

## Research Article

# ***Haus Piksa: The Informal Economy of Film Distribution in Papua New Guinea***

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### **Abstract**

*An informal system of media distribution and screening has been established in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea via the haus piksa (village cinema). This article investigates how media distribution and screening are connected to the growing informal economy, the economic and social motivations of local entrepreneurs who have created spaces for viewing media, and the conflicting opinions about the social change they have brought to village communities. We draw conclusions about how this informal media infrastructure might be leveraged for development initiatives.*

### **Introduction**

A young mother sits on a dirt floor under a thatched roof and breastfeeds her baby. In front of her are several rows of children, their faces lit by a television screen. It provides the only light in the room, except the little that filters in from a florescent light over the outside door, serving as a beacon for those in the community looking for something to do this rainy evening. The young mother is surrounded by family, neighbors and friends, men and women, intently engaged with the Jean Claude Van Damme movie, the sound blaring from the speakers. A row of young men sits with their arms crossed on a plank bench against the woven bamboo wall, making occasional comments that set off shouts of laughter. Another row of young women along the opposite wall pretends to ignore the young men. Near the door a woman sells roasted peanuts and boiled chicken feet. A group in the back corner sits in a gambling circle, flipping cards into the center, oblivious of the others. People slip in and out of the low door at will after handing a few coins to the gatekeeper. Some go over to plug their cellphones into the power strip to take advantage of the community's only power source. The generator hums in the background. This is a typical evening at the *haus piksa* (village cinema) among communities throughout the Highlands of Papua New Guinea.

How are informal systems of media distribution and screening part of the growing informal economy in Papua New Guinea (PNG)? How have they created new social spaces in the community? And to what extent do they reflect development? Curry and Koczberski (2013) state that one "challenge for development researchers is how to conceptualize local engagements with capitalism, and to identify how such concepts and concerns might be applied in development practice to better serve the needs of local communities" (p. 336). To meet this challenge, we examine local engagements with media and the infrastructure and socioeconomic relationships created for media distribution and screening.

The *haus piksa*, or *CD haus*,<sup>1</sup> has become part of the changing infrastructure of rural communities and

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1. *The Tok Pisin language terms haus piksa and CD haus (or even movie haus or video haus) are used interchangeably to describe a village cinema in PNG. The terms appear to be regionally based, with CD haus being more common in the Eastern Highlands and haus piksa more common in the Western Highlands. For this article we use haus piksa for consistency.*

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urban settlements. Like other parts of the developing world, the viewing of movies in the haus piksa has been aided by the availability of affordable DVDs and VCDs and spurred through the practice of media piracy. Only about half the PNG population has access to a TV, with actual ownership much lower. This is even lower for people living in rural areas across PNG, with only 21% of households reporting TV access (Debeljak & Bonnell, 2012). Lack of media ownership, however, is often offset by communal media access. According to the PNG Citizen's Media Access study, "communal viewing is by far the most prevalent in the Highlands region, where watching TV at a friend/relative's house is in fact more common than watching TV at home" (p. 49). TV in PNG is mainly restricted to urban areas, where electricity and broadcast signals are available.

In the Highlands' urban and rural areas, consumption of visual media is often facilitated by the haus piksa. In this article we look at new social forms of interaction created by this circulation of media and the ways that community members in places like the PNG Highlands frame this new social space. We argue that the practice and research of media development in PNG will benefit by focusing on the informal system of media distribution and screening developed by communities themselves. An understanding of how this media distribution functions and the new social spaces it has created will also give us insight into the kind of media that might be created specifically for these venues.

### Media Distribution in Papua New Guinea

While locally produced feature films in PNG have been few and far between in the 40 years since political independence, there has been a sustained interest in internationally produced films. With the exception of Paradise Cinema in the capital city of Port Moresby, billed as "PNG's First Cinema Multiplex" (Movie Manager, 2012), PNG lacks a network of movie theaters that are part of the formal international film industry. However, people are aware of international films because they have made their way to PNG through CDs and VCDs, primarily via ethnic Chinese businessmen and their connections in Indonesia and Malaysia. This circulation of films has also been supported by technology's increasing accessibility and affordability.

These movies, viewed in the haus piksa, are obtained through an informal film distribution system that can be linked to the global shadow economy of cinema (Larkin, 2008; Lobato, 2012). Schneider (2000) has defined shadow economic activities as "employment, production, and exchange unreported to government authorities" (p. 81) that constitute a large and growing part of economic activity throughout the world. The haus piksa venues are part of this shadow economy as small-scale community screening locations that charge a minimal fee to view pirated films, which goes unreported to the government, like most community business activity in PNG.

### Researching the Haus Piksa

Much of the media development focus in PNG has primarily looked at formal media distribution channels—newspapers, television and radio—and the formal and informal distribution through mobile phones (Cave, 2012; Debeljak & Bonnell, 2012; Duffield, Watson, & Hayes, 2008; Khosla et al., 2013; Papoutsaki & Harris, 2008; Rooney, Papoutsaki, & Pamba, 2004; Tacchi, Horst, Papoutsaki, Thomas, & Eggins, 2013; Watson, 2012). Another area of focus has been educational media and communication for social change initiatives with local communities (Eggins, Thomas, & Papoutsaki, 2011; Kemelfield, 1987; Thomas, 2011; Thomas et al., 2012). To date, there has been limited analysis of the informal media distribution and exhibition in PNG through the haus piksa phenomenon as part of the PNG media landscape.

In response to this gap, our team carried out research to study and map haus piksa establishments in the PNG Highlands (Eby & Thomas, 2014). To reach remote communities, University of Goroka (UOG) students were recruited to undertake surveys in their own community area with haus piksa owners and audience members as well as to capture information about the communities. This was in line with the research approaches

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*In addition, plural is indicated with an adjective (e.g., ol haus piksa) so when we refer to haus piksa in plural, we use the slightly cumbersome haus piksa establishments or haus piksa venues. There is no distinction between CD and DVD in Tok Pisin.*

developed and used by the Centre for Social and Creative Media at the University of Goroka to undertake research that builds on existing relationships with communities (Thomas et al., 2012).

The research team developed a questionnaire based on initial interviews with haus piksa owners, taking into account audience numbers, infrastructure, media content, revenue, profitability, and an inquiry into values and social change.<sup>2</sup> The team also designed a similar questionnaire using the same categories for audience members, predominantly to verify information received from the haus piksa owners. In addition, student researchers were given a template to capture basic community information and asked to draw a map of where haus piksa establishments were located in the community. Surveys were undertaken at 385 haus piksa establishments in all seven PNG Highlands provinces, which include Eastern Highlands Province (EHP), Simbu, Jiwaka, Western Highlands Province (WHP), Southern Highlands Province (SHP), Hela, and Enga.<sup>3</sup> The surveys included 385 haus piksa owners and 755 audience members. The data were imported into SPSS for analysis.<sup>4</sup>

## The Haus Piksa and the Informal Economy

The haus piksa phenomenon is widespread throughout the Highlands region. Most researchers found a haus piksa in their home community and mapped them along roads next to schools, churches, trade stores, and markets, which were considered the distinguishing landmarks in their communities. Curry (1999) has pointed out that “the village trade store is ubiquitous in Melanesia, and is for many rural people their first and most frequent point of contact with the new economic and social formations associated with the introduced market economy” (p. 285). In the same way, the haus piksa is another community institution that is becoming ubiquitous, at least throughout the Highlands, introducing new ways of social and economic interaction.

The informal economy is a “process of income-generation characterized by one central feature: *it is unregulated by the institutions of society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated*” (Castells & Portes, 1989, p. 12, italics in original). The *informal economy* is a sector of the economy in which someone earns money for their own consumption in contrast to having ownership or wage work in government or private-sector firms. The activity does not contribute to income tax generation and is not counted in national production. The work involves self-employment or household-based activities, where time is unstructured and the worker is without rights and protection (Conroy, 2010). A visible urban informal economy was slow to develop in PNG. When anthropologist Keith Hart visited the Territory of Papua and New Guinea in 1972 with the Faber Mission, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme to advise on economic policy for the nation about to gain independence, he “was taken aback to find that informal economic activity appeared conspicuous by its absence in PNG’s few small urban centres” (Conroy, 2012, p. 26).

The population and the cash economy have more than doubled since independence, and the “long-term stagnation of formal employment” has now made conditions favorable for the informal economy (Conroy, 2010, p. 189). In contrast to countries in Latin America and next door in Indonesia that are trying to diminish the size of the informal sector by absorbing it into the formal economy and regulating it, in PNG the informal economy is still too small rather than too large (Conroy, 2011). However, the informal economy and its contribution to development in PNG were recognized and encouraged by the government with the introduction of

2. The audience member surveys were conducted among a younger demographic than the owners. Most audience members were under age 40 and almost a quarter of them were under age 20. About a sixth of the respondents had no education, a third had completed grade six or less, and 40% had reached an education level between grades seven and 11. Only 11% had completed high school or gone on to tertiary education. With regard to gender, a balanced representation of men and women was anticipated by setting out to choose one male and one female audience member per community, but the collected sample included 56% male and 44% female respondents. Reflecting their youth, almost half the respondents said they were single and characterized themselves as subsistence farmers, students, self-employed, housewives, or unemployed.

3. The surveys covered 29 of the 35 districts and 51 of the 105 local-level governments in the PNG Highlands region.

4. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software is used for statistical analysis. The number of surveys undertaken per province is not a reflection of the number of haus piksa establishments in these provinces, but rather a reflection of community access by student researchers. Left out of the survey were remote districts to which student researchers could not travel. More easily accessible areas from UOG such as the Eastern Highlands and Simbu Province received more coverage in this study.

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an informal economy policy in 2011, with the purpose of “creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment where the informal economy can grow and flourish” (Department for Community Development, 2011, p. v).

People’s lives are not neatly categorized into one or the other sector of the economy, “but are woven together through creative solutions that are predicated on shoring up everyday security” (Sharp, Cox, Spark, Lusby, & Rooney, 2015, p. 4). This means that many people have wage work, but also participate in the informal economy for additional income. PNG’s rural population<sup>5</sup> relies on the informal economy to earn cash, primarily from agricultural products such as Arabica coffee, garden crops, cocoa, betel nut and betel pepper, copra, oil palm, and firewood (Allen, Bourke, & McGregor, 2009). They also raise and sell poultry, pigs, and fish or run a trade store. Other informal economic activities are primarily pursued in urban areas and include establishing a *kai* bar (selling fast food), catering services, street sales, sewing and selling clothes such as *meri* blouses (loose blouses for women), juggling funds (including negotiations with payday lenders) and investing in fast-money schemes, re-selling second-hand clothes, and security services<sup>6</sup> (Sharp et al., 2015). Betel nut, grown at lower elevations in coastal areas, is transported to the Highlands and is “the most visible manifestation of a flourishing ‘informal’ economy” that evades taxation (Sharp et al., 2015).

In the literature about the informal economy in PNG, discussion of DVD sales, circulation, and screening is mostly absent, although circuits of distribution and consumption of media have been traced in many other regions of the world (Karaganis, 2011; Larkin, 2008; Liang, 2011; Lobato, 2012; Pertierra, 2009). We therefore sought to document where haus piksa venues are located in the Highlands, their routes of distribution, the infrastructure being created, the demographics of the entrepreneurs involved in media, and their economic and social motivations.

## Audience Reach

Most haus piksa owners were aware of at least one or more haus piksa establishments besides the one in their own community. Haus piksa venues have popped up in most communities in the PNG Highlands, reflecting the social construction of village life and the fact that most families cannot afford to individually own a TV and DVD player. Half the haus piksa venues have been in operation only 18 months or less,<sup>7</sup> indicating the recent boom in their establishment or, possibly, a high turnover rate. We estimate there is, on average, a haus piksa in each of the Highlands wards,<sup>8</sup> and more than one in some, so for a Highlands population of just under 3 million (Koloma & Kele, 2014), we estimate there are around 2,000–2,500 haus piksa venues.

## Informal Distribution and Media Piracy

Piracy and informal distribution and exhibition networks have created unlikely links among film production hubs in the U.S., Nigeria, India, South Korea, and other places that produce feature films with locations in the Pacific such as PNG (Eby & Thomas, 2014). This secondary market, unimagined by the original film producer, has led to some social and economic benefits for local communities and is one example of the expanding informal economy in PNG.

The pirated DVD route runs from Malaysia to PNG and is operated by ethnic Chinese businessmen,<sup>9</sup> who have immigrated from a number of countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Mainland China, and Taiwan. Malaysia is the center of illegally pirated DVDs and VCDs in Southeast Asia (Chin, 2008), and this

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5. 87% of the population (Rogers, Bleakley, & Ola, 2011).

6. Many security firms are unregistered and, therefore, fall within the informal economy.

7. However, there is some stability in the business since almost a fifth reported having been established for four or more years.

8. Administratively, PNG is divided into provinces, districts, local level governments, wards, and census units. The ward population profile from the 2011 National Population and Housing Census (Koloma & Kele, 2014) only counts wards per LLG but our own cumulative tally calculates 2,111 wards for the Highlands Region.

9. Although the number of ethnic Chinese in PNG is uncertain due to a range of factors, there was an estimate of around 20,000 in the early 2000s (Chin, 2008).

distribution chain makes movies available to the PNG public. However, there are strong tensions between Chinese businessmen and local populations that have resulted in occasional riots (Smith, 2013), due in part to the perception that Chinese business success is a result of bribing PNG officials, thereby diverting income from local businessmen (Chin, 2008). Four places outside the Highlands—Lae, Kimbe, Port Moresby, and the *batas* (border) market on the PNG/Indonesian border—were mentioned as locations where cheap, pirated DVDs can be purchased. Haus piksa owners usually purchase DVDs at the closest urban center in the Highlands, from shops or from street sellers. Young men acquire bulk DVDs at a discount and then sell them for a profit on the streets, bus stops, or areas with informal markets. In addition to purchasing DVDs, haus piksa operators borrow, exchange, or copy them from flash drives. Internet movie downloads are uncommon due to bandwidth constraints, download speeds, and high costs.<sup>10</sup>

The reported costs of the different types of DVDs vary. Generally, VCDs cost up to K10<sup>11</sup> (US\$3.50), DVDs with a single movie cost up to K15 (US\$5.25), and most DVDs containing a movie collection cost up to K20 (US\$7.00). Interviews with street sellers in Goroka found that movie collections are purchased in bulk from a wholesaler in Lae for K5 (US\$1.75) and sold on the streets of Goroka for K10. Movie collections are usually sold on the street and not in stores. One street seller reported that he sold 15–30 DVDs a day and that he worked with two other street sellers for a local Goroka businessman.

Media researchers have talked about piracy, not simply in legal terms, but as a “mode of infrastructure that facilitates the movement of cultural goods” (Larkin, 2008, p. 14), one that represents the organizational architecture of globalization (Sassen, 2002). Although the framing of media piracy can range from theft to free speech, there is also a piracy-as-access perspective, which asks us to remember that piracy is often an everyday act without overt political content. “Pirate consumption is rarely a self-consciously resistant act, especially in contexts where legal alternatives do not exist” (Lobato, 2012, p. 85). Many times when these issues are discussed in developed countries that might center on the hacker generation, what is often forgotten is that “for billions of people around the world, piracy is an access route to media that is not otherwise available” (Lobato, 2012, p. 82). For most audiences in PNG, this is the case for media access.

## Demographics

Haus piksa owners tend to be young men. This corresponds to recent findings from the ABC Citizen Survey (Debeljak & Bonnell, 2012, p. 10) that indicate it is often male family members who control the home media tools. We found that over three quarters of haus piksa owners were under 40 years of age. This may be due to the rapid technological developments in PNG over the last 20 years, which have privileged younger people who have been more adaptable and quicker to adopt these technologies for business purposes. Young men also drive the supply route for DVDs, as already mentioned. Evaluation of street selling in Goroka suggests young men frequently pursue these activities as a legitimate alternative to crime, and their motivations are underscored by wanting to provide for their families, as indicated through extensive interviews conducted by Little (2016). They frequently mention “struggling” as a virtue when it comes to making a living. By comparison, owning and running a haus piksa depends on an established social relationship with the community and goodwill for its success. Hence, it is a less precarious path to earning a living.

## Infrastructure

Most haus piksa establishments in the village are built from unmilled timber like other village houses, with woven bamboo walls and thatched roofs. Physically, the haus piksa is not significantly different from any other village structure. It is simply built, without furniture, and serves as a place where people can gather to sit on straw or directly on the dirt floor as they are accustomed to doing in their own homes. As a result, the infrastructure for media consumption has been adapted at the village level. In urban spaces the haus piksa is not part of the official landscape of shops, government buildings, restaurants, and hotels. As a community fixture, it is more likely to be found next to markets and in settlements farther from the urban core.

10. Results from the survey found only four owners downloaded movies from the Internet ( $n = 333$ ).

11. K = kina, the PNG currency. 1K = US\$0.35 approximately, although the exchange rate is variable.

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Almost three quarters of the haus piksa establishments were generator-powered, pointing to the poor access to electricity in PNG Highlands communities. While this does not stop people from consuming media, it does require an initial investment to purchase a generator, plus ongoing costs that include the maintenance of the house and fuel purchases (or the cost of electricity from PNG Power for the one quarter of the owners that have electricity). Most respondents estimated the amount spent on fuel to be less than K100 (US\$35) per week. Apart from established indigenous communal social patterns that regularly bring people together in groups, the lack of electricity and the infrastructure costs of equipment and fuel are clearly beyond the reach of individual family groups and are an impetus for communal movie-viewing practices.

About three-quarters of owners said they built the house specifically to show movies, but it was put to many other uses as well such as selling produce and trade-store goods, gambling, community meetings and social events, and sleeping quarters. As a result, haus piksa venues provide regular evening activities in the community.

### Economic and Social Motivations

Many haus pikas owners establish the village cinema as an additional business that complements a range of enterprises. The owners characterized themselves as self-employed (or unemployed) or thought of themselves as small business owners. Some continued to identify as subsistence farmers. When asked why they started a haus piksa, the primary reason given was to create a business to generate income and improve their standard of living. Concerns about paying for school fees<sup>12</sup> were frequently mentioned. In addition, many owners saw the haus piksa as a marketing ploy to attract customers to their store, which is usually nearby.

Often an established business might precede the haus piksa because an initial investment in infrastructure and equipment is required. A typical response was "I own a trade store and a PMV<sup>13</sup> truck."<sup>14</sup> Another responded, "I have a trade store, buy cherry coffee, and poultry."<sup>15</sup> Even if they didn't have an attached trade store, they found ways to sell other items, the most popular being cigarettes and betel nuts. Although a minority sell alcohol, there was a wide variety of merchandise mentioned, including fresh garden produce, Digicel flex cards (mobile phone credit), biscuits, cooked food, and drinks. In addition, haus piksa establishments are places where mobile phones can be charged for a small fee.

Over half of all owners show movies on a daily basis, usually in the evening. Audience attendance increases on the weekend, with over half indicating 50 or more people watch movies at any particular weekend showing. The most common charge for entry is 50 *toea* (about US\$0.20). Children, however, are likely to receive a discount. A small percentage of owners show movies for free to attract customers to their trade store (as already mentioned). Over half the owners estimated their weekly profit after deducting expenses was less than K100 (US\$35), including the sale of food and other items. At the other end of the scale, one fifth reported profits of K200 (US\$140) or more. These results need to be understood in the context of the annual per capita gross national income (GNI) of PNG, which in 2013 was calculated at about US\$1,900 (Kushnir, 2013). An additional income of US\$35 a week for haus piksa owners is US\$1,820 annually and almost equals the GNI, a definite incentive to pursue this form of supplementary income. A majority of people in rural areas of the PNG Highlands have a very low income and are highly reliant on coffee sales, which are seasonal (Rogers, Bleakley, & Ola, 2011). Therefore the haus piksa might provide a more reliable, steady income.

A network of intertwined relationships supports entrepreneurial success in a socially embedded economy. In addition to the economic motivation, in PNG "it is the social dimensions of labor that give labor its value, and not solely the market value of the work performed or the value of the product of that labor" (Curry & Koczberski, 2013, p. 339). It is therefore significant that haus piksa owners gave other reasons for starting their business, including providing entertainment, creating a community gathering place for socialization and

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12. *Although the government since 2012 has reintroduced a tuition-free policy, there are still school-related expenses that parents must cover.*

13. *Public motor vehicle.*

14. *CD haus owner from EHP (0644EHP).*

15. *CD haus owner from EHP (0444EHP).*



relaxation, and providing a place for the community to market its produce. Most owners permit other community members to sell their goods and the area around the haus piksa in most places has become a community marketplace. Haus piksa owners saw it as providing a social and economic service to the community.

## New Forms of Interaction, New Spaces for Development

The haus piksa venues are conduits for film narratives from around the world,<sup>16</sup> creating new spaces for social interaction, informal education, and leisure. “Because of the CD haus, people live in the light,”<sup>17</sup> said one of the respondents, referring literally to the fact that the haus piksa generator provided light for the village. But it can also be interpreted metaphorically—that the movie house is a focus of darkness or light, depending on how people perceive its influence on their society. Larkin (2008) describes how in Nigeria local spaces were “opened up to the forms of leisure and information coming from elsewhere” (p. 11) and traces the cultural work of media technologies. He also notes, “Cinemas were problematic urban places because of what they did, creating a space for mixed-sex activities, and for what they bred, prostitution and other un-Islamic activities that fed on the crowds drawn by the theater” (Larkin, 2008, p. 1). Conservative attitudes among the older generation in the PNG Highlands have expressed similar concerns about un-Christian behavior or behavior that flouts tradition. Haus piksa establishments impact their PNG Highland communities in many ways, causing concerns that could be framed as moral panic, similar to what has been reported about reactions to some uses of mobile phones<sup>18</sup> (Andersen, 2013; Jorgensen, 2014; Lipset, 2013) and, before that, concerns over the introduction of television<sup>19</sup> (Sullivan, 1993).

Traditionally, PNG villages have communal gathering spaces, which are gender-specific, with men gathering in the *hausman* (men’s house) and women in the *hausmeri* (women’s house). This gender separation has become less common in contemporary configurations of social space (Kuman, 2011). One respondent described how people dress up so they can “find their mates mostly in the CD house.”<sup>20</sup> There is clearly anxiety about the way men and women socialize in communal public spaces. The primary concern of respondents focused on the increase in sexual activity among young people that, according to them, has had an impact on issues related to prostitution, unwanted pregnancy, adultery, and rape.

In contrast to these concerns, the majority of respondents agreed that haus piksa venues provided a suitable space for community members to get together, whether for business activities or socializing. A respondent said, it “keeps the community intact and they avoid moving from village to village causing problems.”<sup>21</sup> But contradicting this notion, the increased social activities at night were considered by some to increase community disruptions. One owner complained that it “attracts drunkards during the night, which leads to commenting and conflict, and my area has become a public area, and my family does not have privacy.”<sup>22</sup>

There were also conflicting ideas about the haus piksa as a place for informal education. For example, one owner pointed out that it helps “make people become wiser from viewing other people’s experiences.”<sup>23</sup> Another respondent said, “it educates school children about the global world”<sup>24</sup> and “children are learning English better by watching movies.”<sup>25</sup> However, concerns were also raised about movie content as a bad influence that promoted negative behavior among children and young people. The opinion was expressed that “school children are distracted every night to watch and are not concentrating on their studies.”<sup>26</sup> Others said

16. For a discussion of media content and popular movies in the haus piksa, refer to Eby and Thomas (2014).

17. CD haus owner from EHP (0484EHP).

18. In 2007 Digicel made mobile phones available to the general populace (Watson, 2012).

19. PNG’s first television station was introduced in 1987 (Sullivan, 1993).

20. CD haus owner from SHP (1307SHP).

21. Audience member from EHP (0709EHP).

22. CD haus owner from Simbu (0041SIM).

23. Audience member from Simbu (1477SIM).

24. CD haus owner from EHP (0380EHP).

25. CD haus owner from Simbu (0033SIM).

26. CD haus owner from Simbu (0049SIM).

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that children were stealing from their parents to pay for the gate fees and that it increased litter, domestic violence, gambling, and drug abuse.

A short documentary film titled *Mi Go Long CD-Haus* (Rordam & Jepsen, 2010) illustrates some of these issues. In one scene the father berates the main character, Mika, while the two of them work in the garden cleaning ditches. He complains that his son is spending too much time at the haus piksa and says in Tok Pisin,<sup>27</sup> "The movies will spoil you . . . You're always late for dinner. You and the guys just go to the CD haus and the dance house. You will dance until dawn and have no strength for work." The father, in a meeting with other parents, says he saw a movie at the haus piksa that showed "white men and women kissing. I don't approve. I don't like that kids are watching these kind of movies." One woman noted that it causes her pain to see that young people are learning "to drink beer, to wear long trousers, to roam around all night when we think they're sleeping." At the end of the film Mika's father says, "I see their way of life changing, and they are not following the ways of our ancestors. They're starting to let go of our culture. What kind of generation is coming after us?" (Rordam & Jepsen, 2010). This reflects the concerns of elders in the community and illustrates a generational divide when it comes to the attitudes toward what goes on at the haus piksa. While young men and women aspire to emulate what they see in the movies, their parents and grandparents are concerned that they are losing their culture.

## Conclusion

Local haus piksa owners, motivated by both economic and social factors, have created media viewing spaces in their communities. The haus piksa infrastructure is a grassroots initiative by young entrepreneurs that is influenced by the constant interaction of population movement between urban settlements and rural villages and acts as a conduit for entertainment from the outside world. It has contributed to local informal economic development and social change by creating an informal media infrastructure, stimulating the local economy and encouraging local business initiatives. Media piracy is traced from the distribution pathways of DVDs from Malaysia to PNG and framed as a positive engine for access to affordable movies that would otherwise be inaccessible. We have focused on the haus piksa as part of broader debates about media development in contrast to the focus on television, radio, newspapers, and mobile phones. The haus piksa has created spaces of sociality in both rural villages and urban settlements, and while people have conflicting opinions about its influence on community life, young people in particular see movie viewing as a source of informal education.

When we asked haus piksa owners if they were open to showing locally produced films in their haus piksa, the majority responded enthusiastically. This encouraged us, in a second stage of this project, to distribute *Komuniti Tok Piksa* DVDs, containing five films, researched and shot in local PNG communities, addressing the issue of HIV and AIDS (Thomas & Eby, 2014, 2016). In terms of outreach to rural and settlement communities in the PNG Highlands, distribution to the haus piksa can be an effective way to reach new audiences with media content.

The haus piksa phenomenon has developed from local community member initiatives, in contrast to government and donor-led initiatives for development. However, development initiatives could use this informal media infrastructure for distribution and screening of media that, to date, has primarily targeted formal media outlets. The haus piksa has become a flashpoint for social change, and it can be argued that it is a potential space to distribute films that target social issues to both entertain and educate. It is the space in the community where social change is being negotiated from multiple perspectives and it provides an ideal place to participate in those conversations. ■

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27. *Tok Pisin* is the English-based Creole language of Papua New Guinea.



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