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January 2008

Senses of Place

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SENSES OF PLACE

A Thesis Presented
by
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Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
May 2008
Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management

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A Thesis Presented
By
CATALIN I. CIGHI

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

<u>Introduction</u>

This thesis was born from the attempt to understand why people fall in love with places. The concept of *sense of place* appeared to explain much of the ways in which people relate to place, and for this reason, many of the works reviewed for this study were written by scholars who have analyzed this concept. These scholars studied disciplines such as human geography, anthropology, communication, and tourism studies; therefore each of them operated with particular terminology, assumptions and paradigms. Differences in vocabulary and discourse aside, all these works appear to suffer from a common weakness: they do not explain the concept of place sufficiently. These authors have delved into theories of how senses of place are created without conveying a rigorous understanding of what place is.

More specifically, place has been treated as a thing that exists in objective reality and corresponds directly to an observer's idea of place. This study relies on the premise that place does not exist in reality. An elephant is a thing that can be looked at, touched, and be easily identified. Not much disagreement exists on whether that thing is an elephant or not, because the idea of an elephant is a simple idea that corresponds directly with the thing itself: the elephant. The same rule does not apply to complex ideas, such as culture, fairness, or democracy. These ideas are complex because there is no one and only thing in objective

reality with which they correspond. A hundred different people may hold a hundred different ideas about the meaning of fairness.

Similar to ideas of fairness and democracy is the idea of place. The idea of place does not correspond directly to a thing that exists in objective reality. A place does not exist. A place is a social construct. Before even talking about a *sense of place*, an understanding of how a complex idea such as place comes into being is necessary. This thesis proposed a structured approach to gaining such an understanding.

The texts written on *sense of* place constituted the data for this study. The review of the literature was also the collection of data for analysis, as the literature itself was the data analyzed in this thesis. It was beyond the scope of this thesis to create a synthesis of everything that was written on the topic of place or to explain how particular trends relate to the concerns of the disciplines and of the times in which they were written. However, such trends were particularly significant when understood in their proper historical context.

The concept of *sense of place* is part of a wide body of literature that addressed the emotional, symbolic and spiritual aspects of places. Yi-Fu Tuan was generally credited with re-kindling academic interest in the concept with his 1974 book: *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*. The term topophilia comes from the Greek roots *topo-* (place) and *–philia* (love of/for) and means literarily love of place, but Tuan (1974) defined the term widely so as "to include all emotional connections between physical environment and human beings" (p.2). Possibly recognizing that this book was somewhat

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lacking in academic rigor, Tuan published in 1977 a related book: *Space and place: the perspective of experience*, sparking an academic debate that spanned a few decades and a number of disciplines.

Shamai (1991) noted that *sense of place* is more of an idea than a well defined construct, an abstract and illusive notion which has its roots in phenomenological geographic inquiry and invites philosophically rather than empirically orientated descriptions. Kalternborn (1998) expressed a similar frustration:

"It can be argued that *sense of place* resists any precise definition as it does not refer explicitly to dimensions of place like defined geographic space or the distribution of socio economic activities. *Sense of place* is described in both phenomenological approaches and in positivistic behavioural accounts. Despite, or perhaps due to this diversity, there is no clear consensus on what the concept of *sense of place* should contain or how it should be constructed and measured scientifically" (p. 58).

The concept of *sense of place* may be particularly difficult to grasp due to the transactional approach adopted by most of the authors. A transactional inquiry allows a description of concepts that is tentative and preliminary and expects new descriptions to arise at any time as the inquiry progresses. The inquirer reserves the right to proceed freely in the investigation of the concept, using whatever way is appropriate as long as the inquiry takes place under reasonable hypotheses (Dewey, 1934). In a certain sense, this thesis continued

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the transactional tradition but also broke away by proposing an approach to the concept of *sense of place* that was rooted in a rigorous analysis of the idea of place.

Buttimer (1980), Tuan (1980) and Chawla (1992) were but a few of the authors who have approached the concept from a transactional perspective. Many others have attempted to capture a range of place meanings in a holistic fashion, making it difficult to arrive to one definition, and it is partly for this reason that more than forty years later, a clear definition of the concept still eludes us. But is such a definition necessary?

The challenge of understanding and writing about *sense of place* was to maintain a focused approach to a topic that invited big-picture explorations and reflexive writing. Some texts have addressed *sense of place* as if it is a perceived quality of the place, others have treated it as the process by which a place quality is perceived, and yet others have conceived of it as the impact that a place has on an individual. Whether understood as a quality (the cause), a process (action), or impact (the effect), *sense of place* remained a complex notion that could not be fully explained without addressing issues related to the place itself : its physical aspects, how it is perceived, how it is understood, and what type of actions it inspires. Concepts such as place identity, place image, place attachment, spirit of the place, or "genius loci" appear essential to an understanding of the various building blocks and dimensions of place.

Many of the quoted authors have used these concepts interchangeably, in spite of significant differences in their meaning. Other authors have gone to great

lengths in clarifying one particular concept, ignoring other concepts and not being

interested in identifying and explaining relationships between different concepts.

Although a great need existed for understanding how these concepts influence

each other, how they flow from one to the other, and how the understanding of

one depends on understanding of the other, the literature does not currently offer

a model that articulates the interdependence of significant place concepts and

provides focus for future research. This research aimed to eliminate this gap.

<u>Purpose of the study</u>

The main purpose of this study was to create a model to facilitate the

understanding of how the concept of place is created. This model articulates

what to analyze, by identifying the essential elements of place, and suggests how

the analysis should be conducted, by employing different lenses and parameters

to identify units of analysis and to highlight the relationships between them. The

model was designed to eventually enable a better understanding of the abstract

concept of *sense of place*. The strength of this tool derives from its ability to

visually articulate the plurality, fluidity, and interdependence of building blocks,

elements, and dimensions of place. In doing so, the model facilitates a big picture

understanding of how the concept of place is constructed and also opens up

venues of inquiry into the details of this process.

<u>Research Questions</u>

A model that takes stock of past research and identifies the interdependent relationships between place concepts analyzed in the literature was absolutely necessary before the concept of *sense of place* could be further developed in a direction that allowed practical applications into the field of tourism. With the purpose to create a road map for researching the concept of place, the research questions that were investigated in this study were:

1. What type of model could explain the processes by which the idea of place is created?

2. How could place related concepts - employed in a variety of academic disciplines – be explored so that their interrelatedness is best articulated?

3. What definition of *sense of place* could be developed from insights derived from the model?

4. How could the model be used in research related to practical applications of the concept of *sense of place* in the hospitality and tourism industries?

This study focused primarily on answering the first two research questions: to build the model and to suggest an analytical approach that would make the best use of the model. The last two research questions were briefly addressed to illustrate how an understanding of place and *sense of place* - concepts that appear obscure and evasive - could successfully bridge the gap between the academic world and the business world.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

No inquiry into a *sense of place* could proceed without clarifying what place is. Much has been written about the concept before and after Tuan, yet his description remains the most simple and concise: "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with meaning" (Tuan, 1977, p. 16). Place, the way he conceptualized it, is a pure social construct. However, his idea appeared underdeveloped, because it only addressed a few of the layers that make up the concept of place and did not attempt to explain how exactly meaning is created and ascribed to place. A range of authors in various other disciplines complemented Tuan's work by studying how places are socially constructed, how place meanings develop, and how people become attached to places (e.g., Altman and Low, 1992; Entrikin, 1991; Brandenburg and Carroll, 1995).

Relph (1976) introduced the concept of *placelessness* and Augé (1995) echoed his concerns in a discussion of *non-places*. Place concepts were defined not only by what they include, but also by what they exclude. Rivlin (1982) studied the processes by which people attach meaning to places in urban environments and tackled issues related to group membership and belonging. Sarbin (1983) studied the relationship between place identity and the self.

While the social construction of place was a central theme in most academic approaches, different fields have favored different paradigms of

understanding of the concept. The most important fields receive further attention in the following sections.

<center>Cultural Geography</center>

Cultural geography, or human geography as Tuan preferred to call it, was the birthplace of the concern for *sense of place*. Many of the pioneer researchers adopted humanistic frames and their work approximated closely the work of anthropologists. Entrikin pointed to the need to redirect geographical research toward a concern for the richness of human experience and an understanding of human action (Entrikin, 1989). Buttimer (1976, 1980, 1985, & 1993) illustrated this humanistic focus, particularly through her interest in social behavior. At the time Buttimer began writing there were already many studies suggesting important relationships between physical design and social behavior (Young and Willmott, 1957; Rainwater, 1966; Schorr, 1963; Yancey, 1971) and studies holding that no such relationship exists (Gutman, 1966; Gans, 1961; Wilner et al., 1962). A summary of such debates was offered by Buttimer and Seamon (1980). A theme explored by Buttimer that is relevant for this research relates to the role played by artists and writers in shaping places. Although not fully articulating the ways in which art shapes places and relating these findings to academic fields concerned with meaning creation, Buttimer opened the way to a new way of thinking about place.

The behavioral and humanistic work of the 1960s and 1970s led to inquiries into the role of human understanding and meaning in the creation of places (Ley and Samuels, 1978). A tradition of inquiry into place and lived

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experiences also begun with Bachelard (1964), whose work in environmental

psychology preceded the writings of Tuan (1977), Relph (1976) and Seamon

(1979). While these pioneers worked in an almost esoteric fashion, they were

followed by other authors who wrote in the attempt of making pragmatic

contributions to theory construction and even public policy (Godkin, 1977 & 1980;

Rowles, 1979).

Much of the research conducted on *sense of place* during the 1970s and

1980s reflected strong influences from both Heidegger (1927) and Foucault

(1977). Heidegger's notion of "dwelling" appears to have inspired the themes of

rootedness, uprootedness, and transrootedness in the works of Buttimer and

Seamon (1980), Cosgrove (1984), Lowenthal (1985), Relph (1976), and Tuan

(1977). Foucault had a significant contribution to the theories on how power

regulates space, analyzing modern technologies of discipline and pointing to the

shift in focus to discursive techniques of self-discipline over people, what they

believe and what they do (Foucault 1977 & 1978). If power regulates space, then

power also regulates the way a place is perceived and experienced, and

ultimately influences the *sense of place*. Foucault's writings on *heterotopias* and

panopticism, addressing with issues of institutional power and social control, had

influenced human geographers who focused on postcolonial theories,

globalization, and social critique. Cosgrove (1984) in particular worked to

elucidate the ways in which structures of power and class struggles influenced

the emergence of cultural landscapes.

The fall of the Eastern European Communist Block in 1989 coincided with a number of writings in neo-Marxian spirit (Harvey, 1989; P. Jackson, 1989; Soja 1989). Later in the 1990s, issues related to gender and representation took precedence and became the main focus of cultural geographers. Duncan and Ley (1993) edited works analyzing the connections between place and culture while Keith and Pile (1993) edited works analyzing connections between place and identity. More specialized identity writings like that of Spain (1992) and Massey (1994) focused on gender issues and gained a strong following for the new millennium, inspiring feminist writings like that of Niranjana (2001), Rosing (2003), and Birkeland (2005). Massey and Jess (1995) addressed specifically the concept of *sense of place* and examined the way in which it is bounded to the relationships between place and identity.

Myers (1991) and Weiner (1991) explored local representations of place, focusing on the perception and experience of place. In recent years, Wagner (2000) revisited the notion of place, how it is socially constructed and how it operates at different scales. The idea of analyzing place at various scales will inform the development of the model that will be introduced by this thesis. Murphy and Johnson (2000) put together a volume that took stock of the main themes in cultural geography related to the social construction of place, the act of claiming places, and the remaking of the environment by human intervention. Cartier and Lew (2005) transcend the fields of tourism studies and cultural geography, specifically observing the effect of tourism on place identity and place image. Differences in perspective, and related issues, such as differences in

degrees of immersion in place, have also inspired the model that will be

presented in this study.

<u>Cultural Anthropology</u>

Cultural anthropology writings on place concepts were also concerned

with theorizing social identities, but they focused considerably on issues of

contestation and power struggles, making them very relevant for the third

building block of the model presented here. Writings on local and global power

relations were predominant in the literature and tourism was framed in many

instances as evil and destructive. Anthropologists appear to hold the belief that

tourism kills the object of its desire.

Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988), Deleuze and Guattari (1986),

Kapferer (1988), and Rosaldo (1988) were among the first anthropologists to

focus on ideas of place as sites of power struggle and contestation. Later in the

1990s, Bender (1993) explored relationships between landscape and authority

and set the stage for an author who has focused much on the relationship of

place and politics: Olwig (1993, 2001, 2002a & 2002b). Olwig, incidentally, is a

professor of Landscape Planning, but his work, as that of many of the authors

reviewed in this research, spans many academic disciplines.

The 1990s also witnessed the development of a theme which had become

central in tourist anthropological writings. Carmichael, Hubert, Reeves, &

Schanche (1994) and Kelley and Francis (1994) explored the importance of

conserving sacred sites, being among the first writers to lead the wave of

concern regarding sustainable tourism practices. Within the niche of ecological anthropology, Nietschman (1973) worked to elucidate issues related to human ecological adaptation, exploring the individual's experience of place.

Perhaps one of the most representative anthropological writers concerned with place concepts was Low (1986, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, & 2003), who wrote on issues ranging from the social construction of place to the relationships between place and culture and ideology by employing interdisciplinary perspectives that included architecture, politics, and communications.

Included in the essays collections of Hirsch and O'Hanlon (1995) with topics ranging from the relationships between space and place to place images and representations, were works that addressed ways of seeing that shape the human experience of place (Green, 1995), the role of stories in modeling lived experience (Gow, 1995), the role of a "sense of loss" in place attachments (Pinney,1995), the use of place myths in making legitimate territorial claims (Selwyn, 1995), the role of place and ancestral past in determining place identities (Morphy, 1995), and the role of language in the perception of place and the setting of roots in that place (Gell, 1995). Hirch and O'Hanlon (1995) suggested that anthropology might provide a perspective of place as a dynamic cultural process, multisensual, and constantly oscillating between a "foreground" of lived emplacement and a "background" of social potential (p. 67). Both Tilley (1994) and MacCannell (1997) later re-addressed the role of fore and back areas

as necessary components of a place, and discussed their newly acquired meanings in the context of tourist places.

Only a year later, Feld and Basso (1996) edited a collection of essays that addressed specifically various anthropological interpretations of *sense of place*. The volume title, *Senses of Place*, hints to the multitude of perspectives as well as to the idea that one cannot talk about *sense of place* in singular, as if it would be a single, static concept. Included in this collection were: (1) essays exploring place as "plenary presence permeated with culturally constituted institutions and practices" even when prediscursively given and prereflectively experienced (Casey, 1996, p. 23), (2) reflections on the sensuousness of place as soundscape (Feld, 1996), and (3) perspectives of place as emotional landscape (Kahn, 1996). Blu (1996) researched the building of place attachments in cases when the place and the community were not visually marked by boundaries, while Frake (1996) dealt with the opposite instance, in which a place that is geographically centered and well defined becomes perceived as lost and marginalized. These works illustrated the importance of landmarks infused with particular meaning, such as centers or boundaries, because of their ability to define a place in a strong and coherent manner.

Among the most recent works reviewed was Feuchtwang's (2004) collection of essays dedicated to the treatment of place in China and in particular to the challenge of *making place*.

Writing in the field of postmodern epistemology, Preston (2003) explored the connections between place and mind, describing how the physical environment comes to play an important role in the way people think. The author himself framed his work as postmodern because he builds on the works of authors in the late twentieth century that "began to unravel modernistic views of how we see the world" (p. 53). Preston honored a tradition originating in ecopsychology, a field that had emerged in response to the assertion that the self is assembled cognitively by reference to the environment (Shepard, 1977).

Malpas (1999) claimed that philosophers have given too little attention to place and to human relationships with place, and then proceeded to fill in the gap by giving an account of the nature and significance of place as "a complex but unitary structure that encompasses self and other, space and time, subjectivity and objectivity" (p. 214). Malpas was one of the authors that inspired the claim that the temporal, spatial, and societal dimensions of place are not mere directions which could be explored, but essential aspects of place that must to be addressed and understood, for an analysis of the concept to be complete.

The architect Norberg-Schultz (1980 & 2000) dedicated much of his writings to place concepts, specifically the concept of *genius loci*. He credited much of his approach and work to the philosophy of Heidegger and the work done by the scholar to elucidate the concept of dwelling, which implies that places are the spaces where life occurs. In the author's own terms, his writing about *genius loci* represented an attempt to create a phenomenology of

architecture. Among other notable applications in environmental design, urban

design, and architecture were those of Mugerauer (1994) and Seamon (1992).

In cultural studies, Edensor (1998) wrote a superb account of how tourist

places are constructed, regulated, and how the tourists are primed to behave in

the stages set for them. Borrowing Foucault's concept of *heterotopia*, he

contrasted it favorably to the concept of *tourist bubble* and illustrated the various

ways in which these contrasting stages influence tourist perception of place and

behavior.

Sense of place and place have been explored in many diverse other

fields, such as literature and biography (Hiss, 1990; Turner, 1989), folklore

(Ryden, 1993), music (Stokes, 1994), and art history (Mitchell, 1994). Some of

these authors were quoted here because they illustrated the ways in which

various human endeavors create and ascribe meaning to the places that inspire

them. A symbiotic relationship exists between a place and a human endeavor.

The place makes possible or inspires an endeavor which, in turn, alters the place

physically or enriches it with new meaning, thus forever changing the place,

which in turn, will inspire new or altered human endeavors, in a never ending

feedback loop.

The academic fields mentioned above were not the only academic fields

relevant to this thesis. The authors quoted are not the only scholars who have

taken an interest in place or *sense of place*. The works cited are not the only

works written about these topics. In fact, there is so much more material

available in print or electronic form that a synthesis would be truly beyond the

scope of this thesis. The following chapter explains why these particular fields,

particular authors and particular works were selected for inclusion, and how the

information thus obtained will be used to build the model introduced by this

thesis.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

<u>Methodological framework</u>

This study continued the transactional tradition that has characterized many of the earlier works on place and *sense of place*. Existing data served as the material to create an otherwise original model for the deconstruction of the concept of place. The model focused only on those place and *sense of place*: principles that would hold true in any analysis, at any time, and under any circumstances. No similar model existed in the literature at the time when this study was undertaken.

The model was constructed only of those building blocks, elements and dimensions of place which could not possibly be ignored without compromising the integrity and consistency of this study. These building blocks, elements and dimensions of place were identified by analyzing and distilling the data provided by the literature review. The texts written about place constituted the data analyzed in this study.

Data Collection

The literature reviewed constituted the data for this study. This qualitative was distilled from the most significant texts that have been written on place concepts in a variety of academic fields. The study focused on human geography, anthropology, communication and tourism studies, but many of the texts reviewed could not be easily categorized to one particular field due to their

interdisciplinary orientation. The method of data collection was inspired by thematic content analysis, but the this study did not focus on describing how the data was coded and classified (Gordy and Pritchard, 1995). While coding and classification were absolutely necessary parts of the work performed in analyzing the data, the bulk of this study describes what happened after place-related concepts were identified. This method has deemed to be the best suited approach for the analysis, distillation, and synthesis of large bodies of qualitative data (Holsti, 1969).The data sources were the books and journal articles published on place related concepts since 1900.

The first step was to identify the most relevant texts published on place concepts. The working assumption was that works frequently quoted in the literature were also the works that brought the most significant contributions to the research on place concepts. Therefore, the main criterion for inclusion was the frequency with which a text was referenced in other texts written on the topic.

The preliminary research round consisted of identifying academic texts by key word research in library catalogues, databases, and electronic journals. The works of Tuan (1974), Buttimer (1976), and Relph (1991) were the starting point of this research and the source of the first key words used: *sense of place*, *genius loci*, and *topophilia*. After reviewing the works identified in this first research round, the key words list was enhanced to include *place image*, *place identity*, *placelesness*, and *non-place*. Additional research rounds followed, the list of works growing to include disciplines such as cognitive sciences, biology, politics, marketing, conflict resolution, urban planning, architecture and so on.

Content analysis of each text identified as relevant was conducted on two dimensions:

a. Thematic content analysis on the body of the text, to identify relevant place concepts, theories and explanations.

b. Content analysis of the reference pages, to identify new texts to be included in the following research rounds.

The results were recorded in separate documents: a database containing the most quoted texts and a text database containing detailed concepts and ideas. These databases included references to all texts quoted more than once. All texts quoted more than three times were subject to thematic content analysis. At this point, the list of key words had accomplished its role of identifying relevant bodies of literature, and the research focusing on reviewing the work of scholars that had been identified as authorities in their respective fields.

A future deliverable that could stem from this research and the two databases created would be a genealogy of the concept of place and related topics. Such a development was outside the scope of this thesis. In essence, the data collection stage consisted of a systematic literature review that had the goal of identifying and recording significant texts related to place concepts. The following section details how these records were used to build the foundation of the model.

Procedure

Pursuing the goal of constructing a model that illustrates the relationships between the various place concepts identified, this research employed the

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method of concept mapping for recording and understanding the ideas reviewed. The technique of concept mapping was developed by Joseph D. Novak at Cornell University in the 1970s, as a way to increase meaningful learning in the sciences. In its original form, a concept map is a downward-branching hierarchical structure, linking together various concepts and prepositions (Novak, 1970). To allow an easier integration of various concepts at the end of the analysis stage, this research relaxed the requirement that the structure branches only downward and the model was built to reflect the interdependent relationships between the various identified components. Another literary license taken was to use the original data only as an inspiration for the components of the model that were actually included in the final version and to leave aside the various terminologies and approaches identified. Defining new terms for this thesis was necessary because many of the concepts in the literature were often merely restatements of the same ideas using different words pertaining to different disciplines.

Therefore, a prerequisite to building a clear model was to sift through the plethora of names and concepts and identify those few ideas that were vital to an understanding of the concept of place. All concepts that could be ignored without compromising the rigor and comprehensiveness of the study were discarded. The aim and guiding principle of this thesis was to build a model that illustrated only those concepts that could not possibly be ignored without resulting in an incomplete understanding of place. Once the core concepts were identified, the challenge was to understand and illustrate how they relate to each other, and to

explain why none of them could have been omitted without compromising the integrity of the approach. The way in which the data collected from the literature reviewed was employed may be summarized as follows:

1. Core place concepts were identified and reviewed in detail

2. A concept map was built for each place concept

3. The individual concept maps were merged into a single model

After the model was completed, the bulk of the thesis consisted of explaining the inclusion of the building blocks of the model and justifying structural choices by making references to relevant literature.

<u>Limitations</u>

The research had scope of work limitations particular to a master's thesis. While the literature review spanned multiple academic disciplines and aimed to bring the most relevant works under scrutiny, it is possible that important texts were omitted. As this model was designed to function as a road map for scholars interested in place concepts; the gaps in the literature review are expected to become obvious when the model is employed for analysis. As such, significant omissions could be repaired in future iterations of this model

The wide array of concepts that was employed in this model imposed a second major limitation of scope: forced superficiality. Very complex concepts, such as social construction of reality, the role of language in meaning formation, identity, power, or commodification, were addressed here because the study would have been incomplete if they were ignored. However, the purpose of this study was not to explain these concepts beyond the immediate interdependence

between them and the concept of place. Nor was it the intention of this author to elucidate to any degree the complexities inherent in these concepts. This study did not attempt an exposition of the main themes related to these concepts. The works and authors chosen to exemplify these concepts must not be interpreted as representative for the body of work focused on these concepts, but rather, most illustrative of how this study has chosen to represent the relationships between these concepts and the concept of place.

<u>Significance of study</u>

The model that was developed had applications within, as well as outside the academic realm. The academic world could potentially benefit from a model that takes stock of past research and aims to provide focus for future interdisciplinary research. The model was an attempt to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of place and was designed to serve a heuristic purpose. As a road map, the model has the potential to be useful both in the analysis of past research and in the identification of new venues of inquiry.

Past research on the concept of place was informed by numerous assumptions and choices that were rarely articulated in writing or acknowledged by the authors. One of the benefits this model is expected to offer is to shed light on what these assumptions and choices were. The gaps that could be identified by applying this model are expected to constitute starting points for future research. Professionals working in the tourism industry could also benefit from the application of the model in various fields that relate to the building and

promotion of a place. Destination branding and product design are but a few of

the applications that are made possible by this model.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Place Deconstruction Model (PDM)

The first research question of this study is addressed by detailing the

principles and assumptions that have guided the structure and content of the

model and by illustrating the model in a diagram. The following overview section

offers a big picture perspective to make the more detailed sections easier to

follow. The building blocks of the model are briefly explained and their

relationship to each other tersely illustrated, setting the frame within which a

detailed explanation is built in following sections.

Overview of the PDM

Under academic scrutiny, the idea of place revealed itself as complex.

Numerous interdependent place concepts exist and the dynamics of their

relationship cannot always be presented in a linear fashion. Inquiries into the

meaning of place and how it is represented across cultures and at different

moments in history further complicated the model. The attempt to synthesize

principles from different academic fields has proven overwhelming at times, as

each school of thought, and sometimes each author, had adopted and use widely

different vocabularies. These vocabularies do not only differ one from the other,

but also differ from earlier versions of themselves, as the conventional wisdom

related to place has changed and evolved over time. The multitude of ever-

changing interpretations and perspectives represented in the literature reviewed made understanding *place* difficult and underscored the fact that *place* is a complex idea. The ambition of this thesis was to sift through these complexities in search of fundament principles and to present the results in a model that is simple, but not simplistic.

This thesis relied – albeit only in part - on the assumption that objects behave according to relatively straightforward rules. As a result, the model put forth employed formal logic and analysis to identify and categorize the elements of place in an attempt to derive rules of behavior. Some of these rules would ideally be sufficiently precise to lend themselves to a systematic description and explanation of how people relate to places. The recognition that the world is complex beyond our capacity to readily understand, that any object may only be understood within its context, that events may be evaluated only by considering a host of factors that "operate in relation to one another in no simple, deterministic way" (Nisbett, 2004, p. xvi) accounts for the way in which various elements of the model relate to each other in a cyclical, interdependent fashion. No element of this model stands alone. Feedback loops have been identified and articulated in an attempt to explain how each element influences all the other elements and is influenced by each of them in return.

This model recognizes that members of different cultures may differ fundamentally in their worldviews, and that such differences influence their thought processes, their sense of the world, and how they make *sense of place* (Nisbett, 2004). The particular way in which this model incorporates such plurality

of perspectives in its structure and content has been inspired by the work of Entrikin (1991), who has introduced the concept of *betweenness of place*.

The concept of *betweenness* originated from an attempt to solve a challenge in analyzing, understanding, and presenting the concept of *place*: should *place* be scrutinized employing de-centered universalism or centered particularism? Should the focus lay on the generic or on the specific? What is more relevant: scientific theory or everyday life observation? Would place be better understood from a remote and detached perspective or from an immersed and involved perspective?

The literature review identified a debate centered on the advantages and disadvantages of adopting one of these two extreme positions, and each side was strongly advocated. Some authors, such as Ashworth and Graham (2005), deemed it perverse to generalize about perceived place, which is a phenomenon "related ultimately to a particular individual person, moment and location" (p. 5). Other authors, claimed subjective perspectives are incompatible with the rigor of science. In answer to this debate, Entrikin (1991) commented:

> "To understand place requires that we have access to both an objective and a subjective reality. From the decentered vantage point of the theoretical scientist, place becomes either a location or a set of generic relations and thereby loses much of its significance for human action. From the centered view point of the subject, place has meaning only in relation to an individual's or a group's goals and concerns. Place is best viewed from points in between" (p. 5).

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Entrikin offered additional insights into the multidimensional nature of *place* by critically reviewing the history of place studies and creating a context for better understanding end of the century calls for radical changes in the interpretation of the concept of *place*. His work includes a mix of discussions on the history of ideas, interpretations of literature on place, and exploratory speculations. For the purpose of this thesis, the concept of *betweenness* was translated into the necessity of reflecting both the view from above and the view from within, combining decentered and centered perspectives of place. The tension between objective and subjective perspectives informed the structure of the model, as well as the analysis sections of the thesis. However, this study does not employ the term *objective* in the same sense that Entrikin (1991) used it. According to him, a completely objective approach to place would lack the concepts of *here* and *there* on its spatial dimension, as well as the concepts of *past*, *present* and *future* on its temporal dimension, limiting the meaning of place to "that of the location of one object in relation to others" (p. 18). In contrast to this position, Nagel (1986) conceived of objectivity not as a single finite and perfect scientific position, but as a spectrum of positions of increased objectivity that could be achieved gradually. His position appears to rely on the assumptions that perfect objectivity is unattainable –cannot occur - and that it would only offer an incomplete understanding of a reality that is essentially subjective - should not occur.

In addition to the concept of *betweenness*, as hinted in the introductory chapter, a concept that has heavily influenced the development of this thesis is

the recognition that place is a social construction. The statement that place does not exist may seem outrageous, yet the vast majority of authors studying the concept of *place* during the last five decades accepted and took for granted the socially constructed nature of *place* (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Searle, 1995; Hacking, 1999). This analysis includes an attempt to unveil the essential processes involved in the never-ending dynamic process by which *place* is continuously reinvented in the way people perceive it, think about it, talk about it, and act it out.

In summary, the model developed to address the first research question of this study incorporates the concept of *betweenness* of place and that of *social construction*. The concept of *betweenness* is incorporated by building both a centered and a decentered perspective into the model. The concept of *social construction* is incorporated by adopting a heuristic approach in which theoretical stages of the social construction process are identified as distinct and separate from other stages, and framed as steps pertaining to a linear cause and effect system. The resulting model is illustrated below and explained in brief in the remaining of the overview section of this chapter.
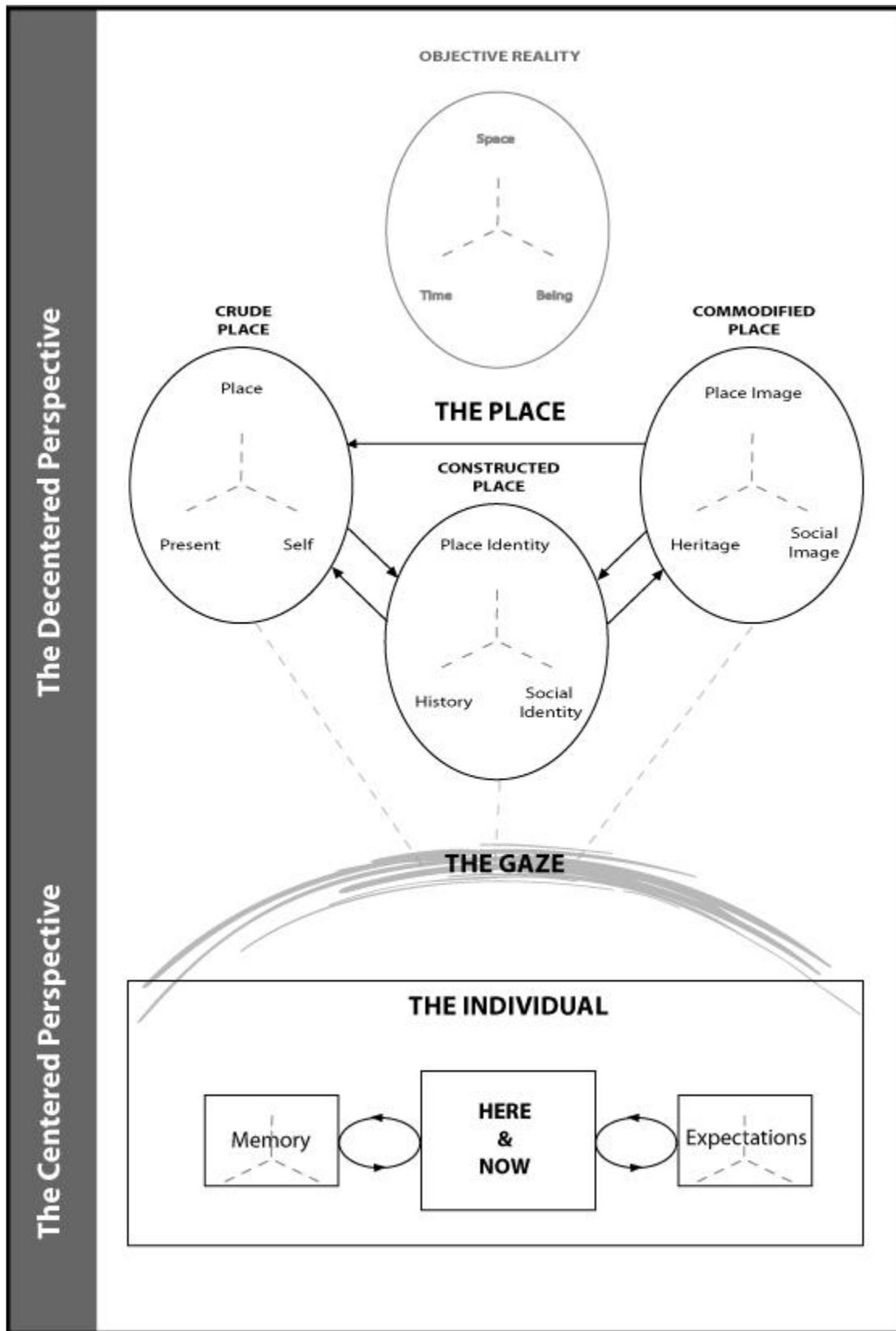
Figure 1: Place Deconstruction Model

The Model

The model consists of two main segments, in accordance to the principle

of *betweenness* of place formulated by Entrikin (1991). One segment represents

a decentered look from the above; the other segment represents a view centered

on the individual. The decentered section of the model identifies three building

blocks of place. Within each building block, the analysis will reinforce the

principle that the spatial, temporal, and social dimensions of place cannot be

separated and understood independent of each other. Each building block

represents a category of place elements that feeds into the way in which

individuals experience place. Degrees of immersion and intensity of engagement

make these three categories relevant in different ways in the way in which they

feed into constructing the gaze. The section of the model centered on the

individual briefly acknowledges the subjectivity brought by an observer to any act

of observation. Both approaches are summarized below.

The decentered perspective

This study defines the terms *Crude Place*, *Constructed Place*, and

Commodified Place presented in Figure 1 to refer to the way in which place is

perceived, thought about, and acted out in words or action respectively. These

three Cs of place are arbitrary. The separation of place into three building blocks

is artificial, but necessary for gaining a better grasp of the processes at work. The

number of building blocks could have been six, or eight, or twelve, according to

the level of detail desired. The nomenclature, starting with Cs, serves utilitarian as well as aesthetic purposes. The three stages could have been labeled Raw Place/ Interpreted Place/ Packaged Place or Observable Place/ Represented Place/ Projected place or whatever other combination that serves to make a distinction and hint to the attributes according to which the distinction was made.

Crude Place is that collection of elements of place which can be observed, *Constructed Place* is that which one believes about the observed place, and *Commodified Place* is that which one wants others to believe about the place. The beliefs formed in *Constructed Place* and the images formed in *Commodified Place* are in themselves elements of place. The summaries below only set the stage for detailed explanations of each building block in the sections that follow. Each of the sections about the building blocks of place will identify the concepts relevant to the analysis of that layer of place and detail these concepts as they relate to place. The analysis in each section is aimed to identify those elements of place that taken all together and overlapped constitute the complex idea we have about place.

Talking about and explaining *Crude Place* is an effort to (1) understand what things and events in the world constitute elements of place, and (2) shed some light on how people perceived them. *Crude Place* is that layer of place consisting of elements that stand out from an undifferentiated environment, are perceived as distinct, but are not yet endowed with meaning. Located in a theoretical split second between perception and cognition, *Crude Place* relies on the assumption that these two processes are independent and occur in a

sequential fashion that begins with perception. This assumption is challenged in

Constructed Place, as it becomes apparent that ascribed meanings influence not

only how elements of place are perceived, but also whether they are perceived at

all. An attempt to solve the academic debate on the precedence and relationship

between these processes is outside the scope of this analysis. Conceive this

stage as an inward flow of information, originating in the world outside the

observer and focus on what and how elements of place are perceived. Maslow's

(1943) hierarchy of needs suggests that people engage in practices pertaining to

Crude Place primarily to satisfy the basic needs for food and shelter.

Constructed Place* is that layer of place consisting of the meanings

ascribed by people to previously identified elements of *Crude Place* in an attempt

to make sense of the world. The analysis highlights the role of language in

meaning creation and the propagation of social constructs. Located in the mind

of the observer, *Constructed Place* is that which an individual genuinely believes

about place. The analysis details processes necessary for identity formation, and

illustrates how the identity of the observer and the identity of place are co-

dependent. Conceive this stage as that which happens inside an observer to the

information perceived about place, how data is interpreted and why, and what

processes determine the end result. People engage in practices pertaining to

Constructed Place primarily to satisfy the need for belonging.

Commodified Place* is that layer of place consisting of images of place

strategically constructed - either dialectically or physically - to further particular

individual or group agendas. These agendas may be as simple as the need to

validate one's own understanding of place or as complex as the attempt to define the past of a place with the purpose to control its future. The section dedicated to this building block discusses concepts related to image building, ideology, contestation, interest groups, and power. Conceive of this stage as the outward flow of information about place, strategically manipulated to various degrees so as to further various agendas. People engage in practices pertaining to *Commodified Place* primarily to satisfy the needs of recognition and self-actualization.

This distinction between these three layers of place is necessary because it will later highlight distinct modes of engagement between individual and place. In this model, each building block serves as a focus mechanism to identify the different ways in which an individual learns about place, speaks and thinks about place, and modifies his behavior related to place. When the processes underlying these building blocks are explained, it becomes easier to understand how each of the three permeate the reality of an observer of place and influence his *sense of place*.

The instrument of analysis

The building blocks of place and their relationship to each other are that which is analyzed in this thesis. The section that follows describes a theoretical instrument that ensures this analysis enfolds in a pragmatic and organized fashion, dissecting place layer by layer. Review of the literature, as well as common sense, suggests that this instrument should have at least three lenses,

to account for the three vital dimensions of place: the social, the spatial, and the

temporal dimensions (Godkin, 1997; Ashworth and Graham, 2005; Sarbin, 1983;

Lanfant, 1995; Castells, 1997). The contribution of this thesis is the argument

that, to analyze the concept of place, one must consider and scrutinize all three

dimensions simultaneously. Any analysis that fails to consider all three

dimensions is incomplete and insufficient. Therefore, the scholar not only can, or

should, but must account for all three dimensions.

That we must account for the spatial dimension is intuitive. While place is

a complex idea that does not have a simple one-on-one relationship with things

that exist in objective reality, one recognizes quite easily that elements of place

do have that relationship. The idea of a mountain is directly related to a thing that

most people could agree is a mountain. That thing exists in space, at certain

coordinates, has a shape, and volume, and mass. A mountain is made out of a

multitude of other things – rocks, soil, trees - that also exist at spatial

coordinates, also have physical attributes, and also evoke simple ideas that

many people could agree on without difficulty. The spatial dimension of place

must be analyzed because it is within it that the things that constitute elements of

place are located.

The temporal dimension of place must be considered to account for

change and action. Change and action differ in that one happens to a thing and

the other is brought about by the thing itself, one modifies the nature of the thing,

the other reinforces it. Change is generally associated with elements of nature,

people included. Action is associated with life, particularly that of humans, because the term implies premeditation and a set of incentives.

As objective reality changes so change the things that constitute elements of place. The role of change in the human perception of place receives detailed consideration later in this thesis. Objective reality is made out of things and events that can be best ascertained by direct observation. However, some things in the physical environment change at such a rate and to such a degree that the same spatial coordinates observed at different points in time may appear significantly different. Events are more time sensitive than things, as they appear to have no shelf life. If an event occurs at a time when a person cannot observe those specific spatial coordinates, the event is forever lost to this particular individual; no direct observation can occur, only indirect knowledge may be available. Language and the capacity to communicate break the spatial-temporal barriers and give indirect access to remote things and events. The role of language in the human perception of place also receives detailed consideration later in this thesis. In conclusion, the temporal dimension of place must be analyzed because, in a manner of speaking, it is within this dimension that the events and activities that constitute elements of place are located.

The social dimension of place must be considered because it is only by the mediation of an observer that objective reality can be ascertained. It follows that it is only through the mediation of an observer that the existence of any element of place can be ascertained. When discussing perception, the unit of analysis must be the individual. When discussing the creation of meaning, the

unit of analysis must be a society. The reasons for this shift of the unit of analysis will become more clear in the section dedicated to the social construction of reality, where much attention will be given to the role of language in meaning creation and communication. In conclusion, the social dimension of place must be analyzed because the objective reality can be perceived and interpreted only through the mediation of people who can perceive, reflect, ascribe meaning, and communicate ideas. The observer, then, is itself an element of place. Moreover, when the observer(s) take on roles of ascribing meaning to place or changing the physical aspects of place, these transformative actions, dialectical or physical, are in themselves elements of place.

In conclusion, place must be analyzed on the defined three dimensions because each dimension has explanatory power. Furthermore, these three dimensions are interrelated in complex ways that make attempts to separate them futile. Therefore, the theoretical instrument of analysis put forth in this study must have at least three lenses: one lens has the ability to detect the spatial dimension, one detects the temporal dimension, and the third detects the social dimension. Place is what the observer obtains by overlapping the information captured by all three lenses. To engage in the analysis of place and leave out any of these three lenses would mean to be content with incomplete understanding.

<u>Parameters</u>

The spatial, temporal, and social lenses can and should be adjusted according to necessary parameters of analysis. The instrument functions similarly to a microscope: the observer should adjust each of the three lenses for perspective (the point of observation) and scale (the unit of observation). Determining at any point in the analysis which perspective and scale are employed on each of the three lenses is vital because these parameters define the physical context within which place elements may be perceived, the symbolic contexts within which they can be interpreted, and the eco-political contexts within which they can be acted out.

Adjusting the spatial lens for perspective reveals that perception and understanding of place is a function of physical engagement with objective reality, especially in the context of *Crude Place*. Is the place observed from afar or from an intimate distance? Is the individual physically immersed in the place, thus activating all his senses, or is he employing the cold distant gaze of a remote observer? Adjusting the spatial lens for scale is a matter of choosing the unit of analysis. The observer may focus on the smallest physical unit that can be recognized as an element of place - a rock, a bench in a park, or sunlight falling on wall in the corner of one's room – or the largest accessible to its senses – the entire forest, a mountain range, or dessert dunes disappearing in the horizon. Scale is strictly linked to perspective. The smallest observable unit for an observer immersed in the environment is quite different from the smallest observable unit for an observer at a distance. One cannot tell the forest from the

trees, if walking among them. But one can tell the forest and how it relates to other forests if one is perched on top of a mountain. Scale and perspective together dictate the context within which individual place elements can be perceived as distinct.

An observer limited to seeing a city's skyline, enjoying a wide perspective and focusing on a very large scale, will perceive as distinct those structures that stand out by sheer size or by some other attribute that can be observed as such a macro level. If asked to identify distinct place elements, this observer will likely talk of the Pentagon in Washington D.C., the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, or of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The same observer, with the benefit of immersion at street level, might talk of the Classic Greek architectural elements of the National Mall, the hilly ups and downs of the Pacific Heights, or the cobblestone of some arched pathway in Montmartre.

Adjusting the temporal lens reveals an unsurpassable condition in as much as direct experience of place is concerned: in *Crude Place* this lens cannot be adjusted for perspective. An observer is stuck in the now. Anything related to the future is conjuncture; everything related to the past is reliance on indirect proof. For this reason, time related elements of place are a most contested and negotiated dimension. As suggested in detail in the section on *Commodified Place*, the past is very much like a pool of distinct historical events in which one can reach and select at will those particular events interpreted in that particular manner which will justify or legitimize future claims, actions, or positions.

Adjusting the temporal lens for scale – or better articulated in this context, for span – the observer decides what portion of time to analyze. The span is characterized both by length of time lapsed (a day, a season, a decade, or an era), and by the coordinates of this period (ancient history, recent history, future). Europe in the dark ages is a very distinct place, and also a terrible one, but its existence in one's mind depends on the blending of numerous decades into one homogeneous period that is known under that name and evokes certain images. The assassination of John F. Kennedy, on the other hand, was a matter of a split of a second, yet it remained equally imbedded in the conscience of people around the world. The spot where it happened has become a place because of that event, just as the pillar of concrete where a car crushed and killed Princess Diana has also become a place.

What then, in terms of perspective and span, allows the identification of events which become elements of place? More so than on the spatial dimension, this thesis shows, it is those periods of time which can be endowed with meaning that stand out. Out of those many that are meaningful, an observer will most likely focus on those meanings that serve his needs and interests. *Crude Place* is concerned with the process by which the infinity of time can be perceived as distinct periods of various span. *Constructed Place* is concerned with processes by which meaning is ascribed to these periods of time, thus transforming them into historical events. *Commodified Place* is concerned with the way these events are handpicked to fit some place related agenda and how they constitute a heritage invoked to legitimize claims.

Things that populate the spatial dimension and events that populate the temporal dimension become elements of a place only in as much as they are endowed with meaning, and that meaning resonates with the observer. Observer is a term that, on the societal dimension, suggests the unit of analysis is that of one individual. How can this lens be adjusted for perspective and scale – or, in the context of the societal dimension, scope? Is it meaningful to do so? Does it add value to the analysis? The available range starts with an individual and ends with the human race, which such stages in between as couple, family, group, society, and so on. Should scope of analysis be determined by quantitative factors – number of individuals involved in perceiving, thinking about, and acting out place – or qualitative factors: the type of individuals or groups, classified by attributes which are likely to influence how they relate to the place? The short answer is both. The long answer is very complex and will be discussed in detail in the section on *Constructed Place*.

In summary, the parameters that can be varied to adjust the three lenses fall into two categories: the category of perspective, a term which is meaningful for all three lenses, albeit changing its meaning, according to the dimension to which it is applied, and the category that includes scale (for place), span (for time), and scope (for society). For each of the building blocks, particular adjustments of the three lenses appear natural, and are generally employed. To illustrate, *Crude Place* invites explorations that focus on the here (because an observer can have only direct experience of the place where he is locate) and now (an observer is stuck in the present) and one individual at a time (is there

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such a thing as collective perception?). The other two building blocks of place

transcend the *here and now* by means of knowledge created and communicated

by language, making accessible places that are remote on the spatial dimension

(far away), temporal dimension (long time ago), and the societal dimension (as

told by someone else).

The recognition that the lenses can be adjusted results in unexpected

insights. It may not be meaningful to talk of collective perception or about direct

experience of a place in the past unless one is willing to assume time travel is a

possibility. Varying the parameters of each lens within the limits of reason, in

countless combinations, will at the very least make less prevalent cases of

academic myopia in which overwhelming preference is given to a particular

parameter – i.e. anthropology give preference to the study of the dweller and

neglects the traveler (Clifford, 1992). Only an honest attempt to account for all

actors (society), stages (space) and events (time) and how they relate to each

other (context) will reveal the multifaceted and fluid nature of place.

The Gaze

This study describes and names the link between the centered

perspective and the decentered perspective of the model as *The Gaze*. The term

is inspired by Urry (2002), who described the culturally specific processes by

which the tourist gaze is constructed and sustained. Initially, the term chosen for

this element of the model was *The Frame*. However, the term frame appeared to

imply a high measure of self-awareness and control on the part of the observer,

and as such, it did not have as much suggestive power as the term *Gaze,* which not only implies a certain distance from the observed object, but also suggests the act of observation is also determined by factors outside the observer. In our model, the gaze is the totality of ways of experiencing place – including perceiving, interpreting, framing – that is the result of influences from both external factors (the objective elements of the decentered perspective) and internal factors (the subjective elements described in the centered perspective). Although originally associated with a tourist, the term gaze is here used to describe the experience of any observer. We are all tourists anyway.

The three building blocks of place invite and allow very different experiences of place, varying in intensity and degree of immersion. *Crude Place* is the physical place in which the observer can immerse itself fully but rarely does. The impact of elements of *Crude Place* on the gaze varies from case to case. *Constructed Place* is the totality of possible meanings assigned to these place elements, but an observer only really has access to his own subjectivity, as detailed in the centered approach. Attempts to become aware of and understand alternative meanings and identities are rare and the results are modest. *Constructed Place*, the elements of which are largely imaginary, is the influence most remote from the place as is in objective reality. Yet, the influence of elements of *Constructed Place* is the most intense. Ideology, propaganda, marketing campaigns and advertisements create images that are actively targeted and imposed on the observer. For this reason, in describing how elements of place from each building block overlap to create a fluid and

multidimensional experience of place, the term *Gaze* appeared a most

appropriate description.

The Centered Perspective

This section represents a conscious effort to incorporate Entrikin's (1991)

concept of *betweenness*, as described in the literature review, and to shed light

on the subjectivity brought to each act of observation. Conceive of this analysis

of subjectivity as an analysis of that which is inherent to each individual engaged

in place, as a zoom in to the internal landscape of the observer. This internal

landscape is as much a place as the external one. It can be analyzed by focusing

on the same three dimensions at scales compatible with the individual – time,

place, self. In this context, the place is that which is observed through the gaze

and detailed in the decentered perspective. The observer's self is the unit of

analysis. The structure of analysis is inspired by the flow of time; it focuses on

past elements (i.e. an individual's background), the present (*here and now*), and

future elements (i.e. goals, expectations).

While the act of observation happens in the *here and now*, the observer

brings to the table the past, accessed through memory (consisting of the

observer's background, knowledge, and experience with all the other places and

all the other people in his life) and the future (consisting of goals and

expectations about the place and its people, driven by current needs and

desires). The *here and now* such influenced by past and future, is itself subject to

influence from the observer's current intentions (cognitive state), mood (affective

state), condition (physical state), status and role (social state). These are not exhausting circumstances, but they are the minimum to be considered when determining the source of an observer's subjectivity in its experience of place.

Senses of Place

This section will address, in part, research question number three, and represents an application of the model to analyze the concept of *sense of place*, the pursuit that has motivated the analysis undertaken in this thesis. What the literature usually refers to as a *sense of place* cannot exist by itself, as in a void, and consists of a juxtaposition of a *sense of place*, a *sense of time*, and a *sense of self*. Furthermore, the fluidity and plurality which characterizes these three dimensions makes it a necessity to refer to this concept in plural, as *senses of place*. The analysis will conclude with a discussion on the various categories of experience that result from having different *senses of place*: *topophilia* when the place elicits love; *misotopia* when the place inspires hate, and a feeling of neutrality towards what is termed a *non-place*, which inspires neither love nor hate, as it has no sense of history or identity.
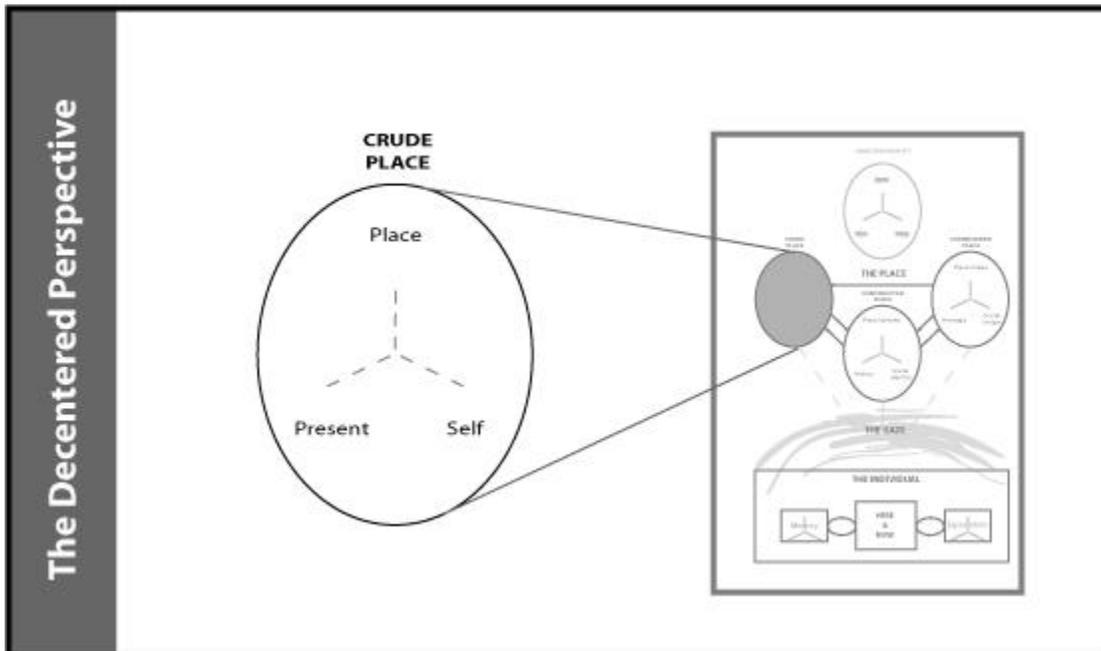
Figure 2: Crude Place

As presented in Figure 2, *Crude Place* is the first building block of the

model developed in this thesis. The term *Crude* is appropriate because it suggest

the raw, unprocessed quality of this dimension of place. *Crude Place* is that

which exists outside of and independent of any observer, the objective reality, a

world of facts that would hold true whether or not one bears witness, a world of

things and events, a "something" to be perceived and acknowledged according to

each individual's abilities and limitations. However, because objective reality can

only be known through an individual, Crude Place is not the equivalent of

objective reality, but rather that portion of it that is perceived by an individual. The

former two sentences appear do not contradict themselves, rather, they illustrate

the fact that an understanding of objective reality necessarily involves a sort of

hermeneutic circle similar to the one described by Heidegger (1927/1996) in the attempt to account for the notion of a being that can only know itself in the act of being.

Because sensorial limitations dictate that which can be known to an individual, perception is addressed first, in the simplest approach possible: *someone perceives via its senses something as distinct from a context*. Each of the terms in this sentence deserves further explanation.

1. *Someone*: the term refers specifically to one individual, the smallest coherent unit of analysis on a scale that ranges –on the social dimension - from individual to social group, society, and ultimately the human race. An individual cannot single-handedly impact the social construction of place discussed in the next section, yet the analysis must start with the individual because all knowledge shared by society can theoretically be traced back to a collection of individual senses of reality. As such, individual perception is the source of everything society believes to know about reality. The terms knowing and reality are clarified in the following section.

The term someone refers to one individual immersed in a place. The intensity of the immersion may vary, with extreme positions being occupied by the dweller (highly immersed) and the tourist (superficially immersed). That an individual must be immersed in the *Crude Place* points to the importance of direct experience at this level of analysis. Located at a theoretical point in time where meaning is not yet ascribed and knowledge about this place has yet to be created, *Crude Place* is the absolute *here and now*, only accessible to an

observer by means of direct experience. Knowledge, created and expressed through the medium of language, allows a transcendence of the here and know, making possible experience of remote places as they were at various moments in time, or as they are expected to become.

2. *Perceives*: is a term that requires a clarification of purpose for this section of this study. This section does not attempt to explain in scientific terms how perception occurs, but rather to make the point that a study of perception is necessary to a better understanding of place. Perception is an observer's link to objective reality. Perception is the element of the model which links the module of *Objective Reality* to the module of *Crude Place*.

Different schools of though have put forth different models of perception. *Gestalt* psychology: An introduction to new concepts in modern psychology, by Wolfgang Kohler, a seminal book written in the early 1940s, includes a thorough review of major currents in 20th century psychology and also recognizes viable alternatives to the *Gestalt* school of thought. The German word *Gestalt* refers to a collection of entities (physical, biological, psychological or symbolic) that create a concept or a pattern that is greater in whole than the sum of its components. Applying this approach to place: a collection of place elements (to be detailed in the context of each building block) make up the concept of place, which is greater than the sum of its components. A place is a *Gestalt* concept, consisting of physical, biological, psychological and symbolic elements, and greater than the some of all. The bulk of this thesis is concerned with identifying these elements of place and how they relate to each other.

Gestalt theories, after enjoying a relatively uncontested half of a century, have been faced with a serious challenger by the emergence of computational neuroscience. An interdisciplinary approach that incorporates the fields of applied mathematics, computer science, electrical engineering, neuroscience, and physics, computational neuroscience is a complex theoretical model for understanding the human brain, with the ultimate goal of of explaining the everyday experience of conscious life.

This goal is shared with the sociology of knowledge, the field which contributed most significantly to the concept of social construction of reality employed in this thesis. In both psychology and cognitive sciences, perception is defined as the process of acquiring, interpreting, selecting, and organizing sensory information. In this analysis, the term perception is used in a narrow sense derived from its Latin root *percepio* and meaning apprehension with the mind or senses. In other words, at this stage in our model, perception is intended to refer only to the collection of surrounding data by use of a sensorial apparatus. As the model put forth by this thesis enfolds, we will describe how an individual's background and experience play a role in his perception of the environment that may be significant enough to override objective reality.

An anecdote publicized by an anthropologist who studied the lives of the BaMbuti pygmies illustrates the former point. As the story goes, a pygmy steps out of his native rainforest for the first time, notices buffalos grazing on a field in the distance, and believes they are insects (Turnbull, 1983, p.8). The pygmy could not conceive the effect of distance on perception because living in a

rainforest environment, where everything is seen at close range, results in a curtailing of perspective. The BaMbuti pygmies have no concept of perspective, because they were never exposed an environment where perspective, at anything but the closest of ranges, was possible. The example is extreme, but it suggestive of the ways in which "no two persons see the same reality" (Tuan, 1974, p.5). While differences in perception between two individuals that share the same environment and have similar backgrounds may be infinitesimal and subtle, what holds true is that the same physical space will be perceived differently by each individual who observes it. Moreover, each individual will perceive the same space differently at different moments in time, according to changes in both external and internal factors, thus leading to the conclusion that an infinity of *Crude Place*s can be projected by each individual onto the same physical space.

3. *Senses*: the living human body is the starting point for sensing the time-space rhythms, claims Buttimer (1996), offering support to one of the premises of this thesis, that space, time and self (as the smallest unit of society) are the three dimensions that must be– as opposed to can be –considered in understanding the concept of place. Human senses, the means by which the observer can perform the act of observing, are included in this inquiry.

The parameter of scale is of particular relevance to a discussion of senses. "The objects we perceive are commensurate to the size of our body, the acuity of our perceptual apparatus, and purpose" (Tuan, 1977, p.14). Only a portion of the world lends itself to be known by human senses. When an external

stimulus affects the senses, it causes the activation of a certain category in the mind, and this category is the percept. As an individual moves in the world, his senses pick up information and create percepts that are provisional and get reinforced or negated as new information is acquired. This is essentially a process of measuring and categorizing of information perceived. In a world where meaning is yet to be ascribed, the purpose that Tuan refers to must be related to the basic needs for food and shelter from the elements; the prerequisite for satisfying these needs is the ability of the organism to orient itself in space.

Parts of the world may be perceived by means of just one sense (e.g. a scent), other parts by means of a combination of senses (e.g. an ocean one can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell). Patterns are included in larger patterns and the level of perception of any individual depends on a number of factors related to the sensory apparatus possessed. The scale, the scope, the intensity that characterize the way in which these patterns manifest themselves will dictate whether an individual will be able to even perceive the pattern at all. The human ear will not perceive sounds that are below or above certain frequencies. The human eye will only see patterns that are within certain scale parameters: bacteria and solar systems are generally outside the sphere of an individual's everyday experience.

Dialectical biologists note that organisms respond to their environment by amplifying and transforming certain signals and by suppressing others. Because different organism adapt their sensory skills differently, the effect is that the world

each organism experiences is essentially a different world. The scientific community agrees that there is no single environment perceived by all species, as features particular to each organism determine which "universal" laws of nature that organism experiences. "A bacterium suspended in a liquid is too small to be affected by the force of gravity yet is the right size to be affected by the Brownian motion" (Preston, 2003, p.55). In essence, the particulars of the organism determine the world it experiences and in which it lives. The differences between species are so significant that one may assume very different realities are available to members of different species.

The differences between members of the same species are certainly much smaller, yet, equally significant in that they account for different realities being accessible to different individuals. What an individual senses with ease may be beyond the capabilities of another individual - as stated before, no two persons see the same reality .The scope and intensity of perception may also vary within the same individual according to a multitude of internal factors. These variances may be irreversible, related to the age or special health conditions, or temporary, depending on factors such as an individual's physical condition, mood, or train of thought. Further research may seek to create a taxonomy of internal and external parameters that influence the perception of place. The Heideggerian (1927) notion of facticity, stating that it is only within a mood that people are permitted to encounter things in the world, provides legitimacy to such a direction of inquiry. Due to the great variation of modes of perception from one individual to another, as well as within the same individual at different moments

in time, the following appears to hold true: overlapping the same portion of space, there are an infinite number of *Crude Place*s.

4. *Something* refers to objective reality, the totality of "phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our volition" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) or "the world as we find it, naively and uncritically" (Kohler, 1947, p.1). The discipline of geography, the science most directly concerned with physical places, has often been described as "a science that derives from the naive experience of the similarities and differences among places." (Entrikin, 1991) This naive world is the starting point of all sciences, as it provides the human mind with the elements on which our faculties can be applied, and for many people it seems to be a most unproblematic world.

Balancing this naive sense with the requirements of scientific rationality proved a difficult act, and many centuries ago physics and biology have challenged the confidence of those who take the naive world to be reality. What a great step it must have been for people to begin questioning hearing, seeing and feeling (Kohler, 1947). Accordingly, it must have been a real revolution to find that noises, colors and smells are mere products of influences from their surroundings. For a while, a distinction was made between secondary qualities such as color or smell and primary qualities such as form, weight, or movement. Eventually, science proved these secondary qualities also depend entirely on the perceiving organism, and are "merely end results of complicated processes in its interior"(Kohler, 1947, p.6).

One way of naively conceiving reality would be as a void populated by certain elements. Whether these elements are atoms or quarks or resonating strings is not relevant. What is relevant is that, according to our senses, there are patterns in which these elements are arranged, and these patterns are perceived as things which have properties and are prone to change. Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, made a distinction between change and action which is relevant to our study of place: a change is brought about by something other than the object, while an activity is brought about by the object itself. Furthermore, a change leads to a different state of being, while an activity preserves or enhances the current state of being. The issue of change is relevant throughout this thesis, not just in the context of *Crude Place*, because it underscores the fluidity of the concept of place by highlighting how each of its elements are in a continuous state of flux. Change, real or anticipated, is a powerful element of place and will deserve detailed attention in each of the following sections. The issue of action is relevant to this thesis because it highlights the fact that a place is not merely a stage for the enfolding of events brought about by other actors, but an active entity, capable of acting upon the physical and psychological make-up of its inhabitants just as significantly as the inhabitants transform the place itself.

Reality – whether we focus on objects (which populate place), events (which populate time and place) or people (which populate time, place, and society), is in a constant state of change. Permanence is an illusion created by the fact that some elements of our naively perceived reality change at a rate and scale that is beyond the reach of our immediate senses.

5. *Context* is a key factor in understanding how a portion of space may be perceived as distinct from everything else and eventually become a place, as it is endowed with meaning and value. The context of an element of place is determined by the interplay of the parameters of perspective and scale. For a portion of space to be perceived as distinct, it must have qualities and attributes that are, in some way, and to some degree, different from its immediate context. At the largest scale imaginable, the infinite itself is the context for anything that may be distinct within it. But the human apparatus of perception is both limited and varied, and therefore a number of more immediate contexts are relevant. At this stage in this model, conceptual and symbolic contexts (such as political, economic, or cultural) are not addressed; the focus is entirely on contexts that are observable and measurable, that depend on physical and chemical properties of the space. Physical contexts may be classified according to the particular sense employed to observe space. As such, we may conceptualize as many types of physical contexts as there are senses employed to perceive them, as well as all the imaginable combinations of these senses.

Consider the five senses and the ability of each to reveal a context. The visual and auditory apparatuses provide visual and auditory contexts that are very manageable to an observer. Humans can see or hear across reasonable distances and they can also manage a multiplicity of visual or auditory impulses without any apparent difficulty. Few people will achieve similar results when the senses of taste, smell or touch are concerned. To illustrate, if distinct smells are perceived simultaneously, the untrained nose will soon merge these smells

together in a homogenous mesh and promptly proceed to ignoring these impulses altogether, rather than paint a diverse and enduring olfactory landscape in our consciousness. For this reason, not all senses are equal when perception is concerned. Whether some senses are less developed because of evolutionary changes in human biology (nature) or because of a lack of attention on our part (nurture) is a question beyond the scope of this thesis. What is relevant is the awareness that observers will differ in their perception of place because of differences in their ability to absorb surrounding information. The following section will point out that factors other than physical could be even more important: knowledge, interest, or mood often dictate where and how our senses will apply themselves.

The focus each individual observer places on a sense or another may vary significantly. From that respect, the following statement may be an indefensible generalization. However, it appears to be generally the case that some senses are more important than others in the pragmatic perception of a place (i.e. visual and auditory senses important for orientation in space, for subsistence), while senses we have become accustomed to think of as secondary (taste, smell, and touch) are fertile with added significance and meaning – the subjects of *Constructed Place*. A scent may become a bookmark pointing to the past and add dimensions of complexity! A focus on the visual would naturally lead the discussion to visual contexts, usually referred to as landscapes (for nature) or cityscapes (for built environments). A focus on the auditory or olfactory would lead to a discussion of soundscapes and scentscapes. The commonality is that

for each sense, there needs to be something perceived as distinct from a homogenous background. This distinct something is an element of *Crude Place*.

Dimensions of Crude Place

The findings of this study suggest that the process by which a portion of something infinite is perceived as distinct applies seamlessly across the three dimensions of place. An individual being perceives himself as different from the world around him and a self is born, a fragment of experienced time is perceived as distinct and given the name of past, part of the homogenous space is perceived as distinct and the conditions for the birth of a place are created. In objective reality there is no such moment in time in which an object, be it thing or event, is perceived as distinct without being imbibed with meaning. Such a moment is merely a theoretical stage we use for the sake of the analysis. For individuals to perceive something is to give it meaning instantaneously. Granted, a debate exists as to what comes first, perception or meaning, but addressing this debate is outside the scope of this thesis

The Spatial Dimension: from Space to Place

Space may be conceived as an infinite and undifferentiated pool of matter. Elements of place are the fragments of matter in this pool that may be perceived as distinct things. Perception drives the transition from undifferentiated space to a spatial area that has the potential of becoming a distinct place. In an infinite world, an observer perceives things that are finite and distinct.

The terms *space* and *place*, as used here, are not the same as the terms that appear in many of the reviewed writings. Distinctions between *space* and *place*, as theorized by Ptolemy (2000), have been rediscovered in the 15th century and rethought in a way that erased the distinction between the two terms. Descartes is credited with much of the muddling of the meaning of space and place (Olwig, 2002; Casey, 1997; Malpas, 1998). Early interpretations of space and place focused more on place than on space. Aristotle (1986) and Plato (1873) both wrote about place, albeit in two distinct ways. Aristotle's concept of place contains bodies, consists of intervals and has magnitude, while Plato's concept of place focuses on its property of being a recipient for something else. Over the centuries, the Cartesian system led to an eradication of place in favor of three-dimensional space (Birkeland, 2005, p.135).

In a tridimensional space, an individual perceives the environment visually as a set of objects against an unfocused background. A multitude of objects compete for attention, but one's capacity of perception is limited. As one focuses on one object, the other objects become unfocused. Either for survival purposes (spatial orientation) or aesthetic appreciation, one focuses on objects that stand out from the background and make a more vigorous claim on the attention. These objects become landmarks. What attributes allow an object to stand out of its surroundings? And out of all the objects that stand out, why only some of them become landmarks? The essence of the answers to this question has to do with the meaning ascribed to these objects, and as such, is treated in the section on

Constructed Place. However, the answer begins here, in *Crude Place*, because only something that can be perceived as distinct can be infused with meaning.

Objects claim attention when their attributes make them distinctive. Attributes fall into categories and the relationships between these categories should be articulated, but a definitive taxonomy of attributes is beyond the scope of this thesis. Only a few details are given, to underline the fact that understanding these attributes is necessary for understanding place. Attributes may be intrinsic to the object or may emerge from a relationship between that object and other objects, including the observer. Intrinsic attributes are related to size, shape, texture, color (light): this monastery is a small wooden structure painted in a unique hue of blue. Relational attributes emerge by contrasting or comparing the intrinsic attributes of various objects: this monastery is one of the seven monasteries built by that particular king. An attribute may be both intrinsic and relational: the size of this monastery makes it the smallest of the seven. In the *Constructed Place* section we address the category of ascribed attributes, created in the process by which an individual will ascribe meaning to objects, and the meaning ascribed becomes an attribute: because this monastery is that place of worship where one comes to confess a particular sin, this place is more than a building, it is a symbol for atonement and purification.

The types of things that can be perceived as distinct in the spatial dimension, at any moment in time and by any average observer can be classified in various ways. Classifying by dominant sense, the spatial dimension is populated by overlapping landscapes, soundscapes, scentscapes, tastescapes,

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and touchscapes. Landscapes are clusters of things we see, soundscapes are the symphony of things we hear, scentscapes are the totality of things we smell, tastescapes are the multitude of tastes that are made possible by that place, and touchscapes the collection of textures available for our tactile pleasure. True, allegedly we can employ each of the five senses to experience any element of place, but some elements dictate degree of immersion we can indulge in. An observer will generally want to look at or touch a building, but will likely be disinclined to smell it or taste it. One will look at fire, enjoy the crackling sounds and the smoky scent, even bask in the heat, but only from a distance, and most probably not ever wonder how it tastes.

The model invites thoroughness of analysis and by applying the rigor of inquiry, the question that arises is: what other criteria of classification could, or should be used to better understand how many and what type of relevant "scapes" exist? The purpose of this exercise is to point out that (1) such "scapes" are important elements of place, and (2) their diversity is overwhelming and the attempt to account for such variety must take the form of categorizing them according to relevant criteria. As an illustration, these "scapes" may be categorized according to their origins. How did these elements come to be? Elements of place categorized as such are either nature-made or human-made.

These two categories could be further split by other criteria. Natural things include living and lifeless elements. Living elements include people, as well as all other life forms. And so forth. Man-made things include all the structures and artifacts that would not have otherwise existed in nature. And so forth. The

purpose of categorizing is to afford insights into the fact that infinite diversity is informed, after all, by order. However, this order is imposed by the thinking mind according to rules by which this mind perceives the world. Different minds will perceive the world differently, according to more or less different rules of categorization.

Another point of such categorization would be to eventually make the case that human action slowly but surely eliminates natural elements of place from the everyday environment, replacing them with human-made elements of place. Landscapes consisting primarily of natural elements, such as topography, water, flora and fauna, and arguably people (many scholars would question whether people are part of nature anymore) are gradually diminished by the actions of humans, by the creation of more and more place elements such as built structures and machines. By convention, human-made landscapes are now referred to as cityscapes.

Landscapes or cityscapes have in common the fact that they are visually perceived. However, the visual is not the only way of perceiving "scapes". An alternative categorization may be based on the criteria of how the elements of place are perceived by the observer. Soundscapes consist of the sounds made by natural things and human-made things experience a similar shift towards the prevalently artificial elements. Scentscapes consist of smells one finds in nature and smells one associates with humans. Touchscapes include not only the tactile sensations that an observer can seek out by reaching for a thing, but also those unavoidable sensations associated with climate: humidity and temperature.

The purpose of such categorization, is twofold. On one hand, the varied means of categorization highlight the richness and diversity of "scapes" available to an observer. On the other hand, categorization also highlights the effects of human action, in gradually replacing the natural elements of its surrounding with human-made elements which are, as the case will be made later in this thesis, much poorer in the sensual experience they can offer. Man, in the very act of perception, has a minimizing effect on reality. As it will be discussed in following sections, this minimization is enacted in multiple other ways, and it directly affects the way in which place is perceived.

The Temporal Dimension: from Time to Past, Present, and Future

As discussed related to the spatial dimension, the infinity of space is beyond the powers of perception of an individual. We have seen how an individual, instead of tackling infinity, focuses on a portion of space that has certain attributes that make it distinct. As a result, the individual deals with a manageable portion of space, recognizable because of its specific attributes. A similar process of differentiation occurs in time.

An individual attempting to conceive eternity will most likely have the same success as an individual attempting to perceive infinity. A more manageable portion of time, however, will allow an individual to orient himself in this dimension. Husserl (1964) described time as a flow consisting of a *sense of time* passed, the present, and a sense of a time to come. In this realist view, time is linear and events occur in a measurable sequence. Linear time and space form

the stage on which events occur. Events create a sense of order in the temporal

dimension just as things create a sense of order in the spatial dimension, by

allowing an observer to apportion the infinite into manageable units. The

difference between time and space, for as much as humans are concerned, is

that movement in space is optional and generally unrestricted, whereas

movement in time is compulsory and unidirectional.

Leibniz and Kant offered an alternative view of time, which denies its

existence as a separate entity that flows (Szirko, 2005). These authors argue that

time is no more than a way of measuring and speaking about events. In other

words, time is a conceptual social construct, useful to describe the relationships

between events. The German philosophers obviously continued an early Greek

tradition of thought common to Antiphon the Sophist, Parmenides, and Zeno

(Szirko, 2005).

Buddhism is but one of the systems of philosophy that maintain that time

is nothing but an illusion. Whether real flow or illusion, whether linear or cyclical,

the relevant point for this thesis is that perception imposes upon the apparent

continuity of time the same effect that it imposes on space: differentiation.

Specific portions in time are perceived as distinct and different from other

portions, so that the concepts of past, present and future are possible.

In the context of *Crude Place* it is difficult to identify elements of place on

the temporal dimension because the observer is stuck in a theoretical now. This

now is not void of memories about times past, nor is it denied expectations about

the future, but all these factors are not part of this theoretical building block,

because they can exist only in a world of meaning and knowledge; that world is described in the following section.

Time is about change. The way an individual perceives time is by separating it into measurable natural events or human events. The term event is usually understood as a notable happening, something that is not common. A hurricane is a natural event. A revolution is a human event. However important such extreme cases may be to the shaping and perceiving of a place, the term event is used in the context of *Crude Place* to refer to all changes of status quo, no matter how common, how positive, or how predictable they may be. Therefore, the changing seasons, the preparation of food, the falling of rain, the rising and setting of the sun are also considered events for the purpose of this analysis.

By lumping together all changes under the term event, ignoring maters of intensity, regularity, or impact on an observer, this thesis intends to highlight once again that value and meaning are human created and human ascribed. Without them, all matters in the universe, objects or events, may just as well be equal. Without differences in meaning and value, all things would be one, in a matter of speaking. In fact, an argument may be made that it is only by ascribed meaning and value that the universe can be perceived as made by individual things and events. That things and events may be argued to also be human constructions.

Categorization of temporal elements can offer insights in a similar way to how the categorization of spatial elements did. Temporal elements of place could

be classified by such criteria as their propensity to change or be changed. If propensity for change would be visually represented on a spectrum, at one extreme there would be continuous change, at the other there would be an encounter with motionless eternity. If various categories of elements of place were plotted on this spectrum according to their propensity to change, a pattern would emerge in which natural elements would dominate the entire spectrum while human-made elements would shyly make a claim on the ephemeral extreme.

"Changes in styles of architecture reflect changes in technology, economy, and in people's attitudes toward what is desirable in the physical environment. [...] However, certain aspects of nature defy easy human control: these are the mountains, deserts, and seas. They constitute, as it were, permanent fixtures in man's world whether he likes it or not" (Tuan, 1974, p.70).

Temporal elements could also be classified according to the linear or cyclical nature of the way they change. Natural changes can be both linear and cyclical. Man-induced changes in natural elements of place, such as pollution or accelerated land erosion, are generally linear and unidirectional. Changes in people themselves are only linear, inevitably leading to the end of their lives. This categorization of temporal elements of place reveals itself as relevant later, when a point is made that humans relate to place driven by needs and desires. A common human desire is to achieve some sort of permanence, to cheat death by leaving some mark behind. Since human existence is ephemeral, this desire often takes forms that involve the making or transformation of elements of place.

Although all human-made things are generally located on the fast end of the

spectrum, as few of the human structures can stand the test of time, as symbolic

prolongation of one's existence appears to be possibly by association with

elements of place.

The Social Dimension: from Being, to Self

The previous section discussed how infinity and eternity are beyond direct

experience and made the point that perception has the role of extracting more

manageable pieces out of these dimensions. On the spatial dimension, out of the

infinity of space, an observer perceives a thing as distinct, and that thing is an

element of place that can be given meaning. On the temporal dimension, out of

the eternity of time, an observer perceives an event as distinct, and that event is

an element of place that can be given meaning. Similarly, on the social

dimension, an individual self perceives itself as distinct and ready to give itself

meaning. However, what is the nature of that original pool out of which the self

perceives itself as distinct? What is the infinity out of which a portion becomes

distinct and can be labeled an individual?

There is hardly a philosopher that has not addressed the issue of being.

From Aristotle to Sartre, from Hegel to Heidegger, from Islamic philosophy to

Western thought, from world mythologies to world religions, the issue of being

has received utmost attention and sparked uncountable debates. Being is the

infinity out of which the self emerges aware of itself. Being is less a thing than it

is a state of existence. Heidegger (1927/1996) coined the term "being-in-the-

world" - German: In-der-Welt-sein- and influenced much of the 20th century writings about place.

"Being-in-the-world" is a concept that illustrates Heidegger's refutation of the idea that object and subject are distinct. In other words, he argued that consciousness is consciousness of something, and there is no such thing as consciousness cut off from that something. This concept applies to objective reality (i.e. a perception) or to an idea about this reality (i.e. a thought) and supports the strong relationship between the social and spatial dimensions of place: there can be no self (consciousness) without place (something to be conscious of). Alternatively, there can be no place without someone to perceive it as such and endow it with value and meaning.

Edmund Husserl, often referred to as father of phenomenology, reiterated a similar point: "all we can know is how we constitute our consciousness of the world and, simultaneously, consciousness of ourselves through relations with the world" (Husserl, 1964, p.16). Similarly, Merleau-Ponty believed that to be in place is to become aware of one's consciousness and sensuous presence in the world, thus framing place as a fundamental form of embodied experience: "the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time" (Feld and Basso, 1996, p.9). Perceptual psychologist J. J. Gibson (2008) affirmed that human perception of place – specifically of ecological relationships - is the source of self-awareness and cognition.

Many of the authors writing about place have chosen to illustrate their points by studying child psychology and perception. Childhood seems an

appropriate timeframe for such study because at such time perception first occurs in an individual and lends itself to study. Childhood is the timeframe in which people have the "experience of emerging not only into the light of consciousness but into a living sense of a dynamic relationship with the outer world; […] in these memories, the child appears to experience both a sense of discontinuity, an awareness of his own unique separateness and identity, and also a continuity, a renewal of relationship with nature as a process" (Chawla, 1994, pp. viii-ix).

Perception is a prerequisite for the awareness of an individual self as being distinct and separate from everything else. In other words, in the conceptual living pool of potential (being) something stirs and perceives itself as distinct from the surrounding world, and in that act of perception, becomes a self. Perception makes possible the differentiation of a self from everything else. Childhood is an attractive timeframe to analyze because it contains a state of being that is close to the theoretical state we have defined for the purpose of locating *Crude Place* in a moment in which perception occurs but meaning is not yet ascribed. Newly born babies are exposed from the beginning of their life to both external stimuli and their own internal workings, but it is only later in their development that they start to pay attention to particular aspects of objective reality: light, movement, voices and so on. Only as a child grows and learns, will that child achieve a conscious understanding of what she is perceiving.

The parallel breaks in the acknowledgement of a fundamental difference between the spatial, temporal and social dimension. A portion of space as well as

a portion of time, are not truly a matter of reality as they are a matter of the perceiving mind. The quality of being distinct is not a quality that exists out there, in the postulated *Crude Place,* but is a function of the perceiving individual. It is the perceiving mind that imposes this distinctiveness onto the universe it perceives. One can only meditate on the reasons why it happens. Contrary to this dynamic, an individual self perceives itself as distinct. It is not clear what moves him to this awareness, but it does not appear to be an outside action. Oriental philosophies have argued that even this perception of being a distinct self is an illusion and have adopted the goal of merging their consciousness back into an infinite One.

<div align="center">Findings related to elements of Crude Place</div>

All the elements of *Crude Place* are precepts. They consist of things and events. There are things of nature and things human-made, and the way they change, and the way they act upon each other. There are the things we can see: the totality of surfaces that can reflect light, the totality of things that create light, and the light itself, in all its various forms and manifestations. These are generally also things we can touch, although we might be disinclined to do so if they are incandescent or if they have teeth at the other end. Many authors like to mention the four primary elements: earth, water, fire and air, which, in all their forms are elements of place. Changes in these things are also elements of place: the weather, the climate, the evolution of the celestial bodies. All life, vegetal or animal, and the motion of it, are elements of place. Everything humans are, do, or make constitutes elements of place. Differences and variations in natural

elements such as topography, water, fauna, flora, and climate, influence the specific essential activities in which humans engage in search of nutrition and shelter. These essential activities are elements of place. All activities are elements of place. The results of these activities are elements of place. Food, harvested or prepared, is an element of place. Everything in the world is an element of *Crude Place*. But in being so, it is observed in its most primary state: devoid of meaning. Just being.

<center>Sense of place as it relates to Crude Place elements</center>

This section is part of the answer to research question number three as it relates to *Crude Place* and will deal specifically with physical place and how an observer perceives it through the senses. Academic literature offers insights directly related to these two topics, two accounts of *sense of place* that are located at the extremes: one arguing that *sense of place* resides only in the place itself, indifferent of who and how observes it, the other arguing that a special *sense of place* is a mere function of the sensorial apparatus.

Norberg-Schultz (1980) argues that places have *genius loci*, an essence independent of the observer itself. If man would not exist there to observe, the spirit of the place would endure, for it is independent. *Genius loci* is the spirit of the place, its existence does not depend on the meaning attributed to it by people; it is something inherently imbedded in the place and has no origin in the relationship between place and people. Sopher (1987, p.8) claims there can be

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no such notion as *genius loci* because claims to its existence usually fail to identify distinctive attributes of place that might be seen or sensed on the ground.

Sensory extremities create special effects that may strengthen or weaken a *sense of place.* Due to the very limited spatial awareness of young children, most of the surrounding environment is a mythical place because it exists at the fringes of their perception (Tuan, 1977, p.100). The awareness of mythical place, Tuan argues, is equivalent to a perception of magic, and it occurs at the extremities of sensorial acuity. In adults, such perception of magic occurs when they become acutely aware of their environment and are awed by their own insignificance, while in old people it occurs as their awareness dims and they return to a childlike state.

Both accounts have merit. Yet, in light of the model put forth, given the complexity of place, how it is perceived, and, as we see in the following sections, how it is interpreted and acted out, both accounts appear narrow and insufficient. *Crude Place* is vitally important because it provides potentially infinite sensory stimuli. But it is mostly in our effort to bring order to this chaos that *sense of place* originates. "Every effort to define space is an attempt to create order out of disorder: it shares some of the significance of the primordial act of creation and hence the sacred character of that act" (Tuan, 1974, p.146).
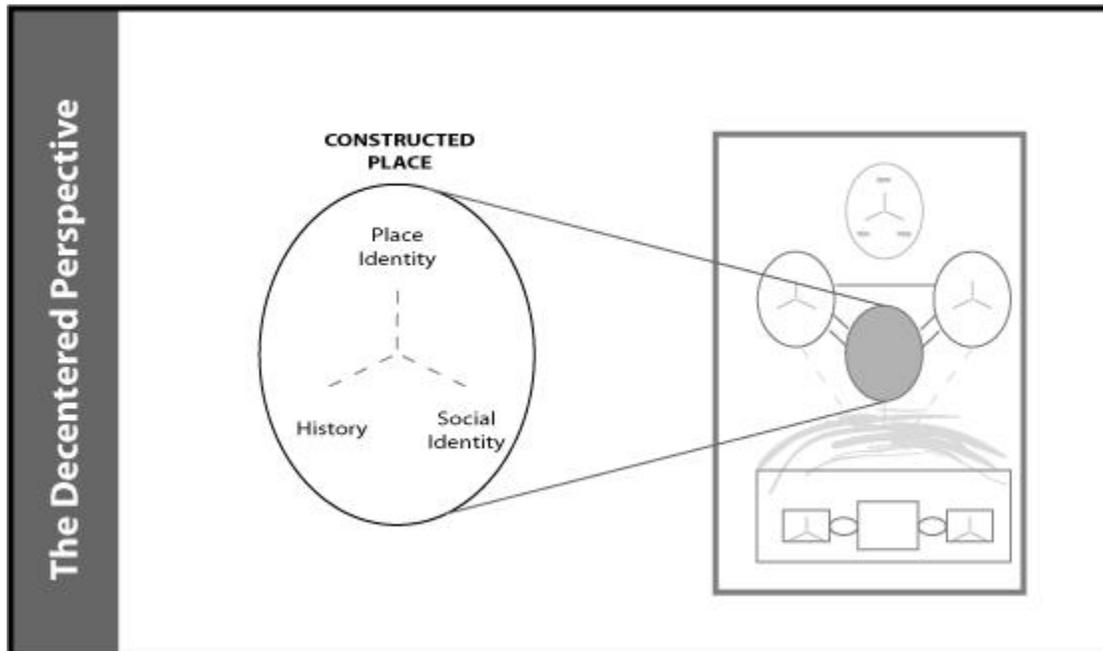
Figure 3: Constructed Place

As illustrated in Figure 3, *Constructed Place* is the second building block of the model developed in this thesis. The word *constructed* is used to suggest that place, as understood in this section, is a product of forces outside and independent of place itself. The argument made in this section is that place is constructed by people through mechanisms that relate to the way they think and talk about place in an honest attempt to make sense of it.

An important difference between *Crude Place* and *Constructed Place* consists of a shift of locus. *Crude Place* is a hybrid that bridges the material world and the inner world of an individual. That which is perceived is outside, but it can only be known through the senses, and as such, through a process of internalization. *Constructed Place* is located inside, consisting of the ways in

which an individual thinks about place and ascribes meaning to it, but this meaning can only be shared by communication, and as such, through a process of externalization. *Constructed Place* is the place as an individual represents it to himself in a genuine effort to make sense out of it. This process of interpretation is peculiar in that it takes place within a single individual, yet it as a result of that individual's immersion in society.

The question that informs this section is how do people think about place? In other words, to account for the three dimensions of analysis, how do people make sense of themselves, the places they experience, and the times they live in? In answering these questions, we will discover how people form their beliefs about place, thus understanding what *Constructed Place* is, and what type of elements of place emerge at this level.

Review of the literature revealed a number of vital interconnected concepts that need to be clarified before answering the questions above. The beliefs people develop about a place appear to be determined by the culture they share. This culture is a system of shared meanings. Meaning is created by a shared language. The multitude of meanings that can be ascribed to a place is a body of knowledge. What is known about a place should not be confused with the notion of understanding, but should be recognized as a prerequisite to the creation of identity. A place identity is the multitude of beliefs held about the place, while a self identity is the belief held about an individual by himself and others. More precisely, self identity is the belief held by an individual about the beliefs that others hold about the individual (Mead, 1976). Self identity and place

identity are co-dependant. Because all of the above may appear confusing, each

concept is detailed below. In detailing these concepts, an effort has been made

to reference only place-related writings. Occasionally, a more specialized

approach was needed and works unrelated to place have been referenced in the

attempt to clarify the meaning of the concepts employed.

Meaning

Culture is essentially concerned with the production and exchange of

meaning and its effects: "It is by our use of things, and what we say, think and

feel about them – how we represent them – that we give them meaning" (Hall,

1997, p.3). Although Hall is writing specifically about language as the medium of

creating meaning, the concept applies to representations of places as well.

People infuse place with meaning by the way they represent them to others and

to themselves. The identities of place, then, are but a product of social actions

and the way in which people construct their own representations of particular

places. To rephrase Hall's (1997) assertion, this study substituted places for

things and recognized that his preposition endures: "it is by our use of places

[things], and what we say, think and feel about them – how we represent them –

that we give them meaning" (p.3).

Meaning is strictly related to context. The importance of context is clearly

depicted in the idea of the Hermeneutic circle: the meaning of the world can only

be known by its relation to its parts, the meaning of a part by reference to a

whole. Context, being that part of the world which is in direct relationship to the

part under scrutiny, is that which gives meaning both to that part and to itself.

Therefore, meaning can be given to a place only within a context. The context of a place is a collection of constitutive contexts for each of the place elements, whether they are spatial, temporal, or social elements. Context may highlight or obscure a place, indifferent of how impressive the place attributes are. Edensor (1998) illustrated how impressive monuments can be easily obscured by famous monuments: Fatehpur Sikra and Agra Fort are two amazing Indian landmarks obscured by the fame of the Taj.

Culture

Culture is "a system of shared meanings which people who belong to the same community, group or nation use to help them interpret and make sense of the world" (Hall, 1995, p.176). Although Hall (1997) argues that "we think of cultures as placed not because all cultures are but because this is how we imagine them" (p.181), it appears that in people's imagination, each culture can be identified with its own specific place. In other words, it appears to us that each place has a culture of its own, and cultures are placed, having a place of their own. How to think of English culture without seeing the famous countryside or of Greek and Italian without seeing the Mediterranean? What should not be understood by these statements is that each place has its own unique culture. On each portion of space, multiple *Crude Place*s exist, and each of these may be interpreted differently according to what cultures and sub-cultures influence the experience of these places, thus revealing that a plurality of *Constructed Place*s co-exist there as well.

As people imagine culture as part of a place, and the shared meanings that make up culture are embedded in the material and social dimensions of that place, the physical landscapes are enriched with layers that constitute "landscapes of the mind" (Said, 1978). Meaning is embedment in the material by the act of creating structures and objects – what people make. Social embedment of meaning refers to social practices – what people do. A culture is usually considered to consist of relatively stable meanings ascribed to what people make and what people do. The more fixed the meanings, the better bounded the culture. "Culture is thus one of the principal means by which identities are constructed, sustained and transformed" (Hall, 1995, p.176).

The role of culture, according to Hall (1995) is not only to express homogenous belonging, but more so to present real differences as a unity. This role is better observed by focusing the social lens at the level of the nation. At this level, culture produces "through its ongoing narrative of the nation (in education, literature, painting, the media, popular culture the historic heritage, the leisure industry, advertising, marketing, etc) an identification, a sense of belongingness which, without constant nurturing, would not be sufficient to bind the nation together across the divisions of class, region, gender, race, and the unevenness of economic development"(Hall, 1995, p.184). This idea is detailed in the section dedicated to *Commodified Place*.

Cultures are not fixed and do not stretch back unchanged in time.

A culture is "never a simple unified entity, but always has to be thought of as composed of similarities and differences, continuities and new elements,

marked by ruptures and always crosscut by difference. Its meanings are the result of a constant, ongoing process of cultural negotiation which is constantly shifting and changing its contours to accommodate continuing tensions "(Hall, 1995, p.182).

Given this fluidity that characterizes it, culture is a very contested concept, just as community and heritage, and place. To understand culture as a system of meanings, Hall (1995) proposes an understanding of culture in terms of a model of language. In a nutshell: reality – whether we focus on objects (which populate place) or events (which populate time) or people (which populate society) - does not have a fixed meaning or a single truth that people discover and express through language. It is through language that people give meaning to the world.

<div align="center">Language</div>

The term language, as used in this section, does not refer to any national language such as. English or French; it refers to the human ability to communicate. One of the premises of this section is that language not merely communicates meaning, but it actually creates it. Although language may be used by an individual as one sees fit, a single individual cannot change language on his own, because language is socially constructed. In an introduction to Bakhtin's (1981) book *The Dialogic Imagination: Four essays*, Michael Holquist identifies authors such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Hjelmslev, Émile Benveniste and Roman Jakobson as some of the most influential thinkers in the study of language during the 20th century (Bakhtin, 1981). These authors are mentioned

here for future study, as the scope of this thesis does not include further analysis on language, but merely highlights its role in the creation of meaning, and as such, in the creation of elements of *Constructed Place*.

Language is not a perfect communication medium. In the exchange of knowledge, the meaning communicated suffers alterations as one person appropriates and interprets into its own frame of reference that which is being communicated. Because of these frequent alterations, place meanings are always different from person to person and open to interpretation. A language also imposes its presence if communication is to occur: "to express a cultural meaning requires us to position ourselves within a shared cultural meaning system, and then to use it to say or mean something" (Hall, 1995, p.179). In other words, language is needed to communicate, but in the act of communication, the message is transformed according to the specific character of the language employed.

Language is both a model of how cultural systems work and a cultural system per se, given the vital role it plays in the construction of identity. Other systems that construct culture comprise religion, customs and traditions, and the meanings ascribed to place. "Place, in short, is one of the key discourses in the system of meaning we call culture, and it functions to help stabilize cultural patterns and fix cultural identities, as they say, beyond the play of history (Hall, 1995, p.181). Appadurai (1988) argued that "in the realm of representations, geographical regions are not so much physically distinct entities as discursively constructed settings that signal particular social modalities" and illustrated how

India became a symbol of hierarchy, New Guinea a symbol of exchange, and Africa a symbol of segmentation (p. 73).

As already stated in this thesis, language is the means by which an observer transcends the *here and now*, gaining access to knowledge and sentiments related to other places or to the past of one's own place that would otherwise be irretrievably lost. "We can gain some understanding of [these sentiments] now only through the literature and through the art works and artifacts that have survived" (Tuan, 1974, p.121). Because language is the means by which we experience all but a small part of the world, language is the main tool in the social construction of reality. In this constructed reality, language plays a role in what we believe about the identity of a place; it has been argued that this "[...] identity is established through the way in which a person communicates about a place" (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.21). "We seldom conclude that the world consists of words just because a good description of it does, but we sometimes suppose that the structure of the world is the same as the structure of our description" (Goodman, 1972, p.24). This is why language determines not only how a person interprets a place, but also everything that can be known about that place. Knowledge of the place is that which can be transmitted about place in a language that one understands, be it verbally or through other means.

<div align="center">Knowledge</div>

For some thinkers, the starting point for knowledge is the "naïve world" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), for others such an explanation is itself naïve, and

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suggest the existence and importance of structures, mechanisms and forces beyond immediate observation must be accepted" (Eyles, 1985, pp.4-5). Knowledge may refer to facts about the place, associations on a number of dimensions, or may even be a matter of imagination. More important than what specific knowledge about the place exists, is the effect knowledge has on place appreciation.

Tuan (1974) insists that visual pleasure is ephemeral, and a visual appreciation of place must be enhanced by knowledge about that place. However intense the scenery may be, unless the observer's attention is captivated by some additional reason, an enduring aesthetic sensation is rarely possible. To thoroughly enjoy a painting, one should recall the facts of the painter's life, or try to fit the picture in front of him into its place in the development of the artist, or otherwise occupy his mind with matters of knowledge "so that his powers of receptivity are gradually renewing themselves; suddenly the make him see a beautiful passage of drawing or color which he would have overlooked had not an intellectual pretext kept his eye unconsciously engaged" (Clark, 1960, p.17). Similarly, in looking at an element of place, knowledge of its history and awareness of its belonging to a network or hierarchy of similar structures, would result in a more profound aesthetic appreciation.

Understanding

Knowledge is not sufficient for a true *sense of place* to occur. Understanding, "that penetrating quality of knowledge that grows from theory, practice, conviction, assertion, error, and humiliation" is key to the appreciation of

place (Strunk and White, 2005, p.10). "If people really do differ profoundly in their systems of thought – their worldviews and cognitive processes – then differences in people's attitudes and beliefs, and even their values and preferences, might not be a matter merely of different inputs and teachings, but rather an inevitable consequence of using different tools to understand the world" (Nisbett, 2004, p.xvii). The place in which different people have been born, raised, and immersed, has a direct influence on what tools they have developed to make sense of reality.

<div align="center">Memory</div>

As knowledge is accumulated in time, it is only made possible by memory, "the source of civilized arts, enabling us to talk about past, present and future" (Chawla, 1994, p.7).This definition contrasts somewhat with more scientific approaches which define memory as a "data processing system for encoding, storing and retrieving information" (Nonaka, 2005). The scientific definition may be more accurate, but it obscures an essential role that memory plays in the construction of place. Husserl (1964) sheds light on this role, discounting the importance of objectivity and accuracy of memory, and focusing on the importance of its functions and of the meaning it ascribes to peoples and places. This is the key for how memory should be approached in conjunction with the concept of place. Memories about place relate to the surrounding physical world, the *Crude* Place, as well as to the world superimposed on it by human thought and representations, the *Constructed* and *Commodified* Place.

The scope of environmental memory covers "three dimensions of perception: individual objects, settings such as home, city, and region; and global moods or feelings for the world" (Chawla, 1992, p.1). These three dimensions – objects, settings and moods- are inseparable in lived experience, as memories of objects evoke settings and memories of settings evoke moods. "Each human life has a theme that organizes memory" (Chawla, 1994, p.10), but that theme has often more to do with imagination that with lived reality, as memory is imperfect, inaccurate, and bound to fail in countless ways. However, as people themselves are compounds of "error, ambiguity, and possibilities that go beyond mere denotations"; therefore the elusive quality of memory is one that most closely approximates reality. When Husserl (1964) coined the term *lifeworld*, or the world of life, he defined it as a "spatial world of things, as we experience it in our precognitive existence, knowing it as that which it allows us to experience" (p.35)

The requirement of adjusting the lenses of the instrument to account for various scales highlights the need of addressing memory at a unit of analysis that reaches beyond the individual. *Collective memory* has only been marginally addressed in this study, but constitutes one of the vital concepts that are involved in the social construction of place and should become a topic for further research in the context of this model. The concept, developed during the first half of the 19th century by Halbwachs (1992), is relevant to the understanding of how collective memory is created and sustained by a continuous production of dialectic or physical representational forms. As such, the concept of *collective memory* is relevant to *Crude Place* (public memory can be enshrined in

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monuments which may become physical landmarks even when their original meaning fades away), *Constructed Place* (because these representations influence how people thing and feel about the place) and *Commodified Place* (because these representations are generally informed by a national agenda).

Identity

Social identity, for the purposes of this study, may be analyzed at various scales and from various perspectives. The unit of analysis may be an individual, a group of various size, or a society. The perspective may be centered, as the unit of analysis perceives its own identity, or decentered, as the unit of analysis is perceived from outside. Furthermore, another distinction made in this study is between place identity and social identity. Social identity is a term used how people make sense of themselves. Place identity is a term used to refer to how people make sense of the places they visit or inhabit. The two types of identity, one's own and that of a place, are interdependent: "as people fashion places, so, too, they fashion themselves" (Feld and Basso, 1995, p.11). On one hand, places have a strong role in the creation of the identity of people attached to them; the ideas and feelings that people have for places are often so strong that they become a central part of the identity of people experiencing these places (Rose, 1995). On the other hand, one creates the identity of a place both on a physical level (by physical action - constructive, destructive, or both, depending on who's watching) and on a discursive level (by symbolic representation).

Identity of self and place, however, requires knowledge of self and place. A few epistemological questions arise: what is it that can be known about place?

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And how is this knowledge created and shared? Identity is an attribute

associated with a sentient being, capable of self-awareness and bent on making

sense of its own existence. Identity builds on two main processes: (1)

identification with something perceived as positive or familiar and (2)

identification against something perceived as negative or foreign. It has been

argued that the propensity to define something by contrasting it with its opposite

is a practice fundamental to the production of knowledge in the West. (Rose,

1995: 103)

<center>Dimensions of Constructed Place</center>

The findings of this study suggest that the processes by which *Crude*

Place elements are infused with meaning and become *Constructed Place*

elements apply very similarly across the three dimensions of space, time, and

society. The following sections explain in some measure of detail how

Constructed Place elements come into being.

<u>The Spatial Dimension: from Place to Place identities</u>

In analyzing *Crude Place*, the spatial lens could be easily adjusted to

observe anything from the smallest to the largest things accessible to the senses

of an observer. Perspective and scale had strictly physical limitations. In

Constructed Place, the physical limitations are overcome. The here is

transcended. Remote locations and wide spaces are now made accessible by

means of the meaning infused in them. A place may now be conceived at

abstract scales such as local, regional, national or global. The global scale is the

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only unit of analysis that is not negotiable: it refers to the entire planet and there is little to debate about where that begins and where it ends. All other scales are abstractions, the centers and their limits of the place they refer to being arbitrarily ascribed. The nation is a case in point. A cultural construct, the nation consists not of a physical space but of a "definite social space within which members must live and work […] it demarcates an historic territory that locates a community in time and space within which anniversaries, rituals and religious occasions are collectively celebrated" (Edensor, 1998, p.36).

As such, the perspective parameter loses some of its importance when applied to the spatial dimension, since there can no longer be talk about a vantage point of observation: where does an individual perch himself to gaze at the nation? However, the perspective parameter on the social scale becomes vital, since it is always from a particular point of view that an individual gives meaning to anything, including place. Adjusting the scale parameter, place can now be perceived beyond the space accessible to physical senses, at either a local, regional, national or global scale, and its elements consist of the specific meanings that are attached to these scales by various actors or groups of actors who experience them (Murphy, 1991; Hoekveld, 1993; Graham, 1998; Knox and Marston, 2001; Simon, 2005). Therefore, a place identity is defined as a set of ideas that exist about an area known by a certain name (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.19), as place identities are not palpable things, but meanings "ascribed to places by people" (Ashworth and Graham, 2005, p.3).

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The implication is that a place identity is not a quality intrinsic to place, because different people will always attribute a different identity to a place. Therefore, there are at least as many place identities as there are people who think about place and it is advisable to refer to place identities in plural. Just as there are an infinity of *Crude Place*s that can be projected on the same spatial coordinates, a great number of *Constructed Place*s exist, but their number is finite and most likely coincides roughly with the number of people that think about that place.

In *Constructed Place*, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a clear distinction between the spatial dimension and the social dimension. Massey (1994, p.12) abandons "the notion of place simply as settled, enclosed, and internally coherent" and replaces it with a notion of place as "meeting place, the location of the intersections of particular bundles of activity spaces, of connections, of interrelations, of influences and movements." Place is "the vast complexity of interlocking and articulating nets of social relations which is [...] formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence there of particular nets of social interrelations and by the effects which that juxtaposition and co-presence produce" Massey (1994, p.12). Simply put, *Constructed Place* is the juxtaposition of all possible place identities, ascribed by the ways in which people think and feel about a place.

In *Crude Place*, we have seen how physical attributes make elements of place distinct within a given context. In *Constructed Place*, distinctiveness depends on individuality, which is a term used to convey the fact that more than

physical attributes are at play. Individuality is an attribute of all organisms and is simultaneously recognizable from the outside and created from within. To be human is to be a distinctive individual responsible for one's own thoughts and actions (Jonas, 1974; Cobb, 1977). The individuality of a place differs from that of an individual in that is accorded rather than self-created. The following scenario serves as an illustration of this claim. As part of a high-end mountain resort, the developers have undertaken the reconstruction of a village as it existed at some point in the past. The project was undertaken with every possible attention to detail, from the cobblestone on the streets to the specific angles of the roofs on top of village houses. Besides being visually identical to images from old photos, this place is not related to the original, nor does it have a genuine historical continuity. It bears no real signs of change. This place, therefore, lacks an individual distinctiveness, because such a quality "lies not so much in its exact physical forms and the arrangements as in the meaning accorded to it by a community of concerned people, and the continuity of these meanings from generation to generation" (Relph, 1981, p.172). The elements of *Constructed Place* that create character and distinctiveness are symbolic entities, thoughts and beliefs, the meanings given to the place.

Just as physical attributes of the *Crude Place* could be intrinsic, pertaining to the place itself, or relational, arising from the way in which the place relates to other places, so are the attributes of the *Constructed Place*. Each place finds itself in a symbolic relationship to other places, whether located at different coordinates, or at different scales. This interdependence can be defined on many

levels. On an economic level, places may be bound together in contradictory ways, as the prosperity of a place comes at the cost of depression for another. The gap between first and third worlds, then, is not a gap, but a connection (Allen, 1995). In economic, social, or political levels, the local and global constitute each other, but "the pattern of social relations and interactions which construct global space is immensely complicated and multifaceted: there is no single set of spatial scales into which all social relations are organized" (Massey, 1995, p.228).

Local-global relationships must not be ignored when analyzing the creation of place identity, as every place is a representation of all the other places that an individual has ever seen before. Therefore, place identity does not only rely on intrinsic qualities of place but also on the relationship between place and other places. Such relationships may simply be a matter of being part of a network or hierarchy of places (one of the seven holy shrines) or they may be related to economic, political, or social activities. Analyzing places as part of diverse larger spatial networks highlights a progressive *sense of place* (Massey, 1993) which "identifies the numerous ways in which locales and sites are constituted by these intermeshing processes and refutes the notion that places have some sort of essence" (Edensor, 1998, p.7).

The academic world has achieved a consensus that place identity: (1) is a social construct, (2) based on characteristics of the place and (3) largely based on the past, but (4) debatable, because it is (5) attributed within and characterized by context (spatial and socio-cultural: norms, values, socio-

economic factors). Lastly and most importantly, (6) identity attribution is a continuous process. (Haartsen, Groote, & Huigen, 2000). This consensus fits in great part the model put forth in this thesis. Recognizing place as a social construct accounts for the social dimension detailed in this section. Recognizing the role of the characteristics of place accounts for the spatial dimension described in the former section. Recognizing the role of the past accounts for the temporal dimension, albeit it appears to downplay the role of the future, in terms of how intention and expectations shape the way in which place is acted out physically and dialectically. However, this omission is partially offset by the recognition that debate and negotiation are inherent in the construction of place, a reality which implies that various interests are competing for control of the place in the future. The dependence of place identity on context justifies the importance given to this concept throughout the thesis.

Place identity is created by how people thing about, talk about, and use the place. The first step in thinking and talking about something is to give it a name. To give a name to a place is possibly one of the most fundamental steps in constructing the identity of a place (Paasi, 1991). As Huigen and Meijering (2005, p.21) put it, "a place is created when we attribute it the quality of being distinct from another location and give it a name." The attribute of distinctiveness retains here the same importance it had for elements of *Crude Place*, in that it determines whether something stands out of its surrounding environment and makes a claim on one's attention. If a place loses distinctiveness and becomes integrated into its context it essentially becomes an undistinguishing part of the

whole, it loses its identity and possibly also its name. This process of integration/differentiation highlights the vital role that both distinctiveness and context play in the emergence or disappearance of a place. Hobbes (1640) described two types of names: one kind is unequivocal, concerned with facts, the other is equivocal and inconstant, concerned with emotions and opinions. In either case, a name that has descriptive power of either the physical or the symbolical attributes of the place, will play a stronger role in the reinforcement of its identity, and as such, of its continued existence.

In addition to ascribing a proper name to a place, another practice that enforces the identity of a place is to ascribe a designation that identifies the place as being important. The designation may be informal (the hang-out place of a group of friends) or formal (i.e. World Heritage, Valuable Cultural Landscape, National Monument etc). Notice that this is an example of a process of identification with something perceived as positive. It would be interesting to find examples of place designations illustrating identification against something perceived as negative. An example would have to sound something like: "New York, the place where tourists do not get mugged so often anymore."

Place identity is not only created in dialectical ways. Meaning and language do not always need words to be transmitted. Meaning is infused also in the ways in which people use the place, in the ways in which people build structures and make objects. "Much as a craftsman imparts something of his personality to the things he makes, so a community can transfer its character to a landscape." The process by which a community imparts its character involves a

"combination of local responsibility with local traditions of building and doing" that is transmitted from a generation to the other "by example and action rather than education." (Relph, 1981, p.172). Knowledge therefore is not only transmitted by means of language. Or rather, language does not only use words. Language and meaning could possibly be inscribed in the very places people inhabit. If, over a long period of time, a society that inhabits a place associates place elements such as specific recognizable landmarks with moral stories and anecdotes, and passes these stories onto future generation, it is certainly conceivable that a member of that society would only need to be present in that place to be exposed to the wisdom of his ancestors. Walking a certain path in life, from a moral standpoint, could conceivably be associated with wisdom inscribed in landmarks located along a real life path that could be walked either as part of a ritual journey, or part of everyday life. The impact of wisdom transmitted this way would probably be quite significant; the lessons would be infused in the place and transmitted by the very act of existing there, in a manner that would not inspire resistance in the younger members of the society, as some modern teaching methods tend to create in our young. These places could be a constant and gentle reminder of the right ways to lead one's life.

The Social Dimension: from Self to Self-Identity

In analyzing *Crude Place*, the social lens had to be adjusted to the smallest unit of analysis: the individual observer, the self who perceives the world around as a collection of distinct things and events, and perceives himself as a

distinct entity. Adjustments to anything but the unit would not have made much sense, given that one cannot make a reasonable case for collective perception. Each individual perceives by itself. In *Constructed Place*, the social lens may be adjusted to account for two or more individuals. In fact, given our belief that meaning, language, and reality itself are socially constructed, the scholar must adjust this lens to analyze place. The individual remains an important unit of analysis, but his own identity, and by association, the identity of place, is dependant on the society in which he is immersed. Society determines the meaning that an individual will ascribe to anything and everything. As such, society determines the way in which an individual makes sense of himself and forms his self identity. The formation of self identity is dependent on the perceived identity of the various social groups to which the individual is exposed and on the perceived identity of the places in which the individual is immersed. In both cases, whether it is place or social group, the individual identifies with positively perceived attributes and identifies against negatively perceived attributes.

Identity formed identifying with or against social groups

Amartya Sen (2006) quotes Oscar Wilde's claim that "Most people are other people," in that "their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation" (p.xv). People appear to be deeply influenced by the social groups with which they identify. At various stages in life, they are exposed to and identify with a variety of social groups. In most Western societies, the family is the first social group to which an individual is exposed,

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and in many cases, it remains the most important. The need to identify with something perceived as positive, such as a family mostly is, comes from a deeply seated need to belong. After food is ingested and shelter secured, the most basic human need is that of belonging to a community. A human is a social being. Failure to belong in some form to some type of community erodes the nature of an individual.

A family is only the first of the many social circles in which an individual will immerse himself during his life. These circles may consist of an extended family, colleagues at school or at work, political groups or circles created based on common interests. In each of these cases the individual will seek a feeling of belonging. In the effort to belong, an individual will adopt attitudes, espouse values, accept meanings and engage in actions that reinforce the feeling of belonging. Thus, if a person is what a person thinks, if a person is what a person does, then a person's identity will be heavily influenced by the social groups to which the individual belongs because these groups dictate which beliefs and actions are acceptable

> "There can be no self in isolation; the identity of an individual is the unique pattern created by weaving together the multitude of roles one plays as a member of various collectives in various social settings. If only one role changes, then all other roles are influenced and changed in some way, thereby changing one into a different person" (Rosemont, 1991, p.88).

Reasoning and choice in identity formation are vital (Sen, 2006). If people identify with or against social, cultural, political and what not other groups, then it stands to reason that people commit at any moment to several allegiances. Although their choices are always constrained by personal characteristics and circumstances, it also holds true that any person has the ability to think about and choose to ascribe more value to some allegiances and less value to others. In that act of reasoning and choice, that person effectively chooses its identity. And this identity is a weighted average of the multitude of identities available to that person. Self-identity has the potential to be self ascribed. However, as it will become apparent in *Commodified Place*, the ability of making this choice is under continuous attack.

Identity formed identifying with or against places

An individual can form his identity by identifying with or against a place. This process is subordinated to that of identifying with or against various social groups, because the meaning ascribed to the place one identifies with has been ascribed in a way conditioned by the association of the individual with those groups. Rose (1995) described systematically three ways in which emotions people have about places can be connected to the notion of identity. The author analyzed (1) feelings of belonging and their manifestations at local scale, regional scale, national scale and transnational scale, (2) processes of identifying against a place, and (3) instances when senses of place do not lead to identifying with that place in any meaningful way.

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A feeling of belonging to a place occurs when part of how one defines oneself is "symbolized by certain qualities of that place" and can be analyzed at various scales -from a home kitchen to a national or supranational structure such as European Union, or even at a global scale- and in various types of relationship with place - one belongs to a place of birth but may also feel affiliated to an alien landscape on the other side of the planet. Tuan (1977), born and raised in a part of China rich in vegetation, felt a natural affiliation with the dessert, where he felt at home.

The process of identifying against a place has been well exposed by Said (1978) in an analysis of how Europeans and Americans have transformed the Orient into an object of fascination and established a *sense of identity* by rejecting it or contrasting itself against it. Said calls *Orientalism* the accumulated body of knowledge about The Orient (a construct) and argues that it is far from being an objective study of a foreign land. What *Orientalism* is all about is the creation and propagation of myths about the Orient, "emphasizing both spirituality and barbarism" because it reflects both the fascination and disgust inspired by this imagined land. In fact, Said suggests that *Orientalism* "says much more about the fears and desires of the West which produced it than it does about any reality of life in the Near East" (Rose, 1995, p.93). The elements of this body of knowledge, whether consisting of maps, travel accounts, photos, paintings or souvenirs, have all created what is referred to as an imagined geography of the area. Details about the political and economic implications of such a process will be discussed in the section dedicated to *Commodified Place*.

Suffice it to say, at this point, that by defining the Orient as "exotic, decadent and corrupt" the West positions itself as "civilized and moral" by contrast.

An important implication of attributing an identity to a place is that it constitutes a genuine attempt to express the "true" nature of the place, or "those features that define its essence" for the observer who attributes the identity (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.21). Thus, the difference between *Constructed Place* and *Commodified Place* is reinforced: the first represents a disinterested attempt to capture the essence of a place; the second represents a very interested attempt to profit economically or politically from a place. Another important implication to a consequence of attributing an identity to a place: that place becomes partly enclosed; other place identities are excluded. Establishing a place identity is therefore partly a process of exclusion. (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.21).

Psychologists Wenkart (1961) and Searle (1995) were among the first to have recognized the importance of place attachment to the development of self-identity. Places are the "focus of meaning or intention, either culturally or individually defined" (Relph, 1976, p.55) and they "incarnate the experience and aspirations of people" (Tuan, 1971, p.281). Places lie at the core of human existence because they are more than stages for life's drama; they are profound centers of meanings and symbols of experience, sources of a person's identity and of psychological well-being (Godkin, 1980, p.73). Given that identity is formed by identifying against as much as identifying with, the "attributes of

otherness are fundamental to representations of identity, which are constructed in counter-distinction to them" (Said, 1978).

To be an individual means not-to-be-integrated in the world (Jonas, 1974, p.204) but individuality also depends on "a sense of both discontinuity and continuity with nature [place] and history [time]" (Cobb, 1977, p.37). Indeed, individuality appears to exist at the balancing point of two contrasting states of being, involving both something separate and something shared. This sharing is based on the direct apprehension of meaning and "the continuity of a *sense of place* transcends the discontinuity of particular places" and is possible because "every place is an unselfconscious and uncontrived symbol of other places" (Relph, 1981, p.168). Even if the observer is a complete stranger in the country visited, he is able to recognize and appreciate the failures and achievements of a community that are engraved in the landscape itself. "Unique places share the fact of having been made by more or less committed individuals, and they therefore always reflect in some measure human abilities and concerns similar to one's own" (Relph, 1981, p.174).

The Temporal Dimension: from Present to History

In *Crude Place*, the layer of place that is accessible only through direct experience, the only perspective one could employ was that of the present moment, the now. Language and the ability to ascribe meaning to events have given the observer the power to transcend the now. The past is available through memory, the future is available through imagination or through the archetypes

revealed by dreams (Jung, 1964). Both past and future inform now the

perspective through which an observer experiences place. Scale, on the other

hand, has lost some of its significance. The elements of *Constructed Place*

consist of the meanings ascribed to thing or event. The magnitude of the event,

its length of time, its location on the continuum of time, makes it no more and no

less accessible to the inquiring mind. An observer will not be attracted to events

of the past because of the attributes of the time itself, but because of the

meanings that can be ascribed to it. The multitude of meanings that can be

associated to all identifiable past events is what can be referred to as history.

Why the focus on the past? Arguably, the past is the only time that can be

known to a person. The future is a matter of speculation; the present is but a

flight of a second and can only be contemplated as it has already become the

past. The past that has constituted direct experience can be known directly, the

past that has not been witnessed can be known indirectly from the accounts of

others, through various mediums. To emphasize the importance of the past of a

place in the interpretation of place, the concept of an envelope of space-time is

introduced (Jess & Massey, 1995, p.134). Cultural tourism seems to emphasize

ruins, monumentality, emblems, and the sacredness of certain spaces. The past

is perceived as more valuable and meaningful than the present, which is

perceived as culturally valueless (Greenwood, 1977 & 1989).

Other authors have recognized that not only the past, but also the present

and future play an essential role in creating a *sense of place*: "a [place] identity

is not only based on perceptions of what a place is, but what it should be"

(Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.22). The past endures as ever relevant because it is the source of previous perceptions, the source of our beliefs of what place is. However, the future is equally important, because it is in future expectations that one locates beliefs about what a place should be. The section dedicated to *Commodified Place* expands on the idea of place making, the attempt of transforming a place according to the desires and interests of various groups.

The past is where the observer looks to determine which the essential activities of that place are (Huigen and Meijerig, 2005). The essential activities of the place are determined by the elements of *Crude Place* and have a very important role in determining the place identity. *Crude Place*, being the physical part of the place, determines the essential activities by dictating what people need to do to survive. Building a shelter in the tropics is a very different activity from building a shelter at the poles. Differences in resources and how easily available they are dictate differences in how people protect themselves from climate extremes, gather or produce their food, and even how they move about in their immediate surroundings.

A *sense of place* is inseparable from a *sense of time*. In fact, "it is our senses of time that in the long-run creates senses of place" (Jackson, 1995, p.33). The identity of a place is not fixed because it relies on systems of meaning and languages that are in constant flux. There is "no way of insisting that events, practices, rituals or relationships mean only one thing or of preventing them, over time, or in different contexts, from taking on new meanings" (Hall, 1995, p.179). The identity of a place changes continuously in a process allegedly determined

by two factors. The first factor is evolutionary because every situation in the present is inevitably rooted in the past. "A current place identity and its historic component form the basis for the future identity, which in turn will embody many aspects from the past " (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.22). The second factor is unexpected events. Knowledge and understanding of identity dynamics is important for groups of interest aiming to change it to align it with their own goals. The evolutionary aspects are easier to track, while the unexpected factors may be more or less successfully predicted by chaos theory and complex modeling software.

Change has been a point of focus in *Crude Place* because it underscored the idea of place being a fluid reality, in a constant state of flux either due to physical changes of the elements of place or due to changes in the observer's ability or willingness to attend to these elements. In *Constructed Place*, change is recognized as having an even more important role in understanding place Integral to an understanding of any element of *Crude Place*, be it a given site, monument or event is "an understanding of how its meaning and use has changed over time" (Lasansky and McLaren, 2004, p.3). We have discussed previously how things in nature can change at such a slow rate, that to a human observer, these elements of place appear to be permanent fixtures of the environment. The meaning ascribed to these elements, though, is far from being permanent.

Although mountains have arguably remained unchanged over the last century, during that same span of time, social attitudes toward the mountains

have changed considerably in the West: "from a religious attitude in which awe was combined with aversion, to an aesthetic attitude that shifted from a sense of the sublime to a feeling for the picturesque; to the modern evaluation of mountains as recreational resource" (Tuan, 1974, p.71). An argument may be made with a reasonable degree of assurance that mountains are not the only elements of *Crude Place* towards which attitudes have changed. It may be reasonably assumed that everything that can be perceived and thought about, will experience in time, shifts and changes in the way meaning is ascribed to the object of attention, even though the object itself did not change in any perceivable way.

<div align="center">Findings related to elements of Constructed Place</div>

We have seen how there can be an infinity of elements of *Crude Place* because of differences in the quality and degree of perception of each individual. Some of these elements were tangible (things) and others were intangible (events). In contrast to *Crude Place* elements, all the elements of *Constructed Place* are intangible elements that rely on the existence of thing and event, but do not have a corporeal existence themselves. Simply put, *Constructed Place* elements include the totality of meanings ascribed to elements of *Crude Place* as well as some elements that derive from abstract thought and fantasy, imaginary things and events that often impact the way a place is perceived.

Although *Crude Place* elements are infinite, the number of possible *Constructed Place* elements is always finite. Although different meanings are ascribed to different things and events by different social groups, the number of

distinct ways of looking at the world is quite small. In fact, most differences tend

to be subtle and are related mostly to what people do (intangible, behavioral) and

make (tangible, creative or destructive action). This categorization highlights

once again the fact that there are differences between the propensity of tangibles

and intangibles to create conflict related to what meaning can be ascribed to

them. Tangible elements of place appear to be much less contested than

intangible elements of place.

Elements that command attraction, whether thing or event, related to

nature or human, do so because of a particular interest of the observer. The

elements that attract the attention of an individual at a particular point in time will

do so because of the meaning associated with them resonates with the observer

either for aesthetical or utilitarian reasons. A realtor will go about his world being

aware of buildings, but so will a student of architecture, albeit for quite different

reasons. Contested elements will automatically command increased attention

from large numbers of people. If self-identity is strictly related to the identity of

place, it stands to reason that people whose identity is threatened when the

meaning of a place is contested will rally in its defense. The temporal dimension

of a place, the locus of events past, appears to be a more contested dimension

that the spatial one. Nature appears to be a source of contestation only in as

much as people cannot easily agree on a common way to relate to it. An

environmentalist and an exploiter of natural resources would probably agree only

on the fact that the other sees the world in quite different terms. As the focus of

the analysis shifts away from natural elements and onto place elements created

by the world of humans, the sources of contestation and disagreement multiply exponentially. Conflicting needs and desires, competing claims for limited resources, unequal distribution of wealth, power, and influence are only some of the reasons why the meanings of places are intensely contested.

Not all *Constructed Place* elements are contested or even available for contestation. The meanings ascribed to the same thing or event differ from one person to the other for two main reasons: (1) lack of agreement, and (2) lack of exposure. When agreement is lacking, the contestation process named above is unavoidable. Lack of exposure, however, occurs in instances when the meaning ascribed to a thing or event is highly personal. The observer was either the only one to experience that element of *Crude* Place, or never shared his interpretation with others present, thus not submitting the ascribed meaning to any form of social sanctioning. Whether unconscious or premeditated, this act of protection of a certain meaning results in the creation of a personal element of *Constructed Place* that will eventually be part of the reason why certain people will be aware of *Personal Places* that are not recognized by anyone else as a place. Some common examples of a *Personal Place* may be a favorite tree climbed as a child, a street corner where a meeting took place, a park bench where a relationship died. Arguably, every place is a *Personal Place* because of the unique way in which it is perceived, thought about, or acted out in unique ways by each individual. However, for the purposes of this study, the distinction is made to account for *Public Places* that include primarily *Constructed* elements shared and

accepted by a multitude of people, and *Personal Places* that include primarily

Constructed elements that are only known to the observer.

Sense of place as it relates to Constructed Place elements

This section is part of the answer to research question number three as it

relates to *Constructed Place* and will deal specifically with the meanings ascribed

to perceived elements of place. The distinction between personal and public

elements of *Constructed Place* is central to this section.

In the context of a *Public Place*, the particular *Constructed* elements that

are more meaningful are those elements that have a significant impact on the

identity of the place as it relates to the identity of the observer. A place element

that becomes accepted as a *center* is an element that has the power to reinforce

beliefs related to an identity constructed by association with something perceived

as positive or similar. An example of a center, depending on the scale analyzed,

may be a cathedral, a city hall, an important gathering location, or a clearing in a

forest. While sometimes the center will be physically located in the center of a

larger space, it is important to recognize that in the context of *Constructed Place*,

a place element becomes a *center* because of the importance of the meaning

ascribed to it. The Vatican may arguably be perceived as centrally located in

Italy, but its importance as a center is derived from the meaning that this

institution has for its believers. A place element that becomes accepted as a

boundary is an element that has the power to reinforce beliefs related to an

identity constructed by disassociation from something perceived as negative or

different. A good example of such a boundary was the Berlin Wall. It was not the physical wall that gave it the landmark status of a boundary, but the symbolic separation between two worldviews, two political systems, or two spheres of influence.

Centers and *boundaries* are anchors of *public* places because they are socially constructed; a multitude of people must agree on the meaning infused in these place elements before they can be recognized as centers or boundaries. On a cognitive level, these elements create a sense of place in that they have the power to define place: this is where it starts, this is where it ends! But on an affective level, these *Constructed Place* elements become more powerful when the meaning associated with them is not merely accepted *public* meaning, but also has strong *personal* significance to the individual observer. Therefore, this study puts forth the idea that a strong sense of place is linked to the need of *belonging*. The observer needs to not only recognize a place element as a center for *some* people, but as a center for his or her own beliefs. Similarly, a boundary is all the more significant when it separates *us* from *them*, as opposed to when we intellectually acknowledge those elements that separate a neutral someone from someone else.

Therefore, a sense of place appears to be more intense and more relevant when it is strongly linked to a *sense of identity* for the observer. The *Constructed Place* elements that appear to intensify this connection are those elements that embody both publicly accepted meaning and significant personal meaning, that stimulate both the intellect and the affect of the individual.
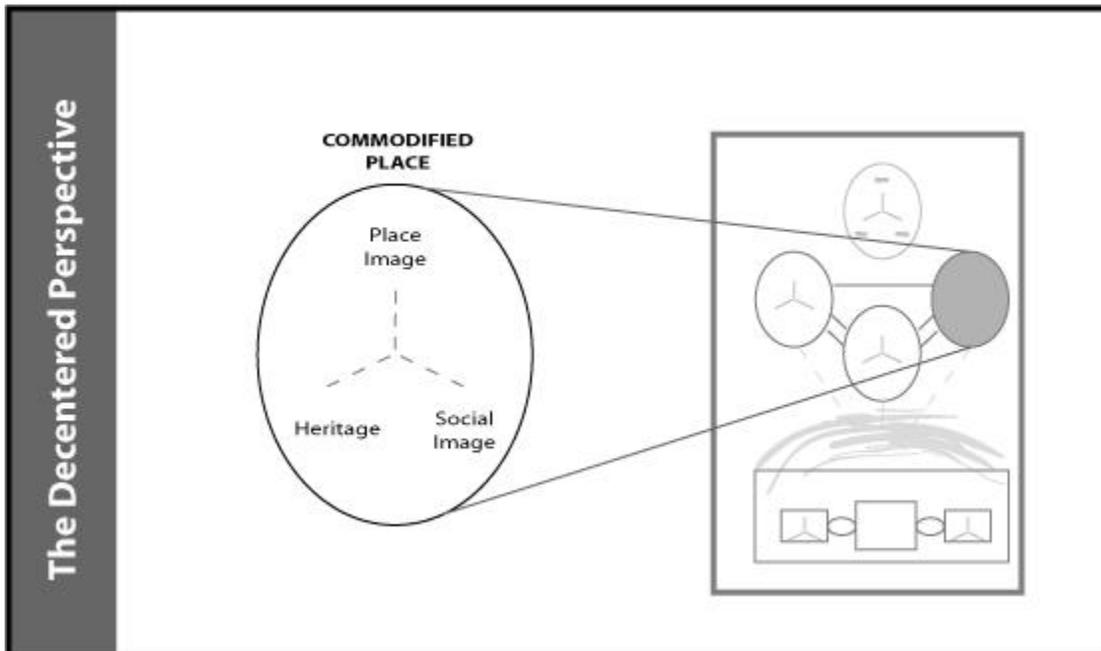
Figure 4: Commodified Place

As illustrated in Figure 4, *Commodified Place* is the third building block of

the model developed in this thesis. The term *commodified* is used to suggest that

place, as understood in this section, is treated as a product that can be owned,

used to reap a variety of benefits, and controlled. The argument made in this

section is that place is contested by people with conflicting agendas for the

purposes of gaining control, furthering particular interests, and reaping economic,

social, and politic benefits.

An important difference between *Constructed Place* and *Commodified*

Place consists of a shift of locus. *Constructed Place* is located inside, consisting

of the ways in which an individual thinks about place and ascribes meaning to it.

Although meaning depends on immersion in a society and is made possible by

language and communication, the main mechanisms are at work in an individual's mind. *Commodified Place* is outside the individual, it is the image publicized, the ideology propagated, the world of artifice.

Commodification

The term commodification has several meanings, therefore some clarification is needed regarding its use in the analysis. The term, when used in a business or economic sense, relates to the transformation of a product into a commodity. A product that becomes a commodity is characterized by lower prices and a homogenization of offering: the competitors who offer this product to the market have little or no incentive to differentiate their product. The consumers do not expect or demand such differentiation. When used in a Marxist sense, commodification refers to the practice of ascribing economic value to something that was previously not thought about in market terms (Marx and Engels, 1848/1998).

The term commodification as it is used in our analysis, borrows from both definitions. On one hand, place has only recently been re-conceptualized as something which can be marketed and sold to tourists or developers. On the other hand, a place that is packaged to appeal to prospective visitors or investors appears to undergo a homogenization that slowly kills its character. Still, this is not all that is meant by the use of the word commodified.

To approaches are illustrated to clarify what it means for a place to be commodified. Complex commodification goes beyond the simple use of place to make money. This commodification is about the application of power in the

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attempt to redefine the meaning of a place as a means to control its future. This approach is explained in detail throughout this section. Simple commodification refers strictly to the economic sphere, in which place is conceptualized as something to be bought and sold, most commonly as a tourist attraction. A slight derivation of this approach is to conceive of place as a product in that its identity is used to market and sell products associated with the place: "regional identities may be used as commodities, suggesting they are used in products suitable for consumption" (Simon, 2005). This process of commodification concerns the "use of regional identities in projects and activities that are associated with the region, and that are turned into products to be bought and sold" (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, p.154). In this context, identity is used not to represent a region but to sell regional products, and actors use those identities that are most useful to achieve this purpose.

Almost all products that correlate to a region can be sold through the embodiment of that region (Bell and Valentine, 1997). The process is reciprocal: while the identity of the region sells the products associated with it, the quality of the products and the role they play in promoting the name of the region reinforces the identity of the region. To illustrate, the names of French wines are often linked with regional names. Same applies to other products and other regions (yogurt for Bulgaria, cheese for The Netherlands, chocolate for Switzerland), but only in wines is there a good reason for identifying the source, because each wine is unique in how closely it depends on the micro-environment in which it is produced.

Edensor (1998) continues the tradition of thought of Kearns and Philo (1993) in explaining how places are perceived less as centers of concern and belonging and more as "bundles of social and economic opportunity competing against one another in the open market for a share of the capital investment cake" (Kearns and Philo, 1993, p.12). However, the idea that places might have an agency of their own (Deloria, 1988) is not central to in this section. Relevant agents can include powerful individuals, groups of interest, or institutions; the economic motif is but one of the several driving forces of attempts to control the meaning of place in order to justify their existing or future claims on that particular place. These claims may be claims of ownership, claims of right to use local resources, claims to control the place in various forms. These claims are voiced in many ways, depending on who these agents are, at what scale they operate, and what their particular goals entail.

Promoters of tourism sites attempt to draw visitors to specific by using images and words which idealize the destination. In fact, they "reflect an image or representation of a place or region, providing visitors with narratives about the characteristics and meanings associated with the places concerned" (Simons, 2005, p.35). Place images are created and promoted at various scales, from the local to the regional and even the national level: "themes and images of the nation are continually discursively reproduced via the national and international media, and in the burgeoning tourist industry, and constitute the images and narratives by which tourists imagine "other" cultures" (Edensor, 1998, p.36).

When a wide scale attempt is made to control the way people think of something, the process involves the use of ideology.

Ideology

Although the term ideology may refer to any organized collection of ideas that offer a way of looking at the world, the general implication of the term as used nowadays suggests a set of ideas imposed by a dominant group to all the members of the society. As such, ideology and the world of politics are inseparable. The main function of ideology is to legitimize the status-quo or a proposed societal change.

An important characteristic of a dominant ideology is that its assumptions go unchallenged. The people who share an ideology also share a world-view that defines what they consider right or wrong, acceptable or not, normal or deviant. Elements of this ideology, for them, are undeniable truths. To illustrate, in modern society, it is accepted as an undeniable truth that parents love their children and that child labor is morally reprehensible. Yet, less than two centuries ago, children were appreciated almost exclusively for their ability to work, and the loss of a child was less painful then the loss of a horse. The child was easily replaceable, while the horse was very expensive. This dramatic example has the role of reminding the assumption on which this thesis is based: that there are no God given truths about the world, and that which people know and believe has been socially constructed and, as such, is subject to change. Therefore, an ideology of place, the collection of ideas and beliefs about place that is taken for

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granted, can be questioned. In questioning the underlying ideology, a place's identity is contested.

<div align="center">Contestation</div>

An important part of addressing research question three consists of clarifying a premise of this study: that there are "rival claims to define the meaning of places and, thereby, rights to control their use or future" (Jess and Massey, 1995, p.134). Rival agents interpret place differently because (a) they see place from a different point of view (as discussed in *Constructed Place*) and (b) they emphasize different or even opposing characteristics may not even be accurate. Indeed, many such characteristics may be completely imaginary, and the way in which various actors get to choose what to put on the map and how to name it results in an imaginary geography. The cultural meaning given to an area at any moment in time is but an illustration of how geographical imagination works in favor of those who are powerful enough to impose their interpretation of place.

The role of contestation in the formation of a place identity is paradoxical Contesting the identity of a place means that its essence is denied and the place can no longer exist as the "same" place. However, such conflicts also contribute to the conservation of place identity, in a process characterized by the principle of the survival of the fittest. The stronger a place identity becomes, the more difficult it is to change and the greater the number of conflicts (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.21).

Certain places are more contested than others because they offer more benefits to those who control them. Places rich in natural resources are contested because of the economic benefits enjoyed by those who own them and have the right of exploitation. The meaning of historic places is contested because they provide political legitimacy to the ruling elite. Sacred places are no exception:

"Sacred sites are often invested with particular significance by different groups, and accordingly are the focus of multiple meanings and practices. For this reason, a sacred place will always be the scene for intense contestation, a lab for observing conflict and negotiation" (Edensor, 1998, p.30).

In a deeply spiritual country such as India where any voyage through the countryside is "marked by passing a host of sacred features and sites", notions of the "cosmological and metaphorical significance of landscapes and places generally predominate over aesthetics of the romantic picturesque", (Edensor, 1998: 31) reinforcing the belief presented in *Constructed Place* that meaning ascribed is the more intensely perceived element of place, carrying more weight than aesthetic feelings inspired by physical landscapes.

<div align="center">Power</div>

Power, in the context of our analysis, is the ability of an individual or group to make choices related to a place and influence the outcomes of these choices. Such power can be applied in small ways, by moving or acting freely in a place, or even more basic, by having access to that place, or in significant ways, by transform the place and using it in a desired way. Power can also manifest itself

by the ability to prevent others from making choices and influencing outcomes related to the place.

The geography of power, understood as geography of social relations stretched over space, is "what sustains much of what we experience around us in any local area - from the nervousness of going down a particular street at night, to the financing of the local company down the road, to the arrival of the latest U.S. movie at the multiplex. And it is out of the intersections of all these geographies that each place acquires both its uniqueness and its interdependence with elsewhere" (Massey, 1995, p.71).

The way place power is applied is intimately related to the way power is created. In any place, those "actors who are powerful on terms of authority and/or resources can impose their dominant place identities at the expense of other actors (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.22). As power "lies in the codes of information and in the images of representation around which societies organize their institutions […] the sites of this power are people's minds" (Castells, 1997, p.359). It is, therefore, in the battle for the minds of the people that power over place is achieved. By controlling the meaning of a place, a group of interest asserts its right to control the future of the place as well. By labeling a territory as a natural reserve, an environmentalist group creates the possibility that the predominant use of that land is in line with preservation actions policies. If the same land is framed as the place where the children of such and such working class will build the future, a development group creates the possibility that the predominant use of that land will be a residential neighborhood.

That places can be perceived and thought about in a multitude of ways and "be subject to competition from alterative representational practices" has already been described in *Constructed Place*, enforcing the point made here, that "modes of representation are closely linked to a situated way of understanding place and space" (Edensor, 1998, p.10).

The individuals or groups that attempt to legitimize a claim to a place generally call upon an affinity or association with that place, or more accurately stated, with the meaning of the place as they attempt to represent it. Generally, scholars have focused on significant claims, made be nations, or large companies, but the same dynamic is at work when the claim is mundane, or made by less powerful individuals. Arguably, any human that interacts in some way with a place, by that interaction expresses an unstated claim: local people want to legitimize a claim of belonging while outsiders want to legitimate a "right to sightsee, take pictures and take souvenirs" (Ashworth and Graham, 2005, p.3).

Minor agents engage in contestation arising from either feelings of loss of a place or the desire to control, Such contestation is imbedded in everyday discourses of sensuous beauty or ugliness (Feld and Stewart, 1996), in discourses of morality and theft (Basso and Blu, 1996), or in discourses of nostalgia and longing (Kahn and Frake, 1996). These discourses are mapped on cartographies, sung, or "storied, in environments piled high in trash or meticulously hedged, in local knowledge of how well- attended paths or roads made vague by having no names or too many, and in the voicing of deep

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aphorism, memorial poesis, heated backtalk, letters from home, speeches with choked-back tears, humorous quips, true-to-life fictions, and what goes without saying" (Feld and Basso, 1995, p.11). In other words, minor agents employ minor everyday discourses in their attempts to negotiate the meaning of a place.

Especially in a world where the local and the global scale are increasingly linked, place is increasingly interpreted in terms of the resources it possesses and how they can be exploited from the outside. Cheap labor, cheap raw materials, weak environmental regulations and so forth are but a few of the characteristics valued by business looking to relocate to cut costs and calls for social responsibility. One can easily see how an economic interpretation of place breeds conflict and contestation of such a pragmatic view. The reality that such landscapes of consumption are simultaneously sacred landscapes for other groups of people "is one of the principal causes of heritage contestation on the global scale" (Ashworth and Graham, 2005, p.5).

The exercise of power over place or related to a place is essentially a form of place making. Place making may be discursive, and consist of community making and culture-making by means of defining or re-defining the meaning of place elements, or it may be non-discursive, and take the form of concrete conservation or development projects.

A result of place-making efforts is the creation of boundaries. The boundaries are structures of power, and have a different role than that of boundaries discussed in the perception of *Crude Place* and *Constructed Place*: they create insiders and outsiders, those who belong and those who do not.

Geographies of inclusion and exclusion are the manifestations of power applied to the politics of belonging.

Boundaries are only the most explicit elements of social control. Arguably, any built structure, by its function and associated meaning, may play a role in influencing social behavior. Between the 1950s and 1970s, a number of studies suggested important relationships between physical design and social behavior (Young and Willmott, 1957; Rainwater, 1966; Schorr, 1963; Yancey, 1971) while other studies held that no such relationship exists (Gutman, 1966; Gans, 1961; Wilner et al., 1962). Buttimer subscribed to the former school of thought and maintained that the success of a place is "contingent on the existential meaning that it acquires for its [inhabitants]" (Buttimer, 1972, p.48).

While application of power is generally associated with the idea of place-making, the processes by which this is achieved may prove the place's un-making. Harvey (1989) finds it ironical that tradition is often preserved by being commodified and marketed as such, a process which transforms the act of searching for roots into the production of a marketable image, "a simulacrum" or "pastiche." Lack of authenticity transforms the place into a non-place.

Dimensions of Commodified Place

The findings of this study suggest that the processes by which *Constructed Place* elements are manipulated to support particular agendas and become *Commodified Place* elements apply very similarly across the three

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dimensions of space, time, and society. The following sections explain in some measure of detail how *Commodified Place* elements come into being.

The Social Dimension: from Self Identity to Self Image

In *Crude Place*, the social lens was adjusted to focus on the individual because the locus of perception is within one observer at a time. In *Constructed Place*, the social lens was adjusted to account primarily for social groups because the locus of meaning creation and knowledge is society. In *Commodified Place*, the lens may be adjusted either on various types of actors, but very rarely on the individual or the society. The reason why these extremes are poorly represented has to do with the distribution of power. Depending on the type of power, variances may apply. Generally, economic and political power is concentrated in the hands of the few. Authoritative or creative power, on occasion, may elevate a single individual to a rank of authority in a field of knowledge or in art. Although the narrative of power will always profess to represent the masses, especially at national levels, never was power of any import or endurance wielded by the masses. Even during the French Revolution, when equality was upheld higher than ever before, in the ranks of the revolutionaries there were leaders and there were followers.

Within any given context, at any given time, there are those who have power and those who do not. In the particular context of *Commodified Place*, those who have power are the ones who can impose their own interpretation of what the place is or what the place should be. Included in any place, and

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important elements thereof, are people. Powerful agents who seek to redefine the meaning of a place by attributing it an image, must of necessity go through the same process when people are concerned: attribute an image to these people as a way of ascribing to them an identity that would justify the actions of these agents. When violence needs to be justified, the image attributed is derogatory. When other economic or political goals are pursued, the image will simply be a distortion of their identity. The attribution of an image can incorporate "two distinct but interrelated distortions: misdescription of people belonging to a targeted category, and an insistence that the misdescribed characteristics are the only ones relevant features of the targeted person's identity" (Sen, 2006, p.7). In either case, whether derogatory attributes are used or not, the resulting miniaturization of people is an act of violence.

That a person has the incentives to build a favorable image and promote it is somewhat intuitive. Willingness to engage in propaganda and having the economic means to do it, enable powerful agents to impose an image on a person or an entire society. Once descriptive misrepresentation has been popularized, the foundation for the endurance of such an image is the continued illusion that the narrow identity ascribed to those people is the only one relevant.

Extreme cases aside, who are the agents of power that seek to alter the meaning of places to further their own interests? When it comes to organized power, a useful distinction would be to recognize (1) actors in the professional discourse and (2) actors without an organization or belonging to grassroots movements. The actors in the professional discourse may belong to

nongovernmental movements (environmental activists focused on the conservation of places) or governmental agencies (politicians using places to legitimize their claims to power) or businesses (tourism agencies promoting places as a product to be consumed). For future iterations of this model, there is value in identifying and classifying all types of actors and their place-related goals.

The one thing these actors have in common is that they use (more or less) strategic means to reach their goals (Brower, 1999). These strategies include but are not limited to the development and use of symbols, activities and products (Simon, 2005). In *Constructed Place*, we have seen the evolution of identity is defined by identity markers, characteristic objects, and events (Huigen and Meijering, 2005). Chawla (1992), discussing the scope of environmental memory, identifies three dimensions of perception: settings (such as home, city, region), individual objects, and moods or feelings for the world. While different terms are used by different authors, the basic idea remains the same: the identity of the place is formed and controlled by elements pertaining to the place itself, to objects built by people, and to activities of humans.

The Temporal Dimension: From History to Heritage

In *Crude Place* we have seen how periods of time, due to specific events associate with them, are perceived as distinct. In *Constructed Place*, we have seen how these distinct periods are endowed with meaning and in that process, mere past events are interpreted, remembered and referred to as history. This

history is the totality of ways in which past events have been interpreted and recorded in our consciousness. Arguably, for the same span of time, or the same past event, there can be as many interpretations as there are people willing to bend their attention on them. In reality, accounting for the social construction of knowledge, there are at any given time, a number of distinct notions of what a certain past event stands for.

In *Commodified Place*, from the resource pool of history, groups of interest pick and choose those particular interpretations of past events that legitimize their claims to the place. It is not the events themselves that are of vital importance. It is the meaning that past events engender in either thing or action or place that is important. The past, in the context of our analysis, is the" lucky dip in which each group of interest can reach and pick up facts that confirm their way of action" (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.22). Heritage, in the context of our analysis, is that conveniently selected crop of meanings that, relying on the past, facilitate claims for the future. In that respect, "heritage is the medium through which *senses of place* are created from *senses of time*" (Ashworth and Graham, 2005, p.11).

Bourdieu (1977) introduced the notion of "cultural capital" and argued that any new ruling elite needed to capture it in order to legitimize their exercise of power. Whoever controls the meaning ascribed to a place controls the future of the place. Heritage is "cultural capital" because it consists of selected material artifacts, mythologies, memories and traditions that are transformed by groups of interest into resources for their desired present. The roots of heritage are firmly

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planted in history, but "contents, interpretations and representations of the resource are selected according to the demands of the present; an imagined past provides resources for a heritage that is to be bequeathed to an imagined future (Ashworth and Graham, 2005, p.4).

Due to its function as legitimizing tool, heritage that it is no longer useful will necessarily be discarded and the past will be reinvented – and history reinterpreted and re-represented - to reflect and justify the new present. Thus "heritage is as much about forgetting as remembering the past" and that is why it is possible for all to believe we've always been at war with Eurasia. Because heritage resides more in meaning than in material artifacts, it can and most of the time is interpreted differently "within any one culture at any one time, as well as between cultures and through time" (Ashworth and Graham, 2005, p.4). What changed most radically in time is not necessarily the meaning of a place, as much as how that particular meaning is used. "The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes a picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age" (Lasansky and McLaren, 2004, p.34).

As stated before, heritage is that part of the past that we select in the present for contemporary purposes, whether they are economic, political or cultural, and seek to propagate into the future. A direct way in which heritage has economic uses is when places designated as heritage (i.e. World Heritage Sites) become places of tourist consumption. Place consumption can be thought of [...] as "a socially constructed activity defined and accepted by those who produce

and consume it, socially sanctioned by institutions, customs, rules, ideas and values" (Ateljevic, 2000, p.376).

Heritage tourism is an illustration of history becomes a necessary ingredient in the creation of a marketable image for destinations (Ashworth and Turnbridge, 1990). However, the way in which places are managed and arranged to encourage consumption alters their character (Sack, 1991). Hence, the cliché that best expresses this reality is that tourism kills the object of its desire. The idea that heritage has cultural and political uses relies on the belief that heritage is much more about meaning than about physical products, being "simultaneously knowledge, a cultural product and a political resource" (Ashworth and Graham, 2005, p.8).

Lowenthal (1985 & 1996) notes four traits of the past that also apply to heritage as understood in this thesis: (1) its antiquity conveys respect, status of antecedence, and underpins idea of continuity and evolutionary social development, (2) emblematic landscapes are created to connect the present to the past in an unbroken trajectory, (3) offers a sense of termination and also (4) a sequence that allows people to locate their lives in linear narratives that connect past, present and future. In other words, heritage provides a context for people to make sense of themselves and their lives and legitimize a sense of belonging to place that is fundamental to their identity.

<u>The Spatial Dimension: from Place Identity to Place Image</u>

In *Crude Place* the infinity of space is perceived as distinct by means of perception. In *Constructed Place*, meaning is ascribed to these elements in an effort to make sense of reality. In *Commodified Place*, only those meanings that have legitimizing value are maintained, and often, new meanings are invented, to achieve the same goals. In this process, the identities of a place are cancelled out by a single image, or by a few competing images.

Hall (1997) adopted a constructionist approach and argued that it is not meaningful to make distinctions between identity (what the region is perceived to be like) and image (the picture that is showed to the outside). Barke and Harrop (1994), as well as Pellenbarg (1991) appear to subscribe to Hall's point of view. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the distinction between identity and image is both meaningful and necessary.

"[...] an image is neither a sign nor a symbol, even though an image can contain both signs and symbols. While a sign has an indicative function, and a symbol functions through substitution, an image is something that is both new and rather peculiar. It represents nothing other than itself, but […] it assembles a world and thus goes beyond its component elements" (Norberg-Schulz, 2000, p11).

Identity is widely used for place marketing because places are believed to need a face to succeed in marketing terms and "heritage may be the outstanding place characteristic which is related to the face of a place" (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.20). However, in this process of commodification, identity becomes an

image, and the transition has deep implications for the way in which that place is interpreted and experienced.

The creation of a place image is equivalent to the creation of an imagined place. An imagined place is not unlike the concept of place-myth as used by Shields (1991): a collective set of images that are associated with a particular place, but should not be confused with place-myths as "elements of complex systems of belief or components of a cosmology" (Tuan, 1977, p.23). Creativity and imagination have a significant role in the ability of an adult individual to build imagined places. According to Chawla (1992), evidence that environmental experiences in childhood make lasting contributions to adult creativity has been documented by Mead and Cobb (1977), Shepard (1967), Hart (1979), Moore and Young (1978), Sobel (1992) and Blaser (1973). An imagined place will depend significantly on the availability of narratives about the place that help construct an as-if world (Entrikin, 1991).

The images constructed about place differ in nature according to the goals of the interest groups who construct them. The effects of these images can be followed on the same three dimensions of analysis: social, temporal and spatial

If the aim of the interest group is to frame a place as a destination, the image is built in such a fashion as to enhance the desirability of the place by depicting them as heavens where otherwise unsatisfied needs and desires can be pursued. That is why, a commonly *Constructed Place* image is that of a liminal or non-ordinary place, which in western culture is thought of as "sacred place, as well as a place that invites and allows ludic behavior and play"

(Graburn, 1976, p.37). The image, in this case, may be built by agents from the inside or the outside of the place.

If the aim of the interest group is to frame the place as suitable for conquest, the image is built in such a fashion as to suggest *Otherness* and justify the ensuing violence and exploitation. In colonial times, the colonized had to be represented as something other than, or opposite to, the colonizers. Since the colonized realm could not be *othered* by adopting its own systems of knowledge, it had to be incorporated into European ways of understanding, absorbed within "an accepted grid for filtering through the oriental into Western consciousness" (Said, 1978, p.6).

The creation of an *Other* that is instilled with the antithesis of an identity (be it that of an individual or a place) is at the core of dominant discourses which become manifest in negative movements such as racism, nationalism, class contempt, misogyny, homophobia and so forth. The ability to identify an *Other* is what creates geographies of exclusion. (Said, 1978; Rutherford, 1990) Creating *Otherness* is also a strategy employed by economic groups of interest that attempt to redefine place in order to control it: the developer who contrasts the bright future high rises with the existing buildings represented as decrepit is but one example. Applied to an individual or group, the differences may be any aspect of identity: class, gender, sexual orientation, etc...

Effects of images on the three dimensions

On the social dimension, the effects of building such narrow and strategic images, divorced from the reality of the place, has deleterious effects on both the people depicted and the people to whom these images are presented. One of the strategies used in paining images of *Otherness* is to remove the people from the picture. This statement is not to be taken literally; it is a way of expressing the fact that means remote places were "surveyed and understood according to criteria that ignored local presence, aesthetics, and knowledge" (Edensor, 1998, p.32). Tourism has a propensity to create "landscapes to admire" by taming their exoticism in a way that conforms to "supposedly universal aesthetic rules" (Tillotson, 1993, p.142).

By ignoring local forms of representation, the creators of such images imply the locals lack the ability to represent and understand their own space. Their place is described as "caught in a state of timelessness, crammed with incidents remarkable for their curiosity or eroticism, hushed into silence by its own mysteries, incapable of self-expression, mute until the westerner observer lends it a voice" (Kabbani, 1986, p.73). By ignoring local knowledge, the only elements of place conveyed are narrow representations, ruled by Western "conventions of the picturesque and the classificatory" (Edensor, 1998, p.23). To illustrate, romantic ideas about particular sites, instead of local character and meaning, were the criteria by which visitors could decide which buildings were to be considered of architectural and historic importance" (King, 1990, p.56). In this act, the colonial power became manifest, by dictating that alien meanings should

be applied to local elements of *Crude Place* (the structures), effectively replacing local elements of *Constructed Place* (the native meaning embedded in the structures).

An unstated social effect, not mentioned by any of these authors, is that the tourist is also framed as ignorant and incapable to digest differences that have not been pre-coded and pre-interpreted for his benefit, so that no effort or inconvenience is ever necessary. For it is only in tackling the unknown unassisted and in struggling with difficulty that an individual can experience that sudden revelation in which he feels he finally understands. Then only he perceives the moment and the place as miraculous in its beauty. Then only he achieves a state related to an enhanced *sense of place*.

As Said (1978) well illustrates in his study of *Orientalism* , the constructed images of a place shape how an individual will understand and interpret both (a) the imagined place and (b) the individual's own country, which is constantly used as point of reference and contrasted with foreign lands. A foreign place is never exotic in its own terms, but always in an explicit comparison with a known place. This process occurs at various scales, from local to supranational and can influences the formation of identity of an individual or an entire continent: the meaning of a Christian Europe depended largely on the existence of an image of Islamic Orient against which it could identify itself.

On the spatial dimension, the place-making efforts of consumerist interest groups result in the manufacturing of non-places.

"The enforcement of a distinct separation from the local population suggests a neo-colonial relationship between tourists and inhabitants; [...] these enclaves themselves, as well as the wider system of enclaves with which they are linked, contain design features, and points of familiarity, such as global eating and drinking outlets and shops, to make tourists feel at home" (Edensor, 1998, p.25).

Whilst bureaucrats and entrepreneurs try to manufacture uniqueness and stress spatial distinctiveness, they usually succeed in producing a "recursive and serial monotony, producing from already known patterns or moulds places almost identical in ambience from city to city" (Harvey, 1989, p.295). "Postmodern shopping malls, leisure centers and supermarkets provides the same aesthetic and spatial references wherever one is in the world" (Rojek, 1995, p.146).

The ultimate effect of image creation on the identity of a place is somewhat paradoxical. In someway, powerful images may function as self-fulfilling prophecies once codified in language. Such powerful images become static and final and eventually impose themselves on the identity of the place: "travelers depended on each other's testimony in forging their narrative; the place became the place they had read about; the native functioned the way the traveler imagines they would do" (Kabbani, 1986, p.114). Just as an individual constructs his identity, in part, by what he thinks others think of himself (Mead, 1934), so a place identity is heavily influenced by how that place is perceived by outsiders. On the other hand, because new groups of interest establish themselves on a continuous basis, the goals and ideas of powerful elites are also dynamic, and

the process of identity attribution and image creation starts anew. As new images are forged to further the interests of new elites, the process described above is reiterated, and "identities are constructed and reconstructed" (Huigen and Meijering, 2005, p.21).

Findings Related to the Elements of Commodified Place

The elements of *Crude Place* are things and events. The elements of *Constructed Place* are the meanings ascribed to these things and events. The elements of *Commodified Place* are elements of artifice. They are demagogic narratives, constructed images, possibly false identities. They could be either the result of an effort to boost one's own image of self or place, or misrepresent that of another. The misrepresentation may be derogatory or may be simply misleading by nature of the utter simplification involved. The plurality of attributes that make up the facts of the place and the multitude of beliefs that exist about them is cancelled out by blanket representations that reduce variety to a fixed, static, imaginary reality. The elements of *Commodified Place* are images and representations of place that have the role of furthering the agenda of powerful agents interested in controlling that place.

Sense of place as it relates to Commodified Place elements

Commodified Place elements exercise possibly the most significant influence on the way in which individuals relate to place and develop a sense for it. The source of this power of influence is related to the frequency and intensity

with which these elements of place are actively forced upon an individual. Because *Commodified Place* elements have been created primarily with the purpose of "selling" an idea to its target market, a significant amount of effort is invested in making sure their message gets through to as many people, as often as possible.

Therefore, *Commodified Place* elements might have the power to supersede *Crude Place* and *Constructed Place* elements because they have the potential to influence the ways in which people engage and think about place. While *Commodified Place* elements may be visualized as actively seeking out the minds of people, *Crude Place* elements are neutral because an individual can always choose how intensely to engage them, and *Constructed Place* elements are largely unavailable for scrutiny. To explain better, *Constructed Place* elements are difficult to scrutinize because they consist of meanings and worldviews that remain largely unquestioned. An individual will rarely question his own interpretation of reality and even less often have the willingness or ability to gain insights into someone else's interpretation of reality. Significant premeditated effort, knowledge, and patience are required of an individual to even begin consciously exposing itself to *Constructed Place* elements other than those inherent in his own worldview.

Furthermore, the senses of place evoked by *Commodified Place* elements can be intense because these elements have been crafted not only to appeal to the needs and wants of an audience, but also to create artificially needs. As will be later explained, a place that is perceived to have the ability to satisfy the

needs of an individual, albeit artificially induced, will arguably be a place that has a greater chance of inspiring an intense sense of place. However, if the *Commodified Place* elements are not deeply rooted in *Constructed Place* and *Crude Place* elements, their appeal is likely to be short lived, and the senses of place they inspire are likely to be quite ephemeral.
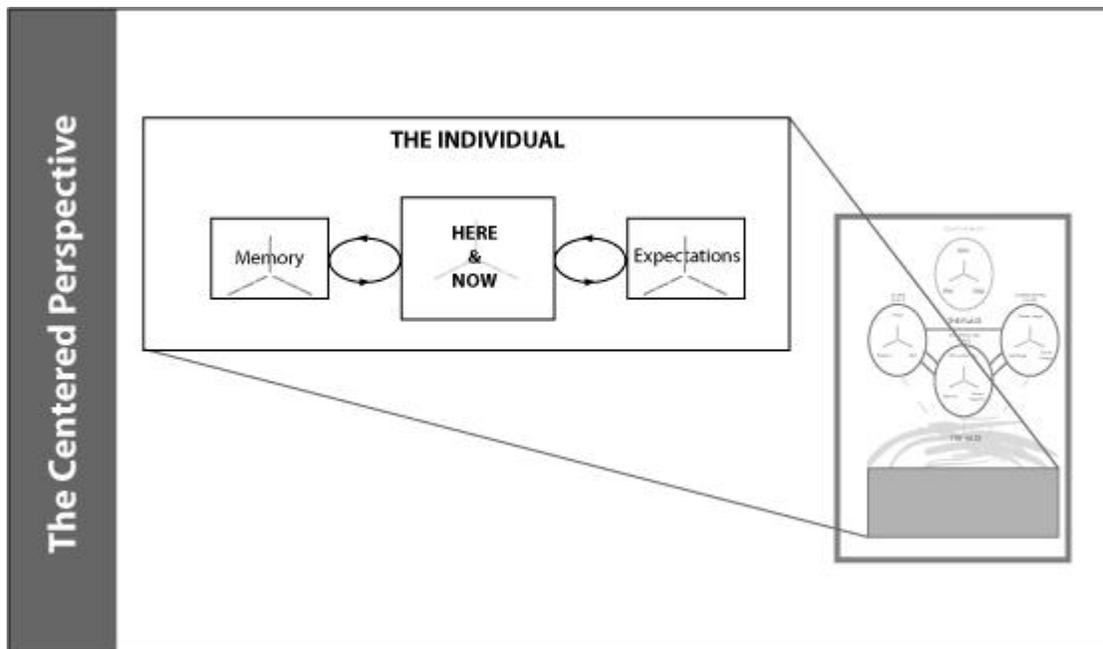
The Centered Perspective

Figure 5: The Centered Perspective

As illustrated in Figure 5, any individual brings his own subjectivity to the interaction with place. No human interaction can exist in purely objective circumstances. This subjectivity thrives at the intersection of external factors, discussed in the decentered approach, and internal factors, discussed in this section.

The Gaze, discussed in the following section, is the name given here to the manifestation of an individual subjectivity in relationship with place. *The Gaze*, a fluid ever-changing frame through which an individual experiences place, feeds on dynamics that occur inside the observer as well as outside. It is the gaze that determines how an individual will perceive place, think of place, and engage place at any given moment in time. *The Gaze*, observed over time, displays certain patterns to which it is prone to return ever so often. Much like a pendulum that yearns to return to its resting point, *The Gaze* yearns to stabilize into patterns which agree with the psychological make-up of the observer. It seeks a balance where the external landscapes of place most closely match the internal landscapes of the observer. It is in that delicate point of balance that *sense of place* is achieved.

This section sheds some light on the internal factors that feed an individual's subjectivity, discusses in more detail how the gaze is formed at the intersection of these factors and the external factors discussed in the decentered approach, and shows how the gaze influences and is influenced in return by the type of experiences of place that are available to an individual.

The internal factors

The internal factors on which the subjectivity of an individual is based are rooted in the *here and now* of the act of engagement with the place. However, both past and future play a role and determine the nature and the intensity of these factors. In a way, past and future are both present (sic!). The three lenses approach employed in analyzing the three building blocks of place is applicable

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in this analysis as well. The temporal lens is used as a backbone for the analysis, to show how the past plays a role, as memory of distant places and people shapes our interpretation of the present and our expectations from the future. Knowledge and experience, hopes and intentions, needs and wants make-up the present moment. This section seeks to shed a light on the way in which this happens.

The Here and Now

At any moment, an observer exists at a unique set of spatial, temporal, and social coordinates. If it is the present moment, then the spatial is a here, the temporal is a now, and the social is a complicated juxtaposition of individual characteristics that include his race, sex, gender, status (economic, political, social), role played in the multitude of social groups to which one belongs, state of health, state of mind, emotional make-up, mood and so forth.

Two goals guide the following analysis: show that the present is a function of past and future, and put some order in the chaos of possible internal factors that affect the experience of place. People, just as places, can only be discovered in this elusive dimension of in-between two world views. This study assumes that the attributes of a person fall into two categories: *intrinsic* and *relational*. Intrinsic attributes are strictly related to the body, mind, and spirit of a person. Relational attributes emerge from the position of the person in relation to everything in its world. The way in which intrinsic and relational attributes change (how often, how intense, in what direction and by what pattern, if any), is an attribute of a person as well; let's call this attribute personal dynamics, to avoid

the need of naming and referring to the infinity of specific changes we could be talking about. Such infinity of changes also defines the nature of a place, making place and person, in as much as our analysis is concerned, very similar indeed.

Playing on this similarity, one discovers the analytical approach adopted for place also applies to the observer. A *Crude Person* is the individual defined by his innate attributes. This person is of a certain race, sex, body built, and so forth. These are intrinsic attributes, some fixed, other changing (i.e. age, strength, health). This person does basic things such as eating, sleeping, and reproducing. He is moved into action by these basic needs and desires that could be referred to as *Crude Motivation*.

A *Constructed Person* is the thinking person, defined by attributes derived from society. This person is a daughter, a mother, a teacher, a member of a health club, a hopeless romantic or a cold pragmatist, and so forth. This person does things in addition to satisfying basic needs, and what he does has much to do with relating to other people in a variety of roles. She is moved into action by the need of belonging and desires that could be referred to as *Constructed Motivation*.

A *Commodified Person* is defined by attributes imposed on him by economic, political, and social forces. This person is a consumer and a producer, defined by the image of success he can project or by the power he possesses. This person does things motivated by the desire to be recognized and the wish for self-actualization. For the *Commodified Person*, few attributes are fixed. In the desire to project a certain image, he will alter himself both superficially and in

significant ways, physically or mentally. Physically, a change of hair color is a superficial way, facial reconstruction is a significant way. Mentally, a change of attitude or the adoption of values and beliefs that further a career are but a few examples. This person is moved by needs and desires that have become his own only because they happen to be en vogue at the time: *Commodified Motivation*.

It is an assumption of this study that every individual is a mixture of the *Crude*, the *Constructed*, and the *Commodified*, in proportions that depend on his past experience and on his future expectations. What the person knows, believes, and values depends on his background and accumulated exposure to places and people. What he can do depends on innate as well as nurtured qualities. What he would like to do depends on his needs and desires, which are also a mixture of the *Crude*, the *Constructed*, and the *Commodified*. Even the volatile mood of the moment appears to be firmly rooted in the past and conditioned by expectations about the future.
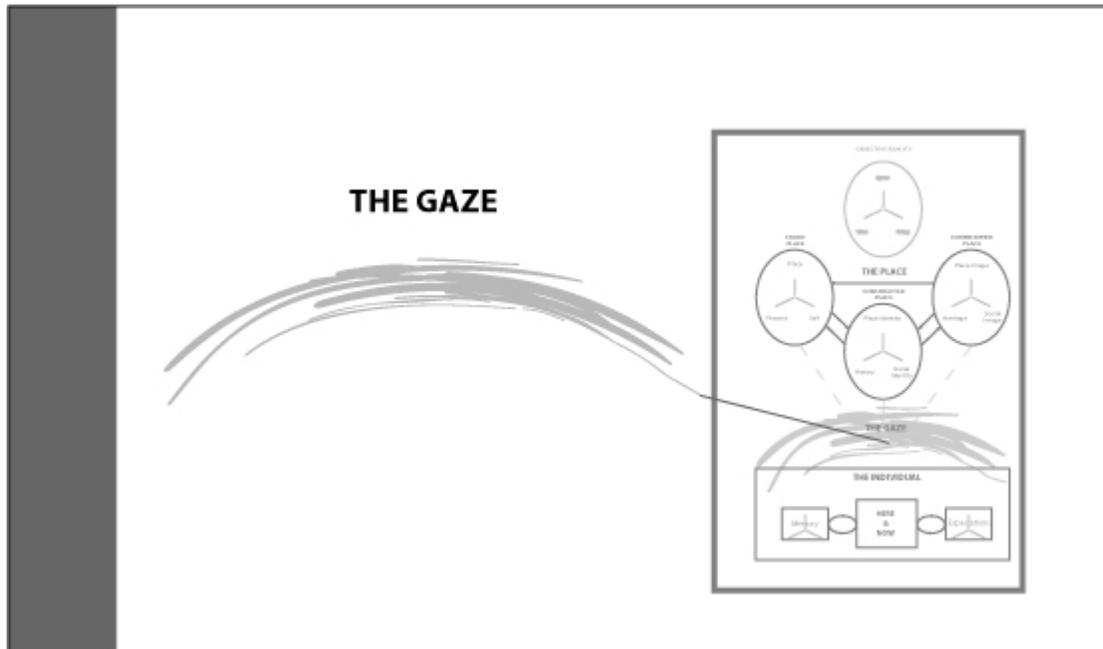
Figure 6: The Gaze

As illustrated in Figure 6, the link between the centered perspective and the decentered perspective, the totality of ways of experiencing place, *The Gaze* is the product of the impact of external place elements and the internal landscape of the observer. *The Gaze* is fluid because it is created by elements which are ever-changing and which receive various degrees of attention at various times.

The claim that the three building blocks of place invite and allow very different experiences of place, varying in intensity and degree of immersion, has a lot to do with the nature of place elements that pertain to these three dimensions.

Crude Place and The Gaze

Elements of *Crude Place* are things and events that can only be perceived by direct experience. Therefore, these elements impact *The Gaze* only if the observer is immersed in the physical place. Limitations regarding an observer's ability to be present in more than one place at a time, suggests that the majority of places do not become known through direct experience. The observer can only experience these places by means of representations available in print, audio or video, in the media, on the internet, or by exchanging stories with other observers. Even when direct experience is possible, internal factors of the observer represent constraints to her ability or willingness to immerse herself in the place. The routine of the day dictates that most people will move about quite indifferent to their surroundings, without noticing details or changes unless some events brings them forth to the forefront of their attention. While an experience of *Crude Place* elements has the potential to be intense, it often leaves the observer untouched. To experience *Crude Place* intensely, the observer needs mindfulness, direct engagement with its environment, interest and curiosity. Otherwise, the experience remains limited.

Constructed Place and The Gaze

Elements of *Constructed Place* consist of the entirety of meanings ascribed to elements of *Crude Place*. Therefore, the impact of these elements on the gaze is the most minimal. These elements are not obvious. An observer will generally be only vaguely aware of his own subjectivity, and either indifferent to or ignorant of the subjectivities of people surrounding him.

An observer's own subjectivity generally remains hidden because the observer is not aware that what he takes for reality is a construct, the result of its immersion in a society, the function of the roles he plays in various social groups. What an observer deems right or wrong, normal or deviant, worth of attention or better left unattended, is generally unquestioned and taken for granted as something everyone else shares. Values and beliefs of an observer, to himself, will usually appear to be universal truths. Whenever someone else deviates in some way, that someone else must be wrong. As such, the elements of *Constructed Place* that are most intimate to an observer are also hidden in most cases.

The subjectivity of others is even more difficult to leave a mark on an observer's interpretation of place. Only rarely will that subjectivity be articulated and communicated clearly enough to inspire questioning. Only rarely will such questioning be characterized by respect for the differences in opinion and not result in contestation. Generally, an observer would first of all have to become aware of his own subjectivity before event intending to pay attention and respect that of another. Once this first step is achieved, the difficulties of inquiring and understanding how someone else interprets the place makes such endeavors very rare and usually contained within the realm of academic inquiry.

Because of the difficulties explained above, the elements of *Constructed Place* are the ones that influence *The Gaze* in the most subtle of ways, with a very strong effect on the side of one's own subjectivity, and a very weak effect on

the side of someone else's. These elements act from behind the veils of the human subconscious.

Commodified Place and The Gaze

Elements of *Commodified Place* are strategically manipulated representations of place. Therefore, their impact on *The Gaze* is the most vigorous, if simply for the fact that these messages are forcefully thrown at the observer from every direction, in the form of advertisements, media representations, stereotypes circulated, political platforms, and so on. A paradox is at work: these elements are the most remote and unreal elements of place, yet they have the most powerful impact on the gaze, and therefore, shape the way people experience place.

These elements are artifices, imagined, either outright false or incorporating simplifying strategies that sometimes misrepresent and always miniaturize place and its inhabitants. Yet, these bite-sized images and messages have a strange appeal. No effort is needed to absorb them. They make no claim on reason and they require no attention-span or commitment. In fact, an effort would be required to dodge them, because they pour towards the observer from countless directions. They tell people what to think and what to do about a place, and for many this is a convenient form of giving up to the comfort of a consumerist society. These elements create a false consciousness that, in turn, reinforces the messages and creates the environment in which they can continue to propagate.

These elements, artificial as they are, are elements of place nevertheless, because their existence depends on elements of *Crude Place* and *Constructed Place*. Also, the impact of these imagined representations is very real, as they feed back and change both physical place and how people think about it. These changes are real. As a result of crafty representations, a place can be transformed by physical action, it can be tore down for redevelopment, or conserved for environmental reasons. The meanings associated with the place will slowly incorporate more and more of the slogans and representations available, until the elements of *Crude Place* play a secondary role in meaning creation, and those of *Commodified Place* rule supreme. Great responsibility should be assumed by agents powerful enough to craft such persuasive messages. However, such responsibility is generally a matter of wishful thinking, an unrealistic expectation. The politics of the status-quo are self-propagating, and powerful agents have no incentives to practice responsibility, for it would work against their best interest.

In summary, at any moment in time, *The Gaze* is influenced to various degrees by elements of place. These elements, referred to as external factors because they are related to the external environment, influence *The Gaze* by providing that which can be attended to. The internal elements discussed in the previous section influence *The Gaze* by dictating if and how the external elements will be attended to. Willingness and ability to experience place depend on these internal elements. *The Gaze*, a function of both categories, sets the scene for the individual experience of place.

The individual experience of place

Exploring the human interaction with place is a worthwhile endeavor because places have fundamental significance to human beings and relationships with places are almost as important as relationships with people (Relph, 1976). To be in place is to know, to become aware of one's very consciousness and sensuous presence in the world. Place is the most fundamental form of embodied experience – the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time (Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Casey, 1993). The experience of place is grounded in the experience of the body (Buttimer and Seamons, 1980). However, the danger of explaining experience is the trap of considering as legitimate only such aspects that can be generalized and casting aside the richness of individual experience. Understanding, then, as it becomes seemingly more sophisticated, also becomes impoverished. "[...] divergent meanings of places are not merely reflected in the narratives about places but are encoded in the diverse activities which different [observers] enact" (Edensor, 1998, p.38).

What are these activities, how are they influence by the place where they occur, and how do they influence place in return? Rowles (1980) isolated four distinct but overlapping modalities of geographical experience: action, orientation, feeling, and fantasy. Action involves movement at various scales, from within an enclosed space, to local places, and to distant places. Orientation occurs due to the need to frame actions in term of cognitive differentiation of space involving schemata – mental representations of physical-social space providing orientation within a known world (Tuan, 1975a; Downs and Stea, 1973;

Moore and Golledge, 1976). Particular settings emerge as affective symbols providing extensions of individual identity (Ley, 1977, p.508). These feelings may be private or they may be shared feelings, a case in which places become "fields of care" (Tuan, 1975b, p.236). Rowles also identified two forms of fantasy: reflective geographical fantasy – reminiscence and selective participation in environments of the past; and projective geographical fantasy –transporting participants to spatially removed contemporary milieus. Other authors have proposed similar taxonomies, which hold in common the fact that they are to a more or less intense degree, arbitrary. In the spirit of this thesis, valuing simplicity, consistence, and thoroughness, a different approach is suggested. The experience of place should be analyzed on two dimensions: ability and willingness to engage place.

Ability to experience

Ability to experience place brings together internal and external elements of place: what elements of place make themselves available to the observer, and how able is the observer to engage these elements and in what way? The ways in which the observer is able to engage place is strictly related to its body functions: look at the place, listen to it, taste it, smell it, and touch it. However, as described in the following section, each of these five categories includes infinite modalities of engagement, prompted by the individual's motivation to act.

Ability to engage place depends on the accessibility of the place. Access is a key concept. To illustrate, there are elements of *Crude Place* that defy human experience, or at least repel most attempts. Extreme climates such as the

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South Pole or the Saharan Desert, topological formations such as mountain tops or deep sea crevices, dangerous environments such as the Amazon jungle or the African Savannah, make experience of these places difficult and unavailable except for the most stubborn of observers. Even these stubborn people will most likely experience these places mediated by technology, with special equipment and devices which make the experience almost as artificial as if they were to be located in a lab and watch a screen of the outside world. Little insight is offered by such an extreme example. However, the point to remember is that places lend themselves to experience in different ways, with different amounts of difficulty. The flat Manhattan is easier to explore than the hilly San Francisco or the steep slopes of Machu Pichu. The more difficulty associated with accessing a certain place, the less likely an observer will fully experience that place. Not everyone can climb, not every one can swim. Bird watching is entertaining only for those with healthy eyesight, and hiking a mountain only attractive for those with good legs and a strong heart.

Elements of *Constructed Place* can also limit the ability of an observer to engage place, but mostly by means of peer pressure (going there is taboo, or at least frowned upon) and by reducing willingness to do so. If a place evokes negative meanings or is perceived as dangerous, the reality of *Crude Place* elements no longer bears much significance; an observer will avoid engaging that place. If a stigma is associated with a place, or if the place is consecrated as holy ground, access is either denied or limited by such elements. It becomes a matter of personal attributes whether these place elements are accessible or not:

a priest would have access to the innermost chambers of the temple, a foreigner will care little of social and cultural taboos.

Elements of *Commodified Place* can significantly limit the ability of an individual to engage the place. Only individuals with certain economic, political, or social power gain admittance to places set aside for these elite circles. An individual that is not a member of the government will not be allowed to step into the building of the ministry. An individual that cannot afford the price of admission will not be allowed inside a museum, a restaurant or aboard a plane. Experiencing Paris by walking the streets without affording to sit down at one of the famous cafes must be quite a different experience that the experience afforded by the ability to pay for access to lodging, food, entertainment and culture. An individual that happens to have the wrong skin color in a racially segregated country will probably be denied access to most places.

Access is not the only element related to the ability of experiencing a place. Once the place is accessed, severe limitations may exist to what an individual can do inside. To illustrate *Crude Place* limitations: one cannot ski in the forest, swim in a desert, or take a stroll on the surface of a lake. These are physical limitations. *Constructed Place* limitations; one cannot whistle in a church, stroll naked downtown, or dance furiously during a symphonic performance. These are cultural limitations, having to do with what is acceptable in specific social circumstances and what is not. *Commodified Place*: one must speak softly, abstain from taking photos, and follow specified paths inside a museum, slide the credit card or show the boarding pass when asked, and not be

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in the park after hours. These are limitations related to how strictly behavior is regulated in various places.

Willingness to experience

Another important way to look at the individual experience of place is by understanding the drive, the motivation, the incentive. The focus no longer rests on ability, but on the willingness to experience a place. The incentive system under which a particular individual operates at any given moment in time has the power to determine not only what places he will seek to engage, but also on what elements of these places his attention will be bent.

Personal interests, as well as professional interests, can shape the mode of engagement with place, and the observer would walk in a world made of things, agents, and relationships relevant to the prevailing interest. To illustrate, a hotel appraiser would move about his world keenly aware of hotel structures, their location, their competitors and the likely demand generators within sight. During times when other interests take precedence, other criteria will define which elements of place stand out for attention. It is generally the interest of the observer that empowers the place. Long-lived and intense interests, such as one's profession, have the power to command attention even in times of leisure, when the observer is otherwise engaged with the place.

As there are numerous professions and infinities of interests, hobbies, talents or personal inclinations, each individual may at any moment be moved into action or contemplation by any possible combination of them. It stands to reason that each individual, if for this reason only, will experience the place in a

very personal and unique way. A particular type of individual has a particular type of relationship with a particular place. The following is an illustration of how a tourist, according to the literature review, is commonly believed to experience place.

<center>Ways of experiencing place: the tourist</center>

This section partly addresses research question number four and is an illustration of the way in which the model can be applied to investigate the relationship between a tourist and place. A tourist and a dweller differ significantly in their relationship to specific spatial coordinates, their predominant assumed roles at the time of the observation, and the needs and desires that motivate their actions at the time. The primary activity of the tourist is the act of travel to the place and through a place. The act of travel may be significant to the individual, as a journey is often associated with the act of discovering one's self: "self knowledge is not an intellectual game, but an arduous journey through the four continents [...] a journey that embraces all aspects of existence" (Jung, 1959, p.6). An opportunity for personal change, a journey is often viewed as a "metaphor for individuation, personal development, change and transformation" (Birkeland, 2005, p.6). Traveling, for some, has become more than getting to a place or simply moving through place; it has become a way of life.

For tourists, ideally, travel is a tool for gaining "comparative knowledge" (Clifford, 1997) that allows individuals to strengthen (or question) their identity by comparing themselves and their places of origin with the foreign people and lands they visit. Providing the accumulation of such knowledge is not entirely

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perverted by the *tourist gaze* (Urry, 1990), travel has the potential of becoming an arena for the "development of a differential space that may transform society and culture" (Birkeland, 2005, p.57). As such, for the many individuals whose previous knowledge of places derives entirely from commoditized representations that bombard them everyday through various media channels, travel is an opportunity to experience a place that one only new about in theory and gain an understanding that can only provided by experiencing the context in which that place lends itself to the observer (Said, 1984).

A number of authors compare and contrast the modern tourist with the ancient pilgrims (Turner, 1974; Bauman, 1996, MacCannell, 1976). In their view, tourists are contemporary pilgrims on a quest to collect what they perceive as valuable objects and places. This view is opposed by authors that believe various forms of pilgrimage still exist and argue for a deconstruction of what it means to be on a pilgrimage nowadays (Rinschede, 1992). The parallel between pilgrimage and tourism offers an important insight into the reason why people leave home. The ancient pilgrim would customarily undergo a rite of passage under the form of a journey to a sacred place with the intent to worship, but as a result of his pilgrimage, a change in the individual's statute would occur. The modern tourist, whether consciously or not, desires a similar positive change in status. It is in recognition of this reality that tourist brochures always promise a sort of transformation through a rite of passage and claim the tourist would become a different person (Bruner, 1991).

The tourist engages in a search for a vanished "authenticity" no longer to be found in the tourist's home and everyday life (MacCannell, 1976). Edensor criticizes the way in which MacCannell adopts argues that authenticity should be conceived as a "negotiable quality open to subjective interpretation" (Bruner 1994; Pearce and Moscardo 1988). Many of the activities in which tourists engage can be understood as attempts to escape an inauthentic way of life, from everyday life (Rojek, 1995; Cohen, 1998, Graburn, 1983). Comparing modern tourism with medieval festivals in their ability to turn normal existence upside down and throw their participants in a liminal state, tourism is found to display a pale version of the festival, in which forms of transgression are merely simulated in a carefully calculated design that has the purpose to suggest that the bounds of normal behavior are transgressed (Turner and Turner, 1973). Thus, the touristic ritual of leaving the everyday for a short time has a "functionalist social purpose which results in the reintegration of the traveler with his/her society upon returning, often with an enhanced social status" (Edensor, 1998, p.4).

Tourists, more so than dwellers, engage the place by looking at it, being primarily interested in visual impressions and sightseeing (Urry, 1990; MacCannell, 1976). The sense of seeing has been dominant in knowledge production in modernity, but such a preference has negative effects for individuals and societies because it privileges distance rather at than relatedness (Lefebvre, 1991). It makes sense, then, that most of the other activities tourists engage in are so many ways of consuming a place they can otherwise not easily relate to. "Tourism has blended into a mélange of consuming activities, typified

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by a structure of feeling which is instantaneous, depthless, affective and fragmented, a condition which apparently thwarts an enduring sense of identity" (Edensor, 1998, p.5).

Thus, a tourist will take photos, buy images and souvenirs, and in the act of doing so imagine that he is in fact purchasing a piece of the place itself, as proof that he has been there. The attitude of the tourist differs from the complex attitude of the native, which "can be expressed by him only with difficulty and indirectly through behavior, local tradition, lore, and myth" (Tuan, 1974, p.63). Essentially, a tourist's experience will be only superficial, his evaluation of the place primarily aesthetic, his judgment determined by appearances evaluated according to some cannon of beauty that is usually alien to the place. In many ways, a tourist may be said of not even seeing a the place, but merely move through sets of representations of place. The tourist, then, is mostly in touch with the *Commodified Place*, being driven by fabricated desires, the needs of recognition, and exposed primarily to the stages set for his benefit and the artifacts produced with him in mind. This layer of place is no less real than the other ones, but it does have the effect to miniaturize both place and its inhabitants, packaging them nicely for consumption.

The above only superficially highlights some of the academic thoughts on tourists and their experience. Many informative books and commentaries exist, yet are outside the scope of this thesis. The above was presented with the purpose of highlighting a point already made in this chapter and to set the stage for a principle presented in the following chapter. The behavior of the tourist is

consistent with the theory expressed here, that needs and desires determine the way in which an individual will move through the place and interact with it. The specific activities tourists engage in are indicative of an important concept at play: the tension of opposites.

All individuals are torn between opposing drives: the need for security is for ever at odds with the need for adventure, the desire to relate conflicts with the desire for intimacy and so on. That everyone wants that which they lack is maybe to simplistic an explanation. The essential point here is that human aspiration encompasses the entire range of possibilities. When priority is given to home related values of security, intimacy, belonging, the heart will harbor secret desires for the opposite of what is home, the unknown and the exotic. It is in this tension of opposites that one of the secrets for understanding *sense of place* resides.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final part of this study addresses in more detail research question

number three: what definition of *sense of place* could be developed from insights

derived from the model? An inquiry about the nature of *sense of place* could not

have proceeded without the inquiry in the nature of *place*. However, while the

insights derived from the analysis of place are necessary to an understanding of

sense of place, they are not sufficient. Something else is required. This chapter

articulates the relevant insights developed in the previous chapter, shows their

relevance to *sense of place*, and puts forth a theory that brings these insights

together and provides that needed something else.

There is no consensus as to where *sense of place* is located. Is it an

attribute of the place, located in the elements of place discussed and best

referred to as *genius loci*? Or is it located in the observer, being not so much a

cause, as an effect? Or is it the process by which an observer becomes attached

to the place? This research started with the goal of finding one answer, possibly

by means of identifying all possibilities and eliminating one by one all that failed

to justify their own existence. Place itself is not just the physical, or just the

symbolic, or just the representation of it. It consists of all of the above plus a few

more layers that have to do both with the observer and the specific time of the

observation. Similarly, *sense of place* is a multi-layered complex concept. Before

attempting an all encompassing theory, a few concepts need to be re-articulated.

The concept of plurality

There is no such thing as one place. The fact that a plurality of places inhabits the same spatial coordinates has been revealed in the analysis of elements of *Crude*, *Constructed*, and *Commodified Place*. Differences in perception ability, variations in perspective and scale, the motivations of the *here and now*, all conspire to ensure an infinity of places co-exist at any given moment at the same spatial coordinates. Differences in worldviews, no matter how minute, dictate that various individuals that belong to various mixtures of social groups will interpret, think about and talk about place in slightly different ways, ensuring the same *Crude Place* is endowed with a multitude of different meanings. Only in the sphere of *Commodified Place* is plurality threatened, as there is manipulative value in convincing people that a place has a single, defining identity that makes all other possible interpretations of place irrelevant. Fortunately, even in the sphere of interest and power, dominant representations of place are often contested because at any given moment there might be a few competitive representations of the place seeking recognition.

Sense of place is also characterized by plurality. Whether *sense of place* is narrowly defined as "making *sense of place*" and as such has a predominantly cognitive component, or whether it has something to do with the affective bonds between observer and the elements of place, the analysis suggests that "*sense of place*" used in singular is improper. Therefore, the first concept dictates that one should always refer to *senses of place* as a way of articulating the plurality of the concept.

The concept of fluidity

There is no such thing as an unchanged or unchangeable place. Change has various forms, degrees of intensity, and multiple impacts on all elements of place, may they be *Crude*, *Constructed* or *Commodified*, internal or external, past, present or future. All elements of *Crude Place* change, albeit some nature elements endure beyond the most enduring human-made elements. Most changes of human-made elements are linear, most changes of natural elements are cyclical. A change of season, the movement of heavenly bodies and the light they pour on the place, the construction of a new building or the tearing down of another are all elements of place as continuously changing. The meanings attached to these elements also changes, thus elements of *Constructed Place* are also in a continuous state of flux. As contesting powers change, the status quo comes under attack and elements of *Commodified Place* are changed to egitimize the new order. All the elements of external place are changing, and so are the internal elements discussed in the centered approach. Moods, opinions and beliefs, goals and intentions are among the most volatile elements of place defined in this analysis. Change is the status quo of all place elements.

The *senses of place* evoked by changing place elements are also in a continuous state of flux. Whether the change is slow or abrupt, small or significant, temporary or permanent, the very existence of such change dictates that one should refer to *senses of place* in plural as a way of articulating the fluidity of the concept.

The concept of interdependence

An analysis of place would be incomplete without an analysis of time and society. The analysis in the previous chapters illustrated how this relation of interdependence holds true across all building blocks of place. In *Crude Place*, the physical elements of place could only be observed in a moment in time (now) and by the mediation of the perceptual apparatus of a single observer (a self). Elements of *Constructed Place*, while no longer limited to the now and one observer, were nevertheless located somewhere in time, and depend on the interpretative powers of the society to even come into being. At this point in the analysis, the temporal dimension and the social dimension took the form of History and Social Identity, and their interdependence with Place Identity holds true. The same applies to Heritage and Social Image, which are concepts interdependent with that of Place Image.

If elements of place are located not only on the spatial, but also on the temporal and social dimensions, it must hold true that senses of place can exist only by taking account of the interdependence of these dimensions. As such, senses of place may be spoken of only inasmuch as senses of time and senses of place are also accounted for. For each individual, senses of place are created from senses of time and senses of self. Any place that fails to inspire a sense of history and identity is not a place at all, it is a *non-place* (Augé, 1995). Therefore, any analysis of senses of place must include analysis of senses of time and senses of self as a way of articulating the interdependence that characterizes this concept.

The concept of simultaneous juxtaposition

Having showed that place is a multi- layered concept and identifying these layers as consisting both of conceptual building blocks (crude, constructed, commodified) and of interdependent dimensions (time, space, and society), a vital point to articulate is that all these layers form place only in as much as they are all simultaneously accounted for. It is not sufficient to identify these elements and treat them one by one as if such dissection could actually occur in reality. It is necessary to recognize that all these elements are manifest with various degrees of intensity at the same time and all the time. And it is out of this simultaneous juxtaposition of elements that place is born.

The same requirement applies to senses of place. To speak of senses of place is to speak about the senses of place, the senses of time and the senses of self evoked by the elements of place as manifest at the same time, overlapping with various and changing intensity. The metaphor of lenses used to account for the analysis on the spatial, temporal, and social dimension is still useful. Conceive place as the image of the interplay of all the elements of place projected through the juxtaposed lenses of time, space and society. To describe this image it is not sufficient to recognize that senses of place are interdependent with senses of time and senses of self. It is necessary to argue that only by means of simultaneous juxtaposition are senses of place created out of senses of time and senses of self.

The concept of attraction

Needs and wants influence what place is because they influence how a place is perceived, thought about, and acted out. Moreover, the urgency of each observer's needs and the pursuit of her goals dictate the circumstances of the *here and now* in which each place is directly experienced. Across all building blocks, the very motivation to move about originates in needs and wants. While *Crude Place* could naturally be associated with more basic needs and *Commodified Place* with fabricated desires, what holds true is that any observer's experience of place is determined by their specific sets of needs and desires.

If place is perceived, thought about, and acted out according to motivational drivers, it stands to reason that *senses of self*, whether focusing on the cognitive or on the affective, must also be influenced by the predominant needs and desires of the observer. The more a place is perceived as satisfactory when these needs and desires are concerned, the more that place is likely to enjoy the focus of attention, the bend of one's mind and spirit, and the flip of one's checkbook.

The concept of attraction dictates that an individual observer will be more open to engaging a place perceived, believed, and represented as an answer to the needs and wants of that individual. The individual may be aware of some of these needs or act quite unconsciously. Stronger senses of place are likely to result from exposure to a place that is attractive in terms of its ability to satisfy the individual on a multitude of levels: physically, intellectually, affectively, or spiritually.

The concept of tension of opposites

The concept of attraction discussed above may appear difficult to apply under the circumstances of change. Elements of place change continuously on all dimensions, external and internal. To further diminish the likelihood of a match between place and human aspirations, the internal landscapes are riddled by paradox. Needs and desires do not form a coherent, uniform whole. Conflicting values coexist, opposing desires tug at a single individual. The need for security is in constant battle with the need for adventure. The need to relate is at odds with the need to privacy.

S*enses of place* appear to be most intense when elements of place and human aspirations align. The ability to satisfy changing and often conflicting human needs gives a place power over the hearts and minds of people. Prague is an excellent example of a city which appeals to very diverse people because it embodies the tension of opposites which characterizes the human condition. Prague's earth-hugging houses appeal to the need for comfort and security while its high arches and hundreds of steeples reflect the human aspiration to something higher. Intimate and nurturing streets open up into vast public piazzas. The architecture of the city includes styles from various currents and ages; these differences complement each other organically. In that respect, continuous change has morphed into a sense of permanence, much like the way in which the changing dunes of the desert and waves of the ocean ensure both water and sand appear forever unchanged. Prague evokes a strong *sense of identity* and a strong *sense of time*.
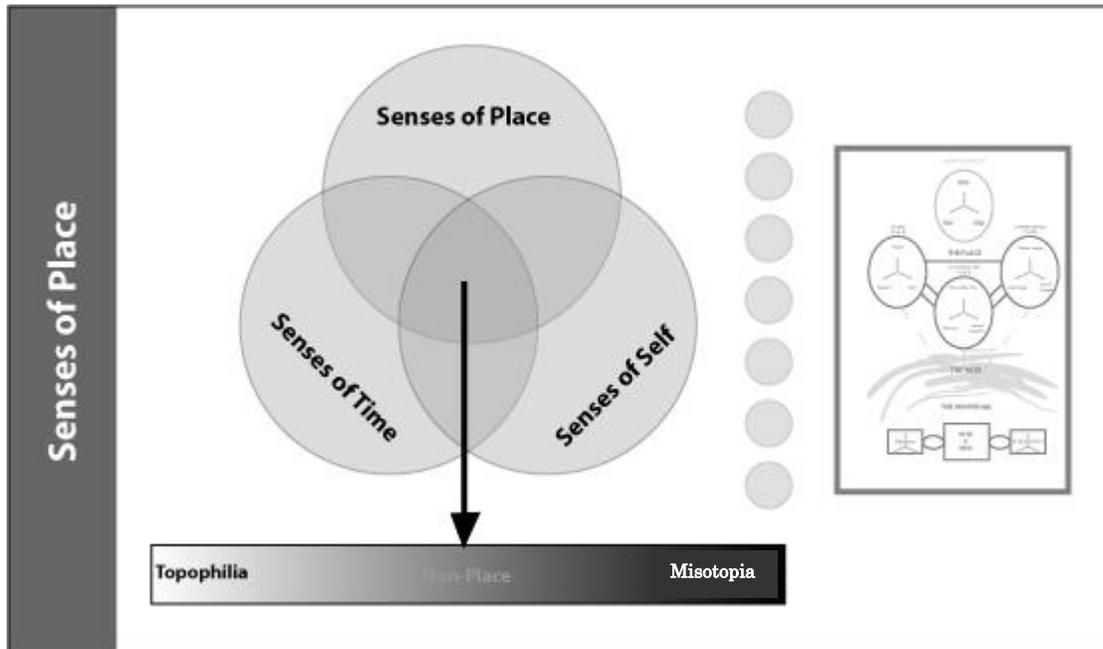
Figure 7: Senses of Place

The seven concepts presented above are illustrations of the type of insights that may be obtained by analyzing place with the aid of the PDM and have been incorporated in the following attempt to define *sense of place*:

An individual's sense of place could be described as an ever changing cognitive-affective resonance between (a) a complex, fluid juxtaposition of crude, constructed, and commodified elements of place pertaining to the dimensions of space, time, and society and (b) the most personal, intimate, and often conflicting needs and desires of that individual.

The singular sense of place is used to distinguish between instances when the concept is discussed at scale focused on the individual (centered approach) and instances when the concept is discussed at a scale focused on

society. The definition, may be further simplified: if (a) could be referred to as *external landscapes*, and (b) could be referred to as *internal landscapes*, then *sense of place could be described as the ever-changing cognitive-affective resonance between internal and external landscapes.*

The definition above, albeit tentative, has merit because it relies on a structured approach to understanding how people relate to place. The reason why much of the literature review uses terms such as *genius loci*, *topophilia*, and *sense of place* interchangeably appears to be related to an unstated assumption that a *sense of place* must always be something positive. *Topophilia*, roughly translated as love of place, describes how an individual relates to a place with which the individual finds himself in harmony: the particular tension of opposites inherent in the particular internal make up of that individual finds expression and resonates with the elements of that particular place. Or, in other words, the internal landscape of the individual is in harmony (more often than not) with the external landscapes. However, the definition put forth in this study does not limit sense of place to a simplistic extreme. The definition is neutral and does not contain a qualitative judgment in itself. In avoiding to force a qualitative judgment, the definition accounts for cases in which a place does not evoke love or fails to inspire any type of relationship with an individual.

Misotopia, hate of place, describes a situation, in which internal landscapes are in conflict with external landscapes. The concentration camp at Auschwitz would be a good example of a place that does not leave an individual indifferent, in which each element of place cries for attention and is infused with

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meaning. The meaning, however, is a painful one, and the place is characterized by its ability to deny human aspiration and to curtail the very ability to survive.

A *non-place* is a place that inspires neither love nor hate. Augé (1995) coined the term *non-place* to describe a condition characterizing the places of modernity, especially places of transit such as motorways, airports, shopping malls and so forth. "Clearly, the word "non-place" designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces" (Augé, 1995, p. 94). In other words, Augé used the term to refer to the intrinsic qualities of the *non-place* as well as to the qualities - or lack thereof – that dictate the nature of their interaction with those who wanders through.

MacCannell's (1976) allegation that "we are all tourists" applies best to *non-places* because nobody dwells there; everyone merely passes through. They owe their existence to a single-minded purpose and they usually enforce strict terms related to access and participation. Non-places are "tourist bubbles" that restrict the individual's choices of movement and action, and consequently thought and perception. The two main characteristics of *non-places* relate to their effect on an individual's *sense of self* and *sense of time*.

Non-places create the "shared identity" of their visitors or users, fabricating the "average man" as tourist, passenger, or any other role ascribed to him by the surrounding *texts,* where a text is any element of the surrounding environment that conveys meaning (Augé, 1995). While *non-places* make available such benefits as "identity loss" and the "more active pleasure of role

playing," the space of *non-places* "creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude" (Augé, 1995, p.103). The tourist follows the same itinerary as the others, receives the same fake smiles and rehearsed greetings, responds to the same demands: show ticket, slide credit card, buy fake artifact, take photo with sign which states identity of place. In effect, an individual will not have the opportunity to develop or ascertain his own identity by perception of, immersion in, or interaction with non-places. A *non-place* is characterized by its ability to cancel out identity, and will not allow the individual to develop a *sense of self*.

Not a destination in themselves, and created with a single minded purpose, *non-places* are there to be passed through and consequently are measured in units of time. "Itineraries do not work without timetables, lists of departure and arrival times in which a corner is always found for a mention of possible delays" (Augé, 1995, p.117). Similarly, while traveling by plane, great care is taken to continuously inform passengers of the plane's position and estimated time of arrival. Check-in times and check-out times in hotels, happy hours and early-bird specials in restaurants, opening and closing times of retail shops, all measured in units of time isolated from the greater context of an individual's life, inviting forgetfulness of a past and indifference for a future that do not relate to the successful operation of the facility, whichever that may be. A *non-place* is like a trap in the present, where the only history is the last 48 hours of news (Augé, 1995). A non-place, then, is characterized by its ability to make past irrelevant, to cancel out the need of understanding events or landmarks in

their historical context, and will not allow the individual to develop a *sense of time*.

The identity of a place, much like the identity of a person, may be created and reinforced by positive and negative processes, by association with something perceived as positive or by disassociation with something perceived as negative. Applying this concept, *non-places* appear to reinforce the identity of places by a negative process of dissociation. A place may be defined as the opposite of a non-place; a place may be defined as that which can and does evoke senses of time and identity.

<u>Practical applications of the model</u>

This section addresses research question number four: how could the model be applied in the hospitality industry? In a very general way, the model can be employed to brainstorm in any situation about any topic. The *Crude* portion of it invites the recognition that there are facts, things and events which should not be confused with opinions or fabricated representations. The *Constructed* portion reminds the user of the complexity brought into the situation by each individual actor and gives insights into what this complexity is caused by. The *Commodified* portion is a reminder that actors have personal agendas, and much of what is being said and done has the purpose of furthering unstated interests.

Using the three lenses makes the user aware of time, place, and people as interrelated. An awareness of time is useful not only in terms of recognizing the inevitability of change, but also as a reminder that any action has its proper

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timing and duration if the desired effect is to be achieved. Adjusting for scale and perspective minimizes the risk of myopia, of focusing on the short term at the expense of long term effects. An awareness of people serves as a useful reminder that any individual is interconnected and a failure to account for all actors involved or to understand what makes them tick would likely result in failure of any endeavor. Basic as such lessons are, they are easily forgotten, unless constantly kept at the forefront of attention. A graphic illustration of the model, if properly internalized and understood, may serve as an easy reference tool for these lessons.

<div align="center">Hospitality applications</div>

Building a hotel, designing a dining experience, or making a branding decision share a common trait: they are all place-making acts. The hospitality industry in many of its varied manifestations, from hotels to golf-courses, from cruise-ships to time-share arrangements, consists of place-making activities. For this reason, the model for deconstructing place can be useful as a tool for analysis and decision making in this industry. The model, as a blueprint for place, can offer valuable insights into steps that would need to be taken to build a place that would appeal to customers by facilitating a structured approach in asking the right questions. The following sections illustrate just some of the ways in which the model can be employed to that end.

The model suggests that a hotel is a complex multi-faceted concept. The site of the development, unless isolated in a distant uninhabited area, will be more than a patch of dirt ready to be developed. It will be a place that needs to be understood. The understanding of the site may be pursued on the three building blocks of the model.

The *Crude* Site will consist of the topography of the site, the geological and physical conditions of the soil, the climate, the availability of life-supporting utilities, the existing life, including but not limited to existing human settlements. In other words, an understanding of the site starts with taking stock of the *Crude Place* elements. The need to understand the site in context dictates that the developer should understand the relationships between this site and its surrounding, both at this current state and in the expected future state of a developed site.

The model dictates that there are *Constructed* elements of the site. Although the site may be a piece of overturned dirt to the developer, the same spot may mean many different things to many different people. In extreme scenarios, the place may be sacred to the locals, or the stage of important national or cultural events. The developer must seek to understand what the site means to all relevant parties so that he can understand the effect of changing the site. A Hampton Inn located on Staten Island has recently opened as part of a larger mixed-use development. In general, Hampton Inns all over the U.S. look very much alike. The Staten Island property is different in an intangible yet

striking fashion. Upon entering the lobby and visiting the rooms, a guest may notice that structural elements of the lobby and the dining area, as well as elements of design, appear to feature a horse racing theme. The quality and good taste of the layout and the decorations may account for part of the appeal of the property, but the essential reason why most guests feel there is something *right* about the place is revealed by in-depth interviews. Although the fact is not publicized under any form, the site of the hotel is the historic site of an old horse racing arena that had been an important socializing and gathering place for Staten Island locals at the turn of the 19th century. Numerous guests feel compelled to express a perceived sense of place to the front desk staff and to each-other. This intense sense of place may be caused by this unstated bond between the property and the heritage of the region.

The model reminds us that there are *Commodified* elements to the site. In this case, the very fact that a piece of dirt is identified as a site – i.e. something that was bought, sold, or leased and is about to be developed speaks to the commodified nature of this spot. However, the commodified elements may not always be so straightforward. Possible questions to raise are: who are the groups of interest or individuals that have something to gain or to lose from the future of this site? What are their incentives and their goals? How will they affect the present or future of the hotel development?

Working with the three lenses, other vital questions emerge. On the spatial lens, most concerns will be addressed by engineers and geologists. But on the social lens and temporal lens, as discussions with developers often reveal, not

much concern is ever manifested. On the temporal lens: what is the story of this place? What happened here and what is likely to happen once again? Is the site significant in any way to any one? One the social lens: who is the site significant to, who will be affected by the development, in what manner?

A developer, having secured permits and licenses, will hire an architect to draw a blueprint of the proposed hotel and forge ahead with the construction. In some cases, when the developer expects to be involved in the future of the building, more attention is paid to issues of design or environmental impact. However, the most often encountered scenario involves a developer that only seeks profit and wants to move to the next contract as soon as possible. As such, design issues are limited to whatever the current standards of an expected franchise flag dictate, and environmental issues are ignored as long as a modicum of legality is satisfied. The problem is that each site is unique, and a cookie-cutter solution is no solution at all, resulting in the implantation of an alien, unrelated structure in the middle of an existing organism that is made of existing structures, infrastructure, life, and people.

The model highlights the importance of often neglected elements of design and environmental friendliness by stressing the importance that the structure is integrated into its environment. Furthermore, the need that the structure evokes a *sense of identity* and a *sense of time* dictates that the structure needs to be integrated both socially and historically. These issues rarely surface in the planning stages of a hotel or resort, if ever. Yet, the analysis performed in this thesis showed that *Crude* Elements of place pale in importance

of the elements that are constructed. The meaning associated with the developed structure will dictate in great part the success of that structure

How could a new structure evoke a sense of history? How could a new structure evoke a sense of identity? The answers to such questions depend on specific local factors and the creative powers and understanding of the developer, and are not the scope of this thesis. What is the scope of this thesis is to point out that questions rarely asked in the Western hospitality world are revealed as very important when a hotel is analyzed by applying the Place Deconstruction Model. These decisions, taking into consideration both future guests and future associates, reveal the need to make choice related to how the space is regulated, what activities are permitted and encouraged, who will be admitted and who will be kept out, what needs and desires will be satisfied and in what way.

<u>Corporate Branding Issues</u>

A hotel has traditionally satisfied basic needs for shelter and food. The need of a guest to belong and participate in a community has rarely been addressed, possibly because a guest is perceived as only passing through. The need of recognition has been long recognized by upscale properties, but the approach to satisfying this need has taken place largely in the context of *Commodified Place* elements, by building and promoting hotel brands that may ultimately result in an erosion of the hotels' identity. This phenomenon is best analyzed in the context of boutique collections.

As groups of individually branded hotels, boutique collections enjoy benefits derived mainly from the distinctiveness of the experience provided. Iconic properties, strategically located in exclusive parts the world, these hotels convey a strong sense of place and often become destinations in their own right. Since the experience created by these hotels depends on their ability to convey a *sense of identity* and a sense of history, many boutique collections have traditionally promoted their properties individually and have avoided adopting a corporate brand.

Recent research conducted by the Cornell and presented in a case study published by the Harvard Business Review suggests that maintaining distinctiveness is costly. While corporate brands such as Four Seasons and Ritz-Carlton enjoy cross property sales as high as 15%, the non-branded hotels are rarely perceived as being part of a collection and costumers do not consciously seek to experience related properties. The dilemma: in the pursuit of better recognition, and implicitly, of higher profits, should boutique collections adopt a corporate brand or not?

The question most often debated by hospitality professionals appears to be whether a corporate brand should be created at the expense of the individual identities of hotels in the collection. The implicit assumption is that branding efforts will have a standardizing effect achieved primarily by adding repetitive physical elements to the properties, such as the brand logo, and by imposing uniform approaches to the delivery of customer service. Which begs the

question: what is it really that we are trying to brand, the hotel building or the experience?

If we are trying to brand the hotel, it appears inevitable that certain elements of design and certain elements of customer service will need to be standardized at the expense of the property's former distinctiveness. But why would anyone want to brand the hotel? The hotel is not the product we are selling, but merely one of the vehicles by which we provide that product. The hotel is not what customers are buying, but merely the setting in which value is being provided. We are not selling beds, rooms, or lounges. We are selling well-being and a sense of identity.

If we are trying to brand the experience, which relies so heavily on the distinctiveness of these properties, it appears necessary to acknowledge that any form of standardization is likely to have a detrimental effect. Fortunately, technology provides a possible way to brand experience without tainting it. The key element in branding experience is to perform a ritual act of dissociation between the delivery of the product and the various methods of representation involved in promoting and selling the product. In other words, all branding elements should be removed in space and in time from the actual experience.

How to perform this act of disassociation in practice would fall under the scope of future research. The purpose of presenting the cases above was to illustrate that the Place Deconstruction Model has real potential to be applied in the hospitality industry. The primary role of the model would be to inspire new ways of looking at the taken-for-granted approach to making places (i.e. hotels,

resorts, restaurants), operating these places (i.e. crafting the customer experience of the place), and promoting these places (i.e. as destinations in their own right).

Restaurant Design Issues

There is a restaurant located on Fore Street in Portland, Maine. The name of the establishment is *The Fore Street Restaurant*. The building of the restaurant, displaying a plain brick exterior, bears no signage that would indicate its use. The restaurant can be entered through a single, simple looking door that would never suggest to an uninformed party that a very good restaurant is located inside. The main chamber of the restaurant is centered on an open kitchen; the centerpiece is an oven with wood fire. Loads of supplies and baskets with produce clutter the kitchen and the sides of the restaurant.

At first sight, this establishment appears to have cast aside the Commodified dimension. A more attentive look would reveal that it relies, in fact, on a different approach to achieve a stronger effect. The choice to avoid a conspicuous façade and glittering signage creates a sense of exclusivity. A guest that hears about the place and chooses to experience it will probably feel that she has been let in into a secret, that she is now part of a very exclusive group of people that are in the know. By eliminating an element of *Crude Place* (i.e. the signage) that is easily recognized as also being a conspicuous and tangible element of the *Commodified Place*, the establishment has in fact created a stronger and more effective element of *Commodified Place*, an intangible

element located in the minds of its customers: the sense of exclusive knowledge and access to a secret place.

The central kitchen is also an element of artifice. The truth is that the greater part of the cooking takes place in a different space, a large hidden kitchen, very much like in any other food and beverage establishment. However, by choosing to add the finishing touches in the open, in a manner that suggests that the entire process takes place in front of the guest's eyes, an illusion is created. This illusion may be defined in various ways: a sense of honesty, of access to the heart of the house, of participation in something that is habitually remote, a glimpse of a rare spectacle. The essential point to remember, however, is that choices made in the inclusion of *Crude Elements* (i.e. the open kitchen, the oven, the performance of cooking in plain sight, etc) have strategic applications in creating *Commodified Elements* that are not easily recognized as elements of artifice.

This illustration serves the purpose of showing that the model can be used as a tool to expose and interpret the design choices made in order to achieve a desired effect, to create a desired guest experience. The simple omission of an object (signage) and the inclusion of another (an open kitchen) have effects on the guests sense of identity, making them feel privileged and special without in any way stating the desire to portray them as such. The lesson to be learned is that tangible elements of a restaurant may be subtly orchestrated to achieve powerful effects on its guests. Based on this premise, then, restaurant designers make choices with an eye on the effect they desire to achieve. The decision

process starts with defining the goal: what experience to offer, how to make the guest feel. Then, the usefulness of the model becomes obvious. On the spatial dimension, decide what tangible elements to include based on what meanings the guests should associate with these objects, characters, and performances. While the commodified elements play a powerful role, it appears that their effects are more powerful if they are not recognized as artifice but come across as something authentic. On the temporal dimension, a restaurant designer should define and recognize meaningful elements of place that have to do with waiting times, timing of performances such as order taking, menu suggestions, and so on. These elements are generally choices that relate to the service script adopted by the establishment. The choice of displaying a wood burning oven is also an element of time, because it creates a sense of sense of heritage, of tradition, of return to the way things used to be, to a place that our memories and fantasies may have framed as ideal. The choice to have an open kitchen also has a social dimension. Guests may now perceive themselves as relating to each other as spectators, and relating to the cooks in ways similar to which an audience relates with actors on a stage. The experience of dining has been enriched.

The questions that the designer must have asked herself could have been: besides eating, what other activities could be added to the experience to achieve the desired effect? Besides the hostess, the waiter and the buss boy, what other actors could be brought on stage to create the desire atmosphere for

the seated guests? By adding these elements (or by eliminating others), what is it that we are communicating or what feelings are we likely to inspire in our guests? Are there elements of place, whether tangible or intangible that work against the type of experience that we aim to offer? It is only by taking stock of all the tangible elements (crude place elements) and continuously assessing what meanings they convey (constructed place elements) that the establishment can decide on strategic actions (commodified place elements) that can ensure the desired guest experience is offered consistently.

General Approach

Based on the illustrations above, the following approach may be adopted in analyzing and making decisions related to any hospitality establishment:

1. Who are our customers? (apply model to attempt a definition of the common needs and desires of the targeted segment of the population that constitutes or client base; focus on their needs to define what senses of place and senses of time would complement their desired sense of identity).

2. What is the experience that would most likely appeal to our customers? (apply the sense of place concepts identified in the model to derive the most appropriate value offering to the identified customer base). The answers to this question reveal *Commodified Place Elements*, the ways in which we want customers to experience the product offered.

3. In order to offer the desired experience, ensure that each element of place contributes towards achieving the defined goal:

a. Identify the *Crude Place* elements needed (painstakingly work to take stock of spatial, temporal and social elements); for each of them define and understand the range of contexts in which they will be interpreted by customers.

b. Attempt taking stock of all the possible ways in which our customers are likely to interpret these elements (relying on an understanding of who the customers are, what their needs are, and how we plan to fulfill these needs).

c. Take strategic steps to modify the identified *Crude Place* elements to influence the *Constructed Place* Elements (effectively implementing *Constructed Place* elements, which constitute the goals of this analysis).

4. Reiterate the process above on a continuous basis, achieving a deeper understanding each time.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This thesis explored four research questions. The first research question, aiming to illustrate how the concept of place is formed, was answered by building the Place Deconstruction Model (PDM). The second research question, aiming to highlight and explore the interrelatedness of place concepts, was answered by identifying place elements related to the three building blocks of the PDM and exploring how they are related on the dimensions of time, space and society. The third research question, aiming to put forth a tentative definition of *senses of place*, was answered by distilling seven concepts from the analysis employed in

addressing the first two questions. The fourth research question, aiming to illustrate how the model could be applied in the hospitality industry, was answered by briefly illustrating new ways of looking at hotel development and branding.

The Place Deconstruction Model appears to have a wider application than originally conceived, as it exposes many forms of demagogy. The model articulates the fact that an infinite pool of possibilities suffers a process of miniaturization at every stage of human engagement with reality. In the very acts of perceiving, thinking about, and representing reality, people consciously and unconsciously strip the object of their attention of its richness and reduce it to a shadow of itself, which then they proceed to present as the only correct way to understand reality and use this interpretation to justify whatever worldview better suites their interests. The fact that this model can visually convey how richness is diminished in the human engagement with reality should at the very least encourage its user to pause and question how much knowledge is taken for granted and passes off much too easily as god-given reality. And in the act of questioning, hopefully the user of the model would feel inspired to pursue a healthy academic skepticism and produce work that goes beyond the *Commodified* surface of things, in search for understanding.

As explained above, the model already affords important insights into the concept of place and inspires future research by making it easy to identify gaps in the academic research of place. What is important to understand about the model, is that these benefits occur at a stage where the model has only

prescribed a way for compiling a list of parts, a list of elements of place, a

blueprint. In other words, this was a stage concerned mostly with investigating

the "what" of place. What lies ahead is an exciting investigation of the "how" and

"why"!

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