



On a (Different) Plain?: Cult Geography, Authenticity and Nirvana Fandom

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Debating 'Authenticity'

- Authenticity = a contested term across academic disciplines.
- Calls for rejecting the concept...:
 - Reisinger and Steiner (2006) and 'objective authenticity'
 - Postmodernist positions (e.g. applications of Baudrillard and Eco) = tourist gaze and hyperreality.
- ...but remains a criterion of discourse and value for fans and/or tourists:
 - See Beeton (2005), Buchmann *et al* (2010).
- Hills (2002) on authenticity and cult geography - authentic/non-commercialised vs inauthentic/commercialised binary unsustainable.

Authenticity as Discourse

- Social constructionism:
 - “a constellation of theories articulating the belief that mind, thought, self, and reality are largely products of history, culture, and language. The world - and the self within it - are not taken-for-granted entities warranted through objective observation but constructions or creations achieved through socially agreed-upon methods of seeing, naming, and interpreting.” (Ray 2000: 18)
 - “[a]lthough we may all agree on our use of mental terms (for example, that we experience happiness, sadness or anger on particular occasions), how do we know that what we experience privately is the same for others? ...no one has access to your “inner life”, nor vice versa.” (Gergen 1999: 12-13)
- Combine these ideas with Wang (1999) - ‘existential authenticity’.







BANDS

The creation and performance of original music is the key to inspiring other people to create themselves and help make a scene grow.

VENUES

All-ages venues that cater to underground music provide a place for bands to play, like-minded youth to congregate, and ideas to spread.



Conclusions

In summary:

- Authenticity as discursive construction:
 - Through fan practices
 - Through presentation of materials and construction of space.
- Different forms of authenticity in sites of Nirvana fandom:
 - Unsanctioned authenticity.
 - Endorsed authenticity.
- Key concerns:
 - How are claims to the authenticity of individual sites of cult geography constructed through the performance and/or display of fan-/sub-cultural meanings of the term?
 - What constructions of 'authenticity' do these sites produce?

