

Customary Assets and Contemporary Artistry: Multimodal Learning and Remote Economic Participation

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The role of artistry in transformative maintenance of law and custom is a theme widely researched and discussed in Aboriginal arts related literature. However, it is the aim of this paper to contribute to a wider discourse about learning and economic participation in remote Australia, and in particular the role of multimodality as a significant asset. The paper draws from relevant literature and two case studies; one from Keringke Arts, and one from Eastern Arrernte teacher and artist, Kathleen Kemarre Wallace. In customary form, multimodality combines and recombines various modalities — including dance, song, sand drawing, body painting and design, storytelling, stories, rhythm, petroglyph and ochre-painted rock art — enabling the intergenerational teaching and learning of rich cultural heritage in ways which connect that experience to the law and custom of the homelands. Multimodality, as it is used in this paper, draws on the concept of ‘form-relationality’; the way various modalities are combined and recombined, as elements which together describe a body of knowledge and yet separately provide myriad detail. Although beyond the scope of this paper, multimodality is also a mediating influence between contemporary and customary elements and contexts. This paper considers the complexity of multimodality as an asset in a contemporary arts market.

■ **Keywords:** multimodal, remote economic participation, teaching and learning

The opportunity structure of an Aboriginal art centre is, in most cases, likely dependent on sustained nonmarket contribution of funds to support business and physical infrastructure. The management and governance of an art centre is underpinned by the self-governance of its membership and in compliance with Australian law. At Keringke Arts, an Eastern Arrernte art centre in the Northern Territory of Australia this mixed model of market and nonmarket (government) activity creates and sustains the opportunity structure required by artists to meet the demands of the cosmopolitan arts market, and has done so since 1990.

A brief discussion of the links between multimodality and arts business follows. It is the aim of this paper to conceptualise multimodality as an asset, and describe how this can inform new ways of thinking about economic participation in remote parts of Australia, that include nonmarket (government programs, funds and priorities) and market (Aboriginal arts, tourism, heritage and knowledge) parameters, but that are not only conceptualisations of these. Previous research reports suggests multiplier effects of creative industries in remote Australia

provide significant financial and other capital returns to constituents. For a more detailed discussion on creative multiplier industries in remote Australia, see the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre Working Paper series (Fisher, 2011; Fisher & Rola-Rubzen, 2011).

The focus of this paper is on the significance of multimodality as an asset for learning and economic participation in remote Australia, and in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. While the data used for this paper comes from central Australia, the research findings may have wider application and specifically, implications for the development of nonmarket policy and entrepreneurial activity. By implication too, there are opportunities for strategic ‘education’ and ‘training’

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policy, as long as these terms are considered more holistically as learning.

In order to conceptualise the value of multimodality as an asset to learning and economic participation, it is important to contrast it with the commodification of units of art. These are most easily defined as 'products', and may be objects or experiences. While the business of an art centre is to sell commodities, the two short case studies in this paper focus on the way that customary assets continue to underpin product and demonstrate that production provides the opportunity for intercultural and intergenerational teaching and learning. The case studies highlight the contribution of Eastern Arrernte multimodality in facilitating the structures upon which a supply and demand market depends.

The terms 'nonmarket', 'market' and 'mixed-market' are used throughout the paper and reflect the concept of 'nonmarket failure' drawn from Wolf (1979), who suggests that multiplier effects from markets commonly combine with nonmarket services, to avoid 'failure'. This encapsulates the term 'mixed-markets' as it is used throughout this paper. Eastern Arrernte multimodality has emanated from ancient sources and 'form-relationality' (Lovell, 2014). Form-relationality is conceptualised as a mechanism for layered and staged complex learning and teaching that is guided by the principles of law and custom operating across homelands. Contemporary product has also emerged from form-relationality and multimodality, which are transformative resources. Research tells us that values for a commodity are ascribed as monetary (Woodhead & Acker, 2014), but this paper suggests that the value of multimodality is customary, and ascribed to identity, land and kinship (Lovell, 2014). Both are combined in contemporary productivity, yet in the literature of nonmarket evaluation of policy, multimodality is not attributed a value or considered a characteristic of economic participation.

In conceptualising multimodality, this paper finds it is a resource underpinning the mixed-market construct through which Keringke Arts operates as an art centre. The case studies included in this paper confirm that multimodality is an asset of teaching and learning practices which continue the ancient transformation and maintenance of fine-grained local knowledge and contribute to economic participation in remote Australia.

Limitations

Multimodal research and intercultural collaboration has been undertaken between the artist and myself since 2003 at Keringke Arts and on the Ltyentye Apurte Eastern Arrernte homelands. Protocols of reciprocity underpin this research collaboration, and the return of data and products, along with considerations of the research design, have informed the case studies documented below. The first case study focuses on the contribution of Wallace and her peers, acting as elders of Keringke Arts, which is only

one Aboriginal art centre among 46 active in the central Australian region. The second case study focuses specifically on *Listen deeply, let these stories in* (Wallace & Lovell, 2009), a publication drawn from multimodal sources, and co-author Kathleen Kemarre Wallace, who is only one custodian and artist among a group of Eastern Arrernte elders and custodians.

Participatory audiences and customers representing the demand side of the market in the case studies included those who are visitors, those who are active research collaborators, and other Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Eastern Arrernte people, but other than in the published survey responses, there is little representing their standpoints, in the data used here.

The author recognises that this data is very constrained as a representation of one collaborative team, one site and one artist; but considers it provides sufficient depth to contextualise the literature and contribute to understanding of multimodality as an asset of value. For the purpose of this paper, the case studies contribute context and fine-grained detail despite that constraint, and are therefore limited as a representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander multimodality.

Assumptions

This article assumes reciprocity is an ontological tenet of all research activity, and that multiple standpoints are represented without dominance of one by another. This paper is written in a style that reflects an intercultural standpoint and history of collaboration with Keringke artists. Through this collaboration it is assumed that Wallace exercises her custodial responsibility to teach and learn through multimodal representations made in the context of the maintenance and transmission cycles and systems underpinning her Eastern Arrernte homelands (Wallace & Lovell, 2009). Her artistry is drawn from the intergenerational and self-determining fields of Eastern Arrernte knowledge that are held in her country, and through which she expresses custodial responsibility, customary law and heritage. It is this deep commitment to teaching and learning as a customary and custodial responsibility and as a form of contemporary expression which provide intercultural insight of how Wallace draws on the multimodal traditions of her heritage. These assumptions stem from previous research undertaken by Wallace and myself (Lovell, 2014; Wallace & Lovell, 2009).

Methods

This paper combines findings from research programs of the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP) with wider literature to define the lenses through which multimodality is being considered here. The lenses are constructed against the neoclassical economic theory that informs the nonmarket assumptions of Human Capital Theory (HCT) (Tan, 2014) and utilise the Theory of Nonmarket Failure (Wolf, 1979) with

which to describe characteristics impacting on economic participation in remote parts of Australia. Several non-market policy and program indicators are juxtaposed with the literature describing practices of remote empowerment and in contrast to the regulatory aims of nonmarket policy. Lastly, the literature describes the recent uptake of multimodality among Eastern Arrernte and intercultural collaborators in publication formats.

Two case studies are used to contextualise the process of production of art commodities, and the value of multimodality as a resource and an asset with which contemporary artists work. The case studies produce contextualised snapshots of multimodality in praxis. They signify that multimodal heritage underpins both the asset of teaching and learning, and the agency of contemporary artistry that is applied in the production of saleable commodities.

Literature

It may seem too fine a point of difference and consequently an impossible stretch, but in opening the discussion for remote economic participation as a signifier of mixed-market tension, success and failure, multimodality (as an enabler of intergenerational teaching and learning) is an applicable indicator, as it signifies different concepts of social and financial transactional value and the impetus of law and custom in generating things of value.

Theories of Human Capital and Nonmarket Failure

In Wolf's terminology 'nonmarket' sectors include government, philanthropy, charity and others positioned to implement services that are responsible for meeting a need, where markets cannot or fail to meet the need efficiently (Wolf, 1979). He argues that nonmarket activity should provide clear analysis of drivers, risks and enablers as they inform the premise of nonmarket activity against which success or failure can be evaluated (regularly) and measured (periodically) similarly to, but not using the same criteria as, markets (Wolf, 1998). Altman (2010) developed a theory of 'hybrid economies' to open the interpretation of what may otherwise pass as 'traditional' forms of exchange, trade and reciprocity placed somehow 'outside' financial economies. Altman has argued for a decade that economic participation in remote settlements remains subject to interpretation and 'weighing up' through the standpoint and influence of customary law and exchange consistent to systems that include valued assets that are embedded in homelands and which predate financial transactions. These assets contribute to the flow of nonmonetary forms of capital, through structures he calls 'hybrid economies' (Russell, 2011), and are worthy of fine-grained comparison with Wolf's conceptualisation of market and nonmarket failures. However, a thorough analysis of this is beyond the scope of this paper, which draws on the concept that mixed-market structures

must realise the complexity of assets and assets signify diverse social, cultural, environmental, institutional and financial standpoints, which contribute a value-range and a range of values. In an intercultural interface (Nakata, 2007), multiple standpoints can be of great benefit, or may act as significant barriers to economic participation in remote Australian contexts.

Economic Participation in Remote Australia

'Red Dirt Thinking' (Guenther, Bat, & Osborne, 2014) surmises that privileging systems of communication and values of kinship may enable others to recognise links essential to Indigenous wellbeing in intercultural interfaces — including health, education and employment. For example, McRae-Williams and Guenther (2014) emphasise 'the need for the national VET (Vocational Education and Training) system to reimagine its role in remote Aboriginal communities from primarily the delivery of human capital competencies to the facilitation of learning spaces that build identity and agency' (p. 2). Tan (2014) cautions us that while it is relatively simple to find fault with neoclassical assumptions underpinning HCT, it is difficult to proffer a suitable replacement for the theory. If multimodality is understood as an asset essential to teaching and learning, and as a resource essential to economic participation, how might opportunity structures better empower economic participation? Again, this is a question needing further analysis, but that is outside the scope of this paper.

National and international literature supports the theory that empowerment for people living in remote and sparsely populated settlements must include economic agency, resilience, expression of their values and the opportunity to make and experience their choices (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Bainbridge, Whiteside, & McCalman, 2013; Memmott, 2010; Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010). Findings about wellbeing (Grieves, 2009; Lovell, 2014; Saini, 2012) suggest empowerment is essential to enable pathways, opportunities and structures of remote economic participation based on culture, standpoint and choice (Lovell, Blake, Alice, & Wallace, 2014; Minutjukur and Osborne, 2014; Osborne, 2014; Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014). The case studies in this paper suggest that multimodality is essential to Eastern Arrernte production of marketable commodities that result in economic empowerment and customary teaching and learning. Woodhead and Acker (2014) find that art centre value chains span economic participation in cosmopolitan markets and local, remote and domestic economic activity. Opportunity structures in remote communities which are adaptive and responsive to wider markets, perform above the expectations of labour market statistics despite the perceived barriers to economic participation described in nonmarket evaluations and assumptions of HCT (Lovell, Guenther, & Zoellner, 2015).

Nonmarket Policy and Program Indicators

Policy indicators and evaluation of Indigenous disadvantage, remoteness and low educational outcomes are described as indicators of poor economic participation, ill health and diminished wellbeing (Forrest, 2014; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2014a, 2014b). Nonmarket policies have significant and disproportionate impact in many communities in remote Australia, where on average more than 85% of constituents are Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Despite what is known about the nuances of sparsely populated regions in developed countries (Carson, Ensign, Rasmussen, & Taylor, 2015) the Australian Government describes drivers of economic participation in terms of neoclassical economic theory (Tan, 2014). Policy implementation assumes a logical sequence from inputs to outcomes for programs (Australian Government, 2014) ahead of the strategies of economic empowerment building on successful local multipliers and cultural assets (Bainbridge et al., 2013). The Indigenous Advancement Strategy (Australian Government, 2014) redresses passive welfare through mandatory work programs (active welfare) in preparation for transition to employment-based economic participation. There is no evidence of corresponding increases in structures that support local labour market activities in remote Australian communities, as would be required for this logic to be enacted (Taylor, Carson, Carson, & Brokensha, 2015). The Australian Government (2015) Northern Australian Development white paper suggests increased remote Indigenous employment targets can be met through active welfare and procurement targets for road construction to support increased industry developing in the north. The demographic trends impacting on the aims of the white paper suggest there will be an increased likelihood of reliance on urban growth and a continuing trend away from regional and remote demographic sustainability (Taylor et al., 2015).

Multimodality and Publication

A suite of contemporary literature emanating from the Alice Springs region and informed by multimodal Indigenous Knowledge teaching and learning imparts intercultural and cultural insight, using the traditions of storytelling, oral history and life-story. These publications include works by Rubuntja and Green (2002), Kruger and Waterford (2007), Dobson and Henderson (2013), Dobson, Walsh, and Douglas (2009), Dobson (2007), Turpin, Ross, Dobson, and Turner (2013), Turner and MacDonald (2010), Turner (1984), and Wallace and Lovell (2009). The origins of this trend in multimodal storytelling as intercultural and educative publication draws from the work of custodians working with linguists (e.g., Henderson and Dobson, 1994; James, 2011), who between them have produced dictionaries and workbooks essential to

bilingual education, and intercultural workplace training and service delivery protocols.

Further publications of multimodal resources include recordings of women's sand drawing and storytelling traditions, with Arrernte, Kaytetye, Anmatyerr and Waramungu women (Green, 2009). Turpin and Green (2011) record and archive sand drawing and storytelling and record song and singing for dancers, including those of Arrernte, Kaytetye, Anmatyerr and Waramungu homelands. Turpin's work extends earlier archival recording of Aboriginal song in the Northern Territory, in the traditions of Koch (2013), Marett (2005), and Barwick, Marett, Blythe, and Walsh (2007), Barwick, Marett, Walsh, Reid, and Ford (2005). Green (2009), Biddle (2007) and Watson (2003) have concentrated effort in recording the way language, sand storytelling, performance and body painting are combined in landscapes of seen and unseen features, and Biddle (2007) and Watson (2003) extend this to the relationship of sand-drawing and body design with contemporary women's painting. Multimodality provides the scope required for complex and simultaneous expressions which are 'form-relational', a term coined and discussed in this way:

The content of images often differs from the iterative interpretation of the story paired with it. The forms (painting and storytelling) are relational, that is they stem from the same family of knowledge, although they engage the audience without being or always meaning everything in the same way. (Lovell, 2014, p. 22)

Most recently Perkins has filmed cycles of Arrernte family dance and song with women of four generations for family use (Rachel Perkins, personal communication, 17 April 2015). The concept of multimodality as an asset of teaching and learning is corroborated through the way multimodal forms of Indigenous Knowledge are recorded and the use of protocols, process and product to offer teaching and learning. As mentioned earlier, the return of such recordings to custodial collaborators is of central importance to all of the research protocols described above.

Case Studies

The following case studies contributed a record of the production of two commodities which depended upon multimodality and which produced employment outcomes and informed pathways to market participation; yet they occur outside the formal (nonmarket) support structures for employment, education, training and economic participation. The case studies contribute context to the discussion of the significance of multimodality, and illustrate the primacy of customary protocols and kinship structures. They show where multimodality overrides nonmarket standpoints in relation to the values of participation. Multimodality is found to anchor intergenerational transmission, which exemplifies the economic empowerment

of contemporary Eastern Arrernte artists. Multimodality contributes to enactments from which cultural heritage derives, and as this paper describes, maintains a source which feeds the acumen of contemporary Eastern Arrernte artistry. Multimodality also gives form and integration to the complexity and depths of ancient and contemporary communication, and the enactment of social relationship systems; these are systems which are the heart of Eastern Arrernte teaching and learning principles (Akeyulerre Inc, 2014).

Apmeraltye Ingkerreke (2008)

Eastern Arrernte hosted *Apmeraltye Ingkerreke — People of one land, all together* (Abbott, Dobson, Turner, & Wallace, 2008) as a series of workshops where multimodal activities provided the structure of the physical and social space through which elders guided family and visitors. The participant evaluation of this multiple session event (Boyle, Lovell, Ellis, & Tremblay, 2009) found that the multimodal structure engaged hands on participation, and included reflection. The design of this participatory and intercultural event borrowed from common forms of Arrernte intergenerational multimodal cultural knowledge expression. These included understanding country and kinship through a system of skin groups and relationships; making and using local plant tinctures and engaging with traditional healing practitioners; public displays and participation in dances and songs of the homelands; the storytelling paintings; and contemporary digital storytelling. The process sought to provide insight of visitors that beyond a single art object or a single cultural performance are the living cultural system connecting people to knowledge in many forms, and which is maintained through multimodal teaching and learning. Arrernte multimodality enabled visitors to experience the cultural literacy of the group and its individuals as a teaching and learning experience. Custodians were active, demonstrating multiple activities and multimodal representations to younger people in a cycle of intergenerational transmission.

There was no formal process to guide visitors about when, where or how to engage and beyond each session theme in the program, little instruction was given. The site was set up with activities located around each of the four custodians. Visitors and hosts made their way around the site as they wished. The design privileged Eastern Arrernte social protocols and practical management of the resources and site. This placed an emphasis on visitors as 'learners' with responsibility to 'learn', and to engage in this site as intercultural interface.

Results from the evaluation survey of participants indicated that 80% wanted to learn something new from their experience and only 27% were familiar with Northern, Central or Eastern Arrernte before the event with the majority of participants travelling interstate to attend the conference (Boyle et al., 2009, p. 16). A majority of partic-

ipants rated 'high' and 'very high' their level of participation (64%), the session content (71%), the venue (84%), the length of the session (64%) and the quality of the session (70%). These figures perhaps indicate something of the level of engagement and learning of participants at this multimodal learning event.

Listen Deeply, Let These Stories in (2009)

The content of the publication, *Listen deeply, let these stories in* (Wallace & Lovell, 2009) includes Eastern Arrernte language and English language. The audio and written versions of Wallace telling stories in Eastern Arrernte differs from those written in English language. As a storyteller Wallace constructs meaning for her audience, so an intercultural and unfamiliar audience will be given a more formal telling than family members, who are Eastern Arrernte language speakers. Images were also central to this publication and design brings Wallace's paintings into a form-relational context with the photos of the landscape/people and each strand of story and biography. The form-relational construction is tangible in publication, with image, story, and biography and landscapes each contributing elements of a larger synthesis as Wallace describes her homelands using a multimodal approach.

This publication was initially conceived as an 'art book'. Following field research, a different direction was taken as we engaged in and with the homelands' landscape. Wallace grew up living a homelands lifestyle, and with access to those resources came the essential and intimate knowledge of survival in a changing landscape, and the formative lessons of law and custom. Her paintings and stories emanate from places and events anchored in the landscape, and are shared as public Eastern Arrernte teaching and learning. The publication documents Wallace in her homeland through a biographically lineal narrative against themes that emerge across her paintings and stories. Her priority was to record for future generations the seen and unseen practices of her elders and ancestors.

The book speaks for itself in this regard, but pertinent to this paper is the consistency of the multimodal record of story and country. Several stories given by Wallace in 2006–2009 at sites in her homeland correspond with iterations given to earlier European ethnographers by other Arrernte informants of the generation of Wallace's great grandfathers and grandfathers. Considering each of these versions reflects the same stories at the same ancestral sites it was insightful to compare and contrast them. Those findings suggested that multimodality plays an essential role in the recording of knowledge over extensive lengths of time, preserves intimate detail, including the impacts of changing environments and social structures over many generations and mediates changes across generations. These findings are supported in the literature and research that describes ancient rock-art sites around the world; but the valuable distinction here is the

multimodal skill of custodians in interpreting intangible and complex bodies of knowledge.

Discussion

The juxtaposition of multimodal teaching and learning in the production of commodities and its value as a significant asset is discussed now using the lenses of intercultural research collaboration between artists and author (Lovell, 2014), and a synthesis of evidence relating to remote economic participation. Evidence that emerged from literature, including the research programs of the CRC-REP, is combined with the evidence from the case studies to describe multimodality as a customary asset of learning and remote economic participation.

The brief discussion of relevant literature provided insight of the context of intercultural interfaces occurring through mixed-market and opportunity structures. These include the regulatory systems in place through nonmarket institutional investment in the mixed-market art centre structure. The theoretical discourses of relevance to the discussion argues that nonmarket disengagement with the everyday practices of multimodal teaching and learning has contributed to what Wolf (1979) describes as 'non-market failure'. HCT which informs much of the nonmarket approach to the Australian Government's educational and employment services is also found to have disengaged from the asset value of cultural resources and capabilities (Disbray, 2014; Guenther et al., 2014; Lovell & Guenther, 2015). HCT is underpinned by assumptions of neoclassical economic theory (Tan, 2014) and the logic of neoclassical economics predicts human behaviour as a series of predetermined cause and effect equations (Colquhoun & Dockery, 2012; Dockery, 2011). These appear at odds with evidence of economic participation in many settlements in remote Australia as reported in a range of research literature (Clarke & Denton, 2013; Dockery, 2014; Taylor et al., 2015).

Education systems and employment pathway research conducted by CRC-REP adds further evidence to those findings that the degree to which educational pathways and employment outcomes in remote Aboriginal communities are causally linked is questionable (Guenther et al., 2014, McRae-Williams & Guenther, 2014). Finally, the case studies in this paper demonstrate that systems of law and custom that exist in homelands are ancient; but it is through them that the multimodal asset base has been maintained and contributes to essential teaching and learning. In developing new forms of contemporary artistry, multimodality has contributed to the production of significant commodities for a cosmopolitan market, and provided enactment of essential customary maintenance of laws and customs that support social and customary relationships.

Beyond the cosmopolitan arts markets and the regulating impact of nonmarket policy, multimodality can

be seen to offer symmetry to opportunity systems and sustainability to social and business structures. Wolf's theory supports the premise that opportunity structures in many remote Australian settlements value cultural agency. We know that the fundamental relationship of cultural practice to production of commodities is nuanced, as is evident in international trends among sparse populations (Carson, Carson, & Lundmark, 2014). Art centres (Acker and Woodhead, 2015; Woodhead and Acker, 2014), tourism products (Jacobsen and Tiyce, 2014; Jacobsen, 2012), Aboriginal community researchers (Lovell, Armstrong, Inkamala, Lechleitner, & Fisher, 2012) and Indigenous ranger programs (Central Lands Council, 2014) in remote Australia are also evidence of 'customary' (Altman & Kerins, 2012) assets. The tension in this conceptualisation lies in the failure of nonmarkets to disclose that a significant remote-urban disconnect exists. Current policy and program implementation has consistently failed to provide opportunity structures that are fit for purpose in remote and sparsely populated regions. Guenther, McRae-Williams, and Townsend (2012) suggest equitable distribution of capital, especially human capital, is essential in modelling symmetric practice and policy change in education systems for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools and settlements. Taylor, Payer, and Brokensha (2015) disclose the design flaws inherent in the population demography assumptions made in the Australian Government (2015) white paper outlining the development agendas for northern Australia. Carson et al. (2015) argue for the conceptualisation of remote sparse populations in all developed countries as vulnerable to unintended impacts of policy designed for larger and predominantly urban populations. This paper contributes to these examples with a view of the nuanced multimodality that operates as a customary asset in the mixed-market opportunity structure that empowers those who live in remote settlements.

Economic multipliers from the creative and customary industries in remote Australia contribute direct financial benefit to constituents at a rate greater than that produced by mining, pastoral or agricultural activity (Rola-Rubzen et al., 2011). A further area of research is needed to determine whether the arts industry has had a greater longitudinal impact on economic participation, wellbeing and financial capital than those the mining industry has produced in remote settlements. The case study component of this paper reflects the benefit of longitudinal intercultural research collaborations. Multimodality is essential to expression of Indigenous Knowledge and gives form to deep cultural literacy from which product emanates. The interface that nonmarkets require does not conceptualise or privilege a multimodal intercultural 'space' of learning and negotiation. Multimodality sustains *doing*, *being* and *knowing* in locally accessible and connected ways, yet remains a largely unacknowledged asset.

Conclusion

From the review of literature, research findings and the case studies it appears that the market-driven value of commodities provides a rationale for the nonmarket's participation in a bespoke mixed-market activity. Nonmarket failure is here signified as a lack of intercultural insight of customary assets essential to remote economic participation in sparsely populated communities. Nonmarket policy struggles to build on the success of mixed-market and market commodities and customary assets as these are nuanced, diverse and perceptually and geographically remote from one another; and more so from the nonmarket policy designers. Nuances are fundamental to those who co-create and sustain intercultural interfaces, who provide commodities for niche-market industries drawn from customary assets, and who try to mediate the impasse of nonmarket failure, in an everyday milieu which should have been overcome by this stage of postcolonial, post self-determination.

Despite all the research undertaken in remote and very remote Australia, there is little evidence that nonmarket educational structures and training pathways value the multimodal and multilingual assets of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelands and custodians. In conclusion, this paper asserts there is evidence that where marketable commodities are produced with customary assets, multimodality may underpin related teaching and learning, and contribute significantly to economic participation in remote communities. The brief summary of the relevant literature demonstrates that different values are ascribed to multimodal assets and to the financial worth of a commodity, which is at some level a derivative of customary multimodal teaching and learning practices.

If the nonmarket sector diminishes value and reduces the opportunity structures that engage multimodality, then the agency of both customary assets and financial capital are depleted. If we flip this around, and ask what are the opportunities that multimodality can offer then examples of successful mixed-market activity are evidence of negotiated value and values. The issue is not with these facts — that multimodality is a valuable customary asset and is in part the asset from which market commodities are produced. However, it remains with the structures of postcolonial, post self-determination, nonmarket failure to value nuanced assets embedded in remote Australian homelands.

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