potential authors in the service of contributing to our wider knowledge of public bureaucracies and politics.

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The title ‘foreign flowers’ suggests that successful institutional transfer is difficult to achieve since foreign flowers tend to have difficulties with surviving in hostile local soil. It is a pathetic image ‘of a plant beleaguered or starved of nourishment’, Larmour notes. He systematically analyses a large number of empirical examples of institutional transfer to the Pacific islands, and in so doing enables a more substantiated estimation of whether or not the ‘foreign flower’ idiom is justified.

The aim of the book is to get a more comprehensive understanding of what actually happens when institutional transfer takes place. It seeks to illuminate where institutions come from, why local institutions in the Pacific end up looking like those in the West, what makes some institutions take hold while others not, what the effects of institutional transfer are, and finally what role culture plays in institutional transfer. The overall objective is to uncover and demonstrate general principles of institutional transfer.

The book analyses about 40 cases of institutional transfer in five different policy areas in a large number of island states in the Pacific. The concerned policies are customary land registration, constitutionalism, representative democracy, public sector reform, and finally anti-corruption. For the reader interested in the Pacific region, this book is highly recommendable. It is rich in empirical detail, and numerous fascinating accounts of institutional transfer are given. Furthermore, there are exciting descriptions of the ‘when’, ‘how’, ‘who’, ‘what’ of transfer, and also accounts of where the concerned institutions originate from and the actual results of transfer are given. This intriguing range of topics addressed is at the same time a potential weakness of the book. The book may have benefited from focusing on fewer questions and topics, and providing a deeper analysis of each. For instance, studying the role of culture in relation to institutional transfer or the results of transfer could each be large research projects in their own right.

Another potential complaint is the method employed for case selection. The examples of transfer seem to be chosen on the criteria that the author either knows them or that they are well documented. The linking of topics and case studies is not systematic, such as explaining why some cases of institutional transfer are related to some islands and not the others. Additionally, the author
does not give an account how the 40 instances of transfer were chosen, nor does he detail how exactly the data for the analyses in the book was gathered. The absences are not in themselves serious faults, but matters of academic taste. To my mind, the analysis could benefit from including cases of institutional transfer to islands in other regions of the world, where the path of institutional transfer and institutional translation took a quite different turn. For instance, on the face of it institutional transfer to Northern European island communities seems to be rather unlike that in the Pacific region. Why is that the case? This would be an interesting puzzle for Larmour to pick up on in his future work on institutional transfer.

The different research questions that are raised in the book are answered by drawing upon a very wide variety of theoretical explanations, and the author demonstrates an impressive overview and insight in academic writing on the subject. Hence for those interested in a broad introduction to different theoretical explanations of different aspects of institutional transfer, this book does a great job. Larmour does not provide a detailed defence of why some theoretical perspectives have been chosen over others, but again this is a matter of academic taste in presentation of the argument.

To summarise, Foreign Flowers is a very interesting book on institutional transfer in the Pacific. It offers intriguing empirical descriptions of actual cases of transfer, and also explanations of why some transfers were more successful than others. The author holds a very impressive amount of knowledge on institutional transfer in the investigated region, and the book should be viewed as a valuable input to policy-makers in the concerned region as well as to external actors attempting to transfer institutions to the Pacific islands.

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