

## Reconstituting the set and setting of the urban pub after a lockdown

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**Introduction:** Scholars in the drugs and alcohol field have explored the impacts of 'set and setting' on harms associated with psychoactive substances ranging from psychedelics to opioids. In the alcohol policy field, this kind of scholarship has focused on drinking cultures and 'social worlds', and has highlighted the role of 'the pub' in these worlds. In New South Wales (NSW) 'the pub' functions as a third place, in which socio-cultural and material elements enable pro-social behaviour that may reduce harms associated with drinking. Here, we explored the ways in which these elements were reconstituted as NSW emerged from a COVID-19 mitigation lockdown, and considered the possible implications of this reconstitution on drinking and associated harms.

**Approach:** From May through August 2020, we interviewed 16 people who had regularly attended urban pubs in NSW before entering a lockdown in 2020, and who had been back to 'the pub' since restrictions had lifted. We then applied Oldenburg's (1999) framework of third places to their accounts.

**Results:** We found that the socio-cultural and material elements that constituted urban pubs as third places were fundamentally altered by rapid social change in response to a public health threat. Urban pubs stopped functioning as 'third places' in many of our participants' lives, particularly for participants who identified as female, as well as participants who were over 30.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Altering the socio-cultural setting of the urban pub to a younger and more male clientele may work to undo the sociality and harm reduction effects that had previously been associated with 'the pub'.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** Given the harms, and complex economic political interests in night-time economies, care must be taken to ensure that policies encourage pro-social balances of the socio-cultural and material elements commonly associated with third places.

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