trade in PNG. In their concluding piece Curry and Koczberksi’s return to the
guiding question of the volume in an attempt to draw together its key themes.

These chapters, some more successful than others, remind us that there is of course no one abstract theory of capitalism that is not affected by the cultural and historical contexts within which capitalism as we label it evolves. Hence capitalism can only be researched as contingent, diverse, and embedded in local contexts, not as some vaguely defined entity that is affecting local contexts. The ethnography offered in this book underpins the importance of seeing capitalism as being embedded in a locality in terms of relations. Nevertheless most of the analyses shed light on embedded meanings of capitalism in terms of symbolic or metaphoric discourses that directly address problems related to the ordeal of the everyday life of capitalism. To say that these discourses speak about capitalism is one thing, but to assert that they have capitalism as their object and to imply that they can be read as an apprehension of capitalism is something altogether different. Despite my criticism, this volume is a good source for development work as it teaches lessons about how communities respond to projects premised on simple capitalist notions of market mechanisms.

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The past encroaching of colonial states drove Pacific peoples from their native lands, and they have been moving ever since: for work, to alleviate overpopulation, or due to a scarcity of resources. Belonging in Oceania adds a multiplicity of layers to the analysis of cultural identification, looking at the roots people have in their homeland, at the web of spatial and social relationships in their new environment, and to the expectations people portray upon their environment from a social, cultural, and spatial perspective. The editors bring together an array of insights under the general headings of “movement,” “place-making,” and “cultural identifications,” resulting in “multiplicities of belonging,” which they see as “the product of dialogical processes operating within the frame of specific power relationships” (16).

The nine case studies show both the perspectives’ wealth of possibilities, but also that it is hard to bring the individual arguments together as a consistent argument. Dürr characterizes the encounter between Maori and Mexican secondary-school students in southern Mexico as a transpacific, cross-cultural encounter, with both groups attempting to communicate their cultural identities. The Maori are almost combatively aware of their
culture and the Mexicans, as part of a strongly Americanized urban setting, are more estranged from their “roots.” In Dürr’s words, “identity is formed primarily by comparing and contrasting oneself with the ‘other’” (42). In that respect it is interesting how the Mexican students re-evaluate their own cultural heritage.

Brandt, focusing on cross-cultural friendships in New Zealand, takes Dürr’s perspective further. For many urban Maori their link to ancestral homelands has eroded and their identity rests on a pan-tribal construct. Brandt shows in detail the contrast this creates between any relations a Maori has to his or her Pakeha (non-indigenous New Zealander) friends, rather than Maori ones. Relationships with Pacific islanders further complicate this. The dialogical results show “a relatively high degree of flexibility in the construction of difference and similarity [providing] informal spaces ‘in between’ in which actors can re-imagine themselves and others” (184).

The studies of Garond and Rollason both take us into the historical shaping of cultural identity through colonial settlement. In Garond’s study displacement plays a prominent role as up until the 1970s Aboriginal peoples across Queensland were relocated to reserves like Palm Island. People consequently trace identity not only to their present location, but also to historical places (reserves, missions), and traditional camps. This gives not only a mixed sense of belonging, but also fosters notions of “cultural loss” and the wish to overcome this.

Rollason, working on Panapompom Island (Milne Bay, PNG), traces the present sense of underdevelopment among the islanders to the link between identity and copra production during colonial times. The collapsing copra economy, replaced by harvesting marine resources, left the locals perceiving themselves as failing “to live up to standards they located in a context they shared with white people and in which they had invested a great deal” (88).

Thode-Arora, Pascht, and Fer and Malogne-Fer trace common denominators within the processes by which Pacific islanders create a common identity within urban New Zealand. First, urban migrants experience a loss of culture and language. Additionally, a new pan-Polynesian identity comes into existence. Co-authors Fer and Malogne-Fer specifically explore the role of Protestantism in this respect. While some groups establish distinctive congregations within their community, others must identify themselves within mixed congregations. Thode-Arora points here to the establishment of weaving groups to maintain Niue identity. Pascht focuses explicitly on the land right issues among the Cook islanders and identifies a third common denominator: kinship and genealogy. Even though the present generations are often born in New Zealand, the authors show that relations to one’s place of origin remain important and will be maintained by gifts or—as is shown by Pascht—the establishment of occupation rights.

In the epilogue, Kempf and Hermann provide a perspective on the effects of present global warming. Atoll states in the Pacific are particularly
vulnerable to rising sea levels. The example of Kiribati shows the complex interplay between official discourse on global warming, the search for a new homeland, and the very practical threat of loss of identity. The authors point to the ability of the Pacific islanders to “exercise agency by mobilizing the fact of their belonging to a particular land and its people—or, and increasingly so, to many communities” (208).

The volume covers a lot of ground, perhaps even too much. The authors showcase interesting arguments in their chapters, but often what is said relates only in part to the main perspective of the volume itself. This is even true of the epilogue to the volume, though the authors do refer back to the individual contributions. The problem is that the net is cast very wide. If the number of contributions to the volume had been larger the overall impression of the volume would be more outspoken. Also, while the authors refer to each other’s work in general, there is too little common ground in the various contributions. While most authors refer to the urban setting of New Zealand as a partial or core locality, these different strands remain unattached and that is a missed opportunity.

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Jeffrey Sissons, who has written widely about historical change in the Pacific, turns his attention in this volume to the chiefly embrace of Jehova in the islands of Tahiti, the Cooks, and Hawai’i. In all cases, conversion yielded striking results: the populations became Christian, ritual was altered, and the nature of paramount leadership was transformed. Chiefs became leaders of centralized kingdoms. Sissons is correct and justified in calling these events an iconoclasm.

Sissons’ argument is logically presented. He introduces the thesis of the book in the first chapters, detailing both his theoretical orientation and the importance of the seasonality of rituals for the maintenance of Polynesian chieftainships. Such seasonality was important in order to reinforce the nature of chiefly power and to cement loyalty throughout all levels of a stratified society. Seasonal rituals were totalizing and central, directed by chiefs and priests and followed by commoners. Before the coming of Christianity, the year was divided into two ritual seasons: the first, Pleiades Above (designating the place of the constellation in the skies of the Southern hemisphere) in which opposites came together, god images were destroyed, and sacrifices