Doing Cultural Work: Local Postcard Production and Place Identity in a Rural Shire

Abstract

Studies of place construction in the rural studies literature have largely privileged the role of professionals over that of local lay actors. This paper contributes to redressing this imbalance through a critical case-study of lay postcard production in a rural shire. Drawing on original, qualitative research conducted in the Shire of Ravensthorpe, Western Australia, including in-depth interviews with key participants, the analysis focuses on this lay production—undertaken in the main by women—as cultural work. By emphasizing the work of making the postcards along with the cultural work these postcards achieve, this examination foregrounds intersections of material and imagined ruralities. In the process, this study highlights the complexity and importance of this lay contribution to place identity, particularly as positioned within what may be considered rural cultural work.

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Key words: Cultural work, Place identity, Postcards, Lay discourse, Rural Australia, Rural women.

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And when the tourist buses come in, that's what they're doing, just picking up a postcard and sending it off to family. (Susan, local postcard producer).

1. Introduction

Public representations, markers and narratives of place together with events such as annual festivals have been the subjects of a substantive body of important work in the rural studies literature (see, for example, Carter et al., 2007; Gibson and Davidson, 2004; Kneafsey, 2000; Larsen, 2008; Panelli et al., 2007). Within this work, local residents appear largely in relation to their perceptions of and identifications with a given place identity, as opposed to their active contributions to the public production of rural place identities. Though not entirely absent (see for example, Winchester and Rofe, 2005; Brennan-Horley et al., 2007), the role of lay actors in the construction of public place identities remains under-examined (and under-recognised). The analysis offered here of lay postcard production in an Australian rural shire contributes to redressing this imbalance, of importance given that senses of place and place identities, fundamental to conceptions and experiences of "the rural", encode ongoing, power-laden, and contested social and cultural constructions with profound material consequences (Harvey, 1993; Kneafsey, 2000; Massey, 1993a, 1993b; Rodman, 1992; Rose, 1995). Equally importantly, lay/everyday discourses and practices, are a central means through which "the rural" is internalised, challenged, and refashioned (Crouch, 1992; Halfacree, 1993, 1995; Jones, 1995; Philo, 1993).

In keeping with much of the scholarship on place, a distinction is drawn between the nevertheless dialogically interlinked notions of sense of place and place identity. "Sense of place" emphasises place as a locus of "personal feelings" (Rose, 1995, p. 88), while "place identity" privileges public (collective) meanings attached to places, circulating in, among others, logos and brands, policies, cultural plans, (local and other) histories, town entry-statements, billboard advertising, festivals and events, and tourism materials including postcards.[1] Of particular interest here, postcards have many uses and functions. Involving interrelated "use-values" and "sign-values" (Haldrup and Larsen, 2006), these include but are not limited to visual communication

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[1] It is not to be confused with "place-based identity" which privileges individual and collective identification with a given place. This identification occurs when the meanings associated with a place are "so strong that they become a central part of the identity of the people experiencing them" (Rose 1995, p. 88). See for example, Carter et al. (2007), who use the term "place-identity" to this effect.

(Sigel, 2000), advertising (Kohn, 2003), aesthetic object (Kohn, 2003), historical artefact (Geary and Webb, 1998; Kurti, 2004), and popular cultural practice and souvenir within the discourse of tourism (Kennedy, 2005; Markwick, 2001). In each instance postcards play a widely-acknowledged role in "the cultural production, performance and consumption of ethnoscapes, places and identities" (Pritchard and Morgan, 2005, p. 71). They contribute substantially to the production and circulation of identity and place stereotypes (see, for example, Sigel, 2000; Cohen, 1995) including, together with chocolate boxes and calendars, idyllic images of rural spaces (Cloke, 1997). Similarly, postcards offer a means of resisting cultural stereotypes (Edwards, 1996; Moors, 2003; Pritchard and Morgan, 2005). As contemporary popular-culture artefact and practice, postcards can provide valuable insights into the ongoing construction of rurality. Largely neglected in this context, the making of postcards is examined here as noteworthy production and performance of local, rural place identity. Further, this postcard work as "lay production" foregrounds a non-commercial and non-specialist character, while "lay" as prefix in, for instance, "lay discourse" (Jones, 1995) and "lay geography" (Crouch, 2000) concurrently encodes everyday, largely individual, ways of knowing. The (rural) everyday, along with individual senses of place, as will become apparent, are important informing aspects of this lay production of postcards. The postcards, however, as cultural artefacts intended for dissemination beyond personal networks constitute a "popular discourse" (Jones, 1995). This local production of postcards thus enacts a dynamic interface between lay and popular discourse.

The postcard production examined here occurs in the Shire of Ravensthorpe, incorporating the towns of Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe. Covering 13, 000 square kilometres of which two-thirds have been set aside as national parks and nature reserves, the Shire is 550 kilometres south-east of Perth, the capital city of Western Australia (Shire of Ravensthorpe, 2007). Dominant industries include broad acre farming and, very recently, large-scale mining (Shire of Ravensthorpe, 2007) which operated with a hybrid residential and fly-in/fly-out workforce (Mayes, 2008b), along with a nascent tourism sector. Relatively consistent with the prior two census periods, the population in 2006 was 1,950 persons (ABS, 2007), but at the time of field work was increasing dramatically as a result of the above mining operation which by May 2008 had trebled the "pre-mine" population of Hopetoun from approximately 350 to

over 1000 (Lawson, 2008).[2] Though the Shire of Ravensthorpe is distant from an urban centre (the nearest city, Albany, is 300 sparsely-inhabited kilometres away), and has a low population density and prevailing agrarian industries, designating it as "rural" is problematic in that "rurality" is not a straight-forward or necessary product of place (Murdoch and Pratt, 1993; Halfacree, 1993). Rather, rurality is an ongoing, contested, plural category and imaginative space, constructed through representation and performance, and for varying (lay and academic) purposes (see, for instance, Cloke, 1997, 2006; Crouch, 1992; Halfacree, 1993; Philo, 1993). In effect, "the 'rural' […] does not essentially lie anywhere, it is locally produced" (Murdoch and Pratt, 1993, p. 425). As a critical, overarching (and finely nuanced) context for experiences of place (Grace and Lennie, 1998) with both "referential and anticipatory" functions (Halfacree, 1993), "the rural" is best approached as socially and culturally constructed sets of defining (and often idealised) characteristics, and ways of doing and being. Thus, to name Ravensthorpe as "rural" is not to assume an inherent, a-historical or homogeneous set of characteristics, values and social structures. Instead this usage (pragmatically) recognises "rurality" as a dominant setting and context for the production (and consumption) of these postcards, while acknowledging that local senses of "rurality" are informed and (re)produced by this work.[3] By emphasising processes of production over "content" and consumption, it is hoped here to contribute to an understanding of intersections of material and imagined ruralities in order, as Cloke (2006, p.24) suggests, to "rematerialise, resocialise and repoliticise" constructions of rural space. In identifying and privileging rurality as informing context, this study is, further, a contribution to the to-date "underdeveloped 'constitutive' sense of culture, of production, performance and consumption, of individual and collective meaning-making in rural Australia" (Carter et al., 2008, p. 29).

2. Cultural work

As discussed below, this local production incorporates collective and individual labour with clear community motivations and consequences. However, "community work" does not adequately encompass the reach and import of this practice. Indeed, a

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[2] The mine has since closed in January 2009.
[3] The Shire in general and Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe in particular are widely described as "remote", "rural" and "regional."

cultural work perspective is necessitated by the entrenched usage of the term "community work" to signify activities closely concerned with the implicitly inward-looking (and often pejoratively feminised) care of community in general and also of individual community members. As Beth Moore Milroy and Susan Wismer (1994, p.72) observe, community work "often appears to be maintenance work—part of the 'social glue' which holds a community together" and "includes small and informal neighbourly care-giving actions by individuals or organisations." They also note that the benefits of this categorically unpaid work are mostly in the area of social welfare. Postcard production in Ravensthorpe, in contrast, involves both paid and volunteer labour and, though seen as essential, does not carry the moral weight of the provision of neighbourly support. More distinctively, it is explicitly outward-looking in its concern with being "presentable" and with satisfying the demands of visitors/tourists. Recognising this production as "cultural" work foregrounds its primary function: namely the production and circulation of public place identities.

Commercial postcard production is clearly incorporated in the broader definition of the cultural industries as "those activities involved in the production of symbolic goods and services, whose principal value is derived from their function as carriers of meaning—through images, symbols, signs and sounds" (Banks, 2006, p. 457). The Ravensthorpe postcard producers participate in this industry as "creative cultural workers" directly employed in the making of symbolic commodities. Conceiving this work as cultural is, however, about more than the commodity itself as a particular "type." Cultural work as concept foregrounds the fundamentally political nature of this work,[4] not least in regards to the twin aspects of "the work of making it, and the work it does" (Bennett, 2007, p.33). This duality privileges interrelationships between embodied material process and signification/representation, while avoiding a simplistic identification of "culture" with representation and of "the social" with material relations (Bennett, 2007).[5] Culture is recognised as a product of labour, thereby guarding "against the reduction of culture to commodification" (Denning,

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[4] "Community work" is also political, yet this is elided in many understandings and uses of the concept.
[5] Bennett's view is that "culture" and "the social" are best understood as distinguishable "from one another as different public organisations of things, texts and humans that are able to operate on and in relation to each other " (p. 34).

2004, p. 94).[6] Concurrently, "The processes that make us—as individuals, as citizens, as members of a particular class, race or gender—are cultural processes" (Turner, 1990, p. 2). In this way the concept of "culture" operates very broadly in a "general semiotic sense (culture as meaning-making practices)" (Bennett, 2007, p.34), incorporating relations of power coded in local knowledges and practices along with broader social and cultural processes. Importantly, acknowledging this lay production of postcards as cultural work, draws it productively into the broader "value chain of meaning" encompassing author/producers, text/performance, and reader/audience (Hartley, 2004). An emphasis on cultural work acknowledges those engaging in this postcard work as producers as well as custodians of local place identity (and of rurality). This examination of the rural doing of this work along with the work it does, in turn problematises a predominant tendency to characterise cultural work as normatively urban (see also Gibson and Klocker, 2005). Likewise, focussing on the specificities of production, from motivation to "finished" artefact, contributes to a much-needed enriched understanding of cultural work as complex undertaking involving social and political motivations (Banks 2006).

3. Local production

The postcard production examined here is "local" on a range of fronts. First, the photographs and art pieces reproduced on the postcards are the work of residents of the Shire. In addition, the postcards have been either published on home computers by those same residents or, as a result of local initiatives, sent to printing companies in the capital city. Second, the images on the cards "depict" a/the local area, specifically the townships of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun. Third, the postcards are available only from local vendors. Indeed, the postcard representation of the Shire, and of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun individually, occurs entirely on postcards of local origin.[7] Fourth, as explored below, this production is rooted in local conditions, just as it is also a local response to external factors. Overall, this production is based upon and reproduces "the area" as site of specificity, intimacy and difference: as local.

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[6] Denning argues specifically for what he terms a "labor theory of culture" as a complementary means to address a number of shortcomings in current socio-analyses of culture.
[7] With the possible exception, in 2007, of a "Blue Reef" post card, the provenance of which remains a mystery, and a generic commercial card which appeared in the local post office in 2008.

While not unique in the region, this postcard production does not appear to be the norm. In September 2007 in the adjacent Shire of Lake Grace, with a comparable population of 1,456 (Shire of Lake Grace, 2007), the town of Newdegate offered only commercial postcards featuring non-local images on some of which the name of the town is superimposed. These postcards present, for example, composites of scenes from the whole of Western Australia including images not only from further afield in the south west of the state but also of Perth and of the far north of the state. These images are collectively titled "Western Australia: State of Contrast" with "Newdegate, Western Australia" embossed notably post-production in gold in the top left-hand corner. On the other hand, the larger town of Lake Grace, also in September 2007, furnished a mixture of local postcards and generic commercial postcards. More broadly, towns and cities of all sizes in Australia are routinely represented on postcards produced by commercial concerns self-identified as national in scope though in the case of larger towns and cities these may feature local images.[8] Historically, postcard production in the Shire of Ravensthorpe is part of a long tradition in Australia encompassing both commercial and lay production. Picture postcards, as Cook (1986) demonstrates, have played a part in the representation of "Australian places" since appearing in Australia in the 1890s, with privately published cards permitted from 1898. Cook notes that early Australian postcards were published as part of government promotions aimed at attracting investment, tourists and migrants. A comparable number, however, again according to Cook, were also "the work of amateur do-it-yourself photographers" (51). Production in the Ravensthorpe area, as evidenced by out-of-circulation postcards held in local collections, and according to the recollections of interviewees, dates back to at least the 1970s. These early postcards are the work of local promotional committees (now defunct, or transformed into newer committees) and of individuals.

4. Greetings from Ravensthorpe

Constituting the full local range available at the time, 53 postcards were systematically acquired during January and February 2007 from all vendors in

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[8] In this region: "Photo Cards Australia", "Steve Parish Publishing" and "Nu-Color-Vue, Australia's National Postcard Company" (recently renamed "Visit Merchandise"). Of course, non-rural areas may well be represented on locally produced postcards.

Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe.[9] There are 4 key groupings: a set produced as a result of a children's art competition, a selection created by an informal art group, those produced by a high-profile community organisation called Ravensthorpe Hopetoun Area Promotions (RHAPS), and 3 individually-produced series. RHAPS is "volunteer driven" with recent support from the Shire to fund a coordinator position one day a week (Erica).[10] The committee runs the Ravensthorpe Visitor Centre and Museum open 7 days a week. Volunteers, rostered on 1 day a month or more, "run the shop part of it" which is "pretty well patronised" by new local residents and a regular flow of visitors and tourist buses (Susan).[11] The children's set, the art collection and RHAPS cards feature local artwork and photography which has been sent to commercial printers for manufacture into postcards. The 3 individual producers active at the time of fieldwork undertake both the photography and production of the postcards. This sample includes postcards made, according to local informants, over a period of around 20 years. The RHAPS postcards in the sample date from the late 1980s/early 1990s, and the art postcards from the mid to late 1990s. On the other hand, the work by individual producers in this sample is more recent. One individual producer, at the time of field work, had been making postcards for 1 month and another for 4 months. Individual producers, however, are responsible for 2 of the largest series of cards in this sample—one focussing on the town of Ravensthorpe and the other on Hopetoun.

Drawing on local knowledge and acknowledgements made on individual cards, 20 residents (not including the children whose work appears on the competition set) were identified as contributing photographs or artwork at various times and with varying levels of involvement in the production of postcards over this 20-year period. They did so as individual producers, or as part of the informal art collective, or as members of RHAPS. Those participating in this production were not doing so as tourism professionals, local government representatives, development officers, or business representatives. The work of men appears on postcards produced by the art group and also RHAPS, and the large individual Hopetoun series was produced by a

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[9]These included the Ravensthorpe Visitor Centre and Museum, Ravensthorpe Post Office, Hopetoun General Store, and The Deck Ice Cream Parlour and Café in Hopetoun.

[10] All names have been changed in order to honour anonymity agreements made with interviewees.

[11] "Ravensthorpe Visitor Centre and Museum" is the full name of the centre; the museum however is the province of Ravensthorpe Historical Society Incorporated.

male. Women, however, have dominated this production. Of the 20 identified contributors, 5 are male and 13 are female; the sex of the remaining 2 people involved, with only initials to go by, remain unclear in this study. Women are credited with the majority of the postcard designs, and have been the driving members of the art and RHAPS groups.

The discussion offered here draws principally on semi-structured interviews with 5 people central to the making of these postcards.[12] Interviewees include prominent, long-standing RHAPS members engaged in the postcard production, one of whom played a key role in the first and subsequent RHAPS series; one person involved in both art collective and individual production across a period of 10 years (though not actively making postcards at this time); and 2 of the 3 identified individual producers all of whom were active at the time of field work. The interviewees are all female and, with one exception, are long-term residents of the shire. My attempts to interview the male individual producer were unsuccessful.[13] In addition to having played a relatively small role, the other male producers no longer lived locally and/or local sources were unable to locate them. Interviewees were asked how and why they began making postcards, what they perceive as the benefits of doing so, how and why they select the images used, and how well the postcards sell. Subsequently, informal conversations were undertaken with local retailers and postcard industry representatives.

5. Motivations and perceived benefits: the place of postcards

Consideration of motivations and perceived benefits as expressed by producers is crucial to a contextualised and nuanced understanding of the processes of production, and of sense of place and place identity as constructed and performed through these postcards. To begin with, the overarching purpose of RHAPS has long been:

> to put us on the map ... to encourage people to stay because a lot of people travel through. Everyone that lives here you know loves the area. We know

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[12] Interviews with producers were conducted as part of my broader research examining community and place identity undertaken during a Fellowship with Alcoa Foundation's Conservation and Sustainability Program hosted by the Alcoa Research Centre for Stronger Communities at Curtin University of Technology.

[13] This producer does not name himself on his cards; my contact was with a third party who was concerned to protect his anonymity and privacy.

we've got a lot to offer and we're just trying to get that out to the general public. (Erica)

For the founding RHAPS committee, postcard production was a means to further this overall ambition. In 1989 when RHAPS was first formed:

> We'd started doing a few things around town to look more presentable. And we had no money of course and no money coming from anywhere. So the postcards were a combination of, in a minor way, promoting the place and also bringing in a bit of money. (Louise)

On the other hand, the art collective sought to address an unsatisfactory *lack* of postcards:

> We had a strong art group both here in Ravensthorpe and in Hopetoun—and there were no postcards locally. You know, there was nothing. So we thought the area needed postcards and this was quite a nice promotion thing for the local artists. There were quite a few artists in the area at that time so we did a sort of joint thing and we got a job lot done with—I can't remember how many designs. And then I think we had another batch done. (Stephanie)

This need for postcards is externally confirmed:

> People frequently come in [to the Visitor Centre] just saying, "Have you got a postcard with Ravensthorpe on it?" You know they just want—they don't seem to care much what's on it. (Stephanie)[14]

This general demand confers authority for the specificities of what constitutes "Ravensthorpe" as an identifiable place upon those producing (and selling) postcards. An inability to meet requests for postcards—issued perhaps in search of a souvenir to send to family and friends as suggested in the opening epigraph, and/or as a trigger for later remembering—may well leave Ravensthorpe "off the map." Meeting this demand harnesses to some extent the tourism industry's powerful ability to broadcast local place identity. The availability of *local* postcards—implicitly defined as locally made and featuring local content—is also seen as important:

> I feel it helps the town to actually have things that are local because people remember places where there are local things more than the generic stuff imported from China. (Katrina)

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[14] Of course, this is not always the case. I have been instore when customers have asked for postcards of specific sites such as the Ravensthorpe Hotel (as an example of a "country pub").

The local postcards enable the promotion of a specific local identity coded in the exclusive use of unique flora and named local sites, in turn specifically presented as part of a broader hierarchy of place as in "Hopetoun, Western Australia." The locally-produced cards thus situate Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe as sites of difference within the broader location of Western Australia, as opposed to subsumption into a general state or national place identity privileged on the previously-described generic commercial cards through the absence of anything specifically local other than the town's name. Importantly, the local postcards provide an "authentic" viewpoint. As one producer phrased it: commercial postcards "are not looking from the inside out, they're looking from the outside in" (Susan). The local postcards, in the words of a local retailer, are popular/desirable because they are "individual and a true representation of the landscape down here" (2007, pers. comm.).

While these postcards offer a lay local perspective on what might/should constitute Ravensthorpe's public place identity, the area is also the subject of broader state government and tourism industry strategies to promote a centrally-branded regional identity. The Shire of Ravensthorpe, under a scheme which divides Western Australia into 5 tourism regions, is incorporated into a broader area marketed as "Australia's Golden Outback." Similarly, at the time of field work a "Regional Tourism Association" was considering the creation of a new regional tourism identity to be known possibly as "the Fitzgerald Coast" (local resident, 2007, pers. comm.). Constructing this new identity based on the incorporation of Ravensthorpe and two adjoining shires into one tourism entity/destination would involve new uniform signage and logos in each of these places. For Ravensthorpe Shire this proposed entity may pose a "risk of being lost" described as something "we're in fear of" (Erica). In foregrounding the specificity of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun the local postcards are a means to engage with ongoing regional identity politics. They also provide a point of resistance to external representations in the media for example of Hopetoun as a "nickel town" (Jerrard, 2007) or "yet another WA mining boom town" (Parker, 2007, p.14).

The postcards are, furthermore, a means for personal contributions to the representation of place:

There were other postcards up there [at the Visitor Center], but I thought I might as well do something a bit more personal, so that's [another reason] why I started. (Susan)

Emotional attachments and pleasures underpin this desire to share individual experiences of place:

I have a love of flowers and nature in general. (Katrina)

Another part of it is that I love sunsets and I live in a home that faces the West so I see all these beautiful sunsets every night. (Susan)

Personal rewards expressed by interviewees centre on "self-improvement" and "esteem-building," rather than potential financial profit. In fact, making money from this work was not offered as motivation or benefit for individual practitioners. Rather, individual social and cultural identity is a driving personal motivation and benefit:

I suppose making postcards is another little interest for me. I'm a farmer's wife. I was always out working in the paddock with my husband. … I'm getting past wanting to do that part of it, so I thought: I need other interests." (Susan)

In the motivations identified here community and personal needs intersect in ways indicative of the complexity and range of cultural work achieved through this local production.

Making postcards

Commercial printing of postcards can be costly and incurs batch-size constraints. RHAPS postcards for example are commercially printed in lots of 2000 (Louise). Advances in the quality of digital photography and reductions in the cost of home printing, however, make local postcard production not only more affordable (especially for individuals) but also more flexible.[15] In both instances of individual production, these trends have played a direct part in the decision to make postcards:

I've always liked photography, and I thought well I've got all these photographs on the computer so why don't I do something with them. (Susan)

When I saw some of my photos on the computer I thought mine are just as good as the ones in the shop, the commercial ones even. (Katrina)

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[15] The emergence of the picture postcard in the first instance had much to do with advances in photography and printing (Woody,1998).

Postcards made by local individuals are produced on personal printers from original digital photographs stored on home computers. The move from photograph to finished postcard can be almost instant, and potentially highly responsive to external conditions.[16] Run-sizes, and thus variety of images, can be as large or small as the individual requires or desires. Within this local economy of production beneficiaries continue to include, among others, printing services, paper and ink manufacturers, and suppliers of relevant hard and soft technologies.

Technological advances, though important, do not fully explain this local production. As seen above, the making of local postcards is predicated on internal and external needs around the (re)presentation of place. It is also enmeshed in local social networks and expectations, occurring within a broader composition of local cultural work, also predominantly undertaken by women. For example, local women, as members of the Southern Scribes writing group, have collectively "gathered, written and edited" some "130 years of [local] memories and anecdotes" published as *And the Dingoes Howled* (1999), and regularly produce volumes such as *Wildflower Country* (2007) characterised on the title page as "A collection of poetry and photography celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show". They have individually written numerous local histories, for instance *Ravensthorpe (Western Australia) Centenary 2001* (Williams, 2001), and have initiated and coordinated the Hopetoun entry statement. Through voluntary participation in a steering committee, local women have played a key part in the *Ravensthorpe Shire Cultural Plan* [17](Donaldson and Donaldson, 2000) and have also been central to the creation of a local "Welcoming Wilderness" place logo appearing on numerous postcards produced by RHAPS and on Ravensthorpe entry signage, among other places. Moreover, this work is ongoing: the Ravensthorpe Progress Association—newly-formed in 2007—is involved in developing an entry / exit statement for the town of Ravensthorpe (local

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[16] One producer offered me a postcard based on a photograph taken the evening before.

[17] This plan provides a "community profile and inventory of resources" to assist "local organisations, committees and Council in planning future projects and accessing external funding" (Donaldson and Donaldson, 2000, p.4). Inspired by a public meeting during which Community Arts Network WA introduced the concept of "Cultural Planning," a steering committee was formed in 1996 made up of Shire Councillors, the assistant Shire CEO, representatives from RHAPS and local Progress Associations and Arts Councils. This process and document is part of a recent neo-liberal shift in Australia in which local government is increasingly responsible for creating and administering cultural initiatives, within an overall policy emphasis on locally competitive participation in the "creative economy" (Gibson and Klocker, 2005).

resident, 2008, pers. comm.). Local women not only staff the visitors centre but also provide commodities—in addition to postcards: local information, artworks, produce and crafts—for the consumption of other local residents and visitors. They are thus deeply involved in the production of not only a visual place identity but also a vibrant sense of community; they are the public "friendly local faces" the Shire presents to visitors and newcomers to the region. The "public face" and place identity of Ravensthorpe Shire and of the towns of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun is substantially created, presented, maintained/updated through work undertaken by a relatively consistent cohort of local women. This broader field of cultural work also traverses individual interests and expression, community-group projects and local government resources.

Those engaged with here as postcard producers have been and/or continue to be involved, often extensively, in the above cultural projects. Their engagement with this broader field of cultural work provides access to networks important for individual postcard production, plus access to distribution points such as the Ravensthorpe Visitor Centre and Museum, and local festivals and events including the long-standing annual Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show. There are noteworthy intersections between volunteer and paid labour, and between collective and individual enterprise. The paid RHAPS Coordinator position, funded by the Shire, validates the work undertaken by RHAPS volunteers and facilitates the ongoing viability of the Visitor Centre, just as this position coordinates and is dependent upon volunteer labour. Individuals selling postcards and other merchandise through the Visitor Centre pay commission in turn supporting RHAPS and the Centre. RHAPS volunteers pay a commission of 20% while non-volunteers pay a 30% commission (Louise). As indicated above, these postcards are an important component of the visitor service RHAPS provides, one aspect of which is to help Visitor Centre volunteers respond to requests for information:

> So I've got some farming ones because people come through the Visitors'
> Centre and ask "what's that yellow crop out there." (Susan).

Volunteer networks in turn support individual practice. As one individual producer commented:

> We had a market day down here with the Wildflower Show, and since the
> show I got told I should put [my postcards] in the Visitor Centre (Susan).

On another level of intersection, the children's art-competition postcards are the direct outcome of developing the *Ravensthorpe Shire Cultural Plan* referred to above:

> We did the cultural plan for the Shire, a group of us. And one of the ploys for the research for that was that we ran a competition for the children of the Shire to do designs, the subject of which was either my favourite place or what I like doing best. (Stephanie)

In this way, the production of these postcards and the place identity they privilege is part of a larger cultural network of engagement and representation. In particular, this production enacts "the spirit of rural living" in which "self-sufficiency, and a willingness to help out" are valued (Little, 1997, p. 206). These attributes are widely cited by local residents[18] many of whom placed particular positive emphasis on a local (women's) propensity (born of necessity) to take a proactive role in making "things" happen. This production of postcards occurs in the context of rural communities constituted by "deep" (often gendered) networks, culturally dominant emphases on self-help and a "can do" attitude, along with gendered expectations of voluntary commitment.

Making the postcards involves varying demands on time and other resources of both an individual and collective nature. Physical tasks include identifying and visiting appropriate sites and/ or creating photographic opportunities; uploading, selecting, and editing images into postcard formats; creating descriptive text and address panels; printing; delivering finished postcards to vendors; checking on sales and replenishing stock; and, for those on committees, attending meetings and producing appropriate documentation. This production is an embodied performance of place: physically producing the postcards contributes to a corporeal experience of place. The work of taking photographs involves bodily, multi-sensory engagements with the environment, and is "as much a 'way of directing' and a 'way of acting' as a 'way of seeing'" (Haldrup and Larsen, 2006, p. 283). In the context of leisure/tourism, it is in the "activity of doing [that] the individual comes to know and value a place" (Crouch 2000, p.71). This can be extended to the cultural work examined here, particularly as it becomes part of, and indeed enriches, everyday life rather than occurring only as a separate or extra-ordinary practice/event, just as the physical acquisition of postcards

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[18] Interviewed as part of the broader study of which this is a part.

is perceived as everyday event (see opening epigraph). New postcards emerge "naturally" and fluidly out of everyday experience:

> I just went to do a job out at the front, and thought oh, that looks good and grabbed the camera. (Susan)

Similarly, a walk along the beach is described as leading to an exciting realisation that the conditions were perfect for a postcard photograph, ultimately entailing a return home to get the camera. As an embodied practice, as a lay geography, this postcard production reproduces a "sense of ownership in places that is not legal or financial but developed in terms of feeling, empowerment, attachment and value" (Crouch, 2000, p.71). The physical making of the postcards also encompasses domestic spaces and family members. One interviewee, for example, commented that she leaves the choice of paper to her husband "because he's more proficient with printing" (Katrina).

4. Representing place: postcards and local identity

Pritchard and Morgan (2005, p. 72) make the point that "We are all engaged in the making of places through the telling of stories and myths and the promotion of images, whether from within or outside those places". However, the local producers of these postcards play a privileged role in the construction of public place identities. This privilege is derived from involvement described above in volunteer networks and the standing in the local community that goes with this as a person who has demonstrated commitment to and love of the community/place. This standing enables and naturalises participation in the representation of place. In addition, the postcard genre, as a culturally well-accepted mode of representing places, authorises the place identities encoded in their individual and cumulative selections. After all, postcards are quintessentially popular artefacts in the sense that they circulate widely-accepted, if not clichéd, perspectives and meanings (see, for example, Howard, 2003), just as they produce those meanings as "popular".

Involvement in local postcard production, whether as an individual or as part of a committee, includes making and implementing decisions about the value and meaning of local landscapes. Put simply, this production enacts a politics of place. As Brace (2003, p. 138) argues: "There is a politics in the act of creating, modifying and moulding real and imagined landscapes, in how the view is framed, in where the view is gained, and in who and what can be seen and not seen". This politics is locally

enacted in the selection and framing of "content," and in the attendant creation of a register of images and meanings signified by, and in turn signifying, "Ravensthorpe" and/or "Hopetoun." Given that a multiplicity of rural spaces—variously informed by gender, class, ethnicity, and so on—may be inscribed onto the same territory (see, for example, Cloke, 2006), this engagement is an opportunity to privilege a specific rural space (as dominant value system, as "truth", as authentic). The representation of place encompasses "both the site to be represented (a geographical place), and the site (the geographical, cultural, political, theoretical viewpoint) from which that representation emanates" (Duncan, 1993, p. 39). The women involved in this postcard production occupy in this instance uniform (middle) class and (senior) age social positions, among others. The selection of images, of viewpoints and frames emerges from (and validates) specific social subjectivities, rather than from an essential or a-historical knowledge base. The majority of the postcards, however, are not clearly attributed to specific individuals—the full Hopetoun set is anonymous, another of the large individual series makes reference to a business name, while the RHAPS cards tend to provide photograph credits, sometimes just initials. None of the postcards explicitly draw attention to their *local* production. This practice downplays the subjective nature of the interpretation and representation of place each offers (and also underplays their "authenticity"). These postcards can thereby seem entirely anonymous, and potentially objective, to the consumer, though local anonymity is less likely in small towns.

As pointed out earlier, the postcards encompass the work of 20 residents variously acting on committees and also working as individuals. Yet, the postcards foreground a limited set of subjects. Though the range of postcard subjects has been shown to be exhaustive (Cook, 1986) these local postcards largely shun mundane events and sites, and tend not to include people. The focus is rather on "rural" landscapes, in particular bush and coastal scenes, and local wildflower species with fewer (always idealised/sanitised) agricultural landscapes[19] and local heritage sites. While this may be attributed in part to the prevalence of national parks and nature reserves in this shire, it is also the case that "the desire to experience beautiful landscape" has been a

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[19] "Farming scenes" include "a mob of prime lambs grazing" on green pasture with small farm buildings in the far distance; a "canola crop in full bloom" with bush in the distance; and a patchwork of green fields seen from a hill with bush in the foreground.

mainstay of commercial tourism in general (Bell and Lyall, 2002, p. 3), and in particular of rural tourism (Woods, 2005). The most valued landscapes in this context are those that "conform most closely to the rural idyll" (Woods, 2005, p.174). These postcards necessarily conform to tourism conventions valorising scenic landscapes, uniqueness, and historical built heritage. Similarly, the images (re)produce dominant Australian cultural conflations of rurality (and nation) with open spaces and "bush" landscapes,[20] foregrounding this as central to the experience of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun over and above everyday sites. In addition, the "original" photographs are neither essentially personal nor spontaneous. Photography is one of the most systematic and structured cultural activities (Bourdieu, 1990); the postcard images draw, for example, on codes and conventions of landscape photography. This local selection of images thus needs to be understood in the context of broad social and cultural trends, particularly given the changes to place identity and senses of place which may occur as a result of attempts to satisfy or comply with, for example, tourism trends (Kneafsey, 2000). Local representations of place, as a result of market drivers of production and the larger cultural politics of identity enacted in tourism and heritage practices, ironically, can involve the marginalisation, if not erasure, of mundane uses and meanings of places (Mayes, 2003).

Local producers are also not exempt from related localised market pressures and attendant generic conventions surrounding a saleable aesthetic. The selection of some images is based, in certainly the RHAPS series, on past sales. (Interviewees noted that landscapes and buildings sell the best.) In order to be "successful" producers must negotiate the tension between what one imagines buyers want to see/remember and what s/he wants to commemorate/share. In practice though, the process of selection is discursively de-politicised in both collective and individual production:

> I just took all sorts of photographs and then we spread them out and said well, we'll use this one and this one and this one. (Louise)
>
> Rather than doing what I necessarily like, I do all and give the option for everybody to choose. (Katrina)

This description of the process of selecting images both foregrounds and defers choice, positioning it as occurring after the initial production of images. Relations of

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[20] See Gibson and Davidson (2004) for an overview of ruralities in Australia.

power as part and parcel of the politics of representation are not necessarily or fully overt in the processes of production described here.

Within the limited set of subjects represented on the postcards, and more likely a result of internal pressures operating under the above exogenous constraints, key sites predominate. For example East Mt Barren, variously referred to as "Mt Barren," is featured on 20% of the sample postcards, and appears in each of the four groupings. The prevalence of specific sites can be explained as exemplifying shared (received) cultural understandings of places of "local value." This coherence may well emerge and/or be confirmed in the making of the postcards, in the transition from inherently unruly and incoherent lay discourse (Jones, 1995) to a shared popular discourse. In the case of the RHAPS postcards the selection of images and text is the outcome of interpersonal discussions about what matters, what should be included, and so on. The entire production process beginning with the decision to make postcards, involves "intentional and incidental communication"—in the realms of both "externalized discourse, that which is communicated in some way" and "personal discourse, the processes of reflection" (Jones, 1995, p. 38)—of everyday meanings of place(s) and of the rural. These lay understandings, which as Halfacree (1995) has demonstrated are likely to involve critical engagement as opposed to merely passive acceptance, are mobilised in the service of a popular discourse, in order to address a broader, external audience/market. The making of the postcards can be seen as a dialogic translation involving individual and collective everyday emotional connections—a love of flowers, a love of sunsets, a shared love of the area. In the process, specific understandings come to dominate, enacting "flows of meanings and power which combine to create social constructions of such things as the rural" (Jones, 1995, p. 39). This local production enacts a complex relationship between lay senses of place—privileging lived experience, emotional attachment and personal feelings, and which are "intimately bound up with place in a way that other forms of discourse are not" (Jones, 1995, p.40)—and place identity as a public representation. Further, this process engages with the "cultural public sphere," posited as an expansion of the notion of a literary public to include "the whole range of media and popular culture" and which "refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication." (McGuigan, 2005, p. 427; p. 435). Lay everyday interpretations are made manifest

and come to circulate through this postcard work as part of the broader cultural identity.

The production of meaning, it needs to be kept in mind, is multifarious and unpredictable: producers, "texts" and "readers" are all, to varying degrees and in varying contexts, sources of meaning (see, for example, Hartley, 2004). Consequently, "symbolic ruralities" are vulnerable to multiple readings which confound a straightforward correlation between "interpretations of producers and audiences" (Philips et al., 2001, p.25). Photographs "enable particular readings and disable others, but such closures are never absolute" (Moors, 2003, p. 25). As multimodal artefacts foregrounding both visual and textual elements, the postcards, however, encourage specific interpretations of the selected sites/ objects. Captions, the need for which is evidence of the "inherently polysemic nature of photographs" (Moors, 2003, p. 25), work to contain this plurality by providing an authoritative context on which photographic meaning rests (McKay, 1994). The generally sparse captions on the postcards examined here "identify" the landscape as a particular geographical place. Overlaying the name "Ravensthorpe" or "Hopetoun" stakes a claim to local ownership of a given site. Landscape "scenes," fundamentally place-less fragments/compositions, are recuperated as place/s in this naming. Particular places both pre-exist and are brought into being by the postcards. Concurrently, the fragment comes to represent the whole town or shire. Photography in particular is a powerful mode of representation in which "Fragments come to stand for the whole, as an expression of apparent essences, what it is 'to be' something" (Edwards, 1996: 200). In this way selected sites are positioned and confirmed as powerful signifiers of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun respectively.[21] These specific sites *are* Hopetoun or Ravensthorpe. Further, in drawing on the conventions of "landscape," these images make the physical surroundings legible as sites of beauty and local meaning, and appropriate them as an intangible resource (Stock, 1993; Urry, 2005) deployed in the broader culture. This postcard work identifies and confirms specific sites/landscapes of beauty, and, more importantly, claims them as *local* places.

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[21] This is not to say that these sites receive the same status in other discourses and contexts. For example, East Mt Barren was featured in June 2008 in a "Mystery Location" competition in the local newspaper. Described in the competition introduction as "dominating the Hopetoun skyline," the range was not identified by readers, even though it "*should* have been easy" to identify as argued in the following issue (Mystery location, p.24, italics added). This practice of mystery location competitions can also be read as part of a broader ongoing struggle over place identity.

Just as they encourage normative interpretations postcards also have the potential to challenge dominant understandings of place, both as abstract concept and as concrete local site. One postcard examined here, as an instance of this, subverts postcard conventions of place. Captioned "Ravensthorpe, Western Australia 'Sunset 2007'" this postcard offers a photograph of a sunset without reference to local identifying features. The silhouetted tree-line in the foreground could be literally anywhere. Dating the sunset undermines the conventional timeless quality of postcard images and of rural spaces. The featured sunset, rather than iconically representing all sunsets (in Ravensthorpe), occurred on a specific evening in 2007 and is never to be repeated. This postcard is overtly a trace of a past moment and place explicitly unavailable for the consumer to witness/experience. This postcard also articulates a tension inherent in visual representation between the object of the gaze and the origin of the gaze. Ravensthorpe is constituted not so much as a site to view, but rather as a site from which to view the sunset. Ravensthorpe, as rural location, is offered/celebrated as a point of view. [22]

Each of the above aspects of production and representation plays a part in framing the possibilities for meaning-making, and in constituting the arena in which place is performed. Even so, the place identity/ies this postcard practice constructs may well be contested in other local practices and texts,[23] just as these representations are likewise subject to ongoing internal contestation.[24] In effect, these postcards offer a highly contingent local praxis and construction of place. Moreover, postcards are spatially and temporally mobile artefacts,[25] and are, often unpredictably, ephemeral. While local cards have been consistently available for over three decades[26], the large individually-produced Hopetoun series in this sample was no longer on sale at the Hopetoun general store in August 2007, six months after the original collection

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[22] In addition, the photograph has been taken from/on private property. Though the reader cannot know this without recourse to the producer, this practice makes a specifically private viewpoint public.

[23] For a case study of the inscription of place identities beyond the dominant construction see Panelli et al. (2007). See also Brennan-Horley et al. (2007) for discussion of local contestation of place and identity.

[24] As one example, interviewees express varying degrees of satisfaction/identification with the "Welcoming Wilderness" logo.

[25] Phillips (2000) has found that many postcards on sale feature photographs taken over 20 years earlier, while the average time lag between the moment a card represents and its use is 5 years. In the case of Picadilly Circus the longest time lag was 47 years.

[26] This period has been confirmed in this study; however, they may well have been available for longer.

period, and remained unavailable in February 2009.[27] According to a sales assistant the postcards had not been selling because the quality of production was not high enough. Quality standards, set by large postcard manufacturers, are a central aspect of gaining market share for commercial companies. An industry representative cited the importance of strong aesthetic appeal, along with competitive pricing, as the key to securing orders. In February 2009, postcards featuring specific images of Hopetoun continued to be available from the Hopetoun café and, newly, from the telecentre. These, however, are produced by two separate, small non-local producers: a Perth artist, and a photographic business the owners of which have relatives living in Hopetoun. In May 2008 a generic postcard produced by "Australia's National Postcard Company" was on sale in the Ravensthorpe Post Office, in place of local cards available at the time of field work. On this postcard, at the request and expense of the retailer (2009, pers. comm.), the word "Ravensthorpe" has been embossed in the favoured gold lettering over a cartoon-caricature of a drinking, smoking, generally "under the weather" Caucasian male. Alongside appears the legend: "After 2 weeks holiday I'm 2 tired 2 return 2 work and 2 broke not 2." In this representation Ravensthorpe is little more than a generic setting for a generic (gendered and classed) holiday experience. Local postcards were no longer available in the post office and were unlikely to return due to high prices in comparison to commercial postcards. One post office supplier had replaced postcard production with the making of blank cards featuring local flora because of difficulties printing address boxes and descriptions on the postcards—in her words "you can handwrite on cards". In contrast, local postcards continue to be available in the Ravensthorpe Visitor Centre and Museum, indicating the importance of volunteer community/local government-funded spaces in maintaining a local voice. In fact, in February 2009 the range of local postcards available from the Visitor Centre was greater than at the time of the original fieldwork. The individual collection originally on sale at the Hopetoun general store was at this time available at the Visitor Centre on higher grade cardboard and with the traditional postcard divisions and address lines on the reverse thus rectifying the above-mentioned shortcomings.

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[27] Of course they might return.

Though transitory, postcards are widely collected in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes and therein have an ongoing aesthetic and documentary role which outlives their often short availability on store racks. As iterative and itinerant artefacts postcards appear extensively in everyday contexts such as on refrigerator doors and workplace noticeboards, and are hence available as authoritative artefacts for consumption by people who may never have been to Ravensthorpe. Whether they continue to be locally available for purchase or not, the local postcards engaged with here, as historical artefacts are part of the ongoing history of the Shire. They generate documentary evidence which might otherwise not surface in the public domain. For example, a RHAPS card pre-dating this sample provides an aerial view of Hopetoun organised and taken specifically as the subject of a postcard. These postcards are part of the record of place and may well shape (and in turn be transformed by) future narratives of place and of local identity. Large print runs available over long periods may also contribute to a sense of stability of place. Overall, as material artefacts, they play "a crucial role in enabling and 'storing' human memories" (Haldrup and Larsen, 2006, p. 280). In all these malleable incarnations local postcards are an ongoing cultural resource.

6. Conclusion

This case study of the local production of postcards in the Shire of Ravensthorpe, Western Australia indicates that lay discourse and practice plays a responsive and locally empowering role in the production and commodification of public, rural place identity. Shown to be socially and culturally embedded, this cultural work operates fluidly across private and public spheres, and incorporates both paid and volunteer labour. The various motivations foreground locally-recognised broader needs for a place identity, in particular to secure a place on the map as part of a relational politics of place. Those involved in this postcard production (whether individually or collectively), through the various embodied processes and the contingent selection of textual elements, construct and mobilise local cultural resources. Taking part in this commodification is to performatively participate in the production of local cultural, social and economic value.

Local benefits of this lay cultural work extend beyond economic opportunity, which is not in any way a primary driver. This work is best read as a "social economy" in

which a range of actors, including cooperatives and voluntary organizations, "put social objectives above business objectives" (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 617). The postcard production undertaken in Ravensthorpe creates and sustains a sense of local community via a shared history and public(ised) place identity, not only for those involved but also as a public sense of community and place signified and brought into existence by this practice. As part of the value noted above, a distinct place identity can be useful in promoting community pride (Blank, 1989), and helping locals "appreciate their community" (Hall 1998, p. 24) while contributing to the sustainability of rural communities understood as dependent on the totality of built and natural, social and cultural, public and private contexts in which we live our lives (Davison, 2008).

This local postcard production, though a seemingly marginal activity, certainly in economic terms, provides an important means for proactive lay participation in public meaning-making processes and practices, often (seen to be) the domain of professional bodies. In providing an avenue for lay involvement this postcard practice, especially as local tradition, is an important mechanism for giving "voice" to local constructions and experiences of place. This local lay voice is crucial to sustaining a sense of local place-identity for both residents and visitors, and can be far-reaching given that postcards are not only "the most widely disseminated tourist icon" but also "play an integral role in sustaining the industry" (Markwick, 2001, p. 434). As noted, however, this postcard production as ongoing practice is far from certain. The possibility for provision of centrally-produced "Fitzgerald Coast" postcards down the track, a possibility not inconsistent with the marketing logic underpinning the overarching regional schemes, constitutes a potential threat in addition to competition from commercial generic postcards. There is also the question of the likelihood of new local participants in this production. This has much to do with opportunities (and the desire) to take part, along with a local openness to a range of potentially conflicting interpretations, and the extent of the market for local postcards. The contexts highlighted in this study suggest the empowerment of specific local interests if not those of the wider local community/ies, and indicate points of engagement with, or resistance to, external constructions of place. Such proactive engagement can be of great importance to the furthering of specific local interests (Mayes, 2008b), just as the absence of local postcards diminishes the visibility of

Ravensthorpe as distinct place/destination. At the same time, the specificities of this practice indicate broader mechanisms by which conservative or "traditional" interpretations may dominate, subordinating or excluding "other" local views and experiences.

Importantly this postcard work is an embodied performance of rurality emerging from and constituting a collectively and individually valorised and naturalised love of the area. This personal connection—the individual pleasures and emotional connections which underpin and are reproduced and culturally endorsed in this production—is an often over-looked aspect of public place identity production. Likewise, examining the production process from motivations to "finished" artefact, has made visible the materiality of constructions of rurality, and the role of broader social trends and systems of production and consumption, at the same time foregrounding the (local) politics of this construction. More generally, it highlights the contributions of lay discourse and practice to the wider field of popular culture and of cultural work. In this "translation" market demands are met in the process of constructing and promoting local place identity/ies, individual senses of place "find expression" and validation, and spaces emerge for the creation of social identities (other than, for example, of "farmer's wife").

The extensive labour identified here is part of the "rich seam" of Australian rural vernacular creativity which remains largely unrecognized and underrepresented in economic development policy (Gibson et al., 2009). This lack of recognition is especially problematic given that creativity and the cultural industries are increasingly seen by (neo-liberal) policy-makers as markers of the economic value of regions (Gibson and Klocker, 2005). The lack of recognition notwithstanding, the cultural work identified here enacts both an appropriation and exploitation of local, lay labour in the service of broader cultural industries such as tourism and also in positioning local places more competitively/successfully/compliantly in relation to the Australian emphasis on the economic independence of regions based on participation in cultural industries. As Gibson (2003) has demonstrated, the designation *cultural* work, and its acceptance by participants, reproduces and naturalises exploitative labour relations for many involved in the culture industries. The postcard producers interviewed in this study did not refer to themselves as "cultural workers" and may well reject this

designation in favour of "community work" or "hobby" as implicit in interview discussions. One interviewee, in response to the argument offered here, noted that she had never thought of her work as having a "role" and tended to identify it as a "hobby business." In this case, these understandings of this work, likely to be widely held not only by producers, devalue its overall importance while rendering it invisible *as work*.

The theorisation of cultural work is presently at risk of not only focusing almost exclusively on "urban" spaces, but also of prematurely characterising it as essentially driven by the pursuit of capital accumulation by self-interested individuals operating in a global market increasingly controlled by powerful corporations (Banks, 2007). This case study confirms Banks' (2006) observations regarding the shaping influence of social and political motivations on the work undertaken by cultural entrepreneurs in Manchester, England. Banks' (2006, p. 466) investigation also identifies an "enduring influence of place and local identity on cultural production" together with the importance of informal networks, " a shared culture" and "strong interlinking with voluntary work." This parallel between the two case studies raises an important question: to what extent is this Ravensthorpe cultural work "rural"? The features identified in this case study and in Banks' work are not necessarily "rural" or "urban" in themselves, but may well play out as such in each context, pointing to the blurring of boundaries between the two social representations, perhaps indicating the presence/infiltration of rural social characteristics into urban spaces. As Banks (2006, p. 466) has argued, "localities may not only provide cultural entrepreneurs with economic advantages and/or aesthetic inspiration (as is conventionally argued), but might potentially act as a framework for the articulation of moral-political and social values in the course of cultural work". Clearly, further work is needed to map cultural work practices in rural spaces and the role of "the rural" in shaping cultural work, as opposed to content. In a related manner, this local production of postcards highlights women's contributions to this work and to processes of rural place identity, in the process suggesting a particular rural gendering of cultural work.[28]

Crucially, this postcard production encodes the ongoing social, cultural and material relevance and power of "the rural." This and other lay cultural work undertaken in

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[28] See discussion in Gibson (2003) and also Banks (2007) arguing for consideration of gender, class and race as important determinants (and products) of cultural work.

any number of (Australian) rural communities, including the wider local souvenir industry of which this postcard work is also a part, is potentially highly important in the ongoing negotiation of contemporary rurality. After all, "important meanings associated with the rural are circulated and negotiated" not only at the national, but also "at the regional and local scales and indeed may be crucially mediated by the individual at all scales" (Cloke and Milbourne, 1992, p. 361). This case study has suggested ways in which individual lay meanings may be "returned" to public popular circulation in this broader ongoing process of constructing rurality, thus contributing to a nuanced, holistic understanding of the role lay agents may play in "reworking and potentially transforming the discourses of rurality in circulation" (Phillips et al., 2001, p.25).

Acknowledgments

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