

**The Knowing in Indigenous Knowledge: Alternative Ways to View Development, largely from a New Guinea Highlands' Perspective**

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The indigenous knowledge (IK) initiative has met with only limited success. This paper seeks to further understanding of the implications of its effective integration into development by asking what the term might mean to others, namely New Guinea Highlanders, ultimately with a view to intimating the outlines of an alternative to the capitalist idea of economic development. After discussing criticism of the propriety of the adjective 'indigenous', and some synonyms, it focuses on the 'knowledge' noun. The Highlands' concept of knowing points up the individual and subjective nature of understanding, as something potentially open to disagreement.

The grammar of Highlands language – that spoken by the Wola of the Southern Highlands Province is taken as an example – particularly verb conjugations, reflects these concerns, notably the consideration given to indicating the source/reliability of knowledge imparted in any utterance. Some languages elsewhere such as Latin America and Australia pay similar attention to evidence. We can relate this evidential interest to oral traditions, the significance of enskilled knowing and individual knowledge variability. It also relates to the trust one can have in any knowledge under discussion, which has a particular salience in an acephalous culture that does not recognise expert authorities. The development implications of such a view of knowledge are considerable, for a stateless political context precludes the imposition of views, such as capitalist state ideas of economic development. While it is currently unclear what an alternative 'acephalous development' might look like, it will likely feature people's contrary understandings of *developman* (development) and *bisnis* (business) as it emerges from the region's current confusion, where they seek to accommodate their egalitarian values to the hierarchical wider world.