



ECONOMIC DIVERSITY IN



CONTEMPORARY TIMOR-LESTE

EDITED BY KELLY SILVA | LISA PALMER | TERESA CUNHA



LEIDEN
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Economic Diversity in Contemporary Timor-Leste

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IN CONTEMPORARY
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Edited by

Kelly Silva, Lisa Palmer and Teresa Cunha

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To the memory of James Scambary and Lucas da Costa

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Introduction

Kelly Silva, Lisa Palmer and Teresa Cunha

Abstract

The introduction to this volume challenges hegemonic, market-driven analyses which characterise Timor-Leste's economy as weak, homogeneous and disformed and elucidates the agentic cultural institutions, logics and practices which underpin and mobilise diverse Timorese economic ecologies. It begins from the assumption that capitalism and its market economy is only one regime, among others, of production, exchange, distribution and consumption that people rely on to make their living. Developing the idea of the interdependencies of economic diversity, it outlines the processes through which an assemblage of institutions and their localised and historical relationships are mobilised for reproducing collective life. It introduces the ways in which subsequent chapters analyse this economic diversity and presents an overview of the ways in which they pattern out across diverse spatio-temporal contexts.

Keywords: Diverse economies; economic interdependencies; Timor-Leste; history; culture

I follow Hirokazu Miyazaki (2013) and others in suggesting that to take the economy seriously in part means to take seriously people's fantasies about it.

—Appel 2017, 312

For some time, narratives and projects aimed at improving and diversifying economic activities in Timor-Leste have been the leitmotifs of a number of development programs. Framing such endeavours are several assumptions about Timor-Leste's economy, namely, that it is unproductive, weak and unfair; that most of it is made up of subsistence agriculture benefitting male interests (Brogan and TOMAK 2016); and that it is excessively dependent on oil and state spending (World Bank Group 2018; Scheiner 2015). To overcome this state of affairs, endless diagnoses and prognoses are undertaken by national and international experts, simultaneously building the received truth that the local economy is underdeveloped and blaming it as a purveyor of poverty and for the country's low position in the Human Rights Development Index. Out of these narratives, a picture of Timor-Leste's economy as one in need of private/public investment and regulatory control emerges—processes, it is argued, that would make it more productive and diverse.

Various phenomena have been mobilised to make sense of this picture and to legitimise this constructed truth. On the one hand, a lack of proper physical, legal, financial and other institutional infrastructure is pointed out. On the other, the supposedly negative effects of local practices and values are cited as explanations for many of the constraints on economic growth in the country: Timor-Leste's people expend too much time on ritual practices (Alonso-Población et al. 2015; Silva 2017); the fertility rate is too high (Burke 2020); 'primitive' agriculture techniques prevail, perpetuating a lack of skills. Low productivity rates and idleness are also often cited (DFAT 2014, 4, 32; Akta 2012). To counter this, economic pedagogies of multiple origins are promulgated by governance institutions with the aim of turning Timor-Leste's citizens into active economic agents (Silva 2017) in neoliberal terms.¹

As elsewhere in the world, measurement of the strength, weakness, growth or stagnation of Timor-Leste's economy is made possible by the crafting and management of indexes, numbers and percentages that supposedly record all activities of production, service and consumption (World Bank Group 2018). GDP (gross domestic product), GNI (gross national income), the poverty rate, and life expectancy at birth are exemplary of the serial global forms by which national economies are measured and crafted (Appel 2017; World Bank Group 2020, 34).

The *Timor-Leste Economic Report 2020* reveals some of the variables taken into consideration in depicting the current state of Timor-Leste's economy. These include 1) public expenditure, 2) private sector activity, 3) consumption related taxes, 4) fiscal sector activities, 5) commercial credit, and 6) domestic (national) revenue (World Bank Group 2020, 1-10). Importantly, households are represented as acting exclusively as units of consumption or recipients of state transfers. No productive activities are endowed to them (World Bank Group 2020, 20) despite the fact that households—and, within them, women carrying out all sorts of work and care—produce the most important economic asset in the world: persons.

In making the above observation, we do not only refer to the reproductive potential of women's bodies. As Federici (2019) and Cunha and Valle (2021) argue, the unpaid care provided mostly by women in the domestic realm is the very bedrock, the very infrastructure, of capitalism and the market society.² Yet, it continues to be silenced and made invisible by the hegemony of economics. A 2020 Oxfam report (one among many such reports) presents an important counterpoint to this hegemony: "The monetary value of women's unpaid care work globally for women aged 15 and over is at least \$10.8 trillion annually—three times the size of the world's tech industry" (Oxfam International 2020, 8).

At development sector or academic events in Dili—such as the Timor-Leste Studies Association Conference—questions are sometimes asked about how local economic activities have been internalised, measured or even considered in indexes such as those aforementioned, but such questions cannot be answered. Some

interlocutors recognise that the various phenomena that comprise local economies in rural areas cannot be measured because state-centred or market-driven institutions lack the tools to consider them (Guteriano Neves, pers. comm.). Activities such as growing food for self-consumption, exchanges performed in ritual contexts, barter among households or families, work exchanges, and women's domestic and communitarian work for productive and reproductive ends are not considered or measured by default. Such phenomena teach us a very important lesson: what has been glossed as the Timor-Leste economy does not correspond to the real economy in Timor-Leste at all.

This volume provides data, narratives and analyses that allow us to understand that the idea of a single economy in Timor-Leste is inaccurate. In other words, the economic relations within the country cannot be reduced to what has been depicted as Timor-Leste's economy in official narratives. We argue that it is critical to dissociate the idea of economy in Timor-Leste from its national inscription into a Timor-Leste market-based national economy, because the latter is unable to take account of economic facts that are outside and beyond the market-driven frame.

By doing so, we aim to complicate current imaginaries about the relevant economic dynamics in the country and bring to the fore fragments of the following occurrences: 1) local, community-based economic values and arrangements; 2) community-based entanglements with the market-driven economy;³ 3) the colonial and postcolonial governance praxis by which a market-driven economy has been promoted in the country; and 4) the dramatic and creative ways by which local people have responded to transformations in the economic dynamics to which they are exposed. Hence, this collection contributes to replacing hegemonic, market-driven images of Timor-Leste's economy as pale, disformed and homogenised with a demonstration of the myriad ways in which economic relations in Timor-Leste are diverse, complex and socially embedded.

Our analysis is framed by a specific way of conceiving 'economy'. Economy is understood as a set of production, exchange, distribution and consumption procedures by which populations and institutions (including nation-states but not limited to them) guarantee their reproduction by replenishing people and things (Polanyi [1944] 2000). Such replacements are the product of articulations between diverse regimes and relations of production, exchange, distribution and consumption (Gibson and Graham 1996) among which the market regime is only one. These articulations create contextual equilibriums in order to respond to the aspirations and needs of the social whole. Therefore, on the basis of such a paradigm, we argue that economic relations in Timor-Leste are made up of particular interdependencies or, as we term them, economic ecologies.

This way of conceiving economy entails a critical widening of the phenomena we conceive as comprising an economy. Domestic work like cooking is an economic

occurrence; care in the sphere of the family or of the community, producing the conditions of life, is also an economic reality; so too are barter experiences, *tara bandu* (ritual resource regulation) and other socio-ecological services carried out by ritual mediations, marriage exchanges (be they glossed as *barlake* or not), growing food for self-consumption, interpersonal relations of clientelism and dependency, and individual and collective ways of organising and deploying labour. For example, any time a funeral occurs in rural Timor-Leste, the event mobilises a whole neighbourhood and the households connected to it through labour and exchange obligations concerned with raising funds, killing animals and offering ritual services. This is an economic event (see Chapter 5, this volume). None of these phenomena are considered in any productive way when state-centred institutions discuss Timor-Leste's economy.

The recovery of the etymological origins of the word economy—the governance of home—is apposite here. While reminding us that economic experiences in the world far exceed the singularly capitalist one (Cunha 2015), it also highlights that what is presumed to be at stake in many governance strategies about the economy in Timor-Leste (and beyond) is merely building and maintaining a capitalist market society. Yet, at a grassroots or local economy level, capitalism might be much less decisive than what dominant and orthodox economic science makes us believe.⁴

Importantly, our proposed analytical frame does not deny that most of the East Timorese population face deprivation and poverty, even though the very idea of poverty might be questioned because it is measured, partially, on the basis of people's engagement with Western-origin systems and institutions (see, e.g., Lundahl and Sjöholm 2019, 1-33). While recognising that the material reproduction of Timorese life is very difficult for much of the population, we argue that it could be still worse if community-based economic institutions did not exist. Despite all the political and ecological catastrophes to which Timor-Leste's peoples have been subjected over time, their existence, resistance and resilience has been ensured, by and large, by relying on these local institutions (see Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8).

Data provided in Part 3 of this collection, and in many political debates in Timor-Leste, show us that most people in the country aspire to engage in the market economy through wage labour and/or finding a way out of subsistence agriculture. These aspirations align with the notion of an agrarian transition (Bernstein 2010)—a model of social change that predicted that societal transformation and technological innovations would involve the exit of the masses from rural areas and agricultural activities towards urban settlements and waged work. Challenging this notion, we assume that a society of fully paid employment will not succeed in Timor-Leste, as it does not exist anymore anywhere in the world (Li 2014; Ferguson 2015; Ferguson and Li 2018). Not by chance, the question presented by Appel (2017, 309) is fundamental: "On what fictions and forgetting does the making of a thing called a national economy depend?"

Of course, the typical phenomenon of a capitalist market-driven economy are everywhere in Timor-Leste. We do not intend to deny or underestimate these. Even in the most remote villages, people take part in local and foreign produce markets, sell and purchase commodities by the mediation of money, take out microcredit loans and look for wage labour. But none of these facts are spontaneous developments derived from a supposed natural evolution of social dynamics—which as Polanyi ([1944] 2000) argued is based on the fallacious idea that the capitalist market is the natural and inevitable evolution of the economic life all around the world. On the contrary, they are products of multiple governance practices and interventions carried out since colonial times that entangle in both positive and negative ways Timor-Leste's resources and people in global economic markets and make them dependent on the latter. It is by these governance practices—the colonial and postcolonial—that state-building has occurred.

The analytical framework proposed here takes a critical stance in relation to both local, community-based economic forms, and global, capitalist market-driven ones. We distance ourselves from any romanticism towards these economic institutions, recognising that they are both structured by power relations which generate and reproduce hierarchies, inequalities and exclusions, even if in different intensities and ways (Meillassoux 1981). For instance, criticism of the exploitation of the domestic work of dependents in Timorese households, on one hand, and land expropriation resulting from capitalist mega-projects, on the other hand, are both carefully discussed in the book (see Chapters 4 and 9, this volume).

State-building, techno-science and national economies

The reduction of economic dynamics in Timor-Leste to a national representation of it has to do with elective affinities existing between modern state-building and the development of the global market capitalism elsewhere in the world. Broadly speaking, the global expansion of market exchanges and commercial linkages demand the pacification of various political conflicts and a certain monopoly and centralisation of power and global finances that is now performed by state and transnational actors (Elias 1993; Polanyi [1944] 2000).

Over time, the monopolisation of power by nation-states came to be nourished by political anxieties about the rationalisation of power. To manage these anxieties, a complex apparatus for producing knowledge for the betterment of governance practices came into existence. This included the emergence of statistics (the etymology of that word is revealing: *stat-istic*) and the systematic development of territorial and population maps (Mitchell 2002). In response to this epistemic anxiety, and in parallel with the very development of the modern nation-state,

proposals for the development of a science aimed at measuring the production, exchange and consumption of wealth emerged. It was called economics and it was immersed in liberal and market fantasies of the ideal society:

The national economy is, therefore, in the first instance an epistemological project of the state, born in a geopolitical moment in which Western powers were looking for tools to manage the Great Depression, pay for war, and respond to imperial decline. It was at this moment that states increasingly took explicit responsibility for economic activities nominally within their borders and sought statistical tools like per capita income, national income accounting, and GDP through which to know and manage their new charge (Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi 2010; Vanoli 2005). As Chris Hann and Keith Hart (2011, 34) put it, 'states claimed the right to manage money, markets, and accumulation in the national interest; and this is why today 'the economy' primarily refers to the country we live in'. (Appel 2017, 297-298)

These umbilical relations between modern state-building and economics have conditioned the very idea of the economy. This reminds us, too, that economics respond to political anxieties related to the legitimation of state power. Consequently, we need to reflect on the emergence of national economies from the outside in; that is, we need to discuss certain extra-economic facts (called externalities in contemporary dominant economic thought) that were imposed in shaping state economic constitutions. In this perspective, laws, property rights, international conventions, and measurement tools such as the census and statistics all perform important roles in the making of national economies.

Importantly, we need to consider the performative role of the epistemic products that economics bring into existence. In Austin's (1999) terms, these have perlocutionary effects so as to build the reality that they, supposedly, only represent. So, when World Bank or International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports affirm the feeble character of Timor-Leste's economy, they are actually building that national economy and predicating it as poor, fragile and weak. This is possible because of fetishisation—the assignment of superhuman qualities to certain facts—which marks people's attitudes towards economics. Nourishing these attitudes are the claims of exclusive technical expertise by those called economists and also the faith placed in technical science on the part of the general population.

If the idea of economy in Timor-Leste cannot be reduced to the 'official' national economy, what phenomena constitute the former? In the following section we bring to the fore facts of a community-based economy that demand greater attention if we are interested in widening our perspectives about social reproduction at the grassroots or local economy level. All of these phenomena and associated institutions are, in varied ways, present in the chapters comprising this collection.

After presenting a range of institutions and phenomena that characterise a community-based economy, we briefly outline the ways in which East Timorese people have become enmeshed with capitalist processes and its market society over time. We then examine the ways in which these multiple local and global institutions and phenomena are now the bedrock of economic ecologies in Timor-Leste. We conclude by outlining the structure of the collection and the chapters comprising it.

Unmasking community-based economies

A number of scholars of Timor-Leste have directly or indirectly argued for the need to make visible the community-based economies that contribute to, and underpin, heterogenous community life across the country (Traube 2007; McWilliam 2011, 2020; Palmer 2010, 2015; Silva 2016, 2017; Carroll-Bell 2015; Fidalgo-Castro 2015; Batterbury et al. 2015; Barnes 2017; Trindade and Barnes 2018; Gibson et al. 2018). Drawing on the work of economic anthropologists, sociologists and geographers (such as Appadurai 1986; Gudeman 2001, 2008, 2016; Gregory 1982; Sousa Santos 2014; Cunha 2014; Gibson-Graham 2005, 2006), they have highlighted the diverse ways in which community-based economies have been, and continue to be, central to Timor's livelihood practices. They also show how these dynamic and always socially and historically contingent economies are masked or even denigrated by those who characterise them as ancillary or as a burden to society. Through long-term ethnographic work, these scholars discern diverse and often highly localised economic logics that allow life to function and pattern out across, between, and within Timor's diverse rural and urban contexts.

One area of concern has been the interrelationships between the logic of the gift (or customary exchange) and the logic of commodities (or market-based approaches). McWilliam (2011, 2020, this volume), drawing on Gudeman (2001, 2008, 2016), has argued that Fataluku communities in the far east of Timor-Leste, including their international diaspora, have chosen in the post-independence era to support their community economic relations for their own sake. These 'high relationship economies' (Gudeman 2016) are distinguished by their attention to mutuality and exchange rather than market-based self-interest. McWilliam's work is informed as well by Gregory (1982) who argues that careful ethnographic attention is needed to unpack the usually stark contrasts between logics of commodity and gift exchange. Reworking Mauss's ([1923] 1990) theory on the classic gift or debt economy as an exchange of inalienable things between persons who are in a state of reciprocal dependence, Gregory (1982) focuses on the importance of discerning the distances between relationships that are created through transactions. He argues that, by paying attention to these dynamic kin and non-kin relationships, distinctions between

'gift' and 'commodity' exchange emerge as extreme points on a continuum rather than binary opposites. A single object of exchange may be considered a gift within one setting, but a commodity within another, as Appadurai (1986) also highlighted.

Other scholars have drawn on Gibson-Graham (2005, 2006) to ask why we do not pay as much attention to examining already existing alternative forms of socio-economic organisation. Gibson-Graham's work encourages us to pay close attention to "non-capitalist economic spaces" and to ask what can be learnt from what is already there (Gibson-Graham 2006, x). Palmer (2010, 2015), for example, has argued that Timor-Leste's independence-era resurgence of customary exchange relations and *lulik* (Tetum: sacred, forbidden, taboo) comprises a re-normalisation of long suppressed potencies and practices across diverse community economies. At the same time, these powerful and dynamic (never quite settled) customary processes (McWilliam, Palmer, and Shepherd 2014) are being given new form by the uncertainties, opportunities and contingencies of the country's post-independence political and economic transition to a largely neoliberal economy and governance regime. Such customary assemblages continually rub up against, and produce interpretations and variations of, the market-based economy and attendant institutions across the country (Palmer 2015; Palmer and McWilliam 2019).

In order to explore in regionally specific ways the "persistent practices of interdependence built on a diversity of social, cultural, economic and ecological relations", Gibson et al. (2018, 4) elucidate a range of geographically located "keywords" or indigenous economic concepts. Using this keywords approach to reveal "economic practices animated by place-based ethics of care-full exchange, reciprocity and redistribution" (Gibson et al. 2018, 4), they draw on Sousa Santos (2014, 184) to argue that reproducing such normally absent keyword/conceptual categories to understand "an economy" is "a necessary prelude to generating a 'sociology of emergence'". The aim of this endeavour is to enlarge the formal idea of economy "by adding to the existing reality the realistic possibilities and future expectations it contains" (Sousa Santos 2014, 184).

Drawing from conceptual categories and keywords in the Timor region, Kehi and Palmer contribute to this task by evoking the concept of *hamutu moris hamutu mate* (together in life, together in death), a concept that they argue underpins customary social and economic relations in this setting:

Life cycle events and commemorations are part of a vibrant complex of practices glossed in the Timorese language of Tetum Terik as the interplay between *hamutu moris hamutu mate* (together in life, together in death). In the process, people across East Timor (also West Timor) generate densely woven inter-relationships of spiritual ecology with ancestors, living relatives, their local environments and the Most Sacred One (*Nai Luli Waik*). Social and spiritual life and livelihoods are enacted and reproduced through careful attention to

these relations for the sake of “intergenerational well-being”, or a pervasive concern for sustaining and nourishing social and spiritual relations that stretch across the past, present and future. Families of particular lineages are organised around origin groups linked to particular ancestral houses and local spirit ecologies which embed these families in intimate, intergenerational social, spiritual, political and economic relationships with their extended kin from other ancestral houses. The alliances formed includes the obligation of members of each ‘house’ to perform particular ritual duties at each other’s life and death based ceremonies and assist with house-based associated rituals and agricultural practices which are inseparable from spiritual life. (Gibson et al. 2018, 7)

Among other things, the institution *hamutu moris hamutu mate* presents us with new arrangements of categories for conceiving economic relations. First, it allows for a positive outlook on debts (notwithstanding the often onerous and frequently inter-generational burden these debts create (cf. Silva and Simião 2017)). Only those who are in a position to become a creditor of a debt participate in the *hamutuk*. In other words, it is a cooperative work that indicates that the people involved are mutually committed to recognising the debt that represents their interdependence. It is not a matter of symmetrical reciprocity in work, but, rather, the certitude that, when you are accepted into the group to work together, your place in the community and in the world is being recognised. In this sense, the worst that can happen to a person is not being accepted into the *hamutuk* because it means that she/he/they is not qualified with sufficient respect and dignity to make other people in debt of her/his/their work. Being excluded from a sense of *hamutuk* is, therefore, the social and symbolic confirmation that her/his/their collective personhood is hurt or obliterated.

Second, the *hamutuk* can only be understood if we consider another concept of time and economy. The *hamutuk* work (i.e., those human activities that are carried out together [human and non-human] on/with the land/water) cannot be bought or sold because it involves a relationship with the sacred character of the land/water.⁵ This goes against the grain of the so-called modern and so-called Western anthropocentrism in which nature, especially land, is property (Polanyi [1944] 2000) prone to endless alienation and exploitation (Cunha and Bessa, this volume; Valle 2019).

Economic versions of this arguably pan-Timorese concept of *hamutuk* are explored by Fidalgo-Castro and Alonso-Población, Silva and Cunha and Bessa in this volume. In these chapters, diverse economic household relations are shown to form a fundamental institution among people whose social reproduction is not capitalist and where the family is the main unit of production, consumption and, to a large extent, distribution. Yet, the further a capitalist economy intrudes, the more families lose the role of being a production unit (Crespi, this volume) and the institution of the family loses part of its essential social function. Nonetheless, some of this change might be welcomed in some contexts. For example, Barnes (this volume) explores

how historical ties of dependency, related to the potentially exploitative household category of servants or slaves (*atan*), also underpin the customary economy.

While these economic ecologies are often excluded from mainstream economic discourse in Timor-Leste, the autonomy and strength of community-based systems is, as many of the authors cited above argue, also an outcome of broader, more-than-human economies in which customary systems are embedded (Palmer and McWilliam 2019). In Timor-Leste (as in many other places), ancestral spirits and other more-than-human agents are taken into consideration in economic life. These economies can be understood as comprising more-than-human communities, with a diversity of beings and potencies deeply embedded in understandings of more-than-human mutuality and social relations. Understanding 'nature' as a part of these inclusive more-than-human social arrangements requires that people be constantly attuned to obligations and reciprocity across human and non-human realms. It requires careful attention to a more-than-human and relational ethics of care and responsibility (Jackson and Palmer 2015; Palmer and Jackson, this volume).

The relational ethics of *hamutu moris hamutu mate* infuse diverse understandings of labour and property that guide the more-than-human practices through which both materials and relations are continually transacted and exchanged. Yet, in their encounters with newer or more dominant economic arrangements (Gibson et al. 2018), a distinct dynamism continually shapes these diverse economic ecologies. As Gibson et al. (2018, 11) write:

What collectively situates them together on a plane of potentiality is, among other things, their inherent sociality and flexibility, their commitment to more than human wellbeing and their unique temporalities. The enduring value of these various practices, relations and knowledges is reinforced by their persistence, creative adaptability and resistance to appropriation. These relations, practices and associated knowledges and cosmovisions are by no means isolated, traditional or static, although their historical roots run deep. Rather, these relations and practices reveal the creative negotiation communities in this interconnected part of the world have long pursued in response to external forces and agents of change (cf. Langton et al. 2006).

Inspired by the keywords approach of Gibson et al. (2018), we distil a non-exhaustive set of core economic institutions and phenomena that pervade customary life in Timor-Leste but which are not considered in neoclassical economic accounts of the country. The following economic institutions orient our approach to this collection and pervade many of its chapters:

- *Marriage-based exchange*: Timor-Leste is a house-based society and relationships between fertility-giving and fertility-taking houses underpin the Timorese customary economy. These more-than-human economies are embedded in a

meshwork of multi-generational configurations in which the sum of the parts is always greater than the two houses concerned. Debts arising from the exchange processes are negotiated between houses in front of the ancestors and are usually settled and reconciled over the long term (often inter-generationally) through a series of highly strategic negotiations and exchanges.

- *Kinship and economy*: the multi-generational relationships between fertility-takers and fertility-givers create a rich array of interdependent economic relations involving both ritual and everyday obligations and acts of patronage, production, consumption and distribution. The types of kinship relation at stake (however close or distant they may be) help to determine the ways in which people comport themselves and the manner in which obligations and debts are activated and settled. This is not necessarily a fair or equitable economy but it is one with its own economic logics.
- *Wealth in knowledge*: this concept refers to two processes. First, the idea that people, specifically customary leaders, actively build compositions of dependents endowed with specific knowledge, such as magical and healing knowledge, genealogical and ritual knowledge, geographic knowledge and labouring (Guyer and Beliga 1995, 102). Second, that people's knowledge of their local environment, social relations and histories is learned through everyday practices of being together, doing, crafting and observing. This is a tacit knowledge transferred and grown inter-generationally (Ingold 2011).
- *Co-dependency*: the knowledge referred to above is co-dependent on recognising wider sets of more-than-human social relations, some of which stretch well outside a given locality. These co-dependencies acknowledge, rather than elide, the structure and agency of the social relations that animate them.
- *More-than-human care*: this concept refers to the obligations that co-dependent relations create for economies of care and community that value reciprocity and the continual attunement to signs of non-care or displeasure, especially in relation to the ancestral realm.
- *More-than-human economy*: the co-dependent relations between certain groups of people, their ancestors and their environment hinges on the recognition of a more-than-human economy in which people are constantly indebted to, and seek the assistance of, the ancestral and nature spirit realm for the wellbeing and vitality of their families and their livelihoods (T: *matak malirin*). These debts have uneven material affects.
- *Commons*: the more-than-human sociality that underpins house-based kinship and economic connections includes the notion of a more-than-human commons as well. This commons refers to the spaces and practices through which people and other beings come together to negotiate power arrangements and people's socially and historically contingent claims to material and immaterial resources.

- *Women and social reproduction*: women's role in these community-based economies is critical to their functioning. Their function and agency is central to social reproduction and economic production, consumption and distribution at the household and community level. While they play a less public role in the ritual economy, a woman's natal house is honoured and invoked in all life-affirming and death rituals. In patrilocal systems, male ritual leaders state that it is incumbent upon them to skilfully negotiate ritual outcomes that meet the approval of the female members of their house, including their wives. Women's roles in these rapidly changing processes of social production and reproduction are increasingly the subject of cross-scalar intervention, especially concerning the power, fertility and educational aspirations of younger women and girls.
- *Wealth in people* (Kopytoff 1986): across Timor-Leste, people are preoccupied with drawing together and holding close vast networks of people. Close and distant family members and neighbouring households are frequently called on to assist with the labour and/or resources required to run large agricultural and/or ritual events or to assist with burdensome or unexpected household expenses. The more people who are associated with a network, the larger the available pool of resources and support. While, in some cases, poorer live-in 'relations' carry out the bulk of domestic duties, the expectation is that the owner of the house will also then have certain obligations to resource and/or support the family networks of that person. Changing economic circumstances challenges these practices and assumptions; however, works by Mauss ([1923] 1990), Lévi-Strauss (2003) and Godelier (1982), among others, indicate that, among many people, wealth is the product of the possibility of distributing goods and people and not simply of their accumulation (as the hegemonic ideology of the Euro-American world would lead us to believe).

To sum up, by community-based economy we mean the complex of economic relations involving production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods, services and people undertaken on the basis of kinship, neighbourhood or other community bounds for the sake of these very relations (Gudeman 2008). The material and immaterial reproduction of the community by various means and in a long-term perspective is the main source of aspiration and anxiety within this economic domain. This particular economic sphere (Bohanann 1955) is embedded in other social institutions and exists to allow them to reproduce (Polanyi [1944] 2000).

Institutions that make up community-based economy are not imagined as economic facts, necessarily. They act as *total social facts* (Mauss [1923] 1990) and often legitimise themselves in non-economic phenomena, such as kinship, religion, neighbourhood bonds, political relations and various symbolic governance systems.

For East Timorese people, at least four different institutions make up the community-based economy: the nuclear or extended-family, the household, neighbour-based groups and origin houses (*uma lisan*), the basic unit of exogamy. Transactions occurring in the community take into consideration a more-than-human economy wherein the potency of place, ancestors and other supernatural beings are considered.

Resources assessed by market operation, including money derived from wage labour and the sale of commodities, are often turned into resources to nourish the community-based economy. Importantly, in such an economic sphere, women have pivotal roles.

Capitalism and the market economy in Timor-Leste: a brief history

If it is true that the idea of economy in Timor-Leste very much exceeds what the concept of Timor-Leste's national economy suggests, it is also undeniable that there have been growing entanglements between Timorese livelihoods and the market economy during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As elsewhere in the world, it seems that colonial and postcolonial state-building in the country has much to do with the enforcement of governance policies aimed at reworking the webs of mutuality and the economic interdependencies in which people have been involved in order to make them more and more dependent on market-driven institutions (Polanyi [1944] 2000).

Among other things, policies aimed at reinforcing capitalism as a mode of production and the market as a sort of social organisation in the country have added new layers of density to the already complex set of local economic institutions and phenomena through which Timorese people make their living.

Others have comprehensively investigated the historical development of Timorese involvement in market and capitalist processes (Gunn 1999; Clarence-Smith 1992; Shepherd 2013; Figueiredo 2018; Lundahl and Sjöholm 2019) and our intention here is not to restate this in any substantive way. Rather, in our brief outline of key historical events and processes, our aim is to reframe the metanarrative through which these events and processes have often been presented. That is to say, we do not consider these events and processes to be the genitors of economy in Timor-Leste; instead, we argue that they should be understood as the means by which capitalism and the market economy—as particular modes of economic and societal organisation—have been introduced into a country already redolent in other modes of economic and societal organisation. Further, given that the geographical, ecological and political conditions of colonial and postcolonial Timor-Leste have been, and are, very diverse, we also argue that these market and

capitalist processes have not manifest themselves in any homogenous spatial or temporal way.

Through the centuries and in uneven ways across Timor-Leste, facts as diverse as Christianity, tax paying, ‘village making’ (*aldeamentos*), land grabbing, schooling, forced displacement of people, lawmaking, monetary policies, moralising narratives and statistical studies have all been conduits for the transposition and immersion of a capitalist and market ethos into the minds and bodies of Timorese people.

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, most of the Portuguese and missionary actions on the island consisted of building alliances with local elites so as to access sandalwood, then a high value commodity exchanged in the incipient global market (Thomaz 2002). The then strong dominance of Chinese merchants in the region obliged those acting in the name of Portugal to subordinate and coordinate their interests with the former.

Later on, taxes were important devices for fostering the replacement of the webs of economic interdependence through which Timorese people made their living. As elsewhere, the monetisation of taxes—enforced as of 1906 by means of *impostos de capitação* (per capita taxes)—was an important vector for people’s engagement with the market economy, forcing people to work for colonial agents in exchange for money or simply to not be arrested. The introduction of cash crops, especially coffee, and the related colonial policies to turn these into major export products, was another important contribution to capitalist expansion in the colony. Such efforts entailed the first systematic and large-scale processes of land grabbing (Shepherd and McWilliam 2013; Fitzpatrick, McWilliam, and Barnes 2012).⁶ Regimes of forced labour were also important economic events in the history of colonial Timor and were strictly connected with the regimes of citizenship then existing. The 1899 Indigenous Labor Regulations (*Regulamento do Trabalho dos Indígenas*) and the 1936 *Rules for Indigenous Work in Timor* (*Regulamento do Trabalho Indígena na Colônia de Timor*) along with similar legislation functioned as technologies of resource management—in this case, of people—with economic impacts.⁷

This intertwined character of state-building and market making is made clear in Sousa’s chapter in this collection. Sousa demonstrates the instrumental role assigned to local bazaars by colonial authorities in Portuguese Timor as devices for imposing a colonial order, and the market as the regime of exchange associated with it. Markets, as time-space of commodified trade, did not emerge spontaneously across the territory; such a phenomenon was enforced by colonial administration as a governance strategy that facilitated control over indigenous power structures to standardise people’s mobility and set the use of space and time in an orderly administrative fashion. It also fostered new habits of dealing with resources and established certain expected economic behaviour for local people.

During World War II (WWII), much of the scant modern infrastructure in the territory was destroyed by the invasion of Timor by Australian and Japanese troops. After WWII, attempts to develop a colonial capitalism in Portuguese Timor were undertaken by means of various government practices. Pluriannual development plans were elaborated and carried out so as to foster the emergence of a local elite entrepreneurial class. Between the end of WWII and the civil war in 1975, a Chinese trader middle class also established itself in the country, as did numerous small-scale industries. Activities then undertaken by the state included the promotion of credit policies; the expansion of agriculture, veterinary assistance and schooling; housing policies; urban planning; price and inflation control; statistical registers; and attempts at mineral prospecting and exploration. Grainger's chapter in this collection investigates instances of colonial housing policy development after WWII, examining how these policies intersected with other economic, social and moral anxieties at the time. Grainger argues that competing colonial ideologies like racism and lusotropicalism as well as Fordism (a technique for organising large-scale production) all played a role in the development of plans for Timorese housing.

In the years after the Indonesian invasion in 1974, an increase in public spending and investment in infrastructure such as roads and schools became the hallmark of Indonesian governance of the territory. Beyond state propaganda and control, the aim was to increase Timorese people's involvement in the Indonesian economy and market society. Across the country, the number of schools, local health clinics and other state apparatuses increased greatly between 1975 and 1999, and the number of civil servants also grew exponentially. Meanwhile, the Indonesian army and police, as the state institutions with the strongest presence in Timor Timur, conditioned all governance practices carried out in the territory.

Transmigration policies and the appropriation of state apparatuses by people from other Indonesian provinces meant that the development policies undertaken during the occupation were redirected away from benefitting East Timorese people. These processes further exposed the reality that the enlargement of state and public policies was primarily undertaken in the interests of Indonesian and non-East Timorese people. Meanwhile, the ongoing violence of the military occupation seriously damaged state policies aimed at enlarging market institutions in the country. The continuous suspicion of the East Timorese towards all public policies, programs and institutions led by the Indonesian state—and the fact that these were marked by corruption and collusion—saw little engagement between these initiatives and the East Timorese people (Mubyarto et al. 1991, 50). In this period, the Chinese trader middle class and the small-scale industry existing during the Portuguese administration were destroyed in the first years of the occupation (Mubyarto et al. 1991, 50).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Timor-Leste as an independent country came to life in a state of outstanding precariousness and vulnerability. Militia attacks in the aftermath of the 1999 popular referendum caused the destruction of most of the infrastructure developed by the Indonesian state. Between 1999 and 2006, humanitarian and development aid institutions played pivotal roles in the reconstruction of the country and in the development of new state-building processes (Silva 2012), supporting endless studies and proposals to forge the legal apparatuses to allow a market society to be transposed to the new country.

In 2007, the new country gained financial sovereignty through the royalties flowing from its vast offshore oil and gas revenues. Since then, the Timor-Leste state has made enormous investments in developing large-scale infrastructure like the South Coast Industrial Corridor and Complex and the Special Administrative Region of Oecussi (RAEOA)/Special Zone of Social Market Economy of Timor-Leste (ZEESM-TL). It is hoped that such mega-projects will trigger economic growth in the near future by providing wage labour to the enormous mass of supposedly unemployed East Timorese citizens (Bovensiepen 2018). Pension payments and direct cash transfers by means of government welfare programs, as well as microcredit initiatives, are increasingly providing post-conflict dividends to the poorer section of Timorese society. At the same time, they are also rapidly entangling people in further countrywide market production and consumption practices. Microcredit institutions have influenced the expansion of a monetised economy in the country and have also contributed to the replacement of webs of mutuality and the economic independencies in which people and their house societies participate. Not by chance, while legitimating their activities as ways to release Timorese women from kinship dependence, these very policies risk making them dependent on higher level financial institutions (Silva and Simião 2017).

The authoritative role that institutions like the IMF and World Bank perform in the arena of international development assistance in Timor-Leste has conditioned public policies and imposed models of neoliberal social organisation in the country. These models give heightened space and importance to the development of the private sector as well as to opening the economy to national and transnational capital in strategic areas like education, health, manufacturing, agricultural production, infrastructure and social security. Such institutional frames ensure that the country becomes further entangled in webs and vacillations of global capital.

Examining Timor-Leste's state budget/expenditure over a period of a decade and a half allows us to see how this global political economy has translated into domestic reality. Table 0.1 contains data documenting 2004/2005 and 2019 state spending in the selected areas of public social policies, defence and police forces, infrastructure and extractive activities.

Table o.1. Timor-Leste state budget/expenditure

2004/2005 total spending: \$65,471,167.05			2019 total spending: \$1,233,357,598.67		
Ministries	Subtotal	%	Ministries	Subtotal	%
Agriculture, Forest Fisheries	\$1,342,837.08	2.05	Agriculture and Fisheries	\$12,635,239.23	1.02
Education, Culture Youth and Sports	\$13,396,503.10	20.46	Education, Youth and Sports	\$78,911,871.77	6.40
Health	\$7,769,571.77	11.87	Health	\$42,223,415.42	3.42
Sect. Labour Solidarity	\$455,207.80	0.70	Social Solidarity and Inclusion	\$54,792,385.36	4.44
Sect. of State Commerce Industries	\$152,521.29	0.23	Tourism, Commerce and Industries	\$5,314,584.17	0.43
Planning Finance	\$4,346,768.96	6.64	Planning and strategic investment	\$12,311,641.13	1.00
			Veterans	\$96,999,167.34	7.86
Sect. of State for Defence	\$4,494,273.43	6.86	Defence	\$30,528,750.25	2.48
Interior	\$7,777,688.24	11.88	Interior	\$47,974,610.98	3.89
			Oil and natural resources	\$24,894,571.36	2.02
			Commission for the Administration of the Infrastructure Fund	\$276,902,289.79	22.45

Source: Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance. 'Budget Transparency Portal'. Accessed 5 January 2020. www.mof.gov.tl/budget-spending/budget-transparency-portal/?lang=en. Figures originally drawn from www.budgettransparency.gov.tl/publicTransparency (site discontinued).

Alarming for a highly ruralised post-conflict country, the percentage of the budget allocated to health, education and agriculture has significantly decreased over this period. The Interior and Defence ministries also had a remarkable reduction in their budget, but a new ministry in the area of post-conflict societal management and control (Roll 2018), the Ministry of Veterans, was created with an important share of the total budget.

The largest share of this budget in 2019 was allocated to infrastructure and mega-project spending. Given the difficulties of attracting international investment, most of Timor-Leste's economy (as a market economy) has been derived from, and depends on, state spending. Hence, during the last 20 years, Timor-Leste's economic policies have been based on the promise of prosperity through extractive activities and associated infrastructure (Bovensiepen 2018). Few investments have been made in smaller-scale productive activities such as small business and agriculture development (Scheiner 2015). Meanwhile, Timorese migrant and seasonal labour has burgeoned in overseas markets, becoming the second most important source of income in the country's market economy (McWilliam 2020; Wigglesworth and Santos, this volume). In other words, the overseas migrant and seasonal labourer experience seems to have become a pivotal part of the East Timorese involvement with the market society.

Not by chance, the final three chapters in this book deal with particular dimensions of the East Timorese overseas and seasonal labourer experience in Australia, the United Kingdom and Korea. By means of a comprehensive analysis, in different ways, these three chapters allow us to see how these phenomena are a means to promote the values and skills characteristic of a market society. Such experiences also reinforce urbanisation—most of the returnees stay in Dili because that is where market opportunities are concentrated—increasing people's dependency on money and wage labour and, ironically, given the nature of the seasonal agricultural labour overseas, contributing to the ongoing devaluing of livelihood activities such as agriculture in Timor-Leste.

Nonetheless, Timorese people have demonstrated a great willingness to embrace their growing enmeshment with the market economy. For example, Wigglesworth and Santos (this volume) show how young Timorese returnees engaging in market opportunities can contribute to extending the rural economy beyond subsistence agriculture. Meanwhile, McWilliam's chapter in this collection provides an important counterpoint by demonstrating that resources gained in migrant work carried out by Fataluku people in the UK have also been invested in the reproduction of mutual obligations among kin groups regarding life cycle rituals and the delayed revival of ceremonial origin houses.⁸ McWilliam attributes this to a Fataluku cultural pragmatism (among other variables) and the successful accommodation between mutuality and market that characterises their contemporary economic dynamic. Michael Rose's chapter, in turn, points to the fact that some Timorese people make sense of their seasonal migrant worker experience by inscribing themselves in a narrative of national struggle for independence: they see their labour journey overseas as shaping an economic front (*frente ekonomika*) of resistance and resilience in the ongoing collective process of nation building.

Towards economic ecologies in Timor-Leste

Contemporary accounts of Timor-Leste's market economy are unanimous in pointing out its fragility and its excessive dependency on oil and gas revenues (La'o Hamutuk 2020). The unemployment index continues to be mobilised to prove the deficient character of the national economy and to legitimise multiple efforts to improve so-called productive activities and foster an entrepreneurial ethos among the population (Silva 2017).

Discussing the state of Timor-Leste's economy, Lundahl and Sjöholm (2019) argue that accounting for these variable unemployment/employment figures depends on whether or not analysts fully consider the labour force involved in agriculture and works carried out in the domestic sphere. If we consider unemployment only on the basis of those who are jobseekers, the statistical figures for unemployment are much lower than the figures arising when we take into consideration those who are not seeking jobs, but still are in vulnerable livelihood conditions. Agricultural activity involves between 63 and 68 per cent of all labour in the country depending on the data source considered (Lundahl and Sjöholm 2019, 146). According to the 2013 labour force survey, less than 30 per cent of job positions in the country involve paid work. As Lundahl and Sjöholm (2019, 143, 156) argue, "the unemployment concept is dubious in a country where few can afford to be formally unemployed".

While agreeing with Lundahl and Sjöholm's (2019) criticisms of the validity of these figures concerning employment/unemployment and their weaknesses in depicting the reality of economic dynamics in Timor-Leste, we also draw on their analysis to tell another story. For us, figures on employment and unemployment in Timor-Leste are poor indicators of economic dynamics because most people make their living through a much more complex array of local economic institutions than those considered in hegemonic economic analysis.

By taking into consideration the diverse institutions, phenomena and events mentioned above, we analyse economic relations in contemporary Timor-Leste by means of the concept of economic ecologies—that is, the historised, localised, heterogeneous and complex combinations of knowledge, production, distribution, exchange and consumption by which people and things are replenished and more-than-human well-being is ensured. As with Timor-Leste's diverse local complexes of governance and spiritual ecologies (Silva 2014; Palmer and McWilliam 2019), economic ecologies do not form a singular (economic) system per se: their constituent parts retain considerable autonomy and coexist in time and space, running in parallel. Following Gudeman (2008), three transaction domains constitute the economic ecologies: the community-based economic institutions, the market economy and the market finance or the trade of money⁹. So, economic dynamics

are generated by people's opportunities, choices or non-choices to engage in each of these economic domains.

Across the globe, diverse ethnographies of economies have long demonstrated that the separation between the dynamics of production, exchange, distribution and consumption is not universal. For example, in many societies, domestic production is characterised by the fact that the production unit is also the consumer unit (Sahlins 1972), although this does not mean that the domestic unit is self-sufficient. The fact that households often do not produce all that is needed (in quantity and/or quality) for their whole reproduction compels them to exchange.¹⁰ Thus, certain models of reproduction, including Timor-Leste's community-based economies, purposefully show the correlations between the dynamics of production, exchange, distribution and consumption. At the same time, these systems are exploited by capitalist practices that work to make the dependency between the spheres of production, circulation and consumption invisible.¹¹

In this collection, we seek to expand upon these entanglements and bring these models into conversation. To do this we draw on the concept of *economic ecologies*—a concept that goes beyond the fact of diversity to demand careful attention to, and the elucidation of, embedded more-than-human social relations and interdependencies. We ask how these 'hidden' socio-economic and socio-ecological rationalities are already embedded with capitalist economies and how increased attention to their salience might help reshape lives and livelihoods in more sustainable and life affirming ways (cf. De Jong 2013; Tsing 2015).

Our choice for economic ecologies instead of economy aims at producing at least three main effects: 1. To mark our distance and difference from hegemonic neoclassic narratives which reduces all economic diversity to a market-driven economy glossed as economy; 2. To highlight the multiple and diverse phenomena which allow material and immaterial reproduction to occur in each particular context; and 3. To draw out the intersectionality of these economic instances that create the necessity for multiple relational layers within economic life.

We embrace this concept fully aware of the fact that many of the institutions making up local economic ecologies are a sort of living ruins (Santos 2018, 29-30)—institutions carved out in the past (be it close or distant) that capitalism has damaged but not completely destroyed or colonised. We think here of relationships of care and donation, of cooperative and mutualist practices, and even of the various systems of government-sanctioned communal use and enjoyment of the land that continue to exist across the region and the globe (Gibson et al. 2018). In Timor-Leste, this sense of mutuality and the commons is actively and explicitly informed by a more-than-human sociality, one that underpins house-based kinship assemblages and associated spiritual and economic ecologies (Palmer 2015, 2020). It is through these assemblages that people and other beings

come together to negotiate arrangements and claims to material and immaterial resources.

From this perspective, capitalism and the market economy is only one regime, among others, of production, distribution and consumption that people rely on to make their living. Capitalism coexists with other institutions, such as those discussed above: marriage exchanges, more-than-human co-dependency and wealth in people and knowledge.

Thus, we deploy the concept of economic ecologies as a tool in a wider search for epistemological justice. We argue for an acknowledgment of the rationality and intrinsic value of non-market economic praxis and the ways in which these institutions and phenomena interpret, contribute to and sometimes even solve the problems and challenges that life, in all its interdependent spheres, presents. For us, inventorying, understanding and valuing these non-market praxes in Timor-Leste is also a political act: expanding the spectrum of possible solutions to the present challenges faced by the world.

Structure and chapter outlines

This book is structured in three parts. The first, ‘Glimpses of the colonial economy’, provides insight into colonial governance attempts to transpose market economic practices into the country and unveils localised subversions of such efforts. Sousa reveals how local markets, as we know them today, are colonial inventions through which colonial authorities attempted to effect their authority and occupation over the territory. These formalised colonial bazaars were devices for taming and incorporating a reluctant Timorese population and other mavericks into a colonial order. As a political undertaking, this process was activated to influence and control indigenous power structures, standardise people’s mobility, and set the use of space and time in an orderly administrative fashion. Nevertheless, Sousa argues, the bazaars were places of dissent and resilient native practices. This is elucidated through a historical analysis of concrete bazaar dynamics, including the expectations, interactions and duplicity of Timorese and Portuguese actors.

In a similar vein, Hicks shows us a concrete experience of dissent around colonial projects of order through an analysis of the Viqueque market during the years 1966-1967. Hicks points out how the space occupied by the weekly emporium offered a forum in which ethnicity, social hierarchy, gender, cockfighting and religious affiliation played out visually, presenting a physical replication of the social distinctions that defined the contemporary character of the village and the subdistrict it served. His subsequent comparison between colonial and postcolonial market organisation in Viqueque suggests that ethnicities, gender and other social

identity markers have become much less relevant in market dynamics. Hicks argues that this is a response to nation-building anxieties.

Colonial attempts to create a socio-economic order via urban planning and housing are analysed in Grainger's chapter. His study provides an epistemological window to better understand the control of domestic spaces and indigenous labour, as well as trans-colonial cooperation after WWII. Reporting on a regional housing study tour backed by the colonial state, Grainger reveals tensions in alignment of the diverse ideologies that underpinned popular housing plans and policies in colonial Timor-Leste: Fordism, lusotropicalism, tropical architecture and racism. This amalgam of ideologies and associated constraints in their application reveals the controversies bound up in the making of a rational administration in 'Portuguese Timor'. Colonial land titling and zoning are shown to be fundamental governance devices embedded with ideas and practices of urban planning, economy and mobility.

Part 2 brings to the fore the local institutions and practices that comprise the economic ecologies existing among East Timorese people. On the basis of different case studies and theoretical approaches, a rich array of values and relationships are made explicit to challenge statist and other 'common sense' representations of local economies as weak or sub-developed. In different ways, the chapters distil and make visible particular sets of power relations, patterns of inequality and a vibrant more-than-human economy.

It is no accident that we begin such a discussion with an analysis by Barnes of the Tetum category *atan* (slave/servant). The persistence and, at the same time, the discomfort this category triggers in research dialogues about Timor-Leste signals its historical and contemporary importance. Barnes calls attention to the different meanings such a category evokes and alerts us to its specificities before Eurocentric notions of 'slave' and 'slavery'. Based on a literature review, the category of *atan* emerges as a floating signifier evoking particular relationships of dependency, servitude (bondage) and even slavery or property. On the basis of her own and other ethnographic research, Barnes points out deep anxieties about *atan* ancestry in a range of settings and contexts, including those involving social differentiation and status recognition. Barnes also argues that *atan* is a category that highlights the importance and uneven effects of ideas of rights and wealth in people in Timor-Leste and elsewhere. Her analysis of this fundamental economic phenomenon blurs the boundaries between orphan/domestic, servant/slave, person/possession and kin/non-kin.

Fidalgo-Castro and Alonso-Población analyse how people from Faulara (Liquiçá Municipality) mobilise goods and money by mechanisms other than market transactions, namely rituals. In this chapter, rituals function as a pivotal economic fact, serving both as a source of economic security and of redistribution embedded in kinship and everyday social networks. By exploring how a particular household deals

with and records their ritual commitments across time, the chapter demonstrates that wellbeing is enabled through debt relations with others and the ways these relations form a social and economic safety net. Taking this broader perspective of what constitutes economy as a category linked to ritual practice, Fidalgo-Castro and Alonso-Población avoid considering kinship related rituals as discrete units of analysis, and tease out some of the unseen functions of regimes of ritual exchange, including the ways in which they actively shape sociality and economy.

Following on from this, Trindade and Oliveira draw our attention to decision-making processes at the household level. Building on a study of household decision-making centred around farming, management of livestock and financial management in the Viqueque district, the authors argue that cultural differentiations at this scale have very often been neglected within the literature. The spatialised social differentiation bound up in Timorese sacred houses (*Uma Lulik*) and the complementarity this entails between male and female members of the house is drawn upon to document how decisions are made at the household level in relation to family resources. Who decides where to farm, what kind of crops are grown, how livestock is utilised and how a family's money is spent are linked to complex understandings of sociocultural norms and practices in the household and wider kinship space.

The operation of a more-than-human economy, based on gift and debt exchange, emerges sharply in Nogueira da Silva's chapter. She discusses household feeding routines in ordinary and extraordinary contexts in Same, Manufahi. Nogueira da Silva argues that the stages of making and consuming food are, among other things, moments of communion—with the creator (*Maromak*), with the ancestors (*bei'ala*) and with the sacred house (*Uma Lulik*). Within these moments, relationships between humans and non-humans are co-constituted by a constant giving and receiving of food—a process in which debt and the expectation of reciprocation are deliberate parts. Nogueira da Silva reminds us that food ingestion is a form of productive consumption through which life is generated materially and immaterially. She also explores the difference between cooking procedures for foods that will be consumed by humans and spirits. The foods offered to non-human agents are offered half-raw (or half-cooked) and, thus, like their recipients, 'appear to be in a liminal state between a natural state and a cultured one'.

Cunha and Bessa's chapter, the last in Part 2, draws on a twofold ecofeminist assumption: 1) in Timor-Leste, the vital relationship between people and the land is constitutive of both Timorese sociability and Timorese views of themselves and the world; and 2) as elsewhere, many of the land-associated works are the responsibility of women. This land work carried out by women generates, among other things, fundamental socio-economies for the subsistence of bodies, food for the spirit and a celebration of life that existed, exists and will exist. Cunha and Bessa explore how

these land works performed by women produce goods, services, memories, identities, affections, bonds, food and objects; in other words, the plentiful resources that are essential for the endless flow of life. They also argue that such embedded socio-economies have a great capacity to resist a neoliberal capitalist hegemony by defining for themselves what abundance is and by practising another economy of desire. This economy of desire points to sobriety as the opposite of neoliberal austerity: sobriety at the centre is life in all its manifestations.

Finally, the third part of this book explores the economic transformations derived of the entanglement between local economies and broader market endeavours. In various ways, the new economic ecologies deriving from these assemblages are analysed as exemplary of the contemporary vitality and resilience of Timorese people and their capacity to generate new ways of organising life and economic relations.

Crespi discusses the impacts of building the Suai Supply Base on the economic dynamics of Kamanasa kingdom. Her focus is on issues related to land appropriation by the state and the ways in which this is linked to new phenomena concerning local diet and increased monetisation. Arguing that this project is a vehicle for the commodification of the economy, Crespi explores structural changes that are affecting existing social systems, especially as this concerns territoriality, trade and diet. With the transfer of the land to the project challenging local practices and notions of land ownership, Crespi explains how the state's plans for the base, and the ways in which the state deals with local expectations and knowledge relating to the land, have created tensions among local populations. She explores the community's fears and expectations about these matters and, finally, discusses the economic changes derived from compensation policies.

Palmer and Jackson explore the sociocultural benefits of emerging market-based instruments for carbon in Timor-Leste. Through an analysis of the market and community-economy interactions and values of a reforestation program in Baguia in the Matebian mountain range, the chapter highlights the opportunities and tensions faced by farmers and their extended kin networks in relation to their fields and forests. Palmer and Jackson argue that these new arrangements are an important facet of Baguia's emergent post-conflict local economy. Elucidating a diversity of understandings about labour and (private) property, they show how a range of practices of care are already subtly woven into the program's operations. They argue that these highly localised and particular relations between people and nature, and between people and people, might be better foregrounded to underpin the carbon trading scheme, triggering a range of other social and cultural benefits as well as biodiversity exchanges.

Barreto Soares examines China's economic activities in post-independence Timor-Leste since 2002. Her analysis focuses on both Chinese state and non-state actors and

their varied levels of immersion in Timor-Leste's economy over the past two decades. Soares argues that non-state Chinese actors are represented, in particular, by the overseas Chinese community resident in Timor-Leste. Further, that the presence and economic activities of Chinese state and non-state actors has significantly changed Timor-Leste's economic landscape. The economic bolstering provided by the Chinese state within Timor-Leste is shown, in part, to reflect an emerging battleground for the competing economic and geopolitical interests of major powers. Meanwhile, overseas Chinese, particularly Chinese newcomers and, to some extent, the historical Timorese-Chinese community, are shown, to varying extents and with varying effects, to be involved in new forms of economic and settler colonialism. More recent arrivals of Chinese nationals have settled in strategic locations, becoming, as in the past, key players in different economic activities across the country.

Wigglesworth and Santos analyse how migrant work has provided an opportunity for Timorese youth to support their families. On their return to Timor-Leste, Timorese seasonal workers invest time and money in contributing to their family's home improvement and daily living expenses. Wigglesworth and Santos argue that this migration experience represents an opportunity for families enmeshed in a subsistence economy to be lifted out of poverty. They also analyse the impact of this migration on social change in Timor-Leste and argue that the migration experience creates new perspectives for many returned workers on gendered relations and how best to respond to the immediate economic needs of their families.

In the next chapter, McWilliam continues an examination of the theme of economic transformations as this relates to the customary economy and the remittance landscape. Focusing on the progressive refashioning of Fataluku origin houses, McWilliam argues that a widespread feature of the post independence landscape of Timor-Leste has been the sustained revival of traditional practices of economic mutuality and a return to custom' especially among many rural communities; further, that Fataluku-speaking customary communities in the far east of the country have been able to continue their engagement with the rebuilding and restoration of their ancestral house traditions in part because of the opportunities imparted by a remittance economy. The progressive re-appearance of these distinctive Fataluku origin houses across the landscape highlights the readiness of origin groups to commit their limited resources to their reconstruction. Reflecting too on the innovative changes that kin groups have made to these traditional forms of construction in recent years, McWilliam argues that this is also an outcome of a characteristic pragmatism that epitomises Fataluku cultural adaptation to changing circumstances and the embrace of modernity, highlighting what is arguably a successful accommodation between mutuality and the market

The final chapter in this collection focuses on the Timorese perspectives on seasonal work in Australia. Rose examines Timorese ideas about seasonal and

other remittance work being a part of a new *frente ekonomika* (economic front) and continuing the East Timorese struggle for independence through greater economic autonomy. Drawing on close ethnographic work, Rose develops the theoretical premise that policy relating to labour migration should be attentive to the perspectives of those who participate in it or aspire to it. In order to better understand the varied and uneven impacts of such programs (including implied or real corruption emerging from Timorese patron-client relations), Rose argues that researchers need to find ways of engaging more deeply with those who do the work, listening carefully to their stories and grievances in all their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness.

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Notes

- ¹ Neoliberal capitalism emerged after the developmentalism of the 1970s (Sachs 2000), marked by the global rise of the financial sector and by the dynamics of a territorially expansionist system in which the growth of capital-bearing debt interest was an essential political dimension (Streck 2013; Rodrigues, Santos, and Teles 2016; Fernández 2016). On neoliberal subjectivities, it is assumed that individual initiative driven by individualistic interests is the core condition of development and entails a belief that this is the only way to organise economic life. Reciprocity and mutuality are seen as obstacles to self-realisation and richness.

- ² For the purpose of clarification, here we use the term market economy or market society to mean the capitalist market economy and the hegemonic capitalist market society.
- ³ We define community-based economies as the social relations that have an economic value, meaning: 1) producing, distributing and consuming whatever is considered as essential to live well and 2) the material reproduction of life taking place within a group of people that nourish bounds of co-dependency among themselves.
- ⁴ De Jong's (2013) analysis of the relatively minimal impact of Indonesia's 1998's economic crisis on everyday life in two villages in Tana Toraja is exemplary of this.
- ⁵ Karl Polanyi's theorisation (1957, 72) about the invention of the work as a commodity is also instructive here. To Polanyi, work is just another name for human activity and is associated with life itself, which in turn is not produced in order to sell labour but for completely different reasons.
- ⁶ In fact, it seems that the very nature of coffee plant production provoked changes in the land tenure in Timor. On the basis of extensive fieldwork in Ermera, Oviedo (2019, 57) brings to the fore people's memory about how coffee changed their agriculture practices. The fact that coffee trees produce annually and that people sold their production to colonial brokers worked to reinforce people's attachment to the land plots where coffee trees were grown, whereas previously agriculture praxes were more nomadic and dispersed. A similar process is identified by Li (2014) in her analysis of transformations in land tenure in Sulawesi, Indonesia.
- ⁷ Local government ordinance no. 439, of June 2, 1936. For more details see Figueiredo 2018, 482-483.
- ⁸ De Jong (2013) points to a similar trend among Torajans immigrants who go abroad or to other Indonesian provinces.
- ⁹ It is worth noting that the trade of money by means of local money lenders—at very high rates—is a common practice in Timor-Leste. Microcredit finance institutions also play a similar role.
- ¹⁰ Sahlins (1972) attributes the following predicates to what he calls the domestic production mode: underproduction; priority for the production of use values; social division of labour based on sex and age; a more unitary productive process (in comparison with the capitalist mode of production); absence of private property; inclination towards maximum dispersion, which since it is self-contained, manifests in the absence of centralised political authority; etc.
- ¹¹ Initiatives such as fair trade have explored the connection between production and consumption dynamics as a particular strategy for adding value to goods. For a discussion of fair trade initiatives in Timor-Leste, see Silva, Ferreira, and Gosaves (2020).

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