

On the Edge of Utopia is consistently alive to the many idiosyncratic textures of Burning Man, owing to the author's first-person involvement with her subjects. But when she dollies back to put the event into larger contexts, she occasionally falters. Because much of the quantitative and qualitative evidence cited in the book was provided by the organizers of the event, she is often uncritical in her advance of their countercultural claims. Put another way, *On*

the Edge of Utopia does a great job of describing how the Burning Man participants perform themselves into being, but its address of just what is it that is being performed shies away from the event's most compelling implication: its enactment of a Viking funeral, bidding an obstreperous farewell to the seemingly lost tradition of countercultural utopianism rather than a wished-for revitalization of it.

Aboriginal Business: Alliances in a Remote Australian Town

Kimberly Christen. *Global Indigenous Politics Series*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research, 2008. 315 pp.

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Kimberly Christen presents a richly textured portrait of "Aboriginal business" in central Australia that warrants close reading by scholars and students of indigenous-settler relations around the globe. Readers will gain clear images of the range of settings in which Aborigines make associations and negotiate obligations with kinspeople, other Aborigines, townspeople, bureaucrats, politicians, anthropologists, lawyers, judges, and a host of other players at the local, national, and international levels. *Aboriginal Business* carefully renders the local, everyday details of political action while never losing sight of the global themes of indigenous rights. For general audiences, the penultimate chapter on designing, building, and launching Nyinkka Nyunyu, the Warumungu Art and Cultural Center in Tennant Creek alone justifies reading this book. For readers with an interest in "self-determination," Christen documents the nuanced ways that Aborigines and their Australian neighbors have crafted interdependent relationships over the last 30 years and, thus, redefined the meaning of the policy as well as how to evaluate its success.

Aboriginal Business shows several important strengths, including:

- (1) conclusively legitimating the value of studying interaction ("alliance making") between indigenous and settler peoples in Australia;
- (2) documenting the continued relevance of local ethnographic work, especially when set in the context of global social movements and transnational trends;
- (3) transcending polarized categorization to highlight how interdependent relations condition the lives of both indigenous and settler peoples in local and national communities;
- (4) illustrating the power of well-written anthropology to enhance cross-cultural understanding; and

- (5) exemplifying the role of critical scholarship in advocacy and social policy debates.

Christen convincingly documents the importance of "alliance making" or "business" to the understanding of community relations in Tennant Creek through chapter after chapter of carefully described extended situations. Each of these situations renders visible aspects of what Aborigines must do to create a present and a future for their communities in association with other Australians. Whether making a land claim, dedicating a train, commissioning a naval warship, or building a cultural center, Aborigines and their associates spend hours working on activities that synthesize practical and symbolic benefits for multiple contexts. "Opening up" the dances and songs of a significant site, for example, instructs young people in the maintenance of the Warumungu cosmos, verifies land claims, legitimates claims for local authority, and communicates the vitality of Warumungu culture to tourists, music aficionados, and other audiences.

In her vigilance to elucidate the constrained efficacy of local action, however, Christen unnecessarily discounts the utility of other analytic concepts for understanding indigenous life. For example, in her fine chapter on building Nyinkka Nyunyu, she asserts that the concept of cultural broker "often obscures the deeply intersocial and intensely local aspects of cultural brokering" (p. 231). Having observed and discussed this process in the early days of self-determination, I respectfully disagree. Especially when highlighting the interplay of resources, meanings, and activities from diverse contexts, the concept of the "cultural broker" focuses attention on local negotiations and social performances. Further, one could argue that the "self-determination" policy enabled Aborigines to assume the role of cultural broker between their own local communities and the wider bureaucratic world previously monopolized by settlers, particularly missionaries, anthropologists, and local welfare officers. Far from devaluing the importance of local Aboriginal action, the fact that Aborigines now vigorously and effectively act

as cultural brokers in diverse settings illustrates her points about the subtle successes of self-determination. Her appreciation of the constraints on local action might also have been enhanced through a careful exploration of the process of co-optation, especially when co-optation is understood as an “alliance-making” process that mutually constrains the interacting parties as she so elegantly describes for indigenous–settler relationships in Central Australia. In her interpretation of Prime Minister Howard’s critique of self-determination, Christen might also have drawn on Judith Kapferer’s (1996) discussion of egalitarian individualism in Australian culture. For Kapferer, the central dilemma of Australian social life is how to accommodate difference in an egalitarian culture. Howard’s protests against acknowledging Aboriginal difference through “self-determination” and his cry to return to “one nation” perfectly illustrate Kapferer’s points.

In conclusion, Christen’s fine monograph illustrates that beautiful writing and thoughtful analysis serve anthropology well. All graduate students of indigenous–settler relations should read this book as a model to emulate. The chapter on Nyinkka Nyunyu should help undergraduates to perceive anthropology’s power to interpret and support community development, particularly in contexts of asymmetrical power and authority. I highly recommend this book for scholars, students, and activists who seek a detailed study of life in the political trenches of contemporary indigenous–settler relations.

REFERENCE CITED

- Kapferer, Judith
1996 *Being All Equal: Identity, Difference and Australian Cultural Practice*. Oxford: Berg.

Ethnic Entrepreneurs: Identity and Development Politics in Latin America

Monica C. DeHart. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010. 192 pp.

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Monica DeHart’s *Ethnic Entrepreneurs* provides a very timely examination of how the neoliberal “self-help” ethos has shaped development programs in the Third World, particularly in Latin America. DeHart shows surprising similarities in the ways that development policymakers have recently defined the indigenous person in Latin America and the Latin American migrant to the United States—two seemingly disparate social categories. She documents an important shift in development policymaking: whereas mainstream development institutions had previously argued that indigeneity and Third World origins signify backwardness or antimodernity, multilateral development institutions have since the 1990s begun promoting these categories of “indigenous” and “immigrant” as particularly entrepreneurial. DeHart convincingly shows how these transformed meanings emerged from the larger shift in development policymaking toward decentralization and community self-help that accompanied the neoliberal emphasis on shrinking the state’s role in the economy.

At the heart of this transformation, DeHart emphasizes, lies an irony. In the context of the launch of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), prominent Guatemalan development programs and their supporting multilateral institutions argued that a community-oriented spirit was central to entrepreneurship. These institutions

promoted the notion that indigenous culture provided particular tools for building small-scale business, including a uniquely indigenous spirit of communitarian entrepreneurship. Although scholars such as Nikolas Rose and Julia Paley have thoroughly interrogated the rise of “decentralization” as a dominant paradigm in development, DeHart brings to light the ways in which “indigenous community” and “immigrant community” have accrued particular value among transnational business leaders and development policymakers. Her book thus contributes to a small but growing literature, including recent work by Jean and John Comaroff, that traces the reformulation of “tribal” and “indigenous” into market-oriented entities.

The chapters each address particular moments in which international policymaking institutions and a prominent Guatemalan NGO, Asociación Cooperación para el Desarrollo Rural de Occidente (CDRO), frame indigenous people and Latin American immigrants to the United States as particularly able entrepreneurs. These moments include the attempts of a UN-sponsored program to lump all Latin American immigrants and Latinos together as a single, entrepreneurially oriented community, disregarding cleavages of class, race, and national origin (ch. 4). In another example, DeHart details the efforts by CDRO to create a business model for Maya farmers that overcomes problems common to development projects, such as rising inequality within communities. CDRO was also able to ensure that a firm market existed for the items that program participants