighting the shifting complexities and contingencies of difference. This has been particularly the case since the 1970s, when the 'crisis of representation' rendered generalising categories suspect and prompted a critical interrogation of the classical ethnographic tradition and method. The introduction of poststructuralist and postmodernist perspectives sparked intense debate about the legitimacy of anthropologists' claims to authorship and objectivity, the politics and partiality of Western epistemologies, and the reflexivity (or lack thereof) of the ethnographer in the field. The act of writing ethnography was revealed as a process of 'invention', not straightforward documentation (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Wagner 1981 [1975]). Experiments in 'new ethnography' attempted to situate the ethnographer as an actor in the field (e.g. Cesara 1982; Rabinow 1977), and to employ new writing techniques that highlighted a multiplicity of voices and truths (e.g. Shostak 1981). Claims to knowledge and truth were declared contingent, and

theories—such as Modernisation Theory—which offered singular narratives of the human condition, decried. Johannes Fabian's (1983) call for anthropologists to recognise the coevalness of their subjects, then, came in a period of general upheaval for the discipline. From having been complicit within the development of Modernisation Theory, anthropology has radically transformed the ways that it approaches and understands categories such as 'the modern'. Two dimensions of this shift are especially significant: firstly, the re-making of modernity and custom as ideas and discourses—as the *objects*, rather than the analytical categories, of ethnographic enquiry; secondly, a retreat to ethnography and to the particularity of the local. In both instances, the intertwining of the particular and the general is obscured, and in both instances this is to the detriment of the resulting work.

### *The idea of custom and the modern*

Drawing on the semiotic approach to culture as text (Geertz 1973), and on emerging notions of performativity (Butler 1988, 1990; De Marinis 1993; Singer 1972), 'modernity' and 'custom' have been repositioned not as objective material fact but as narratives and discourses which find expression in systems of signs and codes, which are constructed and invented, received and interpreted in local and particular social contexts. The functioning of modernity-the-myth has now become a focus for ethnographic enquiry.

Writing about life in the Zambian copperbelt, James Ferguson's well-known ethnographic study, *Expectations of Modernity* (1999), takes a site familiar to studies of the Modernisation Theorists—the urban spaces built around an emerging African mining economy in the 1950s-1970s—and reimagines it through considering modernisation not as an assumed process but as a 'myth'. Following Frederick Cooper in rejecting the depiction of African urbanisation as a straightforward 'affirmation of modernity' (Cooper 1983: 12), Ferguson instead proposes an account of modernity as a 'cultural style', one amongst others being performed in the contested space of the city. This cultural style found expression in the belching smoke stack and machinery of the mines, in the government and corporate buildings, in the language, presentation and social practices of people who considered themselves city people; modern people. 'Modernization', Ferguson writes, is a myth which 'gives form to an understanding of the world, providing a set of categories and premises that continue to shape people's experiences and interpretations of their lives' (Ferguson 1999: 14). When, in the late 1970s,

Zambia's economic expansion began to reverse, the signs and symbols of the modern cultural style which had been made accessible to workers for a few brief years—nice clothes, cars, cash income—were stripped away. Through the lens of the modernisation myth—consistent with its teleological assertions—this failure to eventuate of what had been *expected* of modernity was experienced by Zambian workers as 'an irrecoverable loss of standing...a demotion in the worldwide ranking of things' (Ferguson 1999: 12). In Ferguson's account, then, modernity is approached not as a social structure but as an *idea* that is articulated, anticipated and performed, in ways which reflect the meta-narrative of modernization as well as its localized expressions. Elsewhere, José Mauricio Domingues (2009), Cameron Wesson (2008) and Stacy Leigh Pigg (1996) are amongst those who have similarly taken up the question of how discourses of modernity—*ideas* of the modern—are taken up, refashioned, performed and deployed by people in specific local contexts, to suit local purposes.

It is not simply modernity which has been refashioned as a discourse: attention has turned, too, to the ways in which tradition and custom are constructed, including by those who purport to represent them. As Jolly (1994) and others (Demian 2003; Foster 1995; Keesing 1989) have observed, the concept of *custom*—in Melanesia, *kastom*—is itself a product of the encounter with modernity, or with social difference otherwise understood. In conditions of encounter and multiplicity, notions and discourses of custom are also constructed by those who claim those customs as their own, who situate and identify themselves as customary people. As an idea and a descriptive category it exists only when there emerges something else from which it needs to be differentiated. As with 'modern', 'customary' can be articulated and deployed from various standpoints of either centrality or marginality, in ways that can be creative or controlling, denigrating or empowering, or any ambiguous combination of the above.

For those who use the categories as descriptors of self, rather than other, ideas of custom and customary life, practice and subjectivity can serve as the basis for identity claims (McKay 2006), for human rights claims or engagement with a globalising civil society (Chesters 2009; Sylvain 2008; Tsing 1999), demands for compensation or other forms of recognition in resource-extraction projects (Hirsch 2001), or indeed as a basis for participation in tourism industries or other forms of capitalist cultural commodification (Sylvain 2008). In response to circumstances of drastic social change, 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and

'invented pasts' (Keesing 1989; cf. Trask 1991 for a critique) can provide powerful imaginaries of a way of being which is, or was more secure, more constant. On the other hand, elements of the new can be incorporated and appropriated within patterns of practice asserted as customary—evident, for example, in the appropriation of Christianity (Goddard and Van Heekeren 2003). Articulations of custom can serve particular interests, representing more closely or more strategically the lived realities of some rather than others. Writing about land tenures in the Pacific Islands, R. Gerard Ward and Elizabeth Kingdon (1995) argue that articulations of customary land practices in codified law and the rhetoric of political elites are often greatly removed from the actual practices of custom at local levels. Martha Macintyre (2000) and Bronwyn Douglas (2003), meanwhile, have argued that constructions of 'traditional' women's roles and domain by some Melanesian men are being used to rationalize practices of subjugation and marginalization of Melanesian women. Much like those that have critiqued the meta-narrative of modernity, these studies reveal the operations of custom and tradition as ideas, as powerful discourses, sets of symbols and practices, which are not simply given but rather made and remade in dynamic ways.

As important as it has been, however, to counter the essentialising structuralism of 'modernity vs. custom', there is a strong sense in which the postmodern turn has come too close to losing the materially-existing baby in the deconstruction of its bathwater. The exposing of the ways in which 'customary' or 'modern' function ideologically has proceeded in ways that sometimes fail to distinguish between the material—ways in which 'modern' or 'customary' are descriptors of certain qualities of social relations—and the discursive—the ways in which they are deployed as political and ideologically-charged constructs. Instead, where the one was previously emphasised to the exclusion of the other, now the other is too often emphasised to the exclusion of the one. Discussing the reluctance of contemporary anthropologists to use the terms 'modern' and 'traditional', without 'selfconsciously apologetic scare quotes' Stacy Leigh Pigg (1996: 163) writes:

It will not do to look the other way simply because we now find the traditional-modern dichotomy problematic. Whether or not this dichotomy serves us well in social analysis, the fact is that these terms are thriving in the world we aim to describe and interpret.

Like Ferguson, Pigg approaches modernity as a 'myth' played out in local contexts, and like him she positions this approach as an alternative to the problematic usages of the 'traditional-



modern dichotomy'. In doing so, however—and somewhat paradoxically—scholars in the constructionist tradition assert an either-or dualism between structure and discourse, in which our intellectual choice must be between employing an essentialised dichotomy of traditional (customary) vs. modern—replete with all its normative and teleological assumptions—and orienting ourselves towards modernity-and-custom-as-myth (and only myth). The swing from one paradigmatic extreme to the other is unnecessarily melodramatic; the suggestion that either might be considered in isolation from the other, misled.

### *Site-specific anthropology and the retreat to ethnography*

Within anthropology the postmodern rejection of truth claims and grand theory spilt over, in many quarters, into a rejection of theory *per se* in favour of ethnography. This retreat to ethnography was, as Henrietta Moore (1999: 6) describes it, 'a defensive gesture'. If grand theory was potentially colonialist and exploitative, then the solution that the discipline arrived at was to eschew all analytical generalisations. As solutions go, it was flawed on many fronts, not least of which was the conflating of a particularly problematic form and practice of theorising with theory in general. It imagined wrongly, too, that ethnographic practice could somehow be separated from interpretation and representation, and in refocusing attention on the ethics of ethnographic engagement and fieldwork practice it pursued personal strategies that were necessary, but which in and of themselves would never be sufficient to the task of combatting structural relations of power between the West and its Others (Moore 1999).

Emphasising particularity and plurality was intended as a response to essentialising dichotomies such as that which Modernisation Theory posed between modernity and tradition. Positioning ethnography as a refuge from theory, though, simply created other dichotomies, equally unsatisfactory: ethnography became opposed to theory, and local places opposed to global processes, a dualism which Tsing (2008) has since critiqued. In this vein, one tendency in anthropology (post the postmodern turn) has been to explore local articulations of modernity while continuing to eschew the use of 'modernity' as a generalizing term. Accordingly, Jonathan Xavier Inda (2005: 1) writes in the introduction to an edited collection, entitled *Anthropologies of Modernity*, that the purpose of the collected papers is to 'treat modernity not in abstract terms but tangibly as an ethnographic object...not to come up with some grand, general account of modernity but to analyze its concrete manifestations.' Much

scholarship within Pacific Studies has been similarly inclined, with the impacts of modern social relations and the ways in which they have been negotiated by Pacific peoples explored predominantly by anthropologists working within particular local places, who have, by and large, not been concerned with extrapolating their findings beyond the particularity of those locales. Two further examples here serve to illustrate the point.

Writing about the Faiwolmin people in Western Papua New Guinea, living in and around the Tabubil mine site operated by Ok Tedi Mining Limited, Nicole Polier (1996) draws particular attention to the impact of mining in radically restructuring local communities and identities. 'More than the *kiap* (colonial patrol officer) or the priest', she writes, 'the gold and copper industrial giant has inaugurated a new terrain on which local constructions of gender, sexual identity, and ethnicity are contested' (1996: 1). Similarly Benedict Imbun (1995), an Engan man (from the Enga Province, PNG) explores transformations of identity and collectivity amongst Enga working in the Bougainville copper mine in Panguna in Bougainville Province (now the Autonomous Region of Bougainville) in the late 1970s and 1980s. Imbun argues that far from the disintegration of ethnic solidarity, or its replacement with modern forms of class solidarity, customary forms of ethnic and tribal allegiance provided the basis from which Engan workers engaged with the social environment of the Panguna mining town. Both authors frame their articles with reference to modernity: Polier titles hers, 'Modernity and its Malcontents', and Imbun articulates his concern as being with the 'process of modernisation' engendered by the mine. In neither case, however, is 'modernity' employed as a substantive analytical category. Polier is explicitly wary of the possibilities of using it in such a way, stressing instead 'the encounter of a specific process of capitalist transformation with a specific people' (1996: 2), and invoking Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto's (1979) insistence that a history of capitalist expansion be a history of 'diversity'. A myriad of other examples reveal a similar pattern: a driving concern with the negotiations, collusions and collisions which emerge when customary practices and forms of sociality encounter modern ones; and a deep reluctance to consider them in such generalising terms.

Yet, to return to Henrietta Moore's (1999) critique, the retreat to ethnography and the local is both defensive and illusory. The empirical and the interpretative are not so easily divisible and simply disavowing generalising categories or interpretations does not make them any less present. Both Imbun and Polier draw upon generalising analytical categories—modernity and

modernisation, but also capitalism, gender, class etc.—in order to frame and make sense of the empirical data they present. Avoiding talking about such generalities, the danger is that they are employed uncritically.

When Inda (2005: 1) writes that the purpose of his edited collection is to ‘treat modernity not in abstract terms but tangibly as an ethnographic object...not to come up with some grand, general account of modernity but to analyze its concrete manifestations’, the task he sets himself is impossible. From the very first use of the word ‘modernity’ he is, unavoidably, treating modernity in abstract terms. Rhetorically eschewing a ‘general account’ of the modern, he misses that he is himself drawing on precisely such an account, only surrendering the opportunity to say anything critical about it. Polier does similarly, and her reference to Cardoso and Faletto is telling. Drawing on the Marxist dependency theory tradition, Cardoso and Faletto do, indeed, stress the diversity of experiences of capitalist exploitation amongst the ‘dependent’ capitalist economies of Latin America, but what Polier misses when she quotes them in support of her own approach is that they position their analysis in the dialectical space between the particular and the abstract. Having explored diverse experiences of economic transformation, they ‘return to the general topic of capitalist development in dependent countries’ (Cardoso and Faletto 1979: 174). It is precisely this movement between levels of scale and abstraction that is lost in the retreat to local particularity. Researchers inevitably draw on general and generalising categories to approach, analyse and make sense of the particular; pretending that this is not the case, this aspect of their work simply goes unexamined. Disavowing theory, they forfeit the chance to speak *back* from the particular to the general. And so again the postmodern turn becomes both intellectually disabling and politically dangerous.

## **Multiple modernities**

In considering ways in which custom and modernity have been theorised within sociology and anthropology there is one other approach to understanding social difference that needs to be examined. This is the notion of ‘multiple modernities’, proposed by Shmuel Eisenstadt (2000, 2002) and subsequently taken up widely within sociology (including by Arnason 2001; Casanova 2011; Kaya 2004; Taylor and Lee n.d.; Wagner 2000), as well as within anthropology

(Knauff 2002a; Robbins and Wardlow 2005). Explicitly positioned against Modernisation Theory, but nevertheless taking seriously the concept of the modern, the multiple modernities thesis seems at first glance as if it might offer a corrective both to the essentialism of some sociological theorising, and to the anti-theory relativism of some anthropology. Nevertheless, it is ultimately beset by limitations. Oriented towards plurality, what it achieves is what James (2006: 46) has elsewhere critiqued as a '*flat pluralism*' (my emphasis), devoid of tension and struggle and of any substantive difference. Particularly within the paradigm's sociological articulations, the assertion of difference between 'multiple modernities' too often comes at the cost of obscuring social difference within them. Anthropological works using the approach have accorded more importance and attention to the customary, and have made insights in doing so. Yet these efforts stumble upon the familiar problems of conflating structure with its subjective expressions, and of a lack of analytical clarity and rigour, including the confusing of levels of analysis.

Rejecting the homogenizing and Eurocentric metanarrative of modernity, the multiple modernities approach instead understands the history of modernity as 'a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs' (Eisenstadt 2000: 2). Within this open-ended story, European modernity holds no claim to being the yardstick against which other attempts should be measured: its particular honour is simply that it was the first on the scene (although more anthropologically oriented contributions to the literature have disputed this, too, see Kahn 2001). Indeed, the multiple modernities thesis stresses that European or Western modernity itself began subdividing—pluralizing—soon after its emergence, a reflection of the internal conflict borne out of modernity's own tensions. Of these, Arnason (2000: 65) draws particular attention to the conflict, innate within modernity, between 'the vision of infinitely expanding rational mastery...[and] on the other hand, the individual and collective aspiration to autonomy and creativity'. Eisenstadt (2000) points to tensions between the particular and the universalistic; between the creativity of modernity and its 'disenchantment' of the world (as Weber described it); and between regulatory/authoritative apparatuses and forms of social protest movements. The diversity of expressions of modernity in the world is understood to be, in part, the result of these internal antagonisms playing out in an ongoing dynamic. Modernity 'crystallizes' in a particular, distinctive form, but the continuing struggles between its antagonistic parts—its 'potential capacity for continual self-correction' (Eisenstadt 2000: 11)—means it is not static but re-forms into new crystallizations as it extends across time as well as across geographical space.

The plurality of modernity, though, emerges not just from the internal dynamics of the modern but—according to the multiple modernities thesis—from the diverse traditions from which particular modernities emerge. Rather than posturing a radical break between modernity and tradition, *a la* Modernisation Theory, the unique shapes, colours and textures of particular ‘cultural programmes’ of modernity are understood instead to reflect the particular cultural and traditional contexts out of which each emerged. Western modernity, for instance, far from being universal and ‘culture-neutral’, ‘bears the lasting influence of the civilizational particularities of the Western traditions out of which it emerged’ (Ballantyne 2008: 54). On this reading, the multiple modernities paradigm appears to offer a way to engage with the conceptual categories of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ (or ‘customary’) without having to essentialise and dichotomise them. The problem is that any sense of antagonism or substantive tension between the customary and the modern gets lost. There is recognition, as Casanova (2011) points out, that the emergence of modernity represents a distinctive transformation of existing social and cultural fields, but to the extent that the thesis also recognises the continuity of ‘tradition’, it does so by collapsing it into modernity. ‘Tradition’ becomes little more than a kind of cultural flavouring for the modern. Volker Schmidt (2010) critiques the multiple modernities approach partly on these grounds, for ignoring the differences between the modern and what he (problematically), terms the ‘pre-modern’:

multiple modernists, while otherwise highly attentive to differences, deny, or at least are unwilling to consider the possibility, that such differences might persist in the modern age. For from the perspective of this school, the whole world is (equally) modern now...All contemporary societies are modern, only differently modern (Schmidt 2010: 519).

Nominally concerned with *difference*, the multiple modernities paradigm ends up obscuring difference in favour of varieties of same-ness. Nominally concerned with the continuity of ‘tradition’, it neutralises the notion of any substantive meaning.

Part of what ultimately constrains the multiple modernities approach is that, having pluralized modernity, it is compelled to identify the units of its plurality. Within the literature this has tended to be a confused process, marked by both essentialism and a lack of analytical clarity. Eisenstadt speaks of different ‘civilizational’ differences underscoring different modernities, but is not entirely clear what he means by this, speaking of the West and the East, but then also of ‘Western civilizations’ in plural (for example 2001: 13). At the same time he speaks

about modernities underpinned by different ‘cultures’, and ‘societies’. Similarly, Charles Taylor and Benjamin Lee (n.d.) speak of cultures, societies, and civilisations interchangeably. When identified in the particular, these cultures/societies/civilisations end up looking a lot like nation-states or religions. Taylor and Lee, for instance, predict that ‘a Japanese modernity, an Indian modernity, various modulations of Islamic modernity will probably enter alongside the gamut of Western societies’ (n.d.). James Faubion (1993) argues for the existence of a Greek modernity, and Mayfair Yang (1994) for a Chinese one, while Tu Weiming (2000) would have China located as part of a ‘Confucian’ East Asian modernity. So many different axes and categories of difference are employed that it becomes impossible to draw different studies into any kind of conversation with each other. Robert Foster (2002a) suggests that one benefit of the multiple modernities frame could be to enable comparison—and it possibly could—but the lack of a shared analytical foundation means that it slips very easily into a cultural relativism that hinders rather than enables such comparison. At the same time, whichever unit of plurality is constructed is made culturally homogenous, with differences between ‘modernities’ emphasised over differences within. These include differences of power: class, gender, indigeneity, disparities in wealth, standard of living or access to participation in public life, are subsumed within uncritical assertions of national, religious or civilizational cultural coherence.

Anthropologists working with the notion of multiple modernities have often been more attentive to differences *within* the broader social categories of nation-states, ‘civilisations’ or religions—and similarly more attentive to ‘tradition’ as enduring and socially significant—but this attentiveness has tended to involve simply pluralizing modernities further and further. A collection edited by Bruce Knauft (2002a), *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*, is indicative. The collected works are empirically rich, insightful, and probing of the social contexts in which they are grounded, including social expressions of desire for ‘progress’ in lowlands Papua New Guinea (Knauft 2002c), local articulations of ‘development’ (Karp 2002), and the generation of vernacular discourses of modernity in Zambia (Spitulnik 2002). Holly Wardlow (2002), meanwhile, draws some much needed attention to questions of power and gender, in considering ‘alternatively gendered modernities’ amongst the Huli, also in PNG.

The question begs itself, though, are these studies describing unique and distinctive 'modernities', or unique and distinctive *experiences* of modernity? The response of the multiple modernists may well be that modernity only exists as it is experienced, in its particular constructed and discursive articulations. If this is the case, then the multiple modernities literature is simply a repackaging of the postmodern anthropology discussed earlier, oriented to discursive and subjective expressions of modernity, and towards highly localised encounters between social difference. From this angle, the multiple modernities thesis brings us no closer to a resolution of the divide between the particular and the general.

Yet it is not clear at all that this is the position taken throughout the literature. Certainly within the more sociologically oriented contributions, 'multiple modernities' are at times clearly presented as more than simply discursive or ideological realities. Eisenstadt for instance speaks of 'cultural and social formations' (2000: 24) and of '*institutional* and ideological patterns' (2000: 2, my emphasis). 'Modern' is used as an adjective to denote particular qualities of relationship and social organisation, and the emergence of modernities is understood as a process of significant and far-reaching social transformation. But 'modern' is never clearly defined, and in its singular articulation never positioned clearly in relation to modernities, plural. This begs a second question, posed by Joel Kahn:

Why speak of a Greek, Asian or Islamic modernity at all if the singular is unimaginable? Nothing at all is to be gained by adding the term, since it can have no meaning on its own...The ethnographer's insistence on the primacy of context, by relativizing and pluralizing modernity, leads us to reject any general and singular understandings of modernity and invites us to abandon the concept as caught in a hopeless contradiction (2001: 659).

But the term *does* have meaning. Its common usage is what ties together the various and disparate studies which identify themselves within the multiple modernities paradigm. However unacknowledged it may be, *modernity* (singular) is the inescapable conceptual and intellectual foundation for the claim of *modernities* (plural), whether these be understood in discursive or structural terms. The impetus behind pluralizing modernity has been to move away from a homogenising, Eurocentric, singular narrative of modernity, to recognise the diversity of lives and lived realities. The motivation is unimpeachable, but the method is flawed: *replacing* the singular with the plural is neither necessary nor, ultimately, possible.

What is required instead is a clear articulation of different levels of analysis, one that puts limits around the claims that can be made for and about modernity (singular). So, instead of being understood as a homogenising cultural programme and particular set of socio-political institutions and ideologies, modernity is defined in general but limited terms as a broad patterning of forms of social relations which can take a variety of ideological and institutional forms, and which is mediated through culture. Analytically, modernity exists at a level of singularity because we recognise that there is something distinct in it (the multiple modernists recognise this too, which is why they speak of multiple modernities and not just 'different cultures'). As modernity develops and is contested and negotiated in particular places, times and social contexts, it is articulated and expressed in diverse and shifting ways. It is at *this* level that we can talk about plurality, not of modernity per se, but of its contingent expressions and articulations. At this level, too, we might distinguish between structural and subjective articulations of modernity. 'Modernity' itself, however, remains as a broad, general descriptor of a quality of social relations; a common socio-material phenomenon articulated within a diverse multiplicity of empirical contexts.

### **Entangled social relations**

Considering these divergent ways in which social difference has been approached—within Pacific Studies as well as outside it, in broader intellectual and disciplinary trends—what is striking is the sense of oscillation between the twin poles of essentialism and relativism. The push and pull is absorbing but also exhausting. Either pole offers a respite of sorts, but in the end it is the space of flux between them that proves most generative. Here is the compulsion to speak to and of the enormity of difference encountered, and at the same time to paint in bold colours the agency and creativity of people and places. It is in the space between the poles—caught between empirically rich works which offer little way of making analytical claims beyond the local level, and essentialising analytical frameworks which leave little space for local expressions of agency—that we find what James has called the '*missing middle* of structural-subjective patterning' (2006: 17). It is here that the metaphor of entangled social relations is positioned, and it is here, too, that we find power. Power resides in the dialectic space between structure and agency, freedom and constraint. The extremes of both structuralism and relativism are politically disabling. One leaves no space for human action,



allowing some to write the truth of others; the other recognises a multiplicity of voices but flattens it, denying the possibility of theorising power even as it recognises that power is everywhere. In between these poles is a site of struggle and ambiguity, fraught, with possibilities both for the empowerment and disempowerment of different actors. In looking to the inter-relations of structure and agency, I am broadly in agreement with a tradition of scholarship including Giddens (1979), Bourdieu (1977) and Sahlins (1981), all of whom have pointed to a dialectical relation between structural constraints and the practices of situated actors (cf. Ortner 2006). However in approaching the modern as only one form of social structure, entangled with customary patterns of practice and meaning, it is important to reiterate that my own framework diverges in this important point from those—including both Giddens and Bourdieu—who approach modernity as universal and encompassing.

In understanding how it is that the customary and the modern can be intertwined within time and space, an understanding of structures as patterns of *social relations* is key. In speaking of social relations I am referring broadly to the myriad forms of interactions and relationships that constitute human social life. These include relationships of exchange and production, of practices of meaning-making and expression (culture), forms of communication, knowledge seeking and sharing, patterns of organisation within societies or communities (particular instantiations of the social), and also relationships between people and their environment. Using a language of social relations clearly invokes a long sociological tradition, and its usefulness here is in allowing reflections on social difference without having to fix that difference upon particular collectivities. Similarly, it offers an alternative to segmenting the world into traditional and modern spaces (as does Modernisation Theory). Thus, rather than ascribing the descriptors 'customary' and 'modern' to particular designated units of analysis (e.g. nation-states, ethnic groups, local communities, regional areas), we can employ them as descriptors of qualities of social interactions which might take place within, across and between multiples levels of scale and articulations of collectivity. An orientation towards entangled social relations, then, moves us beyond Fabian's (1983) call for the recognition of co-evalness, which as a critique was insightful and critically important but which left largely intact the *spatial* fixing of difference on a global scale. A metaphor of entanglements disrupts the boundaries of them/us and inside/outside, or, rather, recognises that these boundaries are multiple. Far from 'modern versus customary', but still recognising that there is something distinct captured in these terms, a language of entangled social relations suggests that we instead consider differently weighted configurations of 'custom *and* modernity'.

In approaching structures in this way, I am influenced by the work of a group of scholars (Cregan 2006; Grenfell and James 2008; James 1996, 2006; Sharp 1985) who have paid particular attention to the role of abstraction in constituting different modes of social relations and personhood.<sup>5</sup> Particularly influential here is James' (2006) conceptualisation of social formations as *ontological* formations which, at a categorical level of analysis, involve fundamentally different modes of temporality, spatiality, embodiment and epistemology. Ontological formations, then, are understood to speak to social difference experienced at the most fundamental level of human being-in-the-world. So understood, James recognises the co-existence of social formations as destabilising:

different ontological formations...overlay each other in ways that always disturb, and in some cases completely fracture, the kinds of ontological security sustained through their very different forms of social identification and political organization (James 2006: 33).

'Layered' social formations, in the constitutive abstraction framework, are layers-in-tension, and contemporary conditions of global change are understood to be intensifying the experience of the tensions between them. I take my cue from this understanding of ontological insecurity in developing an argument around the ambivalence of entanglements, and in approaching processes of globalization, state- and nation-building as catalysts for intensified intersections between different ways of being. In the destabilisation of social structures, though, I see not only insecurity but also space for creativity. In trying to bring considerations of power and resistance more explicitly to the fore, the destabilisation of ways of being is, in my reading, a site of possibility.

---

<sup>5</sup> The development of the 'constitutive abstraction' approach has been strongly associated with the Melbourne-based *Arena* journal. James (2006) offers the most comprehensive outline of the approach. As a framework it has also been employed by scholars working in diverse places, including Timor-Leste (for example Grenfell 2008) and Papua New Guinea (James et al. 2012), the latter project being one in which I was involved as both a research assistant and author. Cregan (2006) has used the approach to explore themes of embodiment, and it has elsewhere been applied to the theme of violence and human security (Grenfell and James 2008) and nation formation (James 1996). The approach centres on a detailed methodology, involving analysis across four, increasingly abstracted, levels of analysis: empirical, conjunctural (relating to the conjunctures of different modes of practice—communication, exchange, production, etc.), integrational (i.e. face-to-face through to disembodied social integration), and categorical (referring the foundational categories of temporality, spatiality, embodiment and epistemology). The methodology is not employed in this thesis for a number of reasons, the most notable being that where James and others work within a theoretical frame that is relatively self-referential, my interest has been to develop theoretical understandings through an iterative relationship with ethnographic research. Additionally, the four-fold categorisation of ontological formations which James proposes—tribal, traditional, modern, postmodern—does not resonate empirically with what I have found in my own research. Finally, where we share a common interest in the question of social abstraction, I argue here for the presence of entanglement of different forms and degrees of abstraction, rather than a sequential layering of increasingly abstracted social relations. Nonetheless, James and Grenfell particularly have been both mentors and colleagues, and their influence in the development of my own thinking is significant.

Finally, in proposing the concept of entanglements I seek to offer a framework that can accommodate, indeed nurture, an iterative relationship between theoretical generality and the particularity of empirical experience. As the anthropologist Anna Tsing has written, addressing herself to the question of how one might do ‘an ethnography of global connections’:

As soon as we let go of the universal as a self-fulfilling abstract truth, we must become embroiled in specific situations. And thus it is necessary to begin again, and again, in the middle of things (2005: 1-2).

Seeking to locate myself ‘in the middle of things’, a framework of entanglement is employed as a means of movement between local particularity and the broader generality of processes and experiences that extend far beyond the local. At a level of analytical generality, we can speak about the process and qualities of *entanglement*, but only in critical dialogue with considerations of *entanglements* (plural and particular), which are contingent, spatially and temporally located, relational configurations.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this present chapter has been to demonstrate *why* movement between the general and the particular, between structure and agency, and between the objective and subjective dimensions of custom and modernity, is necessary. Reviewing and critiquing approaches to custom and modernity I have argued that these have been concentrated at two opposing poles—on the one hand, conceptualised as opposing and totalising structures, and on the other as constructed, subjective imaginings. Both of these categories of approach have strengths, but also limitations. What we need, I have argued, is to draw these two camps into a conversation with one another. The customary and the modern *do* speak to ways of being in the world that are structurally and ontologically distinct, but as forms of social relations they are also entangled with one another in dynamic and shifting ways, within places, times, and social groupings. In exploring these entanglements, I have argued that we need to consider both the effects of structures on social life, and the ways that people engage with, negotiate, and pull into different configurations these distinct ways of being. We need to consider, moreover, the existence of custom and modernity both as descriptors of existing social practice and meaning, and as ideas and subjective imaginings. Having demonstrated the *why*,

the question of *how* we approach the customary and the modern in this way is a question of methodology. It is to this question that the following chapter is addressed. Together, the *why* and the *how* of the research provide the basis for the more empirically framed chapters that follow. They provide the basis for explaining how it is that the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land lends itself to the disempowering of local communities, but also for understanding how local communities can reassert their autonomy in the face of the state and globalising capital, through rearticulating the custom with which the modern is entangled.

### 3. Methodology: An ethnography of entangled social relations

---

Having mapped out the counters of the broad intellectual terrain within which it is located, the purpose of this chapter is to outline a methodology for studying the entanglement of customary and modern forms of social relations, including forms of social connection to land. In positioning a discussion of methodology subsequent to a discussion of my intellectual framework, my intention is to locate one within the other. Social relations include modes of inquiry and of communication (James 2006), and in the entanglement of custom and modernity across the Pacific and elsewhere, substantially and structurally distinct ways of knowing and communicating are being brought into complex encounters with one another. The argument made across this thesis is that entanglements are destabilising structures of power, and this holds as much for forms of epistemology as it does for forms of connection to land. Research in places such as Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste represents a practice of entanglement. Here, as well, we see the multiple possibilities which exist for the reconfiguration of relations of power. The dominant tendency here is for the diminishing of local autonomy as modern, codified forms of knowledge are valued over, or reframe, customary, oral ones. Yet we also see possibilities for collaborative and mutually-informing encounters, and for the rearticulation of customary ways of life through the practices and outputs of research. In the spirit of reflexive participant observation, an ethnography of entangled social relations needs to recognise that it is itself part of the social field into which it is enquiring. It must be cognizant of the dominant modernism of its methods and its disciplinary and epistemological underpinnings.

In thinking about *land*, too, a discussion of methodology is not simply adjunct to the empirical focus of the present research, but deeply intertwined with it. The stories through which communities understand themselves and others are deeply embedded in the land, an argument taken up in detail in the following chapter and also in Chapter Six. Epistemologies, too—ways of knowing—are strongly tied to land and place. To the extent that research involves the written codification of oral knowledge, it forms part of a hegemonic process of reframing customary knowledge within the terms and modes of modernist epistemology, of shifting the site of knowledge from the materiality of land and place, to the space of flows (as Castells [2000] would have it) of digital communication and Western academia. In the ambivalence of entanglement, however, research also offers ways of rearticulating the importance of customary connection to land, of creating knowledge and outputs—reports, publications, recordings—which can be useful to communities negotiating processes of change, and as a vehicle for customary voices to be heard and valued.

From here, the chapter moves firstly to outline the key features of an ethnography of entanglements. A discussion of the methods used in the research—primarily participant observation, interviewing and the collection of existing documentary material—is followed by a discussion of the data analysis process and the relationship between the empirical and theoretical aspects of the project. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the political and ethical implications of the methodology and the research more broadly.

### **An ethnography of entanglement**

How, then, to do an ethnography of entangled social relations? In the first instance, an ethnography of entangled forms of social relations must be multi-sited, because people and places are multi-sited. In saying as such I mean to gesture towards the model of multi-sited ethnography proposed by George Marcus (1995), but also go beyond it. For Marcus, the changing nature of locality is understood as a product of postmodernism and transformed conditions of cultural production. His model of multi-sited ethnography is subsequently located within ‘the context of an historical and contemporary world system of capitalist political economy’, its objective being ‘to examine the circulation of cultural meaning, objects,

and identities in diffuse time-space...tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity' (1995: 95-96). Marcus' model of multi-sited ethnography makes an important contribution to the project of rethinking ethnography, social relations and site. It emphasises the myriad connections and flows of movement between locales, and disrupts the privileging of a two-way translation process between subject (them) and anthropologist (us) in favour of recognising a thick field of translations and communications between different sites. Nevertheless, Marcus fails to critically interrogate what he means by 'site', and this proves a major limitation. Multi-sited ethnography—at least in Marcus' presentation of it—challenges the classical assumption of *bounded* and self-contained locales, but it leaves intact the assumption of site as local and particular. It struggles to recognise that practices of place-making occur across multiple levels of spatial scale—local, national, regional, and global (Gille and Ó Riain 2002; see also Gille 2001). Indeed, not only place-making, but identity-making, too.

I wrote in the Introduction about the necessity of approaching site *relationally*, drawing on Massey's insights into places as 'articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings' which can extend far beyond what we conceive of as the place itself (1994: 154). Following Zsuzsa Gille's (2001) use of Massey's 'global sense of place' as a basis for reconceptualising 'site', I suggested that an orientation towards relationships enabled me to accommodate a fluidity of scale and form in the sites I encountered in my fieldwork. Having now developed and contextualised the framework of entanglements in more depth, I want to suggest that we can think of these sites as entanglements—temporally and spatially located relational events, variously constructed in terms of scale and form, themselves contingent articulations within broader relational networks. So understood, an ethnography of entangled social relations must be multi-sited, but in being multi-sited it must also be multi-scalar.

The multi-sited ethnography presented here differs from Marcus' model, too, in the claims it makes about the representativeness of its constituent sites. With a bias towards studying circuits of cultural production, Marcus suggests that the object of a multi-sited ethnography be 'a cultural formation'. He presents such formations as subjectively constructed, and moreover inscribes the ethnographer as their author, with sites selected by following the movements of either people, things, metaphors, plots, individual lives, or conflicts (1995: 105-113). The process, Marcus notes, is necessarily fairly arbitrary, driven by the logic of the ethnographer. What jars, firstly, is the constructivism of Marcus' approach, and the assumption—as Gille and

Ó Riain (2002: 287) observe, that 'social relations among sites can...be reduced to the connections forged by the ethnographer's imagination and logic of association'. Second is the suggestion that, once selected, the sites can be considered as cohesive, neatly-bounded and distinct cultural formations.

In contrast, an ethnography of entanglements of custom and modernity takes sites to be no more and no less than spatially and temporally contingent glimpses into processes which extend far beyond the holding capacity of any research project design (and which exist structurally *and* subjectively, rather than solely as subjective constructions). Tsing (2005) observes that it is impossible to do a detailed ethnographic study of every social group within a global chain. Marcus holds it to be possible, but only because he reduces relational formations to that which the ethnographer constructs themselves, and can thus control and contain within the parameters of their research design. His model of multi-sited ethnography, then, grants the ethnographer quite extraordinary power. Such comprehensive construction relies, as well, on Marcus' limited articulation of 'site'. Once we recognise sites as entanglements, as articulated moments within broader processes of place-making that spill over the boundaries of delimited, bounded locales, it becomes impossible to conceive of cultural formations in the way that Marcus imagines we can.

In critically rethinking a model of multi-sited ethnography, Tsing's 'ethnography of global connections' makes an important contribution. Rather than imagining a set of interconnected locales around which an analytical line might be drawn, Tsing suggests that we orient ourselves instead to studying particular moments of 'friction', by which she means 'zones of awkward engagement, where words mean something different across a divide even as people agree to speak' (2005: xi). We might think about entanglements of custom and modernity as sites of friction—meeting points of fundamentally distinct ways of being in the world which, in spite of deep structural difference, nonetheless exist in dialogue. Tsing writes:

These zones of cultural friction are transient; they arise out of encounters and interactions. They reappear in new places with changing events. The only ways I can think of to study them are patchwork and haphazard. The result of such research may not be a classical ethnography, but it can be deeply ethnographic in



the sense of drawing from the learning experience of the ethnographer (Tsing 2005: xi).

Much as Tsing orients herself to studying particular incidents of 'friction' for what they can reveal about the bigger chains of interaction within which they are located, so too an ethnography of entanglements looks to multiple sites not because they are the constituent parts of some cohesive whole but because they offer multiple—albeit partial—points of vision upon a broader complex.

### **Fieldwork: The importance of being in place**

Fieldwork must be at the core of the ethnographic methodology. Its value is in its sensitising approach, its attention to lived experience. Fieldwork grounds the process of inquiry, anchoring it in the places and alongside the people who are its focus. The fieldwork upon which the present project is grounded took place over several trips. Cumulatively I spent ten months in the field over the course of 2010 and 2011. In February 2010, a two-week trip to Timor-Leste served to lay the foundations for a subsequent longer trip, and was also used to conduct an intensive series of interviews with government personnel involved in the Ita Nia Rai process—the mapping and titling of urban land claims—in Dili and the surrounding districts of Liquica and Manatuto, as well as with informants whose land was being mapped. A three month trip followed in September to November of the same year, focussed on sites in Dili, and in the district of Lospalos. In between these two periods of research in Timor-Leste I spent two months in Papua New Guinea, in April and May 2010. Here, the various research sites were located within the province of Madang. Although this period of research was the first and primary fieldwork trip in PNG within the context of my PhD, it built upon a short two week visit which I had made previously to the Bismarck Ramu Group NGO (with whom I was based in 2010) in October 2008, prior to starting my PhD but when I was in the process of developing a proposal. The purpose of this prior visit had not been data collection but rather relationship building—a period of showing face and talking *stori* which laid the foundations for me to subsequently return and conduct research. In 2011, the award of an Endeavour Research Fellowship offered an opportunity to return to PNG for four months, a period that was used to extend research but also to begin the process of analysis and writing.

It should be evident, then, that the research design deviated from the orthodox anthropological pattern of doctoral research. Partly, this has been a consequence of the multi-sited character of the research. Partly, it reflects a rejection of the counter-posing of the empirical and the analytical, as well as the counter-posing of being *in the field* with being *out* of it. Relationships with *some* informants in both countries were sustained across geographical distance through internet-based communication technologies, as well as through news and greetings passed by word of mouth through social networks. On two instances campaigners from the organisation I worked with in Papua New Guinea travelled to Australia to speak as part of activist forums, and my own participation in these transnational activist networks created another means through which the research field extended beyond the particularity of sites located in Melanesia. As social relations are increasingly spread across greater and greater geographical scales, extending from the local to the global and to all levels in between, the very notion of 'leaving the field' becomes harder to sustain.

Yet, being in place still matters. In the first instance, some relationships could more readily be engaged across distance than others. Specifically, these have been relationships with people connected to civil society organisations or in formal employment or education contexts. Partly this is about access to communication technologies—particularly email and social media—but it also about people's participation within, and familiarity with, modes of social relationship that more easily accommodate the absence of physical proximity. Relationships with informants in villages, or otherwise further removed from modern social spaces, often sustained across distance in the sense that a relationship formed in one period of face-to-face engagement might be 'picked up' again on a subsequent fieldwork trip, but were not active during these periods of remove. Reflecting on which of my relationships were better able to stretch across geographical distance prompted questions that proved useful for thinking about the politics of land debates. Who speaks in these debates? Whose voices can be heard and whose are marginalised when 'public' debates about land are concentrated in the relatively abstracted social domains of government and national and international civil society? When customary forms of social relations are so deeply tied to land and place, how can customary voices and experiences about land be meaningfully articulated in contexts that are removed from the land itself? Moreover, even with those relationships that were more easily sustained across geographical distance, periods of face-to-face interaction provided a necessary foundation. Again, the emergence of more abstracted social relations did not serve to replace

less abstracted ones. Rather, the space of social interaction stretched. Place was not superseded, and the 'seen face' (Smith 1999: 15) remained deeply important.

Anchored in a deep commitment to being in place, the value of ethnography is that it can hold focus on local, emplaced ways of being at the same time that it enquires into more expansive social processes. In conditions of entanglement this becomes indispensable because it challenges the inclination of modern epistemology towards valuing abstracted practices of knowledge making and communicating *at the cost* of less abstracted ones. This is not to say that ethnography can be considered a customary mode of inquiry. It is not, and its modernist foundations and pretexts do need to be acknowledged. But, at its best, the practice of fieldwork encourages embodied and emplaced forms of learning which resonate with customary epistemologies. In aspiring to forms of dialogue that are genuinely inclusive of customary voices and experiences, fieldwork—*being in place*—is the best methodological practice I know.

## **Methods in the field**

Participant observation was the primary method used in the research for this thesis, with interviewing and the collection of documentary material providing important supplements. Participant observation has long been considered the principal method of ethnographic fieldwork (De Munck 1998). Indeed, for some (e.g. Spradley 1980), 'fieldwork' and 'participant observation' are largely equivalent. Kathleen and Billie DeWalt (2002) take a narrower view, recognising participant observation as one of several methods, but also pointing to the ways in which it underlies many of the other techniques used in qualitative research. This is the approach I have taken. Certainly, the spirit of participant observation cuts to the core of what I have described above as the embodied and emplaced value of fieldwork practice. But as a method it also has its roots in a conceptualisation of ethnographic practice increasingly under pressure.

### *Participant observation*

In the classical model, derived from the work of Malinowski (1984 [1922]) and Mead (2001 [1928], 1969 [1930]), participant observation is envisaged as a method of deep immersion within small and contained local communities. In such contexts, ethnographers can hope to embed themselves within the social fabric such that, over time, their presence loses its novelty and they can observe and describe the 'imponderabilia of everyday life' (Malinowski 1984 [1922]: 18) in a kind of natural state. For much of the twentieth century this model of localized participant observation has been the foundation of anthropological practice. Various typologies, including Adler and Adler's (1987) model of ethnographers' membership roles (specifying degrees of group membership ranging from peripheral, to active, to full membership of the ethnographer within their subject cultural group) have sought to reflect the various possible configurations of the participant-observer duality, with these two dimensions understood as being necessarily in tension (Behar 1996; Merriam 1998; O'Reilly 2004). As much as participant observation has always addressed itself to the liminal space between 'inside' and 'outside', however, orthodox accounts of the method have nevertheless remained framed by the idea of the ethnographer's relationship with a specific, designated social *group*, located within a distinct, bounded geographic space of inquiry.

The conditions of my own ethnographic research looked very different. In the first instance, the changing nature of locality itself means that the type of immersion imagined by the pioneers of the participant observation method is now often simply unattainable (if it ever was). The mobility of people and increasingly multi-scalar practices of place-making and community formation makes it impossible to develop relationships of long-term interpersonal familiarity across the entirety of the social network(s) under inquiry. The use of a multi-sited methodology was intended as a means of engaging productively with these shifting parameters, but in itself also generated another sharp point of divergence from the model of participant observation envisaged by Malinowski and Mead: instead of a single, prolonged period of time spent in a single place, the total fieldwork time had to split across multiple locations. At the level of local particularity this has meant an inevitable loss of empirical depth, as has been acknowledged previously. At the same time, however, there is an argument to be made about different levels of analysis. The traditional emphasis on prolonged time in a single locality assumes the local to be the dominant level of analysis. Recognising that entanglements extend across multiple levels of scale, and that 'locality' is increased intertwined with the

global, but also with the national, the regional, and trans-local, I sought to challenge this privileging. Instead, particular localities were approached in their own right, but also for what they could reveal about more general processes of change, and about relationships that extended much further than their own spatial parameters. Methodologically, an effect of this research model was that shorter periods of engagement within specific local places (sometimes ranging from a few days through to several months) did involve less opportunity to become embedded with 'normal' daily life, with the research process itself more overtly shaping the parameters of my engagement with people. In these contexts, the use of supplementary methods, particularly interviewing, offered ways of gathering data of significant quantity and depth in spite of limited time. Nevertheless, as a method in itself and as both a methodological and analytical orientation, participant observation remained the dominant frame within which these other methods were employed, and fieldwork the basis for locating myself as a participant observer within entanglements as they functioned across a broader level of scale.

Across each of the fieldwork periods, data gathered through participant observation was recorded in detailed fieldnotes. Generally, this was done daily. In some contexts—for example while participating in team meetings at the Bismarck Ramu Group NGO, while observing court cases in PNG or land dispute mediation sessions in Timor-Leste, and during some conversations—it was possible to take detailed notes while events were in process, or even to record events using a digital audio recorder. Where this was not possible or appropriate I relied on remembered observations or rough notes scribbled as soon after the fact as feasible, which were subsequently extended. In addition to recording events, conversations, descriptions of places and happenings, my own actions and emotional responses to situations, I also included in my fieldnotes initial analytical thoughts and hypotheses, recognising as DeWalt and DeWalt do that participant observation is 'both a data collection and an analytic tool' (2002: 8). In terms of the data that I was recording, the circumstances of my research—a much wider geographic scale than a conventional anthropological ethnography, with limited time in many specific sites, and with ethnography tied to a parallel process of social theoretical inquiry—required that data collection be targeted towards the particular thematic concern of social connection to land. Nevertheless, I approached this theme in broad terms, casting my net widely in terms of what I included in my fieldnotes.

## *Interviewing*

What distinguishes an interview from, say, a conversation had in the context of participant observation, is firstly that it involves some degree of conscious design on the part of the researcher as to its content and structure, and secondly that it is an intentional interaction, explicitly framed as such and entered into by both (or all) parties. Of course, participant observation is always underscored by the researcher's intent, and interactions at least partly framed by their research interests, but in the main the method remains oriented towards research subjects located within the everyday relational contexts within which they are familiar. Interviewing involves a more explicit request for the interviewee to temporarily step—along with the interviewer—outside of that relational context. In Bourdieu's understanding, they represent 'extra-ordinary discourse' (Bourdieu 1996: 24). This extraordinary character is what gives interviews their unique potency and efficacy, allowing for detailed and reflective consideration of a particular subject and, when are they conducted well, 'offering an exceptional situation for communication' which can 'authorize' and give value to the self-expression of a respondent (Bourdieu 1996: 24). It is on the basis of this extraordinary character that I approach interviewing as methodologically distinct from conversations had in the context of participant observation, disagreeing for instance with Bernard's (1994) inclusion of 'informal interviews'—by which he means unplanned conversations emerging in the course of everyday interaction—within his four-fold typology of interview types. Instead I consider such conversations as products of the participant observation method, restricting the categorisation of 'interview' to those interactions which fall within Bernard's remaining three types—unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews. So defined, all of the interviews I conducted were recorded with a digital audio recorder, and this fact similarly contributed to the sense of them being lifted out of everyday, 'ordinary' conversation. Each interview involved an explicit seeking of consent—for the interview itself and also for its being recorded—and each was framed with an explanation of my research and my intentions in initiating the particular conversation.

Of the three interview types within Bernard's model which I am taking to be descriptive of interviews, as distinct from everyday conversations, it is the first two—unstructured and semi-structured—that are relevant here. Structured interviews—in which there are set questions and set possible responses—were avoided in favour of open-ended questions which were better suited to capturing respondents' own narratives, categories and spoken

understandings. In Bernard's typology, semi-structured interviews are those in which the researcher has a general list of questions, arranged in a particular order, but there are not set options for responses. Unstructured interviews are looser still, in that there is no set schedule of questions but rather a general plan as to the broad direction in which the interview will proceed (Bernard 1994). In practice, most of the interviews which were conducted in the course of this research sat somewhere between these two types. Interviews in more formal contexts—for example with officials employed under the Ita Nia Rai land titling project in Timor-Leste—tended to follow more closely a set schedule of questions, but with the intention that this be flexible enough to allow deviations when responses suggested new lines of enquiry. In less formal contexts—interviews with customary leaders or community members, for example—a few key questions provide a loose structural foundation around which a more dialogical exchange was able to take place.

In Papua New Guinea, interviews were conducted either in English or Tok Pisin, or a combination of the two. Key interviews were subsequently transcribed and translated by a native Tok Pisin speaker who is also an academic colleague, ensuring that they could be engaged with at a more nuanced level than my own conversational level of Tok Pisin allowed. In Timor-Leste, a conversational grasp of Tetum (a language spoken across much of Timor-Leste) was sufficient for much day-to-day interaction, but interpreters<sup>6</sup> were required for more detailed conversations, including interviews. Interviews in Dili and the districts of Liquica and Manatuto were conducted in Tetum. In Lospalos district, where Tetum is not widely spoken, the primary languages used were Fataluku and Makalero. All of the interviews conducted in Timor-Leste were transcribed in the original language. All of those conducted in Fataluku and

---

<sup>6</sup> One of the limitations of having field sites (and time) split across two countries has been that I never achieved the level of language fluency I would have liked in either Tok Pisin or Tetum. A basic conversational grasp of both was valuable for mediating much everyday interaction, but was not sufficient for detailed conversation. Over the two fieldwork trips three male students from the National University of Timor Leste in Dili were engaged as interpreters and research assistants. Two Australian colleagues also acted as interpreters at various points in the research, and a female East Timorese colleague employed by RMIT University's Timor-Leste Research Program acted as a research assistant throughout the duration of both fieldwork trips. Two of the East Timorese students also assisted in translating interviews conducted in Fataluku and Makelero into English. Because these men were not trained translators, I have tended not to rely heavily on the specific text of these translations—in the sense of not using detailed direct quotations, or close discourse analysis—drawing instead on the meaning and narrative communicated, in conjunction with data collected through fieldnotes. Interviews in Tetum which were translated were done so by a trained and experienced translator, and longer, direct quotations have been drawn from these interviews throughout the text. Likewise with interviews from PNG that were translated from Tok Pisin to English, as this was done by a native Tok Pisin speaker who is fluent in English and herself an experienced researcher.

Makalero (which I do not speak or read) were translated into English, along with most of the interviews conducted in Tetum.

Within both interviews and participant observation, I also took my cue from the Melanesian notion '*tok stori*' (Tok Pisin). *Tok stori*—literally, to talk or tell stories—captures well the narrative quality and the mutuality inherent in the forms of interaction that I sought to enable. To *tok stori* involves a process of two-way disclosure, a dialogue in which both parties situate themselves relationally, giving to the other a sense of who they are, where are they from and to whom they are socially connected. To *tok stori* can involve a casual conversation—sitting around talking after the evening meal—or a more formal, organised dialogue (such as, for example, the Tok Stori forums held as part of the peace-building and reconciliation process in the Solomon Islands following the 2006 civil crisis). The particular quality of the *tok stori* comes from the potency of the story in oral culture. The story is the dominant vehicle through which knowledge is transferred, and the form in which it is held. A person's stories are the means through which they locate themselves in the world and within genealogies. The *tok stori*, then, is also partly a transmission of the self, and this spirit of reciprocity, I want to suggest, is resonant in important ways with the impulses and practices of ethnography at its best.

To return to the tensions and ambivalences of entanglement, however, we cannot simply conflate customary forms of communication with modernist research methods. However much they may be able to speak to each other in important ways, their entanglement is not a matter of flat plurality. While constructivist critiques of traditional approaches to interviewing—such as those offered by Kvale (1996), and by Holstein and Gubrium (1995)—rightly draw attention to the interview as an encounter in which knowledge and meaning are produced, not simply revealed, we need also to be attentive to the structural patterns which frame and inform the creative encounter between interviewer and respondent. Again, Bourdieu (1996) is instructive in this regard.

It is the investigator who starts the game and who sets up its rules: it is most often she who, unilaterally and without any preliminary negotiations, assigns to the interview its objectives and uses...This asymmetry is underlined by a social asymmetry which occurs every time the investigator occupies a higher place in the social hierarchy of different types of capital, especially cultural capital. The *market*



*of linguistic and symbolic goods*, which is set up in each interview, varies in structure according to the objective relation between the investigator and the investigated or, which is the same thing, between the capitals of all kinds—especially linguistic capitals—with which they are endowed (Bourdieu 1996: 19).

An interview, then, is indeed a dialogical social relation, but it is also, inevitably, marked by sharp asymmetries, and by the tensions of entanglement. So too with all interactions in the field.

### *Collection of documentary material*

Additionally to the primary methods of participant observation and interviewing, an important supplementary method of data collection was the collection of existing documentary material. This was important, particularly, given the multi-scalar nature of the research. As social relations are extended over increasing geographical distance through the modernising moves of state and nation-building and globalization, text becomes increasingly important as a mode of communication and documentation, and the creation of codified (written) products a means of social regulation and control. Documentary material was approached, then, as an important aspect of entangled social relations. The primary emphasis was on text-based documents, but I also collected material produced through use of other abstracted media, such as film and audio recordings and printed visual material. The types of materials collected included those produced by the state (e.g. cadastral maps, land titles, educational material about government policies, policy documents, and copies of legislation and judicial decisions) as well as by civil society organisations (e.g. educational materials, media releases, video documentaries and social media content). Advertising and promotional material produced by corporations was also collected, as well as mainstream media content. Finally some documentary material collected was of the type produced by local communities themselves, including maps and written records of genealogies and history.

## Data, theory and analysis

Analysis of data gathered during fieldwork took place while I was in the field, in the periods between fieldwork, and subsequent to returning home after the final fieldwork trip to Papua New Guinea in late 2011. In this regards, the methodological approach drew on the some of the core principals of 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990), particularly that of 'constant comparison', which advocates and describes an iterative relationship between the collection and analysis of data. Unlike grounded theory models, however, the empirical dimension of the research was situated not as prior to the development of theory but rather as dynamically intertwined with it. The rejection of a linear trajectory of social abstraction—from the particular to the general, from the customary to the modern and beyond—was taken to be both an intellectual and a methodological position. The present research has indeed endeavoured to produce theoretical insights that are *grounded* in empirical detail and lived realities, but not in the sense of those insights emerging, chrysalis-like, from some pure and theoretically-uncontaminated experience of immersion. Rather, it takes theory to be, as Willis and Trondman (2000: 7) articulate it, 'the pre-cursor, medium and outcome of ethnographic study and writing'. The analysis of data was not approached as a means of progressing from empirical 'reality' to theoretical explanation, but rather as a back-and-forth, iterative process through which the empirical and theoretical aspects each scrutinised the other.

The 'constitutive abstraction' approach of James (2006) and others (Cregan 2006; Grenfell and James 2008; James 1996; Sharp 1985), referenced in the previous chapter, provided one initial theoretical orientation for the research, reflecting particularly my own involvement within prior research projects which had taken this as a foundational framework (James et al. 2012). Core theoretical concepts drawn from this approach and from elsewhere within the sociological tradition—including the concepts of social relations and social formations, ontological difference, and abstraction—informed the initial research questions and lines of inquiry. The particular interest in changing forms of connection to land developed subsequently as means of examining the intersection of social formations. The theoretical frame similarly informed the research design, with the decision to use a multi-sited methodology reflecting a desire to make broad analytical claims with resonance beyond the

particularity of one place. Once begun, however, the process of research, and particularly of empirical research, necessitated a reconsideration of this theoretical approach and both its explicit and implicit claims. The process of empirical enquiry gave rise to a growing discomfort with what felt like my own inherited assumptions about the value of theory-making. Feeling as if I was stretching my data to fit the theory I was working with—particularly to fit the four categories of tribal, traditional, modern and postmodern ontologies, which James (2006) proposes—forced me to reevaluate my use of them, and the theoretical approach more generally. Scrutinised against empirical experience and observation, the notion of distinct social formations continued to resonate and to offer a compelling language through which to understand and give meaning to the data I was gathering, but the four-way typology did not. More fundamentally, the interrogation of the theoretical through the empirical prompted an important recognition and critique (political and epistemological) of the compartmentalising impulse of the former. The extents to which this present work is both informed by, and divergent from, the initial theoretical approach, reflects then a data-theory dynamic which has been both deductive and inductive.

In practical terms, this analytical process proceeded through a relatively organic movement back and forth between writing, visiting and re-visiting data, and analysis of secondary literature. I avoided employing a formal process of data coding, such as those advocated within the grounded theory school. I did this firstly because such processes assume an inductive relationship between data and theory, and secondly because of their tendency towards an over-formulaic and technical rendering of the process of interpretation, what Roy Suddaby (2006: 638) wryly critiques as ‘a neurotic overemphasis on coding’. Instead, a constant process of writing and rewriting, particularly formulating hypotheses and drafting tentative thesis structures based on those hypotheses, allowed me to draw out key themes and put them in relation to each other. Once the structure of the thesis became fairly secure, it became the basis for a more systematic indexing of the data according to the identified themes. Analysis, viewed in this way, was a creative process as much as it was a technical one. The resulting written work does not aspire to scientific validity in a positivist sense, but neither does it present its theoretical claims as solely emergent from data gathered in the field. It is, rather, a product of a contingent process of research engagement, nevertheless situated within and framed by more far-reaching theoretical understandings.

## The ethics and politics of researching entanglements

Conducting research into the entanglement of custom and modernity in the Pacific has meant, inevitably, being part of the process I have been seeking to describe. The practice and the products of research are fundamentally modernist (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991), and to be a researcher in Papua New Guinea or Timor-Leste is to participate in the codification of custom and knowledge, and in the extension of modern epistemologies. It is also to be implicated in the *politics* of entanglement—in the hegemonic articulations of power within which customary ways of knowing, being and remembering are rendered marginal to modern ones. There are other hierarchies of power of course, including inequalities based on race, gender, class, and education, but in conditions of entanglement these are invariably bound up in (although not reducible to) the dynamic of custom and the modernity. The categories of ‘race’, ‘gender’, or ‘class’ are themselves modernist. It is evidence of the contingent epistemological foundations of research that the prevalence of such categories within discourses of research ethics, the emphasis on individual rights, scientific impartiality, and the bureaucratic assessing of consent, all assume a modern social context. Even more particularly, they reflect the ideological dominance within such modern contexts of Western liberalism (Murphy and Dingwall 2007). Aspiring to a genuinely ethical research practice requires a willingness to critique the assumptions of social science ethics guidelines, and also to go beyond their ‘minimal directive’ to ‘do no harm’ (Patai 1991: 137).

On this understanding, seeking consent from research informants meant clearly and accessibly explaining the focus of the research and the methods being used to conduct it, offering anonymity<sup>7</sup>, inviting questions, asking explicitly for permission to proceed and respecting when that permission was denied. But it also meant recognising that the individual autonomy assumed by liberal modernism is not adequately representative of customary forms of subjectivity, and that structural inequalities can create a coercive field within which the requesting and granting of consent takes place. In the fieldwork for this research, seeking

---

<sup>7</sup> Very few people, in the context either interviews or participant observation, asked that their names or other identifying features be concealed. Most, in fact, were enthusiastic that their identities should be bound to what were, essentially, their stories. Names presented in the research, then, are people’s real names. No pseudonyms have used. Instead, people who requested anonymity, or who I was not able to secure permission from, are simply described generally—‘an informant’, ‘a woman from Aitarak Laran’, ‘an older man from the village’, etc.

meaningful consent involved, in the first instance, following proper protocol for entry into communities. This involved seeking permission to conduct research from customary and elected leaders within local communities, as well as from administrative leaders within districts or provinces. In some instances I gave spoken explanations of my research and intentions, and received oral expressions of consent, and in other contexts (particularly more formal or administrative ones, but also in some local communities) written letters of request were appropriate. I followed advice from local research assistants, and from informants themselves, as to the proper protocol in different settings. Seeking consent from individual informants was subsequent to seeking consent at these broader levels of social collectivity.

However, much as the principle of ‘free, prior and informed consent’ is a necessary but insufficient basis for ethical relationships between extractive industry developers and communities—because it takes no account of the competing desires and ontologies which communities need to grapple with in such contexts—in contexts of research it similarly fails to recognise the multiplicity of epistemologies and the dynamics of power between them. The hierarchies and imbalances of power pointed to in the discussion above, are not expunged by following the minimalist, liberal protocols of research ethics processes. They permeate interactions in the field, and beyond that the processes of analysing and writing. Post-colonial scholar Ramón Grosfoguel tells us that ‘we always speak from a particular location within power structures’ (2008: 3; cf. Haraway 1988). Similarly, we speak from a particular location within the entanglements (local and global) of customary and modern forms of knowledge. And when we *speak*, as researchers and academics, more often than not we speak because we *write*. This is not a politically neutral act, as the anthropologists of the postmodern turn have made clear (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Wagner 1981).

The codification of custom transforms it (Gewertz and Errington 1991; Keesing 1992), and also transforms structures of power. Written accounts can be perceived as having an authority and claim to factualness that interferes with, or works to subjugate other forms and ways of knowing, particularly those that centre on oral communication and the embodied holding (and manipulation) of memory. Memory, as Annette Weiner has argued, is central to customary practices of argumentation and politics: ‘a man’s memory makes him strong’ (1976: 42). The fixedness of written text can subvert these practices, shifting the basis of authority from memory to the page, and this transformative quality of codification has particular importance

for the empirical, as well as methodological, concerns of this thesis (see, particularly, Chapter Six on the codification of custom through land reform). Forms of codification of ‘ownership’, custom and knowledges otherwise embedded within land and bodies have effects that transform, rather than simply translate, the nature of people’s connection to land. This is as true of codification through academic research as it is about codification through land reform.

Yet, local communities are already bound up in, and negotiating, the entanglement of customary and modern forms of knowledge. In this context, there are also strong pressures—and also incentives—to engage in the codification of customary knowledge. In Rempi, a peri-urban village in Madang who claim as their customary land part of the area upon which a major Pacific Marine Industrial Zone is being built (Chapters Six and Seven), a lack of state recognition of their landowner claims has compelled them to take measures to ‘put their story out’. Part of this ‘putting out’ involved a decision to share with me a *tumbuna* (Tok Pisin: ancestor) story that would otherwise be held only by the most senior man of the clan. The ethics of this were complex. The decision was clearly made within conditions that were structurally coercive—the community was losing its land and was so compelled to make decisions that they would likely not have otherwise made. But it was also clear that the *lapun* (Tok Pisin: old man), the leader of the clan who made the decision to share the story, was not simply being acted upon passively, but rather acting strategically to utilise my presence as a way of engaging with the conditions that he and his clan found themselves in. In these complex fields, research can offer ways of giving voice to customary knowledge and experiences, and it can offer space for the agency both of researcher and researched, even if structural inequalities remain. In Rempi, then, acting ethically involved respecting the agency of the *lapun*, but also doing what was possible to ensure that the community’s relationship with me did in fact have outcomes that were useful for them. This has meant producing ‘outputs’ other than this thesis. Transcripts of important stories told to me by the *lapun* (and informants in other places) will be taken back to communities, along with digital audio recordings. These will be kept by the community, along with selected other written documents—genealogies, histories—which have been produced by a senior member of the clan, and which are regarded as resources that may have value for the community in its current and future negotiations with the Papua New Guinean state and the corporations involved in the tuna fishing industry.

## Conclusion

A metaphor of entanglements urges us to recognise the customary and the modern, not as dichotomously opposed places, times or social groups, but as coterminous forms of social relations. Positioned in the gap between totalising structures and relativizing constructionism, it offers a way of acknowledging the significance and potential severity of encounters between social difference, as well as the creativity of the human agents within such encounters. In doing so, it also offers a way of conceptualising both the limitations and the possibilities within research. Relationships between researchers and the people they study are indeed marked by sharp structural inequalities. Research *is* implicated in the entanglement of customary and modern epistemologies and ways of being, and to this extent it is implicated in dynamics of power. But the encounter between researcher and researched is not a straightforward encounter between modernity and custom. Rather, researchers entering the field in places like Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste are entering into complex relational contexts within which both customary and modern ways of being are already intertwined. To be sure, entanglements of custom and modernity are not politically neutral: they emerge within the context of hegemonic articulations of power which, globally, position customary ways of being as marginal to modern ones. But these structural inequalities are not absolute. People and communities in predominantly customary contexts are also taking up, negotiating, appropriating, and refashioning modern forms of sociality, including forms of knowledge and communication associated with research. What this means is that the lines of difference between researcher and researched are, also, not absolute. This is what opens the possibility of dialogue, of collaboration.

The feminist scholar Daphne Patai has argued persuasively that 'in an unethical world, we cannot truly do ethical research' (1991: 150). Still, she suggests, we should not reject the possibilities (or importance) of meaningful relationships, dialogue, or of research contributing towards positive social change. She insists that researchers remain cognizant of their privilege, but does not advocate inertia. Instead, what she suggests is that the most ethical practice possible is one which negotiates the dialectics of identification and objectification; which positions the researcher in the liminal space between insider and outsider. Grounded in the generative tension between participation/belonging and observation/distance, an ethnographic methodology offers the possibility of positioning ourselves within this space. The

multiplicity of forms of social relations opens the possibility of multiple articulations of power, including ones that speak back to the hegemony of the modern and challenge the marginalising of the customary. Oriented towards local and customary forms of knowledge, even as it is itself framed within modernist terms, ethnography—the process, fundamentally, of *being in place*—can contribute to these alternate articulations of power. But to do so it needs to be positioned, as power is positioned, in the dialectical space between structure and agency, and between the general and the particular, remaining cognizant of its own modernist foundations as it also seeks to give voice to other articulation of knowledge and experience.

So positioned, the thesis now moves into an explicit exploration of the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land. Echoing the argument made here, about the ambivalent and multiple possibilities which emerge from research, what we see in the following chapters is that entanglements in relation to land create opportunities both for the empowerment, and disempowerment, of local communities. These are not evenly weighted possibilities. The hegemony of the modern at a global scale, and coercive capacity which it has by virtue of its most abstracted nature, means that there is a dominant tendency towards the loss of local autonomy as power and decision-making shifts to the sites, agents, and processes of the nation-state and capital. Still, hegemonies are never complete, and entanglements of customary and modern forms of connection to land also generate new possibilities for rearticulating custom and customary modes of power.

From here, the substantive chapters of the thesis move between sites in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. The following section, 'Land and Power', includes two chapters. The first, Chapter Four, examines customary forms of connection to land through a case study of a rural village in eastern Timor-Leste, while Chapter Five examines competing cartographies of power and the ambivalences of entanglement through a case study drawn from north-coast Papua New Guinea. The section following this, 'Becoming Landowners in Papua New Guinea' includes a further two chapters which take Papua New Guinea's Madang Province as their empirical base. The final two chapters return empirically to Timor-Leste, considering ways in which people are 'Becoming Landowners' in that country.



## **Land and Power**



## 4. Embedded in the land: Customary social relations and connection to land

---

The argument of this thesis is that the entanglement of modern and customary forms of connection to land destabilises structures of power, in ways that create multiple possibilities for their reconfiguration. There is a dominant tendency, I suggest, towards the diminishing autonomy of local communities, as power shifts from those communities—and the land on which they live—to the sites, agents and processes of modern power, specifically the nation-state and globalising capital. In developing this argument, it has been necessary firstly to establish the concept of entanglement, and to argue at a conceptual level that the customary and the modern do represent structurally distinct patterns of social relations, which are nonetheless drawn into dynamic and shifting configurations (Chapter Two). It has been necessary, as well, to establish a methodological framework within which such entanglements can be researched (Chapter Three). Ethnography, I have argued, provides the best foundation for such research, and it is to detailed ethnographic analysis that the thesis now turns.

In order to explore the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land, it is necessary to develop an account of the nature of these forms. This chapter looks specifically at the nature of customary connection to land, drawing on ethnographic analysis of the *suco* (Tetum: village) of Cacavei, a rural subsistence community in Timor-Leste. In doing so, it also develops a theoretical argument about different qualities of embodiment within both customary and modern social relations. Through giving primacy to the customary, the particular nature of *modern* connection to land begins in turn to be illuminated through a process of comparative examination. This is developed further in the subsequent chapters—chapters Five through to Nine—which explore in detail the ways in which modern forms of connection to land, associated with the state, nation, and capital, intersect with customary

ones. In these latter chapters, various aspects of modernist forms of connection to land are introduced, including state-building (particularly Chapters Five, Six and Eight), practices and ideas of development (Chapters Six and Seven), nation-building (Chapter Nine), and urbanisation (Chapters Eight and Nine).

The argument made in this chapter is that the relationship between land and people within customary forms of sociality is understood as being mutually constitutive, and that this is a primary distinguishing factor between customary and modern forms of relationship to land. Patterns of land use and connection to land are not simply *reflective* of genealogical modes of social organisation, they are also understood to be *enabling* of them. It is important here to remember the distinction made in Chapter Two between material patterns of practice and the *ideas* and *discourses* associated with those patterns of practice. The ways in which people use land are always both reflective and constitutive of the nature of relationships they have with one another—this is as true about modern, capitalist forms of sociality as it is about customary ones. Nevertheless, as Latour (1993) has argued, modernity is premised on a series of core ‘myths’, including the separation of the human and the non-human, and of the cultural and the natural. Paralleling the Cartesian mind/body divide, the human (the social) is imagined as autonomous from its (natural) surrounds. Social relations are understood to be created and re-created by people unencumbered by the materiality of blood or place. Or at least, it is held that they should be. Customary sociality, in contrast, approaches the social and the natural worlds as neither divisible nor hierarchically arranged, but rather as mutually constitutive.

In considering the nature of the relationship between people and land within customary sociality, I argue here that practices of connection to land offer means of accessing and performing kinship relationships beyond the genealogical present, namely with (disembodied) ancestors and with the yet-unborn. Ancestors, though no longer embodied in person, are *embedded*<sup>8</sup> in the land. This embeddedness provides a *quality* of embodiment, and it makes

---

<sup>8</sup> The notion of ‘embedded’ social relations used here should be seen as distinct from the notion of ‘social embeddedness’ within economic sociology, which draws on Karl Polanyi’s work around the interrelation of social and economic systems (Granovetter 1985; Sage 2003). To the extent that this conceptualisation of embeddedness is concerned with the effects of social relations upon individual agency, and with themes of reciprocity and social connectivity, the two usages are not entirely unconnected, but should nevertheless be approached as analytically distinct.

ancestors active participants in the social life and relations of customary communities. In Cacavei, the names, actions and migrations of the ancestors are recorded in origin stories, in the natural landscape of rocks, rivers and trees and in the social landscape of cemeteries, hamlets and gardens. As people engage with their land through sacred rituals, oral story-telling and daily practices of subsistence agriculture and residence, they are both maintaining their relationships with their ancestors and ensuring the health of their future descendants. Through these social practices of connection to land, people perform and perpetuate their collective subjectivities and relations of belonging.

Moving again from the empirical to the theoretical, the argument about embeddedness is also an argument about abstraction, and the theme of embodiment provides a particular lens through which to develop it. As is argued throughout this thesis, customary forms of sociality give primacy to less abstracted form of relationship but are nonetheless able to accommodate significant degrees of social abstraction, specifically through enacting strategies that tie abstracted social relations to ones that are anchored in place and materiality. In regards to land and social relations in the Cacavei community, people emphasise the significance of face-to-face, immediately embodied relationships, with those with whom they share ties of proximity or blood. Nevertheless, they also place great importance on relationships that are disembodied and extend well beyond the genealogical present (i.e. more abstracted relationships), specifically with ancestors. The embedding of ancestors in the land, and attendant practices of connections to land (which are also practices of connection to the ancestors) illustrate ways in which abstraction is accommodated through being tied to that which is immediate, anchored in place and materiality.

The second argument made in this chapter is that customary connection to land can be a source of resilience and adaptability for communities encountering processes of social change. Demonstrating this serves a key purpose in developing the second part of this thesis' argument, namely that while entanglement lends itself to a diminishing of local autonomy, it also provides means through which that autonomy can be reasserted. Again drawing on ethnographic data from Cacavei, it is argued that the mutually constitutive relationship between people and land allows a substantial degree of flexibility in forms of social organisation. Constituted in the relational nexus of people and land, this quality of mutability in Cacavei's social organisation goes some way to explaining the community's resilience in

spite of forced displacement and cultural disruption during twenty years of Indonesian occupation. This mutability might be considered more broadly as a source of resilience for customary communities grappling with modernising processes of change. Expressed theoretically, the argument is thus: the reassertion (rearticulation) of practices of customary connection to land can provide a means of grounding and anchoring the abstracting effects of state- and nation-building, globalization, and modernization more broadly understood. As such, practices of connection to land can be, and are being, deployed creatively by communities negotiating entanglements of the customary and the modern.

### **'You must respect the soil': Land and ancestors in Cacavei, Timor-Leste**

Sitting under a thatched-roof shelter, a meeting place for members of *aldeia* (Tetum: sub-village) Lai-ara, Carlos, a respected leader in the community, recounts a story from the time of Indonesian occupation. Lai-ara is one of five *aldeia* which make up the *suco* (village) of Cacavei, located in the Fataluku speaking area of Lautem district at the eastern end of Timor-Leste, about an hour's drive south-east of the district centre of Lospalos town. Carlos is a *lia nain* (Tetum), a customary holder of law and history. As he speaks, other *lia nain* and other senior members of his *aldeia* sitting around him nod in agreement. He is talking about the period between 1978 and 1987, when the people of Cacavei were displaced from their land, fleeing first to Mt Matebian along with tens of thousands of other civilians and Falantil guerrilla forces (fighting for East Timorese Independence from occupying Indonesia) ahead of the encroaching Indonesian military, and then, after the defeat of Falantil at Matebian in November 1978, forcibly relocated to Lospalos town where they lived, under Indonesian control, in a place called Laruara.

The displacement of the Cacavei population was part of a wider set of policies of forced resettlement enacted during Indonesian occupation, aimed at centralising populations within strategic centres in order to make them more easily controllable and less able to provide material support to the East Timorese guerrillas (CAVR 2005; Niner 2009; Thu 2008). The Indonesian military would frequently send out raids into the jungles and mountains to track down and kill the Falantil guerrillas living there, and it is these raids that Carlos is talking about

now. When they were due to be launched, he says, people in the Laruara settlement would be rounded up by the Indonesian soldiers, who would hold guns to their heads. 'Do you want to kill Falantil?', they would ask, 'you want us to kill them, yes?'. The questions would go on, repeatedly, the intention being to coerce verbal expressions of agreement. The people would keep quiet, Carlos says, not saying anything for fear of speaking out against the ancestors, of 'breaking the sacred rules' of obligation which bind them to each other, to extended kin, to ancestors going back to the beginning of time and to generations of descendants to come. He describes one experience in particular, when people were herded together in the resettlement camp. Twice the military said to them, 'do you want to kill Falantil?', and twice the people kept their heads down and were silent. The third time, the Indonesians soldiers told them, 'if you don't answer we'll kill you', and so together they said 'yes', meaning 'yes, we support you to kill the guerrillas'. Carlos says, 'but we did not mean it', and afterwards the people went back and 'spoke words to the land'—to the soil and the rocks and the trees—to communicate to the ancestors, to make clear to them that their support for the actions of the Indonesian military had not been from their hearts.

At this point other men sitting around Carlos join in the telling of the story. In keeping silent with the Indonesians' guns pointed at their heads, they explained, people had not been so much afraid of being shot themselves as of the consequences of 'breaking the rules', of not respecting the ancestors. 'Breaking the rules' can bring death and illness, not just for those who cause the breach but also for their kin, their children and their children's children to come. Whole descent groups can be devastated, which is a prospect that enacts a far greater coercive capacity than the prospect of individual death. We are not so much afraid of the 'people of the light', they say, as of the 'people of the dark'—the ancestors, those who are buried in the land: 'you must respect the soil'. Ancestors—and their significant power—are embedded in the land and in turn the land provides the conduit through which relationships with them can be accessed and invoked. Speaking words to the land, the extraordinary circumstances of people's coerced consent are explained, the relationships with the genealogical past sustained, and protection sought for the wellbeing of the present.

Listening to Carlos and the other *lia nain* recount this story, what is clear is both the importance to the community of genealogical continuity across time, and the importance of land in enabling this continuity. Various forms of connection to land—ritual practice, such as

speaking words to the land, as well as practices associated with burial and gardening, and emplaced forms of story-telling—become means of connecting to temporally distant kin. Through such practices, the materiality of the land itself stands in for the bodies of the dead and the unborn. Recognising this confirms the strong emphasis of customary communities on material (which is to say, *less abstracted*) social relations, but importantly also points to ways in which customary sociality is able to creatively accommodate significant degrees of abstraction (for example physical death). This begins to give us important clues both to the power of the modern to reframe the customary, and the capacity of the customary to speak back to the encroachment of the modern. Before moving into a more detailed ethnographic analysis of some of these practices of connection to land and kin, however, we need to map out more of the conceptual terrain in regards to abstraction and embodiment. Addressing questions of embodiment firstly in terms of contemporary social theory, and then moving back to the particular empirical detail of local connections to land, allows me to establish key arguments which will be carried across this chapter and the thesis. This is because, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, the nature of embodiment within customary sociality is deeply enmeshed with practices and understandings of connection to land. Beyond this, a theoretical discussion of embodiment reveals insights into nature of abstraction in both customary and modern sociality, and, more importantly, the ways in which abstraction is understood and accommodated.

### **Social relations, embodiment and abstraction**

If one of the differentiating characteristics between customary and modern social relations is the level—and quality—of abstraction present within those relations, a key area in which this finds expression is in the *embodiment* of social relations. Embodiment refers to the bodily dimension of human being-in-the-world. It is, as Csordas (1994b: 6) has argued, ‘the existential ground of culture and self’. Never equivalent to ‘the body’, embodiment is rather contextual, ‘enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology, and culture, which together compose enactment’ (Hayles 1999: 196-197). The ways we construct, approach, and use our bodies are reflective of the social conditions in which we are located. As distinct forms of being-in-the-world, the customary and the modern entail distinct forms of embodiment. Particularly relevant for this discussion is the emphasis within customary social formations on



face-to-face interactions; which is to say interactions that are *immediately* rather than *abstractly* embodied (Cregan 2006; James 2006). Relevant, too, are the implications that these differing forms of embodiment have for the ways in which the relationships between the human and non-human realms are practiced and understood, including the relationships between people and land.

To speak at a level of analytical generality, where customary social relations tend to take place in conditions of physical proximity, a distinguishing feature of modern social relations is that they are increasingly mediated by technology and conducted across distance (Cregan 2006). In Giddens' language, they take place in conditions of 'absence' rather than 'presence' (Giddens 1990: 18-19). Face-to-face interactions still occur within modern social contexts, but the corporeality of these interactions—bodies meeting, communicating, exchanging and working in physical proximity to one another—increasingly co-exists with other, more spatially extended, forms of social interaction and community.

Modern forms of abstracted embodiment have their ideational underpinning in the modernist divide between mind and body, and their epistemological grounding in a rationalism premised on the anthropomorphism of the nature-culture divide. Dualisms—including dualisms between mind and body—are not absent from non-Western cultural contexts, but the particularity of Cartesian dualism lies firstly in the definitiveness with which the divide is enacted (Lambek 1998) and secondly in the *hierarchical arrangement* of the two elements so divided. This is a normative positioning in which, as feminist scholar Susan Bordo (1993: 5) describes it, 'that which is not-body is the highest, the best, the noblest, the closest to God; that which is body is the albatross, the heavy drag on self-realization'. Crucially, then, what we see is that more abstractly embodied, spatially extended forms of interaction are accorded primacy within modernity's narratives and myths. A critical difference between the customary and the modern turns out to be not simply whether one entails more abstracted social relations and the other less abstracted ones, *but rather how abstraction is understood and incorporated within social life: the relation in differently abstracted forms of sociality are understood to exist, and the way in which processes of abstraction are valued.*

As Mellor and Shilling suggest, the Cartesian split ‘may be, perhaps, as good a place as any to chart the birth of modernity’ (1997: 10). Mind/body has its parallel in nature/culture, itself essential to the modern project (Latour 1993). It is also inseparable from the individualisation of subjectivity: mind/body gives rise to the foundational sociological distinction between self and society (Turner 2008), and it marks the beginning of the construction of the modern body as ‘closed’, distinct from others and from the physical world (Burkitt 1999; Turner 2008). These premises of modern sociality provide the context within which the extension of modern social relations across space becomes not only technologically possible but (even more fundamentally) socially conceivable. It is only because of the assumed primacy of the mind over the body—and the conviction in the divisibility of the two—that it becomes possible to conceive of social interaction occurring entirely outside of physical interaction. The Cartesian divide is sharply indicative of the dominant modernist approach to social abstraction. The abstraction of social relationships is understood teleologically—a unilinear process of increasing abstraction—and also normatively. That is, abstraction is positive and desirable; the teleological process of abstraction is *progress*. In this understanding, abstraction is a process of moving away from, of leaving behind, that which is less abstracted. So, Cartesian dualism is the positioning of the mind as a non-material (abstracted) entity, distinct and divisible from the body, the base materiality of which becomes something to be overcome.

The divisibility of mind and body (and also of nature and culture) is not a feature either of the pre-modern West or of contemporary customary social relations (Shaw, Herman and Dobbs 2006), and this is reflected in the greater emphasis on relationships which take place in conditions of physical proximity, and in relation to *land*. The centrality of bodily interactions across modes of production, communication and exchange, within ritual practice as well as within the everyday, proclaims the body to be indispensable to customary social relations and subjectivities. Already, the Cacavei community’s story about the Indonesian occupation, recounted above, points us to this fact. The conditions of the story-telling itself were face-to-face—knowledge and history recorded in the embodied memory of the *lia nain*, recounted through spoken word and physical gesture to those seated around. In the content of the story, too, we get glimpses into the immediacy of embodiment of customary relations—the importance accorded to genealogical continuity speaks to the privileging of relationships bound by blood. We see bodies, not individual and *closed*, but mutually-affecting and *open*. Here are bodies that get sick and die because of the social breaches of their kin; and potential bodies (in the case of the yet-unborn) which are brought into living actuality through the

proper social practice of those before them. These are not bodies separate from thought, from identity, or from communication, but rather bodies constituted by, and in turn constituting of, these things.

Yet while customary forms of sociality do, indeed, place great importance on relationships of physical proximity and co-presence, it is also the case that they involve relationships with a relatively high level of abstraction. Particularly, the well-being and sustainability of customary communities depends upon the living maintaining relationships with various forms of *disembodied* others, including ancestors, other spirits including nature spirits, and to some degree with future descendants who exist in their disembodied potentiality. Part of what enables the accommodation of such abstraction, I will argue, is the nature of people's relationship to land.

To the extent that the social organisation of customary societies is primarily genealogical—as opposed to, say, the bureaucratic organisation of the modern nation-state and corporation (James 2006)—it relies upon the placement of people within genealogies extending back over successive generations. Ancestors are, as much as the living, present and active within the thickets of social relations through which people know themselves and claim belonging. Marcia Langton, writing about indigenous communities in the Princess Charlotte Bay region of eastern Cape York in northern Australia, is amongst others (Hicks 2004 [1976]; Straight 2006) who have pointed to the agency of the dead in customary community:

Pama beliefs about the nature of spiritual Beings residing in particular places articulates a core dimension of Pama biogeography, invoking death as a presence in places; not death as abstraction, but as the state of being of those ancestors from whom the living trace their own being, and whose constant presence must be contended with in places (Langton 2010: 86).

Notably, Langton also points to the ways in which the location of ancestors in the land acts to ameliorate the abstracting process of physical death.

Not only tied intimately to the past, customary societies are also *future*-oriented, as the story recounted by the Cacavei *lia nain* makes clear. Maintaining proper relationships with the dead,

the living also ensure the viability and health of their generations to come. David Hicks (2004 [1976]: 1), in his ethnography of a Tetum-speaking community in *suco* Caraubalo, district Viqueque, observed that 'life force is perpetuated from earlier generations to the as yet unrealized generation of potential kin.' Fertility is given by the ancestors, who also have the power to withhold it, and the perpetuation of this fertility from the past to the future is 'via the agency of the current generation of men and women' (Hicks 2004 [1976]: 1). In addition to the agency of the dead and the living, then, the importance accorded to genealogical continuity means that the yet-unborn are also active participants (in their potentiality) in social life, urgent in their demands upon the living. Human actors—dead, living, and unborn—must also contend with the agency of non-human spirits. In Fataluku society these are autochthonous land spirits, which McWilliam (2011) records as being called *mua ocawa* (Fataluku), and which Pannell (2006) glosses more generally as *téi* (Fataluku, meaning 'taboo' or 'sacred'; broadly equivalent to the Tetum *lulik*). These 'self-willed' beings (Pannell 2006: 207) can appear in various forms—crocodiles, eagles, crows, horses, multi-headed snakes—and also leave physical markers of their presence in the landscape, for example holes, caves, and rock formations. As with ancestors, maintenance of proper relationships with these spirits is essential for the continuity and wellbeing of the community, requiring for instance regular offerings of rice, sacrificial meat, beetlenut and palm wine. As with ancestors and the unborn, too, maintaining connection to *mua ocawa* is deeply intertwined with practices of connection to land.

There is, then, an interesting duality: on the one hand, the centrality within customary communities of immediately embodied, face-to-face social relations; and on the other, the deep importance of relationships with disembodied ancestors and future descendants. In other words, while largely constituted around less abstracted social relations, customary communities also sustain relationships of a high degree of abstraction, extending into the past and future, and across both material and spiritual realms. What mediates this apparent tension is the social connection to land. The land itself takes over, as it were, from where human bodies leave off: the enduring presence of rocks, trees, soil, waterways and mountains compensates for their fleeting impermanence. Embedded in the land, relationships with disembodied kin and other non-human spirits achieve a *quality* of immediate embodiment. The next section considers burial and gardening practices in Cacavei as two key ways in which this mediation of relationships through the land occurs. The embeddedness of relations provides a way of managing abstraction within them, grounding the abstracted back into the

material. The section begins with some brief comments on the organisation of social relations within the community.

### **Practices of connection: Accessing ancestral connection through land**

The organisation of social relations in Cacavei, including patterns of land use and ownership, takes place via a series of intersecting social units. Administratively, Timor-Leste is divided into thirteen districts, which in turn are broken up into sixty-five sub-districts and over four hundred *suco* (Craven and Neupert 2006), which is a Portuguese-derived Tetum term translating roughly as 'village'. Below the level of the *suco*, the *aldeia* (also Portuguese-derived Tetum, meaning 'sub-village') is the most local level of social organisation recognised by the state, and common to the lived experience of East Timorese across the country (Grenfell *et al.* 2009). By and large, this system is a legacy of the Portuguese administrative organisation of the country, but to the extent that the Portuguese imposed new units over the existing indigenous system of kingdoms ruled by *liurai* (Tetum: kings) the system is ambiguously reflective of both modern administrative and customary forms of social organisation and belonging (Grenfell *et al.* 2009; Gunn 1999; Hohe 2002; Ospina and Hohe 2001).

Intersecting with the system of district, sub-district, *suco* and *aldeia* are structures of belonging and social organisation based on genealogical descent. *Nuku* (Fataluku) are broad level origin groups whose members trace their genealogies back, through the patrilineal line, to a single common ancestor. A *nuku* can consist of many different hamlets (*knuu*, in Tetum) spread across a large geographical area, whose members may not interact or even speak the same language, although close kinship ties of reciprocity are activated immediately if two people meet and find that they are members of the same *nuku*, and people share common food taboos and a prohibition on intermarriage. Many of the larger *nuku* in Cacavei, for instance, extend across Lospalos subdistrict and into the neighbouring, Makalero-speaking subdistrict of Iliomar. Wives join their husband's *nuku* upon marriage, which is marked through extensive bridewealth exchanges, and patrilocal residence is practiced. In strong ways the social and cultural organisation of *nuku* corresponds to accounts of named houses (in Tetum, *uma lulik*) as key social units elsewhere in Timor-Leste (see for example Bovensiepen 2009; Hicks 2008; Traube 1986). As material structures, sacred houses exist within *nuku* hamlets as centres of

ritual activity, including the cooking of sacrificial meat, and as places in which sacred objects are kept.

Where *aldeia* and *suco* are predominantly organised around shared, cohesive territory, with a *suco* occupying a particular area of land, in turn broken into areas of land claimed by the constituent *aldeia* on the basis of ancestral right, the cartography of a *nuku* is of an expansive network of places, connected one to the next by the footsteps of the ancestors. Where a person might have little day-to-day connection with members of their *nuku* located in another district, however, within a single *suco* the ties between members of a common *nuku* are intimately embodied and of great importance. These ties are strongest within the local level hamlets within which people live. There may be numerous hamlets belonging to the same *nuku* within a single *suco*, and these may be located within several or all of the different *aldeia*. For example, within Cacavei one of the largest *nuku* is *Home* (pronounced Ho-mee), and there are Home hamlets within each of the *aldeia* (as well as within other *suco*). While *nuku* refers to the broadest level origin groups (traced back to a single ancestor), it is also used often to refer to the particular hamlet to which people belong, which represents their most immediate and day-to-day experience of their broader origin group. The fluidity of the naming is relevant. The ambiguity in how terms are applied is indicative of the mutually constitutive nature of people and place, and the mutability which this engenders. And, indeed, the distinction between *aldeia* and *suco* as *primarily* territorially constituted and *nuku* as *primarily* relational—while useful for the task of constructing a modern (abstracted) analytical account—is confounded in the contingent practice of customary life.

### *Practices of connection: Burial*

The most immediate—most literal—way in which genealogical connections are embedded in the land is through burial. Each *nuku*-hamlet has its own cemetery, and the burial of people in their own ancestral land is accorded the highest priority. This includes people who die outside of their *nuku*, with families often mobilising large amounts of money to transport home the bodies of deceased kin (there is a strong commonality here with Papua New Guinea). Failure for this to happen means firstly that the spirits of those people are ‘lost’ and, more seriously for the *nuku*, invites sickness and illness upon future generations. Cemeteries in turn become sacred places, and tending to them—performing ceremonies and making ritual sacrifices—is a

critical part of maintaining relationships with the dead and ensuring the well-being of current and future generations. Such ceremonies occur at times of need, such as when there is sickness or disagreement, as well as annually on *Loron Matebian* (Tetum, All Soul's Day), the Catholic celebration for the faithful departed which in Timor-Leste has become deeply enmeshed with customary connection to ancestors. The type and size of the animals sacrificed, and the regularity of the ceremonies, in part reflect the importance of the cemetery, and the number and importance of the people buried there. The cemeteries of the very first ancestors are the most sacred, and their location is often known by only the most senior *lia nain*. In being more sacred they are also more powerful, and hence also more dangerous. Here, again, Cacavei narratives of ancestors are consistent with those recorded by Hicks (2004 [1976]: 89) in his ethnography of the Caraubalo: 'ghosts are...generally benevolent', he writes, but also 'swift to punish mis-behavior', and people regard them with 'caution'. Judith Bovensiepen (2009: 332-3), similarly, in her ethnography of an East Timorese Central Highlands community, describes accounts of ancestral and land spirits as inciting both 'fear' and 'respect'.

In Cacavei, Lucia Ribeiro, who is from the *nuku* Warudai describes the ritual care required to attend to these powerful and ambiguously inclined sites and kin:

Because in our rituals, every 2 November [All Soul's Day] we should go there and make rituals with the pig, or with the goat, or the hens. But of course, if it's the big cemeteries with one or two or three generations inside there, if it's a pig it should be a big one. If you haven't been for a few years, maybe buffalo is better. If using hens or cocks, you should go every month or so. *People live there through the animals* (my emphasis).

The consequences of this ritual care not being attended to can be devastating. During Indonesian occupation, forcibly relocated to Lospalos town and then confined to a central area in Cacavei, it became impossible for people to visit sacred sites and complete the necessary rituals. Some cemetery sites were damaged during conflict, with much damage inflicted deliberately by Indonesian soldiers who understood well the cultural and social harm they were causing. The effects were serious and far-reaching, and the older people in Cacavei who remember vividly this period describe the deaths and suffering their community endured. It was not until she had lost eight sons, one after the other, that Lucia Ribeiro was able, with a small group of others, to venture into the jungle and up into the mountain—to the origin place of the Warudai *nuku*—to where the first ancestor is buried, taking a pig to kill. Sitting in the

front room of her oldest surviving son's house, she explains that it is due only to this fact that he and another son are alive. The fate of the living and the future generations depends on the relationships of the living with the dead. Indeed, when we talk about the living in this way, as opposed to the dead and the unborn, it would perhaps be salient to talk more carefully of the living-embodied, because when Lucia Ribeiro says that '*people live there* [at the site of the cemeteries] *through the animals*', the 'living' are all those located across an expansive continuum that begins with the ancestor who first moved across the land to establish the very first Warudai, the most sacred place.

### *Practices of connection: Gardening*

Like most, but not all, parts of Timor-Leste, land in Cacavei is organised within a patrilineal social structure. To say simply that gardens pass from fathers to sons is, however, to belie the complexity inherent in systems of land use, 'ownership' and inheritance in customary communities. Patterns of rights of access to, and use of, land and resources are determined by genealogical connections and social relationships extending back over generations. The English term 'ownership' fails profoundly to account for the nature of claims to land, evident in the multiple and seemingly-contradictory ways in which the term is employed by East-Timorese to describe their own relationships to their gardens—describing themselves as owners, for instance, but also reserving that description for the original ancestor, and perhaps also, simultaneously, decrying the concept altogether as Western and other. The confusion points to the distorting potential of attempts by—or demands upon—customary people to articulate their relationship to land within a modernist property rights frame. Recognition of rights to use or claim land, moreover, is contingent upon specific relational contexts, a fact which causes much more confusion for researchers trying to make (abstract) sense of local happenings than it does for those who engage with these relational contexts at the level of the face-to-face. As Wiber and Lovell (2004: 87) note, the mutability of kinship systems is 'a characteristic that frustrates anthropological attempts to plug examples into a typology of pure structural types'. While genealogical connections provide the basis for claim-making, recognition of claims is invariably dependent on particular personal, ecological, and political circumstances.

In the first instance, the most foundational claims upon land are by the first ancestors, and these are enduring claims undiminished by their physical deaths. Here, the order of arrival of



the ancestors is critical. As Carlos, a senior *lia nain*, describes it, only two or three people own land in Cacavei. These are the ancestors who came first from the sea and from Tutuala (at the far eastern point of the island of Timor). At this point the land existed already, and the first ancestors became owners when they arrived and killed buffalo. When the second wave of ancestors moved out from Tutuala, at the far eastern tip of Timor, the first ancestors 'pointed out' land for them to use, and similarly with subsequent migratory waves. Here, Cacavei accounts of origins and ancestral migration are consistent with existing accounts of the importance of precedence as an organising principle in Austronesian social and cultural life (Vischer 2009). The intertwining of precedence and movement—specifically, the sequence of waves of ancestral migration—is also consistent with Pannell's account (2006) of the mobility of both ancestors and nature spirits in Fataluku-speaking Tutuala.

In Cacavei today, descendants of the first group of ancestors claim ownership of the land on which they and their *nuku* 'brothers' make gardens, but their own contemporary claims remain subordinate to the original claims of their ancestors. Descendants of the ancestors who moved out from Tutuala in the second migratory wave might describe themselves as owners, and can pass their gardens to their sons as they were passed to them from their fathers, but again their claims are contingent ones, relational to the prior and more primary claims of others. Gardens are, generally, inherited by the eldest sons, with subsidiary use rights given to younger sons. Various levels and forms of use-rights can also be given to others, most usually from within a common *nuku*. Land might be given to others outside the *nuku*, but only rarely and only in the case of close, existing personal relationships. Nasimento, a *lia nain* from *aldeia* Lai-ara explains that they must be 'like family'. When people give land to others, he says, the agreements are made with ritual and the sharing and drinking of each other's blood, with breaches of blood oaths incurring death or illness for offenders and their descendants. In this way genealogical relations determine land use, but shared land use also created relationships with the potency and obligations of kinship connection.

Everywhere, in rituals as well as in the everyday negotiations over boundaries and use-rights, the ancestors are as present as the living and their potential descendants. Trees—particularly teak—and stones mark boundaries and function as a text from which the *lia nain* can read the histories of the land and the people who moved and lived on it, the nature of their agreements and the consequences of those agreements binding the actions of current and future users of

the land. If a person wishes to open up a new area of forest to make a garden, they must first seek permission from others within the *aldeia* to whom, collectively, the land belongs. Says Nasimento, 'If people want to expand their land, the most important thing is to talk and to have respect'. To have 'respect' is to acknowledge and seek permission from the first ancestors and subsequent ones, as much as from other living members of the *aldeia*. When opening a new area of forest, ritual sacrifices are necessary to recognise the existing, ancestral owner. Most usually a chicken would be killed, with its blood splashed on the land where the new garden will be cleared. In this way, located in place, people position themselves within extended thickets of genealogical connections, and multiple layers of ownership and use rights.

### **People and land as mutually constitutive**

At the end of 1978, after spending three months living in the jungles of Mt Matebian, the Cacavei community was relocated to the resettlement camp in Laruara, in Losaplos town. They remained here for more than seven years, unable to access their ancestral lands and their gardens, and conditions of life were stark. In 1987 the population was relocated back to Cacavei, but instead of being able to return to the sites of residence located on the customary lands of each *aldeia*, they were contained in a central area of the *suco*, located close to the main road. After 1999, with the withdrawal of Indonesian forces, some people chose to return to live on their ancestral lands, but most chose to remain in the area to which they had been moved in 1987 in order to be near the road, church, schools and health clinic. The result is a quite dramatically changed pattern of residence in the community. There are now effectively two centres of residence in the *suco*: one, in central Cacavei, where most of the community live in hamlets clustered together according to *aldeia*, and another up in the hills, about an hour and a half's walk away, which is the area to which part of one of the *aldeia*—*aldeia* Charano—moved back. The effect is that, where *aldeia* are usually presented as territorially cohesive, Charano is itself split between these two physical sites. In addition, there are a relatively small number of people (and their descendants) who chose to stay in Laruara, outside the boundaries of the *suco*, but who are nevertheless thought of as Cacavei people. There is also a small but growing Cacavei population in the national capital, Dili, who live together in an urban hamlet in the suburb of Farol. This means not only that a community

which previously cohered around a shared geographical space—*suco* Cacavei, mapped loosely by Portuguese administrators onto the territory of the pre-existing traditional kingdom—now extends over several geographically disparate sites, but also that units of social organisation—*suco* and particularly *aldeia*—previously based on shared residence and geographical location are now (in some instances) constituted on the basis of identity claims which transcend place.

What makes this possible is the analytical inseparability, in some sense at least, of people and place, and of social relations and land. It is possible to say generally that *nuku* are origin groups constituted *primarily* through shared ancestral descent (social ties) while *aldeia* and *suco* are social units *predominantly* territorially-defined (ties based on shared land). In the complex and localized ways in which these forms of belonging are practiced, however, the analytical distinction between people and land doesn't hold. The embedding of genealogical kin in the land confounds it from the outset: people are located within thickets of social relations that exist across, find expression in, both human and non-human forms. To talk of Cacavei people without talking also about their land is to impose a version of the nature/culture binary upon them. In other words, it is to impose a modern ontological and epistemological construction upon a context where that construction is alien to the dominant ways in which people live their lives and understand their world.

It has been observed (Inglis and Bone 2006) that the creation of the nature/culture binary was intimately tied to the development of distinct fields of intellectual knowledge production (the social and natural sciences) and to modern epistemology in general, and to this extent it is no surprise that the mutability of customary systems is confounding to researchers grounded in a modern subjectivity (myself included) in a way that it simply is not for people in a customary context. In Cacavei, as in other customary places, land and people are mutually constitutive. Or, more specifically, they are *understood* as being mutually constitutive, rather than as distinct and divisible. '*Nuku*' and '*aldeia*'—even '*suco*', in the way that it is used customarily rather than in its modern administrative usage—denote neither strictly territorial nor strictly social configurations. Rather, they are markers of the relationship between land and people, which is dynamic—formed and reformed constantly through immediate, embodied and day-to-day practices—and can shift.

In this way, *'nuku'* denotes at once a group of people tied through common ancestral descent over a far-reaching geographical area, a group of people tied through common ancestral descent who also reside in shared space (the hamlet) and also the physical site (the land) where the common ancestor first established himself when he moved from the sea. An *aldeia* includes people from multiple descent groups who (generally) live together in a form of face-to-face community, who all work gardens within a common, identifiable area of land. As people's relationships are extended across space—to use Giddens' (1990: 18-19) terminology, as space is torn away from place through the creation of relationships between 'absent', geographically separated others, or to use empirical examples from Cacavei, as people move to be nearer to schools or churches, or urban centres, or because of displacement caused by colonial encounters—the *aldeia* shifts with them. In the shifting balance of people/place, the social ties between people become more significant in that instance in holding together the sense of shared belonging than do the ties of common land use/residence. To the extent that the category of belonging hinges on the relational quality of people and land, both dimensions need to remain present in some way—in *aldeia* Charano, those who live in central Cacavei still work their gardens on the ancestral land on a daily basis, which creates daily practices of connection to land and interaction with those living in the mountains, while in *suco* Cacavei those living in the urban camp of Laruara or further afield in Dili or elsewhere, maintain a shared connection to land through returning for rituals or visits, and through being buried there. The flexibility of these categories of belonging—neither strictly territorial nor strictly social, but constituted in the shifting relationship between the two—allows for continuity in spite of conditions of great change.

### **Customary connection to land as a source of resilience**

The discussion in this chapter has largely approached Cacavei as a site of customary social relations, paying attention particularly to the ways in which social relations within the community reflect customary understandings of embodiment and connection to land. Nevertheless, the metaphor of entanglements reminds us that there are no 'pure' customary communities (or indeed modern ones). Rather, all communities and all social groupings reflect particular, albeit differently weighted, configurations of custom and modernity. Within Cacavei, customary forms of social relations are very much dominant. This is particularly the

case in regards to forms of connection to land, and for this reason Cacavei provides an illustrative case-study for exploring the nature of customary connection to land. Yet the community has also, clearly had to grapple with significant, and at times traumatic, experiences of change.

While the causes and content of these experiences can in no way be reduced to the encounter between different social structures, the entanglement of customary and modern ways of being has been *one dimension* of the processes of change with which the community has had to contend. In the late 1970s through to the late 1990s, the colonialism of the Indonesian military and state was a key force propelling the entanglement of custom and modernity in Cacavei and elsewhere in Timor-Leste. In the wake of Independence, processes of state- and nation-building, and of globalization, have emerged as key drivers of these changes. In this last section I consider the ways in which customary connection to land might be approached, analytically, as a source of social resilience, both in terms of the changes which communities like Cacavei have already encountered, and the changes they are responding to now and into the future. My own argument here resonates strongly with the findings of Fitzpatrick and Barnes (2010), who in a study of Babulo village in Timor-Leste's Viqueque district have also identified customary forms of connection to land as a source of resilience for that community in the post-occupation period. Where they place particular importance on forms of 'first possession principles' (precedence) that they identify as uniquely Austronesian, however, I suggest that we can locate this capacity for resilience more generally as an effect of the mutually-constitutive relationship between people and place within customary sociality. Here, two empirical vignettes from my fieldwork in Cacavei offer insights into both the flexibility of customary systems and the limits to that flexibility, also functioning to draw the discussion to considerations of social abstraction. The first vignette involves forms of embedded ritual practice used to seek ancestral protection during Indonesian occupation.

In the long years of occupation and conflict in Cacavei, ritual connection to the land provided a means of invoking the protection of ancestors for both guerrillas and civilians. Former Falantil fighters who made sacrifices at sacred sites in the jungle speak of being protected from bullets, while Indonesian soldiers who desecrated them are said to have been killed by the East Timorese or to have gone 'crazy' and died. Some fighters carried *nafu* (Fataluku), small objects taken from the cemeteries of brave ancestors (like small rocks, bits of coral or wood) and

made sacred through ritual, which ensured the protection of that ancestor for the person carrying it. Falantil guerrillas carrying *nafu* were protected from bullets, falling down suddenly if a bullet was fired at them as if pushed out of its way by invisible forces, or else, if they were sleeping in the jungle and Indonesian forces approaching, woken in time to make an escape. The *nafu*'s power comes from the land from which it is taken. Effectively, it provides a way of accessing the ancestral power which is embedded in the land where the ancestors are buried, of harnessing that power in a form (the object) which is portable and which can be carried with a person away from the site itself. In this regard, *nafu* are indicative of the flexibility within relational configurations of social connections and land, but they also provide clues to thinking about the limits to that flexibility.

Particularly, narratives and practices surrounding *nafu* demonstrate the ways in which the abstraction of social relations is understood within customary sociality—not as a linear progression moving *from* the less abstract *to* the more abstract, but rather as a *stretching* of social relations within which the material and the particular remain vitally important. Sitting in Alfonso Lopes' house in a hamlet of *nuku* Hirin at the place Alipupul, up into the mountains in the ancestral land of *aldeia* Charano, Alfonso, Manuel da Costa, Oscar Ribeiro and the *chefe* (chief) of *aldeia* Charano, Paul Lopes, stress that the power of the *nafu* makes them protective but also dangerous. Only circumstances of great seriousness could warrant such an action as to transfer the power of the embedded ancestors into a *nafu*, and, critically, the *nafu* must be returned to the sites from which they were taken with the cessation of those extenuating circumstances. In 1999, the men say, at the end of the fighting, Falantil soldiers took their *nafu* back, killing buffalo or large pigs—significant sacrifices—in order to re-embed the power temporarily transferred from the ground. Some though, did not return their *nafu*. Avito, the young interpreter sitting with us, tells me that the ex-Falantil soldiers who can be seen still walking around in Dili, with long unwashed hair and still wearing their uniforms, are men who have gone 'crazy' because they did not return the *nafu* which they carried with them during the fighting.

Themes of spatial extension and return emerge as well in the second vignette. Avito, the young man mentioned above, was one of two research assistants who accompanied me in Cacavei. Both were locals—one of them, Ambrosio, from Cacavei itself, and Avito from neighbouring Illiomar—but both now lived in Dili, where they studied at the national university. During my

time in the *suco* both pressed upon me the continuing importance of returning home for rituals and important ceremonies. Every year on All Soul's Day, they said, 'everyone' comes together within each *nuku* to do ceremonies at the graves of the ancestors. So, I asked, did they themselves travel back to the *suco* every year? 'No', they admitted, it had been several years since either of them had made the trip. The bus fare is expensive, and their university studies and lives in the city are demanding of their time. In some ways their experiences support a view of urban migration diminishing customary connection to place and community (a theme that is interrogated more in Chapters Eight and Nine). Far from a straightforward process of dislocation, however, for these young men residence in the city and participation in formal education also created opportunities for innovation. Particularly, it became quickly apparent that employment as my research assistants offered both a chance to return to their home district. Beyond encouraging me to choose Cacavei as a research site, I soon realised that suggestions to travel to or via a particular place, to catch a particular kind of transport on a particular day, or interview a particular person, were often designed in part to allow my two assistants to reconnect—expenses paid—with places and people they might otherwise not have been able to see for some time.

Returning to considerations of abstraction, in the movements of both sacred *nafu* and young students we can recognise that customary social relations in fact allow for relatively high levels of social abstraction—in this case the spatial extension of relationships as people travel away from the land of their ancestors in times of crisis, and as young people move from their communities to live and study in the city. In both instances, the mutually-constitutive relationship between people and place gives rise to a flexibility that allows the community to sustain itself in conditions of social change or extraordinary circumstances. But it also becomes clear that the abstraction of social relations creates precariousness and danger. This is evident in the case of *nafu*—the spatial extension of the ancestral connection from the site of its embedding carrying with it the risk of 'craziness' and harm—as it is more generally in the caution and ambivalence with which disembodied others—land spirits and ancestors—are at all times regarded. Likewise, the movement of the young students from Cacavei to the capital removes them from the site of important rituals, which are necessary for maintaining their own well-being and those of the community at large. In response to the danger which abstraction poses, these more abstracted relations are tied to relational practices that are immediate, material, and with a quality of face-to-face embodiment. Requirements that *nafu* be returned to the site from which they were taken, for instance, and that émigrés return

'home' for visits and for burial, act to limit the process of abstraction and bind it to that which is concrete, embedded, and embodied.

The mutually constitutive relationship between people and land, then, creates a flexibility which allows for the abstraction of social relations, whether that abstraction is caused by physical death, forced displacement, or urbanisation. In this sense, indeed, customary connection to land is a source of social resilience. That abstraction, however, causes strain, and it is here that we need to think about the limits to the flexibility of customary social relations. Abstraction can be accommodated so long as it is bound to ongoing embodied—or embedded—relational practices. Whether across time or space, the extension of social relations is made manageable through the articulation of those relations in material, concrete relational practices. This approach to abstraction marks a key point of differentiation between customary forms of social relations and modern ones, within which more abstracted social relations are valued over, and imagined to be autonomous from, less abstracted social relations (the mind independent from, and valorised over, the body; the social distinct from and dominant over the natural realm).

### **Extrapolating from Cacavei**

Arguing as such, I am making a claim that it is possible to extrapolate from Cacavei, to treat it as exemplary of forms of customary connection to land more generally understood. This claim requires substantiation. Importantly, this claim should not be taken as a suggestion that that all forms of connection to land within customary sociality are equivalent or identical. To the contrary, we see significant diversity in the ways that connection to land is practiced when we compare different local communities within Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea, and we can point as well to differences between these two countries, and at a broader level of scale when we compare Melanesian customary land systems to African customary land systems, for example, to indigenous Australian ones, or those in Latin America or Asia. However we can also see important resonances, whether we take our focus as the local, the national, the regional or the global. This, then, is an argument about levels of analysis (returning here to arguments made in Chapter Two).



Arguing for the mutually constitutive relationship between people and land as a generalizable feature of customary connection to land is supported, in the first instance, by the recognition of mind/body and nature/culture divides as uniquely and contingently modern. Beyond simply defining the customary against the modern, however—as a residual category of ‘non-modern’—we can identify strong points of resonance amongst scholars who have inquired into customary land systems in a variety of empirical contexts. Notable here are widespread references to the social—as opposed to individualistic—embedding of ‘ownership’. This social embedding has been asserted in the case of indigeneity understood in a general sense (Ingold 1986), as well as to particular localities including in Papua New Guinea (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999), indigenous Australia (Myers 1998). Likewise, the embedding of *knowledge* and stories within the land, so evident in Cacavei, has similarly been widely observed (for example Goodall 1996; Weiner 2002), and this too will be shown to be a key feature of connection to land in relation to the Papua New Guinean communities discussed, particularly, in Chapter Six. This intertwining of knowledge and land has also been described, usefully, in terms of a continuity between ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ property (Demian 2006; Strathern 2009; Weiner 2002).

Broadly speaking, the quality of mutability in land relations has also been widely pointed to. In Papua New Guinea, for example, Dwyer and Minnegal (1999) point to a relatively fluid relationship between discourse and behaviour in relation to land use rights in two villages in the Strickland-Bosavi region of Western Province, even as they also point to differences in the way that fluidity was articulated. Mutability and fluidity are similarly observed by Brown, Brookfield and Grau, in a long-term study of a particular clan in Chimbu Province (1990), in Sillitoe’s (1999) ethnography of land use in the Southern Highlands, and further afield in relation to Samoa (Olson 1997), Solomon Islands (Foale and Macintyre 2000), and further afield still in relation to African customary land systems (Berry 2002; Shipton and Goheen 1992). Elsewhere in Timor-Leste, Yoder (2011) points to mutability of land systems in Oecusse district.

Notably, Fitzpatrick and Barnes (2010), in developing their argument about the resilience of customary land systems in Babulo, Timor-Leste, suggest that in fact the relative stability of precedence—‘first order possession’— systems stands in *contrast* to the mutability ascribed by

other scholars to land systems elsewhere. In the course of their study, however, they in fact point repeatedly to elements of flexibility and negotiability, including the incorporation of Christian beliefs within local narratives of origin and ancestry (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010: 213). In my own analysis of Cacavei, moreover—a village in which precedence is an important organising principle—I have suggested that mutability is in fact a key characteristic of connection to land. Our diverging positions on this front reflect the different levels in which we locate the resilience of customary connection to land. Precedence may indeed offer a relatively stable and ‘orderly’ (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010: 207) basis for claiming and organising land, but it also remains the case that it is practiced, in a day-to-day sense, in the context of contingent local relationships and dynamic oral culture, and that the people and land whose relationships it organises remain bound together in a mutually constitutive relationship that resists rigid classifications. This, I suggest, is where we should locate the resilience of customary systems. Importantly, however, where our arguments converge again is in recognition of the fact that contemporary social transformations—including the extended presence of the state and capital—impede upon the resilient capacity of customary forms of connection to land (cf. Peters 2004 in relation to Africa). This is an important argument, and one developed further in Chapter Six in relation to land claim contestations in Madang, PNG.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been three-fold. Firstly, it has developed an account of the nature of customary connection to land, demonstrating the mutually-constitutive nature of people and land, and showing how practices of connection to land provide a means of accessing kinship connections beyond the genealogical present. Second, the chapter has developed the theoretical argument of the thesis relating to social abstraction. While it is true, on the whole, that modernising processes are processes of abstraction, and that customary forms of sociality emphasise non- or less abstracted social relations, it is not true that that the modern is to the abstract as the customary is to the particular. Material, non-abstracted forms of embodiment, land and place remain critical to modern social relations. At the same time, customary forms of sociality can and do accommodate significant degrees of social abstraction. What differentiates the customary and the modern, in large part, is the way in which they approach and value processes of social abstraction. Finally, this chapter explored the ways in

which customary connection to land can provide a source of resilience for communities negotiating entanglements of custom and modernity.

As a community, Cacavei was able to sustain itself through conditions of intense hardship, social dislocation and cultural disruption caused by the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste. The mutability of forms of social organisation and belonging—enabled in part by the mutually constitutive relationship between people and land, shifting and contingent in its articulations—was an important factor in the community’s sustainability during that period. Although patterns of residence altered dramatically, practices of connection to land—through gardening, burial, sacred ritual, the telling of stories and knowledge inscribed in place—enabled the continuation of social relationships and identity across time and space.

If the mutability of customary connection to land was a source of resilience for Cacavei during the Indonesian occupation, it is likely to continue to be so as it and other customary communities grapple with the changes brought by globalization, state- and nation-building, of increased rural-urban migration, and as new infrastructure and the extension of capital and the cash economy generates new cartographies of work and residence. These processes of change are, after all, processes of abstraction, of the extension of social relations over the space of the nation, state, and world. What Cacavei teaches us is that the flexibility within customary systems makes them able to accommodate and respond to such processes of abstraction. But it also makes clear that the abstraction of social relations is not without danger, and in celebrating the flexibility of customary systems we also need to think critically about the necessary limits to their flexibility. Anchoring more abstracted forms of social relations to those which are more concrete, we might imagine that effective strategies for engaging with change in places like Cacavei will be those that enable continuing practices of embodied/embedded connection to land.

In the next chapter, the thesis turns to consider such strategies in more detail. Exploring an encounter between a group of villagers and a delegation of government representatives in a remote part of Papua New Guinea, it argues that customary and modern forms of sociality give rise to distinctly different cartographies of power, centrality and marginality. If this chapter was focussed largely on customary social relations, comparing these to modern forms of

embodiment in more theoretical terms, Chapter Five looks more explicitly at the nature of entangled social relations within a particular empirical context. Through an ethnographic analysis of the encounter between villagers and politicians—catalysed by the extension of resource-extractive industry—it argues that entanglements of custom and modernity can give rise to creative and innovative strategies, within which practices of connection to land offer means of asserting local autonomy and claims of belonging.

## 5. Greeting the state: Ambivalent entanglement and cartographies of power

---

Where the previous chapter focussed primarily on the nature of customary forms of sociality, here the focus of the thesis shifts to the nature of entanglement; to the dynamics and consequences of customary social relations being brought into encounter with modern ones. In developing the overall argument of this thesis—namely that the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land is destabilising structures of sociality, in ways that lend themselves to the disempowering of local communities but also create possibilities for the rearticulation of customary autonomy—this chapter makes two specific sub-arguments. Firstly, the chapter develops *empirically* the argument that was introduced *conceptually* in Chapter Two of this thesis ('Approaching Custom and Modernity') which is that customary and modern social relations, including relationships to land, are being brought into entanglement with one another, and that these entanglements are ambivalent and cut across the boundaries of delimited social groups. Secondly, and subsequently, this chapter demonstrates that the ambivalence of entanglement generates possibilities for creative strategies through which local communities are able to reassert and rearticulate aspects of custom, and in doing so to assert their autonomy in the face of modern sites of power.

These two sub-arguments are developed in this chapter through a detailed ethnographic analysis of a particular, located entanglement of custom and modernity, namely an encounter between a group of villagers in a mine-affected region on Papua New Guinea's northern Rai Coast, and a delegation of government representatives who had been invited to the region to receive a petition from the villagers against proposed mine activity. The delegation's visit prompted deeply ambivalent expressions of both enthusiasm and defiance amongst the receiving villagers, and the encounter between the two groups involved competing, but

similarly ambivalent, performances of authority. The Rai Coast villagers welcomed the presence of the delegation, deriving pride and status from the performance of modern institutional power which their visit entailed. At the same time, they acted consciously to reposition that power in relation to a discourse of custom and attachment to place. In doing so they acted to subvert their own experience of perceived marginality from the centres (cultural and geographic) of modern power, through asserting a competing cartography of power that accorded them a centrality based on their connection to land and identification as *papagraun* (Tok Pisin: customary landowners). Within this cartography of power, it was the state that found itself marginally positioned.

In talking about cartographies of power, I am referring then to the spatial articulation of centres and margins. The argument made here is that the nature of customary sociality endows communities with a significant degree of autonomy, which is to say their capacity to govern and determine relations within the community in relation to law and authority, practices of production and exchange, aspects of culture, determinations of truth and adjudication of knowledge claims. Land is a central concern, here, firstly because patterns of land usage and entitlements to land are a key aspect of social relations, the governance of which is strongly contested within entanglements. The current predominance of customary land tenures is a significant source of autonomy for local Pacific communities, and the moves to register land or title land, or otherwise bring it within the administrative and regulatory structures of the state, can be seen as attempts to shift the site of governance over land.

In the second instance, land is a central concern because the different forms of social connection to land within the modern and the customary inform very different articulations of power. If, as was argued in the previous chapter (Chapter Four, 'Embedded in the Land'), customary social relations are embedded in the mutually constitutive relationship between people and land, then as a quality of social relations, so too is power within customary community embedded in the nexus of people and land. On the Rai Coast, it will be shown that customary connection to land gave rise to a particular articulation of authority and centrality that stood in contrast to the statist authority claims made by the government delegation. At the same time, however, the strategies enacted by the villagers need to be recognised as themselves the products of entanglement, drawing on aspects of modern sociality—particularly, civil society and connection to urban activists—as well as on customarily-derived

forms of identity and belonging. Making these arguments requires setting out an account of the nature of power within entanglements. This is the purpose of the next section, which precedes a move into the ethnographic analysis of the Rai Coast encounter.

## **Approaching Power**

Broadly speaking, my interest in power sits alongside other anthropological works that have, in recent decades, sought to engage the state as a subject for ethnographic analysis (Das and Poole 2004; Hobart and Kapferer 2012; Sharma and Gupta 2006; Steinmetz 1999). In looking to the interaction between state and community in a relatively remote part of Papua New Guinea—the northern Rai Coast—there is a particular resonance with Das and Poole’s (2004) call for ‘anthropology in the margins of the state’. In some ways, however, I also seek to go beyond this, by highlighting as contingent the processes through which ‘centres’ and ‘margins’ are constructed. In the entanglement of different cartographies of power, I suggest, centres can be remade as margins, and ‘marginal’ spaces reasserted as centres.

Engaging with the state anthropologically also entails a challenge to understandings that privilege the state as the key locus of power and authority. Such privileging was evident, particularly, in the pluralist tradition which dominated political science through the 1960s and early 1970s (e.g. Dahl 1961; Polsby 1963). Pluralism emphasised competition between self-interested groups, particularly over the control of resources, and behaviouralism, which is to say a focus on visible, observable activity. Pluralist accounts were also highly institutionalist and government oriented: with ‘interests’ envisaged as policy preferences (Lukes 1974). The behaviouralism of the pluralist tradition was roundly challenged by scholars such as Lukes (1974), as well by post-structuralist accounts of power as diffuse and embedded (for example Foucault 1980), and by Bourdieu’s insights into the nature of domination and cultural and symbolic of capital (1977; 1985). Nonetheless, a statist and conflict-oriented understanding of power retains a significant degree of orthodoxy and ‘common sense’ appeal (in the Gramscian sense), both inside and outside the academy.

Considering the entanglement of customary and modern forms of sociality, an effect of such statist understandings of power has been a pervasive tendency to render non-state polities through a language of deficit. The structure of Martin Van Creveld's (1999) *The Rise and Decline of the State* is illustrative here. Organised chronologically, 'tribes' and other 'stateless societies' are consigned to Chapter One, 'Before the State: Prehistory to AD 1300', after which point Van Creveld has the state developing and expanding, such that by end of Chapter Five (and of the twentieth century), it 'has spread its rule all over the world' (1999: 334). Michael Mann (2003 [1984]) takes a similarly evolutionist view to Creveld, reminding us in the process of the *normative* implications of state-centric analyses. Under a sub-heading, 'The Necessity of the State', he tells us that 'we have no examples of stateless societies long enduring past a primitive level of development' (p.58). In the specific context of the Melanesian Pacific, Francis Fukuyama (2008: 19) comments on state-building in Solomon Islands: 'The advantages of size and power conferred by state formation explain why this form of political organisation quickly displaced segmentary societies wherever they arose.'

In challenging this rendering of customary sociality, Pierre Clastres' study of polities and power within South American Amazonian communities, *Society Against the State* (1989 [1974]), stands as a seminal text. Taking issue with his own discipline, Clastres critiqued anthropologists for assuming the necessity of the state for ordering society, and for viewing non-state polities as 'nascent', 'embryonic', or 'poorly developed' versions of the state (1989 [1974]: 16). The implication of such a view, he said,

is that primitive societies are missing something—the State—that it is essential to them, as it is to any other society: our own, for instance. Consequently, those societies are *incomplete*; they are not quite true societies—they are not *civilized*—their existence continues to suffer the painful experience of a *lack*—the lack of a State—which, try as they may, they will never make up (Clastres 1989 [1974]: 189).

Through his own analysis of deeply egalitarian societies in the Amazon, Clastres argued that non-state societies must be recognised as having their own polities, valued in their own terms. His insistence that the absence of the state in Amazonia be read as an expression not of 'lack' but rather of the 'desire' of Amazonian societies, was echoed subsequently by Rivière (1984), and more recently still by James C. Scott (2009) in his history of hill-dwelling communities in Southeast Asia in the period till 1950. Significantly, too, Clastres challenged a limited



understanding of power as coercion. 'Power', Clastres argued, is '*universal*, immanent to social reality...there are no societies without power' (1989 [1974]: 22-23, emphasis in original), but this is not to say that all power is coercive. The resurgence of anthropological interest in the state in recent decades has built upon this key insight. Extending Clastres' analysis, Joanna Overing's (2012) insistence that Amazonian societies—as with many indigenous societies—display deeply different 'imageries of power' (p.69) is particularly salient here.

My approach to studying power within entanglements, then, begins with the recognition of the modern state as one, contingent articulation of power. Recognizing, moreover, that power must be thought of in broader terms than 'coercion', here I want to suggest a definition of power as *the differentiated capacity to affect*. Power is a quality of social relations that allows one agent, or groups of agents, the capacity to generate change. This can be coercive, but might also be cultural, ideological, and indeed also creative in a positive sense. It is also not restricted to human agents, or to living human agents. Within customary forms of sociality, for instance, ancestors and non-human spirits have their own agency. Indeed, to the extent that human and non-human relationships are also deeply bound up in—embedded within (Chapter Four)—land and the physical environment, so too *land* has its own agency. It is for this reason that failure to maintain proper ritual relationships with burial or other sacred sites can result in serious consequences—illness, death, broken relationships—within social groups. Land is also a source of power in a positive sense, as a site of creativity and regeneration (cf. Leach 2003; Strathern 2009). In theorising power as the differentiated capacity to affect, my intention is here is also to move beyond an emphasis on observable, physical behaviour. The capacity to affect change need not be realised in order to function as power; the threat or possibility is often enough. Moreover, what is (or might be) affected is not necessarily physical. The capacity to affect, in this regard, speaks also to the capacity to affect psychological, emotional, or ideological change, to influence value systems or ideas of the good life.

The operation of power, and of cartographies of power, is understood here as both a material and an ideological process. This point brings us back to the notion of the *dual life*—objective and subjective—of both custom and modernity. In conditions of entanglement, modern forms of sociality are often able to enact a coercive capacity over customary ones, a fact that results at least in part from their more abstracted nature. Simply put, more abstracted, modern forms of sociality are able to reframe and reconstitute customary ones within them—an example

here is the reframing of customary practices within the East Timorese Constitution (see Chapter 8), which asserts that custom is to be recognised to the extent that it does not contradict Constitutional law (thus privileging modern law and governance as the central and over-arching legal framework). However the power of the modern also emerges from what, drawing upon the Gramscian and neo-Gramscian tradition, we can call its *hegemony*, which is to say its ideological and normative dominance (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Girling 1987; Glassman 2011; Hall 1988; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Mouffe 1979; Ortner 1996). This, too, is related to the tendency towards abstraction within modern sociality, particularly the abstracting universalism of modernity that does not recognise other forms of social relations (including forms of power). The dominance of the modern is supported, moreover, by powerful imaginaries which position the customary and the modern in a teleological relationship to one another, and which render them in hierarchical, normative terms. These understandings invoke the very modernist imaginaries of progress and rationality, and aside from their academic expressions in Modernisation Theory and related paradigms, they are expressed and perpetuated through the dominant practices and imaginings of ‘development’ (Chapter 7), as well as through imaginaries associated with urbanisation and nation-building (Chapter 9). For Gramsci, the hegemonic status of these ideas is reflected in their ‘common sense’ quality (Patnaik 1988). Or, to invoke another theorist who has generated important insights into practices of domination and the securing of consent—Pierre Bourdieu—they form part of a ‘self-evident and natural order... [within which] what it essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*’ (1977: 166-167).

Hegemonies, however, are not complete, and it is in the theorising of counter-hegemonic possibilities that a neo-Gramscian understanding of power and domination has particular importance for the present work. Through asserting competing ideologies, it is possible for dominated groups to generate counter-hegemonies (Carroll and Ratner 1994). This is possible, Gramsci argued, because of the intersections of the state with civil society. It is within the latter that dominated groups are able, through cultural and ideological practices, to create new political spaces that in turn challenge the dominance of the hegemonic position associated with the state. Counter-hegemonic forces challenge the capacity of dominating social groups to extract consent from those they dominate; they eat away at the consensus which underpins the ‘common sense’ beliefs, assumptions and institutions of the dominant ideology. Key in this process are ‘intellectuals’, whose role is to articulate and develop counter-hegemonic consciousness. It is important to note, however, that Gramsci held firmly to the

idea that all people are intellectuals, 'in capacity if not in function' (Carroll and Ratner 1994: 12). Expanding and re-articulating Gramsci's thinking within the particular historical context of entanglements and custom and modernity, we might consider the category of 'intellectuals' to apply to leaders within civil society (in the modernist sense in which Gramsci envisioned), but also to leaders in a customary sense—to holders of law, origin stories, history and custom. Expanding a Gramscian framework as well, we might imagine that the possibilities for counter-hegemonic action and thought come not only from the intersections of state and civil society, but also from the intersections of modern political with customary ones. To reiterate a point made earlier in this thesis, the multiplicity of structures accentuates the contingency of each; the ambivalences of entanglement also reveal cracks and partialities in hegemonic understandings and practices. The destabilising effect of such ambivalence can be deeply troubling, but also generative.

Finally, recognising that hegemony is accompanied by the possibilities for counter hegemonies allows us space, too, to draw upon the observations of scholars such as James C. Scott (1985, 1990) and Benedict Kerkvliet (1990; cf. Scott and Kerkvliet 1986), who have emphasised the exercise of resistance by dominated groups.<sup>9</sup> Seeing resistance, Scott tells us, requires paying attention not simply to public interactions between subordinated groups and those who dominate them, but also to 'hidden transcripts', which are made up 'of those speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public

---

<sup>9</sup> Scott himself is in fact critical of Gramscian approaches, and of the concept hegemony particularly. 'The problem with the hegemonic thesis', he argues, 'is that it is difficult to explain how social change could ever originate from below' (1990: 78). Pointing to the scale and diversity of social conflict across history, Scott argues that it stands as proof that dominated people neither consent to their domination nor believe it to be inevitable. Pointing to the subversive traditions of folk culture and popular discourse, he similarly rejects the inevitability thesis on the basis that dominated peoples are fully able to imagine alternative situations in which they are not dominated.

The first problem with Scott's argument is that empirical evidence of resistance or social conflict through human history does not invalidate the argument for hegemony. Pointing to instances in which dominating groups do not secure consent does not mean that all dominating groups are always unable to secure consent. Secondly, Scott does not adequately recognise the ambivalences of power, that people can in fact hold positions that appear to be contradictory, and that these 'contradictions' are not always simply explained by denoting one the as the public 'performance' and the other as the hidden, genuinely felt sentiment. Thirdly, and most fundamentally problematic, he largely overlooks the critical notion of counter-hegemony, which, contrary to his critique, does precisely offer an explanation for how social change originates from below. Finally, many of the charges which Scott makes against the hegemony thesis are directed at some its most rigid interpreters (for example Miliband and Althusser, see Scott 1985: 317). Part of the appeal of the concept of hegemony, I would suggest, is that it is highly malleable. Looking beyond its most orthodox Marxist interpretations, and according more attention to the significance of counter-hegemonic potential, the possibilities for a productive dialogue between the concept of hegemony and Scott's own work on the nature domination/resistance appear much stronger than he suggests.

transcript' (1990: 4-5; cf. 1985). So imagined, 'hidden transcripts' expand our understanding of resistance beyond the pluralist emphasis on observable conflict, to include such practices as the use of double entendre and subversive uses of folk stories and songs, shunning, selective silence, 'backstage' (1990: 24) expressions of anger and resentment, and the generation of a 'sharply dissonant political culture' (p.18) outside of the sight of dominating groups. Kerkvliet (1990), similarly, stresses the need to look beyond public, observable conflict, to see the political as also encompassing debates, decision-making processes and relations of cooperation in regards to the use of resources, where resources are understood broadly as consisting of both material and immaterial things. Here, then, we are encouraged to see 'everyday politics' (Kerkvliet 1990; Scott 1985; Scott and Kerkvliet 1986) at play in relation to values, ideologies, opportunities and ideas. Both Scott and Kerkvliet remind us that we need to give credit to the multiple ways in which people negotiate and speak back to dominating structures and practices, and to recognise these as forms of power and agency.

Urging us to pay close attention to what is said and done 'backstage', or in the 'everyday', the emphases of both Scott and Kerkvliet resonate in key ways with the impulses of ethnographic enquiry. Scott's suggestion, however, that 'most subordinated classes are able, on the basis of their daily material experience, to penetrate and demystify the prevailing ideology' (1985: 317) perhaps does not give enough credit to the power of ideology and pervasive, hegemonic discourses, or to the complexities—tensions, contradictions, and ambivalences—of relationships of power, including within subordinated groups. Both he and Kerkvliet pose an important challenge to those who would take outward signs of consent, or acquiescence, 'at face value' (Kerkvliet 2009: 234) but, as Sherry Ortner (1995: 179) tells us, we also need to resist the 'impulse to sanitize the internal politics of the dominated'. It is in this spirit, then—attuned to the ambivalences of entanglement, to both the power of structures and hegemonies and the power of resisting practices—that I suggest we can best approach the encounter between villagers and politicians at Bongu village.

## **The Ramu Mine and the Rai Coast Villagers**

The Ramu Mine is a large nickel and cobalt mine in Madang Province, developed and now operated by a consortium led by Chinese company MCC (Chinese Metallurgical Limited), with a minority stake held by Australian company Highlands Pacific. The consortium, operating under the name Ramu Nico, first received a permit to develop the mine from the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation in March 2000, and since development began the project has been heavily contested. Particularly contentious is the plan to dispose of toxic mine tailings (the waste material left after minerals are extracted from mined ore) through a system known as Deep Sea Tailings Placement (DSTP). From the primary mine site at Kurumbukari, a thin grey concrete pipe was constructed, running for 75 kilometres across Madang, carrying the toxic sludge to the edge of the Basamuk Bay. There the pipe descends to a depth of 150 metres, where the toxic sludge is 'placed', and where proponents of the system say it will stay, sitting on the ocean floor undisturbed by coastal currents. At the time of research in 2010, the Ramu Mine was still in development, and the use of DSTP as a methods of tailings disposal had been contested over several years through a legal case aimed at both the company and the state which gave them an environmental permit (this case was ultimately lost by the landowner plaintiffs in a Supreme Court hearing in December 2011), and various forms of popular opposition and agitation.

In April 2010, as part of this grassroots agitation, an 'Awareness Program' was held in Bongu Village, near the site where the pipeline ends on the coast of the Basamuk Bay, bringing together representatives from communities up and down the coast, who are heavily reliant on the Basamuk Bay for food and water, and unconvinced by the company's insistence that the toxic waste is not going to pollute the marine environment. The Awareness Program was initiated in part by a young man called George, who spent time in Bongu as a child (it is his mother's land, although the area in question is a patrilineal area) but grew up in Madang Town, has been formally educated, and lived in Australia for a period. An indigenous NGO, the Bismarck Ramu Group (BRG), had been working with other communities affected by the mine for many months, and was present at and supporting this event but not actively organising it.

The Awareness itself took the form of a series of short speeches given by the representatives of different villages or areas of the coast, delivered to the assembled crowd. A documentary film made by PNG filmmaker Scott Waide, attached to BRG, was shown in the evening, on a white piece of cloth stretched across a frame set into the ground in the centre of the village, with the projector, speakers and generator all having been brought over by some of the participants who made the hour long trip on an outboard motorboat from Madang Town to Bongu. The young activist George drew up a petition prior to the Awareness, calling for a stop to the planned DSTP, and this was signed by the assembled crowd in between the speeches and the film showing. A discussion was had as to whether or not the petition should be taken to the office of the (then) Provincial Governor in Madang Town, Sir Arnold Amet, or a demand made for him to come to Bongu to receive it. The consensus that emerged was that the Governor should come to Bongu, and perhaps in an attempt to stave off mounting opposition to the mine, he agreed and organised a large delegation of government representatives, including the (then) deputy Prime Minister Puka Temu, the Minister for Environment and Conservation, the new local MP, and all of their entourages, to accompany him.

### **‘There Never Was a Government Here’**

The arrival of the government delegation was a significant event for Bongu, a large village but one nonetheless remote, within which (until the arrival of the pipeline, at least) the presence of the modern state and of developing capital had been only lightly felt. From the beginning, the impending arrival provoked an extraordinarily ambivalent response. The relative absence of the state in Bongu, and in the other mine-affected communities too, was perceived simultaneously in terms of both lack (a source of distress and an indication of marginality) and pride (a marker of local autonomy). The prospect of such a significant visit was, in turn, met with expressions of both enthusiasm and defiance. People were both pleased that such a delegation of powerful and high status people would be in their village, and angry at the support which the government had given to the tailings disposal plan and determined to coerce a withdrawal of that support.

The speeches which were given at the first meeting—the Awareness Program where it was decided that the Governor should come to Bongu to receive the petition—included strong, vocal assertions of local autonomy and of power derived from connection to land. A speaker representing villages in the Bel Area called for ‘People Power’, as he reached down and picked up a handful of dirt from the ground. Referencing the then-Prime Minister Michael Somare, he told the crowd: ‘this is not Somare’s land, this is your land [in Tok Pisin, *em i graun bilong yu*]. You have the land, you have the power!’ A young man from the District Youth Council at North Coast spoke too, invoking the crowd to ‘be your own boss, not a slave on your own land’. In the video made by a filmmaker<sup>10</sup> from the Bismarck Ramu Group NGO, screened at the end of the Awareness Program, Ken Duguma, a Kurumbukari landowner, articulated a similar sentiment of autonomy, but also highlighted ambiguities in the way that the relationship to the state was understood:

I am worried about my land, but what can I say? I have a short arm, the government’s arm is longer. The government can do whatever it wants and the company will still pay money to the government. There’s nothing here that would indicate government presence. I don’t want to talk about the government. Government doesn’t recognise that I exist. I can stop the company, I can bomb the bridge, and it won’t make a difference to my life. I can continue eating sweet potato and continue living. I don’t need a government. Me—a village man—I don’t need a government. There never was a government here.

The speech is a strong expression of autonomy from the state, of an independence and self-sufficiency which is customarily-derived, rooted in place-bound practices of production, law and social organisation. However, there is acknowledgment, too, that the government wields and is representative of a form of power against which customary authority is vulnerable—rooted in money and the formal economy, but also in the centralised authority of the state. It is an ambiguous expression of both perceived empowerment and disempowerment. In the sentence, ‘there’s nothing here that would indicate government presence’, there is a hint towards ambivalence, that the absence of the government is also an absence of things that might be desired. Because it is also true that the Kurumbukari community agreed to the development of the mine on their land.

---

<sup>10</sup> Scott Waide’s films are broadcast through Youtube on his ‘soulPNG’ channel. The film discussed in this paper is *Uprooted*, and is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdTOBnwlhBA>. It was filmed in March 2010.

Other statements articulated more forcefully a sense of distress at the absence of the state. In the same video in which Ken Duguma asserted, 'I don't need a government', another landowner, from Mindere village, suggested an understanding of government as benevolent patriarch. 'For people here in Mindere and Ganglau', he said, 'we feel like we are about to die because we don't have a father. Our "father", the government, isn't here.' This sentiment was evident, too, in a conversation I had with Georgina Ragi, a Bongu woman who was also the women's representative for the Astrolabe Bay area. Early in the morning on the day that the delegation is expected, Georgina was sitting with women from each of the five clans, who were preparing food for the visit, talking to me and to Meredith, the young reporter from the PNG national television channel. Georgina told me that she and the other women were happy because the Governor was coming to hear their views. 'It's going to be a good day', she said. Talking about 'the company', MCC, the developer of the mine, she said, 'Brothers that used to eat together, *kaikai buai* [chew beetle-nut] together—then the company comes in, this development, and one brother turns against the other brother.' Here, again, was the ambiguity towards both development and the state. In this reading 'development' was a threat to the social fabric of the community, to the bonds between 'brothers'. The women said that they had 'never had a politician in Bongu before, in this whole area', and these things—the devastation caused by the company and the absence of the state—were understood and articulated as connected. The impending arrival of the government, embodied for Georgina in the presence of the Governor, was a possible salve, a possible source of protection for the community in the face of the threat posed by 'the company'.

Then again, 'development' too was understood ambivalently. Michael Rasuk, a Ramu landowner, insisted that 'this is not a fight against development. No. This isn't why we are campaigning. We're fighting to protect and save our environment—our bush, our land, our river.' Many of those in the area that will be affected by the DSTP (but not by the mine-site itself), stressed that they were not opposed to the mine, they only wanted to see a different system of waste disposal. For many of those living at the mine site at Kurumbukari, however, who had been forcibly evicted with only a tarpaulin, a box of nails, 500 kina and a small supply of tinned fish, the mine itself was the problem (this was the story recounted at the beginning of Chapter One). Still, they said, they were 'not against development'. In this discourse 'development' itself stood for many things—cash income, cars, a form of status, inclusion and participation in a way of being that people understood as other to what they knew and had—but what was sought was not the 'other' in place of what was already known. 'Development'



does not replace what exists, and neither was such replacement desired. Rather, in places such as Bongu, different patterns of understanding exist: multiple 'visions of the desirable and the feasible', to use Errington and Gewertz's (2004: 12) evocative phrase. These patterns exist concurrently and in uneasy tension; at times drawn into negotiation, and *at times* in outright collision.

## Greeting the State

Given this ambivalence, there was extensive discussion about how best to welcome the delegation when they arrived. On the morning that they were due, George, the young man who had been playing a key role in mobilising the clans in Bongu and elsewhere, told me that the villagers had met the day before and come up a plan. When the delegation arrived (they were expected by helicopter and would land in an open area at the back of the village) a decision had been made not to have a welcoming party waiting. Instead, people would continue to go about their business in their gardens and in their houses. A few people would greet the helicopter where it landed and guide the men to the village. Inside it would be empty, George told me, and the people would be inside their houses. The plan was that the Governor and the other representatives would not even be sure if people were expecting them—'they should have to wait for us', he said. When a *garamut* drum was beaten, the people would come out of their houses and form into their clan groups, they would come out to where the visitors had been seated on grass mats and 'give them our hard looks'. Then the Master of Ceremonies would take over and the program would begin. There would be speeches, and the petition would be presented by two children and two men dressed in traditional dress. The talk amongst those making these plans was about 'having power'; these were strategies for levelling, for asserting the power that they had as *papa graun*, landowners, by having the government delegation meet them on their land and on their terms.

When the helicopter carrying the delegation arrived, a small group of children broke ranks and ran excitedly to watch it land, but otherwise, indeed, there was no big welcome. The governor, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister and their various assistants disembarked. Six heavily armed police escorts, conspicuous in fluorescent yellow vests, had arrived prior to the helicopter, and there was also an armed military escort travelling with the politicians.

According to plan, the men were led from the landing site along a narrow bush path, leading them down onto the beach and around the side of the village so that they entered it from the front entrance. There, two tall palm fronds were arranged in an A shape, forming a gate, and the delegates were seated on grass mats on the ground in front of it. Two men in tribal dress and carrying spears broke through the palm frond gates. For several minutes they circled in front of the seated men, chanting:

Have you come here to steal our land? Is this your land? You are coming to steal from our land and spoil our land for our future generations. Our land is full of minerals and you are coming to steal from us. Get a feel for the environment—this is how the people feel.

The government delegates shifted visibly when the men in customary warrior dress first began their chanting, but quickly regained their composure. As the chanting proceeded an eclectic assortment of people was gathered around, including the administrative assistants of the Governor, Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, some of the Rai Coast community representatives, myself, the filmmaker attached to the NGO and also a reporter from EMTV, the national television station, both of whom were filming the proceedings.

When the chanting finished the men brought bunches of *buai* (beetlenut) and bottles of water, which were presented to, and accepted by, the seated men. The delegates were subsequently led through the gates into the village, to a meeting place that had been prepared for the gathering. The garamut drum was beaten, and the two warriors shouted out, '*olgeta man-meri kam* (everyone come), the leaders are here'. At this point, from the rear of the village, a procession of a few hundred adults and children marched slowly towards the men, carrying handwritten signs of pieces of paper and cardboard, and chanting 'no DTSP'. Leading them were the two children in traditional dress. Having arrived, they formed a semi-circle. There was a prayer, and then a series of speeches made by community representatives, returned by speeches from the Governor, the Minister, the newly-elected MP for the Rai Coast, and the Deputy Prime Minister. Finally copies of the petition were presented to the three delegates by the children who had led the march. As each bundle was presented the children said in local language, 'our fathers will die but we will be here. We want you to think about our future'. The Governor was the third man to receive a copy, and when he accepted it a cheer rang out throughout the watching crowd. Before the government delegation left again, everyone shared the meal which had been prepared by the women in the village. A large fish, caught

from the deep parts of the Basamuk Bay, was ceremonially presented. This would be the last fish that would be caught, the men were told, if the DSTP went ahead.

## **Competing Cartographies of Power**

Across Papua New Guinea, as across Timor-Leste, the presence of the state as an effective authoritative, bureaucratic, and administrative institution is deeply uneven. The offices, services, infrastructure and personnel associated with the functioning of the state tend to be concentrated with urban centres, in capital cities and in the capitals of Provinces, in Papua New Guinea, or Districts, in Timor-Leste. Geographical distance from these centres becomes a marker of 'remoteness', but this is not the only criteria. In addition to the nodal points of urban administrative centres we can add the locations of sites of economic value to the state and the formal economy (concentrations of industry or natural resources), and also the routes and hubs of the transportation networks which connect them. These patternings of sites and lines form the cartographies of power of modern states. In conditions of entanglement, though, modernist cartographies co-exist with customary ones, and the two entail very different articulations of power, and of centrality and marginality.

The encounter on the Rai Coast involved two very different articulations of power and authority: on the one hand, the *modern* institutional authority of the state legitimated through nationalist appeals; on the other, *customary* authority embedded in place and in genealogical connections across time. It brought into dialogue two competing cartographies of centrality and marginality. One of the key distinguishing features of the modern is a tendency towards abstraction, towards more spatially extended forms of relationship, simultaneously arising out of and expressed within increasingly abstracted modes of production, communication and exchange, forms of identity, imagination and subjectivity. At a level of analytical generalisation, the social relations constituted within modernity—including relationships of power within capitalism and the nation-state—tend to extend further and more abstractly than those constituted within customary forms of community. Ken Duguma, the Kurumbukari man filmed talking about the effect of the Ramu mine on his land, offered an evocative image of this when he said, 'I am worried about my land, but what can I do? I have a short arm, the government's

arm is longer'. With this longer arm, modern structures of authority *can* exert a coercive capacity over customary ones; there can be, in other words, a power imbalance between different structures of power.

Within customary forms of sociality, patterns of power and authority tend overwhelmingly to be embedded within place. Whether positions of authority are inherited within genealogical lines (for instance the Austronesian emphasis on precedence) or, as is often the case in Melanesia, secured through practices of wealth distribution (Godelier and Strathern 1991), they have their grounding in relationships which are predominantly localised and embodied, within forms of collectivity forged in the mutually-constitutive relationship between people and place (Chapter Four). Customary social relations tend to be temporally extended—the emphasis on genealogical connection across time—but spatially limited. Practices of knowledge sharing and story-telling, law-making and enforcement, are grounded in place, hinging upon sustained patterns of embodied interaction between people living and working in shared proximity (James et al. 2012). This does not mean that customary societies are bounded places or that connections with people or places *beyond* are not significant, but it is to suggest that the place to which people belong sits in every way at the centre of their social world.

What happens, then, as modern forms of sociality become entangled with customary ones? As communities on the Rai Coast are drawn—through the modernising moves of resource extraction industry, nation- and state-building—into a globalizing world, they are drawn into more spatially extended sets of social relations within which they are positioned, through spatial practices of exchange, identity and organisation, as well as through the hegemonic language and ideology, as *marginal*. From existing at the centre of their own worlds, so to speak, constructed and understood as such through customary forms of place-bound story-telling, origin myths and knowledge, communities like Bongu can find themselves as relatively small and marginally-positioned elements in these more expansive social fields. The urban spaces of Port Moresby or Madang Town become centres of state power, and distance from them (and subsequently from political decision-making, and from administrative and other services), creates new relations of remoteness. The circuits of capital, too, shape the contours of this modern, more expansive geography of power.

The location of centres of economic power and wealth *elsewhere* in the globalizing world positions Papua New Guinea as marginal in relation to them, just as, within PNG, the concentration of capital within the spaces of urban centres and the hands of indigenous and foreign elites constructs villages like Bongu as marginal. Hegemonic discourses of development and modernisation (ideological expressions of modernity) construct an image of what is desirable (cars, cash income, store-bought foodstuffs, new clothes) and present it to people as something which is *other* to their lives, and also *elsewhere*. As predominantly customary communities are drawn into these expansive (and expanding) cartographies, the risk is that they are subsumed within them. The more abstracted, more spatially extended quality of modern social relations gives them a capacity to reframe customary social relations, to exert a coercive effect over them, to incorporate them and absorb them in ways which can substantially change them.

In terms of authority structures this capacity for the reframing of the customary by the modern is tied closely to what Giddens (1990) has described elsewhere as the 'disembedding of space from place'. Where customary authority is very much rooted in *place*, the institutional authority of the modern nation state extends across *spaces*. The creation of a centralised administrative body demands a disembedding of power from the concrete, predominantly embodied relations of customary community which are embedded in land and place. Instead, codified laws, institutions of police and judiciary, discourses of citizenship, infrastructure building projects etc. become the tools through which the more abstracted authority of the state—the 'long arm' of the government—is extended across the space of the nation-state (cf. Chapters Six and Eight on state-building in relation to land reform). As James Scott (1998) has described, locally-based systems are complex, contingent on local particularities, relationships and knowledge. They are perfectly sensible to those within, but illegible to outsiders. Any system of centralised administration from a distance—the nation-state governing a territory—requires simplification and abstraction. A bureaucratic, rationalist administrative system has neither the capacity nor the interest to handle the complex variability of human collective life which place-bound customary authority systems are so deeply interdependent with. The nation-state remakes the social world as a matter of necessity, as does, similarly, globalizing capital, providing the preminent structures by which other forms of social organisation or subjectivity are framed, and within which they are incorporated.

The remaking of the social world, however, is not a process of epochal shift. It is not, as some (Robbins and Wardlow 2005; Sahlins 1992) have suggested it is, an experience simply of *rupture*. The argument made across this thesis is that ontologically distinct ways of being-in-the-world are *entangled* with one another, and the ambivalences of this multiplicity engender the possibility of creativity as well as of insecurity, of new configurations of difference rather than either the spatial or temporal delimitation of the old from the new. While there is a tendency for customary social relations to be reframed within more abstracted modern ones, the entanglement of custom and modernity also creates new opportunities for a re-articulation of customary social relations, of place-based authority claims made *against* the state and 'the company'. In the case of the Rai Coast villagers, I want to suggest that this is what happened. From the first insistence that the Governor and his delegation come to Bongu to receive the petition, rather than travelling to his office in Town to deliver it, the Rai Coast people enacted strategies to subvert their own experience of marginality from the centres (cultural and geographical) of modern power. They acted consciously to reposition the institutional power of the state within a customary cartography of power within which they were not marginal but central, and within which their claims to authority as *papagraun* were most potent.

These two competing cartographies of centres and margins speak to relations of power and sociality which must be recognised as structurally and materially distinct. Approaching this difference through the concept of entanglements, however, we can also recognise that the structures of practice and meaning cannot be mapped straightforwardly onto the (social) bodies of the villagers, on the one hand, and the politicians, on the other. Rather, in the entanglement of these competing cartographies of power, both politicians and villagers drew upon elements of both customary and modern social relations, even as their subjective performances can be seen to be presenting competing authority claims.

### **Ambivalent Performances of Custom and Modernity**

In Bongu, a relatively remote community in which no-one I spoke to could remember a time when a local conflict was such that it needed to be referred to police or the formal legal

system, the presence of the heavily armed escorts with 'Police' emblazoned across their bullet-proof vests, was glaringly conspicuous, as were the helicopters the delegates arrived in. The delegates and the people in their entourages were formally dressed, visibly identifiable from the villagers and the Papua New Guinean fieldworkers from the NGO. Their speeches invoked a language of government, citizenry, due process and national interest. The Governor made lengthy pronouncements on the importance of following due bureaucratic process in the issuing or reviewing of environmental permits for mine activity. In doing so, he was emphasising the operation of processes and practices of decision-making extending wider and beyond Bongu and the Rai Coast area, enacted by people suitably qualified to do so. His appeal, in effect, was for the villagers to recognise and locate themselves within a schema of power that had its centres elsewhere, and whose key decision-makers were people other than them.

Similarly trying to position the listening crowd within a more expansive, modern cartography, the Deputy Prime Minister told them that Papua New Guinea needed the revenue from mining projects. To close the mine now, he said, would be to give the *nation* a bad name, to damage investor confidence. Less subtly still, the recently elected MP for the area told his new constituents 'if we don't have the mine I can't build new bridges or roads for you', a sentiment echoed in the Governor's own statement: 'If there is no DSTP, there is no mine, there is no development'. The rhetoric was rationalist and bureaucratic, and the relationship which the politicians sought to draw their audience into was the modern relationship of citizen to state and nation, complete with visible displays of the state's access to means of violence (the armed military and police escorts) and appeals to the national interest. It was a dramatic performance of a modern cartography of power, of the sovereign authority of the state extended over land understood in abstract terms as *territory*, and over people constructed in abstract terms as *citizens*.

Strongly framed as they were, however, by their institutionally-given status and authority, it is telling that the members of the parliamentary delegation felt compelled to also make gestures towards the customary. The men's smiling participation in the welcome ceremony, the quick regaining of their composure in the face of the warriors' chanting, their acceptance of *buai* as a precursor to entering the village, were all clear signals, directed outwards, of a familiar, unflappable ease with customary processes and practices. Speaking to the crowd, Governor

Amet did indeed talk at great length about the technical process of issuing environmental permits, but he was also quick to locate himself as a *'man blong Karkar'*, a man belonging—in terms of place-bound and genealogically-given identity claims—to the nearby Karkar Island just off the northern Madang coast (itself likely to be affected by the mine). Not offered as a primary basis for his right to speak and claim authority, in positioning himself customarily the Governor was nevertheless seeking to reinforce that right with a quality of legitimacy that his modern institutional status could not provide. The government delegation gave primacy to a modern institutional authority and the sociality of the state-citizen relationship, but the performance they enacted was nonetheless a product of the entanglement of the modern with the customary.

Conversely, the practices and discourse of the receiving villagers emphasised a customary authority premised on connection to land, but the ambivalences of their words and actions clearly show them to be also embedded within conditions of entanglement. The Rai Coast villagers devised and enacted strategies intended to counter the impact of the performance of the state and to assert a competing claim to authority. Instead of privileging the site and spectacle of the delegation's arrival by holding a welcome where the helicopter landed, the majority of villagers stayed away, repositioning the site of the welcome at the entrance to the village, which had been prepared by them in such a way as to emphasise their claims to the area. The initial absence of the villagers was intended to disturb the delegates' sense of expectation as to how their status and presence would ordinarily be received. The welcome which the people prepared did demonstrate respect for the formal authority of the visitors—the gifts of *buai*, the call of 'come, the leaders are here'—but it also acted to put limits on that authority, to reposition it within a demonstration of the authority of the villagers which derived not from formal institutional power but from claims of identity and belonging as a result of genealogically-derived connection to land and place. Insisting on the meeting taking place in Bongu privileged not the spaces of governmental authority (government offices in urban provincial centres, marked with national flags and emblems of the state) but the *places* from which customary authority as *papagraun* emerges, within which land is not abstracted as territory but rather lived, material and particular, the literal grounding of power and indeed of all social relations. The chanting of the warriors in traditional dress—'is this your land?'—asserted clearly this authority within place, and posed a direct challenge to the claims of the state to sovereignty. The words of the children, passing the petitions to the members of the delegation—'our fathers will die but we will be here'—stressed the duration of the villagers'



customary claims across time. Recognising that *kastom* is, as Keesing (1989) and Kirsch (2006) describe it, an oppositional self-referent, this was indeed an assertion of customary ways of being as contra to those seen to be embodied in the representatives of the state.

*Kastom*, though, is itself a product of ontological entanglement: relational, reflexive, ambivalent. Distinguishing between 'customary' as a descriptor of material patterns of practice and meaning, and *kastom* as an ideological articulation of those patterns, *kastom* is necessarily a product of the customary entangled with the modern. Evidencing both the ambivalence and creative potential of multiplicity, the performance of the receiving villagers also drew on modern forms of organisation, agency and subjectivity. The use of a petition as a mode of agitation and communication is indicative of this, employing a written abstracted mode of communication which invoked the rights and responsibilities of the citizen-state relationship (calling upon the Governor to act to engage with and protect 'the people who gave you the mandate') at the same time that it projected a defiant statement of self-help (including a threat to destroy the pipeline if the Governor did not act). Likewise, too, the villagers utilised the form of a protest march, but drew this into a customary social structure, converging first within their clan groups before coming together to march, as they had previously gathered in their clan groups to discuss what course of action to take when news of the delegation's visit was first confirmed.

## **Insiders and Outsiders**

While the Rai Coast villagers acted in ways that reinforced their own claims to land and legitimacy as *insiders*, locating the government delegation as outsiders and hence as marginal within a customary cartography of power, they also utilised their own connections to people and places beyond their locality. The complex and shifting dynamics regarding insiders and outsiders are illustrative of the ambivalences which emerge from the co-existence of structurally distinct ways of beings, and cartographies of centrality and marginality. Particularly telling here are the roles played by the Bismarck Ramu Group NGO and the urban-based activist George, which point to both the creative potential and the tensions which exist within this multiplicity.

The Bismarck Ramu Group (BRG) is an indigenous-run NGO based in Madang Province which works closely with communities dealing with 'development issues', usually translated as challenges related to mining, logging, oil palm, or other forms of resource extractive industry. A team of campaigners at the organisation also work on broader issues, engaging in advocacy and debate at national and international levels. While Bongu was not one of the specific communities with which BRG was working on a long-term basis, the organisation was, however, closely involved in the contestation against the development of the Ramu nickel mine, and to this extent was organising and supporting the legal case contesting the planned Deep Sea Tailings Placement, conducting advocacy on behalf of and offering logistical support to mine-affected communities, and also engaging in debate and opposition to the mine at local, national, and international levels. BRG did not take an active role in organising the details of either the Awareness Program at Bongu, or the subsequent visit by the Governor and his delegation. Nonetheless, the connections between the NGO and the Rai Coast Villagers were significant in creating the climate within which the events at Bongu could occur.

In the first instance, the actions of the NGO created a climate of pressure and debate within which the Governor felt compelled to travel to Bongu to receive the villagers' petition. The legal case against the proposed Deep Sea Tailings Placement generated national and international media attention, and BRG worked to encourage this through sending regular media releases, and taking full-page advertisements in the two national Papua New Guinea newspapers (themselves often in response to similar advertisements published by the mine developer companies MCC and Highlands Pacific). In addition, the NGO actively utilised new media technologies. Short films made by the BRG filmmaker were (and continue to be) broadcast on Youtube, and several of the campaigners ran blogs and used Facebook and Twitter accounts to communicate with international allies as well as with national ones. In the latter case, this is a population that is rapidly growing as mobile phone networks are expanded and internet-enabled mobile phones become cheaper and more widely available. In a country where conventional media journalists are chronically under-resourced and rarely able to travel to remote areas of the country, and where there are systemic problems of media bias (the *National*, one of two major newspapers, is owned by Malaysian logging giant Rimbunan Hijau, which also holds most of the timber logging licenses in the country), organisations like BRG play a critical role in generating a discursive space within which state and capital can be contested, and within which local actors gain visibility within national and international arenas.

It was through one of the videos produced by BRG filmmaker Scott Waide that George first became involved in the campaign against the Ramu mine and the proposed Deep Sea Tailings Placement. While living temporarily in Australia George saw *Uprooted*, Waide's film about the mine-affected landowners at Kurumbukari, and subsequently connected with Waide and BRG through Facebook. George had grown up in Madang town, but had spent school holidays with his mother in Bongu. It had been ten years since he had been to the place, but on learning about the impact which DSTP was likely to have on Bongu and other Rai Coast villages he began getting involved in the campaign, initially contributing to online discussions, and then starting a Facebook group and an online petition. Prior to connecting with BRG, George had been at something of a loose end in Australia. He'd been living there for two years with his wife, who was studying for a Masters degree, but was not himself working. In his own words, 'I didn't feel like I was using my full potential in Australia'. Connecting with the campaign was also a way of connecting with 'home', and it gave him a sense of purpose. Encouraged by BRG to come back to Madang and, in his words, 'put into action' what he had been doing online, George travelled back to BRG and set about organising the Awareness Program at Bongu.

When George arrived in Bongu, he was welcomed as a 'son'. He travelled back to the village with his mother, through whom he is connected to the place, and with his own young daughter, and these genealogical connections formed the basis for his interactions with the community, and for his alignment with his mother's family's clan within the community. One woman described the feeling within Bongu in these terms:

They [people in Bongu] are very happy. George is our son, so when he came to the community to help the community they were very happy...He's been away, but it's his mother's land so he has all the rights to talk about the land and the people...He's from the place.

It mattered that George was 'from the place'. Just as the Rai Coast villagers asserted, in the face of the state, a customary articulation of power based on connection land, George's authority to speak about the place and the people was rooted in that same structure of power and belonging. He was an insider. At the same time, however, he was valued by the community because of his experience, education, resources and connections *outside* of Bongu, because of his familiarity with the language and practices of the state and civil society. At the first Awareness Program, people from the Rai Coast villages expressed pleasure when George told them that the petition they were going to sign had already been signed over the internet

by people from 'all over the world'. People understood that they were being drawn into sets of relationships that connected their lives and wellbeing to people and events occurring in the courtroom in Madang Town, where the court case against DSTP was underway, in the offices and parliaments of the Provincial and National governments, in China, whose rapid industrial expansion was triggering a similarly rapid expansion of Foreign Direct Investment across the Pacific, and many other places besides. In this context, George was valued as someone who could help the Rai Coast communities mediate, and make sense of, these relationships.

Through their connections to George and to the NGO, then, the Rai Coast villagers were able to assert and give priority to a customary cartography of power, in part by locating themselves within a modernist one, drawing strategically on elements of the spatially extended relationships of national civil society and on connections between the urban and the rural. In conditions of ontological entanglement, modern forms of social organisation and subjectivity offer new ways of reasserting and rearticulating spaces of customary autonomy, and customary forms of identity, being and belonging. Civil society creates a space from which to mount critique of the state and market. At Bongu, the rhetoric of international civil society was evident in, for example, the call for 'People Power' and the invocation for villagers to 'be your own boss, not a slave on your own land'. Here is succinctly illustrated the multiplicity of custom and modernity, structure and discourse: a rhetoric which invokes the imaginary of capitalistic class struggle—'be your own boss'—and of anti-colonialism— 'not a slave on your own land'—directed against the (indigenous) Papua New Guinean state and the (foreign) corporate developer. Modern language turned against the modern, in defence of a way of life which is other to it; a *rearticulation* of the customary from within the context of its entanglement.

Far from a flat hybridity, this contingent configuration of custom and modernity contains within it the tensions of two fundamentally different ways of being brought into encounter. The rearticulation of custom is a process of transformation not straightforward representation, and the coercive capacity of abstracted modernist relations carries with it the risk that the custom will simply be reframed and absorbed within a dominant modernism. In the case of George, the experiences and knowledge which allowed him to comfortably traverse the distance between inside and outside also meant that he approached the Rai Coast through a lens quite different to that of many of the villagers. Walking from his uncle's house back to the

centre of the village one evening, just as it was starting to get dark and the track becoming harder to make out, he commented:

That's one thing, you know, if the village had electricity. If it had electricity, internet, I could have my DVDs, VCDs, everything to make myself comfortable. I'd build a house out here, out of permanent materials [i.e. not out of bush materials] and I'd have everything I need. There's water, fresh from the river, and food. I'd have a boat to go fishing, drive my car to town. That would be the life!

His is an idealised vision of a village life with all the trappings of a (idealised) middle class urban life. It suggests a very different understanding of connection to place, one in which everyday participation and residence within a customary community is not given so much as it is *chosen*, on the basis of considerations that have as much to do with a modern sense of lifestyle as they do with genealogical connection and belonging. It is a vision, too, that emphasises movement—the car, connecting village and town—and in this is a reminder that those who occupy new forms of authority of influence within communities like Bongu are often those with a greater capacity for movement, be it movement to access formal employment or education, or movement between rural and urban spaces, formal and informal economies, or indeed between modern and customary spaces and ways of being. This movement is destabilising. It can mean that those whose voices are heard loudest, those best positioned to speak for (or indeed against) the importance of customary ways of being, are not necessarily those of the people for whom custom is most immediately and intimately lived.

The Rai Coast villagers' capacity to strategically engage outsiders (through the NGO and the young activist George) and to draw upon elements of a customary cartography of power (engaging with ideas and practices of civil society and also citizenship) confirm the arguments that were made in the previous chapter in relation to Cacavei in Timor-Leste. Here, we see communities that privilege forms of sociality and authority grounded in place, and in embodied and genealogically-given forms of relationship. In other words, we see the primacy of less abstracted forms of social relations. Yet, we also see a capacity to accommodate significant degrees of abstraction (spatially and conceptually connections to the nation-state, urban centres and civil society). As with Cacavei, and critically, the ways in which these forms of abstracted relations are accommodated and negotiated is through their being tied back to what is embodied, grounded, particular. So, the community engages with the Governor but shifts the site of that engagement to their own land, and so doing accords primacy to their

own authority as *papagraun*. They draw upon the outsider connections and knowledge of an urban activist who is also a 'son', and 'from the place', and so tie the outside back to the inside, the customary centre. They utilise the discursive space created by a civil society organisation, and practices of civil society contestation, but stage their protest in such a way that it emphasises place, locality, and customary identity.

What we also see, and what again confirms the arguments developed in the previous chapter, is that while abstraction can be accommodated (and indeed strategically deployed), it also causes strain and risk. George's genealogical connection to Bongu allowed him to play a critical role in connecting the village with people, knowledge, and experiences located elsewhere, but his time spent away from the village also meant that his relationship to it was transformed. In Chapter Six, which considers competing land claims between several clans in the Nobnob and Siar villages in Madang, prompted by the presence of a tuna processing factory—we will see another example of the way that entanglements lend power to those within communities who are best able to translate between customary and modern ontologies and spaces. As with George's relationship to Bongu, we will see again that this capacity for connecting the less abstracted social relations of the customary with the more abstracted relations of the modern creates new opportunities for agency, but can also disempower others within local communities. This brings us back to the core of this thesis: the ambivalent destabilisation of power, and the multiple possibilities which exist for its reconfiguration.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has served two key purposes in the development of the overall thesis. In the first instance, it has demonstrated empirically the entanglement of customary and modern forms of sociality—including forms of power and forms of connection to land—through an analysis of an encounter between villagers and politicians on Papua New Guinea's Rai Coast. Doing so, it has built upon and extended the conceptual arguments made in Chapter Two, 'Approaching Social Difference'. Following those who have critiqued the meta-narrative of modernity or explored the ways in which notions of custom are constructed, we can indeed recognise on the Rai Coast that the modern-customary dichotomy does not hold. The encounter of politicians

and villagers was not a straightforward squaring off of two diametrically opposed ways of being in the world. The customary and modern intersected with each other in shifting and dynamic ways, and it was out of this complex entanglement that the actions and interactions of both parties to the encounter were made possible. It is not the case, however, that in the absence of the modern-traditional dichotomy we are left only with their chimeras. What we see, rather, is the entangled co-existence of fundamentally different ways of being in the world. This has been demonstrated, particularly, in the presence of competing cartographies of power, which are themselves underscored by fundamentally distinct understandings of land. On the one hand, we see a modern statist understanding of land as *territory*, over which power is exercised and extended from a central point. On the other, we see land as the immediate and particular grounding of life, authority and belonging—a site from which power emerges and has meaning.

The second function of this chapter has been to demonstrate the generative potential of entanglement, and the possibilities for agency to which its ambivalences give rise. The Rai Coast villagers engaged creatively with the conditions in which they found themselves in, giving primacy to customary forms of sociality and authority but also locating themselves within a modern cartography of power through their connections to civil society and through drawing upon the resources which George, the young urban activist connected to Bongu village through his mother, was able to bring. It has been argued here that these creative strategies emerged from the entanglement of the customary and the modern, and the multiple patterns of sociality and meaning which the community was able to draw into dynamic configuration. This entanglement created possibilities for the *rearticulation* of custom through engagement with modern, which is a subjective process of construction but not one that speaks to an ontologically flat process of hybridisation. Structural difference remains real—pregnant with tensions—even as it is entangled within time and space. It has argued, moreover, that the ways in which the Rai Coast villagers engaged with the state can be understood, theoretically, in relation to dynamics of abstraction. While privileging forms of social relations that are less abstracted—grounded in place and the immediacy of face-to-face interaction—customary sociality is also able to accommodate significant degrees of social abstraction, and it is this capacity which made possible the villagers' creative engagement with the state and civil society.

Drawing the chapter back to the discussion of power with which it began, what we see is a clear demonstration of the contingency of the modern state, and the presence of multiple forms and expressions of power. What we see, moreover, is the interplay both of hegemonic understandings and counter-hegemonic possibilities. Following James Scott's (1985, 1990) urging to look 'backstage', beyond the 'public transcripts' of interactions between subordinate and dominating peoples, we can indeed recognise the strategies of the Rai Coast villagers in planning for the politician's arrival as forms of creative, 'everyday' resistance which drew upon humour and subtle subversions to counter the dominant power of the state. However what we also see is that the ambivalences of entanglement cut across the distinction between public and private transcripts. The villagers displayed a deep ambivalence in relation to the state's impending arrival, demonstrating both pride and defiance. We see incorporation, at least to a degree, of the hegemonic understanding of the state as a key locus of political authority—evident, for instance, in the pleasure with which people anticipated the arrival of the first politicians to set foot in the village, and the elaborate efforts they went to in preparing to welcome the visitors. We see the pervasiveness, too—both 'onstage' and 'offstage'—of hegemonic understandings of development, a theme which is taken up further in Chapter Seven. Similarly, the counter-hegemonic understandings which sought to decentre the state and assert local autonomy were evident both in the public transcript of the politician's visit, and in the practices and conversations which the villagers had prior to it. In short, the distinction which Scott draws between public acts of deference, and private assertions of defiance, does not hold. The reality is much complicated than this, and forces us to engage with the pervasiveness of hegemonies as well as with the presence of resistance.

In December 2011, more than a year and a half after the Awareness Program at Bongu, the legal case against the Ramu mine's use of Deep Sea Tailings Placement was heard for the final time in the Papua New Guinean Supreme Court. In a two-to-one decision, the court ruled against the landowner plaintiffs, effectively giving the green light for the DSTP to proceed. The outcome of the case is in some ways a disheartening coda to the story of the Rai Coast villagers' creative and powerful engagement with the state: as much as the villagers were able to assert their own customary authority and connection to place, the decision about the mine tailings was made, ultimately, in the modernist and bureaucratic space of a courtroom, the landowners' own voices mediated through the technical language of lawyers and experts, far away from the people who stood to be affected, and from the land in which their sociality and their power was grounded. It is a stark reminder that, aside from not constituting a flat



pluralism, the entanglement of customary and modern ways of being is also not politically neutral. The abstracted and spatially extended social relations of the modern can, and often do, exert a coercive capacity over the customary. Customary voices and cartographies of power can be enveloped within modern ones. Still, as laden down as they are with inequities of power, processes of social change in places like Papua New Guinea are not linear, fixed, or given. The dynamic negotiation and struggle of entanglements is ongoing, and what the encounter on the Rai Coast suggests loudly is that the strategies best able to assert the importance of customary authority and ways of being are those that ground themselves in the places from which that authority is derived.



## **Becoming Landowners in Papua New Guinea**



## 6. Relations of property and the codification of customary connection to land

---

As has been argued thus far, entanglements of customary and modern forms of relationship to land are destabilising structures of power, in ways that leave open multiple possibilities existing for their reconfiguration. In the previous chapter, I pointed particularly to the possibilities for creative agency, and for the reassertion of customary autonomy by the Rai Coast communities negotiating the extension of modern political authority over their land. However it is also the argument of this thesis that recognition of the agentive and creative potential of entanglements must go hand in hand with recognition of the structures of power and inequality that permeate them. A desire, and even a political impetus, to find spaces of liberatory potential within the contested landscapes of Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste should not obscure the fact that the experience of destabilisation can also be deeply fraught. Indeed, if entanglements give rise to possibilities for reasserting customary autonomy, such outcomes must be recognised as counter-hegemonic; possibilities carved out against the grain. If there is a dominant tendency emerging out of the destabilisation of structures of power, it is to the *diminishing* of local autonomy. It was this dynamic to which our attention was drawn in the ultimate loss in the Supreme Court of the legal challenge to the dumping of mine waste in the Basamuk sea.

In this chapter, I focus on the transformation of people's connection to land through the extension of relations of property and land ownership. Particularly, I examine the effects and implications of processes of codification and state recognition through which customary communities *become landowners*. The ethnographic data upon which the chapter draws comes from communities in Madang Province, PNG, who are negotiating the presence of industrial tuna fishing and processing activities on their lands and waters. In Rempi, one of the

communities whose customary land forms part of the site of a new Pacific Marine Industrial Zone development—a 216 hectare ‘Special Economic Zone’ intended to house wharfing, berthing and tuna canning facilities—members of the Bomase clan experience exclusion and disempowerment because they are not formally recognised as landowners. The clan are struggling with what might be required of them to secure such recognition, including the public release of sacred—*tambu*—stories. Twenty kilometres down the road, in the Nobnob and Siar areas, local communities are negotiating complex and sometimes fractious social relations to which forms of landowner recognition have already given rise. These communities are drawn into relationships with the one tuna canning facility that is already in operation in the Province, run by Philippines company RD Tuna. In their negotiations with the company and with the state, the process of becoming ‘landowners’ has involved the codification of landowning clans through written, legal documentation, and through the formation of a ‘Landowner Company’ as a legal entity able to enter into contractual agreements. These landowner groups have themselves become implicated within intra-community disputes as well as within contestation with the state and the RD Tuna company.

The primary argument made in this chapter is that the remaking of land as property lends itself to the diminishing of the autonomy of local communities, as power in relation to land shifts to agents, sites and processes associated with the state and with globalising capital. However, if the modernist remaking of land as property can be seen as disempowering for local communities, the second argument made here it is also the case that customary and modern forms of connection to land are *already* entangled within the Rempi, Nobnob and Siar communities. This fact reflects the existing presence of foreign-owned industry, the legacies of the colonial period, and the presence of hegemonic ideologies of development. In this context, forms of codification and accommodation with state-run processes of land reform can be rendered necessary or desirable, even as such processes also generate effects that are experienced negatively. This fact speaks acutely to the ambivalences and destabilising potential of entanglement.

The third argument made concerns the opportunities for community agency that are generated through the entanglement of customary forms of relationship to land with modern, codified relations of property and land ownership. However coercive it may be, the extension of modern forms of connection to land does not simply replace existing ones. The

entanglement of the customary and the modern—particularly, the gaps and overlaps between these two distinct ways of being—also creates space for agency and manipulation, including through the assertion of ‘landowner’ as a basis for leveraging claims against the state and company, the manipulation of ‘clan’ identities and histories, and the continuation of customary practices of contestation over land claim through the mechanisms of the modern legal system. Opportunities for manipulation, however, can be exploited by companies and the state as much as they can be by the communities themselves. Possibilities for reasserting local autonomy exist, but they exist within a structural field marked by vast imbalances of power. Finally, this chapter considers the implications of entanglements for power dynamics *within* communities. Here, the argument made is consistent with one made in the previous chapter, in the context of the Rai Coast villagers’ engagement with George, the young activist originally from Bongu, who had been formally educated and was living in town. In conditions of entanglement, I argue, power *within* local communities often shifts to those best able to negotiate across the ontological difference of the customary and the modern. From here, a discussion of land, land reform and development in Papua New Guinea serves to introduce the analysis of the particular communities which are the ethnographic focus of the chapter.

## **Land and development in Papua New Guinea**

The extension of property relations sits in the nexus of intersecting processes of change. The codification of land systems is, fundamentally, an aspect of state-building—the drawing of forms of land use and governance within the legislative, administrative and judicial mechanisms of the modern state. Particularly in Papua New Guinea, however, such forms of codification have in large part been catalysed by the extension of capitalist systems of production and exchange, particularly forms of large-scale resource extraction led by foreign corporations. To this extent, then, land reforms are a product both of state-building and of economic globalisation. Where these two modernising processes of change converge is the practices and ideologies of ‘development’. At the time that Papua New Guinea gained its independence, in 1975, the writers of the Constitution had a commitment to a model of small-holder led development, captured in the ideal of the ‘Melanesian Way’ (James et al. 2012; Jorgensen 2007). It was this commitment that informed the decision to enshrine customary land tenure as a key feature of the social, political and cultural landscape of the new nation-state. In effect, what the state did was to mandate its own exclusion from the organisation of

land. In the two decades after Independence, however, neoliberalism developed as the dominant political-economic ideology on the global stage—propagated by international financial organisations such as the World Bank, by the governments and foreign aid agencies of key donor countries, including Australia, and increasingly by the political elites within Papua New Guinea. This in turn generated a shift in the way that development was envisaged and pursued, with significant implications for land policy.

The neoliberal approach to development emphasises pro-business deregulation, liberalization of trade, privatization of services, corporate-led economic activity as a means of poverty alleviation, and the use of Gross Domestic Product, economic growth rates, official employment statistics and other formal-sector economic indicators as units of measurement (Gore 2000). Until recently, the neoliberal attitude to land reform was to decry customary land tenures as inefficient, and to call for the introduction of individual freehold title, along with liberalised land markets, as essential preconditions for the expansion of these modernist (capitalist) relations of production and exchange. This was the position of the World Bank, established in its 1975 'Land Reform Policy Paper' (Deninger and Binswanger 1999), and shared by a number of Australian policy advisors influential in shaping Australian foreign policy in regards to the Pacific in the early 2000s (Curtin 2003; Gosarevski, Hughes and Windybank 2004a, 2004b; Hughes 2003, 2004; and for critiques Allen 2008; Fingleton 2005; Holzknecht 2003).

It was under the influence of this neoliberal model that previous attempts to implement the registration of customary land in Papua New Guinea—in 1995 and 2001—were made. Widespread popular opposition, led by an emergent, vocal civil society, led to the abandonment of plans on both occasions. Since that time the approach of both the Papua New Guinean elite and international actors has shifted somewhat, moving away from an emphasis on straight-forward tenure conversion (from customary tenure to a private property regime), towards advocating hybrid systems which seek to find a 'middle-way' between customary land tenure with modern, Western legal frameworks (AusAID 2008; Deninger and Binswanger 1999; Fitzpatrick and McWilliam 2005).



Beneath a language of plurality, however, the political and ideological foundations of ‘middle-way’ land reform differ little from those of their predecessors. The World Bank—the ‘global purveyor of conventional development wisdom’ (Watts 2001: 284)—has ensured that the dominant development paradigm remains premised on neoliberal foundations (Wade 1996). ‘Social capital’, as Bergeron (2003) notes, has become just one more kind of capital to be utilised in the pursuit of economic growth, while the rhetoric of ‘corporate social and environmental responsibility’ has not shaken the commitment to market expansion as the basis and measure of development (Bebbington et al 2008; Eastwood 2011). Likewise, if ‘property rights’ are no longer automatically equated with individualised rights, the Bank continues to emphasise ‘a framework of secure, transparent and enforceable property rights as the critical precondition for investment and economic growth’ (Quan 2000: 38; cf. Peters 2004).

It is this neoliberal approach to development and land reform—firmly grounded in modernist, economic terms—which has informed the policies of the Papua New Guinean state in recent years. In the absence of mechanisms for widespread land registration—mechanisms which have since been introduced in legislation which came into effect in 2012—two key legal instruments have been utilised to facilitate what is widely described in PNG as the ‘mobilisation’ of customary land ‘for development’. Principal amongst these are the *Land Groups Incorporation Act* (1974) and the lease-leaseback scheme. In the first of these, legislation allows for the incorporation of landowning groups as legally recognised entities, able to contract with other entities, particularly corporations. In the lease-leaseback scheme, land is leased from customary owners by the state, which then leases it on to another entity (usually, a corporate developer) through what is termed a Special-purpose Agricultural Business Lease (SABL). It is these two mechanisms that have now been entrenched with the passage of land reform legislation—the *Land Groups Incorporation (Amendment) Act 2009* and the *Land Registration (Customary Land) (Amendment) Act 2009* (Customary Land Act). Both of these mechanisms—the use of Land Groups and of lease-lease-back arrangements—have been central to the dynamics of the tuna industry in Madang, and the relationships between the Rempi, Nobnob and Siar communities, the PNG state, and companies.

What the oft-heard notions of ‘mobilising’, ‘freeing up’, or ‘making available’ customary land ‘for development’ speak to, ultimately, is a process of making land tenure commensurable

with the requirements of modern, capitalist practices of production and economic activity. In PNG, this generally means large scale resource extractive and agro industries—logging, mining, oil palm development, gas and, as will be discussed through this chapter, industrial fishing. The process of ‘mobilising’ land is a process of making land into property, and the people connected to land into ‘landowners’. In practical terms, this involves such steps as the titling of land and codification of systems of land governance, the determining and recording of boundaries, and also the determining and recording of ‘landowners’. Far from a process of simple translation—from customary into modern systems of administration and organisation—this is rather a process of profound social transformation. Nominally concerned to bridge the customary and the modern, these ‘middle-way’ approaches remain firmly lodged within an economistic, modernist frame of reference. Landowners are not simply identified through these processes of reform and codification— they are created.

The recent controversy over the issuing of Special-Purpose Agricultural Business Leases illustrates vividly the ontological tensions which are both created and obscured by the middle-way approach. In 2011 it was revealed that 72 of these long-term leases had been issued by the PNG government in the preceding eight years, over what amounted to a staggering 11 percent of the country’s land mass—5.1 million hectares of customary land (Centre for Environmental Law and Community Rights et al. 2011; Filer 2011; Greenpeace 2012). These leases have overwhelmingly gone to foreign-owned corporations, and have been used particularly for logging and, to a lesser extent, oil palm industry. They have often been issued without the informed consent of landowners, and sometimes without any consent at all. A key way in which this has occurred has been through manipulation of the Incorporated Land Group system, including the incorporation of ILGs with no substantive connection to the customary communities they subsequently acted on behalf of. The SABL scandal has highlighted the extent of the problems plaguing the land administration system—including corruption, inefficiency, and a gross lack of resources and technical capacity. At a deeper ontological level, though, it points to the need to distinguish between the alienation of land in formal legalistic terms, and alienation of land in the experiential sense (including by those who remain formally recognised as ‘landowners’).

A key plank of the middle-way approach is that, through Land Groups and long-term leases, land can be ‘mobilised’ for development, without being alienated from customary landowners.

In the words of the 2007 report of the National Land Development Taskforce: ‘customary lands shall be forever owned by the landowners, in perpetuity, through their Incorporated Land Group’ (NLDT 2007: 88). This assumes, however, that these two things—customary ‘landowners’ and an Incorporated Land Group—are equivalent, that one is simply the legal articulation of the other. It assumes, too, a strictly legalistic conception of ownership that does not necessarily correspond in any substantive way to lived, customary connection to land. In the case of the SABL controversy, what we see is large numbers of communities who remain formally recognised as ‘customary landowners’ but nonetheless alienated from their land in a practical, lived sense. Here, the notion of ‘customary landowner’ is largely emptied of substance, reduced to a modernist, legalistic status with little if any correspondence to a substantively customary form of connection to land.

Far from a flat pluralism—a ‘harmonious’ (AusAID 2008: xii) translation of customary land tenure into modern legal terms—the use of Incorporated Land Groups and long-term leases effects a deep, fundamental transformation in the nature of social connection to land, and in the nature of power. Made into property, land becomes something to be considered independently of the social world; something that can be bought, leased, ‘developed’. This wresting of the natural from the social world is, then, itself a transformation of the social world, of the ways in which sociality is conceived, articulated and practiced. It involves, as well, a rearticulation of the relationship between people and land. Abstracted out from the intimate and particular relations of belonging, land is stripped of its own agentic capacity and potential. Human agents, only, are to be endowed with the capacity to control and effect change in relation to land. The creation of property is also the creation of property owners, and, in relation to these, also renters, investors, squatters, and trespassers. As land is ‘mobilised’ to be used as an asset within the spatially extended relations of the market, it becomes necessary to create structures for regulating those human agents so that their relations are uniform, predictable and ‘legible’ (Scott 1998) across space and linguistic and cultural variables, and independently of known, embodied interaction or shared identity. Abstracted property and market relations require abstracted structures of law, regulation and administration: property law, contract law, commensurate systems of currency exchange, land titles offices, cadastral registries. Through these, more human agents are invested with power in relation to land: lawyers, bureaucrats, policy-makers, judges, cartographers. Collectively, these agents, institutions and structures form the foundations of a modernist cartography of

power in relation to land, and it is with these that customary structures of sociality, law and governance are entangled.

## **The tuna industry in Madang**

The communities which are the focus of this chapter are located on the north coast of Madang Province. Nobnob and Siar are located just outside the Madang Town boundary, with Rempi located 23 kilometres further north. In different ways, each of these communities is currently bound up in complex dynamics related to the presence of industrial tuna fishing and processing activity in the Province. The Nobnob and Siar communities live on and around the site of the Province's existing tuna canning facility, run by the Philippines company RD Tuna, which was granted a 99 year lease over the 6.5ha block of land in 1996. The Rempi community, meanwhile, live alongside a much larger, 216 ha piece of land upon which the Pacific Marine Industrial Zone (PMIZ) is being constructed, and within which RD Tuna's existing wharfing and berthing facilities are located. The PMIZ development represents an attempt by the PNG government to massively expand the scale of its on-shore tuna processing industry, and through doing this to shift PNG's position within the international division of labour in the global tuna industry (Havice and Reed 2012). This is envisaged as a value-adding process, with PNG no longer simply providing raw materials, but rather establishing itself as an exporter of processed, and more profitable, canned and loined tuna products. Demarcated as a Special Economic Zone, the PMIZ will function as an extra-legal area intended to attract spatially-concentrated foreign investment through 'such measures as accelerated depreciation of plant, double deductions for export market development costs and staff training, and tax holidays' (Business Advantage 2011: 43). Once initial infrastructure development is completed operations will be run through the private sector, and the site is forecast to include wharfing, berthing, and processing facilities. A reported ten extra canning factories (additional to RD's existing cannery) will be housed within the site.

The forms of codification of customary land use affecting the Madang communities—leases, negotiations over 'benefit-sharing' agreements, and the formation of Land Groups—are, then, bound up both in processes of state-building and of economic globalisation. The communities'

experiences of *becoming landowners* (cf. Hirsch 2001) however have their roots in processes that long predated the arrival of RD Tuna in 1996. In both cases—for the Nobnob and Siar communities on the one hand, and the Rempi community on the other—the alienation of people from their land is bound up in historical processes of colonialism and missionisation. The 216ha PMIZ site is itself part of a larger 880 hectare block alienated by the Catholic Church during the colonial period, and used for coconut plantations (the Vidar Plantation) and for housing the Alexisshafen mission station, which still operates. Post-Independence, the land came under the control of the corporate arm of the Madang Provincial Government, and this made possible the subsequent leasing of the land to RD Tuna. The claiming of the land by the Madang Provincial Government was, and remains, fiercely contested by the Rempi community as well as by the neighbouring community of Kananam, who insist that the land should have returned to their possession. Likewise, the 6.5ha block of land on which the existing RD Cannery stands—legally identified as Siar Portion 1004—it itself a small part of a much larger, 540 hectare section of land which was the site of the Siar Coconut Plantation, established in the late 1800s by Carpenters Pty Ltd, on behalf of the German administrators of the territory of New Guinea and in close relationship with the Lutheran missionary presence. Again, as with the Rempi community further north, this prior act of alienation laid the basis for granting, by the state, of RD Tuna’s lease over Siar Portion 1004.

### **Asserting claims to land**

For the Rempi<sup>11</sup>, Nobnob and Siar communities—whether under British or German rule, or Australian administration—the missionary, the company boss, and the colonial official have always walked close to one another, and it is against all of these outsiders—both modernist and modernising—that they have had to assert, in varying ways, their connection to land. As an oppositional self-referent (Keesing 1989; Kirsch 2006), one that employs a modernist terminology to assert a claim in the face of modernist, and modernising outsiders, ‘customary landowner’ is one that has been learnt through harsh experience.

---

<sup>11</sup> In Rempi, my fieldwork was concentrated particularly with the Bomase clan, who live in a small village, Bemlon, which is a part of the wider Rempi community.

In Rempi, the Bomase clan tell stories passed down to them of their ancestors' initial contact with the missionaries and German colonialists who first arrived on the North Coast of New Guinea. They tell stories of gifts of salt, beads, tools, and other items given in exchange for what the communities understand to be the right to access and use their land. It is useful here to think back to the narratives and stories told by the *lia nain* of the Cacavei in Timor-Leste (Chapter Four), which described complex patterns of overlaying and intersecting entitlements to land use. They described the ways in which rights to access land, to make gardens or utilise the resources of particular plants or trees could be granted, but stressed that these never diminished or expunged the foundational rights of the first ancestors and those descended from them. In Madang, likewise, people say that it was on these terms that the missionaries and German colonial administrators were permitted access to land. Here, I quote from Peter Gau Sabum, the leader of the Bomase clan. The quote is long, but I include it here in full because it is an important story for his clan, as similar stories are important to other communities living now with the consequences of these deceptions.

At the time the missionaries arrived and wanted to make a plantation, they took our ancestors and they talked to buy the land. Our ancestors did not know they [the missionaries] wanted to buy the land and they [the missionaries] did not say to us that they wanted to buy the land, no. Our ancestors were not like us who went to school and have some knowledge to talk about [negotiate] them making the land [marking it out for plantation].

The mission marked out a huge piece of land and put borders around it. When they finished they gave gifts, they said 'we are giving you gifts'. They did not tell us they bought the land, no, our ancestors did not know that. They [the missionaries] put in a saucepan you all can see down there [pointing in the direction of a house where the large saucepan is still kept]. They put axe, they put tinfish, rice, salt, some round things with holes you can put a rope through and put around the neck...These are the type of items they put—biscuit, rice, a lot of other whiteman things. They told our ancestors 'you take these things'. And they [our ancestors] did not know these things were buying the land, all of them did not know. They said 'they are giving us gifts'. They [the missionaries] wrote our ancestors' names, wrote all the names, and said 'you sign'. Our ancestors did not know how to write so they just held the pen and did some marks and the mission said, that is enough to say you agree [to the sale of the land]. That's how the mission took this land.

The Bomase ancestors did not know that the exchange into which they were entering would mean the alienation of their land. They did not know because the missionaries did not tell them. They were drawn into a performance of a contractual agreement that they did not understand. More fundamentally, though, how *could* they know? The idea of permanent alienation of land is, in the deepest ontological sense, *inconceivable* within a customary framework in which land and people are mutually constitutive. To dispose of land through a sale requires first of all that it be considered something materially separate (and separable) from oneself and one's being—i.e. property—which in itself requires a modernist perspective. Yet, if alienation is inconceivable within a customary framework, it is entirely conceivable within a modernist one. In the entanglement of these two patterns of social relations, the Bomase are forced to negotiate this deep ambivalence: their land is both inalienable and alienated; they are both landowners and dispossessed.

This ambivalence has been intensified for the community by the fact that they were not, at the time that the PMIZ development began, formally recognised by the state as landowners. In explaining their lack of formal landowner status at the beginning of the PMIZ development, the Bomase people say that the neighbouring Kananam people 'got in first' with their origin stories, thus securing recognition as landowners. They themselves held back, they say, because the origin stories—the stories of how the clan ancestors came to their land—are *tambu*, sacred. The knowledge they contain is closely guarded and held only by select individuals, to be passed on in careful and ritualised ways, not widely and publicly revealed, disembedded from the site and social context of its meaning. While the Bomase have, in the time since I finished my research (mid 2010), since gained some recognition as landowners (an ambiguous status in itself, since the land is still considered to be the property of the state), the clan's narratives and experiences of its own exclusion speak to the complex politics of landownership in context of entanglements. What the Bomase clan was grappling with was that public revelation of their sacred knowledge might in fact be the precondition for inclusion within the social relations of capital (this was discussed previously, in the context of this projects' methodology). Such revelation—through legal processes—transforms the ways that knowledge is held, and shifts the site of knowledge from the land itself, where it lives in the memory and embodied presence of the *lapun*, the old man who is the leader of the clan, to the pages of legal documents and the buildings of law courts and land commissions.

Without formal recognition, however, the Bomase were excluded from negotiations and consultations with the state and developers, and feared exclusion from forms of benefit-sharing through which they might hope to receive some share of the wealth being generated by the PMIZ (minimal and debatable as those benefits might be, as we will see in Chapter 7). Their predicament highlights the ambivalent situation within which local communities find themselves in relation to the state and capital. As we will argue in this chapter and in Chapter 7, the extension of modernist forms of relation to land—through ‘development’ and capitalist activity, for instance—diminishes local autonomy and can undermine existing livelihoods. Yet without some accommodation to modernising processes—through seeking legal recognition as ‘customary landowners’—communities are left with little basis from which to exercise any power within the situations into which they, and their land, are nonetheless drawn. The position they occupy in relation to the state brings to mind James Scott’s evocative description of that institution. ‘The state’, Scott says, ‘is the vexed institution that is the ground of both our freedoms and our unfreedoms’ (1998: 7). As the Bomase clan at Rempi struggle to locate themselves both within and against this vexed institution, 23 kilometres down the road the communities at Nobnob and Siar are grappling with the consequences of legal codification of customary connection to land.

### **Land Groups and Landowner Companies in Nobnob and Siar**

The existing tuna cannery in Madang, operated by RD Tuna, stands in the middle of a complex of claims made by local people identifying themselves as ‘landowners’. These claims are made, firstly, against the company. To the extent that both the national and provincial governments are involved in RD Tuna’s operations (having originally invited the company to establish a factory as part of its development strategy, and themselves party to negotiations and agreements with both the company and local communities), these claims are also often made against the state. Thirdly, to the extent that many of them are in competition with one another, they are also claims made by groups within the Nobnob and Siar communities against other groups within those same communities. The primary vehicle for asserting these claims has through the inclusion and codification of various ‘landowning’ groups and clans, including a ‘Landowner Company’, within legal negotiations, documentation, and contractual



agreements entered into with the state and RD company. While not Incorporated Land Groups (although the Landowner Company formed to enter into an agreement with RD Tuna was an incorporated legal entity), the constitution of landowner groups through the process of legal negotiation involves the same dynamics that are now finding expression in the formal ILG process. To this extent, the experiences of the Nobnob and Siar communities provide a useful basis from which to think about the nature and future effects of the ILG process which is now being expanded.

The shifting lines of contestation between different Land Groups<sup>12</sup> in Nobnob and Siar illustrate acutely the ontological dissonances that exist in the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land. Incorporated Land Groups, as Weiner and Glaskin have argued, *elicit* custom, which is to say that they generate a modernist *idea* of custom according to which language, practices and identities are fashioned (Weiner and Glaskin 2007a; cf. Weiner 2006). Recognising, though, that we can distinguish between customary forms of sociality, on the one hand, and custom—*kastom*—as a modernist *idea* of what that sociality entails, one the other, we must recognise that Land Groups do not only elicit custom, they draw together customary and modern ways of being in complex ways. Customary forms of connection to land are indeed transformed through processes of land group incorporation, but this is not to say that ILG's or other forms of Land Groups are solely modernist phenomena. As they are experienced and practiced in the day to day, Land Groups draw customary and modern forms of connection to land into complex configurations. Indeed, it is their entangled character, not simply their modern-ness, that makes them so destabilising of the social and political landscape.

Some brief comments here on the social organisation of the Nobnob area prefigure a discussion of the multiple and contested land claims made by different clans. In my field research in 2010—conducted in the villages of Matupi, Baitabag and Nobnob, all within the larger Nobnob area<sup>13</sup>—a total of eight distinct Nobnob clan groups were identified. These

---

<sup>12</sup> Here I use the term 'Land Groups' to describe the claimants within Nobnob and Siar, recognising that at the time of their negotiations many of these groups were not formally incorporated, but nonetheless can be identified as modernist re-articulations of customary forms of sociality for the purposes of entering into legal, modernist relations.

<sup>13</sup> 'Nobnob' is the name both of the broader area and of a particular village within that area. Similarly, 'Siar' refers to a particular village, as well as the entirety of the area which made up the Siar Plantation (and which also includes the

were: Ditipa, Gidigdi and Abdah (these three clans together forming the Mamagtub tribe), Inad, Sasagas (with three distinct sub-clans identified by respondents), Dadolkud, Hikutpa, and Badalon (this latter grouping being sometimes identified as a clan and other times as a sub-clan, with allegations also made that it is an altogether fictitious or invented clan—a point which we will return to). This general schema appeared to accord, as well, with the groupings represented in the documentary evidence I analysed, including legal agreements, leases, letters and statements of claim, media releases and court rulings all related to RD Tuna's presence. It should be noted, however, that the exact nature and relation of different social groupings within Nobnob is contested. There are claims from some community members that some of the groups presenting themselves as clans are in fact not original landowners but descendants of labourers brought to work on the colonial plantations. Indeed, usage and manipulation of terms such as 'clan', 'sub-clan' and 'tribe' have been widely incorporated into the strategies and narratives of many different claimants across the area, with accounts of the structuring of social groups in relation to one another varying over time as alliances and imperatives shift. Added to this is the erosive impact that the intertwined histories of corporate, church and colonial presence have had on local customary knowledge (cf. Sullivan et al. 2003).

All of these factors make it difficult to give an authoritative account of the social structure in Nobnob. It is important not to overplay the significance of this as a problem, however: the history and story of the area point quite vividly to the dangers of trying to 'fix' custom for the sake of analytical ease, a danger that is as present within ethnographic research as it is within a land titling process. Accordingly, my intention in this discussion is not to adjudicate these competing claims (as was made clear to all of the respondents), but rather to examine the dynamics of the contestation for what they reveal about the power dynamics and ontological entanglements within which the Nobnob communities are embroiled.

---

villages of Matupi, Sagalau and Mis). Much of the Siar Plantation area falls within the broader Nobnob area, but there are some distinctions drawn between them, related particularly to the presence within the Siar Plantation area of communities descended from migrants brought from other Provinces to work as plantation labourers.

### *Competing ownership claims within Nobnob*

The arrival of RD Tuna in Madang marked the beginning of the series of protracted legal and extra-legal conflicts within the community, related particularly to who was to enjoy recognition as the landowners of Portion 1004 by the state and company, and the distribution of benefits (primarily, contracts to run ‘spin-off businesses’—cleaning, security, transport etc.) from the project. Mapping out the contours of these conflicts provides a basis for understanding both the implications of entanglements for power relations *within* local communities, as well as for power dynamics between communities, the state, and capital.

In July 1995, the year prior to the commencement of the cannery’s operations, a Deed of Concern was reportedly signed between the RD company and a man named Bantam Dabid, signing as representative of the ‘Badalon Clan’. Three months later, a statement was signed by representatives of the Sasagas, Hikutpa (identified here as ‘Hikutpa No. 2’) and Ditipa (identified as ‘Didipa Kunta’<sup>14</sup>) clans, calling for the withdrawal of the Deed of Concern on the basis that Badalon were not in fact the landowners of Portion 1004. The following year, the Madang Development Corporation issued RD Tuna with its lease, and construction on the project began. One year later again, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the state of PNG, Madang Provincial Government, RD Tuna Cannery, and representatives of the identified landowners. Here, the three clans identified in the letter of protest—Ditipa Kunta Clan, Sasagas Clan, and Hikutpa No. 2 Clan—are included, and the representatives signing for them are the same men who signed the letter two years prior. A fourth man, Salib Pasagai, is also a signatory, signing as the representative of ‘Badalon *Subclan*’ (emphasis added).

Dan Jorgensen (2007), writing about land claims processes in the area surrounding the Nena/Frieda mining project in PNG’s Sandaun Province, describes those processes in terms of ‘clan-making’ and ‘clan-finding’. Telefolmin claimants in the area around the mine site, he writes, fashioned their claims in the language of clans and sub-clans, despite this being

---

<sup>14</sup> Throughout the written documentation, as well as in people’s recountings of the land claims disputes, a variety of different spellings occur (e.g. ‘Didipa’ and ‘Ditipa’), as well as slight variations in naming. Where these are significant to the content of the analysis—for instance the renaming of clan groups as a means of asserting competing claims—these are discussed in the text. Where the variations relate simply to spelling, however, I have not replicated them but rather consistently used the spellings of the clan names as they were specified to me by my informants at the time of my fieldwork.

contrary to the actual nature of their social organisation: the Telefolmin do not have clan-based societies. Explaining the fiction, Jorgensen argues that 'the state's commitment to customary tenure is framed in terms of the state's own ideas of what customary tenure looks like' (2007: 66), which is to say a model of clans and sub-clans. The state looks for clans, and accordingly the Telefolmin 'create' clans that the state can find (Jorgensen 2007; cf. Weiner 2007). A similar, if less dramatic, manipulation of the language of clans and sub-clans is evident in the claims surrounding Siar Portion 1004. While the Nobnob and Siar communities, like other communities in the Madang area, do have a clan-based system of social organisation, the language and processes of land group incorporation are creating new opportunities for this system to be manipulated. Unlike Jorgensen's analysis of the Telefolmin, however, I suggest that the manipulation of clan identities in Nobnob cannot be seen simply in terms of state elicitation of custom.

The manipulation of clan identities is evident in Nobnob and Siar, particularly, in allegations that the 'Badalon Clan'—on whose behalf Bantam Dabid signed the 1995 Deed of Concern with RD Tuna—is not a clan at all, but rather a group made up of the descendants of plantation workers brought to the area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. After many generations living at Siar, complicated by the realities of extensive inter-marriages, there are no customary 'homes' to which the plantation workers' descendants can return. Their connection to the Siar land is not customary, in the sense that it is not land to which they claim an ancestral connection, but they have nonetheless been drawn into customary forms of community social relations (including social relations of conflict) through their residence on that land. In seeking a share of the benefits which they hoped the RD Tuna cannery would bring, the plantation descendants fashioned themselves in the form that would best support their claims. As the 'Badalon Clan' they were able to present themselves as a legitimate, and 'legible' (Scott 1998) entity, securing both a modern legal and 'customary' basis from which to assert themselves in negotiations.

In objecting to the Deed of Concern signed by Bantam Dabid, the representatives of the Sasagas, Hibutpa and Ditipa clans rejected the Badalons' claim to be rightful owners of Siar Portion 1004. Nevertheless, the Badalon group was included as a signatory in the 1996 Memorandum of Agreement with the company and the state, suggesting some reconciliation between the groups. The reasons again point to the manipulation of clan identities and the

legal process of negotiation. Unpacking the different narratives surrounding the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement, a picture emerges of shifting alliances between clans and social groups, playing out within the new legal-political domain of land groups and benefit-sharing agreements. Within this domain, the two contesting claims for ownership of Portion 1004 come from Badalon and from the Sasagas clan (the latter supported by Hikutpa and Ditipa).

There is, however, another claim made outside of this domain. The Dadolkud clan, another of the eight primary clan groups identified in the Nobnob area, also claims customary connection to the land on which the cannery has now been built. Nongoi, the head of the Dadolkud clan, repeats the assertion made by others, that the Badalon 'clan' are in fact descendants of settlers from the plantation days. All of the eight clans, Nongoi and his supporters insist, 'know' that Dadolkud is the rightful land-owning clan. Nonetheless, Dadolkud has been completely excluded from all of the legal negotiations related to RD's operations. In this context, the shifting alliances of the Badalon appear in a different light. Their own claim to be customary landowners of the cannery site is widely disputed, with no support from any other clans. In contrast, the leaders of the Sasagas clan—particularly, Kumai Musas Mumum and his son John Musas—were able to mobilise support from the Hikutpa and Ditipa clans, and in doing so defeat the Badalons' own claims. Subsequently bringing the Badalons into their alliance, the Sasagas clan was able to further bolster the support for their own claim, and entrench the exclusion of the only other primary claimant, the Dadolkuds. Relegating the Badalon to the status of a 'sub-clan' rather than a 'clan', the representatives of Sasagas, Hikutpa and Ditipa were able to further manipulate the language and relations of clans to give legal effect to the Badalons' junior position within their alliance, and within their negotiations with RD Tuna and the PNG state.

The alliance, however, was not long-lasting. Centrally positioned within it, the Sasagas leaders were able to establish the Daghan Landowner Company, which became the legal entity contracted by RD Tuna to run the 'spin-off businesses' which were to be the main source of benefit for the Nobnob and Siar communities. These business activities—providing security and cleaning services, running a transportation service and canteen for factory workers—were operational for a short time, but collapsed in 2000 amid conflicts within the Nobnob communities and between the Daghan Landowner Company and RD Tuna. Having positioned themselves as the major power-brokers within Nobnob, the leaders of the Sasagas Clan were

subsequently accused by the other clans of monopolising the Company and the benefits from it. More specifically, John Musas was accused of running the company so as to directly benefit his family and members of the particular sub-clan *within* Sasagas of which he is a part, the Damon sub-clan. Allegations of financial mismanagement were made, and another Land Group, presenting itself as the 'Sasagas No. 2 Clan' was formed. In September 2010, a violent attack on the Musas family was made by other residents of the Siar area, including members of the Hikutpa and Ditipa clans. Amidst the confusion and conflict, RD Tuna chose to terminate their agreement with the Daghan Landowner Company, giving as reasons the mismanagement of the money paid to the company, and the fact that it was solely, they alleged, benefitting John Musas and his kin.

Following RD's termination of the Memorandum of Agreement, Musas Mumun (as representative of the Sasagas clan) and his son John Musas (as representative of Daghan Co.) initiated legal action against RD Tuna, the PNG state and Madang Provincial Governments for their breach of the MOA, as well as against the Hikutpa No. 2, Ditipa Kunta and Badalon clans. The case ultimately fell apart because lawyers could not be organised, and because of internal tensions within Sasagas. The result, then, is that John Musas and his father are now relatively marginalised. When RD Tuna began talks in 2009 to build housing for its employees on a piece of land adjacent to the cannery site—Portion 1005—Musas and the Damon sub-clan were excluded from the negotiations, with RD talking instead to representatives of the Ditipa, Inad and Hikutpa clans, as well as the new splinter 'Sasagas No. 2' grouping. Back in Nobnob, the now isolated John Musas has begun reaching out to Nongoi, the leader of the Dadokud clan whose own exclusion Musas was responsible for engineering more than a decade ago. Meanwhile, as the internal lines of alliance and division continue to shift and re-form, none of the 'spin-off benefits' forecast for the Nobnob communities have eventuated (see also Chapter Eight). RD's operations continue.

### **Entangled practices of power**

What does the conflict in Nobnob reveal about the politics of becoming landowners? Where does power sit within this contested landscape, and with whom? In the first instance, while

recognising that the identity of 'customary landowner' is itself a modern one, elicited by the state as well as by capital, the lines and forms of power evident in Nobnob exceed what can be accounted for through a modernist lens. It is certainly the case that the language and practices of clans were manipulated by the Nobnob land claimants, and in the case of the Badalon claimants likely entirely created. Nonetheless, in presenting themselves as a clan, the Badalon claimants were fashioning themselves according to an image that had meaning because it resonated with local experience as well as with state expectations. If theirs was a created clan, it was created from a context of entanglement: a form of self-representation by people negotiating their own placement in the intersection of customary and modern forms of sociality, connected through marriage and emplaced relations of shared proximity to the local communities surrounding them, but also living the consequences of the colonial displacement of their ancestors. Now, also negotiating the arrival of the RD Tuna company, the Badalon 'clan' sought to assert claims for a share of the expected benefits using the language and practices available to them—the legal articulation of landowner groups, and the assertion of a clan identity. As an (attempted) expression of power and agency, the claim was a modernist rearticulation of an idea of custom, but one not entirely disconnected from customary social relations (as existing patterns of practice and meaning).

The manipulation of identities, histories and representations, moreover, needs to be recognised as itself consistent with the exercise of power within customary sociality. The narration of custom in oral traditions, as the French anthropologist Jean Pouillon describes it, is never fixed or exact, but rather 'a structural ensemble which tolerates, and even favours, a form of creativity' (quoted and trans. in Rouland 2001: 15). Annette Weiner, similarly, has pointed to the central role of memory and oral communication in the political domain of customary community:

The recitation of the history of land is not only a 'mythical charter,' in Malinowski's terms, but is also a means of argumentation. Claims are awarded on evaluation of the accuracy of living memory; therefore, a man's memory makes him strong (1976: 42).

Part of this political domain, Weiner suggests, is the *manipulation* of details of land tenure and genealogy, the use and manipulation of knowledge to make and reinforce claims. Genealogies can be 'fictively arranged' (p.42) to suggest strong or weaker ties to founding ancestors. What makes this form of argumentation possible is the immediacy and located nature of customary

forms of communication and epistemology. Knowledge is sustained across time, not through its fixing in the form of durable records—text, digital recordings, etc.—but through its recitation. The telling and re-telling creates opportunities for knowledge to shift, change, and adapt, as each recitation occurs within the context of specific, contingent relationships and social contexts.

Approaching the land claims disputes in Nobnob, what is significant here is, firstly, the presence of multiple, co-existing claims, and secondly, the capacity of customary sociality to accommodate these multiple claims, including the tensions and contradictions between them. Communicated orally—that is to say, within temporally and spatially contingent situations of face-to-face interaction—the assertion and contestation of these co-existing claims is part of the everyday process of making and sustaining social relations within Nobnob. While the shifting alliances and contestation between different claimants can result in very real conflict—the violent attack on the Musas family, for instance—there is also a sense in which this conflict is lived with, and lived through, at the level of the day-to-day.

The presence of co-existing land claims in Nobnob is reflective of that same flexibility which was described in Chapter Four ('Embedded in the Land') as a quality of customary connection to land. In that chapter, I showed that the mutually constitutive relationship between people and land gives rise to mutability in the ways in which both social groups and places are imagined and approached. While land itself is immobile, and inalienable in the sense that it is deeply bound up in belonging and ancestral connection across time, connection to land is not fixed or static. Rather, land is approached through the relationships, histories and migrations of past, present and future kin. Far from a fixed, bounded and enclosed area, land is itself an assemblage of features, objects, marks, stories, materials, spirits, pathways, sites and meanings that are both (to employ a modernist language) 'social' and 'natural'. Connection to land is practiced and performed through day-to-day practices of production and exchange, burial, sacred ritual and emplaced story-telling. Claims to land are multiple, overlapping, and layered, reflecting the complex realities of land use and social interaction, as well as social principles of precedence (particularly in the case of Austronesian societies). The politics of customary landownership in Nobnob, as in Cacavei, reveal different levels and co-existing claims of 'ownership', none of them absolute in the sense that ownership within the Western modern legal tradition is absolute.



The fluidity of land claims in Nobnob, and the accommodation of tension and argumentation within everyday relations, resonates with the accounts of other scholars describing customary land systems, including in Papua New Guinea (Sillitoe 1997), Samoa (Olson 1997), and Africa (van Leeuwen 2010; Shipton and Goheen 1992; Berry 2002). Identifying aspects of customary sociality within the land claims contestation at Nobnob, however, we also need to ask how this political landscape is transformed by modern practices and sites of law and codification. I argue here that there are two key aspects which need to be considered. The first of these concerns the nature of entanglement as a destabilising phenomenon that might encourage practices of agency. To this extent, conditions of entanglement might be considered to amplify the opportunities for, and tendencies towards creative manipulation already present within customary systems of land tenure and argumentation. At the same time, however, entanglements change the nature of customary contestation because they introduce new sites of argumentation, new practices, and new agents. As Pauline Peters (2004) argues persuasively in the context of Africa, the 'negotiability' present within customary land systems must be considered alongside the significant social and political transformations of the colonial and post-colonial period. These two considerations are addressed here, in turn.

### *The destabilisation of structures and possibilities for agency*

I argue throughout this thesis that customary and modern forms of social relations exist, in both Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, in dynamic and shifting configurations. A language of social relations allows us talk about structures as patterns of practice and meaning—ontologically distinct patterns of knowing, communicating, producing, belonging, and understanding—which cut across social, spatial and temporal boundaries. The customary and the modern, I have argued, are *entangled*, and in their entanglement both structures are destabilised, creating multiple possibilities for their reconfiguration. One of these possibilities is that the destabilisation of structures of power not only allows, but in fact encourages, practices of agency and creativity. As they are entangled, neither the customary nor the modern exists absolutely, but rather always partially and in relation to the other. As local communities, and the different individuals and groups within these communities, negotiate the co-existence of customary and modern ways of being in the world, the contingency of each is made more apparent by their partiality, by the awareness of *other*, different possibilities for living and relating. To use Gramscian terminology, entanglement intensifies the possibilities for

the production of counter-hegemonies; the taken-for-granted-ness of hegemonic positions lessened by the experience of difference.

Amongst the Nobnob and Siar communities, the gaps and overlaps between customary and modern forms of connection to land, of argumentation and epistemology, have allowed for the creative manipulation of both systems. As has already been discussed, the incompleteness of the modern system—for instance the relative lack of regulation around the formation of different land groups, and the lack of requirement to ‘fix’ boundaries—has allowed for the continuation of some of the fluidity and negotiation which has been a feature of customary land systems in the Nobnob and Siar areas. Where modern courts and the judicial process are generally held up as a system for determining ‘truth’, for making judgements with a degree of finality and definitiveness, the Nobnob communities have, to some extent, used the legal system in such a way that does not produce definitive judgments, but rather sustains a multiplicity of co-existing, and sometimes contradictory claims. In this way, the disputation around land claims has continued as an everyday, lived, on-going part of social relations between groups.

In the entanglement of the modern legal process with customary forms of social relations, communities have also been able to enact creative strategies which connect their legal claims to emplaced practices of connection to land, for instance through making gardens on the land ‘owned’ by the Lutheran Church, as a basis for a future contestation of the Lutherans’ claims. Similarly, the gaps and overlaps between the customary and modern created an opportunity for the Badalon people to claim some share of the forecast benefits from the RD Cannery. In a country where customary landownership is held to be near-universal (the oft-quoted figure of 97 percent of land under customary tenure), and widely regarded as the basis of most people’s lives, settlers are in a precarious position. This applies especially to settlers such as those in Siar, who are several generations removed from their ancestor’s land, and hence do not have the lived, reciprocal and embodied relationships which are necessary for claiming land rights in their original places of residence (if, indeed, they even know clearly where those places are). Thoroughly entangled, the gaps between the customary and modern land systems created an opportunity for them to counter their own disempowerment.

Nonetheless, if the gaps and overlaps of entanglements create possibilities for manipulation of those systems by local communities, they also enable acts of manipulation by other actors. The contestation in which the Nobnob and Siar communities are embroiled involves not only themselves, but also claims by the state and by the RD company, and the gaps within the modern judicial and legal framework have also benefitted these outside actors. In the first instance, the original transfer of the Siar Plantation site—as with the Vidar Plantation site further north—to the control of the state and then the RD company was arguably made possible by a lack of regulation and ‘proper process’ within the modern land administration system. Similarly, the levels of malpractice, corruption and collusion which are alleged to have occurred in the SABL scandal (the issuing of long-term Special-purpose Agricultural Business Leases to companies without the proper consent of affected communities) speak to the dangers, as well as opportunities, posed to communities drawn into entanglements of customary and modern structures of governance. And, while the ability to form and re-form Land Groups may resonate strongly with customary practices of manipulation of knowledge, genealogies and claims, it has also given the RD company and the state the option of effectively picking and choosing the ‘landowners’ with which it engages. This is evident, particularly, in the exclusion of the Damon sub-clan in the negotiations over the construction of employee housing on Siar Portion 1005.

### *New sites, agents and practices of power*

Pauline Peters (2004), writing in the context of customary land tenure in Africa—and the shift in recent decades towards an embracing of customary tenure in place of the World Bank model of privatisation—cautions against an uncritical privileging of ‘negotiability’ over considerations of equality (cf. Amanor 1999). While she herself arguably privileges a liberal notion of ‘equality’ without socially or critically locating it, her call for caution remains salient. Particularly important is her insistence that the ‘negotiability’ of customary systems be considered in the context of contemporary process of social change. Peters writes:

More emphasis needs to be placed by researchers on who benefits and who loses from instances of ‘negotiability’ in access to land, an analysis that, in turn, needs to be situated in broader political economic and social changes taking place over the past century, particularly during the past thirty or so years. This requires a theoretical move away from privileging contingency, flexibility and negotiability that, willy-nilly, ends by suggesting an open field, to one that is able to identify

those situations and processes (including commodification, structural adjustment, market liberalization and globalization) that limit or end negotiation and flexibility for certain social groups or categories (2004: 270)

Lifting Peter's argument into my own intellectual framework, what this calls attention to is the need to recognise that customary systems and processes—including practices of negotiability, fluidity and manipulation—are entangled with modernist processes and practices. While customary cartographies, articulations and practices of power remain meaningful and significant, these cannot be considered outside of their coexistence, and dynamic intersection with, modernist cartographies and forms of power.

It is within these modernist cartographies of power that the new actors within land disputes—the state and corporate developers—must be situated. But additionally to these we must also recognise the presence of lawyers, bureaucrats, consultants and policy-makers. These are the agents of the judicial, bureaucratic and administrative institutions through which land claims must now be mediated and adjudicated. It was through these institutions that the claims of the Bomase in Rempi were denied recognition, leading to the exclusion of the clan from formal negotiations. It is important to note here that even as, within their customary relations, the clan continued to assert their claims in relation to the Kananam people and in the context of their colonial histories, the state and the RD company were in some sense immune from these claims, located as they were within a modernist system of power through which they were able to deny them legitimacy. It is telling, too, that faced with a modernist denial of their customary claims, the Bomase felt compelled to turn to the modernist arena of the legal system in order to challenge their exclusion from the negotiation process. They have since also taken legal action to challenge the very construction of the Pacific Marine Industrial Zone.

Speaking in 2010 about his clan's exclusion, the Bomase man Daniel Don said of the court case they were hoping to bring, 'It is our last hope, I think'. The legal system does indeed offer opportunities for local communities to challenge, but as the legal challenge to the dumping of mine waste in the Basamuk ocean (Chapter Five) made clear, such challenges often come retrospectively, and themselves shift power and decision-making capacity away from affected communities. They also require significant monetary resources, a fact which itself can then compel reliance on assistance from civil society or other allies, on pro bono work by activist

lawyers (themselves often relatively under-resourced), or else simply makes the legal strategy unfeasible. In Rempi, the members of the Bomase clan were hoping for support from a sympathetic local MP. Some documentation had been filed in the court, but they were unsure of what exactly it involved, and when the case would begin, if at all. Sitting on the balcony of his nephew's house, Daniel said hopefully, but far from confidently, 'maybe next month?' His nephew, sitting alongside him added, 'yeah, but waiting for the money'.

As the adjudication of land claims shifts to the administrative and judicial processes of the state, the governance of land shifts from the site of land itself, which is the grounding of customary power and authority, to the sites of land titles commissions, courtrooms, and government offices. So too is knowledge disembedded from the land to which it pertains, recorded in titles and registration documents rather than in the embodied, situated memories and stories of people who are connected to land—people like the old man, the *lapun*, who is the leader of the Bomase. Recognising the entanglement of the customary and the modern, we can see that customary epistemologies and forms of communication are not expunged. In Nobnob, the dynamic and relation process of claims and counter-claims continues. Yet as much as this negotiability persists, the danger here is that it is against the modernist, definitive statements of 'fact' that these claims are measured and assessed. Indeed, the final termination of the benefit-sharing agreement in Nobnob speaks profoundly to this possibility. As much as the Nobnob and Siar communities were able to engage with the legal system in such a way that allowed a continuation of customary practices of disputation and communication, ultimately it was the company against which all of those communities were positioned which acted unilaterally and, to date, definitively in simply terminating the agreement.

Finally, recognising that customary negotiability must be considered alongside the constraints and dynamics resulting from modernising processes and relations—that is, that customary forms and cartographies of power be considered in their entanglement with modern ones—our attention is also called to implications for power relations *within* communities as well as between communities and external actors. Peters writes, 'not everyone is able to be an interlocutor, and many lose in such negotiations and "conversations"' (2004: 279). Here, she is talking particularly about differing capacities for negotiability within customary tenures, but her point takes on only greater salience if we lift it into a framework of entanglements of ontological difference. Doing so, what we find is that, within local community relations, power

often goes to those able to translate across ontological difference. That is, power goes to those who are best able to position themselves within, and across, both modernist and customary cartographies. This is indeed a matter of negotiability, but is the negotiation of entanglements, not simply the negotiation of customary relations.

In the disputes between the Nobnob claimants, the representative of the Damon sub-clan within the Sasagas clan, John Musas, emerges as someone who was able to gain and assert power within the intertwined communities through his negotiation of both customary and modern forms of relations. Through customary practices of negotiation between different clans, he secured support for Sasagas' claim over the land on which the RD cannery was built. Through his literacy with the mechanisms of courts and administrative processes, he was able to assert this claim within a modernist framework as well, establishing a Landowner Company to enter into a contract with RD and the state, while also demoting the rival Badalon claim through the letter of challenge and through the subsequent designation of Badalon as a 'sub-clan'. In contrast, Nongoi, the leader of the Dadolkud clan, has been unable to translate his customary claims within a modernist legal context, and the effect of this has been the clan's exclusion. Of course, whatever power which John Musas was able to garner through his negotiation of the customary and the modern needs to be set within the context of his ultimate failure to hold on to it. The cancelling of the Daghan Landowner Company's contract reminds us again that possibilities for agency by local communities are made within the context of structures of power that can be weighted against them.

## **Conclusion**

As with the thesis as a whole, this chapter has addressed itself to two key questions, seeking firstly to give an account of the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationships to land (specifically, the entanglement of customary practices of land claims with modern relations of ownership), and subsequently to identify the implications of this entanglement for relations of power. It has argued that the process of *becoming landowners* amounts not simply to a translation of the customary into a modern legal framework, but is rather a process of transformation. Becoming landowners—through the formal recognition and codification of

Land Groups—positions communities (now, ‘landowners’) within modernist cartographies of power, drawn into relationships with the agents, sites, and processes of the state. These relationships are themselves also embroiled with the dynamics of global capital, as forms of codification of landownership are compelled and sought within the context of corporate industry.

Within modernist relations of land ownership, a philosophical divide is enacted between the natural and social worlds. As land becomes something that can be alienated, forms of governance over land—agents, sites and processes—are themselves disembedded from it. In these ways, the process of becoming landowners lends itself to the diminishing autonomy of local communities. Customary cartographies of power, and customary forms of connection to land, are not expunged, but rather entangled—ambivalently and in tension—with these modernist ones. It is this profound ontological difference that is unrecognised by proponents of the new ‘middle way’ approaches to land.

Recognising the tensions between customary forms of connection to land, and modernist relations of property, we also need to draw a distinction between two issues which are too often conflated: on the one hand, weaknesses, flaws, or malpractice in the enactment of modern systems and processes; and on the other, the ontological tensions between the modern and the customary, even if the modern is ‘properly’ functioning. In the first instance, we can point to a litany of faults in the formal system of land administration and governance in PNG: the under-resourcing of Land Titles Commissions (in Madang there has not been a functional Land Titles Commission since the last Commissioner died in 2009); the prevalence of corruption in the issuing the leases or formulation of Incorporated Land Groups (as has been illustrated vividly in the controversy over Special-purpose Agricultural Business Leases); the lack of proper recording and storage of land title and documents (evident in the confusion over the freehold status of Siar Portion 1004); and so on. These are serious failings which can, and do, have deleterious effects upon the ‘rights’ of customary landowners. The new legislation on Incorporated Land Groups may remedy some of these failings. For instance, a new prohibition on membership of multiple Incorporated Land Groups could well limit current practices in which Land Groups are formed specifically to serve particular corporate interests (through generating ‘landowner consent’), without necessarily being in any way reflective of actual patterns of customary community and entitlement to land on-the-ground. Yet remedying

these errors will not relieve the fundamental ontological tensions between modern and customary forms of connection to land.

Within this destabilised landscape, 'landowner' stands as a deeply ambivalent signifier. To draw on Anna Tsing's (2005) work, it is 'engaged universal' which, in conditions of 'friction', can mean different things to parties who nonetheless converse across their difference. As we have seen both in this chapter and in the previous one, it can provide an identity that can be leveraged by communities *against* the state and the company. Within the context of entanglements, formal recognition and codification of 'ownership' can give communities a voice and capacity to engage within the abstracting processes of 'development' and the expansion of capital and industry. What we saw on the Rai Coast, in the previous chapter, was claims to land being enacted from the site of that land, and it is here that we can start to see the potential for a discourse and practice of landownership that is empowering for local communities. Articulated in, and from, land, assertions of customary landownership do not simply speak to the abstracting processes of the modern but rather anchor those abstracting processes and relations back into forms of belonging, sociality, and power which are rooted in land, in embodied and embedded relationships, and in the particularity of place. Yet, what the experiences of the Nobnob, Siar and Rempi communities show us is that such articulations—such expressions of agency—must be recognised as assertions made against the weight of power.



## 7. Making Land Work? The economic and cultural politics of development

---

In the previous chapter, I focussed on the extension of modernist property relations through codified landowner groups and long term leases. As a key aspect of state-building—the extension of modern legal, administrative, judicial and political systems of governance in relation to land—the making of ‘landowners’ is in large part propelled by the desire to render land compatible with the requirements of capitalist industry, particularly resource extractive industry driven by foreign investment. To this extent, processes of state-building and globalisation can be seen to be deeply intertwined. A key point at which they coalesce, as we saw in the previous chapter and also on the Rai Coast (Chapter Five), is in the dominant practices, discourses and imaginings of *development*. Extending and developing the exploration of development as a modernising process of change in relation to land, this chapter takes as its focus the extension of modernist relations of production and exchange across land. Doing so it seeks to examine both the economic and cultural dimensions of this aspect of development. These two dimensions, I argue, are deeply intertwined, and both have relevance for thinking about forms of connection to land and the broader ways of being associated with them.

In relation to the economic, or material aspects of development, I argue in this chapter that the extension of capitalist modes of production and exchange both undermines and ideologically devalues customary forms of subsistence production, as well as forms of informal sector economic activity (which stretch across both the customary and the modern). In its dominant articulations, development seeks to *make land work*, within a very particular ontological understanding of what ‘working’ means (this phrase, ‘making land work’, is taken from the title of a 2008 publication on Pacific land reform produced by the Australian aid

agency AusAID). Customary practices of subsistence agriculture, as well as forms of informal sector economic activity, are chronically devalued, or else ignored, within the dominant criteria through which relations of 'development' and 'underdevelopment' are assessed. They do not *count*. At the same time, these forms of production and exchange become harder to sustain as land is 'mobilised' for capitalist industry, and people 'mobilised' as workers. As this happens, communities are increasingly drawn into extended cartographies of power within which the sites and agents of power—both material and symbolic—are located elsewhere.

Beyond the economic realm, making land and people 'work' brings with it particular visions of the good life, of success and status. Development, then, and processes of globalisation related to systems of production and exchange, must be considered in terms of their economic, but also their cultural dimensions. The cultural dimensions of development have relevance for thinking about land firstly because ideas of the 'developed' life are often strongly associated with an urban, modern mode of relationship to land. Secondly, they are relevant because the promises and desires associated with 'development' are often a key motivating factor underpinning people's decisions to enter into long-term leases with corporate developers or otherwise allow forms of capitalist industry onto their customary land. We saw this clearly in the case of the Kurumbukari landowners, whose story was recounted in the opening chapter. For the Kurumbukari clans, as for other landowning groups in Papua New Guinea and further afield, using customary land as a tradable commodity often appears as one of the only ways of accessing 'development' and all that is associated with it. Both the material processes and cultural meanings attached to development serve to draw local communities into complex social relations and cartographies across national, regional, and global levels of scale.

From here, this chapter proceeds firstly by considering the ways in which 'development' acts to undermine and ideologically devalue customary subsistence and the entangled practices of the informal economy. I point particularly to the economic reductionism and formal sector bias of development as key factors in this devaluing. Following from the previous chapter, the Pacific Marine Industrial Zone and RD Tuna Cannery provide sites from which to consider these processes. The second half of the chapter moves into the consideration of development as a cultural, ideational and symbolically laden phenomena. Here, I consider the cultural politics of development through the lens of consumption—specifically, the consumption of *tinpis*, the little tins of tuna which are produced by the RD factory and which function, ambivalently, as

signifiers both of status and of dispossession. In one sense, considering practices of consumption shifts the empirical focus away from land, but it is important to recognise that the kinds of affective dynamics evident within such practices are in fact deeply bound up with the ways in which land is imagined, and decisions about land are made. Recognising this means moving away, as I have sought to do throughout this thesis, from a limited technical focus on land and land tenure. Instead, I seek to here to engage with the ways that land intersects with broad and far-reaching questions of culture, identity, belonging and livelihood, with questions of desire and value, and with the ways that people understand themselves, and others, in the world.

In the final section of the chapter, I move to consider some of the ways in which hegemonic understandings of development are being challenged by Papua New Guinean activists working in and with local communities in Madang. Here, customary ways of being are valued and rearticulated as a source of pride (rather than humiliation), and a basis for autonomy. A rearticulation of customary connection to land is central to this counter-hegemonic vision of 'development' and the good life, with considerations of economy and livelihood consciously tied to considerations of culture and identity.

Across the chapter, then, we see developed the overall argument of the thesis: entanglement, complex and deeply ambivalent, is destabilising structures of power in ways that lend themselves to the diminishing of local autonomy. This occurs economically, as power within relations of production and exchange shifts from local communities to the actors, sites and processes of globalising capital, but also culturally, as commodities are invested with meaning and some ways of life valued over others. Still, these hegemonic processes are not absolute, and the ambivalence of entanglement also creates new opportunities for articulating alternative visions of the good life, and for privileging alternative criteria of value.

### **Development and the devaluing of subsistence**

The idea of development is an extraordinarily pervasive one across the Pacific, as it is around the world. It is one of those concepts, as James Ferguson (1990: xiii) notes, that forms 'the very

framework within which argumentation takes place'. In Gramscian terminology, it is a hegemonic notion, one that has a 'common sense' quality. At its core, 'development' invokes a linear imaginary of progress that is fundamentally modernist, but which in many ways has been naturalised to the point of seeming self-evident. This is the idea that people and places around the world can be categorised according to their level of development (developed, developing, underdeveloped) and that those who are 'less developed' would be better off being 'more developed'. Challenging this foundational premise, critics such as Arturo Escobar (1995) have shown that the dominant ideologies of development do not simply reflect existing divisions in the world, but rather create them. Development 'makes' the Third World, and in doing so it constructs its own subjects—the 'undeveloped'—in a permanent relation of inequality with the 'developed' West. Development's 'regimes of representation' are also 'originary sites of violence', Escobar tells us, suppressing local culture, histories, identities, and women (Escobar 1995: 214). In context of this particular thesis, what we need to draw attention to is that the benchmark against which development's subjects are measured is not simply the 'developed' West, it is the *modern* Western world. The categories, relations and practices against which the development (or underdevelopment) of places like Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste are measured are modern ones. What will be shown throughout this chapter is that dominant practices and ideologies of development render customary ways of life through a persistent language of deficit.

In relation to land, the benchmark against which development is measured is one of productivity (measured in economic terms of growth rates, Gross Domestic Product, formal sector income generation, output and profit rates), and of property rights (whether in the form of individual freehold or some form of codified customary tenure). It is these criteria that were emphasised in a document produced in 2008 by the Australian aid agency AusAID. Nominally suggesting an about-turn in Australian foreign policy in the Pacific, which had throughout the early 2000s strongly advocated for tenure conversion from 'communal' to private freehold title, the new 'middle-way' approach (as was discussed previously in Chapter Six) in fact remained strongly wedded to these modernist criteria of value and evaluation. Under the title 'Making Land Work', the document proposed mechanisms—primarily, registration (codification) of customary tenure and long-term leases—as a 'middle way' basis for 'reconciling customary land and development' (AusAID 2008: 2). Ignoring the fundamental ontological tensions present within such middle-way approaches (Chapter Six), it moreover left

the notion of development unchallenged. 'Development' remained equated to 'economic growth' (see for example AusAID 2008: 26)

In 2010 campaigners from the Papua New Guinean NGO the Bismarck Ramu Group (BRG), and Vanuatu NGO the Vanuatu Kaltoral Senta (Cultural Centre) participated in a speaking tour organised by the Australian NGO Aid/WATCH. Speaking to an audience in Melbourne, BRG campaigner Steven Sukot sought to explain his opposition to the Australian aid agency AusAID's 'Making Land Work' program. 'I don't think it's appropriate for the Australian government to be coming and telling us how to make land work', he said. 'Land has been working for us always.' Stating as such he was voicing a perception of neo-colonial interference by the Australian government in its former colony, but more deeply than this he was pointing to two very different conceptions of what it means for land to 'work'. It is these differing conceptions that go largely unrecognised within the dominant development paradigm. Privileging one understanding of what it means for land, and people, to 'work', customary forms of connection to land and are rendered in terms of *lack*.

As Braun and McLees (2011) have argued, in relation to large-scale development projects in Lesotho, Southern Africa 'development authorities and the state view places as empty and abstract spaces in need of productivity' (p.5). The result of viewing places and people as 'empty', they argue, is that 'the social and economic violence of displacement and the loss of control over resources' are rendered invisible (2011: 5). Against the universalising of the modern—which is to say, against the fundamental premises of the contemporary land reform and development agenda—customary practices of production and exchange are rendered through a language of deficit; the ways in which customary land 'works' ignored.

If 'seeing like a state' (Scott 1998) demands the abstraction and simplification of connection to land—in the forms of *property* and *ownership*, titling and cadastral mapping—'making land work' (in a modern, capitalist sense) also demands that relationships of production and exchange are made 'legible'. Legibility here, as well, is an effect of abstraction and simplification (Scott 1998). Specifically, what is legible to a state (or a party to a capitalist transaction) is what can be quantified. Two aspects here are key, and will be unfolded further in relation to the PMIZ and the RD Tuna cannery: firstly, the separation (analytical and

ideological) of the 'economic' as a separate realm of social practice; and secondly, a failure to take the informal sector into account.

### *Economic reductionism*

Rooted in the broader epistemological project of the Enlightenment, the categorisation of knowledge and human life into distinct areas of specialisation is particularly modern, and it was out of the Enlightenment that the economic emerged as a distinct realm of social life as well as of academic inquiry. Modern, too, was the development of uniform and quantifiable measures of comparison and evaluation—GDP, growth rates, income, cost, etc. This modernist project of division and abstraction take on a particular intensity within the ideological climate of neoliberalism, which holds not only that the economic stands as an analytically distinct realm of human interaction, but also that it can be considered in absolute isolation from other realms, including the political, cultural, and ecological (Steger and Roy 2010). This is the foundational premise upon which the notion of the self-regulating market—within classical liberalism, Smith's (1983 [1776]) 'invisible hand'—is founded, and which is amplified within contemporary neoliberalism.

What is lost in this economic reductionism is the myriad social, cultural, and ecological aspects of customary production and exchange. In Chapter Four, 'Embedded in the Land', I looked at gardening as a key way in which the living members of a customary community (in my example Cacavei, in Timor-Leste) access and perform kinship relationships across time. Considered through a modernist lens, gardening is a form of production of goods (food stuffs) that have a basic material purpose (nutrition, sustenance) as well as an exchange value that allows them to be sold or traded for money or other goods. Through such a modernist lens, the physical practice of gardening is *labour*, and is of interest only to the extent that it is the means through which goods are produced. Such a reductionist view, however, fails dramatically to capture the significance and substance of gardening in Cacavei and in other customary communities. What we saw in Chapter Four was that the sociality of gardening both reflected and generated ties of shared belonging and co-identification between members of social groups—*nuku* and *aldeia*—including those members who were deceased (ancestors) and those who had yet to be born. It did this, particularly, because it was a means of connecting to the land within which ancestors were embedded, and through which the social relations of the living were

constituted and made meaningful. Gardening, then, has vital social and cultural functions within customary society that extend far beyond the production of food crops. These are obscured in the economic reductionism of the dominant development paradigm.

### *Formal sector bias*

Beyond rendering practices of production and exchange through a narrow, economic lens, there is a pervasive tendency within development to narrow the field of vision even further, such that the focus is specifically on *formal sector* economic activity and indicators. What we see in discourses around the PMIZ, as in too many other large-scale development projects in PNG, is a chronic failure to take the *informal* economy into account. Here, I define the informal economy as relations of production and exchange which occur either entirely or largely outside of state regulatory systems, including taxation systems, and corporate and labour laws. Such activity is often recognised by the state and development agencies—for instance, town centres in PNG (including Madang) have semi-regulated spaces set aside for ‘Informal Sector Markets’—but it is rarely valued on par with formal sector activity. As James et al. (2012: 216-217) observe, informal economies are treated, within mainstream development and state-building discourses, as ‘shadow economies’. As an unfortunate but pervasive phenomenon within the Global South, the assumption here is that development will involve a progression integration of such irregular activity ‘into the economic centre’ (p.216). In other words, formal and informal economies are placed in an unequal relation to one another, one that is inscribed with the language and politics of ‘progress’ and modernization.

The informal sector is of particular interest here because it is fundamentally a space of dynamic entanglement, involving both customary practices of production and exchange—subsistence and barter, for example—as well as forms of income-generating activity through which people negotiate and work across the different worlds of the cash economy and subsistence production (cf. James et al. 2012: 218-219). Notable here are forms of roadside marketing where surplus garden crops are sold, or where women (and it is predominantly women involved in this form of marketing) make and sell foodstuffs—fried fish on skewers, scones, lollies, soft drinks or frozen ices bought or made in bulk and then sold individually on the roadside or at markets in either rural or urban settings. In both Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, the informal economy also includes sales of alcohol, cigarettes, and other

stimulants, including *buai* (beetlenut) in PNG, and *tua* (palm wine) in Timor-Leste. The contexts, forms and scales of informal economic activity vary greatly. In PNG the contrast between a village-based mother selling individually-wrapped sweets for 5 toea (2 or 3 Australian cents), and a highly-organised network of traders purchasing truck-loads of *buai* for transportation to the Highlands where they will be sold for tens of thousands of kina, gives some indication of the diversity of activities that fall under the banner of the informal economy. Common to both, though, is that they are positioned at the interface of customary and modern forms of production and exchange, whether that involves the generation of small amounts of cash income to supplement an otherwise subsistence-based livelihood, covering the cost of school fees and a few store-bought staple goods, or a major profit-making entrepreneurial operation mobilising the resources and social networks of a clan or tribe. *Differently weighted* configurations of custom and modernity, to be sure, both are nonetheless practices of entanglement.

Within a modernist frame, however, such activities are less likely to be recognised as creative entanglements of custom and modernity, as they are to be rendered through a language of deficit as embryonic, second-rate, or less desirable versions of modernist, formal sector economic activity. Additional to this is the fact that informal economic activities are enormously difficult to quantify. By definition, they occur at least partly outside the administrative and bureaucratic processes through which statistical ‘indicators’ are gathered (job figures, income rates, etc.). The combination of these two factors means that the informal economy is almost always devalued, and oftentimes completely ignored. As such, the PNG state might erect covered market places in Port Moresby or Madang for the informal selling of produce and handicrafts, but it still premises its Medium Term Development Strategy on a criteria of economic assessment (becoming a ‘middle income country’, measured by the World Bank according to Gross National Income) from which the informal economy is excluded.

To the extent that they inform development policies, decisions, and practices at national as well as local levels, the inherent biases of these calculations have very real impacts on people’s lives. Through them, places and communities are inscribed as places and people without jobs, without cash, without ‘security’, without industry and investment, without ‘development’, rather than as place and people with *different* livelihoods and forms of work, different systems



of exchange, cultures, ways of being. The existing productive capacity (economically speaking, as well as in a broader socio-cultural sense) of land is ignored.

## **The Pacific Marine Industrial Zone**

Both the economist reductionism and formal sector bias of the dominant development paradigm can be seen clearly in the practices and discourses surrounding the Pacific Marine Industrial Zone (PMIZ) in Madang. This is the major 216 hectare Special Economic Zone, discussed in the previous chapter, which is being constructed to house ten new tuna canning factories and associated wharfing and berthing facilities. The PMIZ is being hailed as a major development in PNG. In March 2008, then Minister for Commerce and Industry Gabriel Kapris declared that the PMIZ had the potential to generate revenue for PNG and other Pacific Island countries of up to US\$2 billion (Kina Securities Limited 2008: 4). Proponents of the project have touted the figure of 30,000 jobs for ‘locals’, to be generated directly and indirectly through the project, and heralded economic benefits for years to come (Noho 2009).

The claims which are made about the project as employment-generating provide one example of the formal-sector bias of the development paradigm. In the first instance, there are good reasons to be sceptical even when taking the claim on face value. In Madang, as elsewhere in PNG, there is a long history of development projects in which jobs initially projected to go to Papua New Guineans in fact end up being filled in many instances by foreign migrant workers. This has been evident at the Ramu Nickel mine, as well as at the existing tuna cannery operated by Philippines company RD Tuna (see for instance Sullivan et al. 2003). Certainly, in the case of the PMIZ, PNG has been trying to entice other Pacific Nations—many of whom are keen to establish tuna processing facilities in their own countries and hence have been less than enthusiastic about PNG setting itself up as a regional player—to get behind the project by holding out the prospect of jobs for their citizens.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Maureen Penjueli, director Pacific Network on Globalization, personal communication December 2011.

More fundamentally, the projection of the PMIZ as ‘job-creating’ is problematic because it pays no attention to the existing work and livelihood activities of local communities, in terms of both customary subsistence agriculture and fishing, and informal income-generating activities. So, for instance, the International Financial Corporation, which assisted the PNG government in selecting the site for the PMIZ and gave advice on setting up a Special Economic Zone, argues for the desirability of the project on the basis that ‘there is currently a small domestic formal sector [in PNG], which is incapable of absorbing the workforce generated by a rapidly growing population’ (IFC n.d.). And Havice and Reed, who otherwise offer a thoughtful and critical analysis of the PMIZ, write that ‘capturing greater value from tuna, particularly through job creation, is of considerable interest in PNG, a country with chronic unemployment [and] pervasive underemployment’ (2012: 414). Of course both statements are correct, to a point; their fault is not so much in the content of what they say as in what they neglect to say. There *is* a chronic shortage of formal sector employment in the country, particularly amongst school leavers and for the country’s urban populations, but there is also a massive informal sector which sustains the livelihoods of most of the population. More formal sector jobs would indeed be a positive development, but the very real danger in Madang at the moment is that the creation of some formal sector jobs through large-scale industrial development will in fact undermine the existing—informal—livelihood activities of local people, which are tied very closely to the ways that people live on, and use, their land.

In Rempi, the community on whose land the PMIZ is being built, a particularly important source of livelihood activity comes from the trade of *buai* (beetlenut) to Highlanders who drive down along the North Coast Road (along which Rempi is situated) and purchase *buai* in large quantities to be taken back to the Highlands and sold on. It is telling that many of the Rempi community have resisted formal sector employment at both the RD Wharf, located close to the village in neighbouring Kananam, and the existing RD Tuna canning factory in Nobnob, because the income they can generate on their own land through this informal trade is so substantially higher than the wages they would receive from the RD company. These informal livelihoods—resistant to quantification, and ideologically devalued in relation to formal sector economic activity—have not been valued and factored in to the evaluations of the project’s costs and benefits. To return to the point made by Braun and McLees (2011), when existing livelihoods, patterns of land use and production are ignored within discourses of development, the social and economic violence which such development can engender is also rendered invisible.

A third problem with the claim that the PMIZ will be income-generating is that the figure of 30,000 jobs for 'locals' (Noho 2009) conflates local community members in the project-affected area with 'locals' understood more generally as PNG nationals. Here, the politics of land emerge acutely, as the abstracted community of the modern nation is accorded priority over the local articulations of community that are given meaning through customary, genealogical and place-bound relations of belonging. So conflated, the language of job-creation conceals the fact that the PMIZ will almost certainly generate the large-scale migration of Papua New Guineans from other Provinces (and possibly Pacific Islanders from other countries) into Madang. More specifically, it will involve the migration of large numbers of people who are, in a customary sense, outsiders, onto the customary lands of communities (Kananam, Rempi, Nobnob, and Siar) within which tensions between landowners and settlers are already acute.

### **The RD Tuna Cannery**

In Madang, you do not have to look far to see evidence of the economic and social damage which can emerge when customary land is 'mobilised' for modern, capitalist forms of industry, and existing informal and customary forms of production both devalued and undermined. When the existing RD Tuna cannery factory was established in 1997, the projected 'benefits' for landowners were significant. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the Memorandum of Agreement signed between the Siar landowners, PNG state, Madang Provincial Government and RD Tuna Cannery outlined a series of 'spin-off benefits' for landowners, of which precious little eventuated. The contract to run spin-off activities—running cooking, cleaning, security, transport services, for example—was cancelled by RD Tuna in the context of disputes between the communities and the company, and between clans within the communities. As was discussed in Chapter Six, the capacity of the company to cancel the contract resulted from the significant power imbalances at play, and its ability to manipulate, for its own benefits, the gaps and overlaps which inevitably exist when customary forms of connection to land are entangled with modern ones through forms of codification. So then, without the spin-off benefits, what is left?

In terms of direct employment, the RD cannery employs 2,800 workers, of whom 90 percent are women (Havice and Reed 2012: 426). Many of these are drawn from local communities, as well as settler communities in Madang Town and further along the north-coast highway. In interviews and conversations with community members in the Nobnob and Siar areas, the primary motivations for employment were given as the need to earn cash for school fees, clothes and household expenses. As RD's own Environmental Plan noted, 'the people of these villages are already dependent on the cash economy' (quoted in Sullivan et al. 2003: 23). What was *not* noted, however, is that that dependence is itself largely a result of the community's lack of land for subsistence agriculture, which is the result of the alienation enacted first by the German Administration, followed by the state and then the RD Tuna company. Nor is it noted that, as at Rempi, the cash income available from waged employment at the cannery is often far lower than that which can be made from informal marketing of garden produce, fish, or beetlenut. Havice and Reed (2012: 426) reach a similar conclusion, noting that the fortnightly pay of cannery workers is roughly equivalent to what women can earn in 3-5 days of roadside marketing. Tim Anderson's (2008) survey of women roadside sellers in Madang similarly found that informal sector activity was generally much more lucrative than formal sector employment, with 82 percent of the sellers surveyed earning more than 50 kina a week, higher than the then-minimum weekly wage of K37.20. Fifty percent were earning over K100 a week. Even taking into account the 2011 increase in the minimum wage, which brought it to just over K100 a week (Matbob 2011), informal marketing remains a more profitable option for many, especially given that the hours required are generally shorter and more flexible. With the loss of land to the cannery, however, gardening, informal fishing and marketing are all becoming more difficult for people living in the Nobnob and Siar areas.

Far from the cannery providing livelihoods to those who did not have them before, what we are in fact seeing is that, in many cases, the presence of the cannery is undermining existing informal economic activity and the conditions for subsistence fishing and agriculture within communities whose members are *then* left with little option but to pursue waged labour with the company. Nancy Sullivan et al., in a social impact study of the RD Cannery completed in 2003, argue that:

The Kananam, Nobnob and Siar people are locked in a cycle of dependency that is grinding away at the very fabric of their sociocultural life. Without land, they must fish. With RD's presence they cannot fish as they once did. Without fish, they must

labour for RD, which prevents them from working on their gardens. Without sufficient pay, they cannot feed their families, or pay school fees or health expenses. They are locked in a double bind: no way to sustain themselves, and at constant risk of losing everything (Sullivan et al. 2003: 7-8).

Where 'development' invokes notions of prosperity and security, the predominant experience of these communities is of a deep insecurity. Here is starkly evident the destabilisation of entanglement, in its most negative expressions: alienated from land, and with subsistence practices of production and exchange increasingly untenable, the communities affected by the RD Tuna Cannery have lost the security of their customary systems, and the autonomy which those systems accorded them, while at the same time being drawn in to modern systems of production and exchange in only the most marginalised and precarious of ways.

### **Ambivalent desires: land, culture and consumption**

So far, this chapter has shown that development—as a discourse and set of practices—privileges modernist forms of production and exchange over customary ones, and in doing so privileges a particular ideal of what it means for land, and people, to 'work'. Through this privileging, customary practices of subsistence agriculture and associated informal economic activities are devalued and undermined. Customary practices of production and exchange, however, and the forms of connection to land that they entail, should not be reduced to solely economic processes. Indeed, the mainstream development paradigm has already been criticised in this chapter for precisely that type of reductionism. We need to recognise, for instance, that the devaluing of subsistence has effects that go far beyond the economic, including effects at the level of desire, subjectivity, culture, and imagination.

One area in which we can see these affective and ideational dynamics of development playing out is in relation to practices of consumption. There are two key aspects of these practices that have relevance for thinking about land and development. Firstly, the growth of the tuna industry in Madang is, as Campling et al. (2012: 182) point out, a process of commodification of subsistence. As customary land is transformed into modern land, and customary practices of production are both devalued and materially undermined, the consumption of food from

people's own gardens or waters increasingly gives way to a reliance on store-bought foods (and the cash income required to purchase them). Secondly, patterns of consumption (including food consumption) serve as powerful, if ambivalent, signifiers of 'development' (or the lack thereof). Desire for development is often articulated through desire for commodities (cf. Macintyre and Foale 2004), and the production and consumption (or non-consumption) of commodities has a powerful communicative effect. As Kopytoff has argued, the production of commodities is 'a cultural and cognitive process: commodities must be not only produced as material things, but also culturally marked as being a certain kind of thing' (1986: 64). Here, I briefly explore some of the cultural and cognitive processes attached to consumption, taking as a focus *tinpis* (tinned fish)—the little cans of tuna that are produced at the RD cannery at Siar.

*Tinpis* is, along with rice, tea, sugar, instant noodles and corned beef, a staple store-bought food item found widely across Papua New Guinea. Within the peri-urban Nobnob and Siar areas, the consumption of *tinpis* points to one key way in which the commodification of subsistence impacts on the nature of people's relationship to land: namely that shops and trade-stores are increasingly supplementing, and in some cases replacing, people's own land as a source of food. This is particularly the case for those communities living in and around the area of the Siar Plantation, whose land has been alienated and who are thus unable to make gardens. It is evident, too, amongst those might have access to some land but are employed at the RD cannery and so do not have the time to maintain and tend to gardens. Likewise, too, stores and markets become the primary sources of food for settlers who move to the Siar and Nobnob areas for work (or simply for the hope of work), as they do for most people who move to any of Papua New Guinea's towns or cities. The shift away from one's own land as a primary source of food, then, involves a reliance on cash income that in turn requires income-generating work, whether in the formal or informal sector. Conversely, participation within these forms of work can also precipitate a shift away from gardening. Beyond a narrow economic view, we can also recognise that the shift away from gardening is a shift away from practices of everyday connection to land that are also bound up in forms of ritual, history, and the embodied maintenance of relationships with kin.

Life without access to land on which to make gardens can be exceptionally hard. Yet, the urban or 'modern' life is also valued and sought-after, and the cultural meanings attached to

commodities such as the *tinpis* that the RD cannery produces illustrate well the complex and ambivalent ways in which different forms, and sites, of life are imagined. Store-bought foodstuffs have become, in many ways, markers of status and ‘development’, and are considered more ‘prestigious’ than locally-produced food (Curry 1999: 290). Their increased consumption and availability in urban as opposed to rural contexts can be invoked as a marker of the ‘backwardness’ of the latter (Errington and Gewertz 2004; Gewertz and Errington 1999;), and purchasing power has become a marker of status and even of masculinity (Bainton 2008).

The cultural meanings associated with consumption are by no means restricted to food. As Martha Macintyre and Simon Foale have argued, many customary landowners ‘seem to be desperate for a taste of consumerism, in any of its multitudinous forms, and appear to be willing to gamble their resources, and in some cases their food security to get it’ (2004: 161). Cars, particularly, feature as powerful symbols of success. Anecdotally, stories abound about communities said to have signed over their land to resource extractive companies for little more than the promise of a new car, something that speaks both to the pervasive reach of ‘development’ as an idea and an imaginary, and to its tight coalescence with consumption. As a Papua New Guinean friend commented to me once, with more than a hint of sarcasm, ‘Oh, when you have a car, that’s it. You’re there. You are developed!’

In the colonial era, the idea of ‘cargo’ was used to refer to the material items introduced to the country by the colonialists, and which were perceived by many Papua New Guineans to be sources of the power that they clearly wielded (cf. Burrige 1960; Errington and Gewertz 2004; Hermann 1992; Lawrence 1964). In recent years, the term has been re-deployed in the context of post-colonialism and ‘development’. Campaigners and activists at the local Bismarck Ramu Group NGO, for instance, commonly bemoan the ‘cargo thinking’ of some people, by which they mean their expectation that international development organisations will deliver goods and services. As a one-way process of distribution, ‘cargo thinking’ stands in contrast to customary forms of reciprocal exchange. ‘Cargo thinking’, too, refers to the expectation that participation in development projects—that is, business led resource-extraction and other economic activity—will generate access to material goods, including cars, nice clothes, mobile phones, and consumption of higher status (store-bought) foods. Consumption of items such as *tinpis*, then, can be a signifier of status that serves to distinguish a ‘modern’ from a ‘traditional’

life; a 'developed' life from an 'undeveloped' one. The cultural meanings attached to relations of consumption, however, are not one-dimensional.

Commodity consumption connects Papua New Guineans to global flows of culture and goods (Foster 2002b: 8), but in doing so it also positions them at the margins of global cartographies of consumption and status. At the RD Tuna cannery, higher value white tuna meat is separated from the low value dark meat. The white meat is processed, either as finished canned products to be exported, particularly to Europe, or as fresh loins, which are then exported and canned elsewhere before being sold. The tuna that is canned and sold to the local market, under the Diana label, is the dark meat, meat that elsewhere in the global industry is sold for animal feed or pet food. In response to local criticism of the quality of Diana tuna, RD began producing a second canned tuna product for local sale, Dolly brand tuna, which is made with slightly higher quality meat. Dolly is more expensive, however, and for most local consumers the cost is prohibitive (cf. Havice and Reed 2012).

So while consumption of tinned fish is in some ways a signifier of status, in other ways it is, simultaneously, a very potent signifier of marginalisation within local as well as within global circuits of consumption. In this regards, the consumption of and narratives surrounding *tinpis* in PNG resonate with those recorded by Gewertz and Errington (2010) in their multi-sited ethnography of lamb flaps (fatty meat cuts), which are valued by Pacific Islanders for their taste and relative affordability, but also known to be the cuts of meat sent to the Pacific because they are not wanted by (white) Australian and New Zealand consumers. The consumption and use of products 'widely understood as another's rejects', Gewertz and Errington observe, is a 'compromised practice' (2012: 8). At the same time, for the families resident at Nobnob and Siar, the production and circulation of *tinpis* from the RD Tuna cannery serves as a daily reminder of the presence of the Philippines company, and of the own alienation from the land on which the cannery now stands.

In the Kananam community, which lives near the site of the existing Vidar wharf (neighbouring Rempi), the cultural politics of fish consumption are also playing out in another, highly gendered, way. Here, it is not only fish but also women's bodies that are being commodified. As stocks of reef fish decline, and informal small-scale fishing for both domestic consumption



and informal marketing becomes more difficult, women in Kananam are being drawn into a growing sex-for-fish trade with Filipino crew on RD's vessels (James et al. 2012; Havice and Reed 2012; Sullivan et al. 2003). The fish for which the women trade sex are 'salt fish', the small and damaged fish that are salted on board the fishing vessels before being brought back to shore. The salt fish are poor quality, go bad quickly and are reported to cause dysentery and other sickness. Reef fish are preferred for their quality and for their taste, but as they are no longer available as they once were (because of over-fishing and pollution resulting from the large-scale tuna fishing industry), salt fish now dominate at the roadside markets and in local diets (Havice and Reed 2012). As the Filipino crew demand 'one fish, one fuck' from local women, resulting pregnancies are creating fissures in families, and rates of HIV/AIDS and other STIs are reported by the community to be on the increase (cf. James et al. 2012).

Not only are these commodified relationships, they are deeply unequal ones. Sullivan et al. (2003) highlight a general pattern of 'disrespect shown by the RD Filipino workers to their PNG counterparts, and most brazenly, to PNG women', and point to documented cases not only of prostitution under economically coercive circumstances, but also rape and acts of humiliation, in Kananam and elsewhere in RD's operations (2003: 9). More generally, they suggest that the treatment of PNG workers at RD Tuna by many (although not all) of their Filipino co-workers and managers as 'second-class citizens', is 'perhaps the single most damaging social repercussion' since the operation was established (2003: 118). The sex-for-fish trade is one particular, very painful articulation of the relationships of power to which transformed patterns of production can give rise. As women, and men, in the Kananam community are drawn into the extended cartographies of power of a globalising economy—as their land, seas, and own bodies are increasingly wedded to the fates and fancies of foreign consumers, producers, investors and workers—'one fish, one fuck' speaks to the most devastating loss of autonomy.

This ambivalence surrounding the consumption of *tinpis* reflects vividly the ambivalence of entanglement—the complex and shifting configurations of different forms and criteria of value, including modernity and urbanity, but also autonomy, culture and self-sufficiency. The consumption of *tinpis*, and involvement in the production processes through which tuna is transformed into commodity form, implicates local Papua New Guineans as well as the Papua New Guinean state in overlapping networks of social relations and cartographies of status.

Through their relationship to the tuna commodity chain—as consumer, worker, dispossessed landowner, or any combination of those things—a Papua New Guinean person will exist at any one point within multiple relationships of power and status. Living in Nobnob or Siar, just outside the Madang town boundary, they may enjoy a level of status vis-à-vis more rurally located Papua New Guineans. Within their own community, they might possess less status than neighbours who can purchase *tinpis* daily, instead of only two or three times a week. Located globally, they are firmly positioned as less ‘modern’ and less ‘developed’ than the European families who consume the choicest cuts of the yellow fin tuna caught in the waters that form part of their customary birth right.

The ambivalent cultural meanings associated with patterns of consumption remind us that relations of production and exchange cannot be reduced solely to their economic dimensions. Changing processes of production are bound up with questions of value, desire and status, and complex affective experiences. These aspects are too often ignored when debates about customary land and development are reduced to technical calculations of economic productivity. Desires for ‘development’—symbolised and articulated, in part, through practices of consumption—motivate decisions that people make, including decisions that divest them of control over their own land. As items of ‘cargo’ are given value, so too are ways of life associated with the West and with ‘outsiders’ more broadly understood. Such ways of life are frequently contrasted to customary ones. To this extent, practices of consumption at Nobnob, Siar and Rempi appear to resonate with Marshall Sahlins’ ruminations on the necessity of ‘humiliation’ in processes of social change and ‘modernisation’ (1992; cf. Robbins 2004; Robbins and Wardlow 2005). Yet here, too, the patterns of meaning and affect are not one-dimensional.

Sitting on the veranda of a house in Rempi, in May of 2010, the old man who is the leader of the Bomase clan, Peter Gau Sabum, told the story of how the Catholic Church ‘purchased’ his ancestor’s land with a handful of trinkets and quantities of salt. As he told the story he acted out the exchange, cupping his hand as if filled with salt, lifting it to his mouth, extending his tongue and then recoiling dramatically, scrunching his face as he demonstrated how his kinsmen, one hundred years ago, must have reacted to their first taste. He shook his head in dismay at the easy seduction of his kin, and the trickery of the missionaries. Talking about the new staples of tinned fish, rice, and flour, he said ‘our fathers only depended on the garden,

not this food which comes from other countries and other places'. He was not speaking here of the 'backwardness' of his ancestors, who ate garden food instead of store-bought goods—although others in Rempi did speak in this way—but rather lamenting a loss of self-sufficiency and autonomy. Herbert, another senior man in the clan, said of the PMIZ, 'we are reduced to beggars on our own land'. The comments of both men were, unmistakably, cut through with sadness and a sense of deep dismay, but Sahlin's reading of *humiliation* seems inadequate to describe the complexity of their narratives and experiences. The comment of Peter Gau Sabum, invoking the self-sufficiency of his ancestors who depended only on their gardens, not on *tinpis* and other store-bought goods, was not a statement of shame at his ancestors' ways of life. If there was a sense of humiliation in his comments, it was to be found in his bemoaning of the devaluing of his tradition, not in its persistence.

### **Rearticulating 'development'**

What theorists of domination tell us—including Bourdieu, Gramsci, and those in the neo-Gramscian tradition (as were discussed in Chapter Five)—is that power is not only exercised in observable behaviour and acts of coercion. Power is exercised, also, in the generation of social and cultural structures through which some actions and choices are made conceivable and others inconceivable; are normalised or rendered spectacular. These are the structures within which certain actions, discourses or material objects endow social actors with capital, while others do not; within which some things are rendered desirable and others undesirable; within which some desires are valued more than others. The dominant practices and understandings of development appear as key means through these aspects of cultural and symbolic power are expressed. Dynamics of domination and consent, however, must be considered alongside practices of resistance and creative agency.

In this final section, I consider the ways in which some activists and community members in Madang are seeking to rearticulate 'development'. Doing so, they draw upon notions of *pride* (rather than humiliation) to put customary connection to land at the centre of a politicised, counter-hegemonic vision of the good life. This rearticulation of development represents a

creative reconfiguration of both the customary and the modern; it speaks to the multiple possibilities that emerge from the ambivalence of entanglement.

Working closely with local communities in Madang Province, including Rempì, Nobnob and Siar, the Bismarck Ramu Group NGO is challenging what they describe as the current 'model of development' within Papua New Guinea. Coordinator of the NGO, John Chitoo, describes the group's intention as being:

to create space where people can reflect and see that this is the development path that we are following. Where are we heading to? Is it going to be ok? We have some good reasons why the Constitutional Planning Committee, the people that came up with the Constitution for the country, they had a really good vision but we see that the country is going off on a tangent...We need to put it back on track.

Positioned in these terms, the NGO is posing a particular challenge to the neoliberal model of development that has gained ascendancy in Papua New Guinea since the 1980s. They are seeking to reclaim, moreover, the vision of smallholder-led, sustainable 'Melanesian' development that was laid out by the framers of the country's constitution at the time of independence in 1975.

Customary connection to land is central to this vision, viewed by the organization as the basis for local livelihoods and empowerment. To this extent the organization has taken a strong position against all forms of land registration. Doing so, what they are also seeking to do is re-value customary forms of connection to land in a climate where they have been systematically devalued. John says, 'our current focus is to help people look after their land, and to appreciate what their land provides for them'. He adds, 'the moment they sign over their land [to resource extractive companies] it is the first step towards them losing control over the land'. BRG works with local communities to come up with alternative strategies for how they will use their land, including through developing small-scale income-generating activities—cash-cropping of cocoa or copra, for example, or in the case of one community, Sausi (in the Upper Ramu area), the collective purchasing of a truck to allow women to travel and sell produce at larger markets in Madang or Ramu. The drawing up of 'Conservation Deeds' involves clans coming together to make a decision about how a particular part of land is to be

conserved. Rules for the use of the land are determined through consensus, along with penalties for breaches. Developed through consensus amongst the clan groups in a local area, and drawing upon customary governance structures (with BRG staff acting as facilitators), mechanisms such as these provide an alternate to the legal and administrative apparatus of the state.

What is significant about the organisation's approach is that it does not position its support for customary forms of connection to land as going backwards, or as a return to some sort of 'authentic' tradition (contra to Keesing's [1989] 'invented pasts'). Rather, the revaluing of customary land is positioned squarely within the context of existing entanglement, at a global as well as a national and local level. Rosa Koian, who runs the NGO's information, communication and education program, says of the organization: '[we are] telling the world that Papua New Guinea has its own ways, there are ways here that the modern world can look up to and learn from.' Here, customary ways of life are not pictured as modernity's past, as Modernisation Theory and much contemporary sociology would have it, but rather as co-temporal with the 'modern world', valued in their own terms rather than through a language of deficit. Indeed, in conversations between organization staff, as well as between the organization and the communities they work with, a commonly emphasized point is that the 'model of development' is understood not only to have failed Papua New Guinea, but also to have failed those countries from whom it has been adopted. People point often, for example, to levels of homelessness within Australia and America, a reality that is considered genuinely shocking. Pointing to the extensive social security mechanisms provided by customary land and social systems, and the fact that most Papua New Guineans have access to their own land, these things are held up as sources of pride.

The articulation of pride, rather than humiliation, is tied as well to an understanding of post-colonial dynamics, in which 'cargo thinking' is understood to be the sad legacy of mentalities instilled in the colonial period. A key focus is on 'decolonizing the minds of people', and countering what is seen to be a desire to emulate the West. John says:

If you see the women at the markets, they are selling fresh vegetables, organic fresh vegetables. Because I've been to Melbourne and I've seen that it's [organic produce] the most expensive item that you can buy in the market. And yet our

people are selling market produce—organic, very healthy, nutritious—they sell them and then when they get the money and go to the store and buy tinned fish and all these other things and bring them back to their families. This is the kind of mentality that we want people to understand—that what we have, let's be proud of who we are, of what we have, and let's be Papua New Guineans because you will never, ever become an Australian, you will always—your actions, how you behave—you will always be Papua New Guinean.

There are resonances here between John's position and what has been described by post-colonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon (1967 [1952]) and Homi Bhabha (1994). Bhabha writes, for instance, of the generation of feelings of inferiority, and fractured self-perception of colonized peoples, of the 'dispossession and dislocation—psychic and social—which speaks to the condition of the marginalized' (1994: 90). Bhabha speaks of 'mimicry' as a response of the dominated to colonial dynamics. His instance that the copy—the mask—will never match the original (1994: esp. 86-92), is echoed in John's insistence that 'you will never, ever, become an Australian'. Yet the conditions of entanglement also generate opportunities for rearticulating difference as a source of value. In John's case, the adoption of a language of 'organic produce' serves to position customary forms of production, favourably, against modern Western ones. The invoking of a 'Papua New Guinean' identity, moreover, speaks to a dynamic entanglement of modern nationalism with customary forms of belonging.

Entanglement, too, provides strategies for the ways in which an alternative articulation of development can fostered, communicated, and advocated. BRG has cultivated strong relationships with a range of national, regional and international organisations. It works closely, for instance, with NGOs including the Pacific Network on Globalisation, based in Fiji, the Vanuatu Kaltoral Senta (Cultural Centre) and the Australia NGO Aid/WATCH, which acts as a watchdog on Australia's aid and foreign policy. Regionally, these and other organisations come together under the Melanesian Indigenous Land Defence Alliance (MILDA), which meets annually to coordinate regional strategies (lobbying the Pacific Islands Forum, for instance) and to share ideas and experiences. The internet—email, blogs, websites—provide key mechanisms through which these groups interact. They provide platforms, too, for critiquing dominant development practices amongst the growing population of Pacific peoples with access to new media technologies. Importantly, though, the Bismarck Ramu Group has not prioritized these forms of engagement—and the mechanisms of modern civil society more

broadly—over local and customarily-based forms of engagement. As Rosa describes it, ‘the core business of BRG is working with people at the lowest level, and that means working with people in their villages, where they are’. Working with local communities, in their villages and also through running training sessions held at the BRG base outside of Madang Town—on models of development, and on globalization—mean that the more abstracted social relations with which the organization engages remain embedded in the less-abstracted, embodied interactions that are grounded in the customary land that underpins this rearticulation of ‘development’.

Recognizing that dominant models and practices of development are very much hegemonic, what we see here is that the entanglement of customary and modern forms of sociality provides a basis for rearticulating the model of development as a basis for a counter-hegemonic strategy. Customary forms of connection to land provide the core of this rearticulation, of an assertion of pride rather than humiliation in customary ways of life, and of a strengthening of community autonomy through emphasizing small-holder models of income-generation and locally-determined agreements on land use. In the experiences of the Bismarck Ramu Group NGO, as in those of the Rempi, Nobnob and Siar communities, we do see elements of humiliation, of ‘mimicry’ and of the incorporation of hegemonic ideas of what it means to be ‘developed’. However we also see splinters in these understandings—ambivalences that open up possibilities for alternative forms of response and subjectivity.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter, following on from Chapter Six, has argued that ideologies and practices of development generate particular, modernist visions of the good life. They privilege modern forms of social relations over customary ones, and in regards to land they privilege a modernist idea of what it means for land—and the people connected to that land—to ‘work’. Drawing local communities into globalizing, capitalist relations of production and exchange, development inscribes those communities as ‘underdeveloped’, organising them into hierarchical relations of status and value, positioning them at the margins of global cartographies of power. Teleological, normative discourses of development generate new visions of what is (or should be) desirable for Pacific people—the consumption of cargo goods,

the accumulation of wealth measured in terms of income levels or GDP. And, simultaneously, Papua New Guinean communities and their land are commodified in the service of the desires of others, be these the European consumers who eat the finest cuts of Pacific tuna, the foreign-owned corporations who make the majority of profits from the tuna industry, or the RD Tuna bosses and Filipino workers who dominate even the bodies of local people. Indeed, we might add to this list that minority of Papua New Guineans for whom development has delivered on its promises—the elite who work in the government and civil service, the small urban middle class who can eat *tinpis* regularly, or who perhaps do not even have to eat *tinpis* because they can afford even higher status foods.

In the communities affected by the tuna fishing industry in Madang, we can recognise developmentalism as a ‘common sense’ ideology through which such structures of domination are constructed. At the same time, in the practices and dynamics of development we see deeply entrenched material inequalities. Both of these dimensions—the material and the ideological—play out in the politics of land use and ‘ownership’, and in the ways that people relate to their land. Materially, land is alienated and commodified, and subsistence or other informal livelihood activities ignored and undermined. Ideologically, these practices of production and exchange are devalued, and the ways (and sites) of life associated with customary connection to land are denigrated as embryonic, under-developed versions of a modernist ideal. Hegemonic, though, as both a discourse and set of practices, developmentalism is not totalising. The ambivalence of humiliation opens up the possibility of alternate articulations of pride and status. Recognising that humiliation is politically situated, moreover, we can recognise that desires for ‘development’ are not simply desires for emulation, but rather reflect people’s own awareness of their marginality within the post-colonial, globalizing dynamics in which their lives are located. Structures of domination are intertwined with the self-understandings and agentive potential of the people they affect.

Where this and the previous chapter have focussed empirically on Papua New Guinea, the following two chapters switch focus to consider the ways that East Timorese are *becoming landowners*. As forms of land reform and codification in Timor-Leste are precipitated more by the complex dynamics of post-conflict society than by the dynamics of resource-extractive industry, they have tended to be concentrated with urban and peri-urban spaces. Accordingly, the thesis now moves to consider the dynamics and implications of urbanisation more directly.



This change of emphasis should not be read as a suggestion that the effects of urbanisation are not relevant in PNG—indeed, we have seen in this chapter that urban-rural imaginaries have consequence for people’s imaginings of custom and modernity, for their ideas of what development and the good life entail. Likewise, a focus on urban Timor-Leste is not intended to suggest that dynamics related to forms of connection in rural places are not relevant there. Rather, the differing emphases speak only to the fact that the particular contexts of each place make them useful sites from which to consider differing dynamics of entanglement. Across this difference, however, what we will see is that the central argument of this thesis holds in relation to both countries.

In Timor-Leste—paying particular attention to urbanisation and nation-building as modernising processes of change in relation to land—what we see in the following two chapters is that the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land destabilises structures of power. This destabilisation lends itself to a loss of local community autonomy, but in its ambivalence it also creates new opportunities for a reassertion of autonomy, through a rearticulation of the customary. The capacity of customary sociality to accommodate significant degrees of abstraction provides ways in which local communities can engage with the more abstracted relations of the modern, grounding them in relationships and forms of connection to land that are tied to place and embodied interaction. Still, abstraction carries risk, and as we will see in Chapter Nine, particularly, the hegemony of imaginaries which privilege the modern (and the urban understood as a site of the modern) can themselves reinforce the concentration of power in the nation-state. Multiple possibilities for the reconfiguration of structures of power do exist, but as we have seen in these last two chapters, and as we will see in the two that follow, entanglements are not politically neutral: counter-hegemonic assertions are, by their very nature, assertions made against the grain.



## **Becoming Landowners in Timor-Leste**



## 8. Land titling, state-building, and urban-rural imaginaries

---

From considering the codification of customary connection to land and the extension of capitalist forms of production and exchange in Papua New Guinea, the empirical focus of the thesis moves, in this section, back to Timor-Leste. Here, a particular focus is on the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land within urban and peri-urban spaces, and on *urbanisation* as a modernising process of change in relation to land. Urbanisation is approached both in terms of its common sense meaning, as a material process involving population movements from rural places towards cities and town cities, as well as in terms of its subjective dimensions. Here, my concern is with the ways in which urban spaces are imagined, including in relation to rural ones. Exploring these two dimensions, and the ways in which this process of change intersects with others—development, state-building, nation-building, and globalisation—the present chapter looks at the extension of property rights and modernist forms of codification of land ‘ownership’ associated with the land reform process branded locally in Timor-Leste as ‘Ita Nia Rai’ (A Tetum term meaning ‘Our Land’).

Ita Nia Rai is a state-building process through which (some) East Timorese in urban and peri-urban areas of the country are becoming landowners. Nonetheless, the process of creating land rights for some is also a process of denying them to others; the creation of landowners by the modern state goes hand in hand with the creation of squatters. The chapter which follows this one (Chapter 9) explores this theme, taking as its ethnographic focus an urban settlement in the capital Dili, Aitarak Laran, which has been denied property rights, and is now facing eviction by the new state. Across both of these chapters, the argument which has made throughout this thesis is extended and developed. That is, I argue that the entanglement of

customary and modern forms of connection to land can be deeply disempowering for local communities, as power shifts increasingly to the agents, sites and processes of the modern nation-state, and as customary forms of connection to land are ideologically and normatively devalued. Entanglement, however, also creates possibilities for the rearticulation of custom, and the reassertion of local autonomy.

In this present chapter, I point specifically to the ways in which the Ita Nia Rai land reforms privilege modernist relations of property and ownership, and in doing so generate cartographies of power which strengthen the authority and power of the state in relation to local communities. To this extent, the effects of contemporary land reform processes in Timor-Leste are shown to be consistent with the effects of forms of codification of customary land tenure occurring in Papua New Guinea (as were discussed in Chapter Six). If modernising processes of change are understood to be disempowering, however, it is also the case that the reality of existing entanglements renders some degree of modernist codification of land use necessary. In urban and peri-urban Timor-Leste these entanglements emerge from the realities of population movements associated with urbanisation, and from the legacies of colonial and conflict experiences, including the presence of a destabilised and precarious overlay of competing bases for land claims. Here, we can also see resonances with the situation of local communities in Madang, for whom forms of engagement with state processes of codification were seen as necessary in the context of the existing, exploitative presence of capitalist industry. Additionally, what we see in this chapter is that entanglements of customary and modern forms of relationship to land also generate new opportunities for rearticulating custom, even as they also lend themselves to a privileging of the modern. These multiple and ambivalent possibilities, I argue, are revealed by looking at the disjuncture between the objective ways in which forms of relationship to land are entangled, and the subjective and ideological ways in which the customary and the modern are imagined.

Ideologically, what we see is two sets of oppositional constructions, overlaid one on top of the other, and each characterised by a sharp hierarchical arrangement. *Urban* spaces are privileged as sites of modernisation, valued over *rural* ones that are in turn rendered as sites of tradition and custom. Through these constructions, customary forms of social relations in rural areas are devalued, and customary sociality in urban spaces rendered invisible. The construction of this oppositional relationship, which reflects many of the normative

assumptions and hierarchies of Modernisation Theory (as were discussed in Chapter Two, 'Approaching Social Difference'), occurs through the policies and discourses of political and economic elites (for instance through assumptions built into urban-focussed land titling projects) but also locally, through popular discourses and cultural imaginaries within the urban. Ethnographic analysis of local engagements with the Ita Nia Rai land reform process, however, reveals the erroneousness of the constructed opposition between 'modern' urban spaces and 'customary' rural ones. Here, data is presented in the form of four case studies, drawn from interviews with families engaged in the Ita Nia Rai land claims collection process in Dili and in the town centres of Liquica and Manatuto Districts. Through these case-studies, the gap between subjective construction and material reality is highlighted. Urban and rural places are shown to be dynamically connected, and customary social relations, while maligned or ignored within dominant and elite discourses, are shown to be, in practice, an important part of urban life. Customarily-derived practices of inheritance and co-residence, for instance, are drawn upon by local people engaged with the Ita Nia Rai mapping and land claims collection process. The reality of entanglements of custom and modernity across the rural/urban divide creates possibilities, then, for the rearticulation of custom within the urban, and in relation to modernising processes of land reform. Nonetheless, the ideological and normative rendering of both custom/modernity and rural/urban remains pervasive, and what we will see in the following chapter is that this hegemonic imaginary can also act to reinforce the power of the nation-state, at the expense of the autonomy of local communities.

From here, a discussion of the legacies of colonialism, conflict and displacement in Timor-Leste sets the context for considering contemporary land dynamics within the country, and particularly within its urban and peri-urban spaces. An analysis of contemporary land reform processes then demonstrates the ways in which these state-building practices are privileging modernist forms of property and land ownership, and in doing so privileging the state as a site of power and decision-making capacity. The ethnographic analysis that follows examines the ways in which these land reform processes are being received and negotiated in local places. The four case studies, mentioned above, are employed to demonstrate the complex and ambivalent realities of entanglements of custom and modernity within these places, and the multiple possibilities to which these entanglements give rise. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the urban and rural imaginaries that are constructed through the Ita Nia Rai process. The construction of these imaginaries highlights the ideological and normative dimensions to the privileging of modernist understandings of property, even as the empirical

evidence from the participants in the Ita Nia Rai land claim collection process confounds the distinction between customary rural places and modern urban ones. Highlighting the contours of this imaginary lays the foundations for examination of the Aitarak Laran case in the following chapter, where we see this imaginary deployed in the context of that urban community's disempowerment.

## **Land, colonialism and displacement in urban Timor-Leste**

In their submission to the government about a proposed new Civil Code—which would regulate issues such as land transactions and inheritance—the East Timorese civil society organisation La'ó Hamutuk (Tetum: 'Walking Together') wrote the following about consultations it had held with local communities:

Many people have told La'ó Hamutuk that you can't discuss land without discussing its story. How did people come to be on the land? Was it given by the ancestors? Did they take it through force or corruption? Were their grandparents forcible moved there as political prisoners? Did the Indonesian military force them into the towns? Did they gain a land certificate because they could read and write Portuguese? Did environmental destruction make it hard to live from the land and force people to move? The story of Timor-Leste's land is the story of Timor-Leste's people (La'ó Hamutuk 2010: 2).

It is a story, as they describe it, of intersecting dynamics of colonialism (under both Portuguese and Indonesian occupation), displacement, conflict, custom and modernity. The contemporary effect of these dynamics is a complex patchwork of sometimes-overlapping land claims, which presents an acute challenge to the administrative capacity of the state (Carson 2007; Fitzpatrick 2002), but also at times to the governance processes of local communities.

For four hundred years before Indonesia invaded the territory in 1975, Timor-Leste was a colony of Portugal. In many ways, the disruption to customary land systems during these four hundred years of Portuguese colonisation amounted to only a fraction of the disruption caused in the twenty-five years of Indonesian occupation that followed (McWilliam and Traube



2011b). Nonetheless, there were several legacies of this period that have relevance for the contemporary situation in regards to land in Timor-Leste. In the first instance, it was during Portuguese occupation that Dili was founded and established as a population centre and as the capital of the territory (in 1769), a move which also cemented the division between the western and eastern halves of the island (Gunn 1999). The former became Dutch Timor, now under Indonesian occupation as West Timor; the latter became Portuguese Timor, providing the territorial foundations for what is now the nation-state of Timor-Leste. A second effect of Portuguese rule was the establishment of a formal land administration system. This only began in 1901, and was focussed (as was, speaking generally, most of Portuguese colonial governance) on urban areas, but it also involved the issuing of land titles over some plantations, particularly coffee plantations in the west of Portuguese Timor (Yoder 2003). In Dili, land titles went particularly to the powerful *mestiço* (mixed Portuguese and Timorese descent) families who emerged as significant power-holders during the Portuguese era, and who remain as such in contemporary Timor-Leste.

Where Portuguese rule over much of its territory was relatively indirect, the violent and disruptive effects of Indonesian occupation were widespread. Seeking to exert control over the rural population, and also to prevent that population rendering assistance to the fighters in the armed resistance movement (FALANTIL, the armed wing of the FRETILIN organisation), Indonesia enacted major policies of forced migration, particularly focussed on moving people closer to population centres, such as happened to the Cacavei community in Lautem District (Chapter Four, 'Embedded in the Land'). Large numbers of people were forcibly relocated from their ancestral lands, with effects, as we saw in Cacavei, that were often socially and culturally traumatic, and also caused extensive disruption of practices of land and resource use (cf. Jackson and Palmer 2012; CAVR 2006). Policies of transmigration also saw people from other parts of Indonesia (particularly Bali and Java) moved to Timor-Leste, located in concentrated transmigration areas (Fitzpatrick 2002). In addition to Portuguese era titles, the period of 1975-1999 also saw the introduction of Indonesian land titles, and again these were often distributed to allies of the regime.

The disruption to existing social systems, including patterns of social connection to land, reached its devastating culmination in 1999, when Indonesia withdrew from Timor-Leste following the result of the independence referendum. A wave of violence unleashed by pro-

Indonesian militia resulted in months of bloodshed and destruction of property and livelihoods. The effects are hard to overstate. An estimated 300,000 people fled their homes, taking shelter in the mountains and forests, and as many as 280,000 more were deported to West Timor, out of a total population of less than one million. Approximately 1,500 civilians were killed (CAVR 2006: chapter 7.2, p.244) Tens of thousands of houses and properties were burned, along with nearly all of the country's infrastructure and, far from insignificantly, its land title records (Fitzpatrick 2002; Traub 2000). Many of those who fled their homes returned to them after the arrival of the Australian-led international peace-keeping force Intafet in September 1999 put an end to the most extreme violence, but in Dili, particularly, the devastation meant that the social, cultural and political geographies of the city were radically transformed.

When people began to return to the city, patterns of reoccupation of properties that had survived the destruction created disparities of wealth and power. Some people were able to occupy two or three houses in the chaotic period that followed the violence, and can now make money from renting out their properties. Others lost their houses and ended up in settlements that are now being reclaimed by the government, such as Aitarak Laran—the focus of the following chapter—while others, particularly those who moved or returned to the city later, rent rooms in boarding houses under precarious and insecure circumstances. Across the city, different *bairu* (neighbourhoods) were affected differently. Some had relatively few Indonesian residents, and so fewer abandoned properties and subsequent conflicts about reoccupation. Other, like Aitarak Laran, had large numbers of Indonesian occupants and so saw a greater degree of disruption from re-occupation. Likewise, different areas experienced different degrees of destruction.

The United Nations Transitional Authority in Timor-Leste (UNTAET), which took over administration of the territory after the Interfet force, established processes for regularising occupations of abandoned land, issuing land according to short term (up to three month), medium term (three to twelve month) and long term (one to five year) leases. It did not, however, address the underlying issues of land ownership (Fitzpatrick 2002), and in regularising occupations arguably formalised the inequalities that had been generated in the immediate post-conflict period (Harrington 2007). The effect now, in contemporary Timor-Leste, is that there are four competing bases for land claims: Portuguese era titles, Indonesian

era titles, customary connection to land, and claims based on current possession (Fitzpatrick 2002). A Transitional Land Law—intended to provide a legal basis for determining conflicts where competing claims are made against the same piece of land—has been in various stages of development over the past decade, but at the time of writing had still not come into force. Ita Nia Rai, the land claims collection process funded by USAID in the period 2008-2012, has advocated mediation as a means of resolving conflicts, but this has had only limited success.

In terms of the modern legal system, then, the situation in regards to land titling and administration is one of significant indeterminacy. Nonetheless, it is important not to read this, as some have done, as indicative of the state of the country as a whole. Amy Carson, for example, declares Timor-Leste ‘a legal disaster with regard to land tenure issues’, going on to describe land systems across the country as ‘in a state of chaos’ (2007: 396, 423), while Charlotte Williams (2009: 575) suggests that ‘A brief walk around Lospalos, the capital of Timor-Leste's easternmost district, introduces even the casual observer to the dysfunction of the country's property regime’. Arguing as such renders invisible the fact that customary land tenures, such as those described in Chapter Four, are dominant across much of the country, and within these systems customary mechanisms of conflict resolution and governance remain strong. Rather, we need to remain attentive to the presence of both customary and modern forms of connection to land, and to both customary and modern forms of governance and social organisation.

### **Land reform and state-building processes in Timor-Leste**

When Timor-Leste formally gained independence in 2002, three years after the Independence referendum and the ensuing UN administration of the territory, it began a process of attempting to establish a legal and administrative framework for the organisation of land. Four key aspects of this state-building process can be identified: firstly, the establishment of a national Constitution, which occurred in 2002; secondly, the drafting of a Transitional Land Law, mentioned above, which is intended to provide a one-off resolution of the conflicting land claims which are the legacy of Timor-Leste's colonial and conflict experiences; thirdly, a Civil Code which would subsequently govern (amongst other things) issues relating to land transactions and inheritance; and fourthly, a process of collecting land claims as a precursor to

issuing land titles in the country's urban and peri-urban areas (the Ita Nia Rai process). At the time of writing, more than ten years after Independence, the Transitional Land Law and Civil Code were still in a process of formation. The status of the former, particularly, is in doubt after the Land Law and two accompanying pieces of legislation were passed by the East Timorese Parliament in February 2012, but subsequently vetoed by President Jose Ramos-Horta in one of his last acts before losing power in the first round of Presidential elections held in March of that year. The Ita Nia Rai land claims collection process, funded by US aid agency USAID, ran from 2008 to 2012, with the first land titles issued to people living in the town centres of Manatuto, Liquica and Ainaro Districts in December 2011. Each of these aspects of the state-building process in relation to land has been marked by a strongly modernist bias.

If the United Nations administration of Timor-Leste, UNTAET, did not address underlying issues relating to land conflicts in the territory, it did provide a precedent for the heavily modernist and strongly centralised approach to state-building taken by the incoming East Timorese government. While the international intervention into Timor-Leste has been widely praised by many commentators as a successful model of state-building (Kingsbury and Leach 2007), it has also been critiqued for its lack of engagement with existing customary systems of organisation and governance. One commentator (Traub 2000: 75) described it as 'an exercise in benevolent colonialism'. As Chopra (2002) notes, the UNTAET mission was the first time that the United Nations had assumed the status of a sovereign state in its administration of a territory. This highlights particularly the *global* nature of entanglement and of state-building processes: as a nation-state, Timor-Leste emerged because of the resistance struggle of a rural guerrilla force and an urban clandestine front with popular support, and the development of a widespread nationalist sentiment in the face of a colonising power (see also Chapter Nine). But, significantly, the nation-state of East Timorese was also in many ways a creation of an international community of states, supra-national organisations, and international financial organisations. It was a product of processes, institutions and agents which are strongly modernist in their practice and in their perception of the world, and which were, in 1999 as they remain today, strongly wedded to an ascendant neoliberal paradigm. This global entanglement generated what Palmer and de Carvahlo (2008: 1322) describe as a 'ground zero' approach to state building, one that effectively rendered invisible existing customary forms of organisation, governance and authority in its attempts to 'build a state from the ground up' (Palmer and de Carvahlo 2008: 1322; cf. Hohe 2003; Ospina and Hohe 2002). In assuming sovereignty from UNTAET in 2002, the new East Timorese state continued this

strongly centralised and modernist approach to state-building (Chopra 2002; Palmer and de Carvahlo 2008; Philpott 2006).

The implications of this approach for the organisation of land have been significant. The citizen- and nation-building project initiated by UNTAET sought to instil core Western socio-political notions (Hicks 2007), and these are reflected in the Constitution. The notion of property ownership has been adopted as a core value, with seemingly little attention paid to the ways that it speaks to an ontologically distinct form of social connection to land. Section 54(1) of the Constitution establishes the right of every *individual* to private property, along with the right to transfer it. This marks a notable difference from the Constitution of Papua New Guinea, which instead enshrines customary land tenure, held by land-owning groups and inalienable. The government of Timor-Leste, through the Land Law, is also looking at ways to codify forms of inalienable customary land tenure—through ‘Community Property’ and ‘Community Protection Zones’—but notable here is that that customary land is not privileged but rather repackaged as one form of *property*, alongside private property. This reframing of the customary within a modernist system of property relations and law is evident, too, in the statement of recognition of custom included in Section 2(4) of the East Timorese Constitution: ‘The State shall recognise and value the norms and customs of East Timor that are *not contrary* to the Constitution and to any legislation dealing specifically with customary law’ (emphasis added). Modernist forms of law and organisation, then, including the establishment of a private property regime, are given precedence. This is a clear demonstration of the coercive capacity of state-building processes to reframe and reconstitute the customary within the modern.

An ontological privileging of property relations has in turn informed the Ita Nia Rai land claims collection process. Funded for five years by the US aid agency USAID, this process has involved the collection of land claims across Dili and in the urban or peri-urban centres of Timor-Leste’s Districts. Opportunities exist for the registration of land as traditional, or ritually important land (*rai adat*) or as community land (*rai comunidade*), but by and large the majority of claims collected have been for small-holder blocks, with claims registered in the name of one or a few individuals. A large amount of land has also been claimed by the state, with significant implications, as we will see in the following chapter, for communities such as Aitarak Laran which now face eviction. In the registering of claims, land is mapped and delimited into distinct

parcels, with boundaries recorded in both a cadastral register and a cadastral map. These maps, and accompanying lists of claimants' names and photographs, are publicly displayed for periods of 30 days, during which claims can be challenged by other people, through lodging a competing claim. At the end of the publication period, those claims that have not been contested are approved, with titles to be subsequently issued in the names of the identified claimants. As noted above, the issuing of land titles has already begun in three districts, and the ultimate (if somewhat arbitrary) goal of the project is to issue at least 50,000 titles across the country.

The creation of cadastral maps and registers is a fundamentally modernising process in relation to land (Scott 1998). In the fixing of land boundaries and the determination of 'owners', abstracted from the everyday practices of social reciprocity, we see reflected here the dynamics that have been previously critiqued in relation to local communities in Madang (Chapter Six). These are accentuated further, however, by the *individual* parcelling and titling of land, and the making of land as freehold property. As in PNG, as well, here we see the shifting of power and decision-making capacity to the state, as the National Directorate for Land, Property and Cadastral Services (DNTPSC) becomes the issuer of titles, and the repository of knowledge (now 'data') about land. Likewise, while mediation is being advocated as a means of resolving conflicting claims, it is now officials from the DNTPSC who run mediation sessions, and for the many conflicts that are not being resolved in this way, the eventual passage of land administration legislation (whether through the Transitional Land Law and the proposed Civil Code, or through alternative legislation) will see the judicial and administrative institutions of the state established as final arbitrators. As in Papua New Guinea, then, land reform (as a state-building process) is generating new cartographies of power, within which modern articulations of authority and epistemology can come to dominate and reframe customary ones.

The ways in which the goals of the Ita Nia Rai process are articulated—by officials, donor agencies and government representatives—highlight the modernist terms in which the process is envisaged. Pedro Xavier de Sousa, Director of Land and Property in Timor-Leste, describes the process as one of creating 'a completely modern cadastral system, developed from raw base material, and linked to land ownership following identification of landowners' (2005: 1). USAID, the project's major backer, identifies the purpose of the claims collection process as

being to provide a foundation for property rights when the legal and policy framework are enacted (USAID 2012). Modernist notions of 'rights' to land and property are invoked, even though the very notion of rights involves an ontological shift in the way that land is approached. As Timothy Chesters (2009) argues, the discourse of land rights is overwhelmingly a discourse of rights *to*, not rights *of*, land (and certainly not *rites* of land). 'As soon as we make of land a stake passively awaiting claimants', he writes, 'we are already on the way to accepting the equation of land and property, with all the Western legal strictures that property, and "property rights", imply' (Chesters 2009: 2).

Nonetheless, a language of property rights remains pervasive, and is tied as well to notions of 'security'. In this understanding, proponents of the Ita Nia Rai process argue for property rights as a means to security of tenure. 'Security' is understood in modernist terms, as something generated through being in possession of a written title issued by a state. In this vein, an information pamphlet written by USAID about the Ita Nia Rai process declares, 'When they have land rights, people will have confidence for the future, and can make investments in their land.' Such proclamations ignore the ways in which security, or 'confidence', might be generated through customary systems, including the ways in which oral traditions and practices of belonging function to secure the entitlements of people to land, or the confidence which comes from one's embedding within reciprocal social relations that connect to you to kin, to land, and to ancestors.

Aside from policy-makers and donor agencies, the development of land reform in Timor-Leste has also involved consultant academics, and here as well there has been a widespread, largely uncritical adoption of modernist language and discourse. In this vein, Daniel Fitzpatrick, in a policy options paper commissioned by the World Bank on Chapter Five of the proposed Land Law, which deals with issues relating to customary land, identifies several of the principles in the East Timorese Constitution as a basis for shared 'common principles' amongst groups affected by the proposed land reform. First amongst these is Section 54, 'Every individual has the right to property'. Fitzpatrick suggests also that:

there appears to be broad agreement that: All rights to property should be secure...The regulation of rural lands should be based on principles of participation and democracy...State land should be used in a fair and equitable manner in

accordance with national interest...The management of rural land should include reference to traditional norms and customs...[and] a local community may act as a form of business organization (Fitzpatrick 2010: 11).

Assumed within this suggested list of 'common principles', however, is a vast array of ideas, values, forms of organisation and social relations that are peculiarly and contingently modern: land understood as property; liberal notions of democracy which, notwithstanding the sanctity with which they are held by policy makers and development organisations, often jar with customary forms of governance and authority; the idea of 'national interest'; the incorporation of community groupings as corporate entities. It may well be the case that each of these 'common principles' represents a form of social relations with which both policy-makers and local communities will have to contend and negotiate, but to assume that they represent a shared normative and ideological baseline for all people affected by the land reform process simply does not pay sufficient heed to the ontological dissonances which exist between these principles and existing customary practices.

Of course, the counter-argument that can be made here is that the Ita Nia Rai process, in being focussed on urban and peri-urban areas, is oriented towards places where customary systems may not be fully functioning, where people are not necessarily living on ancestral land, and where the legacies of colonialism and conflict are such that people are experiencing forms of insecurity beyond the capacity of customary systems to resolve. Certainly, as has been argued in this and previous chapters, the reality of entanglement and insecurity generated through modernising processes of change, is such that forms of formal landowner recognition and codification can be desirable, and indeed necessary. Nonetheless, to read these spaces solely through a modernist language of property and land rights is misleading. There needs to be an engagement with both the customary and the modern as ontologically distinct patterns of practice and meaning. This requires more than simply making 'reference to traditional norms and customs', as Fitzpatrick suggests above, which does little more than fix the customary as a kind of inert cultural backdrop to the modern, entrenching the primacy of the latter. Rather, it requires positioning the customary and the modern as analytically equal to one another, as cohesive ways of being in the world which are intersecting in dynamic and ambivalent ways; at times incommensurable, and other times drawn into creative moments of negotiation. By and large, however, this is not happening, and an effect is the construction of (modern) urban



spaces in relation to (customary) rural ones, a demarcation that both fails to account for the material reality of entanglement and lends itself to a normative privileging of the former.

Before taking up the theme of these urban-rural imaginaries in more detail, it is useful here to consider the experiences, practices and discourses of people who are affected by and negotiating the Ita Nia Rai process. Case studies of four informants in urban and peri-urban Timor-Leste offer empirical insights into the land claims collection process, revealing complex entanglements that are not accounted for in the formal or technical representations of the project's aims and framing. Revealing urban and peri-urban spaces as sites of dynamic interplay between customary and modern practices at a material level, these case studies then provide a basis for considering the construction of custom and modernity, urban and rural, at a *subjective* level.

### **Local negotiations of land and land reform: Four case studies**

#### *Domingos Valentim, Manatuto Town*

In the town centre of Manatuto District, Domingos Valentim's family was amongst the first in Timor-Leste to have their land mapped and registered through the Ita Nia Rai process. The data collection process was piloted here in Manatuto, a district directly to the east of Dili, and also in the town centre of Liquica District, to Dili's west, before it was rolled out to the capital and other urban and peri-urban centres. Although located within the nominally peri-urban area marked out for the piloting of the Ita Nia Rai process, the land on which Domingos and his kin live is customary land. 'This land is our inheritance from long ago', he says, 'it came directly from our ancestors to us, that this land, we all have rights to live on this land'. The organisation of land in the area where Domingos lives is reflective of the forms of customary connection to land described in Chapter Four ('Embedded in the Land'), including multiple layers of 'ownership' or rights to land. Five siblings, of whom Domingos is one, claim primary rights to the land, on the basis of their age and seniority. Other kin, however, including nieces and nephews and their children, have entitlements to live on the land, to build houses and make gardens. Domingos is at pains to stress that these entitlements do not include rights to sell the land to others:

We want to teach our children, or nephews, or younger siblings who are just born, that is land is all of ours, but cannot be sold. We all have rights to come and build a house and work the gardens, this we can do. But to sell to other people, this we cannot. Because this has come long ago to us from our ancestors. They put us here, no one bought this land. This land comes from the ancestors.

When the Ita Nia Rai staff came to Manatuto, Domingos and his family discussed how to engage with the process. Of the five siblings who hold primary rights to the land, one brother is in Dili, and another is in Atambua, in Indonesian West Timor, where he fled in 1999. These siblings retain their rights to land, but because they are not present the names of the remaining three siblings—two brothers, including Domingos, and one sister—had their names registered as claimants.

The ways in which Domingos' family has engaged with the Ita Nia Rai process points to a creative entanglement of customary forms of connection to land, with modernist forms of communication, epistemology, and identity. Domingos is approving of the Ita Nia Process, but significantly frames its importance in terms of customary practice (*adat*):

We feel that this [the land certificate] is a good thing, because this shows that this land is our land, according to *adat*. Because if other people or the state, or our nephews or grandchildren want to sell the land, this says that the land belongs to all of us. No one has the right on their own, no. We all have the right to be able to build houses and use the land, but not to sell it. This piece of paper is very important to us, to prove this.

Domingos and his family will store the 'certificate', the land title, in the *uma lisan* [Tetum: ritual house, also referred to as *uma lulik*, or sacred house], the sacred building that is the material, ritual centre of the genealogical 'house'. In this way, the land claims process has been incorporated within a customary cosmology and form of organisation, and the certificate itself incorporated as a material object with customary significance, stored alongside other symbolically-laden objects within the *uma lisan*. Domingos says he has heard of other areas where conflicts have emerged over the land claims process, where kin living away from the ancestral land, for instance, have objected to the names of other people being registered alongside the land claim. There have been no problems in his own family, however, because the relationships between people are strong. As long as the culture 'will continue to thrive', he

says, there will not be problems between the people and the government. The government will respect the culture, and the people will 'trust the government to strengthen our unity'. In this way, the continuation of customary practices and meaning, and the building of national 'unity' are seen to be commensurate. He adds, though, that if the culture is 'lost', then problems may arise.

### *Marta Baptista Pires, Liquica Town*

In the town centre of Liquica, Marta Baptista Pires has also been through the Ita Nia Rai claims collection process. She is an elderly woman, and her family has lived in the area for close to thirty years, although it is not their ancestral land. The house she lives in, in the town centre, is her son's, but he fled to Atambua in West Timor in 1999 and has not returned. Marta also owns land outside the town centre, which was given to her by her husband, who has since died. This land fell outside the Ita Nia Rai claims area, and so was not mapped during the Ita Nia Rai process, however the block of land on which Marta lives, was. In Marta's experience, the mapping process was 'easy', and also welcomed. The property had previously been titled under the Indonesian regime, and during this period Marta's family paid a yearly tax to the administration. Since Independence they have not had to pay this tax, which for Marta is a positive thing. She would also like her land outside the town boundaries to be mapped. As with her house, this land was previously titled during the Indonesian era, but the certificate is with her son in Atambua, and in the absence of formal certification there have been some conflicts. In the past few years, a relative from her husband's family, a public servant, obtained a bank loan by fraudulently claiming the land as his own, and using it as collateral. The relative has not repaid the loan, and now the bank is seeking to reclaim the land.

Where Domingos and his kin in Manatuto enjoy a considerable degree of security because of the cohesive of customary governance systems on their land, Marta's situation reflects the insecurity that can arise in the gaps between entangled forms of connection to land. While the land on which her family has lived for the past thirty years is not customary land, in the sense of being passed down by the ancestors, elements of customary social organization have none-the-less been important to the way they have engaged with it. Both the house and the land outside the town have been passed down through family systems of inheritance. The land outside the town, particularly, is the site of multiple claims and entitlements. Marta herself

received the land because there were not men in her generation to receive it. There are, however, several nephews, and as in customary systems of land use they have rights to the land on the basis of their kinship connections to Marta's deceased husband. Marta, now, is waiting for her son to come back from Atambua so that they can distribute the land to all of those who have claims. Waiting for her son, however, Marta is also, as Fitzpatrick and McWilliam (2005) and Yoder (2003) describe it, 'waiting for law'. Because if customary practices of entitlement and inheritance are being used in the family's organization of the land, it is also the case that these are not sufficient. In being purchased and titled, the land has already been drawn into modern systems of land administration, and these systems too are incomplete and fractured. The Indonesian era title that the family held is, for the moment at least, lost to them, and at any rate its legal status is unclear. The lack of a cohesive administrative framework enabled Marta's relative to utilize the land as collateral in a way that he had neither a customary nor modern legal entitlement to do, and it also means that Marta was left without a clear means through which to seek resolution.

### *Umbelina Dos Santos, Liquica Town*

Close to where Marta lives, Umbelina Dos Santos and her family are also living on land that is not their ancestral land, but which is nonetheless drawn into kinship-based systems of use and inheritance. Umbelina was born in Liquica, where her father also grew up and married her mother. The piece of land that she has registered as hers through the Ita Nia Process includes five separate houses, home to around thirty people, along with a small kiosk that faces onto a main road running through the town. The five households—*uma kain*—who live on the land are all family, but customary practices of inheritance mean that just three names were recorded on the claim, those of Umbelina and her two younger brothers. As with Domingos' family, these are the people who hold the most primary claims, who have the right to represent their other family members, and who also govern the use of land within the family, giving permission for example to other kin who wish to build houses on the land, or make gardens.

Prior to the Ita Nia Rai process, Umbelina's family had not previously held a title to their land. Measuring land was expensive during the Portuguese era, when Umbelina's father was a child, and the family would have had to pay the expense in order to claim a certificate. 'It was only

for those who had money and who could pay', Umbelina says. 'For us, we could not afford it'. Where access to the formal land administration system in the Portuguese era—and to an extent, also the Indonesian era—was selective and dependent on a degree of financial capacity, the rendering of Ita Nia Rai ('Our Land') as a citizen's process has meant that all land, at least within the nominated project areas, has been drawn into the formal, modern system. 'When the Ita Nia Rai staff came', Umbelina says, 'they said we had to measure our land. Otherwise in the future we will not have the right to claim the land, so we agreed'. If done largely without choice, Umbelina was not upset about the process. As with Marta, there have been some conflicts about the land in the period since 1999, and Umbelina felt that the possession of a certificate would show that they are the true owners, and be a defence against others trying to occupy the land. Still, she said, the certificate would change little about how she used her land. Asked if she would ever consider selling the land, she replied definitively 'no', because there would be no land then for the next generation of her kin.

In Umbelina's narrative, as with both Marta and Domingos', the mapping and codification of land through the Ita Nia Rai process is not perceived as something that will substantially change the nature of social connection to land. None of these three informants articulates a desire to use land as a commodity, and each stress the importance of land remaining within the control of kinship-based social groups, as something that can be passed down to future generations. In this way, each reflects the continuing importance of aspects of customary connection to land, particularly the continuing salience of genealogical-based forms of social organisation. However there are also significant differences between the ways that Umbelina and Marta, on the one hand, and Domingos, on the other, approach their land their connection to it. While each is oriented towards the future inheritance of the descendants, it is only in Domingos' case that this is also linked to a sense of the past, to ancestral connection. For Marta and Umbelina, the sense of security which land provides for their kin, both present and future, is in many ways a more modern sense of security, of having land on which to live and make gardens. While Umbelina says, as well, that she would not consider selling their land, we can also see, from Marta's story, that land *is* being used, by some, as a commodity, in her case by a relative seeking to leverage it as collateral against a bank loan. When land is titled and registered as property—when people become landowners in the modern sense—then it becomes increasingly possible to use land in this way.

Looking back to the experiences of the three Kurumbukari men in Papua New Guinea, whose story was recounted in the opening chapter of this thesis, what we see is that different desires and ways of relating to land can co-exist. In Timor-Leste, the discourse of using land ‘for development’—that is, as an economic resource or as collateral—is not as widespread as in Papua New Guinea, where large-scale resource extractive industry, and opportunities for local communities to engage in such modernist forms of production, are much more widespread. If this discourse has not yet got the local traction in Timor-Leste as it has in PNG, however, we know from the policy intentions of the East Timorese state, international financial institutions and donor agencies such as USAID, that the future expansion of modernist forms of production and exchange is a key goal of the development paradigm. We know as well that land reform is understood, at this elite level, as a central part of this process.

As such, the World Bank’s Justice for the Poor program—which has been actively supporting the development of the Transitional Land Law, positions its conflict-resolution functions within the context of broader neoliberal market reforms, describing the development of land administration as part of the process of developing ‘a fully functioning market economy’ (World Bank 2006: 2), and creating a ‘business regulatory environment’ that will ‘encourage competitive private sector activity’ (p.7). Creating such an environment should, the Bank argues, be ‘at the top of its [the East Timorese Government’s] development agenda’ (p.2). Similarly, the voluntary registration of customary lands—outside the Ita Nia Rai project area—is advocated by USAID (2012: 1) in order to ‘avoid conflicts between communities and potential investors’. To this extent it is likely that, along with the expansion of modernist forms of economic activity, there will be a concomitant expansion of local narratives and imaginaries of ‘development’ understood in these terms. What Papua New Guinean experiences of land and development, such as that of the Kurumbukari community, tell us, is that when opportunities for ‘development’ start to present themselves, land can be, and often is, used in a modernist sense as an alienable economic asset, even as people simultaneously hold a customary understanding of that land as an inalienable grounding of culture, kinship and identity.

### *Alex, Bebora, Dili*

A fourth example of local responses to the Ita Nia Rai land claims collection process comes from Dili, in the *bairu* (neighbourhood) of Bebora in *suco* Motael. Alex is a young man, a language teacher, and lives with his wife and two children in a house originally built by his father during the period of Indonesian occupation. Alex's parents did not live in Dili in the occupation, but rather in the enclave of Oecusse, located in the western part of the island of Timor, where Alex's father worked as a meteorologist. The house in Dili was occupied during the Indonesian era by an aunt, and by Alex's grandparents. Alex's parents moved back to the city, and to the house, in 1999, bringing Alex and his siblings with them. In the period following the violence of 1999, when many people were moving or returning to the city, the house was home to many family members. Another house was built adjacent to the house where Alex now lives, by his father's younger brother, who now lives there. A younger sister of his father also lives in a close-by property, and other family members also live close. Alex's parents themselves have since moved with two of Alex's unmarried siblings to another area of Dili, Marconi, *suco* Fatuhada, but are only a kilometre or so away. When Alex married, the land on which both his house and his uncle's neighbouring house were built, was given to him by his father. This land has now been registered, through the Ita Nia Rai process, in his name.

As with the previous three informants, the story and history of Alex's land points to the entanglement of modern and customary forms of connection to land. The land itself was purchased as private property by Alex's father from a man named Alohi, who is a customary landowner of the Bebora area. Alex was told by his father that there was a land certificate at one stage, but it was lost in 1999. What remains is a copy of a letter written as a receipt of the sale. It does not record a date, but notes that the price was the equivalent of twenty-five American dollars (the currency used in contemporary Timor-Leste) and one buffalo. While Dili is often described by local informants as having been uninhabited when it was established as a city during the Portuguese era, there are pockets throughout the city where people claim customary connection to land. Bebora is one of these areas, and the man Alohi is not the only customary landowner there to have sold land. Other *rai nain* (customary landowners) have sold pieces of land to other incomers, including people from the Districts of Maliana, Baucau, and Liquica. These people live together, intermingled with members of the *rai nain* who still live close by. Prior to 1999, there were a few Indonesians living in Bebora, and so several occupations of houses took place after the Indonesian withdrawal. Mostly, though, the people

living here now are either *rai nain*, or incomers to the city who have purchased, albeit informally, their properties.

While customary and modern forms of connection to land are entangled within the urban site of Bebora, taking a wider frame of reference there is also an interesting entanglement to be observed in the way that Alex and his family engage with land in the Districts to which they are connected. While the family lived in Oecusse throughout the period of the Indonesian occupation, this is not the land from which they are customarily descended. Nonetheless, Alex's parents have returned to Oecusse two or three times in the past decade, including for celebrations and rituals. Alex himself describes a feeling of being both a Dili person and an Oecusse person. He is connected, too, to Liquica, where his father is customarily from, and to Viqueque, from where his mother's father is descended. He also describes a connection to Manatuto, where his mother's mother comes from. The family, including Alex, returns to Liquica for *adat* ceremonies, but also to Oecusse, to Manatuto and Viqueque. In articulating his connection to these places, Alex conveys an identity within which customary connection is important, but it is in many ways a cosmopolitan rearticulation of customary identity, one that is mobile, that connects many different places, and which incorporates places such as Oecusse, to which the family have no ancestral connection. Instead of a form of personhood and belonging which privileges connection to *particular* land, this is rather a form of identity that incorporates multiple lines and sites of connection, entangling customary ways of being with more modernist, mobile and abstracted ones.

The identity and multiple forms of connection that Alex sustains, and the practices of kinship-based inheritance and co-residence that his family employ, might be considered as strategies for engaging with the more modernist forms of land ownership with which they are engaged. Through these strategies, they negotiate the modern and draw it back into forms of sociality that have some grounding in the customary. Recognising that migration, forms of land purchase and ownership, are *abstracted* practices and relations, these then are strategies for negotiating abstraction. Nonetheless, what we have seen throughout this thesis—in Cacavei, on the Rai Coast, in Nobnob, Siar and Rempí, and now in urban and peri-urban Timor-Leste—is that while customary forms of sociality are able to accommodate forms of abstraction, such abstraction also generates risks and insecurity within those customary relations. It is telling here that while Alex and his family return for *adat* ceremonies to Liquica, Manatuto, Oecusse



and Viqueque, the land that is being valued as the substance of inter-generational inheritance is not the customary land to which the family is ancestrally connected, but rather the pieces of property which Alex's parents have acquired through purchase—the property in Bebora, and another piece of land in Oecusse that Alex's father purchased while living there. As these forms of land are given priority, there is an increased reliance on modernist forms of land governance and administration, including the recognition of contractual agreements underpinning land sales, and now the state recognition of ownership through the land titling process. As these forms of governance are extended, the authoritative and decision-making capacity of the modern state is strengthened.

Notable here, as well, is that in the codification of property ownership, it is effectively only one 'layer' of entitlement to land which receives formal recognition—Alex is named as 'landowner' of the land on which several members of his family live, and similarly with those individuals named as claimants over Umbelina Dos Santos' family's land in Liquica, and Domingos Valentim's community's land in Manatuto. On the one hand, this speaks to the dynamic entanglement of modern forms of land organisation with customary ones, as customary mechanisms remain the means through which various subsidiary entitlements to claim and use land—the entitlements of cousins, younger siblings, and other kin—are recognised. On the other hand, however, what we have seen through the entanglement of customary and modern forms of connection to land is a tendency for the modern to reframe the customary within it. In the local ways that the Ita Nia Rai process is being received and negotiated, in these early stages, modernist forms of codification are being positioned within the context of existing, customarily-derived practices of land use and organisation. In granting property rights, however, the land titling process grants rights that are absolute, not contingent. To this extent the danger exists that the modern will take precedence over the customary, and in this instance we need to ask, what becomes of those who are not named? To a degree, such questionings are hypothetical. The Ita Nia Rai process is relatively young, and the issuing of land titles by the East Timorese state has only recently begun. More research, including longitudinal comparative research, will be important here. However comparisons to other places where forms of state codification are longer-running, such as Papua New Guinea, give us some insights into the ways in which the modern can indeed reframe the customary. The establishment within the East Timorese constitution, too, of the primacy of the modern legal system—with custom recognised only to the extent that it does not contradict modern law—also gives some indication of this tendency.

It is useful here to think back to the comment made by Domingos Valentim, in Manatuto. As long as the customary culture continued to ‘thrive’, he said, he envisaged no problems between ‘the people’ and the government-led process of reform. If culture began to be lost, however, problems may indeed arise. Domingos’ observation is astute. One very real danger evident in contemporary Timor-Leste is that the urban-focussed land titling process is occurring not only within a material context of entangled social relations, but also within an ideological climate within which the modern—or the idea of the modern—is being privileged, and forms of customary sociality being devalued or rendered invisible.

### **Urban and rural imaginaries**

One danger in the urban and peri-urban focus of the Ita Nia Rai process is that it effectively constructs a divide between ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ Timor-Leste, and inscribes onto that categorisation another set of oppositional categories, that of ‘modern’ and ‘customary’. Nominally focussed on the urban, the Ita Nia Rai land claims collection process is positioned in contrast to the proposals to establish ‘Community Property’ and ‘Community Protection Zones’, through the Land Law, as sites of customary land tenure beyond the boundaries of the Districts’ town centres. Community Protection Zones could, according to a range of policy options suggested by a World Bank commissioned report, include *all* land that falls outside of town boundaries, unless proven otherwise (Fitzpatrick 2010: 18). In this way, an affiliation is drawn between the rural and the customary (although, following from the discussion of landowner codification in Madang, in the previous chapter, we also need to recognise that the creation of ‘Community Property’ is itself a modernist form of codification of custom). Conversely, Ita Nia Rai is positioned as oriented towards spaces where the customary is perceived to be lacking, namely the urban.

A discussion document produced for the Ita Nia Rai project is illustrative. Recognising the pitfalls of formalising title to land, and that customary systems are in fact capable of providing ‘security of tenure’ and supporting smallholder agriculture, the author of the document suggests that this in itself provides a basis for limiting the collection of land claims to urban

and peri-urban areas. These areas, along with rural sites where 'non-customary' primary industry projects have been initiated by government, 'have been identified as areas where customary authority is less influential', the author writes, 'and, therefore, would be better suited for formal demarcation' (Lopes 2008: 19).<sup>16</sup> To be sure, in *some* of the case studies discussed above, we do indeed see an absence of customary systems as fully cohesive frameworks for the organisation of land. This is far from absolute, however, and it is far from the case that customary authority, and customary ways of relating to land, are inconsequential within these urban spaces.

The categorical demarcation between urban/modern and rural/customary slides easily into an ideological and normative one. In this sense, the modernist bias of officials and policy-makers involved in the Ita Nia Rai land titling process is itself reflective of a broader bias amongst Timor-Leste's Dili-based elite. This elite, as Kelly Silva and Daniel Simião (2012: 367) observe, share an outlook that renders them 'reluctant to acknowledge as legitimate any versions of duties and justice that fall beyond the pale of the formal legal models'. Silva and Simião point to a strong discourse amongst Dili elites through which they position themselves in opposition to the country's rural population. This is often articulated in terms of a distinction between *ema Dili* (Dili people) and *ema foho* (mountain, or hill people), with the capital and the districts/hills constructed as 'distinct moral spaces' (2012: 369; cf. Silva 2011). Silva and Simião see a continuity here between the contemporary discourses and practices of Timor-Leste's elite, and those of its past colonial masters, for whom urban spaces were 'the locus of direct rule, positive law, religion, language, white people and individuals'. Carrying forward this sentiment, urban spaces are rendered by the new elite as sites of modernity, development, and Western (modern) values. In contrast, the 'hill' stands as 'the general designation for places inhabited by uncontrolled or uncivilized people' (Silva and Simião 2012: 370).

---

<sup>16</sup> Jackson and Palmer (2012) provide another example of this failure to recognise the existence of custom in the urban. They point to a 2006 report funded by the Asian Development Bank on water resource issues, which states that 'the influence of "traditional" beliefs and practices associated with water use and allocation in urban environment is largely invisible to most residents, if they exist at all' (quoted in Jackson and Palmer 2012: 72). This is contradicted by Palmer's own research, which points to the continuing importance of custom in issues related to water use in Baucau, Timor-Leste's second largest urban centre.

Silva and Simião's analysis resonates with those of others. Hicks (2007) points to what he describes as a 'dysfunctional relationship' between Dili and the districts (p.13), citing the use of Portuguese as an official language in Timor-Leste as indicative of the lack of interest of Dili elites in strengthening connections between the capital and the districts. Portuguese is a language that is not spoken or understood by a majority of population, but which is understood by a Dili-based elite, particularly those elements that lived in exile in Portugal during the period of Indonesian occupation. It is used, amongst other things, as the language of the courts and the legal system, a fact that renders these spaces largely inaccessible to much of the population (cf. Leach 2008; Kingsbury 2007). Ann Wigglesworth, similarly, argues that the devaluing of Tetum (which is much more widely spoken) in favour of this colonial language reflects a dominant development paradigm which privileges the 'modern' over the 'traditional' (Wigglesworth 2012). The dominance of this paradigm is accentuated, as well, not only by the continuing legacy of colonial mentalities, but also by the disproportionate concentration of international development organisations and personnel within Timor-Leste's urban centres, particularly Dili. The concentration is such that one commentator (Traub 2000: 84) described the capital in the immediate post-referendum period as resembling 'a wholly owned subsidiary of the international development community'. This is the dominant development paradigm that, as we have seen in the ideologies underpinning the UNTAET intervention, and the subsequent land reform policies of the East Timorese state and its development partners, carries a strongly modernist underpinning.

The concentration of development organisations and personnel within urban Timor-Leste generates a peculiar socio-logic, a self-referential culture of liberal-democratic values, discourses and practices ('equality', 'gender mainstreaming', 'development', 'capacity building') that can be largely at odds with—and effectively quarantined from—the ways that the majority of East Timorese live in and understand the world. Hicks (2007) suggests that in the tension between 'Western values' and *adat*, proponents of the former (including Dili-based East Timorese elites) deprecate the latter as inconsistent with a modern nation-state. In this way, we see a replication here of the normative assumptions which underpinned Modernisation Theory (discussed in Chapter Two). At the same time, *within* the urban, the modernist bias of the dominant development sector is such that there is often a failure to recognise the presence of custom in urban contexts, as is evident in the framing of the Ita Nia Rai project. The Timorese who are engaged within the development sector—employed within development organisations or with partnered government agencies—are by and large either

members of Timor-Leste's elite, based within Dili or other urban sites, or else the *recipients* of development organisation and government activity, those to whom 'development' (modernity) must be brought. In this case, people can be positioned in ways that are passive and disempowering, with existing ways of life rendered through a language of deficit, assessed for their lack of 'modern-ness'. This is the case for those in Timor-Leste's districts, positioned as marginal in relation to its urban 'centres', as well as for those positioned marginally within the cartographies of power that exist within the urban, those who are not part of the elite, and those whose ways of life and culture align them—through the normatively-charged imaginaries of urban and rural dynamics—with those from the 'hills', the *ema foho*.

The experiences of Domingos, Marta, Umbelina and Alex demonstrated clearly that the urban and peri-urban sites that are the focus of the Ita Nia Rai project are far from cohesively, or evenly, modern. Customary and modern forms of sociality were shown to intersect in the ways that people engage with land and land reform, even within the capital Dili. To this extent, the data complicates the dominant rendering of Ita Nia Rai as a land reform process oriented towards urban spaces where customary forms of relationship to land are lacking. It reveals a key disjuncture between the subjective and objective dimensions of entanglement within urban and peri-urban Timor-Leste, and more broadly in the relationship between the urban and the rural in that country. At the same time, however, what we also saw, in a material sense, were hints towards the capacity of modern relations of property and land ownership to reframe and reconstitute customary ones. Here, then, the possibility emerges that the material and subjective dimensions of the Ita Nia Rai process—mutually affecting as these dynamics are—will begin to reconverge. Privileging modernist forms of property and land ownership, strengthening the state, and emboldened by a normative imaginary that privileges the modern over the customary and writes urban spaces as modern ones, the danger is that processes such as Ita Nia Rai will produce exactly the kinds disenfranchisement of customary relations which their proponents assume have already, or should already have occurred.

## **Conclusion**

A foundational argument of this thesis is that customary and modern forms of social relations are fundamentally and ontologically distinct, but nonetheless intertwined. As patterns of

practice they are not dichotomously opposed (although ideologically they may be constructed in this way). They do not exist as mutually exclusively ways of being, written onto the bodies of opposing social groups, contained within different epochs or within the boundaries of distinct geographical areas. Rather, these patterns of practice and meaning cut across the boundaries of bodies, social groups, times and places, drawn into dynamic and shifting entanglements. In urban and peri-urban Timor-Leste, we see this illustrated vividly. While, subjectively, the sites in which the Ita Nia Rai process is operational are portrayed through some discourses as sites where custom is lacking, and while the language and assumptions of many policy-makers, officials and commentators involved in the project betray an uncritically modernist lens, in practice what we see is that customary and modern forms of relationship to land are dynamically entangled. On Domingos' land in Manatuto town, we see customary systems that are strong, cohesive, and effective in the organisation of land. In Bebora, we see the presence of customary forms of connection to land alongside modern ones, both in the intermingling of Alex's family with local *rai nain*, and in the entanglement within Alex's family of modern forms of property ownership with customarily-derived practices of co-residence and inheritance. In Marta and Umbelina's land in Liquica, we see land which is not ancestral land, but which is nonetheless governed at least in part through forms of sociality that are grounded in customary ways of being and relating.

In examining the implications of entanglement for relations of *power*, the argument of the thesis has been that these relations are destabilised, and that multiple possibilities exist for their reconfiguration. Here, again, we see this illustrated. The Ita Nia Rai land reforms have strengthened a modernist cartography of power within which the centres of authority and decision-making capacity over land are increasingly concentrated in the sites, agents and processes of the modern state. Yet we also see that these reforms are taking place within a context of existing entanglement, the result, particularly, of urbanisation and of post-conflict and post-colonial dynamics. In this context, a lack of codification of land rights can itself be disempowering, as it was for example for Marta Baptista Pires, whose relative manipulated the gap between the customary and the modern to use her land as collateral for a loan. Indeed, for Marta and other informants discussed in the preceding discussion, the Ita Nia Rai land reforms have largely been welcomed, and have not (to date at least) generated problems for them. Located within entanglements of customary and modern forms of relationship to land, these informants have been able to rearticulate customary practices within urban and peri-urban spaces, as ways of managing their land and negotiating the processes of land reform. This is an

important reminder that entanglements cannot only be read in terms of *clash*, or as an inevitable giving way of the customary to the modern. Yet, it is also the case that the extension of modern relations of property entrenches more abstracted understandings of land and relationships of power that can come to enact a coercive capacity over customary ones, and in the case studies presented here we have seen hints of tension and disjuncture as well as of creative accommodation.

In the following chapter, which is the final substantive chapter of the thesis, I consider the experience of a community for whom the extension of state authority over land has been neither welcome nor easy. The East Timorese state's move to evict Aitarak Laran, and other urban settlements in Dili, has generated an acute, and explicitly political, contestation. It is also a contestation that differs significantly from others described in preceding chapters. Where other communities discussed throughout this thesis have been able, to varying degrees and in differing ways, to rearticulate custom in the face of the extension of modern power, this has not happened in Aitarak Laran. Instead, the community has drawn almost exclusively upon modernist discourses and practices in contesting their eviction—practices and discourses related to civil society, citizenship, rights and the promises of Independence. Without suggesting that custom is not an important part of the community's everyday lives—as we have seen in this chapter, urban spaces are far from exclusively modern—in the 'public transcript' (Scott 1990) of their conflict with the state, at least, custom is noticeable at Aitarak Laran mostly in its absence. I argue in the following chapter that this absence reflects in part the take-up at the local level of the rural-urban imaginaries, discussed in this present chapter, which devalue custom and construct urban spaces as sites of modernity. At a more fundamental level, however, the absence of custom in the public contestation reflects the strained situation in which the community find themselves in. Removed from the customary land which is the centre of a customary cartography of power, and denied land rights in the extension of state authority across the post-colonial city, the community has been left with little recourse but to the modernist language rights and citizenship. The tools that they have employed have given them some grounds for contesting their eviction, but ultimately have had the effect of affirming, rather than challenging, the power of the modern nation-state. In drawing the thesis towards its conclusion, then, the discussion that follows serves as something of a cautionary tale.





## 9. Becoming squatters: the eviction of Aitarak Laran

---

The community of Aitarak Laran sits alongside Comoro Road, a main road running through the centre of Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste. A small row of shops faces the street—a motorcycle repair shop, a couple of kiosks—and between these a dirt roads leads in to a central meeting area, around which exist a crowded hodge-podge of houses. Some are built from cement blocks; others, constructed out of pieces of metal and fibro, are barely more than shacks. On the other side of Comoro Road stands the imposing Presidential Palace, its grand white walls set behind fences and spacious gardens. In between these two counter-posed sites runs a noisy stream of cars, motorbikes, people. Vegetable sellers holler as they push wooden carts laden with tomatoes, beans, carrots and Asian greens. Passengers hang out the doors of packed microlets—the small buses which serve as Dili’s public transport. Young male taxi drivers cruise past in yellow taxis, playing R&B music out of crackly speakers. Geographically located in the centre of the city, the community or *bairu* (neighbourhood) of Aitarak Laran is also located culturally and politically in the intersection of the complex dynamics of change and contestation to which this city gives rise, a fact that was made acutely evident in September 2010 when the community was served with an eviction notice by the National Directorate of Land, Property and Cadastral service within the Ministry of Justice, giving them thirty days to vacate their homes.

The capacity of the East Timorese state to evict the community of Aitarak Laran—and other Dili settlements who have been evicted in the post-Independence period—is a consequence of the disruption to housing and residence which followed Indonesian withdrawal in 1999, and the radically reconfigured cartographies of power which, as was discussed in the previous chapter, emerged in the city as a result. During the Indonesian occupation, Aitarak Laran was home to many Indonesian public servants. Many of the East-Timorese now living in the *bairu*

moved there through occupying the houses that had been left vacant by these Indonesians in 1999. Others moved in the wake of the 2006 civil crisis. There are a small number of properties which are privately owned, and also a small number of families—eight, in the estimation of one informant—who have lived in Aitarak Laran since the period of Portuguese occupation, but the majority of the community's residents came to the area in these periods of crisis and reoccupation. The land on which they are living, however, has now been claimed as state land—*rai estado*—on the basis of legislation passed in the early days of Independence (Law 1/2003) that secured as state property all land that had belonged to the Portuguese state in 1975, and all land that had been both claimed and used by the Indonesian administration from 1975-1999. The move has affected not only the residents of Aitarak Laran, but also other communities in the city. Most notably, 175 households were evicted in January 2011 from an area in Dili's west called Bairro-Pite, an action that generated considerable media interest and popular debate, as well as criticism from local NGOs and international observers including the United Nations Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (UNMIT/Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2012). Given the deeply uneven landscapes of conflict, displacement and destruction which have extended across the city in the wake of Indonesian occupation and the subsequent waves of upheaval, the effect of the state's actions has been to create as squatters and 'illegal occupiers' many of the city's most vulnerable people.

In considering the nature and implications of the land reform process in urban Timor-Leste, the story of the community at Aitarak Laran provides a necessary counter-point to the stories recounted in the previous chapter, of those people who are receiving land titles through the Ita Nia Rai process. If the collection of land claims and issuing of property titles is heralded as a means of generating 'rights' and 'security' amongst (parts of) a citizenry, the insecurity and disenfranchisement of the Aitarak Laran community must also be recognised as part and parcel of the same land reform process. Of course, this is not a connection that the Ita Nia Rai project's backers are keen to draw. Speaking to me, Nigel Thomson, an Australian lawyer working as Chief of Party of the Strengthening Property Rights in Timor-Leste (Ita Nia Rai) project, was quick to disassociate Ita Nia Rai from the wave of evictions taking place in the city. 'It's nothing to do with us', he said. Yet, it is clear that the evictions and the land titling process are connected; they represent two, intertwined dimensions of the extension of state power and authority across the city. Both 'landowners' and 'squatters' come into existence through the establishment of a modern judicial, legislative and administrative system. This system gives them legal and moral weight as categories and designators, and in applying them to sections of

its citizenry codifies varying relations of entitlement, privilege and subjugation. The process of creating property rights for *some* is also a process of denying them to others, and within a modern political system, a key locus of power is with that institution—the nation-state—endowed with the power to create, grant, and withhold those rights.

The story of Aitarak Laran serves as an important counter-point, too, to the emphasis of previous chapters on the possibilities for rearticulating custom in response to the extension of modern power. In Aitarak Laran, the community did indeed contest the state's attempts to evict them, but in doing so they drew almost exclusively upon modernist practices and discourses—appealing to notions of rights and the state-citizen relationship, and invoking the promises of Independence. In the public contestation between the state and the community, custom was overwhelmingly absent. The mechanisms which the community did employ gave them some basis for challenging the state's intentions, but ultimately were limited in their efficacy. As of early 2013, eleven families at Aitarak Laran have already been evicted, and the state remains intent on removing the remaining households as its plans for the construction of the new National Culture Centre take shape. Those that remain in the community, awaiting eviction, remain branded as 'illegal occupiers' of state land.

### **Contesting the eviction**

As the residents of Aitarak Laran found themselves named as squatters in the post-colonial city, the strategy they chose to pursue was one that employed a modernist language of rights, and appeals based on citizenship and membership of the nation. This strategy was pursued in partnership with a number of civil society organisations to whom the community turned for help. As the threatened eviction gained growing media interest—especially after the contentious eviction at Bairro-Pite—the community and their civil society allies sought to utilise the media in their campaign. Media releases were issued, and public speeches and announcements made at the central meeting area in the community which was organised into a stage and organising hub. Banners were strung up alongside the entrance to the community, facing onto the bustling Comoro Road and the office of the head of the state on the other side. One read, 'We Will Not Go From Here'. Another, 'The People Are Not The Enemies Of The State'.

Principal amongst the civil society organisations working with the community were the Haburas Foundation, an NGO with a strong activist orientation that campaigns primarily on environmental issues, and Laifet, the Labour Advocacy Institute for East Timor. The Haburas Foundation emphasises the role of traditional East Timorese culture in securing environmental sustainability (Haburas Foundation 2001), but is also informed by broadly Marxist principles in its work and in the politics of its staff. Laifet, in its orientation towards labour issues, is also strongly informed by a left-leaning, broadly socialist or social-democratic ideology, and has connections with the international trade union movement. Other local civil society groups also supported the community through the NGO Forum, the umbrella organisation that coordinates local and international NGOs in Timor-Leste, and through the Land Network, Rede ba Rai, a network of civil society groups campaigning on land issues. While invoking and supporting ‘traditional’ and ‘East Timorese’ culture (and it is worth noting here that these categories are not straightforwardly equivalent), what is noticeable about both Haburas and Laifet is that they are located with a strongly modernist framework—drawing upon modernist political ideologies, as well as notions of national identity, rights and civil society that are themselves embedded within the politics and modes of political organisation associated with the modern nation-state. To this extent, they are reflective of many local NGOs in Timor-Leste which, as Palmer and de Carvalho (2008) have also observed, are either Marxist or liberal-democratic in their ideological orientation. The modernist positioning of the NGOs is reflected in the ways in which the eviction of the Aitarak Laran community was contested.

The NGOs present at Aitarak Laran took up a strong role as advocates for, and organisers of, the community. Arguing against the threatened eviction, campaigners from the NGOs and community members acting as spokespeople placed particular emphasis on the rights of the Aitarak Laran residents as citizens of the nation-state, invoking particularly the right to housing enshrined in section 58 of the Constitution. As Ameu, from the NGO Laifet, stated:

we are also asking the government to take care of the new families [in Aitarak Laran, as well as those who have lived in the *bairu* since Portuguese time] because in article 58 of the RDTL Constitution it is clearly written that East Timorese citizens have the right to housing and land.

Jascinto de Oliveira Tavares, an Aitarak Laran resident working as a Community Coordinator, likewise called upon the government to 'create the right conditions for the population here', a phrase that was repeated often by informants. 'The action we are taking', he said, 'is just asking for our rights because these rights already consecrated in the law'. Along with the East Timorese Constitution, he also invoked the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), to which Timor-Leste is a signatory, specifically Article 11.1, which asserts the right to adequate housing as a basic human right. Another activist, Gil Horacio Boavida, a campaigner with the Haburas Foundation, went further, calling for redistributive 'land reform' so that 'people in each community...each receive a piece of land like what it inscribed in the RDTL Constitution'.

Appeals to a rights discourse and to the state-citizen relationship in Aitarak Laran were in turn bound up in nationalist appeals, invoking particularly the promises of Independence, and the role of ordinary East Timorese (in Tetum *povu*, or *ema kiik*, the little people) in fighting for that Independence. This statement by Joau Lopes, a resident in the community, is illustrative:

We are not foreigners, we are East Timorese, we have rights to land, a house, because Independence does not mean that the state won independence, but that the people won independence. Also it was the people who fought the war and who finished the war... So we, as East Timorese citizens, we have the right to have some land.

An older man, speaking from the front of the house he shared with his wife, children and grandchildren, said similarly of the campaign against the eviction:

We are not fighting for a particular person but for Timorese people's rights to land. We recognize the state's patrimony [right to the land] but we also need to be recognized because people also fought for this country.

Through these claims, each of the informants positioned themselves, first and foremost, as East Timorese. The primary identity they asserted was a national one, and this provided the basis for the political, but also moral claims that they made. In this sense, the community's entanglement with modern forms of sociality can be seen to have provided them with a language and identity with which to contest their disempowerment by the state.

In this assertion of national identity, however, there was a visible ambivalence in the ways that they, and others in the community, spoke about their own relationship to the newly independent state. In each case, expressions of commitment to the nation were cut through with a tangible sense of disappointment—or at least uncertainty—about what Independence had actually brought to their lives. A conversation with Francisco, a young man living in the community, was revealing of this conflicted sense of both optimism and disappointment. Asked about his reflections of East Timorese Independence, Francisco's first response was qualified, but nonetheless positive. 'I think that now we have Independence', he said smiling, 'almost all people have liberty'. As he continued speaking, however, the smile waned. It became clear that, in fact, he saw the enjoyment of 'liberty' as belonging not so much to 'almost all people' as to a very small few. That liberty, he suggested, the 'access to development, access to this and that', was available only to those from the big and powerful families. Most ordinary Timorese, he suggested, were excluded from these benefits:

Before we thought that with independence everything would be great, with the struggle it was everyone together, so we dreamed that with independence it would be great... but the reality is that with independence we must work really hard to get what we don't have yet. Like in Timor every year we hear that the state has lots of money for development plans but the people have not yet felt any results from this...In reality the people never receive it.

For Francisco and for others at Aitarak Laran, Independence had not delivered what they hoped it would. Life in the post-Independence period has revealed fault-lines, differences, and tensions within a social body—the nation—that in the pre-Independence period achieved a certain degree of unity from a common opposition to a colonising force. 'With the struggle it was everyone together', Francisco says. Now, divisions had emerged within the nation, between 'the state' and 'the people', and, amongst the people themselves, between a privileged elite and a disempowered majority for whom 'access to development' remains elusive. Gil, the activist from the Haburas Foundation NGO, echoed Francisco's sentiment. 'There is no value in the independence that they [the state] are going to give to the people', he said. 'Where is it? There is none.'

## Cartographies of power in the post-colonial city

The ambivalence articulated by the Aitarak Laran residents and civil society activists speaks, at a fundamental level, to tensions deeply rooted within the modern nation-state. These are tensions which exist between the themes of unity, equivalence and inclusivity—invoked in the imaginings of nationhood and citizenry—and the realities of division, exclusion and inequality. In statements such as that made by resident Joao Lopes—‘Independence does not mean that the state won independence, but that the people won Independence’—the residents of Aitarak Laran asserted a vision of the social contract that held the state accountable to the authority and the moral and political claims of its citizens. Doing so, they also mobilised particular understandings of *land*, both as the homeland of the nation, and as the territory of (all) citizens. These imaginings of land, similarly, invoked themes of equality, unity and inclusivity, and again were deeply tied to understandings about the promises of independence.

### *Nation-building and the homeland: Expectations of unity*

The emergence of East Timorese nationalism, as others have observed (Borgerhoff 2006; Anderson 1993), was very much compelled by the particular experience of Indonesian occupation. More so than Portuguese occupation, which remained unevenly spread across the country and never sought to instil a unified subjectivity within its subject population, the Indonesian administration spread out into towns and villages, and it attempted (albeit half-heartedly) to integrate the East Timorese—both subjectively and materially—into the Indonesian nation. It failed on the latter count—that is, in creating a sense of shared identity as *Indonesians* amongst the population of what was then Timor Timur, the 27<sup>th</sup> province of Indonesia—but it did, unwittingly, lay the foundations for a shared identity as *East Timorese*. As the theorist of nationalism Benedict Anderson has written, specifically about Timor-Leste, ‘a profound sense of commonality emerged from the gaze of the colonial state’ (Anderson 1993: 238). In many ways, this was remarkable—although in one sense at least perhaps no more remarkable than the construction of any nation—a potent sense of shared belonging forged out of little more than common physical location on one side of an administrative line agreed upon by two 18<sup>th</sup> century colonial powers, arbitrarily dividing into two halves what was otherwise a single island.

The emergence of East Timorese nationalism was also the emergence of *Rai Timor* (Tetum), land imagined as the national homeland. Somewhat surprisingly, given the centrality of land within nationalist discourses, land has received relatively little attention amongst theorists of nationalism, a fact noted by both Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet (1997) and Colin Williams and Anthony Smith (1983).<sup>17</sup> Kashani-Sabet (1997) puts much of the blame for this lack of attention, at least in recent years, at Benedict Anderson's feet, suggesting that while his (2006[1983]) notion of the imagined community was an important development in understandings of the nation, the positioning of the nation as 'primarily a creation of the modern mind' (1997: 20) diverted attention away from the importance of connection to land in nation-building. While sympathetic to the general tone of her critique, however, I would suggest that it is possible to extend Anderson's analysis rather than simply dismiss it. This can be done by drawing on the concept of imagination, applying it not only to the relationship between human beings, but also to the relationship between human beings and land. As the *homeland*, I suggest, land is imagined in much the same way as the people of a nation are imagined to form a community: most people within a nation will not know, in a direct and immediate way, the vast majority of the land which is understood to constitute the geographical terrain of the nation. Yet, there is a sense of attachment to it, imagined as a coherent and united entity (in much the same way that the nation is understood to represent one community, a multitude of people unified into a singular social body). In much the same way that the nation is an abstracted form of social community, the homeland is an abstracted understanding of land.

---

<sup>17</sup> The works of key theorists in the field—including Benedict Anderson (2006[1983]), Liah Greenfeld (1992), Elie Kedourie (1993[1960]), Eric Hobsbawm (1992), and Ernest Gellner (1983)—fail to engage with the theme of land, and of social connection to land, in any substantial way. Thomas Eriksen (1993) manages the briefest of mentions of territorial conflicts between indigenous people and nation-states, and David McCrone (1998) a slightly longer discussion of the territorial qualities of modern nationalism, particularly 'civic nationalism' as opposed to 'ethnic nationalism' (cf. Brubaker 1992). While certainly connected to it, however, land within the nation is not equivalent to territory. Tom Nairn (1997) provides some valuable discussion of the treatment of both rurality and cities within different variants of nationalism. Again, though, what is being dealt with here is a theme related to people's connection to land, rather than the issue of land itself. Peter Taylor (2003) provides perhaps the most interesting and relevant, if all too brief, comments, discussing the intersection of state territoriality with national homeland in the period following the French Revolution. Finally, there is a hint towards the significance of connection to land in Ernest Renan's classic lecture 'What is a Nation?' While emphasising, much as would Anderson a hundred years later, the spiritual quality of a nation as 'a moral conscience', McCrone (1998: 5) notes that Renan was 'at pains to point out that people's day-to-day commitment to the territory in which they were governed was essential'. Here too, however, the engagement with the theme of land is by inference rather than explicit address.



As the homeland, social connection to land within the modern nation cannot be reduced to 'territorial imperative', but instead concerns the production of social and political space (Williams and Smith 1983: 502). Nonetheless, the idea of territory feeds into that social and political space. At least within the contemporary ideal of the nation-state, *territory* (understood as the land under the jurisdiction of a sovereign state) and *homeland* are understood to be geographically congruous, just as state and nation are understood to be congruous. Or, more specifically, it is understood that territory and homeland should be congruous; that a lack of congruity speaks to some sort of deficit, either cultural or political. Indeed, land forms a key site within which experiences of the state and nation converge (cf. Taylor 2003). The dynamics of colonialism add another dimension to this, too, because if nation and state are intermeshed within the idea and practice of the modern nation-state—'mutually referential', as Cameron and Palan (1999: 273) put it—they are arguably even more intensely so within the context of a colony struggling, as Timor-Leste was, for national liberation. Here, where the state exists not in actuality but in its idealised potentiality, state and nation, homeland and territory are almost collapsed into one another. In struggles for national independence, what makes the nation 'independent' is the attainment of a concomitant state. The state is understood to be the ultimate realisation of the nation; political sovereignty the realisation of cultural sovereignty. Myths of unity are intensified in this space of oppositional potentiality. The nation, forged in opposition to a colonising force, imagined as singular and undivided; the yet-unrealised state imagined as congruous with it; land, imagined as both territory and homeland, underpinning both.

### *Nation-building: Experiences of division*

What happens then, with the achievement of Independence? In Timor-Leste, the kind of unity made possible (or at least imaginable) through the mobilisation of national identity in the face of a common oppressive force has given way in some important respects to the revelation of divisions, fractures, and hierarchies in the post-colonial nation-state. These include hierarchies of class and wealth, and the concentrations of (modern) power in the hands of the Portuguese-speaking *mestiço* (mixed Portuguese and East Timorese descent) families. They include differences between those perceived to have suffered more or less in the struggle for Independence, with distinctions drawn for instance between those elites who were able to leave the country in 1975, and those who could not leave and so stayed and suffered (Traube 2011). Finally, as the East Timorese state has become a reality, so too has the differentiation

between the state and 'the people' (in Tetum, *povu*). If the state is imagined, on the one hand, as a political community inclusive of all citizens and (ideally) congruous with a nation, it is also the case that it represents, on the other hand, the concentration of multiple forms and relations of power—as Bourdieu (1977) would have it, of different forms of capital—which privilege a small minority. In this latter respect, the state is not synonymous with society (or civil society), but rather exists in tension with it.

In one sense, the post-colonial nation-state continues to promote ideals of unity, coherence, equality and inclusivity. Here, land is not only territory and homeland, but also *property*. Classical liberalism has always invoked a tight nexus between property, citizenship and identity (Verdery 1998), with the right to property core amongst the rights originating from the state-citizen relationship. Significantly, in Timor-Leste as well as in Papua New Guinea, property ownership (be that individual freehold or group ownership) is restricted to citizens. In one sense, the making of land as property in this way speaks to themes of unity and equivalence within the nation-state—all citizens share common rights, and this provides a basis for co-identification with one another. Invocations of unity and horizontal equality are evident, too, in the types of claims for land rights or for redistributive land reform being made in Aitarak Laran. Appeals to Section 58 of the Constitution—the right to land and housing—claim entitlements purely on the basis of membership of the nation-state, and in doing so assert a fundamental equivalence between all members. Moreover, these and claims for redistributive land reform assert a fundamental equivalence in regards to land itself. The homeland, that abstracted socio-political space, is translated into an aggregate of distinct, bounded parcels of land, each equivalent and interchangeable, to be allocated to similarly equivalent and interchangeable citizens.

The actual ways in which land is used, owned and valued, however, are revealing of deep inequalities. Here, it is useful to think about the distinction between formal and substantive citizenship (for example Holston and Appadurai 2003). Formally, all East Timorese enjoy common rights to own property, and rights to housing and land as laid out in the Constitution. Substantively, however, there is a huge disparity in the cultural, political, economic and social resources that determine the extent to which those nominal entitlements of citizenship can be realised. The creation and expansion of the East Timorese state has created property owners, but also squatters, and amongst those who *do* formally own land there are substantial

inequities in terms of the type of land, its location, its size and its quality. These hierarchies in relation to land reveal cartographies of power at play within the city. The period since 1999 has seen an explosion of building and infrastructure development in Dili. Land along the coast—the flattest and most valuable land, and most desirable in terms of its location—has been almost entirely occupied by foreign embassies, and bars, restaurants and hotels with cater to the foreigners (in Tetum, *malae*) who work for the embassies or within the development industry. Some East Timorese have access to these spaces, but most do not, excluded by the existence of an acute dual economy that, as Ann Wigglesworth (2012) has argued, is a source of frustration and grievance for many East Timorese in the city. As Gill, the campaigner from the Haburas NGO put it to me:

How is it that they [the government] prioritise flat land, the land that is close to the beach? They are more concerned with business interests, government interests, the interests of the embassies, so the land that is close to the beach they have used for these things and for foreign businesses, and then what about the real landowners, where else can they go? Go into the ocean? That is not possible.

The urban cartography of centres and margins does not only reflect economic inequalities, however, it also reflects the relations of power involved in the construction of the national capital as a social and symbolic space.

The transformation of space, as Lefebvre (1991) has argued, is a necessary part of any 'revolution'. In the shift from colonisation to independence, this transformation of space is, in part at least, about the spatial construction of the nation. In Timor-Leste, not unlike other postcolonial nation-states, this transformation takes forms both grand and banal: the construction of Parliaments and buildings of state (such as the Presidential Palace, opposite the Aitarak Community), the erection of flags, renaming of streets and public places, the claiming of land as civic space and, indeed, the claiming of land as state property, *rai estado*. It involves, as well, the construction of museums and memorials such as that built at the offices of CAVR, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, established at the rehabilitated site of the Comarca Balide Prison, a site of suffering and death during the Indonesian occupation. And of course, to this we might add the construction of the new National Library and Cultural Centre at Aitarak Laran, described on the website of the State Secretariat of Culture as 'a fundamental project to affirm Timor-Leste's national identity'

(Secretaria de Estado da Cultura n.d.). Williams and Smith (1983), Vale (1992), Lu (2011) and De Raedt (2012) have all pointed to the role of such transformations of the landscape and built environment in nation-building processes, particularly in post-colonial states. Kezer (2009), paying particularly attention to the expression of nationhood in 'ordinary spaces', suggests that these processes of material construction and manipulation create a sense of unity and commonality, socialises people as citizens and members of the nations. This is not an uncontested process, however. Any attempt to 'materialise the nation' (De Raedt 2012) must also be seen as an attempt to assert a particular vision of what the nation is.

Institutions such as National Library and Cultural Centre being proposed for Aitarak Laran construct the nation as much as they reflect the nation back to itself and to others. When the Government writes that it is building the Cultural Centre 'so that a substantial part of living culture, one of Timor-Leste's greatest heritage wealth [sic], is clearly represented and may be preserved and developed accordingly' (Secretaria de Estado da Cultura n.d.), the 'living culture' it has in mind is that which would be performed and re-produced through the Schools of Music and Arts which are proposed to be housed in the Centre. It is not the 'living culture' of the people who are, in fact, living, relating, producing and performing meaning and culture within the site already. It is a reified, not an everyday understanding of culture that is being valued as the stuff out of which a nation is built, and it is this vision of nationhood being expressed in the transformation of land and land use within the city. It has not been lost upon the Aitarak Laran community that the national sites of significance being built on top of their homes speak to a vision of the nation that has little resonance with their own lives. More than a few informants drew attention to the fact that a National Library would be of particularly little use to the majority of East Timorese, themselves included, who either did not read or else read very little. Indeed, in a country where customary forms of oral story-telling are the dominant mode of communication, the basis of collective memory and ways of knowing, the construction of a National Library is a conspicuously modernising move. The dissonance between this symbol of national development and the lived realities of the Aitarak Laran community—between local interests and a particular construction of national ones—was put succinctly in a banner strung alongside the entrance to the *bairu*. 'The People Do Not Need A Library', it read, 'They Need This Space'.

## Rural-urban imaginaries in the settlement

As the community negotiated the gap between their expectations for Independence and their experiences of what Independence had in fact brought them, they were similarly ambivalently positioned in their relationship to Timor-Leste's districts. In the entanglement of customary and modern forms of connection to land across the nation-state, Dili and other urban towns are constructed as centres within a national cartography of power. Such construction is underpinned, not only by the material practices of state- and nation-building, but also by pervasive imaginaries of the rural and the urban. These are the imaginaries, discussed in the previous chapter, which construct the urban and the rural as counter-posed spaces, further inscribing the former as a space of modernity, and the latter as a space of custom. Beyond simply being a dichotomising way of representing social life, we have seen that such discourses are normatively and ideologically infused: the 'customary' rural spaces are not simply *other* in relation to 'modern' urban ones, they are *lesser*. In the previous chapter I discussed these discourses particularly as they play out at an elite level, amongst members of the Dili-based East Timorese elite, policy-makers, development consultants and academic commentators. However it is also the case that these dominant, or hegemonic, discourses are also being taken up and perpetuated at a popular level, including in places such as Aitarak Laran.

Here, my argument is that the local traction of these imaginaries might be considered one factor in the modernist framing of the community's contestation with the state, and also in their loss of autonomy in their branding as 'squatters'. In the settlement, as in the sites of government and academia, normative and ideological imaginings of the rural and urban are in turn bound up in discourses about the nation, the state, and independence, as well as discourses about 'development'. We need to move carefully to unpack these interconnected strands, and also to disentangle those dimensions of people's concerns which reflect lived experiences of material inequality (for example, diminished access to primary health care in rural places) from those dimensions which reflect pervasive ideological, normative, and teleological discourses (for example, rural places are poor places to live because they are 'backward' or 'uncivilised').

Drawing upon the idea of the 'good' or 'right conditions' required to live well, several informants spoke about rural Timor—the mountains, or *foho*—as a space of material deprivation. Gil, the activist from the Haburas Foundation, argued in these terms:

To go and live in the mountains is not cool (Tetum, *la jetu*). People can accept it if they are told to move there but the right conditions must be created. For example the government must have running water there. How will there be electricity and roads, to make sure people's lives are ok in that place?...When we go up to the mountains we see that it is really terrible. Why don't they make a plan to improve and develop places in the mountains?

Francisco, the young university student, drew a comparison between his experiences in the city and those of his family in the mountains: 'In Dili we can access many things', he said, 'we can access development'. Certainly, it is the case that much of what is commonly associated with 'development'—health care, formal education, roads, infrastructure, formal sector employment and so on—is found to a higher and more concentrated degree within cities and town centres. However it is also the case that access to these things is far from uniform. Gil and Francisco's own narratives speak to this fact. It was Francisco who commented that the 'liberty' of Independence, the 'access to development, access to this and that' was concentrated in the hands of a powerful minority. And Gil, likewise, spoke about the monopolising of the best land in Dili in the hands of businesses and foreign investors. Much as they are caught in an ambivalent space between their hopes for independence and their experience of it, the men are similarly caught between an imaginary that tells them that the city is a space of 'development' in relation to 'undeveloped' rural spaces, and their own experience of the city as a place where 'development' remains elusive.

Beyond the fact that the rendering of urban spaces as developed, in relation to the undeveloped *foho*, simply does not hold in practice, we also need to interrogate the ideological and normative assumptions implicit within the idea of what is, or is not, 'developed'. As has been argued previously in this thesis, 'development' is neither politically nor culturally neutral. Fundamentally teleological, and echoing the core tenets of Modernisation Theory, developmentalism privileges modernist criteria of value, constructing (not simply reflecting) visions of the 'desirable and the feasible' (Errington and Gewertz 2004). In the process, I have argued, customary ways of life are rendered through a language of deficit, measured for their lack of modern-ness rather than valued in their own terms. To say

as such is not to deny the legitimacy of people's desires, or to seek to romanticise village life. Rural life can be hard, and things like electricity, running water and proximity to health care can and do improve the quality of life outside of the cities. The point here, though, is that the valuing of the idea of an urban and 'developed' life is bound up in a set of ideological and normative dynamics which go far beyond questions of material utility.

The comments of two Aitarak Laran residents—an older woman and her adult son—provide an example of the ways that these laden discourses are mobilised within urban-rural imaginaries. Asked if the family had land in the districts that they could return to if they were forced to leave the settlement, the woman replied:

We don't want to go far away into the mountains. We want to live in the city.  
Then we can look for ways to make a living so that we can send our children to school. If we go up to the mountains now, what will become of our children?  
They'll all be stupid [uneducated] like how it was in the past? With no skills.

Here, a desire to be able to access schooling is bound up in a complex of normative assumptions. The formal schooling system represents one particular, modernist form of education, but here—as in most dominant discourses of development—it is assumed to be *the* form of education. Without formal schooling children will be 'stupid' and 'with no skills'. The knowledge, forms of education and skills associated with customary ways of life and epistemologies are rendered invisible here. Developmentalist discourses such as these are rarely challenged. They have a 'common sense' appeal (in the Gramscian sense), and invoke a moral authority—who would challenge the right of a child to be educated?—that conceals their partiality and their bias. The rendering equivalent of 'education' with 'modern school education' is one of what Escobar has called development's 'regimes of representation', and it is, to use his terminology, a site of 'violence' (Escobar 1995: 214). Particularly interesting for our purposes here is the way in which this representational violence is in turn bound up in a cartographic imagining of urban centres and rural margins, *and* a temporal construction of progress and backwardness. Articulated in terms of a teleological understanding—'they'll all be stupid *like how it was in the past*'—the customary is inscribed as modernity's past. Further inscribed onto a socio-geographical imagining of the relationship between city and *foho*, the customary and the past are both relegated to the mountains. The city becomes the site of modernity, development, the present and future. The violence implicit within this representation emerges too in the comments of the woman's son. Echoing his mother's

sentiments that they do not want to leave the city for the mountains, he added, 'are we people or are we animals?'

In the introduction to this thesis, I argued that land in Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea has become a crucible upon which social relations, power and culture are reconfigured and reimagined. Just as custom and modernity function both as material patterns of practice and meaning, and as subjective articulations of what such patterns do, or should look like, so too the politics of land are bound up both in material processes and in complex imaginaries. Here, we see land in the city bound up in material processes of land reform and the extension of state authority and nation-building, but also in subjective imaginings of belonging, development, and the good life. We see land bound up in cartographies of centrality and marginality, at once geographic and ideational. Reflecting the tension within the modern nation-state between unity and exclusion, the contours of these cartographies speak to both connections and disconnections.

In practice, we know that urban and rural Timor-Leste are not disconnected spaces, and that entanglements of custom and modernity can, and do, extend across them. The very fact that urban centres develop, in large part at least, from migration from rural areas, speaks to the myriad lines of connection between these spaces. In relation to Cacavei (Chapter Four), we saw strong lines of connection between the rural village and the small population of Dili-based people, who nonetheless remained connected to the village through the movements of people, news and information, and goods. Patterns of co-residence within the city, moreover, meant that urban dwellers remained connected to each other, their language, culture and sense of shared belonging. The Cacavei community was able, in other words, to accommodate the abstracting effects of urbanisation by grounding the more abstracted relations to which urbanisation gave rise to the less, abstracted, immediate and embodied relations of customary sociality through practices of co-residence, and through lines of movement which connected the urban population to the customary land of the rural *suco*.

In Alex's family in Bebora, and amongst other informants discussed in the previous chapter we also saw lines of connection between Dili and the districts of Viqueque, Manatuto, Oecusse and Liquica. Similar connections are described by other informants within Dili, who likewise



speak of regularly returning to the districts from which they are from, 'for *adat*'. Additionally to this we might think about the historical lines of connection between urban and rural Timor-Leste, including through the period of Indonesian occupation, and the upheavals of 1999 and the 2006 civil crisis. In the struggle for Independence we can point, for example, to the mutually-reinforcing relationship between the armed resistance based in the districts and the mountains, and the urban-based 'clandestine front' that led non-violent political resistance to occupation, organising protests and distributing information (see for example Salla 1995). Significantly, Andrew McWilliam (2005) points to the importance of customary practices within the organisation of the clandestine front, particularly the utilisation of relationships of trust, reciprocity and obligation anchored in shared belonging to sacred houses (*uma lulik* or *uma adat*). The clandestine front was, he suggests, 'the practical enactment of resistance through house-based relationships' (2005: 37). Here then we see vividly illustrated both the dynamic interconnections between urban and rural Timor-Leste, and presence of custom within the urban. Significantly, too, it is useful to remember that throughout Timor-Leste's many periods of upheaval, it has been the *foho*—the hills and the mountains—to which the country's urban residents have fled to escape from violence and colonial or militia oppression. The hills and the districts have, in an important sense, been spaces of autonomy and of 'refuge' (Scott 2009) throughout Timor-Leste's history.

Yet if practices of connection provide means of managing the abstraction of urbanisation, state- and nation-building, it is also the case that abstraction causes strain within customary sociality. The enactment of practices of connection—the grounding of more abstracted, modern relations in the less abstracted relations to which customary sociality gives primacy—can be made difficult by a range of factors both material and subjective. Spatial distances between rural and urban spaces can make visits 'home' more difficult, as we saw for instance in the two young men from Cacavei and Illiomar now studying at Dili's National University (Chapter Four). Expense, and demands on time can similarly be prohibitive, but so too can imaginaries which devalue customary forms of connection. As rural places and customary ways of life are devalued in relation to a modern, urban ideal, the danger is that practices of connection become not only more difficult to sustain, but less desirable. As the city and the *foho* are increasingly constructed, subjectively, as distinct social and moral spaces (Silva and Simião 2012: 369), they can become increasingly separate in a material sense too.

In Aitarak Laran, the presence of hegemonic rural-urban imaginaries enacted a separation—in a subjective sense—between the settlement’s residents and the districts from which they originally migrated. An ideological privileging of the modern through these imaginaries might be considered a factor in the modernist framing of the community’s contestation of their eviction, coupled with the modernist practices and discourses of the civil society organisations working as their advocates. The position in which they found themselves, however, was fraught. Both residents and NGO activists at the settlement articulated their positioning within the social and geographic space of the country through dominant imaginaries of urban centrality and development, but in fact found themselves positioned on the margins of cartographies of power within the city itself, unable to access ‘development’ and denied land rights in the extension of state power.

In a material sense, the location of the Aitarak Laran community in an urban settlement means that its members are removed from the land which is the grounding of a customary articulation of power and authority, and it is here that we can see a key distinction between the contestation at Aitarak Laran and that which took place on Papua New Guinea’s Rai Coast (Chapter Five). The residents of Aitarak Laran were not on their customary land. They could not claim authority as *rai nain* (Tetum: customary land owners). They were already deeply bound up in entanglements with modernity, and these ultimately informed the parameters of the action they were able to take. Rural to urban migration tends, ultimately, to relocate people within spaces where modern forms of connection to land—relations of property—are dominant, and in these contexts it is difficult to avoid a framing of political struggles in the terms of those relations. For the informants discussed in the previous chapter, it was possible to rearticulate customary practices in their connection to land and kin, even within urban and peri-urban areas, because they had land from which to do so. For those denied land rights in the city, such as the community of Aitarak Laran, there is little basis from which to contest the state other than in the terms the state dictates.

## Limits and possibilities of the modern

To say as such, however, is not to say that the community was entirely powerless or without agency. They did contest their eviction, and were able to draw upon the tools and discourses of civil society in doing so. Appealing to the ideals of unity and inclusivity which they took to be the promises of independence, the community and their allies challenged the dominant articulation of statehood and nationhood within the city. As an urban expression of political dissent, their protest brings to mind the forms of political expression which have been discussed by many urban theorists through the framework of the 'right to the city' (Bhan 2009; Friedmann 1992; Harvey 2003; Marcuse 2009; Mayer 2009; McCann 2002; Mitchell 2003; Purcell 2002). First coined by Henri Lefebvre in the context of the 1968 civil unrest in Paris, the 'right to the city' has become a widely used referent encompassing demands by subaltern or oppressed peoples for full access to, and enjoyment of, urban spaces. As Lefebvre first theorised it, the right to the city is the right to 'urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of moments and places' (1996[1968]: 179). For him, and for others who have since mobilised the term, the idea of the right to the city speaks directly to the experience of cities as spaces of exclusion, hierarchy, inequality, and oppression. In this sense, it is located within (or more explicitly, *against*) the context of capitalism and dominant forms of power associated with the nation-state.

In its more recent usages, the idea of the 'right to the city' has included an explicit contestation of neoliberal capitalism (see for example Harvey 2003; Purcell 2002) and calls for more substantive forms of citizenship (for example Holston and Appadurai 2003; McCann 2002). In struggles for rights to the city, Holston and Appadurai write, 'new kinds of citizens engage each other in struggles over the nature of belonging to the national society' (2003: 302). The 'emergence of democracy' breeds social movements which 'empower poor citizens to mobilize around the redistributive rights-claims of citizenship' (2003: 302). This, surely, is what we can see at Aitarak Laran. Take, for instance, this statement by Gil, the activist from the Haburas Foundation NGO:

Dili is not a separate piece of land. Dili is Timor's city. The land in Dili is needed by East Timorese people, it's not here so that we can develop a city here that

is for other people. East Timorese people in their own constitution state that East Timorese people can live here, can live in Baucau, can live anywhere within the territory of Timor-Leste.

Arguing as such, Gil was clearly making a demand for a right to the city for all East Timorese. He was claiming full access to the city on the basis of national belonging and citizenship, regardless of wealth, status, or other differentials of power. To this extent, the protest at Aitarak Laran offered a compelling challenge to the divisions and inequalities evident in the post-Independence period. Nevertheless, the limited extent to which the protest was able to effectively counter these divisions points to limitations of appeals to the state—particularly of rights discourses—and in turn points to the limitations of the ‘right to the city’ as a framework for conceptualising contemporary urban dissent.

In its more radical interpretations the notion of the right to the city offers a fundamental critique to the dominance of property rights. Lefebvre (1996) himself was careful to emphasise that his vision of a transformed urban society was based on the appropriation of the city, of the wresting by the city inhabitants of *use rights* rather than property rights, which, as he argued, ultimately hinge on forms of exclusion. David Harvey, similarly, has called for a ‘utopian’ remaking of cities, moving beyond the current political status quo within which ‘the inalienable rights to private property and the profit rate trump any other conception of inalienable right you can think of’ (2003: 940). Within a capitalist system, he insists, all other rights are simply ‘derivate rights’ (p.940) in relation to property rights, and this fact requires political transformation rather than simply reformation. In similar fashion, Peter Marcuse argues that the right to the city ‘is a moral claim, founded on fundamental principles of justice, of ethics, of morality, of virtue, of the good. It is not meant as a legal claim enforceable through a judicial process today’ (2009: 192). Holston and Appadurai suggest moreover that the expansion of understandings of citizenship through multiplying rights claims (such as demands for rights to housing, water, employment etc.)

changes the very conception of right and citizenship. Right becomes more of a claim upon than a possession held against the world...conceived as an aspect of social relatedness rather than as an inherent and natural property of individuals’ (2003: 302)

Yet, if the right to the city poses a potentially radical critique to capitalism, to the dominance of property rights, and to the modern state as arbiter of entitlements and legal claims, it is also the case that it has often been deployed in ways that assume the principles and ontologies of modernity, and more specifically of liberal democracy. Purcell (2002: 100), in this regard, argues for the merits of mobilising around the right to the city as a means of ‘contributing to a new urban democracy’. Arguing that inhabitants of the city can bring to the struggle their diverse identities of race, sexuality, gender and class, his vision of a ‘politics of identity and difference’ (p.106) assumes a very modernist framing of subjectivity. Mitchell (2003), meanwhile, defends a language of rights on the basis that they provide a foundation for defending liberal democratic ideals. ‘Rights establish an important *ideal*’, he argues, ‘against which the behaviour of the state, capital, and other powerful actors must be measured—and held accountable’ (Mitchell 2003: 25). These mobilisations of the notion are arguably much more reformist in their orientation than Lefebvre’s original understanding of the right to the city, and speak to tensions and divergences within the use of the concept (cf. Mayer 2009).

When we read the idea of the right to the city through the lens of Aitarak Laran, we see these tensions playing out empirically as well as conceptually. In important ways, the community and their civil society allies challenged the dominant rendering of the city as a space of hierarchies and inequalities, making a claim for equal and full inclusion in the social life of the city, however it is also true that the rights claims they invoked were directed to the state. The right to housing was invoked on the basis of the state system, and through reference to the Constitution as the source of that right. Moreover, while the community challenged the exclusions and inequalities to which the extension of modern property rights had given rise, in the end their demand was not for a transformation to the system of property rights but for access to those same rights themselves. These tensions reflect the ambivalence of the community in relation to Independence—the oscillation between commitment to, and disillusionment with, the nation-state which the struggle for Independence had brought into being.

They speak, as well, to tensions present within *any* deployment of rights discourse, not simply those made at Aitarak Laran, or those made under the banner of the right to the city. Rights claims, including those that invoke a universalism—human rights, for example—do as much to limit emancipatory claims as they do to engender them. This emerges from their particular

modern, and modern liberal characteristics. Rights discourses produce modern subjects (Ignatieff 1999), and in doing so set the parameters of the political field within which those subjects can act politically. As Wendy Brown argues, rights discourse 'organizes political space, often with the aim of monopolizing it' (Brown 2004: 461). If the catch-cry of the right to the city can be seen, particularly amongst those theorists who have taken up the concept, to speak to a transformative, even 'utopian' (Harvey 2003) potential, it is also the case that in concrete situations, 'rights' tend to be imagined, claimed, and deployed in relation to the dominant, *existing* agents and processes of power. So it was at Aitarak Laran. Recourse to notions of the state-citizen relationship, appeals to nationalist discourses, and demands for rights to land understood as property, territory and homeland, had the effect, ultimately, of affirming rather than contesting the power of the state as the sovereign authority with the power to grant, or withhold, rights. They had the effect, similarly, of privileging abstracted forms of relationship to land—land as property, equivalent and transferable—which, despite promising inclusivity and belonging, function to exclude and disempower.

The limitations of the community's contestation can be seen, in the final case, in its outcomes. At the time of writing, the scheduled eviction of the whole of the Aitarak Laran community had not yet occurred. This may well reflect the pressure which the civil society campaign was able to bring to bear upon the state, but it is more likely that it simply reflects delays in the plans for construction of the new National Library and Cultural Centre. The website of the State Secretariat of Culture writes that construction is set to commence within the next few years (Secretaria de Estado da Cultura n.d.). Eleven households have, however, been evicted already—in May 2012—in order to make way for a new office building for the Finance Ministry. It certainly does not appear that the government's plans to clear the community have been abandoned. Elsewhere, the families evicted from Bairro-Pite remain landless. The small amount of compensation—US\$2000 per family—given to them has been insufficient to purchase land and a house elsewhere in the city. Indeed, many of those evicted from Bairro-Pite are now sheltering in run-down sheds at Aitarak Laran. When the Aitarak Laran residents, offered similar levels of compensation, complained that they were insufficient, the Minister of Justice Lucia Lobato responded: 'We will not negotiate about the price, because they are occupying government land and houses illegally, so we give a little money based on the government's ability' (quoted in Win 2010). Saying as such, she illustrated acutely the limitations of appeals to a rights discourse. Branded as illegal occupiers, the Aitarak Laran

residents who are still facing eviction have simply been rendered ineligible for rights to proper compensation, and it is the state which holds the power to render them as such.

## **Conclusion**

The argument made across this thesis has been the entanglement of customary and modern forms of connection to land is destabilising structures of power. There is a dominant tendency, I have argued, towards the diminishing of local autonomy as power shifts increasingly to the state and globalising capital, but I have also shown ways in which entanglement creates new opportunities for the rearticulation of customary connection to land, and subsequently for the reassertion of the forms of power and authority to which such connection gives rise. Viewed from the particular vantage point of an urban settlement in Timor-Leste, the entanglement of customary and modern forms of connection to land reveals particular insights. Here, we do indeed see the shifting of power to the state, as that institution secures its power as the arbiter of rights, including land rights. Where in other communities discussed in this thesis, however, we have also seen rearticulations of customary practices, here custom has been evident, above all, in its absence. This is not to say that custom was not a part of the ways that the Aitarak Laran residents lived their lives, or even related to the land on which they lived, but it is to say that the 'public transcript' (Scott 1990) of their contestation with the state was staged almost exclusively in modernist terms. It may well be that the community chose to engage a language of rights and citizenship because they believed that this was the strategy that would best allow them to successfully engage the state, but analysis of the discourse and practices of both the community and their allies suggests that there was more going on than simply strategic decision making. To return to our discussion of power, we need to look here both to the knowing strategies enacted in the face of domination (as Scott [1985, 1990] would have it), and the pervasive influence of hegemonic understandings (in the neo-Gramscian vein). Moreover, even if the adoption of a modernist rights discourse was in part a strategic one, this still leaves open the question of why the community and civil society organisations believed that *this* strategy would be the most effective. What I have suggested in this chapter is that the modernist terms in which the community staged its protest reflected factors both material and ideological.

At the level of the nation-state one effect of the entanglement of customary and modern forms of connection to land is the ideological and normative construction of (modern) urban spaces in contrast to (customary) rural ones. This is a delineation not necessarily reflected in practice, but it nonetheless has powerful effects both material and subjective. Across the nation-state, such imaginaries devalue customary ways of life, and the rural places associated with them. Within the urban, such imaginaries can also be disempowering, to the extent that they can exacerbate the disconnect between urban populations and rural ones, and between urban populations and customary practices. This disconnect is not inevitable: it is possible to rearticulate custom with the urban, as we have seen clearly within the previous chapter. For those denied land rights in the extension of state authority across the state, however, the effect of dominant rural-urban imaginaries can be to leave people ambivalently, and precariously, positioned. Through the dominant ideological and normative renderings of urban and rural life, the residents of Aitarak Laran were nominally positioned in the centre of the nation-state, in the space of modernity and development. In practice, though, what they experienced was disempowerment and marginality. 'Development' remained elusive, and their place within both state and nation was marked by inequality, hierarchy, and exclusion.

Removed from customary land, they and others like them are similarly removed from the grounding of customary power and authority. Coupled with the presence of hegemonic discourses which privilege the modern, including the modernist framing of civil society actors, this left them with little option but to contest their disempowerment within the frame of reference established by the state. Rights discourse, appeals to the nation, to the state-citizen relationship and to the promises of independence *did* provide them with means of challenging hierarchy and inequality within the city. Through these means, communities like Aitarak Laran can challenge the dominant articulation of state and nation, but the efficacy of such challenges is limited in key ways. The limitations of these expressions of agency is evidenced in the outcomes of the Aitarak Laran case: evictions have begun, with others still planned, and the community remain without rights and recognised claims to land. The limitations were evident, too, in the ambivalence articulated by the community. Despite their hopes for independence—for unity, inclusivity, and land—the founding of a modern nation-state has not delivered what they hoped it would. Their 'expectations of modernity', to borrow James Ferguson's (1999) phrase, have been disappointed.



In many ways, the story of Aitarak Laran resonates with the story with which this thesis began, of the three Kurumbukari landowners sitting with their lawyer, grappling with the loss of their land to a mining company. Here, too, the hopes of people for development and the promises of modernity resulted in a painful loss of autonomy. In both cases, people found themselves alienated from land, and in both cases the loss of this connection meant that the customary grounding of power and authority was similarly lost. If the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land can produce new opportunities for the expressions of agency, if it contains in fact a potentially radical political potential, it is also the case that counter-hegemonic assertions are made, very much, against the grain of power. Entanglements are writ through with power, and what we see in both of these cases is that when the connection to customary land is lost, the capacity for rearticulating custom as a basis of autonomy is dramatically diminished.



## 10. Conclusion

---

This thesis has set out to answer two, interrelated questions: firstly, what is the nature of encounters between customary and modern forms of relationship to land? And secondly, what are the implications of these encounters for relations of power? In examining these questions, I have employed a methodology that is both ethnographic and social theoretical, and I have argued here that these two dimensions provide different, but mutually-informing perspectives on processes of social change which are broadly occurring, but also local and particular in their articulations. Recognising as well that these processes occur unevenly, the ethnographic approach I have taken has been a multi-sited one, a fact which also speaks to the mobility of people, goods and ideas, and so to the limitations of the classical anthropological model of the bounded site. The approach has also been multi-scalar, responding to the ways in which social relations are articulated both locally and globally, and indeed in a myriad of levels scale between these two poles. Methodologically, then, as well as intellectually and epistemologically, my concern across this thesis has been to move across a range of levels of abstraction, looking particularly to the intersections of more and less abstracted ways of being, knowing, communicating and relating.

In examining the nature of the encounter between customary and modern forms of relationship to land—which I have theorised here through the concept of *entanglement*—I have approached land in broad terms. While significant bodies of literature have addressed particular aspects of land within the Pacific, for instance customary land systems in local places, the intersection of customary and modern law, the relationship between customary land tenures and economic development, or the extension of property relations, there has been a lack of literature engaging with the changing nature of land across these multiple domains. This thesis has been oriented towards this gap, seeking to develop a broad account

of the changing nature of land in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, positioning different dimensions of social connection to land as interconnected aspects of customary and modern forms of sociality. In introducing an explicit concern with power, I have also sought to make an original contribution to a body of literature within which power has often been subordinated to a focus on the thick description of culture, or else engaged with in the context of specific local places or events, or specific aspects of social connection to land. In the pages that follow I address in turn the two questions which have driven this research project: firstly, the nature of the encounter between customary and modern forms of relationship to land; and secondly, the implications of these encounters for relations of power.

### **The nature of the encounter between customary and modern forms of relationship to land**

In the first instance, the foundational argument of this thesis has been that the customary and the modern do represent structurally distinct patterns of social relations, including forms of social connection to land. Arguing as such goes against the grain of some recent trends within anthropology and Pacific Studies, which have tended in recent years to emphasise ethnography in local places, and to be sceptical about generalising theory. There has been scepticism, particularly, about the concepts of ‘custom’ and ‘modernity’, which have tended to become objects, rather than analytical tools, of ethnographic enquiry. However my approach also stands in contrast to other literature—including older anthropological approaches, as well as much contemporary sociological scholarship—which has tended to position the customary and the modern as totalising structures, dichotomously opposed and teleologically and normatively arranged (tendencies which we have also seen within the dominant ideologies and discourses of development). Positioned between these two extremes, I have argued instead that we can understand the customary and the modern as forms of social relations which are structurally distinct but nonetheless *entangled* across the boundaries of times, spaces, and delimited social groups.

The concept of entanglement, then, sits at the core of this thesis. In the iterative relationship between theory and data, the measure of its value is the extent to which it offers a lens for

understanding what we see when we look at communities in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste through an ethnographic lens. Looking through this lens, what we see is that customary forms of social connection to land *are* substantively different to modern ones. In Chapter Four, in an analysis of the Cacavei community in Timor-Leste, I mapped out the broad contours of this difference, pointing to the mutually-constitutive relationship between people and land. This is a quality that diverges, particularly, from the mind-body and nature-culture dualisms that are foundational philosophical premises, or ‘myths’ (Latour 1993), of modern social life, and which underpin modern ways of thinking about and relating to land. Beyond Cacavei, we see this same quality of customary connection to land in other places. In the Nobnob and Siar communities in Madang we see forms of belonging, knowledge and story-telling grounded in the land through which people trace their ancestry. On the Rai Coast, we see the mutually-constitutive relationship between people and land asserted as a basis for autonomy and power. Even in urban and peri-urban Timor-Leste, we see practices of connection to land that cannot simply be accounted for as local or culturally-infused varieties of modernity. Multiple and overlapping forms of entitlement to land, for instance—evident for example in the stories of Marta Baptista Pires in Liquica, and Domingos Valentim in Manatuto—involve a substantially different understanding of land to the absolute ownership intrinsic to modernist understandings of land-as-property.

Yet what we also see is that these structurally distinct forms of connection to land—customary and modern—are nonetheless dynamically intertwined. An understanding of entanglements of *social relations* allows us to understand how this is so. Forms of social relations cut across the boundaries of times, places, groups. They are drawn into shifting configurations, replete with moments of tension and incommensurability as well as moments of creative negotiation or accommodation. On the Rai Coast, then, a customary assertion of authority as *papagraun* is entangled with the institutional, modern authority of the state, but also entangled with modern forms of identity and agency associated with civil society. In the communities affected by industrial fishing in Madang, customary forms of social organisation and connection to land are entangled with modernist practices of codification—land groups and landowner companies—as well as with the practices and ideologies of development. In Cacavei, place-bound forms of social relationship and culture are entangled with more modernist forms of connection to land as community members relocate from the village to the urban capital in Dili, or to the township in Lospalos.

At this broader level of scale, too, the customary and the modern are entangled, subjectively as well as in practice, through the relationships between urban and rural places and the imaginings of what these relationships entail. Globally, the customary and the modern are entangled as local communities are drawn increasingly into the extended social relations (cultural, political, economic) of a globalising world, and negotiate both the material relationships which this entails—relationships with foreign companies, academics, civil society groups, international financial institutions and so on—as well as the intersection of ideas, understandings of the world, and patterns of meaning and imagination. As we saw, particularly in Chapter Seven, this can be a deeply affective experience, bringing into encounter ideologically and normatively laden understandings of the good life, evoking emotions of humiliation but also pride, which inform (amongst other things) patterns of consumption.

### **Implications for power**

Entanglements, then, are ambivalent, and this quality emerges from the presence of co-existing, but nonetheless distinct, ways of being in the world. The multiplicity of ways of being—of structures of practice and meaning—fractures the taken-for-grantedness of each. There is a radical political potential in this, which generates creativity and amplifies the possibilities for agency. It is through this ambivalent entanglement that it becomes possible to rearticulate custom, and to draw the customary and the modern into new, dynamic configurations. Yet the destabilisation of social structures can also be deeply troubling and disruptive. It can generate insecurity, and the tensions between customary and modern ways of being can cause strain for both. Entanglements, I have argued, are destabilising structures of power.

What we have seen is that customary and modern forms of social connection to land involve, and indeed give rise to, differing articulations of power and authority. In the case of the former, we see land itself as a site and source of power. We see customary powerholders whose authority stems from their location within social thickets of connection that are intimately tied to land and place. Interconnected practices of communication, decision-

making, law and epistemology are similarly embedded in land, articulated primarily through face-to-face relationships between people living and working in proximity to one another, tied through land to their ancestors, their histories and their futures. Within customary cartographies of power, then, we see that the site of customary land is central, providing the basis from which social relations are constituted. Land itself has its own agency, as a site of creation and regeneration, and a material conduit through which relationships with ancestors are accessed, performed, and cultivated. Such structures of power, however, are being destabilised as the extension of modern social relations generates its own cartographies. Here, power does not emerge from the site of land but is extended across it. The centres of power are the administrative, legislative and policy-making centres of Madang Town, Port Moresby, Dili, but also Canberra (where the Australian government and aid agency makes decisions of aid funding and foreign policy), Washington (where the World Bank and International Monetary Fund make pronouncements on the desirability or not of customary land tenures and Special Economic Zones), and General Santos City in the Philippines (from where the executives of the tuna fishing RD Corporation issue directives to the managers of the Madang cannery). Courtrooms, land titles offices, parliaments: these too become sites of power, and those who work in them become powerholders.

As these two cartographies and articulations of power are entangled, each is destabilised. The modern claims an absolute authority—the sovereignty of the nation-state, the overarching primacy of modern law—which is confounded in practice by the existence of other ways of being and other sites, structures and processes of power. At the same time, the authority-claims of customary leaders, and the customary autonomy of local communities are challenged by the presence of other sites and forms of power, including more abstracted articulations of power which claim an overarching primacy—the primacy accorded to modern law over custom within the East Timorese constitution, for example. As entanglements destabilise structures of power, multiple possibilities arise for their reconfiguration. These are not, however, evenly weighted. The dominant, or hegemonic tendency I have argued is for the diminishing of local autonomy, as the sites, agents and processes of a modernist cartography of power are accorded primacy.

### *The diminishing of local autonomy*

We have seen examples of this loss of autonomy across the thesis. In the Nobnob, Siar and Rempi communities in Madang, and amongst East Timorese informants in the urban centres of Dili, Liquica and Manatuto, we have seen a loss of autonomy through the creation of property relations. Through this state-building process, authority and decision-making capacity in relation to land shifts to the sites, agents and processes of the modern state. The fixing of ownership, and the codification of custom in turn reduces the space for customary practices of manipulation and ongoing assertions and reassertions of land claims. It reduces the capacity for multiple, overlaying forms of claims, and for making claims contingent on ongoing reciprocity. In the extension of modernist relations of production and exchange, local autonomy is lost as power and decision-making capacity over land shifts to the sites and agents of capital, and as decisions about land are determined increasingly by the imperatives of the economic market. Local autonomy is lost, too, as subsistence agriculture is both undermined and devalued. In processes of urbanisation, we see the potential for a loss of autonomy as people move away from the customary land that is the grounding of customary authority. This has been most vividly illustrated in the branding, by the East Timorese state, of the residents of the Aitarak Laran settlement as 'squatters'. These processes, as we have seen, are often interconnected, and what we have also seen is that in many cases the foundations for contemporary acts of alienation have their foundations in the acts of alienation perpetrated by past colonial powers.

The coercive capacity of the modern—the dominant tendency towards the diminishing of local customary autonomy in conditions of entanglement—emerges from several factors. In the first instance, the more abstracted nature of modern forms of connection to land means that they can reframe customary forms of connection within them. The nation-state becomes the overarching political structure within which (and under which) customary communities, and customary forms of power and governance, are positioned. Modern law is established as the highest and overarching structure of law. Abstracted, codified forms of knowledge are endowed with authority on the basis of their capacity to extend over time and space, and their existence outside of and beyond the particularities and contingencies of face-to-face, oral communication. Secondly, we need to look at what is lost in processes of abstraction, in the extension of modernist relations or the codification of customary ones. In the economic reductionism of development and the extension of capitalist industry, land is reduced to its



economic aspects, and its rich cultural, social and ecological dimensions largely rendered out. The multiplicity of co-existing customary claims to land, negotiated in the practice of day-to-day relationships, is lost in definitive assertions of ownership and the fixing of borders and customary practices through codified legal instruments. The agency of land, and the mutually constitutive relationship between land and people, is lost as land is remade as property.

The coercive capacity of the modern does not only emerge from its material effects, however. Modernising processes of state-building, nation-building and globalisation are supported by the presence of powerful ideologies which privilege modern ways of being and devalue customary ones. Modernity itself privileges more abstracted social relations over less abstracted ones. Mind is privileged over body, culture over nature, and these philosophical renderings in turn make possible the making of land into property (distinct and alienable from people connected to it). Writing is privileged over speaking, meaning that codified articulations of law and knowledge about land are privileged over oral modes of communication which have their basis in contingent relationships between people living in proximity to one another, bound together by genealogical connections over time, embedded in land. The modern, meanwhile, aspires to universality, meaning that customary ways of life and forms of connection to land are rendered through a language of deficit, assessed for their lack of modern-ness rather being value in their own terms, as *different* ways of being and relating to land. Dominant ideologies of development perpetuate teleological understandings of the customary as modernity's past, and construct images of the good, developed life that take Western modernity as their benchmark.

Finally, the coercive capacity of the modern emerges from the limitations of customary structures of power. Such structures are remarkably effective and resilient in organising the relationships of people within customary community. In Cacavei, for instance, we saw examples of how breaches of customary law—failure to maintain proper relationships with ancestors, for example, or opening a new garden without securing the proper permissions—could result in death and illness, both for an individual offender and for their living kin and future descendants. This is a prospect that enacts an effective coercive capacity over people bound to each other through shared genealogical connection, within a common cosmological understanding of the world. It enacts relatively little coercive capacity, however, over outsiders who do not share that cosmological understanding—foreign companies, for example. For

communities already entangled with modern agents and processes, then, further accommodation with the modern—through securing state recognition as ‘landowners’, in the case of the Rempi community for example, or through negotiating contractual agreements in order to receive a share of the projected profits of a resource project, in the case of the Nobnob and Siar villagers—can be both necessary and desirable. In Timor-Leste, similarly, we saw how existing entanglements related to the intersecting dynamics of urbanisation and colonialism generated forms of insecurity that were often beyond the capacity of customary systems to resolve. In this context, the extension of state-authority in the form of land titling was welcomed by many, even as it can be seen to have further concentrated power in the hands of the state. In other words, entanglements with modernity can compel further entanglement, and recognising this highlights acutely the difficulties and tensions within which many Pacific communities have to contend.

### *Counter-hegemonic possibilities*

Yet, if the entanglement of customary and modern forms of connection to land lends itself to the diminishing of local autonomy, what we have seen across this thesis is that entanglement also creates new possibilities for agency, for counter-hegemonic assertions that challenge the predominance of modernist assumptions and discourses. Here, it becomes possible to rearticulate custom, and through doing so to reassert a customary articulation of autonomy in the face of the extending power of the state and capital. While some (Weiner 2006; Weiner and Glaskin 2007a) have drawn attention to the ways that custom is ‘elicited’ by the modern, my emphasis here has been different. ‘Custom’, as a category and an analytical designator, is a product of the modern. However we need to remain cognizant of what I have referred to throughout this thesis as the *dual life* of custom and modernity. That is, the ways in which ‘custom’ and ‘modernity’ function both as descriptors of materially existing patterns of practice and meaning, and as ideas and subjective constructions of what those patterns do, or should, look like. In other words, while ‘custom’ as a category—or *kastom*, or ‘landowner’—is a product of the modern, it this does not mean that the forms of practice and meaning which it is invoked to describe are themselves necessarily simply products of the modern.

Chapter Six (‘Relations of Property and the Codification of Customary Connection to Land’) gave us a clear example of this. Here, local communities in the Nobnob and Siar areas in

Madang engaged a language of clans and land groups in their negotiations with the Papua New Guinean state and the RD company. In some cases, most notably the Badalon people within Siar, this was quite clearly a manipulated process of self-description, with widespread accusations made by other clan groups which suggested that the Badalon were in fact not a clan at all, but descendants of plantation workers brought to the area by German plantation owners generations prior. Yet, even here, what we saw was that people were engaging language that reflected their own local experience as well as state expectations. Living the consequences of their ancestors' prior displacement, their own lives in Siar nonetheless reflected a complex entanglement of both modern and customary ways of being, including being on land. To this extent, I argued that their invocation of a language of custom and clans needs to be understood as a product, not simply of the modern, but of the entanglement of the modern with the customary. Indeed, what we also saw in that Chapter is that the qualities of manipulation and negotiability evident in the shifting claims of all of the Nobnob and Siar claimants are themselves in many ways consistent with customary practices of ongoing and multiple claim-making. Beyond this, we have also seen that the rearticulation of custom through the self-referent of 'customary landowner' provided a basis for the Nobnob and Siar communities to leverage claims against the state and company, and through doing so to reassert their own agency within negotiations.

Elsewhere, we have seen multiple other examples of the ways in which local communities are rearticulating custom in their negotiations with the state- and nation-building, and globalisation. On the Rai Coast (Chapter Five), villagers asserted a customary autonomy as *papagraun*, landowners, decentring the authority of the visiting politician by giving emphasis to a customary cartography of centres and margins. Doing so, however, they also drew upon their relationships with civil society organisations, and with George, the urban-based activist connected to Bongu village through his mother's clan. The villagers creatively negotiated both a customary and a modern cartography of power, and drew on elements of both customary and modern sociality in staging their protest. In Timor-Leste, people who have had their land mapped through the Ita Nia Rai lands claim processes have been able, in a variety of ways, to rearticulate custom within the modernist relations of property to which the process gave rise. In Manatuto town, Domingos Valentim and his kin live on their customary land, handed down to them from their ancestors. In negotiating the land claims collection process, the title that will be issued to them over their 'property' will be kept in the *uma lisan*, or sacred house, reincorporated as a symbolic object in a way that will continue to accord primacy to the

customary practices through which the family organises and governs its relationship to land. Amongst other informants negotiating the Ita Nia Rai process—Alex in Bebora in Dili, and Umbelina Dos Santos in Liquica, for example—we saw families who are not on their customary land, but who are nonetheless drawing on customary practices in the organisation of their land. These people have become landowners through the Ita Nia Rai process, but have also decentred the absolute nature of modern property claims through enacting customarily-derived practices of inheritance and overlapping levels of land-use rights within kin groups in the way that they engage with their land. In this way, while the agents, sites and processes of the modern state are endowed with power and decision-making capacity over land, local people are also asserting their autonomy in managing their land through governance structures that extend far beyond the state's ambit.

In each of these instances, the rearticulation of custom can be understood as a means of managing abstraction. Globalisation, state- and nation-building, urbanisation: each of these represents an abstracting process of change. As people are drawn into increasingly spatially-extended relationships, social relations—including forms of connection to land and practices of power and governance—are increasingly lifted out of the immediacy and particularity of face-to-face relationships embedded in land and place. These modernising processes also give emphasis to increasingly abstracted forms of communication and epistemology, and these too have implications for land. In recognising modernising processes of change as abstracting processes, I have argued across this thesis that we can point to strong commonalities amongst the experiences of communities across both Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, even as the particular contexts within which these communities are located also speak to differences and points of contrast. Notable amongst these points of commonality are experiences of migration. While Papua New Guinea has not experienced the level of forced migration through conflict and occupation that Timor-Leste has seen, notwithstanding the conflict in Bougainville, processes of large-scale resource extraction have catalysed population movements. We saw examples of this, in Chapters Six and Seven, in the movements of settlers to the Nobnob and Siar areas to work as plantation labourers during the German administration, and also in the influx of settlers anticipated as the Pacific Marine Industrial Zone is constructed. In the story that opened the introductory chapter, as well—of the three Papua New Guinean men from Kurumbukari whose clans were grappling with the loss of their land due to the construction of the Ramu mine—we saw displacement generated through the extension of capitalist relations of production and industry. Extrapolating from the particularities of these local circumstances,

what are common here are experiences of movement and mobility, catalysed by the extension of modernist relations, whether associated with economic globalisation, with urbanisation, or with colonial projects.

Processes of social abstraction underpin each of these common experiences—displacement caused by colonialism or by capitalist development, urbanisation, nation- or state-building. Yet the more abstracted social relations of the nation-state, globalising capital or the colonial territory do not simply replace less abstracted forms of sociality. The space of abstraction stretches, rather than shifts. And, at the same time, what we have seen in this thesis is that customary sociality, while privileging less abstracted forms of social relations, is nonetheless able to accommodate a significant degree of abstraction. It does this through anchoring more abstracted relations back into forms of relationship based on connection to land and face-to-face proximity. These two factors are what give rise to the possibilities for rearticulating custom. They mean that the customary does not simply give way to the modern, but is rather entangled with it.

In each of the examples discussed above, and in others discussed in the preceding chapters, communities and local people have engaged with the abstracting processes of the modern by grounding them in practices of connection to land, place, and kin. So, in Domingos' case, the abstracted relations of property ownership privileged through the Ita Nia Rai land claims collection process are grounded in practices of face-to-face, genealogically-derived connection through the reincorporating of the land title as a physical object to be kept alongside customary, sacred objects in the material space of the *uma lisan*. On the Rai Coast, the abstracted relations of state and citizenry were engaged with by shifting the site of encounter to the customary land of the Rai Coast villagers, where a competing assertion of customary authority could be made from the physical site from which that authority emerged. In each case, local communities engaged actively with the modern, but also challenged the hegemonic privileging of the more abstracted over the less. Asserting the persistent importance of the material, the bodily and the grounded, these counter-hegemonic strategies also challenged the implicit telos of the modern—the assumption of ever-increasing abstraction, understood as progress.

Rearticulating customary practices of connection, it is also possible to challenge the ideological and normative devaluing of custom. This is vitally important because, as we seen, the coercive capacity of the modern emerges not only from its material practices of abstraction, but also from the presence of hegemonic ideologies which privilege the modern. The rearticulation of custom provides means of challenging these hegemonic imaginings. In Papua New Guinea, civil society groups such as the Bismarck Ramu Group are asserting an alternate 'model of development', employing new media technologies and the practices and language of civil society to rearticulate a vision of the good life grounded in customary practices, culture, patterns of production and exchange. Here, assertions of pride act to counter the 'humiliation' (Sahlins 1992) which can otherwise be the affective response to processes of modernising social change. Still, the hegemonic privileging of the modern is pervasive and far-reaching. To differing extents, we seen the presence of these hegemonic understandings within each of the communities discussed throughout this thesis. Differing visions of the good life, differing criteria of value, emotions of both pride and humiliation (in both the modern and the customary) exist ambivalently alongside one another, entangled in complex ways that can indeed be deeply destabilising.

### **Mobilising belonging / coming back to land**

Where, then, does this leave us? If a central focus of this thesis has been on the quality of ambivalence, the argument made across the preceding pages has itself exhibited much of this same quality. It has moved back and forth between creativity and constraint, between the possibilities for agency and the many factors that act to limit such possibilities. In many ways, it has moved back and forth between hopefulness and pessimism. Perhaps it cannot be otherwise. Avoiding easy answers, what we are necessarily left with is a landscape of complexities, contradictions and tensions. At times, it is a landscape of impossible choices and intractable dilemmas. The modernising processes of globalisation, state- and nation-building are enacting far-reaching changes across the Pacific, and they are having often dramatic effects on the ways in which people relate to land. Communities for whom customary connection to land has long underpinned a deep autonomy are having now to negotiate with new sites, agents and processes of power, but also new understandings of land and new visions of life, culture, and belonging. These processes, and the extension of modernist

cartographies of power, lend themselves to the diminishing autonomy of local communities, and can have effects that are profoundly difficult. Yet they are also unavoidable, and in many cases also desired.

The point here is not to simply invert the normative assumptions of Modernisation Theory or the dominant development paradigm, to privilege the customary uncritically or to deny the legitimacy of people's desires for their lives. The point is rather to scrutinise the complex relations of power which inform how different ways of life are practiced and valued, how desires are constructed and performed, and how agency is either nurtured or impeded. Viewed in this way, what can be seen to be most problematic about the processes of change affecting social connection to land in both Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea is not the entanglement of custom and modernity itself so much as the ideological and normative privileging of one way of life over another. It is the rendering of customary life through a language of deficit, a process that in turn informs both the extension of material processes of change and the ways in which these are responded to and negotiated on the ground.

In May 2010, I sat down to talk *stori* with a man named Alfred Kaket. A leader in the Tokain group of villages in Sumkar District on the north coast of Madang, Alfred is also the chairman of the Madang People's Forum. The Forum is an umbrella group of communities and land groups in the Province, a 'people's movement', as he describes it, which was formed in 2007 to articulate the voices of local communities and facilitate trans-local organising between them. Since 2007, a number of Forums have been held, hosted each time by a local community which organises food and accommodation for the visitors from other places. One Forum was held to focus on the Pacific Marine Industrial Zone, and another has focussed on the communities affected by the Ramu Mine development. In each case, the emphasis is on communities self-organising, communicating with one another and developing strategies for combatting challenges they face related to the large-scale development projects, or else for implementing alternative forms of community-controlled economic activity such as copra or vanilla production.

Speaking about the PMIZ, the Ramu mine, the lure of 'cargo' and a myriad other issues facing local communities, Alfred said, 'this is a challenging time'. Indeed it is, and the processes of

change with which communities in both Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste are contending do demand response. Still, the rhythm of change and response is not a linear one. Custom is not giving way to modernity, but rather meeting it, headstrong, in shifting and dynamic configurations, riddled with competing possibilities. As local communities negotiate these processes of change, and the extended social relations into which they are increasingly being drawn, the strategies which will likely best enable them to hold on to their autonomy—the strategies which *are* best enabling them to hold on to their autonomy—are those which are grounded in continuing, customary practices of connection to land.

It is these practices of ongoing attachment to land which Alfred emphasised to me as we sat, talking *stori* about his and other communities, and about the message that the Madang People's Forum sought to communicate to those people with which it worked. In exploring the nature of the entanglement of customary and modern forms of relationship to land, and the implications of this entanglement for relationships of power across both Papua New Guinea and Timor, the conclusion which this thesis has reached is, ultimately, little more than an extended rendition of what Alfred has been talking about for many years, and his words are good ones with which to close:

This is a challenging time. You, and your land, you are dependent on it. So anything that changes, when you are trying to adapt to it, make sure that you and your land are connected, and then you adapt to those changes. You don't have to adapt to that change and then lose your land, no. You have to connect to your land, and then you will balance your life and your situation. If you don't do this then you will be imbalancing your self. You will be nowhere, and struggling. I don't know, maybe you'd just be like others begging on the street. Your land is important, your environment is important...We live on land and work on land, and *then* we will move through those changes.







## References

- Adler, Patricia A. and Peter Adler. 1987. *Membership Roles in Field Research*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Albrow, Martin. 1996. *The Global Age: State and Society Beyond Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 1996. 'Critical Reflections on "Reflexive Modernization"'. *Theory, Culture and Society* 13(4): 133-8.
- Allen, Matthew. 2008. 'Land Reform in Melanesia'. *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Briefing Note 6*. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Amanor, Kojo S. 1999. *Global Restructuring and Land Rights in Ghana: Forest Food Chains, Timber and Rural Livelihoods*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet Research Report no. 108.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1993. 'Imagining "East Timor"'. *Arena Magazine* 4: 24-25.
- Anderson, Benedict. 2006 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Second edition. London: Verso.
- Anderson, Tim. 2008. 'Women Roadside Sellers in Madang'. *Pacific Economic Bulletin*. 23(1): 59-73.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arnason, Johann P. 2001. 'The Multiplication of Modernity'. In Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzhak Sternberg, eds. *Identity, Culture and Globalization*. Leiden: Brill.
- AusAID. 2008. *Making Land Work: Reconciling Customary Land and Development: Volume One*. Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development.
- Bainton, Nicholas A. 2008. 'Men of Kastom and the Customs of Men: Status, Legitimacy and Persistent Values in Lihir, Papua New Guinea'. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 19(2): 194-212.
- Ballantyne, Glenda. 2008. 'Unification or Multiplication? Theorizing Multiple Modernities'. *International Journal of the Humanities* 5(10): 53-59.
- Ballard, Chris. 1997. 'It's the Land, Stupid! The Moral Economy of Resource Ownership in Papua New Guinea'. In Peter Larmour, ed. *The Governance of Common Property in the*

- Pacific Region*. Pacific Policy Paper 19. National Centre for Development Studies. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Bamford, Sandra. 1998. 'Humanized Landscapes, Embodied Worlds: Land and the Construction of Intergenerational Continuity Among the Kamea of Papua New Guinea'. *Social Analysis* 42(3): 28-54.
- Baran, Paul A. 1957. *The Political Economy of Growth*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bebbington, Anthony, Leonith Hinojosa, Denise Humphreys Bebbington, Maria Luisa Burneo and Ximena Warnaars. 2008. 'Contention and Ambiguity: Mining and the Possibilities of Development'. *Development and Change* 39(6): 887-914.
- Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage
- Beck, Ulrich, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash. 1994. *Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Behar, Ruth. 1996. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*. Boston: Beacon.
- Bergeron, Suzanne. 2003. 'The Post-Washington Consensus and Economic Representations of Women in Development at the World Bank'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5(3): 397-419.
- Berman, Marshall. 1983. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Bernard, H. Russell. 1994. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Second edition. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Berry, Sara. 2002. 'Debating the Land Question in Africa'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44(4): 638-668.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bhan, Gautam. 2009. "'This is No Longer the City I Once Knew": Evictions, the Urban Poor and the Right to the City in Millennial Delhi'. *Environment and Urbanization* 21(1): 127-142.
- Bordo, Susan. 1993. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Borgerhoff, Andre. 2006. 'The Double Task: Nation- and State-Building in Timor-Leste'. *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5(1): 101-130.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977 [1972]. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1985. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996. 'Understanding'. *Theory, Culture and Society* 13(2): 17-37.
- Bovensiepen, Judith. 2009. 'Spiritual Landscapes of Life and Death in the Central Highlands of East Timor'. *Anthropological Forum: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Comparative Sociology* 19(3): 323-338.
- Braun, Yvonne A., and Leslie A. McLees. 2012. 'Space, Ownership and Inequality: Economic Development and Tourism in the Highlands of Lesotho'. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*. doi: 10.1093/cjres/rsr039: 1-15.
- Brown, Paula, Harold Brookfield and Robin Grau. 1990. 'Land Tenure and Transfer in Chimbu, Papua New Guinea: 1958-1984—A Study in Continuity and Change, Accommodation and Opportunism'. *Human Ecology* 18(1): 21-49.
- Brown, Wendy. 2004. "'The Most We Can Hope For...": Human Rights and the Politics of Fatalism'. *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103(2-3): 451-463.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 1992. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Burawoy, Michael. 2001. 'Manufacturing the Global'. *Ethnography* 2(2): 147-159.
- Burawoy, Michael, Sean O. Riain, Joseph A. Blum, Sheba George, Zsuzsa Gille, Teresa Gowan, Lynne Haney, Maren Klawiter, Steven H. Lopez, and Millie Thayer. 2000. *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burkitt, Ian. 1999. *Bodies of Thought: Embodiment, Identity and Modernity*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage.
- Burridge, Kenelm. 1960. *Mambu: A Study of Melanesian Cargo Movements and Their Ideological Background*. London: Methuen.
- Business Advantage. 2011. *Business Advantage Papua New Guinea 2011/2012*. Melbourne: Business Advantage International.
- Butler, Judith. 1988. 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory'. *Theatre Journal* 49(1): 519-531.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Cameron, Angus and Ronen Palan. 1999. 'The Imagined Economy: Mapping Transformations of the Contemporary State'. *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* 28(2): 267-288.

- Campling, Liam, Elizabeth Havice and Penny McCall Howard. 2012. 'The Political Economy and Ecology of Capture Fisheries: Market Dynamics, Resource Access and Relations of Exploitation and Resistance'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 12(2-3): 177-203.
- Cardoso, Fernando and Enzo Faletto. 1979. *Dependency and Development in Latin America*. Trans. Marjory Mattingly Urquidi. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Carroll, William K. and Robert S. Ratner. 1994. 'Between Leninism and Radical Pluralism: Gramscian Reflections on Counter-Hegemony and the New Social Movements'. *Critical Sociology* 20(2): 3-26.
- Carson, Amy Ochoa. 2007. 'East Timor's Land Tenure Problems: A Consideration of Land Reform Programs in South Africa and Zimbabwe'. *Indiana International and Comparative Law Review* 17: 395-429.
- Casanova, José. 2011. 'Cosmopolitanism, the Clash of Civilizations and Multiple Modernities'. *Current Sociology* 59(2): 252-67.
- Casey, Edward. 1993. *Getting Back Into Place: Towards a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Casey, Edward. 1997. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 1989. *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring and the Urban-Regional Process*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castells, Manuel. 2000. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Second edition. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell.
- CAVR (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste). 2005. *Timor-Leste Forced Displacement and Famine*. Dili: CAVR.
- CAVR (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste). 2006. *Chega! Final Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste*. Dili: CAVR.
- Centre for Environmental Law and Community Rights (CELCOR)/Friends of the Earth PNG, the Bismarck Ramu Group, Greenpeace Australia Pacific and the Forest Peoples Programme (FFP). 2011. *Request for Consideration Under the Urgent Action/Early Warning Procedure to Prevent Irreparable Harm to Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Papua New Guinea*. 78<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, February 2011. Available at: <http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2011/03/png-cerd-2011-ew-ua-final.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2012).
- Cesara, Manda. 1982. *Reflections of a Woman Anthropologist: No Hiding Places*. New York: Academic Press.
- Chesters, Timothy. 2009. 'Introduction'. In Timothy Chesters, ed. *Land Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 2005*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

- Chopra, Jarat. 2002. 'Building State Failure in East Timor'. *Development and Change* 33(5): 979-1000.
- Clastres, Pierre. 1989 [1974]. *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. New York: Zone Books.
- Clifford, James. 1986. 'Introduction and Partial Truths'. In James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Clifford, James and George E. Marcus, eds. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff, eds. 1991. *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa, vol. 1*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Coole, Dianna, and Samantha Frost, eds. 2010. *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Cooper, Frederick. 1983. 'Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labour in Africa'. In Frederick Cooper, ed. *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labour, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa*. Beverley Hills: Sage.
- Cregan, Kate. 2006. *The Sociology of the Body: Mapping the Abstraction of Embodiment*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage.
- Csordas, Thomas J., ed. 1994a. *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Csordas, Thomas J. 1994b. 'Introduction: The Body as Representation and Being-In-The-World'. In Thomas J. Csordas, ed. *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Curry, George. 1999. 'Markets, Social Embeddedness and Precapitalist societies: The Case of Village Tradestores in Papua New Guinea'. *Geoforum* 30: 285-298.
- Curtin, Tim. 2003. 'Scarcity Amidst Plenty: The Economics of Land Tenure in Papua New Guinea'. In Tim Curtin, Hartmut Holzkecht and Peter Larmour. *Land Registration in Papua New Guinea: Competing Perspectives*. State Society and Governance in Melanesia, discussion paper 2003/1. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Curtin, Tim, Hartmut Holzkecht and Peter Larmour. 2003. *Land Registration in Papua New Guinea: Competing Perspectives*. State Society and Governance in Melanesia, discussion paper 2003/1. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

- Das, Veena and Deborah Poole, eds. 2004. *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Santa Fe: School of America Research Press.
- Deininger, Klaus and Hans Binswanger. 1999. 'The Evolution of the World Bank's Land Policy: Principles, Experience, and Future Challenges'. *The World Bank Research Observer* 14(2): 247-276.
- DeLanda, Manuel. 2006. *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. London: Continuum Books.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1988. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London: Athlone.
- De Marinis, Marco. 1993. *The Semiotics of Performance*. Trans Áine O'Healy. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press
- Demian, Melissa. 2003. 'Custom in the Courtroom, Law in the Village: Legal Transformations in Papua New Guinea'. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9(1): 97-115.
- Demian, Melissa. 2006. 'Seeing, Knowing, Owning: Property Claims as Revelatory Acts'. In Eric Hirsch and Marilyn Strathern, eds. *Transactions and Creations: Property Debates and the Stimulus of Melanesia*. New York and Oxford: Berghan Books.
- De Munck, Victor C. 1998. 'Participant Observation: A Thick Explanation of Conflict in a Sri Lankan Village'. In Victor C. De Munck and Elisa J. Sobo, eds. *Using Methods in the Field: A Practical Introduction and Casebook*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Dening, Greg. 1988 [1980]. *Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774-1880*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Dening, Greg. 2004. *Beach Crossings: Voyages Across Times, Cultures, and Self*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Deninger, Klaus and Hans Binswanger. 1999. 'The Evolution of the World Bank's Land Policy: Principles, Experience, and Future Challenges'. *The World Bank Research Observer* 14(2): 247-276.
- De Raedt, Kim. 2012. 'Building the Rainbow Nation: A Critical Analysis of the Role of Architecture in Materializing a Post-Apartheid South African Identity'. *Afrika Focus* 25(1): 7-27.
- Descola, Philippe. 1992. 'Societies of Nature and the Nature of Society'. In Adam Kuper, ed. *Conceptualizing Society*. London: Routledge.
- Descola, Philippe and Gisli Palsson. 1996. 'Introduction'. In Philippe Descola and Gisli Palsson, eds. *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- De Sousa, Pedro Xavier. 2005. 'East Timor Land Management – A Long Way to Go, But We Have Started'. Paper presented at the Expert Group Meeting on Secure Land Tenure, 'New Legal Frameworks and Tools in Asia & Pacific, organized by FIG Commission 7, UN-HABITAT,



- the World Bank, and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 9-9 December. Available at [www.fig.net/commission7/bangkok\\_2005/papers/6\\_3\\_sousa.pdf](http://www.fig.net/commission7/bangkok_2005/papers/6_3_sousa.pdf) (accessed 19 July 2011).
- DeWalt, Kathleen M. and Billie R. DeWalt. 2002. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Domingues, José Mauricio. 2009. 'Modernity and Modernizing Moves: Latin America in Comparative Perspective'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 26(7-8): 208-227.
- Douglas, Bronwen. 2003. 'Christianity, Tradition, and Everyday Modernity: Towards an Anatomy of Women's Groupings in Melanesia'. *Oceania* 74 (1/2): 6-23.
- Douglas, Mary. 2002[1966]. *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge.
- Dwyer, Peter and Monica Minnegal. 1999. 'The Transformation of Use-Rights: A Comparison of Two Papua New Guinean Societies'. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 55(3): 361-383.
- Eastwood, Lauren E. 2011. 'Resisting Dispossession: Indigenous Peoples, the World Bank and the Contested Terrain of Policy'. *New Global Studies* 5(1): article 1.
- Eisenstadt, S.N. 2000. 'Multiple Modernities'. *Daedalus* 129(1): 1-29.
- Eisenstadt, S.N., ed. 2002. *Multiple Modernities*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 1993. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. London and Boulder: Pluto Press.
- Errington, Frederick and Deborah Gewertz. 2004. *Yali's Question: Sugar, Culture and History*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2001. 'Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization'. *Political Geography* 20: 139-174.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fairhead, Lindsay, Gae Kauzi and Charles Yala. 2009. 'Land Reform in Papua New Guinea: Quantifying the Economic Impacts'. Preliminary Working Paper (21<sup>st</sup> May). Port Moresby: National Research Institute.
- Falzon, Mark-Anthony. 2009. *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*. Farnham: Ashgate.

- Fanon, Frantz. 1967 [1952]. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press.
- Faubion, James. 1993. *Modern Greek Lessons: A Primer in Historical Constructivism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Featherstone, Mike, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, eds. 1995. *Global Modernities*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage.
- Ferguson, James. 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferguson, James. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Filer, Colin. 2011. 'The New Land Grab in Papua New Guinea'. Paper presented at the International Conference on Global Land Grabbing, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 6-8 April.
- Fingleton, Jim. 2005. 'Privatising Land in the Pacific: A Defence of Customary Tenures'. Discussion Paper No.80. Canberra: The Australia Institute.
- Fitzpatrick, Daniel. 2001. 'Land Issues in a Newly Independent East Timor'. Research Paper no. 21 2000-01. Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library.
- Fitzpatrick, Daniel. 2002. *Land Claims in East Timor*. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press.
- Fitzpatrick, Daniel. 2008. 'Mediating Land Conflict in East Timor'. In AusAID, ed. *Making Land Work: Volume Two: Case Studies*. Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development.
- Fitzpatrick, Daniel. 2010. *Policy Options for Regulating Community Property and Community Protection Zones in Timor-Leste*. Report prepared for World Bank, Justice for the Poor Timor-Leste.
- Fitzpatrick, Daniel and Susana Barnes. 2010. 'The Relative Resilience of Property: First Possession and Order Without Law in East Timor'. *Law & Society Review* 44(2): 205-238.
- Fitzpatrick, Daniel and Andrew McWilliam. 2005. 'Waiting for Law: Land Custom and Legal Regulation in Timor-Leste'. *Development Bulletin* 68: 58-61.
- Fitzpatrick, Daniel, Andrew McWilliam and Susana Barnes. 2013. *Property and Social Resilience in Times of Conflict: Land, Custom and Law in East Timor*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Foale, Simon and Martha Macintyre. 2000 'Dynamic and Flexible Aspects of Land and Marine Tenure at West Nggela: Implications for Marine Resource Management'. *Oceania* 71(1): 30-45.
- Foster, Robert J. 1995. *Social Reproduction and History in Melanesia: Mortuary Ritual, Gift Exchange, and Custom in the Tanga Islands*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Foster, Robert J. 2002a. 'Bargains with Modernity in Papua New Guinea and Elsewhere'. *Anthropological Theory* 2(2): 233-251.
- Foster, Robert J. 2002b. *Materializing the Nation: Commodities, Consumption and Media in Papua New Guinea*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper. New York: Vintage Books.
- Fox, James J. 2006. *The Poetic Power of Place: Comparative Perspectives*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Fox, James J. and Clifford Sather. eds. 2006. *Origin, Ancestry and Alliance: Explorations in Austronesian Ethnography*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Frank, Andre Gunder. 1967. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Friedmann, John. 1992. 'The Right to the City'. *Society and Nature* 1(1): 71-84.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 2008. 'State Building in Solomon Islands'. *Pacific Economic Bulletin* 23(3): 18-34.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gewertz, Deborah B. and Frederick K. Errington. 1991. *Twisted Histories, Altered Contexts: Representing the Chambri in a World System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gewertz, Deborah B. and Frederick K. Errington. 1999. *Emerging Class in Papua New Guinea: The Telling of Difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gewertz, Deborah and Frederick Errington. 2010. *Cheap Meat: Flap Food Nations in the Pacific Islands*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory*. London: Macmillan.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gille, Zsuzsa. 2001. 'Critical Ethnography in the Time of Globalization: Toward a New Concept of Site'. *Cultural Studies—Critical Methodologies* 1 (3): 319-334.
- Gille, Zsuzsa and Sean Ó Riain. 2002. 'Global Ethnography'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 271-95.

- Girling, John. 1987. *Capital and Power: Political Economy and Social Transformation*. London, New York and Sydney: Croom Helm.
- Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glassman, Jim. 2011. 'Cracking Hegemony in Thailand: Gramsci, Bourdieu and the Dialectics of Rebellion'. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 41(1): 25-46.
- Gluckman, Max. 1961. 'Anthropological Problems Arising from the African Industrial Revolution'. In Aidan Southall, ed. *Social Change in Modern Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Goddard, Michael and Deborah Van Heekeren. 2003. 'United and Divided: Christianity, Tradition and Identity in Two South Coast Papua New Guinea Villages'. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14(2): 144-159.
- Godelier, Maurice and Marilyn Strathern, eds. 1991. *Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goodall, Heather. 1996. *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Gore, Charles. 2000. 'The Rise and Fall of the Washington Consensus as a Paradigm for Developing Countries'. *World Development* 28(5): 789-804.
- Gosarevski, Steven, Helen Hughes and Susan Windybank. 2004a. 'Is Papua New Guinea Viable?'. *Pacific Economic Bulletin* 19(1): 134-148.
- Gosarevski, Steven, Helen Hughes and Susan Windybank. 2004b. 'Is Papua New Guinea Viable With Customary Land Ownership?'. *Pacific Economic Bulletin* 19(3): 133-136.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1985. 'Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness'. *American Journal of Sociology* 91: 481-510.
- Greenfeld, Liah. 1992. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Greenpeace. 2012. *Up for Grabs: Millions of Hectares of Customary Land in PNG Stolen for Logging*. Ultimo: Greenpeace Australia Pacific.
- Grenfell, Damian. 2008. 'Reconciliation: Violence and Nation Formation in Timor-Leste'. In Damian Grenfell and Paul James, eds. *Rethinking Insecurity, War and Violence: Beyond Savage Globalization*. Routledge: London.
- Grenfell, Damian and Paul James, eds. 2008. *Rethinking Insecurity, War and Violence: Beyond Savage Globalization*. Routledge: London.
- Grenfell, Damian, Mayra Walsh, Carmenesa Moniz Noronha, Kym Holthouse and Anna Trembath. 2009. *Understanding Community: Security and Sustainability in Timor-Leste*.

- Report produced by Irish Aid, Oxfam Australia, Concern Worldwide and the Globalism Research Centre, RMIT University.
- Grosfoguel, Ramón. 2003. *Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grosfoguel, Ramón. 2008. 'Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality: Decolonizing Political Economy and Postcolonial Studies'. *Eurozine*. Available at: <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2008-07-04-grosfoguel-en.pdf> (accessed 11 November 2012).
- Gunn, Geoffrey C. 1999. *Timor Loro Sae: 500 Years*. Macau: Livros do Oriente.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1983. 'Modernity—An Incomplete Project'. In Hal Foster, ed. *Postmodern Culture*. London and Sydney. Pluto Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Trans. Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Haburas Foundation. 2001. 'Constitution of Haburas Foundation'. Available at <http://haburas.org/HaburasConstitutionAdopted2001English.pdf> (accessed 3 January 2013).
- Hall, Stuart. 1988. *The Hard Road to Renewal*. London: Verso.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. 'When was the "Post-Colonial"? Thinking at the Limit'. In Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, eds. *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. London: Routledge.
- Hanafi, Sari and Taylor Long. 2010. 'Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23(2): 134-159.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. *Feminist Studies* 14(3): 575-599.
- Haraway, Donna. 2003. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Harrington, Andrew. 2007. 'Ethnicity, Violence & Land and Property Disputes in Timor-Leste'. *East Timor Law Journal* 2. Available at [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/%28httpDocuments%29/8A0BE17539B53A71C1257329002A902C/\\$file/AndrewLand%26PropertyFinal.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/%28httpDocuments%29/8A0BE17539B53A71C1257329002A902C/$file/AndrewLand%26PropertyFinal.pdf) (accessed 6 May 2012).
- Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harvey, David. 2003. 'The Right to the City'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27(4): 939-941.

- Havice, Elizabeth, and Kristin Reed. 2012. 'Fishing for Development? Tuna Resource Access and Industrial Change in Papua New Guinea'. *Journal of Agrarian Change*. 12(2-3): 413-435.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. 1999. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hermann, Elfriede. 1992. 'The Yali Movement in Retrospect: Rewriting History, Redefining "Cargo Cult"'. *Oceania* 63(1): 55-71.
- Hicks, David. 2004[1976]. *Tetum Ghosts & Kin: Fertility and Gender in East Timor*. Second edition. Long Grove: Waveland Press.
- Hicks, David. 2007. 'Community and Nation-State in East Timor: A View from the Periphery'. *Anthropology Today* 23(1): 13-16.
- Hicks, David. 2008. 'Glimpses of Alternatives: The *Uma Lulik* of East Timor'. *Social Analysis* 52: 166-180.
- Hillis, Ken. 1999. *Digital Sensations: Space, Identity, and Embodiment in Virtual Reality*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hirsch, Eric 2001. 'New Boundaries of Influence in Highland Papua: "Culture", Mining and Ritual Conversions'. *Oceania* 71(4): 298-312.
- Hirsch, Eric and Marilyn Strathern, eds. 2006. *Transactions and Creations: Property Debates and the Stimulus of Melanesia*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Hobart, Angela and Bruce Kapferer, eds. 2012. *Contesting the State: The Dynamics of Resistance and Control*. Wantage: Sean Kingston.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1992. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Second edition. Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hock, Klaus and Gesa Mackenthun, eds. 2012. *Entangled Knowledge: Scientific Discourses and Cultural Difference*. Münster: Waxmann.
- Hodder, Ian. 2012. *Entangled. An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things*. Oxford: Wiley and Blackwell.
- Hohe, Tanja. 2002. 'The Clash of Paradigms: International Administration and Local Political Legitimacy in East Timor'. *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 24 (3): 569-589.
- Holstein, James A. and Jaber F. Gubrium. 1995. *The Active Interview*. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Holston, James and Arjun Appadurai. 2003. 'Cities and Citizenship'. In Neil Brenner, Bob Jessop, Martin Jones, Gordon Macleod, eds. *State/Space: A Reader*. Oxford and Boston: Blackwell.

- Hughes, Helen. 2003. 'Aid Has Failed the Pacific'. *Issue Analysis* 33. Sydney: Centre for Independent Studies.
- Hughes, Helen. 2004. 'The Pacific is Viable!'. *Issue Analysis* 53. Sydney: Centre for Independent Studies.
- Ichijo, Atsuko and Willfried Spohn, eds. 2005. *Entangled Identities: Nations and Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Ignatieff, Michael. 1999. 'Human Rights'. In Carla Hesse and Robert Post, eds. *Human Rights in Political Transitions: Gettysburg to Bosnia*. New York: Zone Books.
- Imbun, Benedict Y. 1995. 'Enga Social Life and Identity in a Papua New Guinea Mining Town'. *Oceania* 66(1): 51-62.
- Inda, Jonathan Xavier. 2005a. 'Analytics of the Modern: An Introduction'. In Jonathan Xavier Inda, ed. *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics*. Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.
- Inglis, David and John Bone. 2006. 'Boundary Maintenance, Border Crossing and the Nature/Culture Divide'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 9(2): 272-287.
- Ingold, Tim. 1986. *The Appropriation of Nature: Essays on Human Ecology and Social Relations*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Ingold, Tim. 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ingold, Tim. 2008. 'Bindings Against Boundaries: Entanglement of Life in an Open World'. *Environment and Planning A* 40(8): 1796-1810.
- Ingold, Tim. 2010. *Bringing Things Back to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials*. NCRM Working Paper 15. Realities / Morgan Centre, University of Manchester.
- Ingold, Tim. 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jackson, Sue E. and Lisa R. Palmer. 2012. 'Modernising Water: Articulating Custom in Water Governance in Australia and East Timor'. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 3(3): article 7.
- James, Paul. 1996. *Nation Formation: Toward a Theory of Abstract Community*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage.
- James, Paul. 2006. *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back In*. London: Sage.

- James, Paul, Yaso Nadarajah, Karen Haive and Victoria Stead. 2012. *Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Development: Other Paths for Papua New Guinea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Jolly, Margaret. 1994. *Women of the Place: Kastom, Colonialism and Gender in Vanuatu*. Chur and Reading: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Jolly, Margaret and Serge Tcherkézoff. 2009. 'Oceanic Encounters: A Prelude'. In Margaret Jolly, Serge Tcherkézoff and Darrell Tryon, eds. *Oceanic Encounters: Exchange, Desire, Violence*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Jorgensen, Dan. 2007. 'Clan-Finding, Clan-Making and the Politics of Identity in a Papua New Guinea Mining Project'. In James F. Weiner and Katie Glaskin, eds. *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Junge, Matthias. 2008. 'Bauman on Ambivalence—Fully Acknowledging the Ambiguity of Ambivalence'. In Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Poul Poder, eds. *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman: Challenges and Critique*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Kahn, Joel S. 2001. 'Anthropology and Modernity'. *Current Anthropology* 42(5): 651-680.
- Karp, Ivan. 2002. 'Development and Personhood: Tracing the Contours of a Moral Discourse'. In Bruce M. Knauft, ed. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. 1997. 'The Frontier Phenomenon: Perceptions of the Land in Iranian Nationalism'. *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 6(10): 19-38.
- Kaya, Ibrahim. 2004. 'Modernity, Openness, Interpretation: a Perspective on Multiple Modernities'. *Social Science Information* 43(1): 35-57.
- Kedourie, Elie. 1993[1960]. *Nationalism*. Fourth edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Keesing, Roger M. 1989. 'Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Contemporary Pacific'. *The Contemporary Pacific* 1(1-2): 19-42.
- Keesing, Roger M. 1992. *Custom and Confrontation: Kwaio Struggle for Cultural Autonomy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Keown, Michelle. 2007. *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Kerkvliet, Benedict J. Tria. 1990. *Everyday Politics in the Philippines: Class and Status Relations in a Central Lurzon Village*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press.
- Kerkvliet, Benedict J. Tria. 2009. 'Everyday Politics in Peasant Societies (And Ours)'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(1): 227-243.



- Kezer, Zeynep. 2009. 'An Imaginable Community: The Material Culture of Nation-Building in Early Republican Turkey'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27(3): 508-530.
- Kili, Lesley. 2010. 'Boots and all for Lazarus'. *Post-Courier*. 8 April: 7.
- Kina Securities Limited. 2008. *Kina Communique*. 7 March.
- Kingsbury, Damien. 2007. 'Political Development'. In Damien Kingsbury and Michael Leach, eds. *East Timor: Beyond Independence*. Clayton: Monash University Press.
- Kingsbury, Damien and Michael Leach. 2007. 'Introduction'. In Damien Kingsbury and Michael Leach, eds. *East Timor: Beyond Independence*. Clayton: Monash University Press.
- Kirsch, Stuart. 2006. 'Property Limits: Debates on the Body, Nature and Culture'. In Eric Hirsch and Marilyn Strathern, eds. *Transactions and Creations: Property Debates and the Stimulus of Melanesia*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Knauff, Bruce M. ed. 2002a. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Knauff, Bruce M. 2002b. 'Critically Modern: An Introduction'. In Bruce M. Knauff, ed. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Knauff, Bruce M. 2002c. 'Trials of the Oxymodern: Public Practice at Nomad Station'. In Bruce M. Knauff, ed. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Koczberski, Gina and George N. Curry. 2004. 'Divided Communities and Contested Landscapes: Mobility, Development and Shifting Identities in Migrant Destination Sites in Papua New Guinea'. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 45(3): 357-371.
- Koczberski, Gina and George N. Curry. 2005. 'Making A Living: Land Pressures and Changing Livelihood Strategies Among Palm Settlers in Papua New Guinea'. *Agricultural Systems* 85(3): 324-339.
- Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Edited by Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kvale, Steinar. 1996. *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.
- Lambek, Michael. 1998. 'Body and Mind in Mind, Body and Mind in Body: Some Anthropological Interventions in a Long Conversation'. In Michael Lambek and Andrew

- Strathern, eds. *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lambek, Michael and Andrew Strathern, eds. 1998. *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Langton, Marcia. 2010. 'The Estate as Duration: "Being in Place" and Aboriginal Property Relations in Areas of Cape York Peninsula in North Australia'. In Lee Godden and Maureen Tehan, eds. *Comparative Perspectives of Communal Lands and Individual Ownership: Sustainable Futures*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Laklau, Andrew A. L. 1995. *Customary Land Tenure, Customary Land Owners and the Proposals for Customary Land Reform in Papua New Guinea*. Lae: Pacific Land Tenure and Policy Centre.
- La'o Hamutuk. 2010. Submission to Committee A, National Parliament, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, from La'o Hamutuk, Regarding Land, Housing and Water Rights in the Draft Civil Code. 29 September. Available at [www.laohamutuk.org/Agri/land/civil/LHsubCivilCode29Sep10En.pdf](http://www.laohamutuk.org/Agri/land/civil/LHsubCivilCode29Sep10En.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2012)
- Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lawrence, Peter. 1964. *Road Belong Cargo*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Lazzarato, Maurizio. 1996. 'Immaterial Labour'. Trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emory. In Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, eds. *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Leach, James. 2003. *Creative Land: Place and Procreation on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Leach, Michael. 2008. 'Surveying East Timorese Tertiary Student Attitudes to National Identity 2002-2007'. *South East Asia Research* 16(3): 405-431.
- Leahy, Michael and Maurice Crain. 1937. *The Land that Time Forgot: Adventures and Discoveries in New Guinea*. London: Hurst & Blackett.
- Lederman, Rena. 1998. 'Globalization and the Future of Culture Areas: Melanesianist Anthropology in Transition'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27: 427-49.
- Lefebvre Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lefebvre Henri. 1996. *Writings on Cities*. Trans. and edited Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lerner, David. 1958. *The Passing of Traditional Society: The Modernizing of the Middle East*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

- Lopes, Ibero. 2008. *Technical Framework for a Transitional Land Law for East Timor*. Discussion paper prepared for USAID/ARD Strengthening Property Rights in Timor-Leste, Ita Nia Rai Project.
- Lu, Duanfang. 2011. *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Lukes, Steven. 1974. *Power: A Radical View*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- McCann, Eugene J. 2002. 'Space, Citizenship, and the Right to the City: A Brief Overview'. *GeoJournal* 58(2-3): 77-79.
- McCrone, David. 1998. *The Sociology of Nationalism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- McKay, Deirdre. 2006. 'Rethinking Indigenous Place: Igorot Identity and Locality in the Philippines'. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 17(3): 291-306.
- McWilliam, Andrew. 2005. 'Houses of Resistance in East Timor: Structuring Sociality in the New Nation'. *Anthropological Forum: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Comparative Sociology* 15(1): 27-44.
- McWilliam, Andrew. 2007. 'Austronesians in Linguistic Disguise: Fataluku Cultural Fusion in East Timor'. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 38(2): 355-375.
- McWilliam, Andrew. 2011. 'Exchange and Resilience in East Timor'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17(4): 745-763.
- McWilliam, Andrew and Elizabeth G. Traube, eds. 2011a. *Land and Life in Timor-Leste: Ethnographic Essays*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- McWilliam, Andrew and Elizabeth G. Traube. 2011b. 'Land and Life in Timor-Leste: Introduction'. In Andrew McWilliam and Elizabeth G. Traube, eds. *Land and Life in Timor-Leste: Ethnographic Essays*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Macintyre, Martha. 2000. "'Hear Us, Women of Papua New Guinea!" Melanesian Women and Human Rights'. In Anne-Marie Hilsdon, Martha Macintyre, Vera Mackie and Maila Stivens, eds. *Human Rights and Gender Politics: Asia-Pacific Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Macintyre, Martha and Simon Foale. 2004. 'Global Imperatives and Local Desires: Competing Economic and Environmental Interests in Melanesian Communities', in Victoria S. Lockwood, ed. *Globalization and Culture Change in the Pacific Islands*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

- Macintyre, Martha and Simon Foale. 2007. 'Land and Marine Tenure, Ownership and New Forms of Entitlement on Lihir: Changing Notions of Property in the Context of a Goldmining Project'. *Human Organization* 66(1): 49-59.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1984 [1922]. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Mann, Michael. 2003 [1984]. 'The Autonomous Power of the State: It's Origins, Mechanisms and Results'. In Neil Brenner, Bob Jessop, Martin Jones, and Gordon Macleod, eds. *State/Space: A Reader*. Malden, Oxford, Carlton and Berlin: Blackwell.
- Marcus, George E. 1995. 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95-117.
- Marcus, George E. and Michael M.J. Fischer. 1986. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Marcuse, Peter. 2009. 'From Critical Urban Theory to the Right to the City'. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 13(2-3): 185-197.
- Massey, Doreen. 1994. *Space, Place and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massey, Doreen. 2005. *For Space*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage.
- Matbob, Patrick. 2011. 'Relief to Unskilled Workers. But Employers?' *Islands Business*. Available at [http://www.islandsbusiness.com/islands\\_business/index\\_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=18595/overrideSkinName=issueArticle-full.tpl](http://www.islandsbusiness.com/islands_business/index_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=18595/overrideSkinName=issueArticle-full.tpl) (accessed 6 September 2011)
- Mayer, Margit. 2009. 'The "Right to the City" in the Context of Shifting Mottos of Urban Social Movements'. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 13(2-3): 362-374.
- Mead, Margaret. 1969 [1930]. *The Social Organization of Manu'a*. Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 76. Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press.
- Mead, Margaret. 2001 [1928]. *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation*. Perennial Classics edition. New York: William Morrow.
- Meggitt, Mervyn. 1977. *Blood is the Argument: Warfare Among the Mae Enga Tribesman of the New Guinea Highlands*. California: Mayfield Publishing.
- Mellor, Philip A. and Chris Shilling. 1997. *Re-forming the Body: Religion, Community and Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Merriam, Sharan. 1998. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Messerschmidt, Donald Alan, ed. 1981. *Anthropologists at Home in North America: Methods and Issues in the Study of One's Own Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mitchell, Don. 2003. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Moore, Henrietta L. 1999. 'Anthropological Theory at the Turn of the Century'. In Henrietta L. Moore, ed. *Anthropological Theory Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mouffe, Chantal, ed. 1979. *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*. London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Myers, Fred. 1998. 'Always Ask: Resource Use and Land Ownership among Pintupi Aborigines of the Australian Western Desert'. In W.H. Edwards, ed. *Traditional Aboriginal Society*. Second edition. South Yarra: Macmillan Education Australia.
- Murphy, Elizabeth and Robert Dingwall. 2007. 'The Ethics of Ethnography'. In Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland, eds. *Handbook of Ethnography*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage.
- Nairn, Tom. 1997. *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited*. London: Verso.
- Narciso, Vanda, and Pedro Henriques. 2010. 'Women and Land in Timor-Leste: Issues in Gender and Development'. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 17(1): 49-72.
- Niner, Sara. 2009. *Xanana: Leader of the Struggle for Independent Timor-Leste*. North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing.
- Nixon, Rod. 2009. 'Contracts, Land Tenure and Rural Development in Timor-Leste'. *Justice for the Poor Briefing Note* 3(3). World Bank.
- NLDT. 2007. *The National Land Development Taskforce Report: Land Administration, Land Dispute Settlement, and Customary Land Development*. Port Moresby: National Research Institute.
- Noho, Bola. 2009. 'Project Estimates to Employ 30,000'. *Post-Courier*. 14 October.
- Nonggorr, John. 1993. 'Resolving Conflicts in Customary Law and Western Law in Natural Resource Developments in Papua New Guinea'. *UNSW Law Journal* 16(2): 433-457.
- O'Reilly, Karen. 2004. *Ethnographic Methods*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Olson, M.D. 1997. 'Regulating Custom: Land, Law and Central Judiciary in Samoa'. *The Journal of Pacific History* 32(2): 153-179.
- Ortner, Sherry. 1995. 'Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37(1): 173-193.

- Ortner, Sherry B. 1996. *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 2006. *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Ospina, Sofi and Tanja Hohe. 2001. 'Traditional Power Structures and the Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project'. Report prepared for CEP/PMU, ETTA/UNTAET and the World Bank. Dili. September 2001.
- Overing, Joanna. 2012. 'The Spectre of the Tyrant: Power, Violence, and the Poetics of an Amazonian Egalitarianism'. In Angela Hobart and Bruce Kapferer, eds. *Contesting the State: Dynamics of Resistance and Control*. Wantage: Sean Kingston.
- Palmer, Lisa and Demetrio do Amaral de Carvalho. 2008. 'Nation Building and Resource Management: The Politics of 'Nature' in Timor Leste'. *Geoforum* 39(3): 1321-1332.
- Pannell, Sandra. 2006. 'Welcome to Hotel Tutuala: Fataluku Accounts of Going Places in an Immobile World'. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 7(3): 203-219.
- Papastergiadis, Nikos. 2000. *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalisation, Deterritorialisation and Hybridity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Patai, Daphne. 1991. 'US Academics and Third World Women: Is Ethical Research Possible?'. In Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds. *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. New York: Routledge.
- Patnaik, Arun K. 1988. 'Gramsci's Concept of Common Sense: Towards a Theory of Subaltern Consciousness in Hegemony Processes'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 23(5): PE2-PE10.
- Peters, Pauline E. 2004. 'Inequality and Social Conflict Over Land in Africa'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 4(3): 269-314.
- Philpott, Simon. 2006. 'East Timor's Double Life: Smells Like Westphalian Spirit'. *Third World Quarterly* 27(1): 135-59.
- Pigg, Stacy Leigh. 1996. 'The Credible and the Credulous: The Question of "Villagers' Beliefs" in Nepal'. *Cultural Anthropology* 11(2): 160-201.
- Polier, Nicole 1996. 'Of Mines and Min: Modernity and its Malcontents in Papua New Guinea'. *Ethnology* 35(1): 1-16.
- Polsby, Nelson W. 1963. *Community Power and Political Theory*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Purcell, Mark. 2002. 'Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant'. *GeoJournal* 58(2-3): 99-108.

- Quan, Julian. 2000. 'Land Tenure, Economic Growth and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa'. In Camilla Toulmin and Julian Quan, eds. *Evolving Land Rights, Policy and Tenure in Africa*. London: DFID/IIED/NRI.
- Rabinow, Paul. 1977. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Rivière, Peter. 1984. *Individual and Society in Guiana: A Comparative Study of Amerindian Social Organization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robbins, Joel. 2004. *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Robbins, Joel and Holly Wardlow, eds. 2005. *The Making of Global and Local Modernities in Melanesia: Humiliation, Transformation and the Nature of Cultural Change*. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Rostow, Walt W. 1960. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rouland, Norbert. 2001. 'Custom and the Law'. In Paul de Deckker and Jean-Yves Faberon, eds. *Custom and the Law*. Canberra: Asia-Pacific Press.
- Rumsey, Alan. 2001. 'Introduction'. In Alan Rumsey and James F. Weiner, eds. *Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Rumsey, Alan and James F. Weiner, eds. 2001. *Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Sage, Colin. 2003. 'Social Embeddedness and Relations of Regard: Alternative "Good Food" Networks in South-West Ireland'. *Journal of Rural Studies* 19(1): 47-60.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1981. *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1992. 'The Economics of Develop-Man in the Pacific'. *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 21: 13-25.
- Salla, Michael. 1995. 'East Timor's Nonviolent Resistance'. *Peace Review* 7(2): 191-197.
- Schmidt, Volker H. 2010. 'Modernity and Diversity: Reflections on the Controversy between Modernization Theory and Multiple Modernists'. *Social Science Information* 49(4): 511-538.

- Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. and Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, eds. 1986. *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance in South-East Asia*. London: Frank Cass.
- Secretaria de Estado da Cultura. n.d. 'Museum and Cultural Centre of Timor-Leste'. Available at: <http://www.cultura.gov.tl/en/institution/projects/museum-and-cultural-centre-of-timor-leste> (accessed 21 December 2012).
- Sharma, Aradhana and Akhil Gupta, eds. 2006. *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Sharp, Geoff. 1985. 'Constitutive Abstraction and Social Practice'. *Arena* 70: 48-82.
- Sharp, Joanne P., Paul Routledge, Chris Philo and Ronan Paddison, eds. 2000. *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/Resistance*. London: Routledge.
- Shaw, Wendy S., R.D.K. Herman and Rebecca G. Dobbs. 2006. 'Encountering Indigeneity: Re-Imagining and Decolonizing Geography'. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88(3): 267-276.
- Shipton, Parker and Mitzi Goheen. 1992. 'Introduction: Understanding African Land-Holding: Power, Wealth, and Meaning'. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62(3): 307-325.
- Shostak, Marjorie. 1981. *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sillitoe, Paul. 1999. 'Beating the Boundaries: Land Tenure and Identity in the Papua New Guinea Highlands'. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 55(3): 331-360.
- Silva, Kelly. 2011. 'Foho Versus Dili: The Political Role of Place in East Timor National Imagination'. *REALIS—Revista de Estudos AntiUtilitaristas e PosColoniasis* 1(2): 144-165.
- Silva, Kelly and Daniel Simião. 2012. 'Coping With "Traditions": The Analysis of East-Timorese Nation Building from the Perspective of a Certain Anthropology Made in Brazil'. *Vibrant: Virtual Brazilian Anthropology* 9(1): 360-381.
- Silverman, Eric Kline. 2005. 'Sepik River Selves in a Changing Modernity: From Sahlins to Psychodynamics'. In Joel Robbins and Holly Wardlow, eds. *The Making of Global and Local*



- Modernities in Melanesia: Humiliation, Transformation and the Nature of Cultural Change.* Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Singer, Milton. 1972. *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization.* New York: Praeger.
- Smith, Adam. 1983 [1776]. *The Wealth of Nations.* New York: Penguin.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* London: Zed Books.
- Spitulnik, Debra A. 2002. 'Accessing "Local" Modernities: Reflections on the Place of Linguistic Evidence in Ethnography'. In Bruce M. Knauft, ed. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Spradley, James P. 1980. *Participant Observation.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Steger, Manfred B. and Ravi K. Roy. 2010. *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Steinmetz, George, ed. 1999. *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Straight, Bilinda S. 2006. 'Becoming Dead: The Entangled Agencies of the Dearly Departed'. *Anthropology and Humanism* 31(2): 101-110.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1999. *Property, Substance and Effect: Anthropological Essays on Persons and Things.* London: Athlone Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 2009. 'Land: Intangible or Tangible Property?'. In Timothy Chesters, ed. *Land Rights.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strauss, Anselm L. and Juliet M. Corbin. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory.* Second edition. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Suddaby, Roy. 2006. 'From the Editors: What Grounded Theory is Not'. *Academy of Management Journal* 49(4): 633-642.
- Sullivan, Nancy, Thomas Warr, Joseph Rainbubu, Jennifer Kunoko, Francis Akauna, Moses Angasa, and Yunus Wenda. 2003. *Tinpis Maror: A Social Impact Study of Proposed RD Tuna Cannery at Vidar Wharf, Madang.* Madang: Nancy Sullivan Ltd.
- Sundén, Jenny. 2003. *Material Virtualities: Approaching Online Textual Embodiment.* New York: Peter Lang.

- Sylvain, Renée. 2008. 'Disorderly Development: Globalization and the Idea of "Culture" in the Kalahari'. In Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds. *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*. Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Tamaira, A. Marata, ed. 2009a. *The Space Between: Negotiating Culture, Place, and Identity in the Pacific*. CPIS Occasional Paper 44. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Tamaira, A. Marata. 2009b. 'Preface'. In A. Marata Tamaira, ed. *The Space Between: Negotiating Culture, Place, and Identity in the Pacific*. CPIS Occasional Paper 44. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Taylor, Charles and Benjamin Lee. n.d. 'Multiple Modernities Project: Modernity and Difference: Working Draft'. Unpublished paper. Available at: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/transcult/promad.html> [accessed 5 October 2011].
- Taylor, Peter J. 2003. 'The State as Container: Territoriality in the Modern World-System'. In Neil Brenner, Bob Jessop, Martin Jones, Gordon Macleod, eds. *State/Space: A Reader*. Oxford and Boston: Blackwell.
- Therborn, Göran. 2003. 'Entangled Modernities'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 6(3): 293-305.
- Thomas, Nicholas. 1991. *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Thu, Pyone Myat, Steffanie Scott and Kimberley P. Van Niel. 2007. 'Gendered Access to Customary Land in East Timor'. *GeoJournal* 69(4): 239-255.
- Thu, Pyone Myat. 2008. 'Land Forgotten: Effects of Indonesian Re-Settlement on Rural Livelihoods in East Timor'. In David Mearns, ed, *Democratic Governance in Timor-Leste: Reconciling the Local and the National*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press.
- Trask, Haunani-Kay. 1991. 'Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle'. *The Contemporary Pacific* 3(1): 159-177.
- Traub, James. 2000. 'Inventing East Timor'. *Foreign Affairs* 79(4): 74-89.
- Traube, Elizabeth G. 1986. *Cosmology and Social Life: Ritual Exchange Among the Mambai of East Timor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Traube, Elizabeth G. 2011. 'Planting the Flag'. In Andrew McWilliam and Elizabeth G. Traube, eds. *Land and Life in Timor-Leste: Ethnographic Essays*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Tsing, Anna. 1999. 'Becoming a Tribal Elder and Other Green Development Fantasies'. In Tania Li, ed. *Transformation of the Indonesian Uplands: Marginality, Power and Production*. London: Harwood.

- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Tsing, Anna. 2008. 'The Global Situation'. In Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds. *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*. Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2008. *The Body and Society*. Third edition. London: Sage.
- UNMIT/Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2012. *Periodic Report on Human Rights in Timor-Leste, 1 July 2010 – 31 December 2011*. Available at: <http://unmit.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ZgAMNpgRIsI%3D&tabid=12032&language=en-US> (accessed 9 January 2013).
- Urry, John. 2000. *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Urry, John. 2007. *Mobilities*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity
- USAID. 2012. *Timor-Leste—Property Rights and Resource Governance Profile*. United States Agency for International Development. Available at <http://usaidlandtenure.net/timor-leste> (accessed 14 November 2012).
- Vale, Lawrence. 1992. *Architecture, Power and National Identity*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Van Creveld, Martin. 1999. *The Rise and Decline of the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van der Tuin, Iris and Rick Dolphijn. 2010. 'The Transversality of New Materialism'. *Women: A Cultural Review* 21(2): 153J-171.
- Van Leeuwen, Mathijs. 2010. 'Crisis or Continuity? Framing Land Disputes and Local Conflict Resolution in Burundi'. *Land Use Policy* 27(3): 753-762.
- Verdery, Katherine. 1998. 'Transnationalism, Nationalism, Citizenship, and Property: Eastern Europe Since 1989'. *American Ethnologist* 25(2): 291-306.
- Vischer, Michael P. 2009. *Precedence: Social Differentiation in the Austronesian World*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Wade, Robert. 1996. 'Japan, the World Bank, and the Art of Paradigm Maintenance: The East Asian Miracle in Political Perspective'. *The New Left Review* 217: 3-36
- Wagner, Peter. 2000. 'Modernity—One or Many?'. In Judith Blau, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Wagner, Roy. 1981 [1975]. *The Invention of Culture*. Revised edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ward, R. Gerard and Elizabeth Kingdon, eds. 1995. *Land, Custom and Practice in the South Pacific*. Cambridge and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Wardlow, Holly. 2002. "'Hands-Up"-ing Buses and Harvesting Cheese-Pops: Gendered Mediation of Modern Disjuncture in Melanesia'. In Bruce M. Knauff, ed. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Watts, Michael. 2001. 'Development Ethnographies'. *Ethnography* 2(2): 283-300.
- Weiming, Tu. 2000. 'Implications of the Rise of "Confucian" East Asia'. *Daedalus* 129(1): 195-218.
- Weiner, Annette B. 1976. *Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Weiner, James. 2002. 'Adverse Possession: Some Observations on the Relation Between Land and Land-Based Knowledge in Papua New Guinea'. Paper prepared for FAO/USP/RICS Foundation South Pacific Land Tenure Symposium. Available at: [http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/sol\\_adobe\\_documents/usp%20only/customary%20law/weiner.pdf](http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/sol_adobe_documents/usp%20only/customary%20law/weiner.pdf) (accessed 29 January 2013).
- Weiner, James. 2006. 'Eliciting Customary Law'. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 7(1): 15-25.
- Weiner, James F. and Katie Glaskin, eds. 2007a. *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Weiner, James F. and Katie Glaskin. 2007b. 'Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives. In James F. Weiner and Katie Glaskin, eds. *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Wesson, Cameron B. 2008. 'Mixed Metaphors: Dynamic Modernities in Southeastern North America'. *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* 4(1): 67-86.
- Wiber, Melanie G. and Peter Lovell. 2004. 'Property, Kinship and Cultural Capital: The Ethics of Modelling Kinship in Sustainable Resource Management'. *Anthropologica* 46: 85-98.
- Wigglesworth, Ann. 2012. 'The Growth of Civil Society in Timor-Leste: Three Moments of Activism'. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2012.735545.
- Williams, Charlotte C. 2009. 'Reaching Back to Move Forward: Using Adverse Possession to Resolve Land Conflicts in Timor-Leste'. *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal* 18(3): 575-607.
- Williams, Colin and Anthony D. Smith. 1983. 'The National Construction of Social Space'. *Progress in Human Geography* 7(4): 502-518.

- Willis, Paul and Mats Trondman. 2000. 'Manifesto for Ethnography'. *Ethnography* 1(1): 5-16.
- Win, Thin Lei. 2010. 'East Timor Land Law Fuels Fears of Evictions, Conflict'. AlterNet report. 21 October. Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/timor-leste/east-timor-land-law-fuels-fears-evictions-conflict> (accessed 9 January 2013).
- Wolf, Eric. 1997 [1982]. *Europe and the People Without History*. Edition with a new preface. Berkely, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- World Bank. 2006. *Timor-Leste: The Business Regulatory Environment*. World Bank. Available at: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTIMORLESTE/Resources/Timor\\_Leste\\_Business\\_Regulatory\\_Environment\\_Report\\_English\\_for\\_web\\_revised.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTIMORLESTE/Resources/Timor_Leste_Business_Regulatory_Environment_Report_English_for_web_revised.pdf) (accessed 10 September 2012).
- Yala, Charles, Satish Chand and Ron Duncan. 2010. 'Making Land More Productive'. In Charles Yala, ed. *The Genesis of the Papua New Guinea Land Reform Program: Selected Papers from the 2005 National Land Summit*. Monograph no. 42. Port Moresby: National Research Institute.
- Yang, Mayfair Mei-Hui. 1994. *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Yoder, Laura S. Meitzner. 2003. 'Custom and Conflict: The Uses and Limitations of Traditional Systems in Addressing Rural Land Disputes in East Timor'. Discussion paper prepared for a regional workshop, Land Policy and Administration for Pro-Poor Rural Growth, Dili, December 2003.
- Yoder, Laura S. Meitzner. 2011. 'Tensions of Tradition: Making and Remaking Claims to Land in the Oecusse Enclave'. In Andrew McWilliam and Elizabeth G. Traube, eds. *Land and Life in Timor-Leste: Ethnographic Essays*. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Zielyk, Ihor V. 1966. 'On Ambiguity and Ambivalence'. *The Pacific Sociological Review* 9(1): 57-64.
- Zorn, Jean G. 1992. 'Graun Bilong Mipela: Local Land Courts and the Changing Customary Law of Papua New Guinea'. *Pacific Studies* 15(2): 1-38.