

## Can *Wantok* Networks be Counter-publics?

### Development and Public Space in Urban Papua New Guinea <sup>1)</sup>

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#### I Introduction: The Ambivalence of Port Moresby —A dangerous city and *wantok* safety networks

I have been doing fieldwork in Papua New Guinea since 1980 (Kumagai 2013). My story here begins with my first day in Papua New Guinea—on December 14, 1979. I was a graduate student from Tokyo, planning to do my field research, and I had just arrived in Port Moresby for a 9-month stay arranged in affiliation with the Geography Department at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG). UPNG staff met me at the Jackson airport (the old one, without any air conditioning) and brought me to Boroko Hotel. We went to dinner together at a nearby Chinese restaurant and after we finished I suggested that I would walk back to the hotel, situated just 100 meters away. However, they stopped me insisting that, “It’s Friday night and it’s too dangerous for you to walk about. We’ll take you by car to the hotel”. This was my first experience of culture shock in PNG; I had never imagined Port Moresby to be a dangerous city, or anything other than a peaceful South Pacific paradise! At the time, only four years had passed since independence but law and order were already viewed as matters of grave concern within PNG’s cities (Picture 1).

However, my experiences during my first year left a very different impression on me. I stayed in a “student village” at UPNG and had every meal at the University mess (which can be quite dull and dreadful!). I used to engage in conversation with any student who happened to sit by me and each time I became friends with a student, he would inevitably invite me to come to stay at his village. I visited

several villages, where each student’s family and relatives treated me kindly—like true family.

In essence, I was involved in their *wantok* networks. While there are more than 700 different languages in Papua New Guinea, no major ethnic group dominates the nation or national politics. Literally, *wantok* is an expression for “one talk”, or people of the same language group; however, in practice it is more broadly inclusive of people coming from the same region<sup>2)</sup>. I loved being a part of this network as I never felt lonely in UPNG. At the same time, I had to make an effort to assist family and other relatives once they came to Port Moresby. This, however, was not a strange or new experience to me but rather it felt familiar to me, much like how I remember my childhood days when I visited my home town of Rikuzen-takata (one of the worst tsunami-hit areas of the 2011 Great East Japan Disaster). The relationship with my relatives in Rikuzentakata was warm and a bit troublesome but I could not help but enjoy being a part.

In Port Moresby, I did not see any persons begging



Picture 1 Boroko area at Port Moresby in the mid-1980s. Microbuses are operating as Public Motor Vehicle (PMV).

on the streets, which was quite unusual relative to other Third World cities such as Jakarta. Many people stated or believed that the absence of visible poverty was because of the *wantok* system, which allowed members to support each other in the city. And many such beneficiaries would return to a subsistence lifestyle if they went back to their home village.

Evidence such as this suggests that there was no absolute poverty in PNG society. So why then would there be a high crime rate? This question of how a serious breakdown of law and order could coexist with far-reaching *wantok* safety networks remains unresolved for me and probably for many people in PNG. PNG's weak police force, high unemployment rate, and widespread frustration among the younger male population may each provide part of the answer, but these alone do not tell the full story.

In this paper, I grapple with this question by three differing yet interrelated perspectives. These include characteristics of: 1) the *wantok* system, violence and masculinity, 2) post-colonial urban space, migrant settlements and the informal sector in Port Moresby, and 3) public sphere and public space from a gender perspective in PNG societies.

While I enjoyed being a part of the *wantok* system in PNG in my first year and appreciate many aspects of it, here I would like to offer a brief critique. My aim is to emphasize that we should go further beyond the present *wantok* system and make a new public sphere or public space in PNG urban society. I highlight a view that making new public space in the city is the key for the solution.

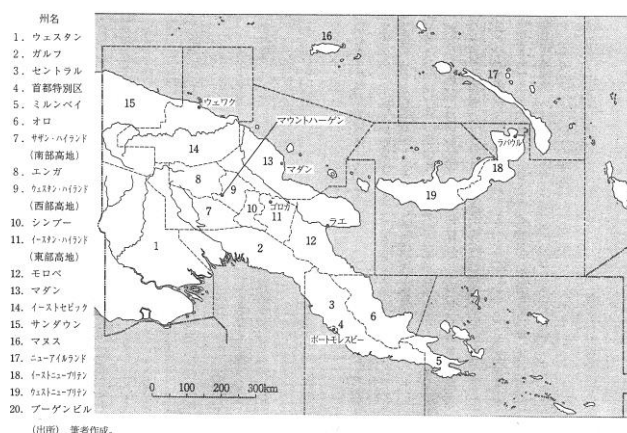


Figure 1. Papua New Guinea: Provincial boundaries (Kumagai 2000: 30)

## II The *wantok* system, violence and masculinity

According to one newspaper article from the Post Courier, published on January 3, 2001, academic research shows that in one year 12% of adult women over the age of 16 living in the city had experienced a sexual assault, while 10% of households suffered a break in. Such crimes rates are markedly high, even when compared with cities that have a reputation for being dangerous, such as Johannesburg or Rio de Janeiro.

Problems of law and order or high rates of crime in PNG's cities, however, do not stem from absolute poverty. This is because: 1) most people have access to minimum assistance from their *wantok*; and 2) most people report being able to live on a rural subsistence economy if need be, although this is indeed more difficult today in many areas.

However, I believe that each of these two factors contributes significantly to the problem of law and order in PNG's cities. You may ask, how is this so?

This is because *wantok* principally provide for the economic and social security of *wantok* members only, and overlooks or excludes outsiders. Thus, in essence, the *wantok* contrasts sharply with the "public".

However, at the same time, a *wantok* represents more than just a "private" entity or relationship. Instead, in Papua New Guinea, each *wantok* acts like a mini-state by providing a coordinated network for ensuring safety and security in urban space such as through shelter or employment. And *wantok* groups as such compete and struggle each other.

Here, I shall recall one incident from September 2006. At that time, ethnic tension existed between people of the Tari (Southern Highland province) and those of the Hagen (Western Highland province) and all Ppublic Motor Vehicles (PMV) in the NCD (National Capital District) had stopped running due to a strike by predominantly Hagen PMV minibuses crews. This one example demonstrates how urban PMV services have never been exactly "public" in PNG cities. PMV crews pay more serious attention to any risk of attack by Tari people than to their own duty in sustaining urban public transportation. This also means that they perceive a more acute danger of

being attacked by other ethnic groups and feel less trust in police responsible for maintaining law and order.

Customs of retaliation, or “pay back”, are popular not only in rural areas but also in urban PNG. We should recognize that these sorts of incidents (often referred to as “tribal fights”) allow for anyone in a particular ethnic or *wantok* group, including women and children, to be made a target or victim, while men’s power and physical expression of violence are emphasized through acts of revenge on enemies or other *wantok* groups. In this way, violent acts by men representing their masculinity are socially accepted. Such exchanges fortify intra-group solidarity, which resembles the role of the state. Thus, a *wantok* relationship is not unlike a “public” affiliation for members. They cannot escape from intergroup struggles by their own free will.

By such interrelations, each *wantok* (ethnic) group remains an “other”. Each of these “others” is constructed for its own solidarity, while outsiders lie outside of their realm of interest—or else appear as an enemy. Owing to the *wantok* system, members of a *wantok* are not seriously concerned over whether members of other *wantoks* are harmed by crime. They might even hide a perpetrator within their ranks rather than make a report to the police. Thus, criminal activity as such does not matter within the urban community: it may not be fully sanctioned by a *wantok* community itself but is overlooked if it does not directly harm or threaten close members.

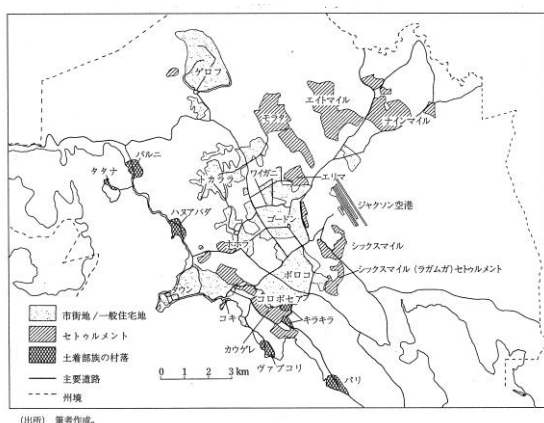
In sum, *wantok* networks spoil the formation of the “public” in urban PNG. This affects the shaping of

public welfare, the operation of public transport, and the modeling of public sentiment around the incidence of crime. *Wantok* is a system that allows for the “othering” of others. Under such a system, people remain mutually unrelated and unchanged, prompting them to reject the possibility of interaction and collaboration. No proper public space for mutual interaction exists in PNG’s cities. I will continue to pursue this point by discussing the characteristics of PNG urban space in the following section.

### III (Post-)Colonial Township

Rural-urban migration in PNG has only a short history. In the case of Port Moresby, its early days unfolded after World War II when people from surrounding villages in the Central and Gulf provinces started to come to the city as casual laborers. A massive influx from the Highland region took shape from the 1960s. Thus most of PNG’s urban population is first or second generation in terms of urban residency. Rural villages remain the ideal “home” for many, rather than present-day city residences. This means that households generally do not feel “at home” in the city. High crime rates actually enhance discomfort for all urban residents—from wealthy to poorer people. However, few take serious action to stop crime or violence, partly because they do not self-identify as real agents of the city.

This is a post-colonial sentiment, I believe. In colonial times, the people of PNG were totally excluded from both urban space and urban way of life. The city exclusively belonged to the expatriate or colonial elites. Native-born Papua New Guineans were banned from staying overnight in urban areas except for in a few servant quarters or labour compounds. Instead, they were compelled to live in the surrounding rural villages (Oram 1976). Even now, urban regulation and urban space reflects this colonial legacy. Various informal sector activities, such as street vending or selling cooked food on the street, are strictly prohibited by regulations of colonial origin under the premise that they are unhygienic. Urban PNG—as seen in its planning, zoning, and discrete townships connected by extensive



**Figure 2. Port Moresby: Built-up area** (Kumagai 2000:36)

road networks—is characteristically designed for wealthy motorists who do not think about ordinary people unable to afford their own cars.

Ordinary people experience problems with mobility and traveling throughout the city, especially at night when PMV bus service is no longer running. Therefore, there are no “public” spots for gathering in the evening, such as sports stadiums. Only a few private, expensive spots such as upscale restaurants, night clubs or discos are available for night amusement. Such a situation enhances the frustration of younger people who cannot create their own communal culture while deprived of their own space for night.

Additionally, such mobility restrictions also result in the deprivation of opportunity for income. If many people spent their evenings strolling outside, there would be greater opportunity for making money such as through PMVs or street vending. Such exchanges would, I believe, reduce the crime rate as well, as the mere presence of people in public spaces may help prevent serious offenses from taking place. Urban residents commonly state that they would not feel safe strolling around because PNG’s cities are dangerous. However, I believe that, to the contrary, urban spaces in PNG are dangerous because people cannot or do not stroll around at night.

#### IV Migrant settlements and the informal sector in Port Moresby

I started my field research in urban migrant settlements in Port Moresby in 1980. Let me now briefly touch on some of settlement history. As mentioned earlier, the population of Port Moresby was rather small immediately prior to World War II; there were only 400 Europeans living in the township and 3,000-4,000 indigenous people—that is, Port Moresby’s original inhabitants of Motu and Koitabu descent—living in the surrounding rural villages (Oram 1976). This situation drastically changed after the war as Port Moresby had become the administration center for both the Mandate Territory of New Guinea and Australian Papua. A growing demand for indigenous labour for construction and wharf industries spurred an influx from surrounding

regions mostly in the Central and Gulf districts. Since the colonial government had been reluctant to provide low cost public housing for the indigenous population until the mid-1960s, rural-urban migrants initially found accommodation in servant’s quarters or labour compounds. Later, they began to construct their own houses in the townships on Motu or Koita land or on the government land. These settlements swelled with the arrival of new migrants who shared common origins with earlier dwellers, or *wantok*. And even newer settlements of migrants from the Highland region took shape from the mid-1960s, mainly at the margins of built up areas such as Gordons Ridge or Six Mile. Thereafter, settlements continued to emerge at suburbs such as 8 Miles or 9 Miles (see Figure 2). Residents living in urban migrant settlements make up 20-30% of Port Moresby’s urban population and such settlements tend to be highly segregated. Moreover, they are often referred to as a source of crime. However, this is not entirely accurate as many criminals live in formal residential areas as well.

The inferior environment imparted by settlements in both government and customarily-owned land has not been drastically improved so far, and a majority of residents are living in inhuman conditions without electricity, running water or garbage collection. The space of their everyday life is not well seen by the public because these settlements have rarely been visited by others outside of a given *wantok*.

I conducted my first survey in 1980 in three different settlements: 1) Ranuguri (near the Town and Konedob area), 2) Talai (near the Koki and Badili area) and 3) Ragamuga (at the back of the Six Mile rubbish dump). Ranuguri was composed of Kerema people (from the Gulf Province). Talai had a mixed population of Morobe, Eastern Highland and Goilala (from the inland mountainous areas of the Central Province) peoples. Ragamuga was comprised of people from the Gumine district in Chimbu province.

What I found from my first survey was that people experienced a diverse range of socio-economic circumstances. The Ranuguri settlement was established in the early 1950s and residents, while living in makeshift homes, enjoyed a relatively stable life with employment and close contact with their



**Picture 2. Six Mile rubbish dump: A gateway to Ragamuga settlement** (in the 1990s)

home villages (located within the distance of a one-day trip). Morobe people in the Talai settlement, newly formed in the 1970s, had a higher standard of houses built by residents with aspirations of establishing a proper home in town. On the other hand, Gumine people inhabited the worst environment (Picture 2). Located at the back of Port Moresby's rubbish dump, proper water was not available in the settlement. Residents, comprised of mostly single males, lived in tiny makeshift shacks that became too hot for occupation in the daytime (Kumagai 1985).

From 1984 and through the 1990s, I continuously stayed at Ragamuga or the Six Mile Dump settlement for participant observation. My host family kindly accepted me into their home and I felt comfortable there, even with difficulties in water provision and the occasional noises at night. In fact, despite its notorious reputation as a source of "rascal gangs", I found this settlement to be, to the contrary, the safest place for me to stay in Port Moresby. This was because all residents knew me and did not disturb me as I was under the guardianship of my host family—and no outsiders entered the settlement. Most residents are good, honest people grappling with economic strife: half of the adult male population was fully unemployed while the other half had only insecure, low-income unskilled work as security guards or casual laborers. More and more households took the form of nuclear families as men brought family, wives, and children from their home villages (Picture 3). Women engaged in street vending to supplement an insufficient household income. Moreover, it was



**Picture 3. A family standing in front of their house in Ragamuga Settelement** (photographed in 2001)

mainly women who supported children going to school by providing fees, lunches and travel expenses for school.

Recent drastic spatial change in Port Moresby, under the slogan of "Clean City" however, complicates women's ability to sustain their street vending as vendors are violently excluded by the police force or other "city guardians" hired by the NCD government under the rationale those vendors spoil the environment of the city.<sup>2)</sup>

I worked with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as an expert in the alleviation of poverty in 2000-2001 while utilizing my knowledge of settlements in Port Moresby. I first concentrated my efforts on altering the stereotypical image of settlements and collaborating with various stakeholders such as NCD public officials, members of parliament, and especially Lady Kidu who chaired the urbanization committee at both the national and local level. Our opinions on urban settlements in PNG were different and we sometimes were at odds but, after a successful workshop held in February 2001 where all stakeholders came together for a frank discussion on the issue, we formed a consensus on the necessity of creating a fair policy. This would facilitate the integration of settlements into urban society, and not just exclude or to push them back to their rural homes (Kumagai 2001).

Later in 2001 a drastic pilot project was planned by NCD government for the Six Mile Dump settlement in 2001—one that would formalize the settlement located on customarily owned land—under the condition that regular rent payments would be made



to the landowner. Customarily land owners would have to accept the settlement, and then the NCD government would have to provide public services. Unfortunately, however, the project was never launched, mainly due to land disputes (involving another party who also claimed to be a landowner and stumped the NCD, who could not judge which landowner was proper).

However, owing to successive efforts by JICA and their experts since 2001, new community development projects have taken shape in several different settlements across Port Moresby since 2005 under an agreement between the NCD government and JICA. The most successful result was the visible transformation in the attitude of NCD government officials. Officials continuously visited areas together with the JICA consultant team so as to determine project sites and potential for collaboration with settler participants in participatory development projects. This was a great opportunity for creating an alternative space affiliated with the NCD government and ordinary people living in the settlements.

## V Public sphere and public space: viewing from gender relationship in PNG

Recently urban space in NCD has been drastically transformed: wider roads are constructed and filled with new motor vehicles while luxurious hotels and shopping malls spring up throughout the city. However, despite the above-mentioned efforts of JICA experts and a few government officials, poorer people are still excluded from public spaces in the National Capital District (Pictures 4 & 5). Here, who is excluded and who is included is a matter of a class. The benefits of capitalist and large scale formal sector activities—which were never public but private—have combined with government policy for building a “world class city”, thus requiring the expulsion of small scale informal sector activities. Who would say that present development in the NCD fulfills the interests of public welfare or the survival of ordinary people? While the wealthy have more, poorer people are losing their spaces for living and sustaining livelihoods. This is the context of urban space and the nature of the contest over acquiring urban public



**Picture 4. Street Vendors in Tabari Squire at Boroko**  
(photographed in 2006; now street vending at public open space is totally banned by NCD city overnment)

space that has transpired between the large capitalist sector affiliated with the government, and civil sector or grassroots people in Port Moresby.

So what then is “public”? Staehili and Mitcthel in referring to Weintraub’s work on political theory and philosophy offer the following four dimensions indentifying the “public” or publicity. They are: 1) the state or government, 2) the realm of state and economy, 3) collective and non-governmental entities and 4) sociability and display that includes representation, visibility or performance (Staehili and Mitchel 2008: 123-4). Therefore it is not only the government but also citizens who should define the public.

Jurgen Habermas presented the idea of “public sphere” in his influential book, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*. Habermas described the public sphere as one between civil society and the state (Low and Smith 2006: 4). In this light, it does matter whether civil society in its true sense exists in PNG or not.

In general, the *wantok* system does not represent a public sphere in Habermas’ sense because it has a closed membership limited to particular groups of people with the same language or hailing from the same regional origin. Such an assemblage contrasts the public sphere as formed by individuals who come

together out of common interest or to manage public goods accessible to all.

In *Rethinking the public sphere*, Nancy Fraser states that the public has several different senses; it may mean that which is: 1) state-related, 2) accessible to everyone, 3) of concern to everyone, and 4) pertaining to a common good or shared interest. These definitions contrast with those that define a sense of the private; Fraser herself defines private as that “pertaining to private property in a market economy” and “pertaining to intimate domestic or personal life, including sexual life” (Fraser 1992:128). As Fraser points out in feminist literature, the “public sphere” covers the first four senses of the public as well as the first aspect of her definition of “private”, while the private sphere refers to the very last aspect.

Additionally, Nancy Fraser (1992) criticizes the idea of public sphere as presented by Habermas for its bourgeois and masculinist bias, as Habermas frames it as a singular common public sphere that is often dominated by the powerful and by men. Instead, Fraser highlights a multicultural subaltern counter-public supported by many different subordinated social groups such as women, workers, peoples of color and sexual minorities. If we can successfully think of multi-cultural counter-publics in PNG, *wantok* networks might possibly fit in here.

While the public sphere is a universal and abstract conceptual location in which democracy occurs, public space is material and constitutes an actual site or place (Mitchell 2003: 133-4). The publicness of a space is closely related to the quality of access. Access is not a simple matter of a space being open or closed at a given time but is conditioned by feelings of receptivity, of welcome, and of comfort (Staeheli and Mitchell 2008: 116). Public space has different meanings in different societies, places and times (Low and Smith 2006:4). In Habermas’s account, the ideal public sphere is deemed universal and spatially undifferentiated. However, Fraser’s critique opens some room for spatializing public sphere theory (Low and Smith 2006:5).

If we could take *wantok* relationships as possessing a potential for counter-publics, and imagine and construct alternative public space in PNG cities from

the grassroots, what would be necessary for this purpose? I believe there ought to be some conditions for modifying or improving the present *wantok* system. First thing is, as already mentioned, creating space for collaboration between different *wantok* groups, instead of othering other *wantoks*. And the second is establishing more gender equality in relationships.

As for the first issue, I have observed an incipient multi-cultural mini-public space is appearing at the Makana quarter in Nine Mile settlement. I interviewed one of the “community mediators”, a young community leader, who told me about how they effectively solve everyday disputes between different *wantok* groups. Quick and fair treatment for both parties was a key to solving disputes before escalation of violent conflict takes place.

Concerning the latter, as many are aware, Papua New Guinea has one of the world’s most gender unbalanced national parliaments. Only one woman, Lady Kidu, was represented from among 108 electorates in 2007. (This was slightly improved when three female Parliamentarians won seats in 2012 <sup>4)</sup> .

I had a chance of participating in the national election campaign of one member of my host family in 2007. He himself stood for a candidate in the electorate of Port Moresby Northeast where his own settlement, Makana quarter in 9 mile was located. He built his own campaign house in the settlement and insisted himself as a representative of the poorer people living in urban settlements. It was quite an interesting experience for me and I learned much in the process. One such lesson was that PNG men are very well trained for public speech! This is arguably rooted in the tradition of Big Men in Melanesian societies, where male leaders must be outstanding in terms of both physical power and public speech to assert control over a group. On the contrary women rarely speak in public and tend to, instead, silently prepare meals in campaign houses. This shows how the public sphere of *wantok* is male dominated.

On the other hand, women’s day-to-day issues did not gain visibility in the campaign. The electoral campaign was not unlike a men’s festival of glory—designed to represent their power and project their aspirations in public. Every five year men



**Picture 5. Busy informal sector market in Boroko**  
(photographed in 2007; this space once was officially provided by NCD, but now closed)

involved in the campaign have some catalysis, however this does not give much chance for making sustainable improvement in the daily lives of all, especially women.

A wife of the candidate personally voiced to me her complaints about the huge sums of money her husband exhausted for the campaign, thus spoiling the family livelihood and even her own hard-earned savings gained from street vending and a private loan business located in Four Mile where such activity is now totally banned. It should be noted that her business had attracted many customers beyond her own *wantok* network. She noted that it was such customers who extended financial assistance to her in times of economic difficulty following her husband's campaign rather than her own *wantoks*. Therefore, such informal sector activities had actually contributed to making a multi-cultural public space.

## **VI Concluding remarks: Constructing alternative public space**

I once presented a paper at the 2004 International Geographical Congress held in the UK and the paper was titled “*Man bilong ples, Meri bilong taun*”, which might sound strange because it is men that first migrated to town and women come behind. I presented that while men in town tend to invest their energies in the *wantok* networks that connect them to their home villages for his power and prestige, women in town are more realistic and make greater effort to sustain socio-economic security and look after children in their harsh urban economic environment.

I strongly believe that urban society in Papua New Guinea urgently needs to create a new public space for mutual interaction among all residents to promote relationships beyond the *wantok* system. Fraser states that the idea of an egalitarian, multicultural society only make sense if we suppose a plurality of public arenas in which diverse values and rhetorics participate (Fraser 1992:126). While the publicity or publicness in PNG cities at present is exclusively determined by the government authority, people at the grassroots lose their chance to earn a livelihood as well as to communicate beyond *wantok* networks in public space. The alternative public space should be socially inclusive rather than exclusive and not perpetuate the othering or excluding of other *wantoks* as outsiders or enemies and more women and younger men should be involved in it. I believe that doing so would contribute greatly to solving the law and order problem and reducing crime in PNG cities, as well as advance the integration of poorer people into the urban economy.

In other words, a new “commons” in our urban space (Harvey 2012) is called for—one in which we may freely share and democratically and responsibly manage on our own through multicultural collaboration at the grassroots level rather than a top-down restrictive management of the city government. This means that ordinary people keen to live as urbanites may (and must) reclaim urban space from the colonial or post-colonial elite. I, for one, know they can do it because Papua New Guineans have been living in a communal society strengthened by networks of mutual help throughout most of their long history.

## **Notes**

- 1) This article was modified from a paper originally presented at a University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) workshop on August 4, 2015, titled “Grassroots development for the future Papua New Guinea: A view from Japanese researchers with long-term fieldwork experience”. This paper as well as the workshop was funded by the Grant-in-Aid titled “Formation of New Social Orders in Papua New Guinea: A Study on Generation of the Public Sphere in line with Development”, headed by Professor



Yukio Toyoda of Rikkyo University. The workshop had around 40 participants including UPNG researchers and students as well as other guests such as the Ambassador of Japan and Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

- 2) The “Wantok” system provides indispensable social safety networks in Papua New Guinea, especially for those who are living in urban areas. The *wantok’s* range is not fixed within certain language groups but varies according to social contexts.
- 3) Port Moresby’s urban space has been modernized by the NCD government under an urban beautification campaign since the late 1990s (Kumagai 2000). By this influence, street vending and especially the selling of betel-nuts has been banned in the city, leading to the exclusion of vendors due to a view that they spoil the city’s beauty.
- 4) General elections are held every five years in Papua New Guinea. While the power of political parties is relatively weak, most candidates stand independently. There are often more than 20-30 candidates in each electoral round.
- 5) I once had an informal meeting with Mr. Powes Parkop, the present governor of NCD in September, 2008. He is popular as a lawyer concerned with human rights issues. While he recognized the importance of the informal sector, he had a negative view of street vendors’ behavior, which he attributed to hygienic reasons. He insisted that large sums of money (7 million kina) were necessary for cleaning urban space. “*Ol i tromoi pipia tasol* (The vendors just leave their rubbish and do not care about it). This means that they are uncivilized”. Such a statement clearly reflects the street vendors’ lack of attention to customs for public space as well as the government’s postcolonial mentality.

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(J) in Japanese

(JE) in Japanese, abstract in English

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## ワントク関係はもうひとつの公共圏となりうるか？ ——パプアニューギニア都市における開発と公共空間——

熊谷 圭知

私は1979～80年にパプアニューギニア大学地理学科に留学して以来、この地でフィールドワークを続けてきた。農村に生存維持経済が残り（絶対的な貧困がなく）、相互扶助のワントク関係が存在するパプアニューギニア都市で、いったいなぜ犯罪が多いのか、これが私の長年の問いだった。本稿では、その背景を、1）ワントク関係と男性優位の社会、2）植民地時代に根差す都市空間の特質、3）公共圏と公共空間の欠如、から論じる。

第1の点について言えば、ワントクは、自集団内での相互扶助と団結をもたらす一方、異なる集団を他者として排除してしまう性質をもっている。ワントク集団の凝集性は、集団間の暴力的な対立とそこにおける男性性の発露によって強化される。

第2の点について言えば、パプアニューギニアの都市は、もともと植民者であるヨーロッパ人のための空間として作られ、植民地時代に起源をもつ土地利用規制が、パプアニューギニアの人々にとって住みにくい都市空間を作り出している。ポートモレスビーは夜には公共交通手段がなく、集まる場所も娯楽の機会もない。若い男たちにとってフラストレーションが高まる空間である。私は、1980年以来、ポートモレスビーの農村からの移住者の集落（セトルメント）を研究対象としてきた。こうした住民の多くが従事する露天商などの経済活動は、近代化された美しい都市空間をめざす政策の中で、排除され、住民の困窮は増している。

第3の点について言えば、ポートモレスビーでは、フォーマルな経済部門と結びついた首都政府の空間政策が、草の根の人々の生き残りのための空間利用を排除している。いったい「公（共性）」とは何だろうか。公共圏と市民社会の重要性を論じたのはハバーマスだが、フレイザーは、多文化的な対抗公共圏の可能性を提起している。パプアニューギニアの都市社会の中でワントク・ネットワークを越えた多文化的な公共圏を生み出すためには、異なるワントク集団を他者として排除するのではなく、共同／協働しながら新たな関係性の契機を作り出していくこと、そして、男性支配の政治・社会の構造（国政レベルでも日常生活でも）を変え、女性の力と志向性を生かしていくことが鍵となるだろう。それらを通じ、人々が都市に新しい公共空間を作り出していくことが、パプアニューギニア都市が抱える犯罪や治安の悪さという課題を解決に向かわせると信じる。