In the wake of the global financial crisis that began in the summer of 2008, many commentators, critics and visionaries have looked anew at contemporary and historical alternatives to dominant financial paradigms. Alternatives, it is thought, might point a way out of the current predicament, provide options for those who wish on an individual or collective basis to stand outside of mainstream finance, or inspire new blueprints for the possible. For an anthropologist, the quest to discover, adapt or adopt such alternatives is familiar enough to give pause. Drawing on examples from Islamic banking and finance and local currency movements, this talk explores the various modalities of alternative, the potential of plural and diverse economies, and the analytical assumptions inherent in separating the alternative from the modal or normative.

What we talk about when we talk about ‘alternative economies’:
From Islamic banking to local currencies

Bio
Bill Maurer is a cultural anthropologist who conducts research on law, property, money and finance, particularly new and experimental financial and currency forms and their legal implications. He is the Director of the Institute of Money, Technology and Financial Inclusion and the Co-Director of the Intel Science & Technology Center for Social Computing at the University of California, Irvine. He is the editor of six collections, as well as the author of Recharting the Caribbean: Land, Law and Citizenship in the British Virgin Islands (1997), Pious Property: Islamic Mortgages in the United States (2006), and Mutual Life, Limited: Islamic Banking, Alternative Currencies, Lateral Reason (2005). The latter received the Victor Turner Prize in 2005. Professor Maurer served as Special Advisor to the Royal College of Art’s Future of Money project.

Date: Thursday 21 March, 2013
Time: 4.30pm to 6.00pm
Venue: Seminar Rooms 1&2
        Storey Hall, Building 16, Level 7, RMIT City Campus
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This talk is part of the Money, Media and Contemporary Culture series that is made possible through an International Visiting Fellows grant from the RMIT Foundation. It is also sponsored by the Graduate School of Business and Law at RMIT University.