

Beyond paperclips: Alternative development in North Australia

A post-capitalist perspective on Cattle, Culture, Climate, and Conservation, with a convivial proposal fit for the polycrisis of our times.

John Brisbin, john@ethicalfeast.net

Acknowledgments

This presentation began as an outline for a larger essay on how best to respond to the intransigent problems that a society suffused in financialised “realities” appears to suffer from, particularly in the contested domains associated with land management, traditional cultures, and exposure to climate change impacts.

I have been inspired and motivated by the work of my colleagues Prof Kamaljit Sangha and Dr Abner Yalu. We are looking forward to producing a jointly-authored work that brings a more structured approach to the central recommendations of this presentation.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the encouragement and advice offered by Prof Jeremy Russell-Smith whose pioneering research, field work, and relentless advocacy in North Australia continues to deliver essential on ground benefits for people and Country.

Disclaimers

Every attempt has been made to obtain rights and clearances for the images that appear in the presentation. Attribution is provided in the Media Credits.

All words are mine or those of contributors as noted. No AI has been used in the text of this presentation. AI has been used as a research tool to surface hard-to-locate references, an especially important function for independent commentators without access to institutional literature services.

[Ethical Feast](#) is a loose collection of ideas I maintain for public interest. I have no conflicts to declare.

Cite:

Brisbin J (2026) Beyond Paperclips: Alternative Development for North Australia. In 'Proceedings of the 2026 Darwin Conference', (Australian Rangeland Society)

Copyright: CC-BY-NC-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>)



Can I invite you to take a deep breath, step back a couple of layers, and permit yourself to admit that, whatever it is we're doing in North Australia, whatever it is that we reasonable people call Business-as-Usual, it's not working. The cumulative effect of our collective activities is a net negative. It's not delivering for communities, nor for country.

The land may be commercially productive, but it's increasingly expensive to keep it that way. The Beetaloo might be worth a fortune, but only if we're happy to ignore the cost of climate chaos. We've got more green and red tape than ever, yet biodiversity is tanking. And most tragically, people are hurting. Communities get injected annually with billions in support programs and yet they continue to be wracked by the trauma of dispossession, systemic disadvantage, and deaths of despair.

What is the problem?

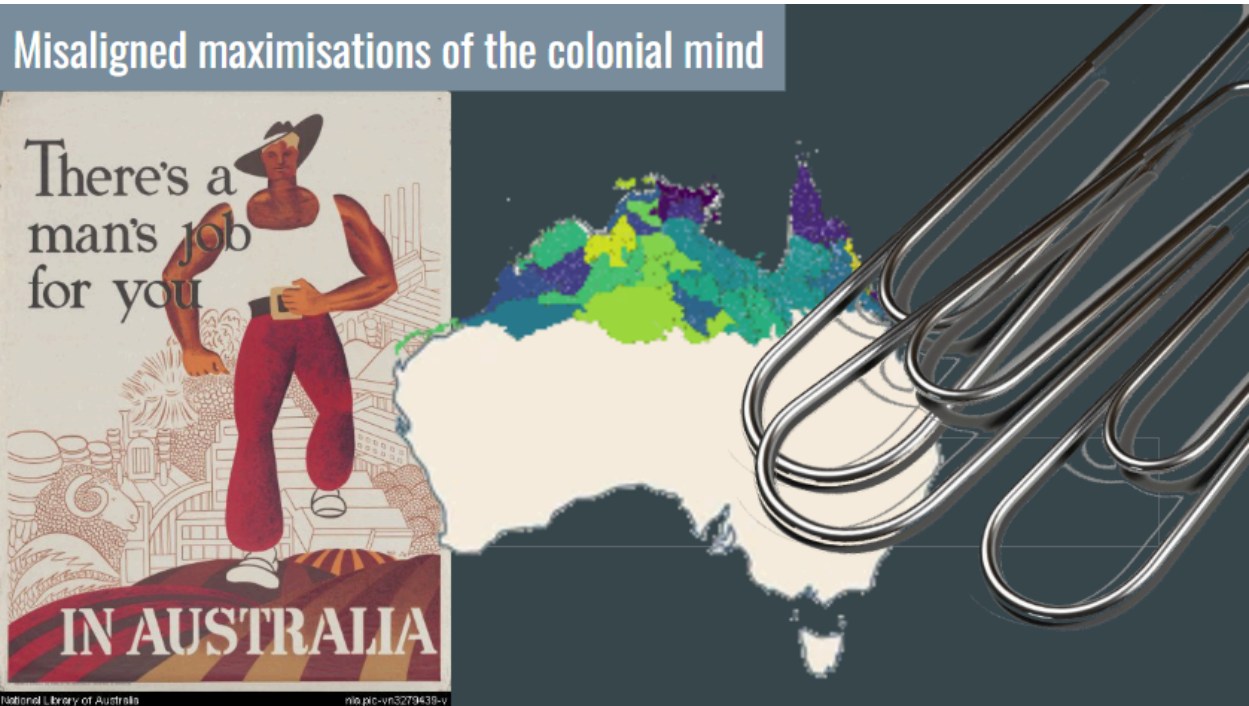
There is a singular causal factor. It's a cross-cutting dynamic that traduces our best efforts in every domain: cattle, carbon, culture, conservation...all are subject to the relentless lash of the same whip. And that whip is the economy.

Or...at least... this pernicious version of an economy.

Because there are alternatives. There are different economic arrangements that we can, and should, be exploring. Instead of today's race to the edge of collapse, imagine if the economy functioned to improve our levels of resilience, health, connectedness, and sociability. Imagine if the economy's invisible hand functioned to maximise living landscapes and local livelihoods? Can we imagine that? I certainly hope so.

I imagine such an economy would require 3 more C's: capabilities, convivial tools, and the Commons. Yet getting from here to there requires an examination of another big C: cultural context.

So, I'd like to begin by drawing a connection between this glorious country we call North Australia, colonisation, and paperclips.



Paperclips refers to the cautionary thought experiment¹ proposed by philosopher Nick Bostrom. He warned that an AI could misunderstand whatever instructions we thought we had given it, and could end up using its immense capabilities to convert the entire planet into something as trivial as paperclips. In other words, the problem of goal alignment is existential.

Now let's replace AI and paperclips with capitalism and finance.

In the 1600's capitalism metastasized across the western European mind² providing cultural justification for the colonial project that arrived – up here – in the 1870s with surveyor's chains in one hand and neck chains in the other.

Development in the North has been particularly brutal³. It's an ongoing process of criminal theft, dispossession, and ecosystem degradation, all conforming to the simple rule of capital maximisation.

By the time Kidman pegged out his empire of grass, global finance was powering up on the monumental grease fire of fossil fuel exploitation and the colonial wealth pump was in full operation, imposing the doctrine of capital around the entire planet.

¹ See *Ethical Issues In Advanced Artificial Intelligence* (Bostrom 2003)

² Various accounts are available, depending on your preferences. For some, the spread of capitalism is evidence of man's fundamentally selfish nature and flawed character. For others, it is evidence of a naturally arising potential that, in a functioning culture, can be kept in check (Kimmerer 2013; Yunkaporta 2019; Wilson-Lee 2022). A more austere and theoretical account of the process was explored by Hofstadter (1983) with an eye on Dawkins' "memes." With specific regard to the ongoing displacement of living systems (human, other-than-human, and all the complexity between) see the account provided by Paradies (2020)

³ Count the massacres at (Ryan et al. 2024). Listen to the cultural silence (Bottoms 2013). Australia is, of course, not exceptional. The world-wide barbarity of capital-driven development is well beyond defence and continues apace (Hickel et al. 2022). It's just that the injustices here are the ones we have the deepest obligation to address.

Misaligned maximisations of the colonial mind



And here we are. The financial imperative is ubiquitous. Capital calls the shots. It owns our cultural narratives, its precepts are pumped through our institutions, it paralyses our social imagination, and then stretches outward, through a myriad of procedural instruments, to anchor itself into reef, rainforest, and rangeland.

Thus, the nurturing relationships between people and Country are now attenuated through the constraints of capitalist objectives. Finance separates us and dissolves our shared aspirations into a million selfish bank accounts.



We are cut off from the larger community of life, starved for meaning, and confused as to our purpose. Our societies turn inwards, become brittle and intolerant. Our politics lose gravitas and descend into the dull, deranged spectacle of elites savagely jostling one another for the mere illusion of power⁴.

So, Bostrom's nightmare has already occurred: the paperclip maximiser is in full operation. We moderns have invited a ledger of symbols, an endless string of 1s and 0s, to interpenetrate and subsume the very body that is our home. And our cultural inertia still pushes hard in this direction⁵.

In 2015 the Commonwealth released its White Paper for Developing North Australia⁶. We're now just over 10 years into its 30 year vision, and there are few signs that this (very) white paper is anything more than an extension of the extractivist, colonial mindset that defines business-as-usual in Australia⁷ right into the current day.

Now, Frederic Jameson reckoned that it's easier for people to imagine the end of the world than imagine the end of capitalism⁸. That's a sobering thought when you really think about it. Let's defy Jameson and think of something else.

⁴ See Turchin(2024) for a very useful framing of the conditions that lead to social instability. The two key drivers are economic inequality and "elite overproduction." We are undoubtedly in the midst of a spike in both these factors.

⁵ And we're still happy to let finance dictate the "efficient allocation" of our most precious resources, eg high-speed water rights trading(Hamilton and Kells 2021). Contrast with the work of Poelina et al on the Fitzroy(2019)

⁶ An appalling "achievement" of the short-lived Tony Abbott, the White Paper(Commonwealth 2015) is disgraceful in the narrowness of its vision and has been rightfully rejected by just about everyone except the capitalist class. See a particularly forceful commentary from Peter Yu and colleagues at

⁷ It's difficult to estimate just how entrenched a society's "mind" actually is. Interesting to hear Watson reflect on Australia's relationship with *The Bush* (2014), and it was a privilege to chew on these ideas with Friedel(2020).

⁸ If nothing else from this presentation makes an impact, I sincerely hope this does. It is an astonishing fact of our current era that we assume advances can be achieved in every domain of life, but that the "rules" of the economy are somehow immutable. The specific quote cited here is in *Seeds of Time*(Jameson 1994), but for an insightful (and more approachable) elaboration see Mark Fisher's work, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalist_Realism.

Conviviality, capabilities, and the Commons

Conviviality, capabilities, and the Commons

1. **Autonomy:** Does the strategy or policy increase community decision-making power and local capability?
2. **Interdependence:** Does it strengthen relationships between people, Country, and institutional partners?
3. **Proportionality:** Are risks and costs fairly shared across actors, yielding society-wide benefit maximisation *and* individual flourishing?

HDI: A Long & Healthy Life + Access to Knowledge + Decent Standard of Living

We're proposing a radically divergent, convivial alternative for *the North*. Conviviality, as developed by Ivan Illich(1973), insists that societies must recognise and celebrate strict limits on technological and industrial growth so that benefit, both individual and communal, can be maximised with active regard for the other-than-human world⁹.

What that means in practice is a matter for contextualised negotiation by the people participating in that society. In other words, conviviality must be co-created as an ongoing process: it cannot be preemptively encoded¹⁰.

Thus, we do not seek a recipe for how to manage civil affairs¹¹. Instead, Illich offers three principles: Autonomy, Interdependence, and Proportionality.

1. **Autonomy:** Does the strategy or policy increase community decision-making power and local capability?
2. **Interdependence:** Does it strengthen relationships between people, Country, and institutional partners?
3. **Proportionality:** Are risks and costs fairly shared across actors, yielding society-wide benefit maximisation *and* individual flourishing?

⁹ See the work of Stoeckl et al at *Australian Indigenous insights into ecosystem services: Beyond services towards connectedness – People, place and time*(2021)

¹⁰ Relationality is the central principle anchoring Indigenous cultures into their Country, Kin, and themselves. Mary Graham has explored this theme with great insight and frankness over decades. See, for example: (1999, 2014; Johnson et al. 2016)

Key to relationality is the ever-shifting dynamics that are a feature of living, evolving processes. This necessitates a worldview with adaptive sensitivity at its core. The move away from centralised, totalising conceptual frameworks has, thankfully, picked up speed in recent years. For an engaging, first-person account of that journey, see *At Work in the Ruins*(Hine 2024). A more academic interrogation of capitalist alienation and post-modern precarity is given by Tsing in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*(2015).

¹¹ One of my transformative moments came from this presentation by Prof Christie on the ways in which Indigenous Law is encoded in the act of living(2007).

These principles can be used by community to assess how well any given proposal aligns with their goals¹².

Supporting this process is the capabilities framework provided by Amartya Sen and which now forms the foundation for the UN's Human Development Index. The HDI evaluates society on three dimensions:

- A Long & Healthy Life
- Access to Knowledge
- Decent Standard of Living

These factors are fully elaborated in the HDI materials and have been extensively developed by advocates. What is missing is the broadscale, real-world deployment. And that's what we're proposing for the North.

¹² Conviviality is explored in the context of conservation by Buscher and Fletcher(2020) with sharp sensitivity to the need for a "third way" approach to break the stalemate between divergent views of conservation. Central to their analysis is that the crisis in conservation is merely one thread of the polycrisis. And they, like many others, conclude that the profound changes needed will begin to flow naturally once the hegemony of capital is sufficiently reduced.

Conviviality, capabilities, and the Commons

1. Instantiating a **hybrid economic zone** across North Australia
2. Legitimising community-scale **governance processes centred on relationality**
3. Reimagining **resilience as a social imperative** and foundation for a good life

⇒ Requires a **crack in the hegemon of capital**

To deploy the principles of conviviality and make progress on the HDI standards, I think we'll need three transformative processes:

1. Instantiating a “hybrid economic zone” across North Australia
2. Legitimising community-scale governance processes centred on relationality
3. Reimagining resilience as a social imperative and foundation for a good life¹³

Deployment of these ideas relies on broad support from the Australian public, and equally important, support from a sufficiently nimble cadre of disaffected elites.

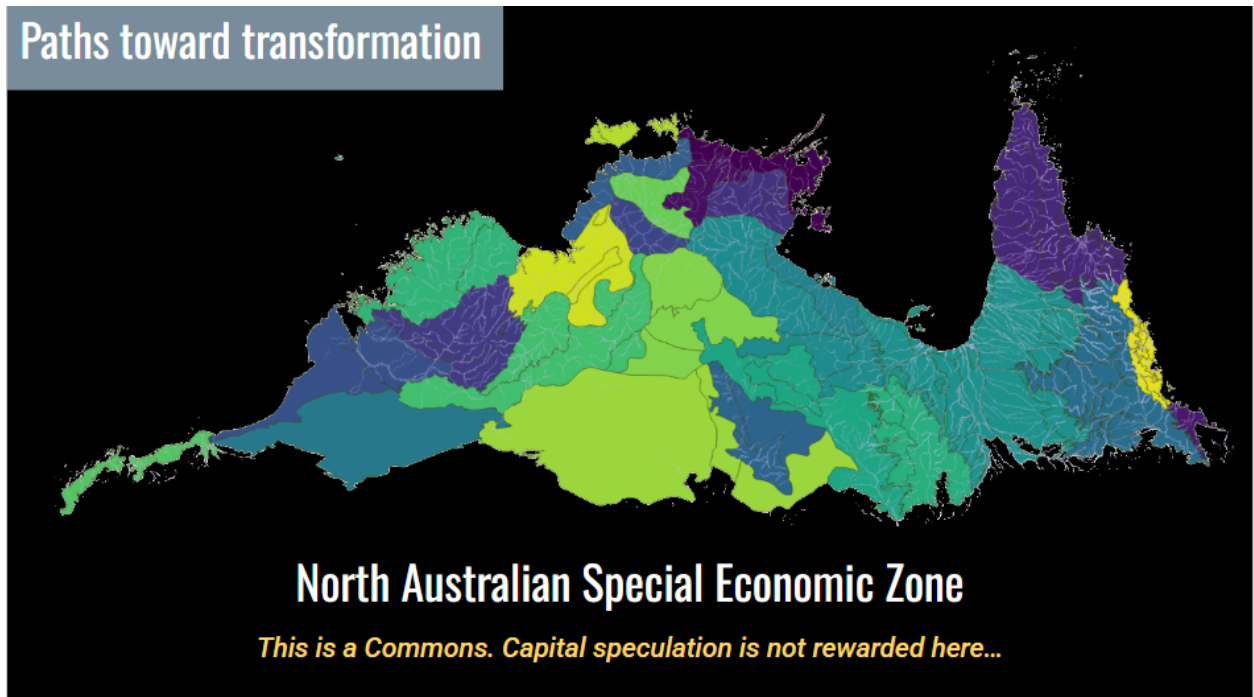
All of these require displacement of the hegemonic position of capital within our culture. That's no small challenge, but adhering to the simplistic algorithms of finance is plainly suicidal¹⁴.

¹³Per Jeremy Lent's(2026) outlines for an “ecocivilisation”. This the third in his outstanding series of investigations into why we are where we are. See also: *Patterning Instinct*(Lent and Capra 2017) and *The Web of Meaning*(Lent 2021) Highly recommended!

¹⁴A growing sense of restlessness is evident in the body politic. People are quoting Gramsci quite a lot these days See the Prison Notebooks(Wikipedia contributors 2026). Gramsci actually said: “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.” This assessment could easily apply to the terminal decay of late-stage capitalism, as explored by de Oliveria in *Hospicing Modernity*(2022), or provocatively, by Varoufakis in *Technofeudalism: What killed Capitalism*(2024).

Even defenders of Modernity could admit that it appears to have stranded us on a local maxima. So much energy wasted: the unreflective use of fossil fuels powering a great acceleration(J. R. McNeill 2022) into nothing of particular significance aside from perhaps another great extinction event.

Paths toward transformation



Step 1: Establish a carve-out for North Australia¹⁵.

Enact a special economic arrangement designed as a sort of reverse enclosure. Subvert the notion of real estate speculation and re-establish the commons as the default tenure for land. Explicitly extend Indigenous concepts of stewardship and custodial relationships with Country.

Within this zone, all rural leasehold and freehold land will be acquired by the Cth at fair market value. All up, the cost of acquisition would be in the range of \$50B¹⁶. Another \$50B might be needed to buy out ongoing commercial operations such as mining, fossil fuel development, and logistics.¹⁷ The acquisition of the North for public good could be achieved,

¹⁵ The North needs to be legible as a jurisdiction so we can answer the question: “What laws apply here, now?” Boundaries are integral to modern ideas of legal dominion as well as to the more fluid and contextual notions of Indigenous law. Both types of intelligence are necessary. We propose to begin with the IBRA regions, then modify that to account for catchments, natural linkages, and cultural connectivity. Through discussion at community level we should be able to reach a sufficiently useful definition of North Australia.

¹⁶ Very difficult to estimate, but for a start see:

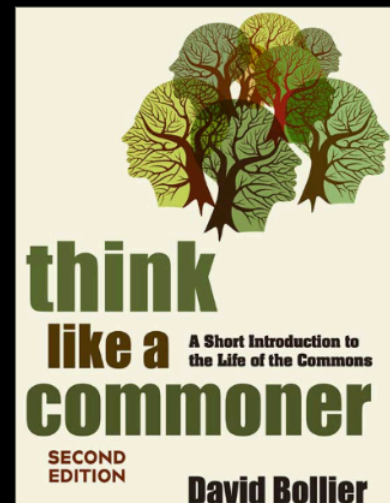
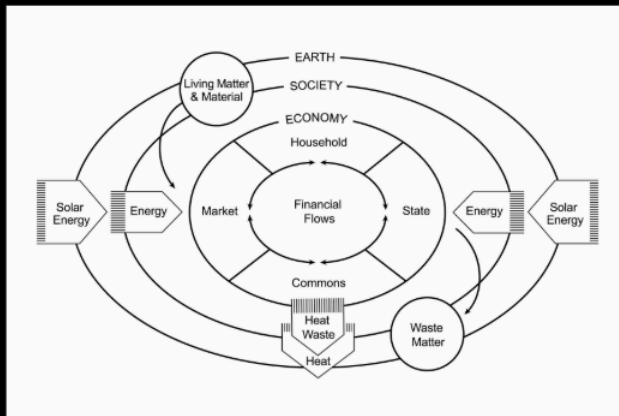
<https://www.brokernews.com.au/news/breaking-news/farmland-boom-stalls-rural-property-market-hit-s-plateau-287326.aspx>, and

<https://www.farmlandgrab.org/post/32803-dominant-players-in-australia-s-rural-property-market-revealed> As for the right of the nation to manage tenure, see the uncompromising assertions provided by Edwards in *From Red to Green to Black* (2018) and the short version (NoiseCat 2017)

¹⁷ Claims of lost earning potential would be subject to the same heavy discount rate that climate budgets are currently subject to. At least some serious economists have argued for a climate investment discount rate based on more plausible forecasting logic (Newell and Pizer 2002; Ackerman and Finlayson 2006). Discount rates of 5-7% are typically used by forecasters to justify the lack of investment in climate risk reduction. This logic was championed by Nordhaus’ who also counselled to get us comfortable with 4c of warming because it will only knock global GDP by a few percentage points (Keen 2019). Despite the tricky math, both lines of reasoning betray their central loyalty: protecting and advancing the project of capital reproduction by any means.

in short, for a quarter of the cost for non-existent AUKUS submarines that we apparently can afford, no questions asked.

Paths toward transformation



Businesses in North Australia are enmeshed in community

This is a Commons. Capital speculation is not rewarded here...

Step 2: Shift business and commerce toward local flourishing.

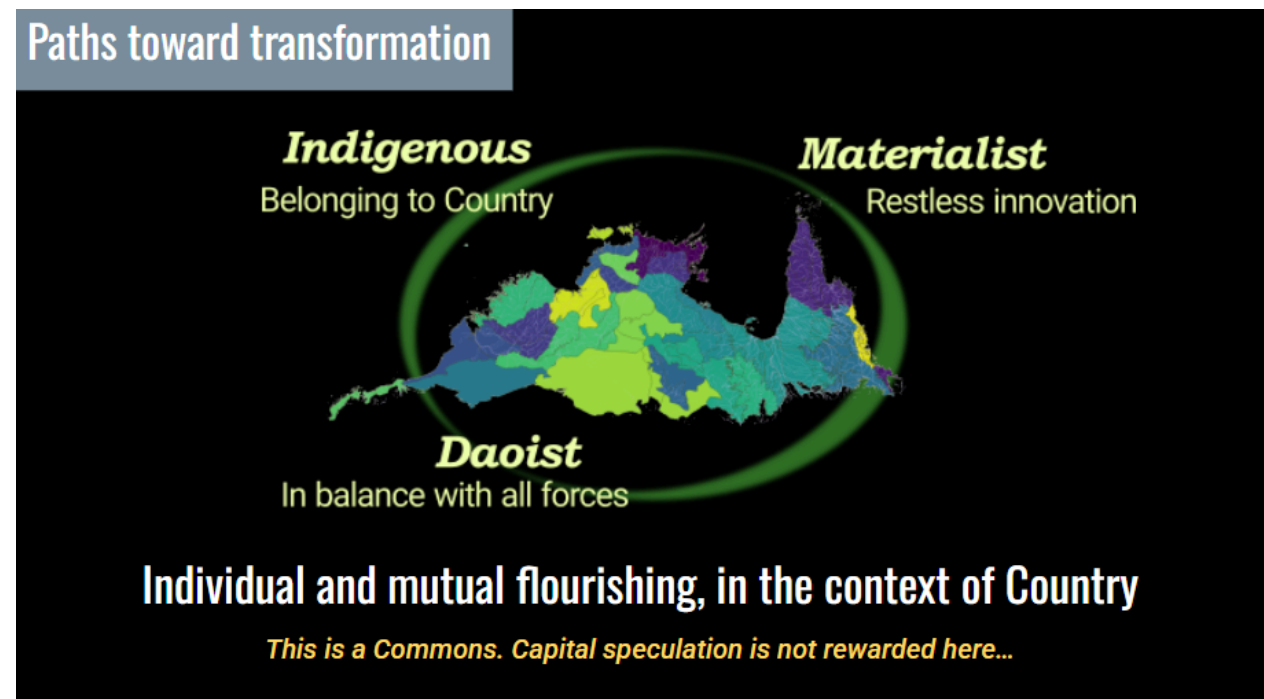
This structural adjustment program would eliminate or significantly reduce capital reproduction activities¹⁸. If a business up here is being run to maximise financial profit, go do that in “mainstream” Australia. Many operators will choose to leave. The vacancy will be filled by enterprises whose central aims are convivial¹⁹. Numerous scholars and practitioners

¹⁸ Despite the relentless boosterism, North Australia doesn’t appear to be worth that much to the national accounts. Critical estimates of economic benefit are difficult to find (naturally). Most of the acclaimed \$250Bn headline GDP figures for the north are comprised of minerals export. Famously, this sector leaves little trace of lasting local benefit. The costs of public support programs are rarely subtracted from the “good news story” of private economic activity.

Sangha, amongst a chorus of others (Kamaljit Sangha, Jeremy Russell-Smith, Scott C. Morrison, Robert Costanza, Andrew Edwards 2017; Chambers *et al.* 2018; Russell-Smith and Sangha 2018; Stoeckl *et al.* 2021) have used a range of analytical approaches to draw a line between the public cost of social support, health costs, and other negative budget impacts and the expected improvements to be realised if people were able to live more flourishing lives (per Sen). Their work suggests that, on a purely financial basis, it would be more economical to directly invest in community-driven initiatives that maximise local autonomy, interdependence, and proportionality with the environment. If the value of ecosystem services is taken into account, there is no question that the current economic arrangements deliver an overwhelmingly inefficient allocation of scarce resources.

¹⁹ There is every reason to suppose that people will be able to re-organise themselves around pro-social, ecological principles without overbearing central administration and without the “stabilising” effect of the profit motive (Poelina and Nordensvard 2018). Even in the cities, vibrant alternatives arise and find purchase in the face of overwhelming pressures to conform to current economic norms. See for example the complex ecosystem of New Urban Economies (NUE) that are responding to the polycrisis (of Modernity) as experienced in urban environments (Zara and Forno 2026) and the extensive work of Bollier (2025) on a modern movement toward the Commons. Until recent times, virtually all productive effort was undertaken as collective, cooperative enterprise. Graeber and Wengrow (2021) provide a fascinating historical account of social enterprises and social arrangements that confirm this view. The International Cooperatives Alliance estimates that at least 12% of people on the planet who are integral to “any of the 3 million cooperatives on earth. Cooperatives provide jobs or work opportunities to 10% of the employed population, and the three

have suggested that North Australia is especially suited to diverse, locally-governed enterprises whose chief aim is to meet the needs of local people,²⁰ this proposal gives proper space for those alternatives to flourish²¹.



Step 3: Celebrate and extend a life of sufficiency. Earn resilience while you sleep.

Right here, in the heart of North Australia, we are being nourished by the civilisational competence of the oldest continuous cultures on earth. Mixing Indigenous ways of governance with the convivial principles of Ivan Illich and the capabilities approach of Amartya Sen, and seasoning with hard-won insights from our Daoist neighbors to the north, we can see that Australia, and particularly North Australia, is remarkably well-positioned to pioneer the alternative principles and practices that are fit to carry us onwards²².

hundred largest cooperatives or mutuals generate \$2.79 trillion USD in turnover while providing the services and infrastructure society needs to thrive.” (ICA 2025).

²⁰The economic significance and diversity of a “convivial sector” has not, to my knowledge, been systematically surveyed. But there is certainly no shortage of initiatives. See the work on alternative outback economies and “economies of scope”(Smith *et al.* 2008; Traill and Stafford-Smith 2020); the patient insights of Russell-Smith and Sangha(2018). Altman has been tireless in promoting a “hybrid economy”(2006), Dale is innovative on mixed modes of governance(2021), and Russell-Smith *et al* produced a foundational collection in *Sustainable Land Sector Development Northern Australia: Indigenous rights, aspirations, cultural responsibilities*(2018).

²¹ Note the well-intentioned yet ill-fated proposal by Land & Water Australia and the ACF(Hill *et al.* 2008) to inspire a “cultural and conservation economy” for the North. The scope of the vision dared not impose on mainstream economic arrangements and thus failed to offer a sufficiently robust path toward the goals proposed. There is little argument that a different development path is needed, but we just have a very difficult time finding our way to the tractible edges of the problem, despite our best intentions(Foran *et al.* 2019).

²² For just about our entire history as a species we have demonstrated remarkably adaptive and innovative ways to balance a desire for individual autonomy with the need for social conformance. Indigenous Australians commonly assert that “nobody is the boss of me”(Yunkaporta 2019), while the system of governance that allows this individualistic attitude to merge gracefully with group governance is explored by Indigenous philosopher Mary Graham and co-author Morgan Brigg in *Politics: Philosophical Ordering of Country*(2026). This area is rife for exploration, in real life(!) as it suggests that our entire society needs to transform toward an Indigenous way of being(Smaje 2022;

There will be very interesting dynamics at the border²³. Such boundary work is a success indicator because, unlike now, people will then have a choice between two very different camps.

Splitting into two cultures is also a way to spread the risks. It's a way to materially improve the nation's resilience. If the financialised techno-optimists turn out to be right, there will be plenty of opportunity for convivial North Australia to catch up and re-join the party. On the other hand, if the future is as challenging as it appears, all of Australia will benefit from the healthy country and healthy people that conviviality takes as its central optimisation goal.

Change is the only constant

"Only a crisis, actual or perceived, produces real change."

We can do better than paperclips.



Capitalism has become an intersubjective psychosis. It is a mind virus gone mad: and, like a fever dream, it will either kill the host or run its course and there's not much we can do to change that. So, in practical terms, the conceivable future is rife with crisis.

And let's be realistic: there's no imaginable path from here in Darwin today to a convivial economic zone for North Australia.

But the system of thought that so tightly constrains us in this moment is precisely that: it is a system of thought. It is a construct that resides in the sense-making narratives we mutually reinforce of our own free will. Each of us possess the choice of what stories we reinforce, and what stories we relegate to the dustbin²⁴. We are agents of change.

Milton Friedman(1962) claimed that "Only a crisis, actual or perceived, produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around".

Brewer 2022). 200 years from now, pigs, honey bees, camels and white fellas will (or ought to be) well on the way to behaving as Indigenous participants. The alienated position of "colonist" cannot be sustained over time, per the inexorable tendency of complex adaptive systems to locate homeostasis.

²³ The boundary between BaU Australia and the convivial North Australia will be a place of fascinating interactions. People and natural processes will always be moving across boundaries, both enriching and diluting the norms in both camps.

²⁴ One of our most profound freedoms and consequential obligations is how we each choose to deploy our inner freedom. See Viktor Frankl's 1949 classic, translated to English as *Man's Search for Meaning*(2025): "...I became acquainted with those martyrs whose behavior in camp, whose suffering and death, bore witness to the fact that the last inner freedom cannot be lost. It can be said that they were worthy of their sufferings; the way they bore their suffering was a genuine inner achievement. It is this spiritual freedom—which cannot be taken away—that makes life meaningful and purposeful."

We can tell a different story to one another. We can practice opening our Overton Windows to new possibilities. There are alternatives. Here in the North, we can do better than paperclips.

Media credits

1947 Immigration Poster: <https://dictionaryofsydney.org/media/1979> (Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike (version Au-2.5 CC-BY-SA))

Minesite blast: From

<https://www.agrf.org.au/agrf-blog/2025/5/30/empowering-mine-rehabilitation> (Royalty free from Getty Images:

<https://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/photo/coal-mine-royalty-free-image/1395239628>)

Paperclip desolation: Image: (Neelakandan 2026) (AI Image used with permission)

Lung-Tree: AI Image by @master.thyself on Insta:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DVSUgfiiPy7/>

Doughnut diagram:

<https://www.holo.mg/dossiers/imal-post-growth/doughnut-economics/?cn-reloaded=1>

Pollie stare: 'New South Wales State Governor Sir Dudley de Chair standing wearing a bowtie, Sydney, ca. 1924 [picture]' Available at <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/6304091> [Verified 30 August 2026]. Accessed 30 August 2026

All other images are works of the author.

References

Ackerman F, Finlayson IJ (2006) 'The economics of inaction on climate change: a sensitivity analysis' *Climate Policy* **6**, 509–526.

Altman J (2006) 'The Indigenous hybrid economy: A realistic sustainable option for remote communities? Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy.'

Bollier D (2025) 'Think Like a Commoner.' (New Society Publishers)

Bostrom N (2003) 'Ethical Issues In Advanced Artificial Intelligence' *Cognitive, Emotive and Ethical Aspects of Decision Making in Humans and in Artificial Intelligence* **2**, 12–17.

Bottoms T (2013) 'Conspiracy of silence.' (Allen & Unwin: St Leonards, NSW, Australia)

Brewer J (2022) 'Becoming the Future Indigenous' Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4D51JwA7c30&t=9s> [Verified 10 December 2022]

Büscher B, Fletcher R (2020) 'The conservation revolution.' (Verso Books: London, England)

Chambers I, Russell-Smith J, Costanza R, Cribb J, Kerins S, George M, James G, Pedersen H, Lane P, Christopherson P, Ansell J, Sangha K (2018) 'Australia's north, Australia's future: A vision and strategies for sustainable economic, ecological and social prosperity in northern Australia' *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* **5**, 615–640.

- Christie PM (2007) '(ca) On the complexity of rules in Indigenous Law and Story'
- Commonwealth (2015) Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia. 978-1-925237-67-2. Office of North Australia, Available at <https://www.cdu.edu.au/sites/default/files/the-northern-institute/docs/northern-australia-white-paper.pdf>
- Dale AP, Campbell A, Douglas M, Robertson A, Wallace R, Davies P (2021) New pathways for the governance of northern development. In 'Leading from the North: Rethinking Northern Australia Development'. pp. 455–478. (ANU Press)
- Edwards G (2018) From Red To Green To Black: A Stewardship Incentives Scheme For Improving Queensland's Pastoral Lands. The Royal Society of Queensland,
- Foran B, Smith MS, Burnside D, Andrew M, Blesing D, Forrest K, Taylor J (2019) 'Australian rangeland futures: time now for systemic responses to interconnected challenges' *Rangeland Journal* **41**, 271–292.
- Frankl VE (2025) 'Man's search for meaning.' (Beacon Press: Boston, MA)
- Friedel M, Brisbin J (2020) 'Nudging the narrative: heading in the "right direction"' *Rangeland Journal*. doi:[10.1071/RJ20019](https://doi.org/10.1071/RJ20019)
- Friedman M (1962) 'Capitalism and freedom.' (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL)
- Graham M (1999) Some Thoughts about the Philosophical Underpinnings of Aboriginal Worldviews. In 'Worldviews Environment, Culture, Religion'.
- Graham M (2014) 'Aboriginal notions of relationality and positionalism: A reply to Weber' *Global Discourse* **4**, 17–22.
- Hamilton S, Kells S (2021) 'Robber barons and high-speed traders dominate Australia's water market' *The Conversation*. Available at <http://theconversation.com/robber-barons-and-high-speed-traders-dominate-australias-water-market-166422> [Verified 31 August 2021]
- Hickel J, Dorninger C, Wieland H, Suwandi I (2022) 'Imperialist appropriation in the world economy: Drain from the global South through unequal exchange, 1990–2015' *Global Environmental Change: Human and Policy Dimensions* **73**, 102467.
- Hill R, Harding EK, Edwards D, O'Dempsey J, Hill DLG, Martin A, McIntyre-Tamwoy S (2008) 'A cultural and conservation economy for northern Australia' Available at <https://library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/FullTextFiles/070635.pdf>
- Hine D (2024) 'At work in the ruins.' (Chelsea Green Publishing: White River Junction, VT)
- Hofstadter D (1983) On viral sentences and self-replicating structures
- Illich I (1973) 'Tools for Conviviality.' (Marion Boyars)
- Jameson F (1994) 'The Seeds of Time.' (Columbia University Press: New York, NY)
- Jeremy Russell-Smith, Glenn James, Howard Pedersen, Kamaljit K. Sangha (Ed) (2018) 'Sustainable Land Sector Development Northern Australia: Indigenous rights, aspirations, cultural responsibilities.' (CRC Press, Taylor & Francis: Boca Raton, FL)
- Johnson M, Brigg M, Graham M (2016) 'Pearson and Responsibility:(Mis-) Understanding the Capabilities Approach' *The Australian journal of politics and history* **62**, 251–267.

- Kamaljit Sangha, Jeremy Russell-Smith, Scott C. Morrison, Robert Costanza, Andrew Edwards (2017) 'Challenges for valuing ecosystem services from an Indigenous estate in northern Australia' *Ecosystem Services*. Available at https://www.academia.edu/32875517/Challenges_for_valuing_ecosystem_services_from_an_Indigenous_estate_in_northern_Australia?email_work_card=view-paper [Verified 17 August 2026]
- Keen S (2019) "'4°C of global warming is optimal' – even Nobel Prize winners are getting things catastrophically wrong' (J Raine, Ed.) doi:[10.64628/ab.3u66hq53e](https://doi.org/10.64628/ab.3u66hq53e)
- Kimmerer RW (2013) 'Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants.' (Milkweed Editions)
- Lent J (2021) 'The Web of Meaning: Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place In the Universe.'
- Lent J (2026) 'Ecocivilization: Making a World that Works for All.' (Melville House Publishing: Brooklyn, NY) Available at <https://www.penguin.com.au/books/ecocivilization-9781685892340> [Verified 26 August 2026]
- Lent J, Capra F (2017) 'The Patterning Instinct: A Cultural History of Humanity's Search for Meaning.' (Prometheus)
- Neelakandan A (2026) 'The Paperclip Maximiser Is Already Here... As Permanent War' *Swarajyamag*. Available at <https://swarajyamag.com/ideas/the-paperclip-maximiser-is-already-here-as-permanent-war> [Verified 23 August 2026]
- Newell RG, Pizer W (2002) 'Discounting the Benefits of Climate Change Policies Using Uncertain Rates' *Resources*. Available at <https://www.resources.org/archives/discounting-the-benefits-of-climate-change-policies-using-uncertain-rates/> [Verified 26 August 2026]
- NoiseCat JB (2017) 'The western idea of private property is flawed. Indigenous peoples have it right' *The Guardian*. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/27/western-idea-private-property-flawed-indigenous-peoples-have-it-right> [Verified 16 January 2020]
- de Oliveira VM (2022) 'Hospicing Modernity.' (North Atlantic Books: Berkeley, CA)
- Paradies Y (2020) 'Unsettling truths: modernity, (de-)coloniality and Indigenous futures' *Postcolonial Studies* **23**, 438–456.
- Poelina A, Nordensvard J (2018) Sustainable Luxury Tourism, Indigenous Communities and Governance. In 'Sustainable Luxury, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation'. (Eds MA Gardetti, SS Muthu) pp. 147–166. (Springer Singapore: Singapore)
- Poelina A, Taylor KS, Perdrisat I (2019) 'Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council: an Indigenous cultural approach to collaborative water governance' *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management* **26**, 236–254.
- Russell-Smith J, Sangha KK (2018) 'Emerging opportunities for developing a diversified land sector economy in Australia's northern savannas' *Rangeland Journal* **40**, 315.
- Ryan L, Debenham J, Pascoe B, Smith R, Owen C, Richards J, Craig H, Gilbert S, Anders RJ, Usher K, Price D, Newley J, Brown M (2024) 'Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930' *Centre For 21st Century Humanities*. Available at

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/timeline.php> [Verified 16 June 2026]

- Smaje C (2022) 'Sand talking: can indigenous wisdom save the world?' *Resilience*. Available at https://www.resilience.org/stories/2022-01-14/sand-talking-can-indigenous-wisdom-save-the-world/?mc_cid=dfb5ab507e&mc_eid=4f72de01bb [Verified 28 January 2022]
- Smith MS, Moran M, Seemann K (2008) 'The "viability" and resilience of communities and settlements in desert Australia' *The Rangeland Journal* **30**, 123–135.
- Stoeckl N, Jarvis D, Larson S, Larson A, Grainger D, Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation (2021) 'Australian Indigenous insights into ecosystem services: Beyond services towards connectedness – People, place and time' *Ecosystem services* **50**, 101341.
- Traill BJ, Stafford-Smith M (2020) 'A narrative to support the future of the Australian Outback' *Rangeland Journal*. doi:[10.1071/RJ20040](https://doi.org/10.1071/RJ20040)
- Tsing AL (2015) 'The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins, 978-1-4008-7354-8 (eBook).' (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ)
- Turchin P (2024) 'End times.' (Penguin Books: Harlow, England)
- Varoufakis Y (2024) 'Technofeudalism: What killed capitalism.' (Vintage: London, England)
- Watson D (2014) 'The Bush.'
- Wikipedia contributors (2026) 'Prison Notebooks' *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison_Notebooks
- Wilson-Lee E (2022) 'A History of Water: Being an Account of a Murder, an Epic and Two Visions of Global History.' (HarperCollins Publishers: London, England)
- Yunkaporta T (2019) 'Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World.' (Text Publishing)
- Zara C, Forno F (2026) 'Transformative adaptation in times of polycrisis: insights from Milan's New Urban Economies' *Frontiers in Sociology* **11**, 1804091.