



Harvesting Development: The Construction of Fresh Food Markets in Papua New Guinea

Karl Benediktsson

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Harvesting Development is a sophisticated and authoritative analysis of the transition from a subsistence to a market economy in the Papua New Guinea fresh food trade. Drawing upon actor-oriented and social constructivist concepts, Karl Benediktsson skillfully builds a systematic framework for analysis around three critical issues: the social embeddedness of markets, the uneven historical and spatial configuration of commoditization processes, and the key role played by social actors and organizing practices in the shaping of global/local change.

In so doing, he demonstrates the central importance of "social agency" in the creation of markets of various types, in the changing meanings accorded to exchange transactions, and in the development of social networks and power constellations.

Harvesting Development skillfully and inventively interweaves theoretical constructs with a detailed ethnography of marketing networks in the rural village and the urban marketplace, as well as in the "spaces in between."

Benediktsson shows the rural community not as an isolated universe but as one consisting of dynamic linkages and networks that extend far beyond the locality. At the same time, he demonstrates the crucial importance of local actors--with their own agendas and interpretations of the metanarrative of "development"--in shaping the outcome of the market integration process.

This work tackles processes and problems that few ethnographers have made their central concern and so will be essential reading for Melanesianists. It will also be of obvious relevance to geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, economists, and anyone dealing with development issues.

Karl Benediktsson is Lecturer in Human and Economic Geography, University of Iceland.

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