The Pink Palace, policy and power: Home-making practices and gentrification in Northcote

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Cultural practices constitute cultural spaces, which include, or exclude, specific identities. This article examines a set of particular 'home-making' cultural practices surrounding gentrification in Northcote, Melbourne. I use the notion of home making to understand the implications of gentrification on a particular site, the Pink Palace. The Pink Palace was a former warehouse, located on Eastment Street, Northcote, which operated as a home, a punk music venue and a space for radical political activism between 1998 and 2005. It was closed in 2005 when the lease was not renewed. Through ethnographic interviews I conducted with people involved at the Pink Palace, I understand the punk subcultural activities practised as instances of home making which attempted to fix a meaning for the Pink Palace and its surrounds. I posit this articulation of home making against the home-making practices of Darebin City Council, which attempted to re-signify Eastment Street as a 'creative community' through cultural planning. An analysis of Darebin City Council's policies shows how such policy constructs the Pink Palace and its nearby area as the home space of a creative-consumer identity. The creative consumer is a gentrifying identity whose home-making practices enacted the creative community imperatives laid out by Darebin City Council. The home-making practices of the gentrifying creative consumer worked to over-determine the punk home space constituted through the (sub)cultural practices of the Pink Palace residents. The punk significance of Eastment Street was invisibilized as the practices of home making by gentrifiers gained ascendance. With the gentrification of the space, the Pink Palace residents no longer felt 'at home' in Eastment Street. They were excluded from their former home space and the Pink Palace closed.

Introduction

Cultural practices construct cultural spaces in which particular identities are included or excluded. The cultural practice of 'home making' is crucial to the production of gentrified spaces. I acknowledge that gentrification depends, in part, on economic shifts (Jager 1986; Smith 1996; Smith and Williams 1986). However, cultural practices are also crucial for establishing inner suburbs as legibly gentrified. I define home making as a cultural process where subjects enact their identities in relation to a particular space as one of ownership.

Gentrification relies on home making that values economically profitable cultural production and consumption. These practices simultaneously mark space as gentrified, and 'home' to middle-class identities. Further, I suggest that the valuation of such cultural practices simultaneously devalorizes subjects who will not, or are less able to, comply with the cultural imperatives of gentrification. In turn, gentrifiers perceive these subjects as 'not-being-at-home' in the suburb. Consequently, those who are unable to comply

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experience unwelcomeness in the space. This instigates their displacement, voluntary or otherwise, from the area.

I work through these ideas through an ethnography of the Pink Palace (hereafter the Palace). The Palace was a warehouse located on Eastment Street, Northcote – a suburb north of Melbourne's central business district (CBD). It operated as a residential, activist and subcultural[1] punk space from 1998 until 2005. It closed in 2005 after the property owner refused to renew the lease. New tenants renovated the space into a visual-art gallery. I will show how cultural gentrification, manifested through council-led applications of 'creative city' planning (Florida 2003; Landry 2005), displaced Palace residents from the suburb. Northcote is located in the LGA of Darebin and locally governed by Darebin City Council (DCC). During the twentieth century, the chief industries in Northcote were wqsmall business and skilled trades (Lemon 1983; Lobert and Ruffy 1988).[2] However, a recent decline in the latter sector led the local economy to shift towards 'creative' industries (DCC and Metropolis Research 2006). This shift depends on an instrumentalization of 'creative' culture – be it live music performance, food production or artistic pursuits. Examining the home-making practices concurrent and entangled with the cultural-economic changes in Northcote provides a deeper understanding of gentrification's cultural dynamics.

Firstly, I will outline how home making depends on subjective enactments of spatial ownership – be they subcultural or gentrified. I will also delineate the importance of 'culture' for contemporary understandings of creative-city gentrification. Next, I will draw on ethnographic interviews I conducted with former Palace residents[3] and the current tenants of the Palace space to draw out the significance of culture to subcultural, and gentrified, home making. Through a focus on the junction between these home-making practices, I consider how the ascendance of creative consumers in Northcote eclipsed, but also incorporated, the Palace residents' subcultural home making.

Home making

'Home making' is, of course, a loaded term in everyday parlance. It is associated with a type of white, often working-class, female domesticity embodied in subservience to patriarchal and heterosexual norms.[4] However, recent work in cultural studies and human geography has invigorated 'home making' through a broadening of its parameters to include manifold enactments of spatial ownership by multiply gendered, classed and ethnic identities. Home has moved beyond the domestic brick veneer to public, and national, spaces (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Papastergiadis 2003). Home is processual and constituted through the embodied cultural practices of particular identities (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2007). Gorman-Murray provides a fruitful perspective on home making (ibid.). He proposes that it is a series of cultural practices within bounded home spaces, and a process of literal home mak*ing*; where homeliness is constituted through material changes to the domestic space.

I build on these ideas through Rose's work on enacted landscapes (2002, 2006). Rose suggests that spaces are 'stuck down' through subjective practices within them (2002, 455). Spaces do not possess an innate, singular significance. Rather, they gather a plurality of meanings via spatialized human processes. These enacted landscapes, which Rose, drawing on Bataille,[5] calls 'monuments', are constantly emerging sites. Subjects attempt to imbue monuments with a coherent meaning. This 'monumentalizing' illustrates a desire to stabilize a 'life that always overwhelms' (461). Via repetitive practice, subjects attempt to determine a site's meaning, as well as shore up their identity in relation to the space.

Rose's work provides an entry point for understanding how spaces *beyond* the home are made homely through 'landscaping' practices.

According to this broadened definition, 'home making' is less about economic position – say of owning a home, or of carrying out unpaid domestic labour – than of particular embodied practices in a space. Such practices are inevitably culturally contingent – they intersect with wider frameworks of classed, gendered and ethnic identity. I suggest, however, that some practices are more easily 'overwhelmed' than others. A closer look at how particular groups – in this case, one subcultural, the other gentrifying – enact homeliness reveals the structures of power embedded in cultural home making.

The creative city and gentrification

I offer creative city planning and, in Northcote's case, its concomitant gentrification as a particular process of cultural home making. Cultural planning policies which harness 'creative-cities' schema, such as those mobilized by DCC, arrange people and things spatially to generate cultural practices which result in a 'revitalized', creative, population (Florida 2003). I understand gentrification as a process where subjects' cultural practices indicate particular socially classed identities as 'at home' in a space. These are middle class, the 'gentrifiers', and working class, the objects of gentrification. Through the course of gentrification, they are enacted as oppositional subjectivities.

The Northcote brand: Northcote as a creative city

DCC's 'place-making' plans for Northcote as a creative city are evident in two council reports: the *High Street Northcote/Westgarth Arts Precinct Report* (*APR*) and the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan* (*ACSP*). Both propose using culture instrumentally to constitute Northcote as a home for economically profitable creative industries. Creative cities are urban spaces spatially arranged 'afresh' as branded sites of creative industrial production and consumption (Landry 2005, 234). Further, such policies intend to produce 'good' cultural citizens who use and provide creative-city infrastructure (Florida 2003).

Creative cities depend on city-branding to construct the city as a commodity, which works as a means of distinction in the market of inter-urban competitiveness (Bianchini and Bloomfield 1996, 103; Evans 2001, 139; Stevenson 2004, 120; 2000, 90; Urry 1995, 152). *APR* and *ACSP* frame Northcote as a 'natural' home for creative industry. In *APR*, DCC compares Northcote to Berlin as 'traditionally … a city of artists' (DCC & PS 2006b, 12). The notion of 'tradition' implies that artists 'naturally' gestate in Northcote and that cultural planning simply needs to nurture such 'heritage' (11). This notion, of organic creativity, forms the overarching brand the suburb (DCC & ESD 2006, 25, 32, 82; DCC 2000, 21).

In particular, DCC earmarked Eastment Street as an 'arts incubator' a year after the Palace closed (DCC and ESD 2006). However, in interview, Cllr Tsitas (2007), a key player in DCC's creative-city framework, conceded that the Palace's former subcultural position partly inspired the arts incubator moniker (see also DCC 2000, 21; DCC & ESD 2006, 85). Lloyd (2008) discusses the value of subcultural practices to creative cities and affiliated gentrification in his work on neo-bohemias. Creative-city frameworks and neo-bohemias have much in common. Both urban forms value creative cultural production – in the form of arts industry and affiliated service cultures. Importantly, Lloyd points out, rather than being entirely oppositional, subcultural subjects play a crucial role in adding edgy authenticity to a space. Echoing Zukin's (1982) earlier work on 'loft living', Lloyd is

wary of a simplistic antagonism between 'good' artists and subculturalists, and 'bad' gentrifiers. By lauding Eastment Street's prior position as a hive of creative activity – characterized in part by the Palace – Tsitas establishes a heritage for the street. This legitimizes Eastment Street's current position as an 'incubator'. That is, he constitutes Eastment Street as naturally, or *organically*, creative.

Gentrification

Creative-city planning implicitly attempts to instigate gentrification in 'urban problem' (Landry 2005, 20) areas[6] - that is, areas with a low socio-economic status. Northcote was, according to DCC statistics (DCC and Metropolis Research 2006), such an area prior to its creative 'revitalization'. However, creative-city rhetoric focuses primarily on cultural (creative) capital 'indexes' rather than socio-economics (cf. Florida 2003). Political-economic understandings of gentrification regard it as the process where devalued working-class inner-city spaces are re-valued economically as middle-class enclaves (Smith and Williams 1986; Smith 1986; Jager 1986). Investors buy cheap, run-down properties in inner-city locations, renovate them and then sell for a profit. These changes occur in clusters, which eventually spread until the whole suburb is gentrified (ibid.; see also Jacobs 1992; Gibson and Homan 2004).[7] The increased value of gentrified properties, according to gentrification theory, appeals to middle-class consumers who can afford such elevated house prices. Thus, the original working-class inhabitants are 'priced out' of the suburb (Smith and Williams 1986; Shaw 2006).

This thesis is helpful for understanding the political-economic process of gentrification. However, Northcote contradicts his formula. Smith suggests that 'neighbourhood-scale' property abandonment due to inexpedience must occur prior to gentrification (Smith 1986, 23). This argument is persuasive for Smith's case studies in New York City. However, widespread abandonment of real-estate is rare in Australia (Logan 1985).[8] I deviate from Smith's early model and follow his later, more nuanced, model of gentrification (1996, 2006). He suggests that 'culture' is a key value-adding device for constituting gentrified spaces (1996, 31). I propose that, even without the total physical deterioration of real-estate in Northcote, property in the area of study was devalued prior to 2005 (Real Estate Institute of Victoria 2007). Northcote was culturally devalued - though this surely translated into economic devaluation. Northcote was perceived as 'boring suburbia' until recently (Lemon 1983, 264). It was (lower) middle class, and unfashionable. This is evident in DCC documents emphasizing the suburb's 'new' role as 'artist colony', explicitly tied to the ascendance of creative industries (DCC & ESD 2006, 32; DCC & PS 2006a, 20).

Further, according to accounts of economic gentrification, property owners are the primary gentrifiers (Smith 1986, 1996; Smith and Williams 1986; Jager 1986). However, the role of renters is also crucial to the gentrification process. They enact 'leased' gentrification (Zukin 1982, 1987; see also Lloyd 2005). Their creative-consumer practices attract middle-class subjects who can afford to buy in the area. Meanwhile they save their wages (from creative labour) to buy gentrified property in the future.[9]

Punk home making at the Pink Palace

Prior to DCC's vision of Northcote as a creative-city space, Northcote was home to a crew of 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) punks living in Eastment Street. The Palace responded to an immediate need for stable accommodation for a number of DIY punk activists in 1998. DIY aligns with a broad notion of anarchism that rejects organized capitalism, in favour of collective forms of cultural production (O'Hara 1999, 166). Prior to 1998, the Palace

residents had been living either in short-term squats or at Melbourne's docks as a part of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) strike:[10]

> When I was there [at the Pink Palace], I was really how would I put it? Like, I immediately connected with everyone ... we all got along, and we had the same ideals and we wanted to do the same things. (Victor; Palace resident 2004/2005)[11]

> I felt at home [in Northcote]. I definitely didn't feel like we were out of place ... you felt pretty comfy there. (Marilyn; Palace resident 2005)

Victor and Marilyn's feelings of belonging demonstrate how Palace residents constructed the Palace, and Northcote, as 'home'. I argue that such homeliness arose from the residents' enactment of the Palace's interior, and the suburb beyond, as *subcultural* 'landscapes'. Palace residents established the Palace and Northcote as a homely subcultural landscape through aestheticized, subcultural practices within and beyond the Palace space.

Punk 'landscaping' at the Palace

A punk existence characterized by the illegitimate possession of property and activism became less viable in the late 1990s (Ruddick 1998; O'Connor 2002). To counter this and despite the residents' legal leasing of the site (cf. Shaw 2006), Palace residents constructed the Palace as a radical, DIY punk space through material 'punk' production (the building of the space).

All landscapes are potentially polysemous. However, through an emphasis on particular 'systems of care' in a landscape, subjects attempt to render sites singular in meaning (Rose 2002, 463). This is evident in Palace residents' narration of the warehouse as 'empty', before their occupation:

> It was a big empty shell of a warehouse ... and people just used whatever they could around the place to create some sort of divides. (Ben)[12]

The residents filled the 'shell' of the Palace with subcultural meaning via practices of literal home-building (cf. Gorman-Murray 2007). Early residents use their narration of this process to frame their construction of the space's interior as important to making the site punk. This was due to their deliberate emulation of European DIY punk squats. European sites were highly valued as authentically punk by residents, due to their sustained illegitimate existence and the perception that European punks had a stronger sense of political radicalism:

> A couple of those key people [who set up the Palace] had recently spent time in Europe [where] there is just so much inspiration, it's more political over there, and the link between politics and political activism in the punk scene is huge ... So they'd ... come back with heaps of ideas ... and I think that's what probably ... had more to do with the setting up of the Pink Palace, 'cause there's really an amazing amount of spaces like ... squats all through Europe. (Ben)

The Palace really 'came to matter' as a punk space through the residents' material construction of its interior rooms (Rose 2002, 457). The residents valued amateur construction using scavenged, recycled materials. The finished 'look' of the Palace fit the *bricolage* punk style of 'material poverty' and 'chaos' (Hebdige 1979, 115, 113). Residents made the rooms out of mismatched materials, and their amateur 'warehouse conversion' resembled the punk squats of the 1970s and 1980s described by Ruddick (1998), O'Hara (1999) and Shaw (2006), as well as the European spaces its residents admired.

However, the residents consistently emphasized the *practice* of collectively constructing the Palace as more significant to subcultural landscaping than the punk

stylized, end product. The practice of building the Palace together led to feelings of homely connectedness between residents:

> We built the practice room; we bricked that up – we were learning as we went, 'cause we'd never done it, so it was quite fun, a slow process but interesting to do. (Ben)

The action of building the Palace's interior collectively cohered the residents' subcultural identity as they worked to 'cultivate its monumental presence' as their punk home (Rose 2002, 456).

The residents' regular use of the 'jam room' for the repeated enactment of punk music also established group identity bound to an understanding of the Palace as punk:

> You had everything in your reach – your jam room across the hall and you got your friends there ... *Pisschrist* [his band] was like ... a house project band because ... we all lived together. (Victor)

Punk 'landscaping' in Northcote: Aesthetics/sonics/practices

The material home making by Palace residents constituted a subcultural landscape internal to the Palace space. In this section, I extend this coherence beyond the Palace to Northcote. Through an externalization of subcultural practices into the suburb, residents became a visible subcultural group. This externalizing movement also attempted to render Northcote homely.

Firstly, the residents presented a seemingly homogeneous punk 'look' to uninitiated gig-goers and Northcote residents. Their look, like the punk aesthetic of the Palace building, followed Hebdige's (1979) notion of *bricolage*. Their style was a mash-up of army disposables, friends' band t-shirts, and political patches, which they sewed on the backs of their army, or denim, jackets. This is a typical punk aesthetic (ibid.; Ruddick 1998). However, Palace residents distinguished themselves from Melbourne's less politically radical punks through their hairstyles, as Ben describes:

> We're *crusty* punks. Not Mohawks. Round here [in Melbourne] Mohawks are, like, the sort of 'dumb' punks – they aren't political at all – in Footscray they're even racist – some of them ... They call us 'hippie punks' or 'tofu punks' 'cause of our dreads and the vegan[13] thing. (Ben)

However, I am less interested in simply noting that the residents nurtured a coherent sartorial outlook than with *how* and *why* Palace residents used style as a subcultural marker for claiming homeliness in Northcote. I build on Rose's concern, not with the over-determined 'meaning' of monuments but with *why* subjects construct monuments (2002, 457). I propose that the residents' aesthetic coherence worked practically; to claim local space as home for the group, at a time when punk spaces and gigs were increasingly policed. The residents share a sense that the police threatened their homeliness in the suburb. To counter this threat they made their subcultural presence visible:

> The police used to come ... to tell us to turn it down [but we] used to – during bands, when bands were setting up – everyone used to just walk outside to drink out on the street. (Nick)

Such practices attempted to make Northcote homely. This follows the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies notion that subcultural 'space-claims' work via spectacular stylistic displays of group identity (Clarke et al. [1975] 2005, 97). The practices of 'winning space' carried out by the residents moved their monumentalizing beyond the bounds of the Palace. The residents attempted to render Northcote, Eastment Street particularly, a part of their homely landscape:

> As we didn't have a backyard, we'd be hanging out in the car-park over the road ... having a cuppa ... that was probably the ... reason why we came to meet so many of our neighbours. (Ben)

However, without being incorporated into the logic of punk subcultural identity, such practices contribute little to subcultural coherence. Thus, Ben went on to describe how 'hanging out' in the car park built relationships with other punks also living in Eastment Street. This demonstrates that to stabilize Northcote as subcultural, the residents had to breach the distinction between their stabilized subcultural home at the Palace, and inscribe the space beyond its walls as 'punk'.

The Palace residents also constituted Northcote as a homely punk space by transgressing the Palace walls sonically during gigs. The audibility of punk music, outside of the gig area, rendered the boundary between the Palace and the street beyond permeable. It alerted neighbouring residents to the presence of punks in Northcote. Here, one attendee describes a Palace gig:

> The music was almost as loud outside as it [was] inside, adding to this [was] the amount of kids spilling onto Eastment St. ... it was a [gig] that will not be forgotten. ('Selfish Pete', in Butcher 2005, 32)

The volume of the punk music performed at the Palace operated as a way of 'carv[ing] out virtual, and claim[ing] actual space ... by *filling* it with ... music' (Thornton 1996, 19).[14] The sonic penetration of Eastment Street, alongside the residents' and gig-goers' spectacular stylistic display, incurred the attention of the police and complaints from neighbours. Yet it also rendered the Palace *present* beyond its walls. The punk music practices of the occupants' bands extended their subcultural landscape into Northcote.

Aside from such examples of spectacular subcultural practices, the Palace residents also constituted Northcote as homely punk space through everyday practices of radical politics. This requires a slippage, through subcultural *habitus*, that practices such as photocopying activist fliers and 'dumpster diving' are banal:

> We ... used ... High Street ... in much the *same way everyone living in the area* would have. We ... scoured the local NQR [supermarket] for decent cheapo vegan food and used the local MP's office to copy fliers. (Lucy; emphasis added)

> We'd go to NQR and get ... cheap food; I think a lot of [residents] 'dumpster dived' ... it wasn't a problem. (Marilyn)[15]

These descriptions of punk practice normalize subcultural enactments in Northcote. Further, they render the suburb as a 'normal' component of the Palace's subcultural landscape.

Home-making the creative city in Northcote – Gentrification and the displacement of the Pink Palace

Through subcultural practice, the Palace residents 'landscaped' Northcote as a DIY punk home. However, the potential polysemy of landscapes means that Northcote was also 'home' to other subjectivities and cultural practices. In particular, DCC's constitution of Northcote as a creative-city space offered a different and, eventually, antagonistic construction of the suburb's landscape to the Palace residents. Significantly, DCC's policies drew on the aesthetics of Palace subculture to grant Northcote an organic authenticity in an attempt to make the suburb homely for creative consumers.

'Deep cool': The symbolic and material arrangement of 'organically creative' space

External media representations build Northcote symbolically, as a home for creative industry. An *Age* article describing High Street as a space of 'deep cool' (Rousseau 2007, 5) does not directly mention DCC policy but draws on the cultural capital that DCC

foregrounds in its promotional material (DCC 2006; DCC and PS 2006b). The article locates Northcote's 'deep coolness' in the café culture explicitly identified in policy documents as a 'major economic driver' (DCC & PS 2006a, 7). The cafés' coolness, according to the article, lies in an impression of un-engineered organicism.[16] They are 'ad hoc' and 'creative' spaces, which the 'arts community [and] ... cool kids' frequent (Rousseau 2007, 5). This promotion of Northcote as a space to 'hobnob' with 'persons and things' that bestow cool creative capital aligns the area with DCC's branding strategy to maintain and grow homely cool in the city (Bourdieu 1992, 472; DCC & ESD 2006, 20).

The cafés discussed in the article demonstrate the material arrangement of space necessary for Northcote's creative-city constitution. Further, the article also shows the incorporation of Palace aesthetics. The author mentions 'Palamino', a café that employs what Hanlon (2002) calls a 'poor chic' aesthetic. Palomino's 'ad hoc' (Rousseau 2007, 5) décor mirrors the scavenged furnishings of the Palace. However, as Hanlon points out, while such décor presents a 'shabby'[17] style – indicated by flea market and charity shop bought furniture and knick-knacks – it remains an affectation of bourgeois consumers.

A current resident of the Palace (now an art gallery, renamed 'The Space Between') elaborates, speaking about a similar venue in Northcote, 'Open Studio':

> You've got ... little Open Studio which is like basically someone's house which is just like someone serving drinks. (Josh)

Where the Palace *was* 'someone's house' where people could watch live music, Open Studio is *like* a private home. Of course, it is actually a commercial space that cultivates Northcote's 'home-brand' of organic creativity.

The transition of Northcote from a space where Palace residents felt at home opening their warehouse up for gigs to one where venues offer a sanitized version of such events demonstrates the incorporation of Palace subculture into creative-city planning.[18]

Gentrification: 'Not inviting at all' – The experience and perspective of Palace residents

Palace residents 'acted out' their subjectivities strategically, as a means of home-making Northcote. However, as per the process of subcultural incorporation (Hebdige 1979), once their practices became a part of the new gentrified culture, the Palace punks moved on.

The Palace residents understood the failure to have their lease renewed in 2005 as the result of gentrification. This was the case. However, the residents were not typical working-class objects of gentrification (Williams and Smith 1986). Their education granted them middle-class cultural capital. Yet their, admittedly self-imposed, material poverty and subcultural identification excluded them from the emergent, gentrified, version of Northcote, and led them to perceive themselves as 'working class'. Their self-perception as working class allowed an understanding of Northcote as a site of struggle between their working-class selves and the middle-class gentrifiers.

This is evident in the residents' identification of gentrification in Northcote through the presence of 'the physical manifestations of gentrification' (Lucy):

> When I moved in to Northcote ... it was very quiet. ... Our street used to be a whole street full of warehouses ... since then – towards the last year of us living there [2004] – the warehouses which our friends lived in were demolished. In its place were [built] fancy apartments ... trendy cafes popp[ed] up ... and bars. (Victor)

Victor aligns gentrification with the increasing visibility of 'fancy' material spaces. His distinction between subcultural uses of Eastment Street prior to the presence of apartment buildings suggests a disjunction between himself and Palace residents, and the 'fancy',

or middle-class, gentrifiers. Victor establishes gentrification as a class struggle. He centres the struggle on material sites, once imagined as subcultural home spaces, but which came to be signified as 'fancy' or 'trendy'. Lucy also equates gentrification with a change in Northcote's material aesthetics, taken to represent bourgeois taste:

> The ... changes in the area [were] from a ... somewhat dingy area to ... modern apartments ... *trendy, bourgeois* cafes and boutique baby clothing stores. [Such shops] were becoming a common feature of High Street. (Lucy; emphasis added)

The perceived shift from 'dingy' to 'trendy' supports Barnes et al.'s (2006) claim that aesthetics make creative-city gentrification material. Further, the aesthetic taste represented by such renovations distinguishes these spaces as middle class (Jager 1986, 83). Gentrified buildings are boundary markers, with local residents who lack economic, and cultural, capital made to feel unwelcome at sites coded as 'gentrified'. The Palace residents felt unwelcome in the gentrified, material landscape of Northcote. They perceived the middle-classed manifestations of gentrification as threats to their punk landscaping practices. Thus, much of the anxiety expressed by the residents focuses on buildings they perceive as gentrified and unwelcoming of their subcultural practice. In particular, residents chose the renovated 'Northcote Social Club' (NSC) as a signifier of gentrification. NSC is located at the end of Eastment Street, on the corner of Hawthorn Road and High Street. It operated as a pub – the Commercial – and was frequented by working-class locals until 2004.[19] Then, it was bought and re-branded as a primarily acoustic-band venue.[20] For the Palace occupants, the conversion to NSC is material evidence of Northcote's gentrification:

> I think Northcote Social Club was the biggest turning point for that strip, out of anything that happened – that was the biggest, as soon as that place set up, that's when I really started to notice the difference in ... the demographic ... moving [in] there ... [They were] well-off, slightly alternative people. (Ben)

Further, NSC provides a material focus for the residents' general sense of unwelcomeness in Northcote. This is bound to a perceived lack of support for punk music:

> [Northcote Social Club] wasn't really a venue at all [when I lived there] it was just like an 'old man's pub' ... I guess [now] it does bring that kind of different crowd there – it's definitely not a punk venue, they don't put punk bands on really. Ever. (Marilyn)

> There's just so many bars opening up there [on High Street] now, like the Northcote Social Club, [that are] completely inaccessible for people like us. I feel it's just not inviting at all. (Ben)[21]

The Palace residents' sense of unwelcomeness in Northcote also recuperated the symbolic violence of their eventual eviction. Their self-positioning as working class, and unwelcome, in the suburb allowed a positive spin on the otherwise traumatic experience of eviction:

> I think they [the landlord] just 'had it' with us. I mean I think, the decision, I think the decision had already been made [by the residents] not to renew it ... Most of our gang moved over to [the working-class Melbourne suburb of] Footscray ... [which] is probably like Northcote was before the Pink Palace. If we had a venue like that in Footscray, that'd be all it would take ... Everyone should just move to Footscray and do it [get a space like the Palace operating again]. (Ben)

> There is definitely like a different vibe in this area [where he lives now] but all our friends are still living here – so there's a lot of support. *Pisschrist* is doing a lot of things at the moment ... that is something that came out of the Pink Palace and we are still doing now and still doing together. (Victor)

Gentrified Northcote is 'unwelcoming'. Thus, with the decision 'already ... made', the residents landscape new subcultural homes in a different working-class suburb.

Gentrification: 'It's just so cool' – The gentrifiers' perspective

Since the Palace closed, Tsitas' vision of a 'creative community' has begun to 'incubate' on Eastment Street. Currently, the street hosts numerous professional creative industries,[22] as well as renovated warehouse residences for creative workers' living spaces. These are primarily leased properties. However, it is the gentrified renters who home make, and brand build, Northcote's organically cool image. A current leasing resident of the Palace site articulates a similar sense of external home making to the Palace residents:

> I like *my* space ... I think Northcote is definitely an artistic area ... You've got [bars such as] Wesley-Anne and Terra Firma ... it's just so *cool*. (Josh; emphasis added)

Josh claims the warehouse as 'my space' discursively. However, his profession of creative-consumer *habitus* through bar-hopping solidifies his gentrified position in wider gentrified Northcote. Further, Josh's visible leisure activities help to re-signify Northcote as a gentrified landscape.

Despite his position as a renter, Josh feels at home in gentrified Northcote through his engagement with the night-time economy. In particular, and unlike the Palace residents, Josh regards NSC with high esteem:

> Northcote has a ... good ... atmosphere ... The music is *great*, You've got ... one of the biggest venues in Melbourne just down the road – Northcote Social Club. (Josh)

Josh's assessment complements external media representations of NSC that frame it as a 'pot of gold' and further inscribe Northcote as a gentrified space (*The Age* 2007). Its renovation is celebrated as a solution to the very 'dinginess' the Palace residents valued:

> Formerly the Commercial Hotel, the pub had *new life breathed into its grimy little lungs* in late 2004 and re-opened as the Northcote Social Club. ... [T]he pub is a top-notch live band venue and popular local hang out. (PBS 106.7FM 2007; emphasis added)

NSC is an aestheticized and sanitized version of the Palace's role as a live music venue in Northcote. Though it is granted 'new life' through re-branding, the reviewer's allusion to Northcote's 'griminess' also grants it the sort of 'benign danger' which also attracts leased gentrifiers, such as Josh (Smith 1996, 19; see also Shaw 2006).

The notion that gentrification adds 'new life' to 'problem' urban spaces is crucial for the legitimization of gentrification. For Josh, the materializations of gentrification in Northcote are not unwelcoming. They improve the landscape. Josh expresses this through the idea that Northcote, and Eastment Street in particular, is more 'open' since gentrification:

> I say 'hello' to everyone on this street and everyone usually says 'hello' [in reply] ... they're open people in this street ... There's a lot of really nice, open people here [in Northcote]. (Josh)

Josh positions his emphasis on openness against a 'closedness' he associates with the old Palace landscape. For Josh, the Palace residents' subcultural practices indicated a lack of 'openness' to the lifestyles offered by gentrification:

> They were punks ... But *I* like a lot of variety ... I guess in the sense of *a renaissance* ... accepting everything and taking it all in and then ... Do your own thing. (Josh; second emphasis added)

While Josh perceives the Palace residents as closed to the 'renaissance'[23] offered by 'doing your own thing' he also contradictorily frames them as too open. He links this to

a negative perception of radical politics. For Josh, the Palace residents' activism was a sign of closedness to the dominant ideology of liberal democracy. However, he also regards DIY politics as being open to anything, an assumption he links with mental instability:

> They were … just letting in whoever and … being open. I didn't move in here, to do something *crazy* for the world like they did … I'm not … into anarchy … I mean, if I do … anything to change the world … I want it to be my art – I don't want to go out and chain myself to stuff [like forest activists]. Everyone's opinion is accepted equally and … it's just … I don't know, just doing our own thing – I'm not political at all. (Josh)

Josh dismisses the Palace as too open and too closed, while positing his alteration of the Palace space to an art gallery as more acceptable mode for 'changing the world'.

Conclusion

To close, I return to Rose's notion of 'monuments'. The Palace residents experienced a sense of 'not-being-at-home' in Northcote owing to the over-determination of their subcultural landscape by gentrification. During the first years that the Palace operated, residents established a subcultural landscape through enacted re-significations of Northcote as DIY punk. However, DCC determined the geography of Northcote in a divergent manner that favoured the emergence of a creative-consumer subjectivity. The practices of the creative consumer, already 'at home' in Northcote, monumentalized and over-determined the Palace residents' subcultural landscapes. These practices gave the gentrifiers, in Rose's words, something to 'hold onto' and made the Palace residents unwelcome (2002, 461):

> [Regarding the Northcote Social Club] *there was something there for them to hold onto* … Since that opened [Northcote]'s gone downhill … so much faster. (Ben; emphasis added)

Ben's sentiments echo Rose. Ben highlights a sense that the dominant, or determining, home-making dynamic in Northcote shifted and overwhelmed his own subcultural homeliness. He contrasts the gentrifiers' ability to 'hold onto', and home make, with the Palace occupants' *inability* to maintain punk subcultural spaces in Northcote:

> We *want* to live here [in Northcote] and we'd like to have a bigger and closer community but we just can't afford to do it anymore. There's a few of us who are lucky enough to have places … There's a few … houses around that are still cheap, and that we can *keep hold of*, but there's fewer and fewer and each one that goes, you notice it more and more. (Ben; second emphasis added)

The home-making practices of the gentrifiers granted them 'something … to hold onto'. It made their gentrifying meaningful to those excluded from their landscapes: the Palace residents. A site like NSC became 'completely inaccessible' (Ben). Nevertheless, gentrified spaces are unstable landscapes. The Palace haunts Josh's enactment of his gentrifying position in Northcote. He was troubled by activists and punks 'rock[ing] up' and assuming the Palace landscape is still intact (Josh):

> People came down from the hills [after tree-sits]. They just rocked up. They'd been chaining themselves to bulldozers for like months, for *years* … they come back trying to find the Pink Palace … and it's like 'this is our *home* now'. (Josh)

Yet, as a gentrifier, Josh can also 'move along' these aberrations on his revitalized landscape. Josh informs the errant activists that Eastment Street is *his home now*. The gentrifiers' homely claims on Northcote over-determined the punks' subcultural landscape. The Palace residents' home was no longer visible, because it could no longer be practised. Their spaces had been re-coded as 'organically cool' and home to gentrifiers.

This lack of perceptibility and sense of unwelcomeness is expressed by one former Palace resident, Victor, whose words close my article:

> I always felt welcome in Northcote because everything was relaxed and everybody just went about their own business and, um you know, then it became gentrified ... it was ... you know, there was *nothing left*, *it was hard to see* ... (Victor; emphasis added)

Notes

1. I am aware of the, often heated, discussion surrounding the term 'subculture' (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Muggleton 2000; Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003). It is with these debates in mind that I have consciously chosen 'subculture', over, say, 'scene' (cf. Kahn-Harris 2007). I acknowledge the shortcomings of early subcultural theory, which tended to privilege semiotic analysis of subcultural products rather than critically engaging with subcultural formations as diverse, living entities (cf. Hebdige 1979). In this article, I grant the subculture associated with the Palace a liveliness through ethnographic content. Here, I am drawing more on the 'first wave' of CCCS work on subcultures, which was based on qualitative interviews and participant observation (Willis 1977, 1978). Further, I chose 'subculture' because it suggests a coherence, which I wish to capture, particularly in this first section of the paper. Scene is an accurate appellation for, say, the wider 'punk' networks of which many of the Palace residents were a part (cf. Straw [1991] 2005). However, when referring to a highly localized grouping, as I am, I feel subculture is more apt.
2. Brick making was the main industry in Northcote during most of the twentieth century (Lobert and Ruffy 1988, 23; Lemon 1983). However, other light manufacturing and small businesses also flourished (Lobert and Ruffy 1988, 35–6). Eastment Street, in particular, was home to shoemakers, bakeries and laundries (Darebin Historical Encyclopaedia n.d.; Sands & MacDougall 1915, 1923, 1961, 1967, 1972; Darebin City Council 2007b).
3. The interviews were conducted in the period June–August 2007. I undertook participant observation at the Palace, before it closed in March–April 2005.
4. Though, recently, it is worth noting that there has been something of a recuperation of home-making practices in, particularly middle-class, culture.
5. Rose draws on Bataille's notion of 'monuments' (1985). These monuments operate as 'Babel-like summits designed to lift us out of the ongoingness of life' (Rose 2002, 461). That is, monuments work as over-arching devices constructed by subjects as a foil to the excessive potential meanings of 'life in general' (ibid.).
6. See Barnes et al.'s (2006) article on Port Kembla, Wollongong, for a critique of council planners' assumptions that creative-city planning is a normative solution to local social and economic 'problems'.
7. Not unsurprisingly, creative-city advocates use a similar rhetoric. See Landry (2005).
8. Though Shaw's work on Sydney contradicts this (2006). In Northcote, however, widespread abandonment was not present.
9. Florida (2003), in fact, suggests that such a situation is crucial to the gestation of creative city spaces. His 'bohemian index' is determined by the amount of creative-workers living (notably renting) and 'playing' in a particular space.
10. The MUA strike occurred on Melbourne's wharves during 1998. It centred on the decision of Patrick Stevedoring boss Chris Corrigan to sack all his unionized workers. This was due to their alleged 'rort[ing]' of union bargaining resulting in high wages for what he perceived as very little work (in Trinca and Davies 2000, xiv). Because of the Coalition government's workplace relations laws, general striking was difficult, thus the 'Wharfies' picketed the docks, while Australian Council of Trade Unions lawyers pursued the matter in court. Meanwhile, non-union workers were brought in to work. See Trinca and Davies for a journalistic account of events (2000).
11. The names of the interview subjects quoted in this paper have been changed.
12. Prior to 1998, the warehouse had operated primarily as a bakery (Sands & McDougall 1915, 1923, 1961, 1967, 1972). A title search reveals that from 1968 until 1972 it operated as 'Rinaldi's Bakery', after which it was jointly owned by Mr Silvestroni and Mr Sambucco, who also used it for baking (Land Titles Office, Victoria n.d.). In 1989, Mr Silvestroni appears to have bought the warehouse outright, after which, according to the Palace residents, it operated as a jeans warehouse (ibid.).

13. Most of the Palace residents were vegan – subscribing to the radical animal rights ideology outlined by O'Hara (1999).

14. This was particularly true when the punk-death-metal hybrid genre of 'grindcore' was performed at the Palace. Refer to Kahn-Harris for a discussion of the 'sonic transgression' of musical forms such as grindcore (2007, 30–4). For a general discussion regarding the relationship between grindcore and punk refer to Mudrian, chapter 1, 'Punk is a rotting corpse' (2004, 25–45). The Palace also hosted avant-garde shows and art noise bands. However, as the residents pointed out, these less explicitly 'punk' performers remained punk … influenced. Lucy expressed this sentiment: 'grind[core] music is just yet another sub-genre of punk … So when all the residents of the P[ink] P[alace] referred to "punk", it was an umbrella term that roughly encapsulated most of the music played there … whether it be grind[core], hardcore, metal, crust, folk punk or whatever.'

15. 'Dumpster diving' is a practice where people, resistant to participation in capitalist exchange, and concerned that much supermarket stock is thrown away before it is rancid, steal food from large bins behind supermarkets.

16. An article in the metropolitan magazine *The Melbourne Times* also harnesses an understanding of Northcote as 'organic' (Ennis 2007, 9). '[B]randing visionary' Gilbert Rochecouste dubs the suburb as the first 'organically cool' creative precinct in Melbourne (ibid.).

17. 'Shabby chic' is, in fact, a popular style of interior decoration. See Ashwell and Costin (1996).

18. It is worth noting that Open Studio is only a two-minute walk from the former Palace site.

19. See Lemon for a very brief historical outline of the Commercial (1983, 114, 131).

20. The businessperson responsible for NSC remodelling also re-branded and renovated the 'Corner Hotel' in Richmond. The same owner also established the 'Public Office' bar and band venue in Melbourne's CBD. Richmond is another inner-Melbourne suburb which has undergone gentrification, of which Logan provides an early analysis (1985). The 'Public Office' is an example of a classic form of gentrification. Formerly a warehouse, it was renovated and re-branded as 'cool' partly as a result of the hip bands that performed there. Gentrification in Melbourne's CBD is discussed by Lobato (2006). Gibson and Homan (2004) discuss the shift towards unamplified music in their work on Marrickville, Sydney.

21. Victor also regarded Northcote as unwelcoming owing to the inception of sites such as NSC. Before proceeding with his remarks regarding the Commercial Hotel, quoted above, he commented: 'In the past, Northcote was more like a place for the, I guess, um, … punks … [Now] it is less *welcoming*' (emphasis added).

22. Such as illustration and shop-front design, as well as residential spaces, primarily apartment blocks and refurbished warehouses.

23. Though the term 'renaissance' is not specifically used in DCC documents, Evans (2001) uses it as the subtitle of his book *Cultural Planning: An Urban Renaissance*, which outlines strategies for creative industry to revitalize (gentrify) urban spaces. Smith discusses the rhetorical use of 'renaissance' in relation to New York City (1996, 35).

Notes on contributor

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