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NATURAL RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND INDIGENOUS LIVELIHOODS

Natural Resource Extraction and Indigenous Livelihoods

Development Challenges in an Era of Globalization

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Chapter 2

Mining in Aboriginal Australia: Economic Impacts, Sustainable Livelihoods and Cultural Difference at Century Mine, Northwest Queensland

David Martin, David Trigger and Joni Parmenter

This chapter examines the capacity of the Australian mining industry to provide livelihoods for the Aboriginal people of mine hinterlands. It uses a case study of the Century Mine in the Gulf of Carpentaria region of northwest Queensland to illustrate certain dilemmas confronting developers, governments and Aboriginal people themselves around gaining sustainable livelihoods through engagement with the mining industry.

Unlike the cases considered in other chapters of this volume, Australia is a wealthy, developed country. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2010 exceeded US$1.2 trillion, more than US$55,000 per capita (DFAT 2011). The extraction of mineral resources in Australia is a technically sophisticated industry that makes a very significant contribution to GDP, currently amounting to some AUS$121 billion annually, and employing nearly 190,000 people (Minerals Council of Australia 2011). Of these, some 5 per cent identify as Indigenous (MCA 2011: 64).[1] Many of the significant mining regions of Australia are located in remote parts of the country, where a substantial proportion of the population is Aboriginal, and where the natural increase of that minority is relatively high (Taylor 2009: 65). Some 60 per cent of mining operations in Australia have Aboriginal communities in their hinterlands, and the minerals industry is the largest private sector employer of Indigenous people (Minerals Council of Australia 2011: 64).

1 The term 'Indigenous' in the Australian context is used almost interchangeably with 'Aboriginal'. However, there are two distinct Indigenous groups in Australia – the Melanesian people of the Torres Strait Islands between Queensland and Papua New Guinea (some 80 per cent of whom have migrated to the mainland), and the Aboriginal peoples of the mainland. Statistics, such as socioeconomic indices such as employment levels, typically do not differentiate between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. In this chapter, where a source refers to 'Indigenous' people, we have maintained this term, but where we are discussing the central theme of engagement with the mining industry, we adopt the term 'Aboriginal' for clarity.

Yet, the Aboriginal populations of mine hinterlands are characterized by continuing high levels of relative disadvantage compared to the wider regional and national populations as measured by standard indicators (education levels, employment, health, longevity and so forth). Langton (2010) argues that in these regions, Aboriginal people suffer from a 'resource curse' in which overwhelmingly impoverished, marginalized and disengaged Aboriginal populations live in regions from which the enormous wealth generated by the resource industries fuels the national economy, and provides high incomes for a skilled workforce, including the significant numbers of those employed on a fly-in-fly-out basis from other parts of Australia.

Certainly, the extent to which Aboriginal people have benefited from participation in the Australian resource extraction industry, and how this translates in the long term into improved and sustainable livelihoods, requires further attention. A study of three major Australian agreements between resource developers and Aboriginal groups indicates that dependence on the state in hinterland Aboriginal populations remains high, and that standard socioeconomic indicators have improved only marginally (Altman 2009a; Taylor 2009). A particular and ongoing issue concerns differential access to benefits from agreements with mining companies between those Aboriginal people on the one hand on whose traditional lands the mining takes place (and who hold, or have claimed, native title or other legally recognized rights and thus who can negotiate agreements under various Federal and State statutory regimes), and on the other hand, the broader Aboriginal populations of the mine hinterlands as well as those from further afield. Much of the existing literature deals with agreement-making processes, the legal principles of agreement-making and the content of agreements (O'Faircheallaigh 2004; Langton and Palmer 2003). However, there has been relatively little attention given to either the implementation aspects of agreements, or the outcomes resulting from their implementation (O'Faircheallaigh 2002, 2004; Allbrook and Jebb 2004; Altman and Martin 2009; Martin 2009).

Scambury (2009) has argued that unfavourable agreement outcomes arise from the limitations imposed on Aboriginal aspirations for distinctive lifestyles and livelihoods. It has also been suggested that the limited visibility of the customary or informal economy restricts the value that can be derived both by the mining industry and Aboriginal people from their mutual engagement (Altman 2001; Scambary 2009). Altman (2009b: 18) suggests that the absence of support for alternative livelihood options has contributed to polarizing Aboriginal views concerning development options, and often forces Aboriginal communities into a choice between mining or welfare dependency. However, in our view, based on lengthy research engagements with a range of communities, there is a real question as to whether and to what extent the customary economy, or other non-market forms of livelihood, can meet the needs of the youthful and growing Aboriginal populations of remote Australia in general, and of the mine hinterlands, in particular.

Aboriginal People in the Australian Mining Industry

During the last decade or so, the Australian minerals industry peak representative body—the Minerals Council of Australia—has formally expressed commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainable development principles, a mandate that includes addressing Indigenous socioeconomic disadvantage (Tiplady and Barclay 2007). Developing and maintaining good relationships with Aboriginal people on whose traditional lands developments are occurring has become imperative to accessing and developing new resources cost effectively (Brereton and Parmenter 2008). Most major companies now have specific policies that recognize Indigenous people's interests (Doohan 2008; Langton and Palmer 2003, O'Faircheallaigh 2004; Tiplady and Barclay 2007; Vidler 2007, 2009).

A significant earlier impetus for this shift towards more 'socially responsible' practice was the formal recognition of certain potential Indigenous rights in lands and waters by the Australian Government following the landmark *Mabo* High Court judgement. The Commonwealth *Native Title Act* 1993 afforded native title claimants (not all community members) a negotiating right, though not a right of veto, in the mining approvals process. This introduction of Native Title negotiation rights has coincided with, if not partly caused, significant tension between those Aboriginal people favouring mining as the basis for economic opportunity, and those pursuing an agenda of securing rights to land and recognition and the strengthening of what is commonly termed 'culture' (Trigger 1997, 2000; Altman 2009b; Scambary 2009).

A further impetus for engagement by resource developers with Aboriginal people has arisen because of a shortage of appropriately skilled and available labour across Australia as a whole. While a significant number of skilled personnel are being brought in from overseas on special immigration visas, some companies have taken a strategic decision that, notwithstanding the high costs of addressing work readiness and other issues amongst the Aboriginal people of mine hinterlands, there is a business case to be made for seeking to maximize local Aboriginal employment (Tiplady and Barclay 2007; Taylor 2009: 68).

Government approaches in areas where there is mining activity emphasize the development opportunity presented to Aboriginal communities (Altman 2009b). The Government in power in 2011/2012 has encouraged partnerships and joint initiatives with industry as a way of addressing socioeconomic disadvantage. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to increase Indigenous employment and training between the Australian Government and the Minerals Council of Australia was reached in 2005. A number of mining companies have since become signatories to Regional Partnership Agreements with all levels of Government and Aboriginal groups.[2] More recently, the Minerals Council of Australia announced

2 See the ATNS 2012 Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project website http://www.atns.net.au/

the implementation of its *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy* (MCA 2011), which mirrors the national government's initiative (FAHCSIA 2011). In the State where our case study of Century Mine is situated, the Queensland Government and a peak industry body signed, in 2007, a similar MOU (Queensland Government and QRC, 2007). All of these initiatives and agreements emphasize areas of community development such as health, education, infrastructure and governance, not just employment creation and training, which had been the case with earlier initiatives.

Aboriginal participation in the mining industry has increased in both absolute and relative terms over the last few years (Brereton and Parmenter 2008). According to the 2006 National Census, Indigenous people constituted 2.3 per cent of the mining workforce, which broadly reflected their representation in the population. However, when disaggregated by regions where there is mining activity, Aboriginal people remain underrepresented relative to their proportion in those populations. For example, in the Pilbara region in Western Australia, Indigenous people represent 5.7 per cent of the total mining workforce and 13.7 per cent of the total population (ABS, 2006). In the Mt Isa region in Queensland, Indigenous people represent 6.3 per cent of the total mining workforce and 16.6 per cent of the total population (ABS 2006). The best known performers in terms of Indigenous representation in the workforce are the Rio Tinto Argyle Diamond Mine in Western Australia and MMG Century Zinc Mine in Queensland. Both these mines have maintained between 15 and 20 per cent Indigenous representation in their workforce. Notably, both mines have agreements in place that include provisions for employment for Aboriginal people. The emergence of such formal agreements, with some mining companies going further by developing broader Indigenous employment strategies and policies, may have influenced the significant increase of 79 per cent between 2001 and 2006 of Indigenous employees in the resources industry (from 1,390 to 2,499 persons, see ABS 2006). This increase is much higher than for the mining workforce generally and therefore cannot be explained solely by the recent resources boom.

Nonetheless, the industry has attracted some criticism for hiring people already employed and thereby not increasing the labour pool (Lenegan 2005). A further criticism has been that Indigenous people are not offered career development opportunities (Tiplady and Barclay 2007). The majority of Aboriginal employees in the Australian mining industry occupy semi-skilled (albeit often highly paid) positions, including truck or plant operator jobs (Tiplady and Barclay 2007). These offer few prospects in the longer term, and often disappear with greater automation (Brereton and Parmenter 2008). A few Indigenous-owned and operated businesses that service the mining industry and Aboriginal labour hire and training organizations have emerged over the last few years, but the numbers are small. In the State of Queensland, recent reports (Vidler 2007; 2009) suggest that the industry's focus is mainly on employment, with relatively few structured attempts to promote the development of businesses.

Aboriginal Livelihoods in Australian Mine Hinterlands

In commenting on livelihoods research, de Haan and Zoomers (2005) observe that the concept goes beyond just the economic or material objectives of life:

> This is not to say that livelihood is not a matter of material well-being, but rather that it also includes non-material aspects of well-being. Livelihood should be seen as a dynamic and holistic concept.

Similarly, Carney (1998: 4) has provided the following widely-cited definition:

> A livelihood system comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.

De Haan and Zoomers (2005: 30–31) note that sustainability is understood here as involving both long-term flexibility and ecological soundness, although environmental factors played a more prominent role in the livelihoods debate in the 1990s than is currently the case. They observe that an important achievement of the livelihoods approach is an improved understanding of the 'multidimensionality of poverty, which takes account of how poverty is perceived by the poor themselves'. Also significant in their view is its attention to the variety of 'capitals' on which the poor draw to derive their livelihoods, including conventional assets and various forms of human and social capital, with an emphasis on 'flexible combinations of, and trade-offs between, different capitals' (de Haan and Zoomers 2005: 33; see also Scoones 1998).

However, there are two broad arenas of critique of this commonly adopted framework, each raised by de Haan and Zoomers, which, in our view, are highly pertinent to the contexts of many Aboriginal Australians. The first is that the focus in livelihood approaches on interchanges and trade-offs between what are construed as various forms of 'capital' makes it difficult to move beyond just material motives and aspirations. Quoting Arce (2003: 205–6), de Haan and Zoomers question the reduction of 'livelihood to the mobilization and deployment of social and organizational resources for the pursuit of economic and environmental goals' (see also Scoones 2009: 177). The second, and underlying, arena of critique is that in their view, livelihood studies downplay potential limitations in people's *access* to livelihood opportunities and in their capacity for flexible interchanges of the various forms of capital. These limitations are held to arise through the particular configurations of power, systems of social relations, and the character of formal and informal institutions which may variously constrain or (we would argue) enable means of gaining a living for the group or individual concerned (de Haan and Zoomers 2005: 32–7).

A set of the informal institutions which govern people's capacity (and arguably motivations) to access opportunities for livelihoods constitutes what de Haan and

Zoomers (2005: 40, following Arce and Hebinck 2002, and Nooteboom 2003) term livelihood 'styles'. A style is understood to consist of: a specific cultural repertoire comprising shared experiences, knowledge, insights, interests, prospects and interpretations of the context; an integrated set of practices and artefacts used in making the living; a specific ordering of the interrelations with markets, technologies and institutions; and responses to policy frameworks. As they note, the concept of a 'style' as a distinctive ethos brought to bear by a group in gaining a livelihood shares much with Bourdieu's broader concept of 'habitus' – 'cognitive and motivating structures' and sets of habituated practices and dispositions which are appropriated and internalized in the course of engagement in everyday life, and which, in turn, generate the practices which reproduce social forms and institutions (Bourdieu 1977: 82–3). These structures may be subjective (although not necessarily brought to the level of discourse) but they are not unique to any given individual in the particular group or class.

Concepts of 'styles', cultural repertoires and 'habitus' of a group or class usefully introduce sociocultural factors into livelihoods frameworks. They challenge any neoliberal focus on individuals as essentially economic actors abstracted from particular connections to people, places, world views and ways of life—matters arguably of universal significance but especially so for the Aboriginal people of Australian mine hinterlands (Martin 2001, 2011). They acknowledge individual agency, but place it in the context of personal subjectivities and dispositions which are acquired through socialization and everyday praxis within the particular group, and which, in turn, are produced and reproduced over time through the wider structures and institutions within which the group is situated (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). Such factors are important when considering the nature of, and possibilities for, Aboriginal livelihoods to be gained through engagement with the mining industry. This is in no small part because the appropriateness, opportunities, entailments and risks of such engagements will be evaluated by the particular Aboriginal people themselves against their own distinctive repertoires of values, motivations and understandings, including those informing the means by which one can, or should, gain a living (Altman 2005a, 2005b; Scambary 2009). Thus, for example, there is an extensive literature which bears on the distinctive values and understandings which Australian Aboriginal people may bring to their engagement with the general economy (see discussions in Trigger 2005; Peterson 2005).

It is important to observe here, however, that it is erroneous to characterize such phenomena in terms of supposedly separate and autonomous Aboriginal domains. There is a body of rich ethnographic research demonstrating social distance between remote dwelling Aboriginal people and other Australians at the level of everyday interaction (Tonkinson 1974; von Sturmer 1984; Trigger 1986, 1992; Rowse 1992; Musharbash 2009). However, livelihoods for Aboriginal Australians, including those living in the more remote mine hinterlands, cannot be derived autogenously, and must include engagement with the general Australian—and thus global—economy. Aboriginal societies, cultures and economies are not and cannot be bounded entities; nowhere in Australia do Aboriginal people live in

self-defining and self-reproducing domains of meaning and practices, including economic ones—rather, they live in constantly transforming 'intercultural' worlds constituted since colonization by social, cultural and economic forms drawn from the dominant society as well as by those whose ultimate origins lie in pre-colonial Aboriginal culture (Merlan 1998; Hinkson and Smith 2005; Martin 2005: 112). Part of this embeddedness in the wider society entails changing levels of capacity to take up opportunities in the national economy.

Taylor (2009: 68) observes that irrespective of the steps taken by resource companies to meet Aboriginal employment targets set as a component of establishing a social license to operate, the additional jobs created may only keep pace with the growth of the working-age Aboriginal population. The author warns (*loc. cit.*) that '(w)hatever development options are pursued, substantial constraints on participation remain to be overcome across the spectrum of social and economic conditions'. To illustrate the extent of some of these constraints that have been quantified, Taylor provides what he terms 'indicative proxies of labour force exclusion' for the Pilbara region in northwest Australia, one of the major mining provinces and the basis of a large iron ore export industry. These data are reproduced in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Constraints on Aboriginal economic participation, Pilbara region, Australia, 2006

Indigenous population aged 15+	4,759
Has no post-school qualification	88%
Has less than Year 10 schooling	32%
Not in the labour force	46%
Hospitalized each year (all persons)	59%
Has diabetes (25 years and over)	21%
Has a disability	21%
Arrested each year	22%
In custody/supervision at any one time	6%
Achieves Year 7 literacy (current attendees)	60%
15 year olds surviving to age 65	< 50%

Source: Taylor (2009: 69), drawn from Taylor and Scambary (2005).

Taylor (2009) stresses that strategies directed at other avenues of economic engagement for Aboriginal people which may better accord with their particular development priorities and aspirations also need to be supported, such as those in cultural tourism, land and resource management, and art and craft manufacture. This accords with the central theme resonating in an extensive body of work by Altman (2001; 2005a, 2005b; 2009b) concerning what he terms an Aboriginal 'hybrid economy' involving state, market and customary components of

livelihoods. The author importantly notes that the relative significance of each of these components will be highly variable geographically: the customary sector is likely to be more significant in regions where for historical reasons, Aboriginal people have been able to maintain close associations with their traditional lands (and, we would add, those lands have not been degraded to the extent that they can no longer support substantial customary economic activity). Furthermore, Altman observes that empirically, the three sectors are highly interdependent, and that it is in the intersections between them that the most significant productive activity takes place. An example would be in the government resourcing of Aboriginal management of valuable or threatened ecosystems both on and off Aboriginal lands (Altman and Larsen 2007; LaFlamme 2007, 2011; Davies et al., 2008; Taylor 2009: 61–2). However, while there is, in our view, some validity to the arguments presented by scholars such as Altman (2001; 2005a, 2005b, 2009b) and Scambary (2009) that alternative Aboriginal development aspirations should be supported, these livelihood arenas are not immune from the demographic and capacity issues raised above. Nor are any livelihood arenas which are dependent on government resourcing for their ongoing viability immune from emerging fiscal constraints.

Case Study: The Century Zinc Mine

The open-cut Century Zinc Mine in the Gulf region of Northwest Queensland is one of the worlds largest and also produces lead and silver. Operated in 2012 by the Minmetals Group (MMG), the project proposal was originally developed by Conzinc Riotinto Australia (CRA). It is a 'fly-in-fly-out' operation in a remote region, staffed with employees who travel to the mine site from multiple locations within the Gulf and other towns and cities in Queensland. According to the most recent available data, Aboriginal employees make up close to 20 per cent of the total workforce (Brereton and Parmenter 2008).

The framework under which the mine manager and the contracting companies that actually undertake the mining operations engaging Aboriginal people was established by the Gulf Communities Agreement (GCA), signed following protracted and highly adversarial negotiations between the mining company, the Queensland State Government, and Aboriginal parties (Blowes and Trigger 1999). These negotiations were initially outside of the ambit of the *Native Title Act* and involved sections of the broader Aboriginal community of the Gulf region. However, with compulsory arbitration instituted under the Act when negotiations appeared to have reached an impasse, there was a necessary change in focus to negotiating with the registered native title claimants of areas impacted by the mine and its infrastructure under the Right to Negotiate provisions of the *Native Title Act* (Martin 1998; Trigger 1998). The GCA was ultimately signed in May 1997 between Century Zinc Limited (the original developer of the mine), the State of Queensland, and representatives of three Aboriginal groups asserting native title, whose respective claims encompassed the mining lease itself, the slurry pipeline corridor between the mine and the port,

and the port area. The GCA actually came into effect in September 1997 when Pasminco purchased the Century Mine project from Rio Tinto.

The GCA committed the mine owners to spend AUS$60 million over the life of the mine on employment and training for 'local' Aboriginal people, support for Aboriginal business development, and annual payments to certain specified organizations whose memberships were drawn from these native title groups. An additional AUS$30 million was committed by the State Government (Blowes & Trigger 1999). Moreover, a regime was established for native title group involvement in identifying, recording and, where possible, protecting sites of cultural significance during the construction phase; an advisory role was established for native title group representatives in mine environmental management; and a number of pastoral properties owned by the mining company were to be gradually transferred to ownership by the relevant native title groups (Martin 1998, 2009). In return, the native title signatories committed to supporting the development of the mine.

Although as mentioned, there were direct benefit payments to some half dozen Aboriginal organizations (at least to the extent that they were able to meet administrative and legal operational requirements), the key elements of the GCA from the perspective of the mining company and the State Government (apart from the social license to operate) were the employment and economic development provisions. These recognized the socioeconomic disadvantages of the native title holders and the Aboriginal residents of the specified Gulf communities, and were directed towards what were termed 'local Aboriginal people'. This category was defined in the GCA as those who were members of the three native title groups, wherever they might live, together with Aboriginal residents of certain specified communities in the Gulf area with significant Aboriginal populations, most of whom were not members of the three native title groups. This has meant, for example, that preferential Aboriginal enterprise development and employment strategies and targets could not be fulfilled by utilizing skilled Aboriginal people from elsewhere—although there are no barriers as such to their engagement.[3] The GCA is similar in its principles to a number of other major native title agreements in Australia, in particular, the Western Cape Communities Coexistence Agreement signed with communities in western Cape York peninsula, the Argyle diamond mine agreement in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, and the Yandicoogina agreement in the

3 The first five-yearly review of the GCA (Pasminco et al., 2002) found that in fact the recording of Aboriginal employment against GCA requirements failed to differentiate between 'local' Aboriginal employment and that of Aboriginal people from elsewhere, and in some cases actually included local non-Indigenous residents. Distinguishing who is 'local', who is considered a native title holder and at times who definitely has some Aboriginal ancestry, is not necessarily an easy matter for company personnel including those Aboriginal people working explicitly in this aspect of the mine's community relations program.

Pilbara iron ore mining province, also in Western Australia. All were negotiated by subsidiaries of Rio Tinto. An important similarity shared by many of these agreements is that they seek to benefit not only those whose traditional lands are being mined, but also the broader regional Aboriginal population.

In the region surrounding the Century Mine, the majority of Aboriginal people have poor levels of education and health, and sub-standard housing, particularly in the discrete Aboriginal communities of Mornington Island and Doomadgee (Martin 1998; Pasminco et al., 2002). Prior to the development of the Century Mine, most Aboriginal employment in these communities was through the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme in which unemployed Aboriginal people engaged in state-subsidized community services and other work (Martin 1998). There was limited focus on building institutional capacity (Martin 2009), and as the Century Mine negotiations indicated, highly contested ideas on the future development of communities in the lower Gulf area (CSRM 2008; Scambary 2009; Trigger 1997, 1998).

This contestation over appropriate development pathways was manifest in the negotiation process, not least of all amongst the Aboriginal people of the region themselves (Trigger 1997), and is reflected in the apparently competing Aboriginal aspirations that are set out in the GCA as follows (Gulf Communities Agreement 1997: 5):

> The Native Title Groups and the members of the Communities who live in the area today have goals and aspirations for themselves and their communities. Those goals and aspirations include:
>
> a. to remove the Native Title Groups and the other members of the Communities from welfare dependency and, to the greatest extent possible, promote economic self-sufficiency;
> b. to participate as fully as possible in the Project and mine related ventures;
> c. to be able to live on their traditional lands;
> d. to protect fully their natural environment and its resources;
> e. to identify and protect sites of significance to the Native Title Groups;
> f. to ensure that the material benefits do not corrupt indigenous cultures but enable people to re-affirm the cultures and enhance the lifestyles of the members of the Native Title Groups and other members of the Communities through community and cultural development initiatives; and
> g. to ensure that the standard of health, employment rates, education opportunities and other social indices of Native Title Groups and other members of the Communities is comparable to ordinary Australian standards.

This agreement clause is part of a complex document negotiated with the assistance of an array of technical experts, particularly lawyers. It is imperative, therefore, that it, along with the GCA more broadly, be understood as a form of 'translation' in a cross-cultural environment from the diverse worldviews, priorities and aspirations of the Aboriginal people concerned into the negotiated and carefully structured language of a contract enforceable under Australian law (Martin 2009). Nonetheless, there are two clear themes set out in this aspirational statement. The first relates to what might be seen as addressing the socioeconomic disadvantage of members of the native title groups and other Aboriginal people in the Gulf region—such as removing them from welfare dependency, enabling participation in the mining project, and improving their current poor health and education. The second theme relates to matters implied as pertaining to the domain of Aboriginal 'culture'—enabling the Aboriginal people concerned to live on their traditional lands, to protect their natural environment and its resources, and to identify and protect sites of significance. Clause (f) is of particular interest, in that it foreshadows an opposition between the material benefits arising from the agreement (to be directed towards addressing socioeconomic disadvantage) and Aboriginal cultures, with the latter being seen as potentially corrupted by the former. We will return to this dichotomy in the concluding section of this Chapter. First, however, we briefly examine the impacts of the mine.

A study by CSRM (2008) reported that Century Mine has, to date, impacted on the region in two main ways. Firstly, it has been a quite significant provider of jobs and training opportunities to local Aboriginal people, for an average of around 150 employees per year. Overall, more than 600 Indigenous people have obtained work at the mine in the period up to mid-2007, with 200 completing pre-vocational training. The mine has also facilitated the development of some Aboriginal enterprises, both directly (through contracts to provide mining related services) and indirectly through the GCA, by funding the Aboriginal Development Benefits Trust (ADBT) to provide financial assistance to new Indigenous businesses in the region. Secondly, the operation has significantly increased income flows, mainly through the payment of salaries and wages to Aboriginal employees. The mine is also a major ratepayer, contributing AUS$1.7 million annually to Burke Shire and AUS$277,000 to Carpentaria Shire. Other income flows occur through annual payments to native title parties, cumulatively totalling AUS$5.8 million to July 2008, with a balance at the time not distributed at AUS$1.2 million (CSRM, 2008).

The second five-yearly review of the GCA, undertaken in 2008 by consultants *The Right Mind* (TRM), reported that employment was the major single benefit to community residents. However, there were no indicators which monitor progress in the area of removing welfare dependency, and the authors of the review were of the opinion that any would show low impact (TRM 2008: 40). Overall, the review found while there are some areas of negative process—for example, Indigenous leadership and management has not increased, and there is a lack of leadership and planning of committees established by the agreement—the mine has improved the quality of life for a significant number of Gulf residents (TRM, 2008). In relation

to the State Government's role since the beginning of the agreement, the review found that since the agreement was signed, corporate memory, commitment and will to leverage the agreement have been all but lost (TRM 2008: 22).

The most recent data suggest that Aboriginal people represent 20 per cent of the total workforce at Century Mine, which puts it in the leading group of Australian mines in terms of both the level of Aboriginal employment and the relative sophistication of the supporting organizational systems (Brereton and Parmenter 2008). However, some communities have been more successful than others in accessing employment and opportunities. Of the three main Gulf communities, Normanton has traditionally had the highest level of representation, followed by Doomadgee and Mornington Island (Barker and Brereton 2004, CSRM 2008). The small township of Burketown, with its substantial Aboriginal population, also had a high level of representation. The failure to focus on the more disadvantaged communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island—where a significant number of Waanyi native title holders reside—was identified as a major issue in the first five-year review (Pasminco et al., 2002).

Another factor to consider is that most of the Aboriginal employees at Century Mine have been in entry-level positions (albeit often highly paid), such as truck driving, and relatively few have acquired trade skills or managerial experience. This pattern is representative of the Australian Mining Industry more generally (Tiplady and Barclay 2007), as well as the Canadian mining industry (Gibson and Klinck 2005). This could be due to the lower standard of education in Indigenous communities, the lack of career development for Indigenous employees, and the absence of legal requirements for companies to train local Indigenous employees (Brereton and Parmenter 2008, Tiplady and Barclay 2007). It could also be due to a lack of desire to pursue real career training and development in the mining industry, particularly in light of distinctive Aboriginal values pertaining to work and related participation in the economy outlined previously.

Despite this bottom-heavy distribution, data collected in 2007 indicate that Century Mine has been successful in providing opportunities for Indigenous people to enter and remain in mainstream employment and in promoting positive attitudes towards work (Parmenter and Love 2007). Of the 89 Indigenous employees surveyed, 54 per cent were previously working for CDEP or were unemployed, 41 per cent had worked for the mine for over two years, and 96 per cent planned to continue working either in the mining industry (52 per cent) or other employment (44 per cent) post-Century. The overall turnover rate for Aboriginal employees in 2002–3 was approximately 30 per cent, which was roughly comparable to the rate for all workers (Barker and Brereton 2004).

Employment at Century appears to have increased the geographic mobility of Aboriginal employees within and out of the Gulf region; the mine has reportedly also made available at times seats on its flights for community members needing to travel for compassionate or medical reasons. Thirty-five per cent of respondents had moved residence since starting work, with around half of these (49 per cent) moving out of the Gulf region. Respondents cited problems in their community

and access to better education and health services as the most common reasons for leaving. Some said the added pressure to share money with family was also a factor in their decision to move.

The ability to travel independently around the region was found to be important to many of the respondents. Sixty-three per cent of GCA employees had purchased a car since working at the mine. Several interview participants noted that purchasing a four-wheel-drive vehicle made it easier to fish, hunt, visit relatives and maintain a connection to country. As Scambary (2009) notes from his doctoral research, a number of Century Mine employees indicated their aspiration to obtain 'rangelands', upon which to hunt and live and regarded their employment as a strategic path to gaining the necessary resources to realize this goal.

The GCA included provisions for the transfer of a number of pastoral properties to local Aboriginal ownership, and has resulted in an increase in the amount of land under Aboriginal control. Two Waanyi companies, Lawn Hill and Riversleigh Pastoral Holding Company (LHRPHC) and Turn off Lagoon Pastoral Holding Company (TOPHC), now own these three valuable cattle stations (TRM 2009). Riversleigh sublets Lawn Hill to non-Aboriginal interests for commercial pastoral enterprises from which it receives an income, and also a proportion of the breeding stock to build up a viable cattle enterprise of its own eventually. LHRPHC has also conducted successful pastoral training programs for young local Aboriginal men on the Riversleigh property. Turn off Lagoon country is unsuitable for a modern cattle enterprise, and is mainly used for camping, hunting and fishing by its Aboriginal owners. Thus, these three properties constitute a large area of country which provides diverse forms of livelihood for its Waanyi and other Aboriginal owners, albeit not on a scale to support large numbers of people.

In summary, the Century Mine has created significant employment opportunities and income flows for a relatively modest proportion of the Aboriginal people in the region—although not on a scale to address in a sustainable way the socioeconomic disadvantage of the native title groups, let alone the broader Gulf Aboriginal population. However, these benefits have been unevenly distributed with Mornington Island and Doomadgee faring less well than Normanton and Burketown. A few Aboriginal businesses have been developed but the future of these is uncertain given their reliance on the presence of the mine. There appears to have been little improvement of health and education standards since Century Mine began operating, and physical infrastructure remains underdeveloped (CSRM 2008).

Conclusion: Sustainable Livelihoods, Sustaining Cultural Identity?

We have discussed how in the case of Century Mine the Gulf Communities Agreement set out the aspirations of the native title groups which are parties to it in terms of a perceived tension or contradiction between their economic engagement with the mine and the wider society on the one hand and maintenance of Aboriginal

culture on the other. This ostensible contradiction reflects the terms of what is often a polarized debate in Australia on how to address the manifestly poor socioeconomic status of many Aboriginal people, most particularly those resident in remote regions. In such regions where there is mining, following Langton (2010), we noted a 'resource curse' for Aboriginal people, many of whom live in comparative poverty in the midst of the enormous wealth generated by that mining.

It could be argued that implementation of the GCA itself offers evidence of such a contradiction, or at least of a tension. There has been an ongoing discrepancy between the relatively high proportion of people employed from the town of Normanton and the small township of Burketown on the one hand and the numbers from the two ex-mission discrete Aboriginal communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island on the other hand. Normanton is a small, relatively remote, township where race relations have certainly not always been easy, but where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have grown up in close proximity, and where many have worked, intermarried, gone to school, played sport together, and so forth (Pasminco et al. 2002). But while Aboriginal people in Normanton are to varying degrees integrated into the town's society and the regional economy (as are those living in Burketown), Doomadgee and Mornington Island are more like enclave Aboriginal populations in which lives are less connected to the institutions of the wider society. They are townships in each of which reside more than a thousand members of 'tribal' groups (such as Waanyi people) who have had their native title and thus continuity of traditional culture recognized by Australian law (though similar attempts are also underway in Normanton, and there are members of native title groups also in Burketown).

But is there in fact a contradiction between sustained cultural traditions and economic engagement? We argue that this is not necessarily the case. In looking at the particular instance of a differential success in recruiting Aboriginal employees from one township or another, there are multiple factors which are likely to be germane, and it is not possible to determine whether 'culture' in the more limited sense that is referred to in the quoted GCA clause—in fact a sense which is widely found in Aboriginal discourse as well as in wider Australian society—is in any straightforward way a causal factor. We argued earlier that Aboriginal societies, cultures, and economies cannot be viewed as bounded entities, and are constantly transforming through engagement with the dominant society. Indeed, it could be argued that the very process of negotiations and engagement with the wider society and political economy can reinforce traditional culture, or at least aspirations for its recuperation (Robins 2003: 283).

Furthermore, 'culture' in particular cannot usefully or appropriately be seen as an aggregate of only those attributes which have been inherited solely from a traditional Aboriginal past; the culture of Aboriginal people in Australia's Gulf County, in 2012, exhibits sets of dispositions, values, understandings and practices that have been constituted since colonization through an interaction between forms drawn from the dominant society and those whose ultimate origins lie in the pre-colonial past. From this perspective, then, the culture of

the Aboriginal parties to the GCA is not just constituted by exotica such as dance, ritual, and spiritual beliefs or by the character of people's traditional connections to ancestral lands, but also by the values, dispositions and practices nowadays brought to bear in all aspects of life, including those related to gaining a livelihood.

There can be no doubt that large-scale mining, such as that which is taking place at the Century zinc deposit, can have both dramatic negative and positive impacts on the lives of local Aboriginal groups and communities. But social change and transformation is occurring in remote Indigenous Australia irrespective of whether there are mines in the vicinity. The desire of the Aboriginal parties negotiating the GCA to address socioeconomic disadvantage reflects an acceptance that all was not right with their communities, and that they wished to utilize resources and opportunities provided under the agreement in order to address this disadvantage. Native Title agreements such as the GCA are explicitly transformative, irrespective of whether or not their aims include the protection and maintenance of certain aspects of Aboriginal culture (Martin 2009: 108–112). Their objectives—such as financial benefits and economic development through employment, training and business enterprise—are predicated precisely upon the transformation of the Aboriginal parties' existing socioeconomic status (Martin 2009: 111, Langton 2013), and thus, in part, transforming the everyday habitus and approaches to regular work that form a critical part of contemporary culture.

Our approach in this chapter is thus consistent with arguments that there is not a single mode of modernity but rather multiple forms, each influenced by specific sets of traditions, cultural values and histories (Eisenstadt 2000). Nor should it be assumed that traditional and modernist identities are mutually exclusive. Drawing on his life experience in a northeast Australian Aboriginal community, and the writings of Sen (2006), Pearson (2006) has challenged what he terms a 'reductive approach to identity', which assumes that the only possibility is of a singular affiliation of the individual or the group. The author prefers the notion of 'layered identities' in his writings about Aboriginal economic and cultural futures. His argument is that cultural distinctiveness and integration—most particularly through education and the resulting productive activity in what he terms the 'real economy'—are not mutually exclusive. In Pearson's view, some form of integration is in fact essential to the maintenance of viable cultural distinctiveness in remote Aboriginal Australia. In terms of our discussion of mining, then, productive livelihoods, including those gained through mining and other arenas of the market economy, can be seen as essential to the maintenance of 'culture' in any sustainable form over coming decades.

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