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OUT OF WORK, OUT OF LEISURE, OUT OF PLACE:
MORAL REGULATION, CITIZENSHIP
AND VOLUNTEERING IN THE RURAL “IDYLL”¹

ABSTRACT

This paper presents components of semi-structured interview exploratory research (n=25) carried out during 2003 in NSW's far north coast rainbow region as preparation of a larger agenda which seeks to interrogate ways in which national policy that circumscribes citizenship, interacts with cultural practices of belonging in rural “idyllic” tourism regions subjected to rapid growth in immigration from urban environments in successive waves. The central thrust of our approach is to examine the way in which work-for-the-dole volunteering, with its emphasis on producing the active citizen in the bodies of the unemployed, operates to inform cultural practices of place infused with diverse, contradictory, and intersecting meanings of idleness bound up in culturally mediated relationships between joblessness and leisure. Though barely scratching the surface of highly complex and fluid relations, the paper focuses on how obligatory volunteering operates to both subvert and support the extent to which work-for the-dole ameliorates social alienation as a condition of joblessness. What happens to the sense of belonging when layers of regional migrants are pushed together by the welfare system?

Keywords: *tourism, immigration, belonging, welfare, work, leisure*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper presents components of semi-structured interview exploratory research (n=25) carried out during 2003 in NSW's far north coast rainbow region as preparation of a larger agenda which seeks to interrogate ways in which national policy that circumscribes citizenship, interacts with cultural practices of belonging in rural "idyllic" tourism regions subjected to rapid growth in immigration from urban environments in successive waves. The central thrust of our approach is to examine the way in which work-for-the-dole volunteering, with its emphasis on producing the active citizen in the bodies of the unemployed, operates to inform cultural practices of place infused with diverse, contradictory, and intersecting meanings of idleness bound up in culturally mediated relationships between joblessness and leisure. Though barely scratching the surface of highly complex and fluid relations, the paper focuses on how obligatory volunteering operates to both subvert and support the extent to which work-for-the-dole ameliorates social alienation as a condition of joblessness. What happens to the sense of belonging when layers of regional migrants are pushed together by the welfare system?

The paper begins by positioning unemployment as a discursive and material condition that articulates citizenship in semi-juridico-legal form within residualist then neo-liberal welfare states. We then move on to a discussion of how this "thin" citizenship, which pre-supposes an enduring work/leisure binary, has been bolstered most recently with work-for welfare (work-for-the-dole) arrangements in overt attempts to re-invigorate "active" citizenship through engagement with volunteer agencies. Prior to examining how this is elaborated in practice, we position both juridico-legal and active citizenships within notions of belonging and place relations in the rural "Idyll" under intensive consumption pressure via tourism development.

"Problems of idleness" imbedded in liberalisms and to do with creating stable attachment to labor markets, have produced an array of ways of sifting the workshy from the productive jobless and, most recently, getting the chronically unemployed to work on their own attachment to civil society when confronted with debilitating alienation (Law, 1993; Walters, 1996 and 1997). Leisure studies scholars such as Rojeck (1985) and Seabrook (1988) have positioned the leisure/work binary as an artifact of modernity produced in the same wave of rationalism that gave rise to the notion of unemployment and responses to it (Walters, 1994). The work/leisure binary becomes distorted in joblessness, partly because there is no "work" for

residual leisure to lean on, and partly because there is no legitimate time off from job search or job readiness activity (Law, 2001a). Dole bludgers enjoy themselves – the genuinely unemployed do not.

Leisure scholars (e.g. Whitson, 1987; Van Parisjs, 1990) have long argued for the extension of social citizenship rooted in notions of distributive justice, to include healthy lifestyles through the public support of recreation. However, as Lobo (2002) has recently observed, the potential of formal recreation infrastructure to ameliorate alienation caused by joblessness by providing a host of psychological and physical benefits, has been eroded by the more successful neo-liberal user-pays principle aligned with “residualist” (Esping-Anderson, 1990) notions of welfare justice. Volunteer agencies potentially provide a solution to that problem by engaging the jobless in social milieu centered on civic contribution achievable outside of work. Such benefits are partly predicated on the assumption that volunteering is “active” citizenship and immersion in volunteer milieu will help stimulate an ethic of such contribution (Putnum, 2000). Attention should immediately turn to the ways in which work for the dole actually helps to produce the “self” as belonging through participation in and contribution to that milieu. Our investigation here centers on some of the ways in which supportive social milieu are eroded in practices of place making in the “idyll” and most importantly the role that obligatory volunteering plays in mediating these processes via a cultural confrontation hinging on interpretation of the “idyll” and the distribution of rights to tenure of place.

Most literature on practices of place and belonging in tourism regions centers on relations between rural pragmatists and gentrifying agents in global relations of consumption. In an effort to highlight the significance of multiple layers of culturally distinct migration to practices of place making that informs “belonging”, we concentrate here on relations of joblessness between cultures explicitly writing place as “idyll”. As has long been reported in the social psychological literature, the debilitating personal effects of unemployment do not operate as deeply when those out of work are located within cultural milieu that don’t interpret joblessness as a personal failing or an act of “identity” fraud committed by bludgers. Certainly, relations of “belonging” or cultural citizenship makes a difference to the way joblessness is experienced and the way that national citizenship mediated in welfare administration is interpreted.

Work for the dole in Australia, Britain, Canada and the U.S. has operated since the mid- 1990s to place welfare beneficiaries within volunteer organizations in an effort to maintain or produce the “active citizen” in

the bodies of the long-term unemployed. These arrangements are meant to immerse beneficiaries in an environment that has all the characteristics of a job. Routines, supervised expectations, skills development, co-worker relationships and so on. It's a "Clayton's job" – one you have when you don't have a job. Apart from the need to locate this effort away from the formal economy, volunteer organizations are ideal for the government to house efforts to create the "active citizen" in the bodies of the unemployed. In addition to providing a "work like" context, "obligatory volunteers" are immersed in a hyper-citizen milieu, that will hopefully rub off on those out of work and in danger of losing access to the kind of social capital that will inevitably lead to a productive life.

Judith Cochran's book reporting an examination of WFD arrangements in Western Australia has pointed to a number of outcomes for both obligatory volunteers and the agencies they're situated in. These include: little positive effects on self-esteem-job and training outcomes, non-reimbursement of participation expenses, and substantial negative effects for volunteer agencies such as overloads on administrative resources, disruption of operations due to low levels of volunteer reliability, and no training for the kinds of supervisory roles volunteers are now placed in. While these dynamics are important and certainly appeared in interviews for the the present study, we wish to focus on cultural effects centering on the way WFD interacts with relations of belonging or cultural citizenship in tourism regions already saturated with "problems of idleness" bound up in notions of the "idyll".

The advent of the "active citizen" is the result of national and global processes of identity formation within neo-liberal regimes that have been well canvassed in the governmentality literature. Governing the "active self" is accomplished in an array of regulatory techniques and technologies explicitly designed to get subjects to work on themselves as solutions to "problems of idleness" that circulate within now globalized neo-liberalism. The array of techniques and technologies of making the active citizen in the bodies of the unemployed (such as activity diaries, intensive interviews and now WFD) are partly to get the "passive" to work on themselves, and partly to sift the work shy – known as those doing things other than looking for work or keeping "work ready" (Dean, 1995 and 1998; Walters, 1994, 1996 and 1997; Burgess et. al., 2000). Surveillance and punishment for doing things other than work search or other legitimized activity has been a constant feature of benefit systems, and particularly important to the Australian tax supported benefit. However, it is well known that in regions of high and chronic unemployment, alienation is ameliorated by the pres-

ence of dense communities that de-center paid work as source of identity. Relations of “belonging” and identities that circulate in “place” are thus critical in pursuing ways out of alienation in joblessness.

The literature on place relations in tourism regions has commented extensively on material and cultural outcomes of rural gentrification. The cultural level of analysis includes a raft of sanitizing effects following the re-writing of place concomitant with its commodification following the demise of primary and secondary industries. The rural “idyll” is certainly supposed to be predicated on the absence of modernity, leaving sweeping views of rural nirvanas for consumption. Poverty is particularly problematic and “othered” out of view with a range of municipally orchestrated efforts to shift the bodies of the poor out of town. Consumption of the “idyll” involves taking on a “cultural citizenship” that resonates with romantic notions of, but doesn’t get too up close and personal with rural realities i.e. *“if you don’t stop those cows from mooing so loudly, I’ll call the police.”* Cultural citizenship is shaped by material and symbolic practices involving the production of place “narratives” of the “idyll” which bump into cultural configurations established in various waves of migration. Negotiating one’s identity as “unemployed” in the “idyll” means negotiating relations between place cultures. While much of this work has tended to position that negotiation as between rural pragmatists and gentrifiers, our analysis here centers primarily on relations between narratives of place developed in at least two waves of migration and the way that work-for-the-dole, brings those relations into relief through explicit practices of citizenship.

Important to our analysis here, are relations of idleness that circulate within and between communities in the “Idyll” that circumscribe belonging. The “idyll” not only circulates in tourism and “lifestyle” magazines and in the minds of gentrifiers, but also in social security administration as places that attract bludgers. Moving to a place of lower employment is evidence of bludging – particularly if it is beautiful and supports cultures with anti-work ethics. In rural regions considered tourism destinations, “belonging” for the “unemployed” is accomplished by negotiating meanings of idleness at the intersection of active and cultural citizenships overlaid on the platform of place consumption practices.

We have argued that neo-liberal ideals of the “active citizen” position the “career of the self” as an enterprise meant to strip away idleness as “passivity” politically legitimated through the deserving/non-deserving binary. The deserving do ethical work on themselves. The undeserving (bludgers) refuse such a work place. We have also argued that volunteer

networks now positioned as ethical incubators to contain such projects of the self are not merely agents of the state, but constitute cultural enclaves that have ideas of idleness circulating through them. This localization of regulatory relations opens up the possibility for more intense relations of surveillance, but also subversion of the homogenous “active” citizen. In the “idyll”, the meaning of joblessness as idleness is radically fragmented and operates to inform cultural “othering” and therefore cultural citizenship in ways that both compliment and subvert national citizenship ideals. The following case study of the “rainbow region” elaborates the role of meanings of idleness to inform the intersection of juridico-legal, civic and cultural practices of citizenship.

THE RAINBOW REGION

Describing the region

The “Rainbow Region” is a term that emerged in the 1980’s to describe the cultural diversity in the NSW far north coast region circumscribed by Brunswick Heads in the north, Bangalow in the south and Nimben in the west, taking in of course Mullumbimby near the geographical center and Byron Bay on the coast. The region is a “region” because of intersecting or at least jointly resonating cultural flows that are the center of this analysis. With the exception of Lismore, which is arguably outside of or on the fringe of these flows, the region is partly characterized by typical dynamics of economic change (shifts from agricultural and secondary production to service industries) that have positioned it as an idyllic zone suitable for consumption. Persistently high levels of unemployment in the region over the past 25 years (hovering around the 20-25% mark) stem from typical rural economic re-organization and stickiness of “place”. Since the late 1960’s, the region has circulated in national administrative discourse, and amplified in the press as a haven for “bludgers”. Inscribed directly into DSS procedure manuals for a brief period in the early 1970s were the “Hippie element” and “surfie types” who not only become the embodiment of explanations of rising unemployment in the early 1970’s but who’s “idleness” also became indelibly iconic of the region.

Contradictory relations of idleness

Different to “holiday makers” who lived lives interpretable through the lenses of modernity (earned their “time off”), “surfies” and “hippies” were

a threat to cultural practices of place, particularly for police who also conducted surveillance of welfare fraud in the 70's.

“Yeah there was this cop, Wilson I think his name was and one other guy. He used to harass us all. He dragged one of my mates into the lock up, cut his hair, took him to the highway and told him to get out of town. He left me alone though because I had a job.” LS

Forms of representation (dress, speech, hairstyles, politics etc.) were intentionally anti-modernist and this extended to notions of time that were framed by a deep physical and human ecology. While geographically distinct, anti-authoritarianism, marijuana, sexual relations, and non-modernist temporal distinctions provided cultural linkages between surfies and hippies as well as “tags” for governing authorities. During early periods of settlement, unemployment benefits were both a boon and a problem for these communities. On one hand, the dole offered an exit door from absolute authority of the labor market and its rational organizations as defining features of “productivity” important for expressions of the “self”. Personally resonant relations of informal exchange characterized somewhat utopian ideals achievable within communities that dissolved work leisure distinctions and with them, notions of productivity/idleness. Dissolving such distinctions partly meant silencing the labor market as authority of social contribution and identity, and opening up the concrete possibility for explicit cultural citizenship where a fluid range of values circulated in wide networks of exchange relations.

“One thing we don't ask people around here is ‘what do you do?’ because people do such a variety of things. You get a lot of people who would just walk away, unimpressed. Whereas if you'd said, well I'm developing a composting toilet better than the last one, then people would go ‘oh really?’ That's got status. That's got credibility... ‘If you had a real job, a lot of people didn't really want to know about it.’ [JK in DN]

“We weren't doing nothing on the dole. There was always stuff to do, always stuff on the house or the land, our art, and stuff for eachother. We were always at something, it just wasn't broken up into boxes of ‘job’ and ‘time off’.” [GC]

What looked like “passivity” or illegitimate leisure to governing relations operating with an “active/passive” binary based on labour market participa-

tion dissolved within social contexts that valued the art of the “self”. JK’s comment highlighted that occupational identity was and remains within “alternative” communities irrelevant to social relations, thus undercutting “alienation”. While careerlessness was a mark of distinction, joblessness was never an overt “goal”. The kind of work, its structure and content had to fit with ideals of productivity rooted in an ethic of contribution. RE commented further:

“I looked around and thought, well if I could find any jobs that I really thought ought to be done, I’d apply for them. Other than that I’ve just got to do whatever comes next.” [JK in DN]

Whitlam’s minister for social security, Bill Hayden attempted to enable this degree of negotiation with the labour market, particularly for youth in 1973 by adjusting the work test to reflect the kind of work that people wanted to do. Following pressure from both inside and outside of the labor party, Hayden reversed his position by 1974. There were only two kinds of people on the dole – bludgers and those willing to submit to the labor market no matter what jobs were available.

During the 1970’s, contradictory relations of “idleness” played themselves out in predictable ways. Police harassment was common place, as were more informal tensions in shops, welfare agencies, cafe’s and so on. By the mid-1980’s several concurrent though separate trajectories ushered in shifting relations of idleness. “Alternative” cultures proliferated and fragmented in a second wave of settlement in the early eighties, though remained culturally resonant with earlier anti-modernity themes. “Hippies” with politically charged utopian ideals were joined by “ferrals” and religious orders. Further, after 10-15 years of cohabitation, the global emergence of legitimacy of environmentalism and continued deterioration of the capacity of traditional local labor markets, “hippie” versus “settler” enmity became submerged in earth centered cultures, hybrids of rural pragmatism and humanist environmentalism. Surfies, had mostly abandoned explicitly hedonic lives and were now producing Byron Bay as an iconic surfing destination, nostalgic and authentic for the expanding and moneyed long-board market, “raging” for youthful shortboarders.

The region had become “idyllic” in the 60’s as an obvious place to articulate cultural critique, to live a variety of utopias. Most importantly, the region presented and continues to do so, opportunity to heal the ravages of modernity.

“It attracted all these people that weren’t necessarily capable of being good cogs in the machine, but as individuals they were really good people. I mean this was social triage, casualties from the city, they came here and depending on how screwed up they were they might end up out the back of Huonbrook or Main Arm, if they were really screwed up they ended up at Nimbin, but they’re so tolerant and understanding.” [DN]

Commodification of these “alternative” cultures in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s were most profoundly articulated in waves of development and settlement centering on consumption of the land enabled by a re-valorization of historically subversive identities, now consumable as place icons. As JK put it: “Alternative has become a crystal shop in Byron Bay.” As is well documented, consumption of the “Idyll” is predicated on dressing up in non-modernity. Viable agriculture in the region is increasingly leaving its broken down fences to indicate tranquility, small town backyards are increasingly becoming tropical courtyards, banana shed verandah’s have given way to poolside decks – all of which write the romantic countryside. The rarely used shack on the beach, which housed dense communities of “soul” surfers have mostly given way to predictable monolith’s and circulate as conspicuous consumption among the wealthy, sporting a stack of surfboards. The north coast “alternative traveler” has also gradually given way to the anonymous “backpacker”.

Volunteering, gentrification and idleness

As in other “idyllic” regions, gentrification has followed a fairly traditional path. New settlers in the 1990’s arrived in unprecedented numbers in flight from the city and to simply invest in upwardly mobile real estate. An amalgam of early and semi-retirees, telecommuters and part-time moneyed residents have blanketed the region in new and renovated architectural styles that resonate “retreat”. One informant referred to this as **“St Ives by the Sea”** [KB]. Predictable material outcomes include rising land values and rents, pressure on infrastructure and so on. This wave of settlement also brought new meanings of joblessness in alignment with the national “active/passive” binary citizen. While this wave certainly brought a plethora of commercial and professional skills and expanded global relations, their occupation of the land appears to have had several effects.

The non-moneyed and non-landed which are heavily represented in cultural organizations and informal networks are becoming increasingly geographically marginalised, which has destabilized dense civic networks:

“it’s too expensive for any of us to live around here. I’ll be kicked out here [house on ridge] when the owner rebuilds next year. That’s happening to a lot of our people. It makes it harder or impossible for us to get together, particularly without transport. It’s taken a lot of our committed people off the scene.” [RP]

“Place” has become increasingly privatized, which has reduced the level of tolerance for diversity:

“People now have a huge investment in their little piece of the area and so [we get] the irate screams of how it should be and how it would be and so on.” [DN]

New relations of idleness have emerged directly from work-for-the-dole arrangements that bolster conditions for alienation while out of work. Population pressure on the region has brought “landcare” to the fore. While contradictory cultures have tended to circulate in their own milieu, preservation of the physical “idyll” has brought a convergence of interests in protection of the land. While such a convergence potentially strengthens a cross-cultural de-centering of occupational status in relation to civic contribution, obligatory volunteers in land care agencies, are treated as non-citizens of place in two main ways.

First, servant/master relations between obligatory volunteers and land-owners are brought to bear for landcare tasks that take place on private property. The opportunity to visibly contribute in a meaningful way for publicly paid workers doing tasks on private property, serves to reinforce land ownership as the primary dimension of belonging, in a place where prior waves of immigrants had made “home” as a place to articulate substantial variety in personhood, and not necessarily through the labour market. One project supervisor commented on how the “unemployed” status of work-for-the dole workers renders them visible as “incarcerated” and thus “invisible” as people with any valuable contribution – quite the opposite of the government discourse on what work-for-the-dole is about:

“We thought you were from Grafton, and I said, what do you mean Grafton? And they were talking about Grafton jail they thought we were on day release from Grafton jail and I was absolutely shocked ... they see us as not worthy people, we are not valuable enough to do something more meaningful so when the real shitty jobs need to be done well we’ll

get these guys to do that because nobody else wants to do that. And people actually say that to me, I say, why are you asking us to do this? And they say, because nobody else will ... Those people I have got to tell you, city people that have been lawyers and this and that that have come and they've retired early or whatever and they've come and brought that mentality with them that anybody who is unemployed is a ratbag ... it's because they want you as slave labour because you are [no cost] or because you're looked down upon because you are unemployed. It's not always easy to separate the two there ... We do a lot of work on private properties and it plays itself out by us arriving for a job and there's no-one there ... very obvious how much do they care you are giving them free labour and they expect me to manage this show and they don't even appear." [LD]

Private landowners not only receive service from their government "slaves" but also occupy positions in the volunteer elite, remaining at a cultural distance from their "obligatory" volunteers. Cultural "othering" is easily accomplished by "disappearing" identities that disrupt regional entitlement:

"Completely being treated as they don't exist is something that does happen quite often, that a volunteer will come and interact with me while my people stand right there and they won't introduce themselves, they won't even acknowledge it, when they leave for the day they won't say thank you, it's just them and me and these guys don't exist at all, and that's pretty rude really, it's very rude." [LD]

In this instance, work for the dole explicitly frames bodies of the unemployed as those who've been "caught" by the system and are paying their dues for a government holiday. DN comments in a similar fashion about working in the tourism industry:

"That uniqueness that came from all the different people living here is going while they paint the place with one bloody great big salmon color paintbrush. Unless you are an entrepreneur or some sort of bloody rich person, you are either going to have to be a laborer or a servant to those with money... cleaning their toilets, the waitresses the gardeners... You could go out and drink with solicitors and real estate agents and parkies and socialize all in the same group so long as your behavior was acceptable. Now it doesn't matter how you behave, so long as you've got enough money to own your big block of land somewhere in Byron you can do what you like and if you haven't got the money you're bullshit." [DN]

New settlers, and primarily women seem reasonably well distributed in landcare volunteer agencies and articulate their commitment to the idyll through their direct relationship to the land. However, the bodies of the unemployed are “othered” out of place because of the obligatory nature of their service. LD believes this to be something imported. This relationship doesn’t seem to operate the same way with regular volunteers that share regional biographies – particularly experience with poverty and welfare administration:

“.... is a single mum on benefits and’s been here for years. She’s doing all that work to bring up her kids, ploughs alot of her energy into [projects] and treats us like equals. She’s given us food and drink that I know she can’t afford. Treats us like we’re making a difference, a contribution” [LD]

While commodification of the “idyll” is partially accomplished by the establishment of class relationships as cultural relationships, work-for-the-dole appears to operate smoothly under conditions where regular volunteers, obligatory volunteers and service beneficiaries share pre-existing cultural links. One neighborhood center regular volunteer commented:

“We all get along really well. There’s no difference really between regular volunteers, people on work-for-the-dole and our clients. You can’t tell who’s who most of the time, just by walking in. Really we just helping each other, nurturing each other in what we’ve all been through.” [EO]

Participants have a degree of choice over which agency they select to volunteer with. However if unaccustomed to cultures of formal volunteer networks, choices are presented in terms of the type of work done and the sorts of skills that could potentially be developed, rather than fit within milieu that makes sense in terms of “place” relations. While this dynamic should operate in other places, the intense liminality of the “idyll” under commodification brings joblessness into higher relief as a contestable condition regulating relations of idleness. The landed gentry deserve their break from modernity, the jobless do not.

Surfing on the dole

Visibility of joblessness is a key factor in relations of idleness. Surfers in particular have been singled out in the Australian press, most intensely in

the seventies and periodically since. To some extent, icons of authenticity within surfing communities revolving around the “soul surfer” have set up a degree of cultural legitimacy for the decentration of economic identity. How one surfs, and lives in a way that can accommodate ocean moods is more central than work, and this should be expected in coastal communities. Certainly early surfing migrants to the Byron Bay area were able to produce economic lives in surf industries capable of supporting commitment to the surfing “self” and to avoid authoritarian discipline. The idea of surfing on the dole continues to attach to the region. One community agency respondent commented:

“About once every two or three years one of the current affairs programs goes to Byron Bay, down to the surf and sticks a microphone in front of him and says, “are you working?” and he says, “oh no the surf is too good”, that gets broadcast all over Australia and there’s a big crackdown in Centrelink offices around the coast for three months, until everything quiets down again so if you’re looking for a dole bludger, Byron Bay or Lennox Head or somewhere around there is the place you usually go to get your hot story.” [TH]

Two factors need to be mentioned here. First, this commentator goes on to argue that many come to the region because of the surf. They work casually, to support surfing, primarily in the booming construction industry or in the surf manufacturing and services industries. Second, world class tourism labor markets are often saturated with illegal workers. “Backpackers” accept low waged work either or both, in return for rent or under the counter. Healthy retail sectors that can traditionally absorb unskilled casual workers have a cheaper supply of labor than local youth. One commentator observed that reliability of surfing work-for-the-dole youth is quite low and failure to turn up on time will warrant a breach of benefit conditions. However, given the crowded out local labor market, and that their community networks centered on surf are quite strong, even happily referring to self as a “dole bludger” is a pragmatic response to labor market conditions:

“How many times can you do the rounds of those bloody shops and B&B’s before you say “stuff it, I’ll stay at home with mum and dad ... and surf my brains out.” [KB]

CONCLUSION

Notions of citizenship hinging on the active/passive binary tightly circumscribe what counts as “active” Surfing and “alternative” communities dissolve the active/passive binary in place relations that refuse the “project of the self” through obligatory volunteering. To a certain extent, “projects of the self” are ongoing within milieu that de-center the work/leisure binary. The “idyll” operates within these communities to dissolve both active/passive and work/leisure binary’s. Alienation dissolves when joblessness is not an “othering” condition. However, colonization of the “idyll” by rural gentrifiers is shifting place relations to reassert legitimacy of those binaries and helps to reproduce the conditions for alienation. Diaspora of the poor through rent increases as well as surveillance through a range of explicit and implicit mechanisms such as parking, camping and busking regulations at the municipal level have started to rupture nurturing community networks.

Work-for-the-dole adds a new layer of moral regulation to the “idyll” by concretely “producing” the work shy in a way that reproduces master servant relations imported from the metropolis and inscribed in tenure over “place”. Being out of work and receiving welfare assistance now means committing to work for volunteer agencies. In effect, volunteer agencies have taken on interpersonal moral regulation akin to the style of 19th century benevolence. Having dense networks of local volunteers administer work-for-the-dole means that individuals must negotiate “local” identities that are necessarily bound up in local cultural relations which are circumscribed by the meaning of “place”. The meaning of “place” is particularly under pressure in rural regions becoming increasingly attractive for landscape consumers. The meaning of landscape evokes “idylls” that are fragmented between cultural layers – each interpreting the legitimacy of work/leisure, active/passive, idle/productive in a different way. In such places, work-for-the-dole effectively places the primacy of one set of place interpretations over another. Being out of work can now mean interpersonal servitude to new landscape consumers. “The project of the self” implied in active employment policy is filtered through a localized version of what the “self” should be. Relations of belonging for those out of work in the rainbow region were circumscribed by mutually supportive relations that effectively dissolved the work/leisure binary as relevant to conducting civic life within their own cultural communities of choice. Alienation due to joblessness didn’t make sense in a milieu where the productive/idle binary was submerged beneath authentic “projects” of the self that were

open-ended as “freedom to be”. However, the mutually supporting and culturally devastating blows of gentrification and work-for-welfare have converged to bring global relations of place commodification, national citizenship rights and obligations into play with local relations of belonging.

While this paper is exploratory in nature and confined to a single case study, we advance that the processes identified here are common. For new gentrifiers, the unemployed “self” is a resource for gentrification projects and a reinforcement of the “Idyll” that can be purchased. For those caught in the welfare net, their “idyll”, comprised of fluid social relations based in mutual support, celebration and understanding, is shattered as they are driven back into the visibility and shame of joblessness.

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