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Abstract: Rural ethnic minorities occupy unique economic, social, as well as geographical places in Australian society. Non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants have transformed the rural landscapes through the construction of public and private spaces expressing their cultural heritage. These sites can also significantly impact the dynamics of social cohesion and intercultural relations in multicultural rural communities. The paper explores the potential role of the sites built by rural ethnic minorities in promoting both intra - group solidarity and inter- group dialogue. It also provides insights into complexities of multicultural place-making. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part briefly explores the literature on the migration and heritage, place, belonging and social cohesion, and the relationship between social capital and the built environment. The second part outlines empirical findings from Griffith, a regional town in New South Wales. The focus is on the places built by Italian immigrants, such as the Italian clubs and the recently built Italian Museum and Cultural Centre. The construction of these places facilitated a sense of solidarity among the Italian immigrants and expressed their belonging to place. However, the immigrants attempts at place-making simultaneously involved inscribing a degree of exclusivity and a strategy of becoming more a part of their new environment. In doing this there is also potential for multicultural place-making to intensify the existing intra- and inter-group tensions

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The Ethnic Landscape of Rural Australia: Non- Anglo - Celtic Immigrant Communities and the Built Environment

1. Introduction

In most western countries today, immigration has been primarily an urban phenomenon (Castles and Miller, 2003). The corollary of the urban/immigrant couplet is that, in terms of demography, the national imagination and popular discourses, rural areas of western society have been represented as white, non-immigrant, places and spaces. For example, in the United Kingdom rural areas – the countryside – have a strong association with Whiteness, so that rurality becomes a racialised space and place (Tyler 2003). Neal (2002) argues that rural areas in Britain are seen as 'White safe havens', characterised by neighbourliness, tranquillity and community, in contrast to the cities where postcolonial Asian and Black immigrant settlement has been associated with a decline of community and safety and an escalation of crime and conflict (Keith 2005). Ethnic diversity in rural areas has thus been recently signposted by a considerable debate examining relations between the concepts of 'otherness', marginalisation, ethnic landscape, and rurality. There has been a strong focus on the role of rurality as a signifier of an exclusive and white national identity. For instance, Agyeman and Spooner (1997) addressed the nature of racism in the context of the English countryside and referred to a series of reports of the 1990s which found an extensive amount of racial violence, harassment and a resistance to the arrival of incomers into rural communities. Similarly, Holloway (2007), Neal (2002), Williams (2007), Ray and Reed (2005), Knowles (2008), Garland and Chakraborti (2007)

investigated the experience of other ethnic groups within the English countryside, highlighting the problems with increasing ethnic diversity in the predominantly white populations. They all pointed to the need to look beyond the idyllic and static representations of the rural environment and combine this romanticised notion with the reality of ethnic exclusivity. These white rural discourses have been entrenched despite that fact that rural areas in most western countries do have a long-standing immigrant history stretching back many decades and despite the fact that in the US (Fennelly, 2008), Canada (Carter, Morrish and Amoyaw, 2008), New Zealand (Spoonley and Bedford, 2008) and Australia (Hugo, 2008) new pathways for immigrant settlement to rural areas have been introduced in the past decade.

This article presents the results of research designed to explore the historical and contemporary presence of immigrant minorities through the lens of their impact on the built environment in rural Australia. We argue that the contemporary research on the rural ethnic landscape is one way of appreciating the way that successive waves of immigrants have transformed the rural landscape through the construction of public and private spaces, expressing their cultural heritage by altering their physical environment. These built sites can also significantly impact the dynamics of social cohesion and intercultural relations in multicultural rural communities. However, until recently the places built by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants have remained largely unrecognised as part of Australia's heritage. Several recent studies have argued that this lack of recognition is a result of official definitions of heritage that prioritise 'elite' or 'Western' heritage at the expense of places significant to marginalised cultural groups (Hartfield, 2001). Also, as Winnikoff (1992: 140) argues 'the material evidence of

ethnic minority settlement is rarely celebrated' and there is 'an obvious bias in favour of British influence' in research on the Australian built environment.

In recent years researchers have begun to explore the meaning of particular 'cultural landscapes', including landscapes built by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants. The changes immigrants make to the built environment are often seen as part of a process of 'home building' or claiming space in an unfamiliar environment (Hage, 1997). This claiming of space is not always uncontested. For example, Dunn (2001, 2003) has documented the vocal opposition from non-Muslim residents to proposals to build mosques in several Sydney suburbs. Anderson (1990) has highlighted the conflicts that have arisen over symbols of ethnicity in the built environments of public spaces such as Sydney and Melbourne's Chinatowns. Hence, it can be argued that places built by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants also have political significance as reflective of power relations and the struggle of cultural minorities for control over the use and design of space. In addition, places built by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants can play a role in facilitating cultural exchange between ethnic groups. In an increasingly culturally diverse nation such as Australia, the relationship between places built by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants and inter-cultural exchange warrants further consideration.

This paper links the built environment and immigration in rural Australia and explores the impact of places built and used by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants on rural communities and the potential role of the sites built by rural ethnic minorities in facilitating intra - group and inter-group social networks. The paper begins by outlining the literature on immigration, place, belonging and social cohesion. It builds on earlier

work that employs the concept of social capital in examining the role of community spaces in cross-cultural exchange (Lalich, 2003).

The paper then outlines empirical findings from applying these concepts to the sites built by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants to Griffith, a regional town of around 24,000 people in the Riverina region of south-western New South Wales (NSW). Griffith is approximately 600 km west of Sydney. Griffith is one of the largest wine and vegetable production areas in Australia, and although it is a major centre in the Riverina region it maintains a strong rural character, with almost a third of its working population engaged in farming or agricultural processing industries. It has a long history of multiculturalism, with the Wiradjuri, the Indigenous owners of the land, joined by Anglo-Celtic immigrants in the early nineteenth century and southern European immigrants (particularly Italians) since the early 1900s.

The most obvious non-Anglo-Celtic impact on Griffith's built environment is that of Italian immigrants and their descendants. Based on fieldwork undertaken between October 2005 and February 2007, the paper explores a number of 'Italian' sites, such as the Italian clubs and the recently built Italian Museum and Cultural Centre, reflecting in particular on the role of these sites in inter-cultural relations.

As this research seeks to understand complex social phenomena in specific contexts, and to identify the existence of social relationships through the described experience of research participants, it is well suited to interpretive research. The approach adopted in this study is hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 2002; Hayllar and Griffin, 2005). The aim of phenomenological enquiry is to understand 'social phenomena from the actor's own perspective'(Carson et al., 2001). Whereas phenomenology is primarily

oriented toward the immediate phenomena of human experience, such as thinking and feeling (Creswell, 1998: 65), hermeneutics interprets the phenomena in light of the specific historical and cultural context and existing concepts and theories.

The most appropriate research methods for hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry are qualitative techniques that let participants speak for themselves and allow for the emergence of unexpected results while also facilitating an iterative process between the collection of data and researcher interpretation. In this project, the methods adopted included in-depth interviews, a small survey and participant observation. In total 13 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted. Interview participants were selected via a networking methodology and targeted sampling and included individuals closely associated with the specific buildings being studied (such as members of management committees and founding members), users of the sites, local council staff (in tourism, planning and community departments) and members of the local council. Participant observation was carried out during events such as *Festa Delle Salsiccie*, bocce tournaments, multicultural events and meetings of local multicultural associations. A face-to-face survey of ten attendees of *Festa Delle Salsiccie* was carried out in August 2006 in order to examine festival attendance and experience. While the surveys included a number of pre-coded demographic questions, open-ended questions were used to ask about conceptual or interpretive issues deemed important from a review of existing literature. Respondents were approached randomly over a four hour period, and detailed responses were recorded in writing by the researcher. Responses to

the open-ended survey questions were analysed thematically along with interview transcripts and observation field notes.[1]

2. Ethnicity and Built Environment

The built environment may be seen as a 'form of expression'. It is a 'mode of communication through which people express to others something about themselves, their values, aspirations, needs and desires' (Lalich, 2003: 41). Viewing the built environment as a manuscript of social and cultural processes, the Australian built landscape is a rich source of information about major demographic, cultural and political change.

Despite the lack of attention by official heritage bodies, the impact of immigration on Australia's built environment has received increasing attention in academic research in recent years. Cultural and social geographers as well as academic architects and planners have developed a growing literature on 'cultural landscapes', including landscapes built by non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants (Armstrong, 1997, 2002). The cultural landscapes tradition within social geography has explored the ways in which landscapes can be read as 'texts', based on the 'proposition that places/landscapes are physical representations of public history awaiting interpretation' (Armstrong, 2002: 206).

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[1] The survey of festival attendees was designed to gather a range of views from people who had participated in the *Festa Delle Salsiccie* as it was a key event held at the Griffith Museum and Cultural Centre. Since attendees were seated at large tables for most of the day, the researcher approached each table in turn and asked for volunteers to participate in the survey. When the volunteers from one table had been surveyed the researcher moved to the next table and repeated the process. With the reliance on open-ended questions each survey took 15 to 20 minutes so the number was limited by time constraints. Further studies of the Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre or similar sites could usefully build on this approach by conducting short visitor surveys as appropriate and following up on key points with more in-depth interviews or focus groups.

A major theme within this literature is the sense of place individuals and communities engender through enacting their cultural traditions or ways of life in the spaces they inhabit (Armstrong, 2002; Babacan, 2005/6). Hage (1997) has described this as part of a process of 'home building' which may involve changes to the physical landscape as well as changes to the social landscape through language, food and cultural practices in an attempt to build a comfortable and familiar space in which immigrants feel they can belong.

The importance of a sense of 'rootedness and dwelling' for new immigrants has also been reinforced by Lalich (2003). He suggests that immigrants, at least at first, 'tend to interact with others of their ethnic or regional background for reasons of language, culture, religion or race and shared settlement experience', particularly when reinforced by the 'social constraints of the host society' (Lalich, 2003: 7). This can feed into the desire to develop social institutions, such as ethnic clubs and associations, that help to maintain cultural values. It may also encourage the building or acquisition of shared community spaces, in order that immigrant groups can 'meet at certain places of a common interest' (Lalich, 2003: 7). Like Hage, Lalich sees these processes as part of 'immigrant adaptation to a new Australian landscape' and the desire for fixity in a new place, rather than a wish to avoid engaging with the broader community (Lalich, 2003: 1).

As well as being important for a sense of identity and belonging for first generation immigrants, places built in a new environment can also be central to the transmission of culture to future generations. This has important implications for cultural continuity and the intergenerational sustainability of minority cultures in multicultural environments.

In explaining the intergenerational value of historic heritage sites, the Allen Consulting Group's (2005) report *Valuing the Priceless*, produced for the Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand, suggested that since the use of heritage places is often a social experience shared with others, knowledge and experience of the sites may lead to 'common heritage value, social identity and cultural continuity' (ACG 2005: 8). In particular, heritage places may 'contribute towards social stability and cohesion in the community… [and] allow a sense of identity' either for the whole community or for members of particular cultural groups (ACG, 2005: 8).

Attempts of immigrant groups to alter the built environment are not always uncontested, particularly when they are cultural minorities. As Hayden (1995) has noted, all spaces are contested terrains. In Australia, this has been played out recently in attempts by non-Muslim residents of a number of Sydney suburbs to prevent mosques being built in their neighbourhoods. Dunn (2001, 2003) has documented this opposition, noting attempts by non-Muslim residents to cast themselves as the legitimate arbiters of the use of neighbourhood space as opposed to the Muslim 'outsiders'. These contests are reflective of broader tensions around what constitutes 'Australianess', diminishing the notion of citizenship by challenging the rights of cultural minorities to 'participate in the making and use of space' (Dunn, 2003: 162).

However, a number of studies have highlighted the complexities associated with the representation of ethnicity in the built environment. For example, Anderson (1990) has noted the opposition of local Chinese Australians to the development of Melbourne's Chinatown. In Sydney, while there was more support for a Chinatown from within the Chinese community, there was competition among Chinese Australians over how

Chinese culture should be represented. In a more recent study of four 'ethnic precincts' in Sydney, Collins and Kunz (2005) have argued that the 'ethnicity' of these areas is often symbolised in an aestheticised way that is presumed to appeal to Western visitors but which the local ethnic community may experience as fake and 'kitschy'. Similarly, Zukin (1995) has noted the politics involved in who defines what is an 'ethnic' area and how that is represented. While this may be directed or constrained by the dominant culture, ethnic minority communities, or at least elements within them, often have agency in this process. In research on Cabramatta in Sydney, Dunn (2003) has argued that although symbols of 'Indo-Chinese-ness' in the built environment may reflect an 'Orientalist' view of Indo-Chinese culture, they are also the result of a deliberate effort from within the Indo-Chinese community to challenge negative public perceptions and media representations of Asian immigrants.

While ethnic precincts and multicultural monuments may be cultural or symbolic centres for immigrant communities, they may also be commercial spaces. This commercial function can undermine the potential of control over space to empower ethnic minorities since, especially in ethnic precincts, sites may be designed to conform to dominant Orientalist views of the ethnic 'Other' in order to attract western visitors (Anderson, 1990; Collins and Kunz, 2005). This may occur especially where the commercialisation of ethnic markers is deployed as a strategy for economic development, as in the case of some 'global cities' (Zukin, 1995) and rural areas (Noussia, 2003) where the 'culture industries', including tourism, entertainment and the arts, are promoted as the new engine of economic growth. For instance, Helzer (2001) has moved beyond seeing the ethnic landscape as a simple indicator of the persistence

of identity among group members. In exploring the emergence of a 'Cal-Ital' landscape in northern California's wine industry she has outlined how efforts to introduce consumers to Italian wines have led to reinvention, 'cultural packaging' and marketing of Italian heritage.

Such developments raise important questions about the politics of representation. There are two distinct complexities associated with representation (Collins, 2007). First, there is the problem of the credibility and authenticity of the ethnic representation, which involves who is 'authorised' to claim authenticity, how that authenticity is symbolised and what a site's developers have to do to generate a perception of authenticity among the site's visitors. Second, there is the question of how legitimate can a site be in the eyes of the 'co-ethnic' community where it has been developed by deliberate regulation and government intervention or when the 'co-ethnic' community is in fact fractured or made up of a number of different – even competing – groups.

One way of understanding the role of the built environment and place in inter-ethnic relations is through the concept of social capital. This concept is often broken down into notions of 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital, where bonding social capital is understood as strong ties within a group and bridging social capital is understood as weaker ties between groups (Onyx and Bullen, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). The benefits of strong 'bonding' social capital have been much debated. Putnam (2000), for example, suggests that while bonding social capital creates 'strong in-group loyalty', it 'may also create strong out-group antagonism' (Putnam, 2000: 23). That is, close communal ties may hinder interaction between groups. Several authors (Portes, 1998; Bowles, 1999) have highlighted the potential for strong

social capital within a group to inhibit movement or joint action across social boundaries. Such views are reminiscent of ongoing debates about multiculturalism in Australia, with critics of immigration suggesting that it is inevitable that culturally diverse neighbourhoods will continue to 'erupt into open conflict and aggression along ethnic lines' (MEAC, 1989). Multicultural place–making can therefore entrench exclusion and difference, where creating space by ethnic groups may involve inscribing a degree of exclusivity.

While rural communities are likely to have strong bonding social capital, they are less likely than urban areas to have significant bridging social capital (Onyx and Bullen, 2000). The power within bonding social capital can create narrow, intolerant communities which should be considered in exploring the experience of ethnic minority groups in the rural context. Rural communities are often associated with exclusivity and intolerance of 'others' (Garland and Chakaborti, 2006). Thus, the place-making of ethnic groups in this context is also intertwined with the factors of rurality as rural communities have social boundaries which, 'though largely symbolic and seldom made explicit, have really effects for all community members, immigrant or other' (Gray et al., 1990: 99).

Agyeman (1995) has argued that the discussion of intercultural exchange within the rural environment should also be related to the level of multicultural awareness within a community. In a study on attitudes to racism and cultural diversity in Australia, Forrest and Dunn (2006) found a strong acknowledgment of the existence of Anglo-Celtic privilege and racial prejudice. The most intolerant are the rural communities where

views are dominated by a very strong opposition to multicultural values and any form of cultural pluralism.

3. Non-Anglo-Celtic Immigrants in Griffith, New South Wales

Griffith sits in the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people – the largest Aboriginal language group in New South Wales. Anglo-Celtic immigrants began to arrive in Wiradjuri country in the early nineteenth century and the expansion of the pastoral industry saw sheep and cattle graziers moving 'rapidly down the river corridors' (Kabaila, 2005: 11). The land along the rivers, so important for Wiradjuri livelihoods (NSW DECC, 2008), was taken over for large pastoral stations and the competition for land contributed to a 'moving frontier' of armed resistance from the Wiradjuri and massacres and murders from the new arrivals. The Wiradjuri were eventually restricted to towns and missions such as at Darlington Point and Three Ways, the latter still existing as a largely Aboriginal settlement near central Griffith (Kabaila, 2005). This history highlights an important feature of Australian rurality: here 'whiteness' is relatively new, although 'white exclusivity' was generally not diminished – and may have even been exacerbated – by the prior Aboriginal ownership of the land.

While the Wiradjuri were relegated to a position as 'outsiders' within their own country, from 1912 the new Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme brought another wave of settlers to the Riverina. City folk, soldier settlers and farmers from selections elsewhere all came to 'cash in' on the expected prosperity. New immigrants also arrived, beginning with British but also including Italians, Spanish and Germans in the first

wave. Of these new immigrants, the Italians 'constituted the most distinct group' (Kabaila, 2005: 53).

Migration from Italy was one of the first major developments of non-Anglo-Celtic diversity in Australia (Burnley, 2001). Italians came during the period of the 'White Australian policy,' which remained in place between 1901 and the late 1960s. The philosophy of White Australia had implications for all non- Anglo-.Celtic immigrants, including Italians, who all experienced hostilities and antagonism from the host society (Alcorso, 1992; Baldassar, 2006).

The first Italian immigrants to Griffith were mainly Trevisani from the Veneto region of northern Italy. Subsequent immigrants came from many other regions of Italy: prior to World War II they were mostly from the northern provinces, especially from the north-east of Veneto and Friuli (Piazza, 2005; Huber, 1977). Following World War II a new wave of Italian immigrants arrived, this time mostly from the southern regions, particularly Calabria and Sicilia (Piazza, 2005: 10, 19). Those from the south eventually came to outnumber those from the north (Kabaila, 2005: 53). Other Italian immigrants came from Abruzzo, Toscana, Piemonte, Marche and Campagna (Piazza, 2005: 10, 19). It may be said that Italians in Griffith did not represent a single homogenous community but rather a number of small, often overlapping and interacting groups based on regional ties. Recent estimates put the proportion of the population in Griffith with Italian ancestry at up to 60 per cent of the total population (Sims, 2004) and some 'Italian' families are now into their fifth generation in Australia (Kabaila, 2005).

The early Italian immigrants took up farming and trades, bringing valuable skills as builders, tailors and small-scale farmers with them from home. With skills and

experience in a 'mixed economy' – working for cash as well as producing their own food in small plots and vegetable gardens – the Italians found success while many of the local farmers failed (Kabaila, 2005: 55). Where Anglo Celtic Australians had abandoned farms that had been damaged by salt intrusion or waterlogging, Italian farmers were able to repair them and bring them back to full productivity. By 1940 Italian immigrants and other farmers had developed Griffith into the largest and most successful agricultural community in New South Wales. A report prepared in July of that year by the federal government stated that 'out of a population of 10,000, there were in Griffith 3,000 Italian who owned 232 of the 1,013 farms in the district' (Cresciani, 2000: 93).

Italian immigrants became central to the region's economic growth, dominating the farming industry and introducing new industries such as wine production that remain central to Griffith's prosperity today. Italians living in this area have sometimes refered to Griffith as *Un Giardino nel deserto* (A Garden in the Desert) referring to its remoteness on one hand and fertile farming land on the other. Italian immigrants and their descendants now own 60 per cent of all farms, 90 percent of the 8 - 27 hectare horticultural farms, and about 13 percent of large area farms in the region (Kelly, 1988: 606). Some of Australia's largest wineries such as *Casellas*, *De Bortoli* and *Rosettos Wines* are owned and run by Italian immigrants to Griffith and their descendants.

According to many authors (Alcrosco, 1992; Huber, 1977; Pascoe, 1987) patterns of communal cooperation usually based on kinship, village ties and other elements of *la cultura contadina* (Italian peasant culture) led to the success of Italians in horticultural and agricultural industries. The family and kinship bonds were strong in the regions

where Italian immigration to Australia originated from, and were compounded with strong village identity and provincial solidarity. In traditional Italia rural society, the presence of a sense of community and in-group solidarity was evident through an institution of sharecropping families, and continuous mutual aid and exchange of services between neighbours (Putnam, 1993). Sharecropping also became common in the case of Italian rice farmers in Griffith (Huber, 1977).

The gradual takeover of farms by Italians often led to hostility on the part on Anglo Australians living in Griffith. In 1927 some attempts were made to prevent any Italians from settling in Griffith or having the same right as Anglo Australians to buy farms (Panucci et al., 1992). By the 1930s, there was an increasing hostility towards Italian settlers in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme and as Pascoe (1987: 150) argued 'Griffith, the utopian scheme to cultivate arid land had crystallised into two ethnic communities -the British group and Italians'. Socially there was little communication between the Anglo-Celts and Italians in Griffith. There are some other indications of early tensions between Griffith's Anglo-Celtic and Italian residents. In 1928, a number of Anglo-Celtic residents formed the Jondaryan Club, described by local historian Peter Kabaila (2005: 172) as "a partnership of the Anglo-Australian power brokers in the town." The fifteen original men in the club carefully scrutinised membership applications to ensure that only the town's most influential men – either property owners or professionals – could join. High membership fees and a limit of 100 members also helped to reserve the club for the wealthy and powerful. Italians were specifically excluded from joining this influential club until 1959 (Kabaila, 2005: 172). This closely

reflects the ethnic exclusivity in dominantly 'white' countryside described earlier in this paper.

The hostility of the early 1920s and 1930s had the effects of developing a more closely knit Italian community that would otherwise have been then case (Huber, 1977; Vasta et al., 1992). As a reaction to the exclusionary practice of the dominant Anglo Australian culture, Italian immigrants in Griffith started meeting places which were an adaptation of the traditional rural based institutions of *osteria.* Those meeting places were eventually replaced by Italian clubs

As well as historical tensions between Griffith's Italian and Anglo-Celtic communities, there have also been significant tensions among Griffith's Italian immigrants, particularly along regional lines. Following the end of World War II, a marked division between those more established Italians who had settled in the interwar years and the more recent settlers quickly emerged. Further tension existed between different regional groups, notably the Veneti's disdain for southern Italians, particularly the Calabresi whom they considered socially inferior and clannish. Even within the Veneti community the religious/anti-cleric divides shaped relations (Kabaila, 2005). These divisions manifest themselves in the formation of a number of the clubs which became the focus of social interactions within the Italian community.

3.1 Italian Immigrants and the Built Environment

The influence of Italian immigrants on Griffith's built environment is mostly evident in the Italian Museum and Cultural Centre, Griffith's four 'Italian' clubs, the Scalabrini retirement village and the Our Lady of Pompeii Catholic Church. In addition, many of

the town's public buildings were built by Italian immigrants and their descendants. Several Italian immigrants have also expressed their heritage through 'ethnic nostalgia' in their homes (Kabaila, 2005: 127).

The individual process of embodying cultural practice in space can be seen at the front and back yards of the Italian family homes. For example, several of the homes in Griffith have adopted Italian elements such as elaborate metalwork fences or arched verandas. They have also incorporated columns or statues of lions, the symbol of Venice (Figure 1). As such they have been often referred to as 'spaghetti palaces.'[2]

Figure 1: An Italian House in Griffith, NSW
[insert image]

Photograph: Kirrily Jordan, January 2007.

As Pascoe (1987: 187) has argued, some of the key elements of such Italian home building, including twin white lions guarding the entrance to Italian homes, alfresco eating areas and even the colour of the facade, offended Anglo Australian notions of good taste. However, it may be said that for Italian immigrants the aestheticism was mainly dictated by cultural imperatives. Italian immigrants also used gardens to establish their own sense of space. Italian gardens provide a setting for creativity, a connection to personal history, and enable the immigrants to express themselves by re-creating an environment very similar to the one they had in Italian villages.

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[2] A 'spaghetti palace' refers to an Italian style double story brick house with ornate wrought iron trimmings around the balcony (Vasta et al., 1992:218)

3.2 Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre

The Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre is located in Pioneer Park on the outskirts of the town centre. Construction of the museum was completed in 2003. The museum traces the history of Italian immigrants to Griffith and the surrounding region. Photographs and artefacts point to the central role of Italian immigrants in the economic and cultural development of the town. A 2005 study of local heritage places recommended the museum be listed on local and state heritage registers for its 'high significance to the Italian community' (Kabaila, 2005).

The design of the building was deliberately inclusive. It is intended to reflect both Griffith's Italian heritage and Australian rurality, with the front of the building consisting of Italian columns and arches with a *torre*, or bell tower, that is reminiscent of building designs in Italian villages (Kabaila, 2005: 151). A focus on the bell tower (*campanile*) has its origin in traditional rural comminutes in Italy where anything within the sound of the bell tower is regarded as belonging to the village (Pascoe, 1987). The back of the Griffith Italian museum, with its corrugated iron roof, represents a common rural Australian shed (Figure 2). One of the members of the original museum committee, a middle-aged man with Italian heritage, here called Lorenzo, described the significance of the design:

> "*This was meant to mould the two communities together, the Anglo-Saxon and the Italian… the building had the arches and the tiled roof at the entrance as a portico, and that's typically Italian, and then the rest of the building is in zinc alum iron, which is styled like… an early Riverina shearing shed, so that the two came together… Rather than build a typically Italian building we just wanted to*

show the community that we wanted, we weren't being divisive, and here it is, a building that it achieved, that the two cultures could meet and live together". (Interview G2).

Figure 2: The Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre, Pioneer Park, Griffith, NSW

[insert image]

Photograph: Kirrily Jordan, December 2005.

When the original idea of the museum was proposed, there was widespread enthusiasm among residents with Italian ancestry. For example, many Italian groups – including regional associations (such as the Abruzzo, Calabrian group, Trevisani, Veronesi, Vicentini and Fogolar Furlan), armed forces groups (such as the Alpini and Marinai D'Italia) and sports and social groups (such as local *bocce* clubs, the Italian Sports Club and the Italian Republic Day Committee) – generously donated funds (Piazza, 2005: 53).

The role of the Museum in promoting social cohesion among Italians and their descendants in Griffith is complex. As well as being important for a sense of identity and belonging for first generation immigrants, places built in their new environment could also be central to the transmission of culture to future generations. This has important implications for cultural continuity and the intergenerational sustainability of minority cultures in multicultural environments. According to Joe, an elderly Italian immigrant who is on the current museum committee, one aim of the museum is to remind young Italian Australians about their cultural backgrounds and the heritage of Griffith's Italian pioneers (Interview G5, not his real name). The visitors' book shows

that visitors include locals from Anglo-Celtic, Italian and Pacific Islander backgrounds, as well as diverse groups from local primary schools. However, widespread support among these groups and the efforts of local school has not translated into a strong intergenerational transmission of culture through the museum. For example, although Brenda has Italian heritage, is actively engaged in arts and cultural services in Griffith and generally enjoys visiting museums, she only visited the Italian museum in 2007 – three years after it opened:

> *"I was kind of interested I guess when it first opened, and then never sort of got out there and kind of forgot about it…I don't know many people that would go up [to the museum]… unless you're showing Italian tourists around [laughs]. And they'd probably laugh at it… I've got a few friends that are Italian, that are from Italian descent as well, and I don't know if they've even been up there to have a look… not unless they were up there for something in particular, like an event or something like that"* (Interview G8, not her real name).

In addition, the museum has actually aroused tension and division among Italians in Griffith. For example, there is some perception that the museum is largely a celebration of northern Italian heritage. This highlights a longstanding tension between northern and southern Italian immigrants to this area. As middle-aged Italian immigrant and current museum committee member Angelo explains, some from the south:

"*thought that there was an overbearance of northerners in the committee, or not only on the committee, but also what was going to be displayed… So that alienated the groups from the south, who thought 'this is a northern thing'. And I don't think that's waned yet, I think that's still there. They feel that the committee, that it's mainly the*

northerners that want to… establish it and therefore put their ideas which is a bit of a shame". (Interview G7, not his real name).

One entry in the visitor book, dated April 2006, reiterates this view:

"Such a small exhibition for such a large Italian community – it would be nice to see the other regions represented – Not everyone is from Treviso."

Obviously, the allegations of northern Italian bias may undermine the potential of the Museum for positive inter–cultural dialogue.

The Italian Museum and Cultural Centre has not only affected relations among Griffith's Italian immigrants and their descendants but has also impacted upon the relations between these residents and others in the town. When the museum was built there was a small 'ripple' among some non-Italians who wondered why there should be an Italian museum in Griffith. One long term Anglo-Celtic resident of the area, born in Griffith in the 1950s and here called Pat, recalls that

"there was a bit of a ripple initially… there probably was some envy perhaps."
(Interview G3)

Lorenzo, the man with Italian heritage introduced earlier, also remembers some initial reaction against the museum, with someone vandalising the wall with a reference to the Italian involvement in the 'mafia like' activities (Bottom, 2008) surrounding the 1970s disappearance of politician Donald MacKay:

"someone got pretty keen and actually painted some graffiti on the wall but it was only once… it said something like, it was a bit of a throw back from the Donald MacKay days… I just forget what they put on now, but anyway, it wasn't nice."
(Interview G2)

However, Lorenzo notes that this initial, fairly limited opposition "*eventually died down and we got on with the job*" (Interview G2).

The *Festa Delle Salsicce* adds yet another layer of complexity to the impact of the museum on relations among those with Italian ancestry. The annual *Festa Delle Salsiccie* (Salami Festival, or Festival of the Sausage) is organised by the Italian Museum Committee and is held on the lawns outside the Museum. It should be mentioned here that public ceremonies and festivals, particularly the ones including music, dancing and food are vital to Italian rural life (Pascoe, 1987; Bannister, 2006). The reconstructions of the festivals which are associated with rural settlements are also a 'distinctive feature of an immigrant group which is still close to its peasant ancestry' (Pascoe, 1992: 95).

The *Festa* festival is a fundraiser for the Museum and was originally conceived as a way to showcase the building to the public[3]. The first *Festa* in 2003 was inspired by 'an age-old Italian argument' over whether northerners or southerners make the best salami (Pattison, 2008). Prior to the festival, the organisers (who are of Italian descent) work with local entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds to secure donations or discounts on food, wine and prizes for the day. In many cases this leads to an ongoing relationship of trust and reciprocity, with the organisers promoting these businesses and returning to them the following year. It provides an opportunity to develop and strengthen informal networks between Anglo-Celtic residents and those with Italian heritage .On the day of

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[3] The festival has grown steadily since 2003, with 300 people attending in 2006, 450 in 2007 and 600 in 2008 (Pattison 2008). These included locals of both Italian and Anglo-Celtic heritage as well as organised tour groups from from Melbourne, Cobram and Geelong.

the festival, Italian women prepare the food while Anglo-Celtic and Italian men work together to set up the marquee and tables and chairs. A similarly mixed group of volunteers also stays behind after the days' events to pack up and dismantle the marquee. (Field notes G20, August 2006).

As described above, the *Festa Delle Salsicce* also provides opportunities for more participatory inter-cultural exchange. In the scoping survey of the festival participants in 2006, some noted the festival was meaningful for them because it brings together people from different cultural backgrounds, with one respondent commenting that "*We're all local people, part and parcel of our community*" (Survey G5). Another suggested that:

"[It's meaningful] because it's all the different nationalities…it's nice and harmonious, there's no hate… For integration it's really great". (Survey G8)

A third commented:

"[It's meaningful because it's] seeing the heritage of the past, Italian heritage, and there's other people who get involved too. It's very pleasant to see that – everybody amalgamates". (Survey G3).

Promotion of Italian heritage and the festival only recently started shaping the regional identity of Griffith (Helzer, 2001). The festival is currently being marketed mainly as an 'ethnic' event promoting 'Italianness'. It perhaps does not transform the landscape by utilising discourse of the rural idyll, as it is the case of promoting German heritage in Lobenthal is South Australia (Winchester and Rofe, 2005). It draws more on notions of hardship of rural life in Italy.

The Museum and *Festa Della Salsicce* are expression of Italianness as well as Italo-Australian place making. The Italian Museum was designed to represent belonging to place and an emergent inter-ethnic relationship, as it reflects both Italian heritage and Australian rurality. While the Museum provides a symbolic reference to an inter-ethnic relationship the *Festa* can be seen as part of a process of community-building through shared activities in celebrating Italian rural traditions. The *Festa* provides the Italian immigrants with a statement of their presence in Griffith and it has an integrating function for both old and younger Italians, and provides forum for positive inter-cultural exchange.

3.3 Griffith's Italian Clubs

While the Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre is a relatively new building, Griffith has been home to a number of 'Italian' club houses for a much longer period. There are four Italian club houses in Griffith and surrounds. The first to be built was the Italo-Australian Club, established in 1937 at the Coronation Hall. The club was forced to close during World War II, and when it re-opened after the war it became the Coronation Club. Today it exists as the Coro Club. In 1946 both the Yoogali and Yoogali Catholic Clubs were opened, followed by the Hanwood Catholic Club in 1955.

The Italo-Australian Club was the first Italian social club in the area and was immediately popular, having many members and being very well attended. The club house, consisting of two fibro and corrugated iron rooms, was used for drinking, socialising and gambling. It resembled the men's social centres – or *osteria* – in the villages of Veneto. Unlike Griffith's Jondaryan Club, which was open only to the

region's distinguished Anglo-Celtic gentlemen, the Italo-Australian club was always open to members of any ethnic background. Original members were mostly Italian and Anglo or Irish Australian. Similarly, the Yoogali Club had a clear policy from its very early days that membership was open to all. It was non-sectarian and non-racial, with all men, 'regardless of political affiliation, religious beliefs or cultural background' allowed to join (Kabaila, 2005). However, in the early days its membership was predominantly northern Italian (especially Veneti) and Anglo-Celtic Australian.

The clubs have been key places where Griffith's Italian immigrants have forged their sense of belonging. In particular, they have been used to maintain cultural traditions such as *bocce*[4] and Italian card games while also speaking Italian dialects. Italian engagement in Griffith clubs has given Griffith the reputation of being 'the liveliest country town in Australia' (Huber, 1977: 55). In 1951 the Coronation Club was a site for starting the Continental Music Club which aimed at bridging all Italians together. According to Bannister (2007), during the 1950s and 1960s the music club was very important in promoting Italian culture in Griffith. Interestingly, the music club was also used by New South Wales Department of Agriculture and the Irrigation Research and Extension Committee as a point of contact for advising Italian farmers and growers about innovation and extension programs (Huber, 1977; Bannister, 2007). Today, the Italian clubs regularly host meetings of local Italian associations such as the *Alpini* and *Fogolar Furlan* which are dedicated to the preservation of Italian heritage (Bannister, 2007).

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[4] *Bocce* is a traditional Italian game

Echoing Hage's (1997) concept of 'home building,' the clubs have allowed Griffith's Italian immigrants to create a space to feel at home and secure in their new environment. For example, Joe, the elderly Italian immigrant referred to earlier, suggests that without these clubs, he would not have stayed in Australia:

"*There was a dance there [at the Coronation Hall] on a Saturday night… even that was something that was lovely to newcomer. If it wasn't for those places there, I would not stay here in Australia, no, I would go back to Italy. Otherwise live here like animals, you know, you got nothing. So, we started to build things… and started to build up here a good community until we felt… it was good to live here*" (Interview G5)

As Armstrong (1994) has argued, such sites are important parts of the inheritance of contemporary society and facilitate a way of life or continuing cultural practices. They can play a valuable role in transmitting culture, educating the public and facilitating social and cultural exchange. The clubs Italian immigrants built in Griffith can be regarded as an adaptation of a traditional *osteria* and simultaneously as a media for partial integration (Huber, 1977: 56), demonstrating both 'roots in transferred cultures' and embededness in the local context and social space (Lalich, 2003: 11).

The Italian clubs were patronised, at least in part, as a response to the exclusion Italian immigrants felt from mainstream society. Tony, an elderly Italian immigrant who arrived in Griffith as a young man, stated that:

"*The reason why the Italian clubs were first initiated was that we were not allowed to join the Ex-Servicemen's Club, or what was then the Jondaryan Club. I was barred from entering the Ex-Servicemen's Club after a football game. I was*

playing football for Griffith, and all the team went in after the game and I was

stopped at the door. So I then took on board the Italian clubs and patronised

them". (Interview G1, not his real name).

It can be argued that the establishment of the Italian clubs was, therefore, a way of claiming citizenship through the social use of space. Such an argument requires a recognition that citizenship is socially-constructed. It is 'strongly influenced by notions of what constitutes national [and local] identity,' with ethnic and religious minorities often cast as non-citizens in attempts to deny them basic citizenship rights (Dunn 2001b: 35).

Like the Italian Museum and Cultural Centre, Griffith's Italian clubs tell a complex story about place and social cohesion in an ethnically mixed rural environment. A number of the clubs have had a historic association with Italians from a particular region, sometimes demonstrating friction between northerners and southerners (Bannister, 2007). For example, when the Yoogali Catholic Club was opened, it specifically excluded Calabresi (Kabaila, 2005: 171). Today, the membership is more mixed, but the members who are Italian immigrants are still predominantly from the north. In contrast, the Yoogali Club, located immediately next door to the Yoogali Catholic Club, is today seen as a predominantly southern Italian club. The Hanwood Catholic Club has taken a different trajectory. Tony, the elderly immigrant introduced above, suggests that the club was instrumental in building relations between northern and southern Italians, as well as aiding integration with the non-Italian club members:

"The Hanwood Club was in trouble and it looked like closing down… [there were] Italian factions from different regions of Italy. At the time the different factions wouldn't fratonise" (Interview G1).

But Tony remembers that a sense of 'unity' at the club was created by starting football (soccer) games among the children:

"The kids didn't recognise factions, and the parents following the kids began to fratonise. That created the unity… it became mixed and it remained that way, it was just a gathering of all factions, including the Australian faction. I think the club did help to integrate. I think it helped to integrate all of them, through membership and through sporting activities and socialising." (Interview G1).

While being flavored with tensions and competition among some Italians, the Italian clubs have made a point of being open to non-Italians, and are no longer popularly known as being 'Italian'. The mixed membership of the clubs has provided a forum for members to meet and socialise with people from other cultures. However, while club membership is a useful starting point, it is necessary to know more about the level and quality of social engagement between members before we can assert that the club facilitates improved inter-cultural relations or creates bridging social capital. While social clubs may actually reinforce existing social cleavages by limiting membership or pitting one club against another, it seems that some activities, such as sporting events sponsored by the Italian clubs, have furthered intra- and inter-ethnic respect and inclusion. This supports arguments reported by Pedersen et al. (2005) that active engagement in anti-racism strategies has a more lasting positive effect on attitudes to ethnic difference than passive activities such as listening to lectures or watching films.

In relation to Griffith's Italian clubs, it suggests that it is the nature of activities engaged in, rather than membership of a club or association *per se*, that is critical in developing positive inter-and intra-ethnic exchange.

4. Concluding Comments

The built environment examined in this paper is just a few of the sites through which Griffith's non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants and their descendants have enacted and expressed their belonging to place. The issues raised in this paper provide insights into the complexities of ethnic diversity and social cohesion and add to our understanding of the rural ethnic experience. Two key points emerge. The first is the potential for multicultural place-making in rural areas to both transcend, and exacerbate, existing intra- and inter-cultural tensions. The second is a reflection of multicultural spatial change in the context of Griffith's rurality.

Griffith challenges the white image of Australian rural society through its strong Italian immigrant presence over many decades and its recent influx of minority immigrants from a range of ethnic backgrounds. However, the experience of Griffith's Italian and other immigrants can only be understood through the prism of racialisation. Griffith's early Italian immigrants experienced racism and hostility from the Anglo-Celtic population, particularly in the context of efforts to prevent Italians buying farms. Italian immigrants were also deliberately excluded from positions of power and influence, as evidenced by their exclusion from the Anglo – Celtic clubs until 1959. However, Italian immigrants were able to respond effectively to this exclusion by building their own clubs and staking out their own social space in the town. They were not passive victims to racism in Griffith. This shows the important role of immigrant

agency in responding to, and reshaping, their new rural neighbourhoods. Rural societies become a contested terrain as the enduring historical legacy of white power and privilege is challenged by, and changed by, immigrant minorities. The more recent construction of the Italian Museum and Cultural Centre suggests a continuation of this process, with Italian immigrants claiming both physical and symbolic space in documenting their central role in Griffith's socio-economic development.

The construction of these places has had three important effects: producing a sense of belonging among Italians; providing opportunities to transcend some forms of ethnic prejudice; and further entrenching others. Several of the research participants reported that key places – such as the Italian clubs – were central to their sense of belonging in Griffith. The changing relationship of Italian immigrants to place in Griffith – from exclusion from the Jondaryan Club to the creation of their own clubs and now the Italian museum – also demonstrates their efforts to claim citizenship rights in the face of limited notions of national belonging.

Through the Italian clubs and the Italian museum, immigrants have also created spaces for inter-ethnic encounter and exchange in the rural setting of Griffith. A number of the respondents indicated that in creating a space for themselves, they have also created a stepping stone to the broader community. This has occurred in at least two ways: the symbolic reference to an inter-ethnic relationship in building design; and the facilitation of inter-ethnic encounter. While the design of the Italian museum is not universally admired, it was a conscious effort to represent belonging to place and an emergent inter-ethnic relationship. As such, it has avoided the much-critiqued representations of the ethnic 'Other' identified by Anderson (1990) and others in some

Australian urban centres. To paraphrase Anderson (1991: 9), the design of the Italian museum avoids a reliance on a discrete "Italianness" by representing an inter-ethnic belonging. Arguably, it challenges notions of both 'whiteness' and 'Italianness' that draw on notions of static and essential ethnic difference.

Key places in the built environment may also create a stepping stone to engagement with the broader community through the facilitation of inter-cultural encounter. For example, as described above, the opportunity provided by the *Festa Delle Salsicce* to strengthen and develop informal networks between Anglo-Celtic residents and those with Italian heritage suggests that the festival, with its genesis in the Italian museum, can have an important role in inter-ethnic dialogue.

In deliberately including non-Italians in activities, events and building design, the construction and use of the Italian clubs and Italian museum provide support to Hage's (1997) notion of home-building and to Lalich's (2003) contention that in creating their own spaces immigrants may be embedded in both their own cultures and their local context. It suggests that immigrant's attempts at place-making may simultaneously involve inscribing a degree of exclusivity and a strategy of becoming more a part of their new environment. In terms of social capital, it suggests that bonding and bridging capital may not be discrete: among one group, and through one place, bonding and bridging capital may be pursued simultaneously. Alternatively, a period of intra-community consolidation in place may be the precursor to broader community engagement. This conclusion correlates with the suggestion that strong bonds within groups may facilitate strong bonds between them, and demonstrates one mechanism by

which this may occur. It also shows that Putnam's (2000) concerns about 'in-group loyalty' being accompanied by 'out-group antagonism' do not always hold.

However, we have also seen that immigrant place-making can raise existing tensions. When the Italian Museum was built, old anti-Italian sentiments resurfaced in Griffith. While not as vocal or widespread as the recent opposition to building mosques and Islamic centres in Sydney, this reflects a similar resistance to multicultural spatial change. Our research also shows the way in which an existing 'sore spot' – the old animosities among northern and southern Italians – was aggravated by decisions over the museum's display. Arguably, it shows an uneven citizenship even within an immigrant group.

The second key point to emerge from our research is a reflection on multicultural spatial change in the context of a rural community. The rurality of Griffith and particularly the land tenure system of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation area allowed and encouraged Griffith's Italians to transplant to Australia some elements of Italian rural society as well as culturally ingrained agricultural practices.

The research into rural ethnic identities cited earlier in this paper (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Knowles, 2008), points to the potential for ethnic exclusivity in rural areas. In Griffith, the interaction between ethnicity and rurality has been complex. While many Anglo-Celtic soldier settlers failed at farming despite their access to irrigation, Griffith's Italian immigrants used their existing skills in small-scale farming with great success. This contributed to the initial hostility towards Italians as they sought to buy up failing Anglo-Celtic farms – a hostility that, among other things, demanded Italian exclusion from the Jondaryan Club. However, the very success of

Griffith's Italian farmers has also forged the region's economic prosperity, shoring up the local economy and in turn providing employment to new immigrants. Again, these changes are reflected in the built environment, with the Italian clubs demonstrative of the early immigrants' determination to belong and the Museum tracking the story of their adaptation and economic success. As Australia and other western nations begin to redirect new immigrants away from urban to rural settlement, rural whiteness will be increasingly challenged and undermined.

As such, this paper challenges perceptions of an Anglo-Celtic Australian rurality, with both the Italian clubs and Italian Museum and Cultural Centre providing material testament to the multi-ethnic character of rural development. Moreover, they provide evidence of a deeper cultural transformation behind the built form. While they demonstrate the potential for inter- and intra-group conflict and exclusion in rural settings, they also suggest the possibilities for a multicultural rural citizenship and the development of inter-cultural relationships through the design and use of place in rural landscapes.

Acknowledgement

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