

Nicholas A. Bainton, Debra McDougall, Kalissa Alexeyeff, & John Cox (Eds.). (2021). *Unequal lives: Gender, race and class in the Western Pacific*. Canberra, Australia: ANU Press. 560pp, pbk, ISBN: 978-1-7604-6410-3. US\$60.

Unequal lives is an edited volume that speaks to two key themes. First, it is about exploring the different dimensions of inequality in the Western Pacific and how parallax definitions of fairness, deprivation and wealth are shaped by different bodies, identities, relations and places. Second, it is about the character of anthropology as a discipline historically, in this current moment, and what it wants to be in the future. Fittingly for a volume that grew from a festschrift honouring the work of Martha MacIntyre, interwoven are reflections about what it means to centre the belief in anthropology as a tool for social justice that underpins much of MacIntyre's scholarship. Her curiosity and pragmatism, as well as the respect, humour and generosity of her approach to communities as member or visitor, are celebrated and reflected throughout.

In their introduction, editors Deborah McDougall and Nicholas Bainton set out the bricolage of historic and contemporary forces that have helped shaped current contours of inequality in the Western Pacific, particularly in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Solomon Islands. Against this setting, contributing authors write about how, 'gendered, race- and class-based inequalities intersect in novel ways to entrench existing inequities and create new varieties of vulnerability. The authors consider not only multiple dimensions of inequality but also multiple scales: local, national, regional and global/world historical' (p.11).

Following from this, Susan Hemer and Deborah McDougall consider how these intersections shape different communities' access to services, focusing on health care and education respectively. Hemer demonstrates the ways international, state and local barriers shape poor access to and uptake of tuberculosis treatment on Lihir Island, PNG. She shows to devastating effect how 'a narrow version of culture, often labelled as 'cultural beliefs', is frequently blamed rather than addressing more complex issues such as social structures and global economic or political forces that shape the spread of infections and methods of diagnosis and treatment' (p. 150). McDougall presents an account of the Kulu Language Institute of Ranongga Island in the Solomon Islands. Following a path forged by MacIntyre, this chapter rejects binarized and simplistic framings of the harms of patriarchal inequality. It shows how the shame borne by young men in Solomon Islands in the context of formal (especially English language) education, and concomitant expressions as aggression or ennui, are disrupted by the reparative potential of first language education. This chapter offers hope in its description of the young people and communities that are using linguistic education to reclaim and remake their potential and sense of self, while at the same time reflecting on the other students who have fallen through the cracks. McDougall's analysis also provides a useful lever to pry apart default deficit narratives around young men in Melanesia (which often also serve to position women as victims without agency).

Across different timescales and settings, John Barker, Laura Zimmer-Tamakoshi, Dan Jorgenson, Nicholas Bainton and Michael Main each centre, "MacIntyre's radical proposal...that the invention of tradition is not a feature of modernity, but rather a fundamental component of tradition itself" (Main, p. 338).

Barker, Zimmer-Tamakoshi and Jorgensen write from their extensive relational and research histories in PNG with Maisin and Gende people and in Telefomin respectively to discuss key points of rupture and economic and social change. In examining the impacts on the lives and relationships of people in those places, each chapter demonstrates how the present contexts of inequality are informed by cumulative history but catalysed by current industrial

developments and rationalised in new ways by contemporary actors. These processes are ongoing and the consequences unfixed, leading Jorgensen to advocate for a ‘processual anthropology,’ that accommodates uncertainty and temporality.

Bainton draws out the ways that incommensurate views on the meanings of fair access to land held by landowners and mining companies in Lihir are revealed through the carrying out of symbolic protests, the placing of ginger root or *gorgor* at the mine site to stop work. While the mining company has come to accept the political potency of *gorgor* and negotiate around particular protests, it is unlikely that satisfactory resolution will be achieved. Few informed consent processes around mining agreements factor in the affective results of dispossession and change and it is these consequences, experienced as ‘unfair’ by landowners, that are centred in the protests.

Chapters by Deborah Gewertz and Fred Errington and John Cox show the ways that experiences of deprivation or power disrupt simple ideas of rural-urban binaries in narratives of poverty and capability. Gewertz and Errington write about the experience of Chambri people living in precarious conditions in the urban settlement of Sisiak near Madang, PNG. Cash poor and in a ‘moral economy of ‘stingy’ – if not downright mean – egalitarianism, one in which success was downplayed and appreciation, withheld,’ few if any Chambri had the skills or desire to return to rural life, despite there being some appeal to moving away from town. Conversely, Cox provides an analysis of the classist power dynamics at play in urban, middle class Papua New Guineans’ patronising attitudes towards their rural relatives so-called ‘handout’ or ‘cargo cult’ mentality. Read together, these chapters demonstrate how success and failure are reframed across moral economies that shift in focus across local, national and international scaling.

There are several compelling chapters that sit in the discomfort of what it means to be a scholar or visitor from a settler-colonial state (as many contributors to this volume are) and to be writing about inequality in the postcolonial settings of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. In a chapter by Paige West and John Aini, the authors describe the labour, and material and relational costs faced by community organisations hosting international visitors. Despite the unrecognised or even ignored burden that these visits placed on staff, communities and families, many visitors justified their presence in New Ireland as being in the service of social justice in a general sense, as the outputs from their visit would ‘raise awareness’ of different issues. Following MacIntyre’s own statement that she is, ‘deeply suspicious of people who see themselves as ‘anthropological heroes’ for ‘their people’’ (p. 491), West and Aini highlight how these claims to altruism serve to obfuscate the damage caused and the inequality of effort, cost and advantage outlaid by staff and community members. Moreover, that this is done in the service of a visitor’s career, pleasure or curiosity.

Melissa Demian writes into another aspect of this balancing, considering what it means to navigate different positions in the context of research. Demian draws on Macintyre’s legacy of negotiating across identities and relationships to examine how they are rewritten across and through local, national and international frameworks. In doing so, she demonstrates that how the anthropologist is placed, through their relationships, histories and behaviours configures and reconfigures how people understand what they need to know.

This is played out in the tensions described by Colin Filer in his chapter presenting findings from a World Bank commissioned survey considering whether mining jobs were ‘good for development.’ Filer describes the different zones of entitlement that exist in relation to mine sites and the ways that gender, class and ethnicity can facilitate or prohibit mobility across those zones. These raise fascinating questions, however particularly in terms of

understanding women's experiences working in the sector, the parameters of the study set by the funding agency limits the depth of information requested or offered by survey participants.

Simon Foale considers a different dimension again, looking at how anthropology itself is valued as a way of understanding the world against the fetishization of so-called hard sciences and quantifiable data that are more readily decontextualised and simplified away from the refracting influence of location, relationships and intersecting sources of inequality. These chapters each centre the example of Macintyre's pragmatic integrity as a means of thinking through challenging considerations about how to comport and understand oneself as a researcher, and how we might collectively assert the merit and potential of anthropology as a discipline.

In one of the tributes that makes up the final section of the book, Dora Kuir-Ayius describes her friend Martha as a '*bilum* [string bag] full of things (including knowledge) that needed another *bilum* to unpack some stuff into, to share the load' (p. 542). As a collection, *Unequal Lives* serves as one such vessel, weaving together provocations, contradictions, hope and hardship in an ongoing, collective project towards understanding and redress.

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