The engagement of Indigenous Australians in economic activity is a matter of long-standing public concern and debate. Jon Altman has been intellectually engaged with Indigenous economic activity for almost 40 years, most prominently through his elaboration of the concept of the hybrid economy, and most recently through his sustained and trenchant critique of policy. He has inspired others to also engage with these important issues, both through his writing and through his position as the foundation Director of the Australian National University’s Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research from 1990 to 2010.

The year 2014 saw both Jon’s 60th birthday and his retirement from CAEPR. This collection of essays marks those events. Contributors include long-standing colleagues from the disciplines of economics, anthropology and political science, and younger scholars who have been inspired by Jon’s approach in developing their own research projects. All point to the complexity as well as the importance of engaging with Indigenous economic activity — conceptually, empirically and as a strategic concern for public policy.
ENGAGING
INDIGENOUS
ECONOMY

DEBATING DIVERSE
APPROACHES
Contents

List of figures .................................................. ix
List of tables .................................................... xiii
Abbreviations and acronyms .................................. xv
Contributors ...................................................... xvii

Part 1: The Hybrid Economy: Theory, Practice and Policy

1. Taking difference seriously: Life, income and work
   for Jon Altman and friends .................................. 1
   Wil Sands

2. From Samos to CAEP² via Mumeika: The hybrid economy
   comes of age .................................................. 15
   Geoff Buchanan

3. From public policy to pure anthropology: A genealogy
   of the idea of the hybrid economy ....................... 29
   Chris Gregory

4. Cultural domains and the theory of customary
   environmentalism in Indigenous Australia .............. 43
   Kim de Rijke, Richard Martin and David Trigger

5. What is the policy significance of the hybrid economy? .... 55
   Nicola Peterson

6. If the market is the problem, is the hybrid economy
   the solution? .................................................. 65
   Katherine Cunich

7. Valuing Aboriginal cultural activity: Beyond markets .... 79
   Kasey Woods

8. Hybrid economies as life projects? An example from
   the Torres Strait ........................................... 95
   Annick Thomassin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Indigenous country in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria: Territories of difference or indifference?</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seán Kerris and Jarkey Drian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Indigenous-owned art centres, tourism and economic benefits: The case of Ma'ku Arts</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marianne Rispens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Five theses for reinstituting economics: Anthropological lessons from Broome</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stephen Muckle and Ben Didlay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 2: Critiquing Neoliberalism and the Guardian State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Neoliberalism and the return of the guardian state: Micromanaging Indigenous peoples in a new chapter of colonial governance</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shelley Beisefeld</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Media stars and neoliberal nova agendas in Indigenous policymaking</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kerry McCullum and Lisa Waller</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Trapped in the gap</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emma Knual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Neoliberal rhetoric and guardian state outcomes in Aboriginal land reform</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leon Terril</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 3: Land, Housing and Entrepreneurship: Altman Applied**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rd Wensing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Exploring hybridity in housing: Lessons for appropriate tenure choices and policy</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Louise Crawford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>The political economy of the Aboriginals Benefit Account: Relevance of the 1986 Altman review 30 years on</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>David P Pollock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>The work of rights: The nature of native title labour</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pamela McGrath</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Indigenous small businesses in the Australian Indigenous economy</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jack Collins, Mark Morrison, Branka Krvokapic-Skoko,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rosa Butler and Pik Beau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 4: Personal Reflections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Reflections of a PhD student</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benedict Scambey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Reflections of a senior colleague</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Nieuwenhuysen, AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jon Altman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CAEPR Research Monograph Series 305
Jock Collins is Professor of Social Economics in the Management Discipline Group at the UTS Business School, Sydney, Australia. His research interests centre on an interdisciplinary study of immigration and cultural diversity and include immigrant and Indigenous entrepreneurship. His research has been funded by the Australian Research Council and the Rural Industry Research and Development Council.

Louise Crabtree is a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. She has recently led work funded by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute focusing on appropriate housing tenure options for Aboriginal communities in New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

Katherine Curchin is an applied political philosopher with research interests in social policy and Indigenous policy in Australia. She is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University, and holds an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award. Her current research project compares Noel Pearson and Jon Altman’s visions of Indigenous development.

Ben Dibley is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University, Australia. He is co-author of Collecting, ordering, governing: anthropology and liberal government (Duke University Press, forthcoming).

Jacky Green is a Garawa warrior and artist from the Gulf country of the Northern Territory. He says he started painting to get his voice out: 'I want to show people what is happening to our country and to Aboriginal people. No one is listening to us. What we want. How we want to live. What we want in the future for our children. It's for these reasons that I started to paint. I want government to listen to Aboriginal people. I want people in the cities to know what's happening to us and our country.'

Chris Gregory is an Adjunct Fellow in Anthropology at The Australian National University. He is an economic anthropologist who has lived and worked in Papua New Guinea, India and Fiji. He is the author of Observing the economy (Routledge, 1989, with Jon Altman), A second edition of his book, Gifts and commodities, has just been published by HAU books.

Seán Kerins is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University. Over the past 25 years he has worked with Indigenous peoples and local communities on cultural and natural resource management issues in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Faroe Islands, Norway and Australia.

Emma Kowal is Professor of Anthropology in the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Deakin University. She is the author of Trapped in the gap: doing good in Indigenous Australia (Berghahn, 2015).

Branka Krivokapic-Skoko is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Business Charles Sturt University. Her research interests include the revitalisation of regional and rural Australia through ethnic business and immigration. Her research has been funded by the Australian Research Council and the Rural Industry Research and Development Council.

Richard Martin is a Research Fellow and Consultant Anthropologist at the University of Queensland. His research is focused on the politics of land and identity in Australia. He has undertaken numerous applied projects, including research on multiple native title claims and cultural heritage matters around Queensland. He was co-editor (with Cameron Dalley) of Dicotomous Identities? Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and the intercultural in Australia, The Australian Journal of Anthropology, Volume 26, Issue 1 (2015).

Kerry McCallum is Senior Research Fellow in the News and Media Research Centre, Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra. Her research in political communication examines the relationships between changing media, political participation and the development of social policy, with a particular focus on Australian Indigenous affairs.

Pamela McGrath is currently Research Director with the National Title Tribunal. Her research interests include the social impacts of native title, Indigenous heritage management, information management and archiving. She has worked in the native title sector for over 15 years and in 2010 co-founded the Centre for Native Title Anthropology at The Australian National University.
ENGAGING INDIGENOUS ECONOMY

Mark Morrison is Sub-Dean Research in the Faculty of Business, Charles Sturt University. His research has been funded by the Australian Research Council (Discovery and Linkage Grants), the US Environmental Protection Agency and National Science Foundation, NSW Environmental Trust, Land and Water Australia, Country Energy, IPART and the US Forest Service.

Stephen Muecke is Professor of Ethnography in the Environmental Humanities Program at the University of New South Wales. His book The Mother’s Day protest and other fictocritical essays will be published by Rowman and Littlefield International in June 2016.

John Nieuwenhuysen is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, and is currently Emeritus Professor, Monash University. In 2003 he received an award (AM) in the Order of Australia for services to independent research on immigration, multicultural, equity, indigenous, taxation, labour and industry issues, and to reform of the liquor laws of Victoria.

Nicolas Peterson is Professor of Anthropology at The Australian National University. He has a long-standing interest in Australian Aboriginal anthropology, land and sea tenure, economic anthropology, and four-world peoples and the state. His most recent book is Experiments in self-determination: histories of the outstation movement in Australia (coedited with Fred Myers, ANU Press, 2016).

David P Pollack is a former adviser in the Australian Government specialising in land rights, native title and royalty management. He has a special interest in the Aboriginals Benefit Account and worked closely with Jon Altman in researching the financial aspects of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 during the period of the Reeves Review in the late 1990s.

Kim de Rijke is Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Queensland. His current research is focused on the sociocultural dimensions of unconventional gas developments in Australia, Europe and the US. For the past 13 years he has also carried out applied research on native title and Indigenous cultural heritage and was managing and senior anthropologist at the Kimberley and Central Queensland Aboriginal Land Councils from 2003 to 2008.

Marianne Riphagen is a Visiting Fellow at the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, The Australian National University. She also teaches anthropology at the Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Her research has focused on art created by urban-based Indigenous Australians, Indigenous cosmopolitanism and the economic value of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Australia’s Western Desert.

Will Sanders joined the staff of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) as a Research Fellow in 1993, having previously been a CAEPR Associate and co-author with Jon Altman of CAEPR’s Discussion Paper No. 1. He works on policy issues relating to housing, local government and social security. His political science training has also led to a research interest in Indigenous people and elections. Will was Deputy Director of CAEPR from 2010 to 2014.

Benedict Scambary is an anthropologist with 20 years’ experience working with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. He completed his PhD at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research under the supervision of Jon Altman in 2007. He is currently the Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

Leon Terrill is a lecturer in the University of New South Wales Law School and a Research Director at the Indigenous Law Centre. He is the author of Beyond communal and individual ownership: Indigenous land reform in Australia (Routledge, 2015) and teaches land law, contract law and Indigenous legal issues.

Annie Thomassin is an anthropology PhD candidate at McGill University (Canada). Her thesis examines the politics underpinning fisheries co-management strategies in Torres Strait. She is also a Research Officer at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University, where her research focus is largely on the political ecology of coastal and marine resources management.

David Trigger is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Queensland. His research interests encompass the different meanings ascribed to land and nature across diverse sectors of society. He has carried out more than 35 years of anthropological study on Indigenous Australian systems of land tenure, including applied research on
What is the policy significance of the hybrid economy?

Nicolas Peterson

Introduction

The future of Aboriginal people living on remote lands either in the large ex-mission and government communities or in small outstations is problematic both for government and ultimately for the people themselves. Not only are these people remote from mainstream economic activity in many, but by no means all cases, but, by and large, there is no regional demand for their labour. Were people much better educated, perhaps 15–25 per cent could be employed in administration and service delivery in their communities, if all jobs were Aboriginalised. Such a situation is at least a generation or two away even from the possibility of realisation. This situation parallels the situation in a number of countries such as South Africa and parts of Asia where there are also populations that are surplus to the labour requirements of the mainstream economy. The prospects of substantial proportions of the remote Aboriginal population ever being employed in the mainstream are remote.

This faces policymakers, and the people themselves, with the question as to whether there are desirable long-term forms of dependency that are not only satisfactory to Aboriginal people but which are not
ENGAGING INDIGENOUS ECONOMY

going to be a cause of concern to others, and to ask what resources Aboriginal people might have to draw on to structure such a life (cf. Ferguson 2013).

Since at least 2001, Jon Altman has been a strong advocate of one possible solution for some of those people living on Aboriginal lands in the tropical savannah and coastal areas of north Australia. His solution is for the government to recognise that these people are part of what he calls a hybrid economy and for the government to support a particular sub-group to build on this for an alternative development paradigm that is more accepting of cultural difference (Altman 2010: 270). The thinking behind this idea goes back to at least his experience and research for his PhD thesis in 1979-80 living at Mumeka (Momga) outstation south of Maningrida, with a small, fluctuating population of 19 people. In a fine study he documented the income and expenditure patterns and the time allocation of people living there, quickly coming to appreciate the value and significance of the customary economy (see Altman 1987).

On the basis of extended fieldwork at Mumeka outstation in western Arnhem Land, Altman estimated that the imputed value of subsistence income (i.e., hunted and gathered foods at the outstation) was 175 per cent of the people's cash income. Clearly this was a major contribution to people's livelihood and fundamental to understanding their circumstances at that time. The outstation life provided a much better protein diet and much less stress than living at Maningrida.

Jon developed the term 'hybrid economy' in 2001 during his collaboration with the members of the Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management at Charles Darwin University, emphasising that the notion of Aboriginal economy in remote Australia needed to be broadened and developed especially because both policymakers and politicians failed to understand the important contribution this remote area Indigenous people make to their own support: they are not just welfare dependent but contribute to their own support through the production of bark paintings and artefacts for sale, and through hunting, foraging and fishing for food.

Since developing the framework he has been strongly advocating it in both academic and applied forums. From 2007 he has elaborated his ideas under the project title People on Country: Healthy Landscapes and Indigenous Economic Futures. This refers to what Altman describes as a social and environmental movement based around the recognition of how much of the national environmental estate and biodiversity is on Aboriginal lands. Further, he argues that across this Indigenous estate are many hundreds of small communities that are in an ideal position, properly supported by government, to help look after it both in their own interests and those of the nation.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response in 2007 is a key turning point in Altman's work. This is marked by outspoken criticism of the government's approach in Indigenous affairs and a growing disenchantedness with the ability of evidence-based research to inform productive Indigenous policy and practice (Thomassy & Butler 2014: 4). Altman saw Indigenous affairs as increasingly influenced by particular ideologies and interest groups. For 30 years Altman has devoted himself to the production of high quality evidenced-based research, both by himself and through the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), directed to the betterment of Aboriginal lives by assisting government and others in the formulation of policy in Indigenous affairs.

There is no doubt that Altman's work has been enormously effective in developing understanding of the nature and significance of, and securing support for, outstations, the art and craft movement, Indigenous tourism projects and, more recently, ranger programs and other aspects of working on country. He has also been a strong advocate for the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, so mistakenly criticised and attacked by many.

Given that Altman is now in full advocacy mode for the significance of the hybrid economy, not just as a framework for describing the economics of remote Australia but as the basis for policy, I want to ask whether the thinking behind the hybrid economy holds out the promise of a desirable form of long-term dependency and if it is really coherent as a basis for policymaking for Aboriginal people in remote Australia.
The hybrid economy

The hybrid economy is usually presented in the form of a Venn diagram of three intersecting circles, one representing the economic aspects of the state, another representing the market and the third representing the customary economy. This gives rise to four intersections between these three sectors (4, 5, 6, 7 in Fig. 5.1) and it is the linkages indicated by these intersections that highlight the areas where Altman considers the most productive activity occurs (Russell 2011: 2).

Thus in respect of the intersection between the customary and the state (4), social security or the CDEP scheme underwrite some customary activities; in respect of the intersection between the state and the market (5) there are commercial enterprises that are underwritten by the state through CDEP or other enterprise support; in respect of the intersection between the customary and the market (6) there are joint ventures that are not predicated on any state support; and in respect of the intersection between market, state and customary (7) the clearest example is the marketing of arts and crafts but also cultural tourism and some environmental services (Altman 2001: 4–5). The model could be further developed and is not always consistently presented (see Gregory, this volume). In many illustrations the three domains vary in size, as does the extent of the overlaps, and generally speaking there is a lack of quantification associated with the sectors and overlaps.

The hybrid economy: A desirable long-term form of dependency?

The hybrid economy model focuses on production and income sources. Thus the state (1) mainly supplies direct income in the form of social security payments and, in the outstation contexts, a limited number of jobs. The customary sector (2) mainly provides imputed income through import substitution as a result of hunting and fishing. The market sector (3) provides cash through the sale of artefacts. In the outstation contexts segments 4, 5, 6, and 7 are mainly related to the generation of income through the production and sale of artefacts subsidised through the CDEP scheme, occasional involvement in tourism, and more recently through wages earned in relation to the provision of environmental services.

A central issue is the robustness of the hybrid economy. Does the customary sector continue to play the same important role in import substitution today when there are greater constraints on hunting than in the past, and possibly depletion? The imputed contribution to income in Mungala, at least, seems to have dropped.

This might not be an issue if jobs have become available in the environmental services area, but given the limited number of such jobs available in the Maningrida area (around 40) the possibilities for increased cash income from this source seem small. There are certainly opportunities for increased tourism ventures but only a limited number of these could possibly function in the range of one regional centre. As to the art and craft market this can be very valuable but is quite fragile, as Altman has documented, and highly dependent on government funding of the relevant infrastructure.
ENGAGING INDIGENOUS ECONOMY

The principal source of cash income in the hybrid economy has always been social security, which depends substantially on the age structure and composition of the population. Given that outstation populations are groups of closely related kin, sharing practices are likely to ensure that everybody has some access to cash and in-kind resources. So while the actual mechanisms and tensions in distribution are not known it can be assumed that sharing practices will, generally speaking, ensure a level of access by all.

The most obvious challenge to long-term satisfaction with this existence is in respect of consumption. As long as people's consumer dependency remains low then the levels of income generated by the ever-changing nature of the hybrid economy are likely to remain satisfactory. However, there is evidence of an increased desire for a wider range of goods and services in outstations that require cash. This suggests that levels of consumer dependency are rising. Housing is one example. People's desire for better accommodation is faced with the costs of providing it in remote locations, with consequent declarations by government that no new houses will be built in such places. But there are other expensive and new dependencies, especially associated with the phone and other information and communication technology. The costs of which will, in all probability, rise. Any decline in food from the customary economy will ratchet up the need for cash. Further, people are now being asked to contribute to the cost of services being supplied to them. Together, these factors will diminish outstation residents' discretionary income.

There is good evidence that people in outstations flourish in a number of ways, including in terms of physical and mental health and socially in terms of greatly increased control over their lives (e.g. see Burgess et al. 2009). Outstations probably are a desirable long-term form of dependency for those people living on them. This leads to the question of how many people that involves and foreshadows another: why, if it is desirable, does only a small proportion of the remote population appear to think so?

5. WHAT IS THE POLICY SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HYBRID ECONOMY?

How many people live on outstations?

The difficulties of estimating outstation populations are several. Not least is the high level of mobility between outstations in a region and the regional centre, an issue that has been present since Atzman carried out his fieldwork (see also Taylor 2006: 49). Then there is the issue of the definition of outstation which, as far as the statistical and legal agreements between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth go, is highly confusing, as any residence group outside the core 70 or so designated townships is called an outstation. This leaves not only ample room for confusion but also considerable scope for ambiguity in claims made for the numbers of people covered by the hybrid economy.

In 2001 the number of discrete Aboriginal communities Australia-wide was 1,216. Of these, 577 had 19 or less people and 785 had less than 40 (Taylor 2006: 47). It is not clear from these figures how vacant outstations were or are dealt with in these calculations. Such outstations can range from a few tin sheds to very sophisticated housing which may be vacant for years at a time, as is the case in the 19 outstations around Yuendumu and some outstations in Arnhem Land.

The total population of these 'less than 49 people' outstations in 2006 was estimated at 11,343 out of a very remote region total population of 30,680 (Taylor 2006: 47). The high level of mobility between regional centres and outstations can be seen in two different lights. It can be used to argue that many more than simply the residents of the outstations benefit from them, as people whose permanent residence is in the regional centres can go out to an outstation from time to time for recreation and holidays, thus spreading their benefit. But it can also be seen as a potential sign of weakness in the permanency of the outstations in that the regional centres have the enduring resources, services and many other attractions. Orbiting from outstations can lead to people getting stuck in the regional centres.

Either way, outstations (and providing environmental services from them) are a Rolls-Royce option for a very small portion of the Aboriginal population in remote areas. But, as has been suggested, there is some reason to suppose that the viability of outstations is quite fragile, even if government policy remains unchanged.
A coherent basis for policy?

In 2005 Altman and Morrison argued that the proper foundation for Indigenous economic development will need to be on the basis of Aboriginal property rights in commercially valuable assets like water, fisheries and minerals (Altman & Morrison 2006: 52). Elsewhere Altman has emphasised the carbon economy: the payment of rent to traditional owners by government and others for use of land. As with the hybrid economy, the emphasis is on income which underwrites Aboriginal economy, the emphasis is on income which underwrites Aboriginal income. People's own unilateral definition of economic development objectives (Altman 2012: 16). Apparently this is a right that Indigenous Australians have. The basis for this right or the responsibilities that go with it is nowhere stated, nor are there any indications of substantively worked out economic development objectives for particular remote regions. Further, there is no indication of why increasing unearned income will not result in increased dependency. The implied image is of a renter class. But what this leisureed people would do with their income and time is never addressed, although what past experience suggests is not good.

A further cloud reducing the clarity of the policy implications of the hybrid economy is the emphasis placed on the significance of cultural difference. The specific nature of cultural differences relevant to Aboriginal life in the 21st century to be built on or accommodated are not spelt out. Further, the emphasis on culture is often in danger of being backward-looking and failing to acknowledge the huge changes that have taken place in the last 60 years. There is no reason to suppose that the rate of change will decrease, although its trajectory is hard to predict. By emphasising cultural issues, the much more complex sociological ones are avoided and discussion of the future becomes slogans that get in the way of clear, evidenced-based argument, analysis and thinking.

The positive intentions behind the promotion of the hybrid economy cannot be questioned, but at best it is only focusing on the easy stuff and avoiding dealing with any of the difficulties the majority of remote area populations are facing. One obvious reason for doing so is that Altman, like everybody else, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, has no clear ideas about what to do for the majority of the population. We all wish people in remote Australia a good life but what that might be and how to secure it is another question altogether. Some people, however, do not have the luxury of doing nothing about the future—they are the government and the policymakers. Altman is an influential commentator from among one important set of opinion makers who all want things done—church members, the medical profession, Aboriginal and other public intellectuals, and members of the United Nations are others. They mainly work in slogans or critiques of existing policy, offering palatable but implausible solutions such as suggesting that all that is required is to listen to Aboriginal people. Were it so easy. If we look at what Aboriginal people in remote Australia actually do, it is clear that: working in the customary economy and living on an outstation is only desirable for a small proportion of the total population. Helping the majority to develop desirable long-term life projects under conditions of dependency is clearly going to be highly challenging.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jon Altman, Maggie Brady, William Arthur, David Martin, Julie Finlayson, Paul Burke, Chris Gregory and Francesca Merlan for many stimulating conversations around topics related to this contribution.

References


If the market is the problem, is the hybrid economy the solution?

Katherine Curchin

Introduction

One of Jon Altman's preoccupations in recent years has been the impact of neoliberal ideology on Indigenous affairs policy. He has been a critic of the policy goal of incorporating more Indigenous Australians in remote regions into the mainstream economy, believing that Indigenous Australians joining the labour market are destined for the least desirable place within it. He has also argued that the values orientation promoted by market society is at odds with the kin-based societies in which many Indigenous people live today. Altman maintains that an ideological commitment to the market has blinded many policymakers to the viable alternatives to market-based development in Australia's north (Altman 2005: 122). His hybrid economy framework challenges the dominant way of thinking about economic development for Indigenous peoples by highlighting a range of productive activities currently performed by Indigenous groups in Australia's north. These innovative activities occur within the intersection of the customary, market and state sectors of local economies. Livelihood strategies based on these activities enable