LOST IN PLACE

ON PLACE THEORY AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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PREFACE

Standing now on the threshold of graduation and looking back on five years of landscape architecture studies, I am aware of all the things I have gained through my education. It has given me a new set of eyes on the world, making visible connections and nuances I never noticed before. It has injected me with an almost delusional conviction that absolutely everything one way or another is a landscape architecture matter. But it has also made me doubt the possibility of ever being able to more than scratch the surface of this diverse and immensely complex field. To borrow a statement from a most accomplished scholar, *the more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know* (that was Einstein). Developing this master's thesis has offered me a provisional retreat into the realm of ideas. It has been a valuable opportunity to gain a firmer grip on the history and theory of the discipline, and reflect upon its relation to contemporary practices and evolving positions of the field. The lens of inquiry that has served to gather many disparate ponderings is the concept of place – as evasive as it is ubiquitous in everyday life and landscape architecture alike, and therefore so intriguing. Besides the ambition of contributing to a better understanding of place theory through this work, the exploration has also been an effort in what I expect to be an ever ongoing strive to find my own place amongst the breadth of ideas and professional contexts of the field. It is my hope that the result might stir also in you, dear reader, new questions, reflections, and realizations as you go on through the different places of your life and your work.

Louise Kjellgren

Stockholm, March 2015

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01

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an introduction and a background to this thesis project: how it came about and what it sets out to accomplish. Section 1.1 begins with a personal story of facing a particular place, and Section 1.2 accounts for the choice of topic explored in this thesis. Section 1.3 outlines and elaborates on aspects of the greater problem field within which the topic is set, followed by section 1.4 defining the particular problems that the thesis addresses. Section 1.5 states the aim and objectives of the thesis, and the questions guiding the research. Section 1.6 delineates the scope and limitations of the project, Section 1.7 defines the intended target audience, and the chapter concludes with section 1.8 which provides an outline of the thesis structure to orient the reader.

1.1
FACING PLACE: REVELATIONS AT THE WOOL STORE

Turning left at the intersection the street arched gently, passing between a paper recycling facility and an empty-looking office unit. There was an awkwardly renovated building on the right, looking rather out of place with the façade freshly painted in broad strokes of bright yellow, red and blue. The ground level hosted a desolate Italian eatery, the upstairs a dance academy and a boxing gym from where a subtle bass vibration purred down the walls and spilled out on the pavement. At the end of the street, opposite the self-storage adverting the prosecution of trespassers, stood the old giant itself.

The silhouette of the saw-toothed roof was outlined sharply against the afternoon sky. Disintegrating brick walls exposed rebar and wiring withering, and the window eyes were punched in or shut tight with plywood sheets. In this industrial part of North Melbourne, derelict wool stores such as this was not an uncommon sight.

Next to the wool store building was a fenced and empty lot of concrete, asphalt and dirt. Then finally, where the street hit a dead end in chain-linked and barbed wire, the Macaulay train line ran past underneath the City Link freeway overpass. Beyond the tracks, barely discernible where it lay sunken amidst weeds and shrubs, was the Railway Canal. Once an open creek, now a concrete-lined channel for storm water management where quiet water slowly made its way south to the Yarra River.

The sound of the freeway was a constant murmur in the waning rush hour, a mumbling monologue above. The train tracks cut into the dirt below the concrete belly of the bridge, which hung like some big animal suspended in mid air. Thick pillar legs held the heavy structure still while shadows of cars and trucks racing past were cast on the concrete slab beneath.

It was a sketchy place. Graffiti covered the entire bottom floor of the building. Cut-open fencing, empty spray cans, cigarette butts, junk and trash in the corners bore witness of invisible users. As darkness fell, the sharp lights from the late-open boxing gym pierced the adjacent façade, lending some light to the deserted wool store lot. There was the hum of the occasional vehicle on the overpass. Some rattle around the train track's fence. My immediate instinct was to turn back.

I hesitated beside the hole in the fence. The evening was quiet. Nobody around. Then suddenly I jumped at the sound of a car approaching, but it just pulled into the self-storage, turned around and drove off. I took a breath, flexed my shoulders, ducked under the barbed wire and entered through the fence.

You can imagine the inside of the wool store in its prime. Stacks of wool bundles piled high, samples to touch, eager chatter under the high ceiling on an auction day. The workers and the tradesmen now just ghosts of memory and imagination floating across the rotting wood floors.

The second time I came I saw a person cutting across the lot from the boxing gym, making quick way along the tracks. I kept to myself, looking closer at patterns on the ground and scattered left-behind trinkets.

In little nooks and corners under the overpass bridge dwelled birds. Pigeons, sparrows, even crows shuffling and fussing about on top of the pillars. Then suddenly taking off, darting across the lot and soaring
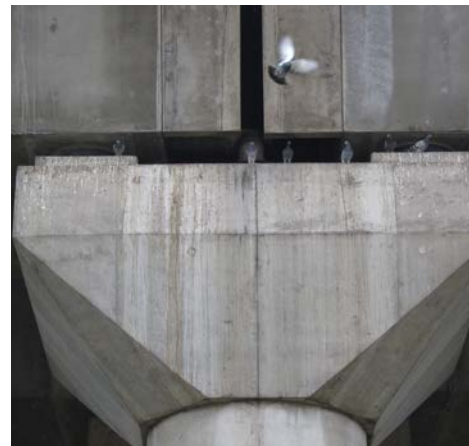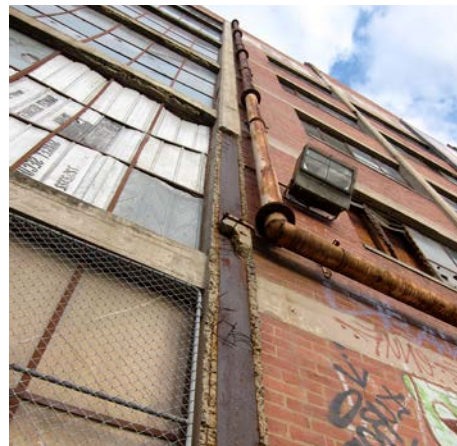
Figure 1. (Continued on next page) Images from the Melbourne Wool store site, featuring the prominent structures of the brick building, freeway overpass, and fencing that enclose the concrete lot, as well as details of the disintegrating materials, thriving weeds, and tiny wildlife.

into the open sky. Sometimes just one, sometimes two, and sometimes the whole flapping flock.

There were also tinier creatures. I noticed them when the sun came out. In the weeds that grew from the dirt and cracks in the concrete buzzed bees and butterflies and other little bugs. Seemingly random they fluttered about, moving from flower to flower in the one day that is a whole summer in their short lives. Not passers-through like me, they were bred and fed of this place, living in it and through it.

Another time I was photographing the graffiti murals, making my way along the perimeter of the wool store brick wall. All of a sudden there was a girl in my viewfinder. Maybe sixteen or so, dark-skinned and veiled in a black scarf she paced back and forth in the nook of a barred doorway. She didn't mind me snapping shots. A while later I looked back over my shoulder and a boy sat with her on the dirty stair. A lovers' hideout.

I saw kids on their BMX-bikes riding past and trying some tricks. Even skater boys one time, lighting smokes and failing kickflips on the uneven surface. And when the dance class was done, a trail of jolly teenagers crossed the lot and headed for the nearby train station along the tracks.

Really, there was an awful lot going on in this place.

1.2 PLACE INSIGHTS: A STARTING POINT

The choice of topic and point of entry into this thesis project is greatly influenced by my experiences as an exchange student at the University of Melbourne in 2013. The course *Urban Design Theory* and the experimental studio course *Representing and Remembering Place* provided me with foundational overviews, insights, and experiences of diverse place discourses in the form of theoretical knowledge and applied creative practice respectively. Most importantly, they sparked my interest to delve deeper into place theory and its connections to landscape architecture.

The derelict wool store and surrounding lot described in the previous section was my object of study for the latter course. Located in the semi-industrial area of North Melbourne, adjacent to a freeway bridge, train track, and canal, it was once part of a thriving Australian wool industry. Now it stood empty and withering. Through numerous visits and various modes of mapping, recording, and documenting different aspects of the place and its uses I began to see that it was not dead, but full of new forms of life and activity that was overwriting the old surface. Birds, weeds and insects had made it their home, people used the lot as a shortcut to a nearby train station, and kids came to skate and bike across the slab where weeds were finding foothold in the disintegrating concrete. The fluctuations of economy, the trajectory of city development in Melbourne, the daily habits of people and the entire life cycle of animals – all could be traced in this seemingly empty place.

The project called out and challenged my preconceived notions, and brought about insights of the difficulties in capturing the essence of a place in just one short visit. It made me question my own understanding of what a place is, and what role I as a landscape architect play in the shaping of places. My own views, assumptions, fears and desires appear to be an inextricable part of how I experience places, and this begs deeper consideration. How can I separate my personal inclinations from the greater ambitions of a design intervention – is it possible at all, or even desired? How can I understand place in a way that supports constructive design approaches?

These questions led me to the project at hand, and form the foundation from which I now depart. Throughout the thesis I shall be returning to the epiphanous ground of the wool store, which will serve as an exemplifying case in the quest for answers for how we may understand place.

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For those who pass it without entering, the city is one thing; it is another for those who are trapped by it and never leave. There is the city where you arrive for the first time; and there is another city which you leave never to return. Each deserves a different name...

— Italo Calvino

1.3 BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM FIELD

History is brimful of stories about places – mundane and fantastic, forbidden, lost or rebuilt. Visions of the future are rendered as places too – planned and projected, advertised, hoped-for or dreaded. Our lives are steeped in place experiences, most of which we take for granted and scarcely reflect about: the intimate place we call home; everyday motions through neighborhood places; trips to foreign places. Experiences of places make up our daily grind and vacation highlights, frame our existence and fuel our dreams. There can be little doubt that place matters. But what, really, do we mean by *place*?

A seemingly self-evident word, place is loose and slippery and may refer to a wide range of things or situations in everyday life with diversely connotative meanings: 'come over to my place'; 'he doesn't know his place'; 'Brooklyn is a great place', and so on. Whether referring to a physical location or a position in a social hierarchy, it makes sense to us in a general way. But place is also a concept used across a broad range of disciplines to describe, in a more particular sense, characteristics of the environment, and human relationships with it. As explained by the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket 2006:33), different professions have different interests in, and approaches to, place:

The meaning of the word place and its qualities are understood and defined differently depending on viewpoint and profession. Somewhat simplified, sociologists study people's interactions with others and in groups. It is the social relationships that give place its meaning. The city is a melting pot for this, an arena for social, cultural and economic interactions. The city is a social product, a spatial structure that functions as a social organism. The architect studies people's need for beauty, function and ability to orient themselves. [...] Planners study people's need for a good life environment. [...] Antiquarians study people's need of a history. The place tells our history. It gives us identity, pride and a sense of collective belonging. [...] Ecologists study the life environments of plants and animals as an asset for biological life in its own right, and the human need for natural experiences. Cultural geographers study human interaction with place. We shape and are shaped by the place.[1] [Author's translation]

Here we are presented with multiple angles on the meaning of place but left without any general definition because it is said to vary depending on disciplinary focus and point of view. As professor of social and cultural geography Tim Cresswell (2004:1) points out, place is not a specialized academic term: it is a multifaceted word that may simultaneously convey general and particular meanings. It has kept academic writers of various

fields busy for decades quarrelling about its import, and countless books, articles, and critical reviews have been published on issues pertaining to place by in particular geographers, philosophers and social scientists (see Kitchin & Hubbard 2010 for an overview of key contributors and ideas).

Still, the concept of place remains deeply contested both between and within specific disciplinary discourses. Within geography, it can for example denote everything from a particular location on a map, to a locus of human meaning – a "field of care" (Tuan 1979:416-9) – to a social construction. It can stand for an object, "a thing in the world", as well as a way of looking, "a way of understanding the world" (Cresswell 2004:11,15). In the latter case the question is not what one place or another is like, but "what makes a place a place?" (Cresswell 2004:23), and that is also the concern of this thesis.

Within landscape architecture, place is an essential and extensively used concept. But unlike others in the professional vocabulary that can be defined and described concretely such as ecoduct or swale, place is often used loosely and regarded as commonsense, or referred to through common concepts such as *genius loci* – the spirit of place – whose meaning is not always clear or universal (Moore 2010:57-61). Despite its inconsistent interpretation across academic discourses, Kim Dovey (2010:3), professor of architecture and urban design, notes that the significant role of place in design and planning practice oftentimes is upheld by a presumed consensus of understanding. This can be problematic, since such presumptions are in fact often grounded upon quite divergent, but implicit and therefore unchallenged, understandings of place.

While there is little theorization on the concept of place within and for the discipline of landscape architecture specifically (note for example how place theory is completely omitted in landscape architecture professor Michael Murphy's (2005)

account on landscape architecture theory), in a world of growing global competition notions of *place* and *placemaking* practices are enjoying increasing attention in the practical fields of landscape architecture and urban design: sometimes merely figuring as buzzwords, and sometimes offered as specific design services or broken down into guidelines for community action (Carmona et al 2010:125-129, 304; Projects for Public Spaces [no date]). In what I interpret to be a consequence of this gap between scant disciplinary theory and liberal practical application, contemporary landscape architecture displays many contradicting positions on the meaning and significance of place. Let me take a few examples to highlight how the use of place showcases strikingly different emphases in contexts of landscape architecture and placemaking.

The British Landscape Institute ([no date]) introduces the landscape architecture profession and values on their website, quoting practitioner Merrick Denton Thompson saying that landscape architecture "stands at that interface between people and place." Further they bring up the concept of genius loci, quite familiar to landscape architects, stating that:

Ancient Romans believed that every place had a guardian spirit – the genius loci. Landscape architecture uses this idea to ensure the spirit of a place is always considered when designs and plans are drawn up. [...] Landscape architects create places where people can live, work and relax and they create places where plants and animals can thrive.

In this brief but quite typical description, the landscape architect is seen as the mediator between intrinsic qualities of place, and social and ecological needs. Through the genius loci, place is on the one hand recognized as a phenomenon already existing prior to intervention, which

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1. Original quote: "Innebörden av ordet plats och dess kvaliteter uppfattas och definieras olika beroende på synsätt och profession. Lite förenklat studerar till exempel sociologer människans samspel med andra och i grupp. Det är de sociala relationerna som ger mening åt platsen. Staden är en mötesplats för detta, en arena för sociala, kulturella och ekonomiska interaktioner. Staden är en social produkt, en rumslig struktur som fungerar som social organism. Arkitekten studerar människans behov av skönhet, funktion och att kunna orientera sig. [...] Planerare studerar människans behov av en historia. Platsen berättar vår historia. Den ger oss identitet, stolthet och samhörighet. [...] Ekologer studerar växters och djurs livsmiljöer som en tillgång för det biologiska livet i sig och för människans behov av naturupplevelser. Kulturgeografer studerar människans samspel med platsen. Vi formar och formas av platsen. Varför har utvecklingen blivit så just här?"

designers ought to be sensitive to. On the other, it is said that landscape architects create places. This common contradiction is rarely interrogated, and there will be cause to return to it in this thesis.

A more self-assured view of the power of design in the making of place is offered in the company philosophy of the notable landscape architecture practice Martha Schwarz Partners ([no date]):

Through design, we can create a "sense of place" and engender a sense of belonging and individuality. Through design can we enable people to make an emotional connection to a place by imbuing it with character, memory, identity, orientation and individuality. As we globalize and become more homogenous, there is an increasing need to create a new or enhanced identity that differentiates neighbourhoods or cities. Our practice is often asked to create a "place", and establish an identity, as distinctiveness and uniqueness may give a city a competitive edge, something of crucial importance to new and regenerating cities. We are often tasked to decipher what the image should be for an individual project, a community or even a city – one that is unique to that particular place, that is strong enough to create an identity, and most importantly, will be embraced by the public.

This statement portrays the designer as a director or creator of place – deciphering an *image* relevant to the project and thereupon constructing an *identity* to be established – and place as a product of design that is delivered to the public. Place in this context is posed more like a brand, whose character can be molded in the design office and applied onto a particular setting with the primary goal to be different from other places for reasons of global competition.

Exemplifying an opposite end of a current spectrum of placemaking ideas is Projects for Public Spaces ([no date]), an organization advocating and guiding community-driven and cross-disciplinary place development processes since the 1970's. They reject the possibility that places can at all be conceived as design- or discipline-specific products. In their view, placemaking is necessarily a process rooted in public participation, with a holistic view of different aspects of place:

Making a place is not the same as constructing a building, designing a plaza, or developing a commercial zone. When people enjoy a place for its special social and physical attributes, and when they are allowed to influence decision-making about that space, then you see genuine placemaking in action. […] Placemaking strikes a balance between the built, the social, the ecological and even the spiritual qualities of a place.

In this perspective it is clear that physical attributes or design alone do not suffice to create a place. The physical environment and social functions are seen to be intertwined in place, supporting the statement that "It takes a place to create a community, and a community to create a place" (Ibid.).

In all of the above examples the concept of place is central to the statements, but used in different ways that in turn implies different roles of the landscape architect. It seems to act as an empty vessel to be filled with different meanings depending on the aims and desires of the user, thus being appropriated by different actors to promote quite different, even incompatible, agendas. While I do not regard this inherent diversity of the concept of place as negative per se, the possible misunderstandings, conflicts, or illusionary concords that may arise between clients, designers, and end users as a result of its implicit and ambiguous application are problematic.

If we as landscape architects make statements about place that veil our understanding of its meaning and only implicitly assert our intentions, we allow for many different and potentially contradictory interpretations. Say for example that a landscape architect and a municipal council agree that a neighborhood upgrade project should result in a *great place*. If that for the landscape architect means adding high-end design features to elevate the area, but for the council members means engaging the residents in an integrated process that allows them to formulate goals and co-steer the design development, then they are in for some serious head-butting and are most likely not using resources efficiently. If different actors involved in a project talk about place in the same terms but mean different things by their words, it opens up for misunderstandings that may in turn spur unnecessary conflicts, or, conversely, conceal

disagreements that ought to be resolved, all which I believe increases the risk of discrepancies between the expectations on and outcomes of our work.

Ultimately, this is not only a matter of professional communication, but about democracy through public influence on development of the shared environment. Although loose talk and industry jargon may sometimes be consciously employed strategies to avoid conflicts in projects, I would say that whether brought on by deliberate calculation or ignorant unawareness it is nonetheless issues that threaten democratic principles of transparency in processes of planning and design for public space (in which participation nowadays is widely acknowledged as essential, see for example Calderon 2013:13; Butler 2014:13; Carmona et al 2010:336-343). To be explicit in our communication and engage clients and users in honest and open debate, however, requires that we as professionals know what we mean by place.

This brings us to consider what I find to be the core problem of the assertive but contradictory uses of place showcased in the given examples: that theorization on the concept of place in the discipline of landscape architecture is lacking. Without firm theoretical grounding from which to problematize situations, exercise self-reflection, and take deliberate stands, we are in a weak position to develop and convincingly defend ideas about place and placemaking practices. This deficiency – and its consequence that the concept of place is largely taken for granted or applied ad hoc – threatens to undermine our authority. I believe there are not many landscape architects whose eyes would not twitch if put on the spot by the query 'what is it that you mean, exactly, when you say place'?

This situation is not unique to the concept of place – there are many concepts central to landscape architecture that come with a host of different interpretations (see for example Johansson & Råsmark 2006 for a Swedish elaboration on the concept of *city*, and Burns & Kahn 2005 on *site*) – nor is place an isolated concept within the discipline. To draw attention to yet another fact that complicates the matter at our concern, within landscape architecture place is accompanied by in particular the similar but not quite synonymous concepts of *landscape* and *site*, as well as put in relation to the concept of *space*. There is significant overlap between these, and they are often used interchangeably in practice and, as Gunhild Setten (2006) points out in regards to geography, contested and differentiated sometimes more to claim academic territory than to explain actual differences. But while the concept of landscape has in recent years been defined in a formal manner with political weight through the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe 2000), and the concept of site been increasingly re-conceptualized and described in terms of operational relationships rather than metric boundaries (Burns & Kahn 2005; Braae & Diedrich 2012), place seems to largely have evaded academic scrutiny within the landscape architecture discourse specifically (as exemplified most prominently by its absence in Murphy 2005). This despite that its currency is clearly rising through notions of place identity, local branding and placemaking in an internationally calibrated world. Hence I see a need to bridge the gap between theoretical grounding and practical use of the concept of place within landscape architecture.

What I believe is needed in response to problems of cloudy communication and poorly supported jargon is not a *definition* but a *theory* of place that is better articulated in relation to the specific disciplinary context of landscape architecture. A once-and-for-all definition of place is not desired since, to borrow a quote from associate professor of modern architecture Sandy Isenstadt (2005:158), "the basis for the term's disciplinary specialization is not its specificity but, rather, its flexibility"[2]. Due to the multifaceted and complex nature of place – "at once experienced, structured and discursively constructed" as Dovey (2010:13) describes it – the concept seems virtually impossible to pin down in a general definition without washing out its nuances. A theory of place, however, need not necessarily be normative and paint issues in the black and white of right and wrong, but could open up for contextual problematization rather than prescriptive application.

In line with the above, the thrust of the

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2. Isenstadt makes her comment in regards to the similar concept of site, but I apply it here to place because I find it fits equally well and serves to highlight an equivalent condition.

arguments put forth in thesis is that a theory of place catering to the particular disciplinary niche of landscape architecture could enlighten of the complexity and deepen the understanding of the concept of place within the field, and thereby inform more explicit and concretely specific ways of talking about, writing of, and designing for place – ways that neither obliterate nor polarize differences in viewpoint, but that could reveal incongruences and unmask conflicting interests to be openly debated, negotiated and resolved. Thus it could help to also alleviate problems of communication and conflation with similar concepts without reducing place matters to over-simplified distinctions. Additionally, and not least important, it could form a basis for critical contemplation on the concept of place and its practical application amongst students, academics and professionals in the field of landscape architecture. As Dovey (2010:6) points out, "there is nothing so practical as good theory".

But before getting carried away with these optimistic prospects, a valid question to be settled is if landscape architects really need their own theory of place. If such immense volumes of ideas are already published on the matter by researchers in related disciplines, why not just pick and choose from them, why waste more paper on it? To me, the main argument for the effort of developing disciplinary place theory is not so that we may keep it to ourselves in isolation on our own professional turf (where it will likely be insufficient to appropriately address the interdisciplinary nature of place matters, see Dovey 2010:6-7, 9), but to hone its usefulness by testing and evaluating its applicability to questions and situations typical for our field. By no means do we have to omit existing knowledge, but we should use and adapt it critically.

Accordingly, this thesis builds its case by drawing on already established theories of place and scrutinizing them from a contemporary landscape architecture perspective. Hence without aspiring on any wholly original discoveries, the attempts to synthesize relevant place theory for landscape architecture may at least improve the accessibility of ideas in a concentrated format, and inspire further studies.

Finally, none of this is to say that a theory of place would automatically solve all place-related queries or issues for landscape architects – that it would be some form of final destination. On the contrary, it would be a point of departure that landscape architects could push off from on intellectual and practical quests alike – whether to ground ideas or actions in theory, or to think or act in ways that serve to challenge it.

From this broad exposition of place-related issues, let me summarize and define the specific problems to be addressed in this thesis.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The concept of place is extensively used within landscape architecture but scantly theorized within the discipline. It is often taken as commonsense with a presumed consensus of understanding while in fact being applied in contradicting fashions in communication and design practice. Additionally, it is easily conflated with other similar but not synonymous concepts. From this, as exemplified and argued in the previous section, two different but interconnected problems arise.

The first problem is that nebulous and inconsistent use of the concept of place in landscape architecture discourse and practice runs the risk of impairing communication between practitioners, and with clients and the public alike, particularly in contexts of planning and design for public space. The second problem is that the lacking theorization of place within the discipline of landscape architecture does not offer guidance for students and professionals to understand the concept, problematize its meaning and use in various contexts, and define their own stance accordingly.

1.5 AIMS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND OBJECTIVES

Seeking to respond to the problems identified, this thesis is driven by two overarching aims. The primary aim is scholarly: to contribute to the development of place theory specific to and contemporarily calibrated for the landscape architecture discipline. This is done by exploring and scrutinizing some of the diverse understandings of the concept of place promoted in established theories within related disciplines, and analyzing their implications and relevance for contemporary landscape architecture. The secondary aim is educational: to provide grounds for a deeper and more nuanced understanding as well as

incentives for a more conscious employment of the concept of place for academics, practitioners and students of landscape architecture. This is done by problematizing the concept and elucidating the consequences of different place theories for landscape architecture theory and practice.

The aims are addressed in reversed order, to first establish how place theory bears on the discipline, and subsequently how a place theory tailored to contemporary landscape architecture can be formulated. Three successively progressive research questions (RQ) are guiding the work in order to achieve the aims, targeting a specific set of objectives for their attainment:

RQ1. *How can different understandings of the concept of place frame the processes and impact the outcomes of landscape architectural design?*

RQ2. *What understandings of the concept of place are relevant to contemporary landscape architecture theory and design practice?*

RQ3. *What implications would the understandings of place herein promoted as relevant entail for landscape architecture theory and design practice?*

To answer the research questions, the objectives are to synthesize and outline an adequate range of place theories to be included in the study; use the Melbourne wool store as a recurring case by which to reflect on and illustrate the different theories; and structure a framework of relevant principles, processes, and contemporary tendencies of landscape architecture to use as analytical lenses for evaluation of the theories. These components of the research can then be brought together in response to the research questions by elucidating the implications of different theoretical perspectives on place for landscape architectural design, evaluate their suitability to support contemporary idea-formulation and practice within the discipline, and exemplify how promoted understandings of place would affect theoretical views and practical approaches within landscape architecture.

The intent here is not to provide single or static answers, but rather to achieve a deeper understanding of the questions through critical problematization. As Murphy (2005:11) points out in regards to the developing body of landscape

architecture theory, "meaning comes not just from the discovery of definitive answers to the question but primarily from our individual and collective search for them." I am searching for acceptable answers, aware that "knowing is a process of continual change and improvement" (Ibid.), and that the answers therefore may change over time even if the questions remain the same.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The research focus adopted for this thesis poses difficulties in that both the cross-disciplinary field of place theory in and of itself, and the landscape architecture discipline to which I tie it, are excessively diverse and complex. Topics are hard to clearly delineate and distill, as boundaries between disciplines, processes and situations easily blur. The following limitations are imposed on the research for pragmatic reasons and in order to delimit a feasible scope.

This thesis is focused on how theories of place can be understood from a contemporary landscape architecture perspective, but it does not primarily use sources from within the discipline. Since the target derives from a lack of established place theory within the field, I turn to neighboring disciplines of geography, architecture, urban design, philosophy, and social studies for more developed place theories. This allows me to map out a range of approaches to place, which can be discussed and evaluated in relation to landscape architecture. The contemporary focus does not mean that all theories or other sources included need to be recent, but that their suitability is evaluated and discussed with an emphasis on present and future application.

The research does not incorporate any quantitative examination of the use of the concept of place within landscape architecture communication or design practice. By focusing on academic substantive theory and qualitative examples, the aim is to move beyond such customary use to provide a deeper theoretical understanding of the concept place and the implications of different views. This deeper understanding could in turn inform practical use, and potentially be a platform from which to develop procedural theories and methods for design.

The research is focused on the very concept of place, and not on specific places of the world that it may be used to describe. As such, it does

not compare or evaluate different places or aspire to conclude what makes a good or bad place. I do however take as given and as motivation for this work that the design and character of places have profound effects on people's lives. The scope of the thesis is limited to place theory concerning physical places of the world, and does not delve into the mechanisms of fictional or virtual places or the potential that digital places (such as in Minecraft or the like) may have for processes of planning and design.

The focus of the thesis is on urban and public perspectives, rather than rural or private matters. It is my understanding that issues of place tend to surface and become increasingly articulated in the contexts of change that characterize the urban environment, and that they are central to democratic and participatory processes of planning and design of the public urban realm.

In order to limit the scope, I will focus primarily on the design aspect of landscape architecture in my analysis and discussion of theories, and address planning and management only schematically.

The scope of the thesis is broad, in that it accounts for multiple theories and offer them for comparison, rather than honing in on analyzing a single theory in greater depth. The reason is partly my desire to understand a bigger picture, but also the intent to focus on theoretical aspects useful to a landscape architecture understanding of place rather than giving a complete account for any one individual place theory in its own right.

The thesis relates to a wider international discourse, and is not tied to a specific national or local context despite being conceived at a Swedish university or having the object of its case study located in Melbourne, Australia. Language, local culture, and differing semantic connotations do however bear on any discussion of place as a concept, especially if place theory is to be applied to local practice, and needs to be addressed before we move on.

1.6.1 LOST IN TRANSLATION: SEMANTIC SPECIFICS
Writing in English about the concept of place for an international discourse while being grounded in a Swedish educational context requires semantic considerations. A notable condition is the way in which the word and concept of *place* in the English language does not directly translate to the equivalent Swedish *plats*. Additionally, while the English *landscape* more seamlessly translates into the Swedish *landskap*, the associated concepts of *space* and *site* do not carry over their connotations directly across the language barrier, but have other synonyms with slightly different meanings in Swedish (*rum/rymd* and *tomt*).

This means that issues pertaining to the confused use of the concept of place within Swedish landscape architecture discourse and practice (in a linguistic and conceptual sense respectively) may not be fully resolved through an examination of place in an English-speaking international discourse, and vice versa. Suggested ways to understand and express place matters may simply not apply laterally between the languages, nor attach themselves to *place* and *plats* to the same effect. However, I choose to position this work within the prevailing international discourse rather than seek to adjust and apply the theoretical sources to the specific conditions of Swedish. I aim to get at a conceptual core of place, and to contribute to the international discourse through this work that by its standard as such remains available to an international audience. I am certain that even if direct word-for-word translations are not possible, place theories and ideas explored in English may at least obliquely shine a light on similar issues of the Swedish *plats*.

1.7 TARGET AUDIENCE
This thesis is directed primarily towards students and professionals within the landscape architecture field. It is theoretical in its nature and thereby addresses a primarily academic audience. However, it is still relevant for practitioners as a source for new insights and ground for critical reflection upon theoretical ideas, applied practices, and the relationships between them. Equally, it is relevant for planners, urban designers, architects, politicians, public office employees and others who take part or interest in the public and professional processes (political as well as design-oriented) that shape places.

1.8 THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis consists of six chapters, followed by a summary in Swedish. Below, the roles and main points of each chapter are briefly outlined in an overview to orient the reader of their content and connections.

01 **Chapter 1** gives an introduction and background to the thesis and establishes the focus and aim of the research. It gives a personal account for the choice of topic, including a description of the Melbourne wool store that is used as a case study in Chapter 4 and as an example for analysis in Chapter 5.

02 **Chapter 2** describes the methodological approach and procedure of the research. It accounts for the critical approach adopted, and breaks down the methodological components of the study to clarify how information was gathered, selected, analyzed and organized into the final product.

03 **Chapter 3** sets the foundation of the research by constructing a landscape architecture framework for place theory evaluation focused on principles, processes and contemporary tendencies within the discipline. It provides a set of lenses through which to look at different place theories and relate them to relevant aspects of the discipline, hence directing the analyses in subsequent chapters and informing the answers to my research questions.

04 **Chapter 4** presents the research on place theories and is comprised of four parts, each corresponding to a particular theoretical paradigm and thereby exemplifying different ways of understanding the concept of place. Each paradigm is outlined with emhasis on a set of common parameters (relating the concept of place to *meaning, space, time, local/global relations* and *design*) that both serves to tie them to landscape architecture matters and allow for comparative analyses in Chapter 5. Finally, each paradigm is applied in a reflective manner to the Melbourne wool store case study.

05 **Chapter 5** contains analyses and discussions in response to the research questions. It brings together the information on the different paradigms from Chapter 4, and relates it to the framework constructed in Chapter 3. The main outcomes and arguments of the research are summarized in a concluding section, which constitutes the core of the theoretical contribution of this thesis.

06 **Chapter 6** concludes the thesis with reflections on the process and outcomes. It gives a reflective account on my personal experiences and knowledge acquisition through the research, and also presents evaluations of the focus, methods and results in retrospect. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research, for which this thesis can serve as a foundation.

02

METHOD

This chapter explains the methodological approach and procedure by which this thesis has been conceived. It starts with Section 2.1 outlining foundational approaches to the research field and process overall. Thereafter Section 2.2 gives a detailed account for the different methodological steps of the process. Firstly of the literature studies that make up the core of the research: explaining how information has been gathered, selected, and organized. Secondly of the Melbourne wool store case study: describing the purpose of its inclusion in the research, the ways in which information was acquired and processed, and the particular execution.

2.1 APPROACH

The approach adopted in this thesis is critical and reflective. Critical in that I write from an insider perspective on landscape architecture, with an agenda to point out shortcomings, questions conventions, and promote change in regards to understandings and uses of the concept of place (see Swaffield 2002:2, as further elaborated in Section 3.1). Reflective in that I take my own view of the landscape architecture field as well as personal place experiences as a given foundation for my understanding of the topic, which I relate to and expand upon through this research to develop my arguments. I agree with landscape architecture professor Elizabeth Meyer (2002) that landscape architecture theory needs to be regarded as inevitably situated and contextual, and for this reason I put emphasis both on my own personal perspective in the recurring accounts on the Melbourne wool store case study, and on contemporary tendencies in the landscape architecture framework for place theory evaluation developed in Chapter 3.

I take as the premise of this thesis Dovey's (2010:8-9) statement that "all place research is interdisciplinary", and seek to make constructive connections between place theories of related disciplines and landscape architecture. The research does not aspire to carve out a theory from scratch out of first-hand empirical data or observations, but conducts critical analysis of established place theories from neighboring disciplines in relation to landscape architecture in order to propose relevant understandings. I do not systematically test ideas on real professional situations (such as a particular design project), but use a case study revolving around understanding and depicting a certain place to broadly reflect on their significance, as will be explained in this chapter.

2.2 PROCEDURE

The research process consisted of two main methodological parts: literature studies and a personally influenced case study. These provided the information for, and informed the structure of, analyses in response to the research questions. They are described under the following headlines, and diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 2 on the next spread. Despite the seemingly sharp division between phases and parts of the research, it should be noted that they are neither chronologically separated steps in the process nor in the finished product, although some are more dispersed than others throughout the thesis structure (in particular the case study). They have mostly been developed in parallel, since the writing of a thesis like this is inevitably an iterative process of continuously refining research questions, content, and conclusions relative to the development of the work direction as a whole and the evolving threads of particular arguments.

2.2.1 LITERATURE STUDIES: GATHERING, SELECTING, AND STRUCTURING MATERIAL

The bulk of the thesis' source material was acquired through two literature studies. The first (as organized in the thesis structure) literature study focused on defining landscape architecture and its practice and processes, understanding the role of theory within the discipline, and tracing contemporary trends and tendencies. This material formed a foundation for developing the landscape architecture framework for place theory evaluation in Chapter 3. Three books were key sources to find information and support my statements for this part: Michael Murphy's *Landscape Architecture Theory* (2005), Ian Thompson's *Ecology, Community, and Delight* (2000), and Simon Swaffield's *Theory in Landscape Architecture* (2002). Where the first gives a comprehensive overview of different theoretical strands within the discipline, the second combines theoretical ponderings and interviews with practitioners, and the last offers a broad range of seminal texts on theory in landscape architecture stretching more than a half-century back.

My selection of material has been aimed at providing an overview of matters of importance to understand the discipline and to understand the implications of place theory for it. The accounts have no claim on being complete or particularly deep, since they are not in themselves targets for the research but means to clarify issues of place theory from a landscape architecture perspective.

The second literature study focused on place theory in a broad sense, and formed the foundation for the presentation of place theories in Chapter 4. It was concentrated on theories within geography, architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, philosophy, and social studies that either directly or indirectly address matters of place in relation to the physical environment, and human relationships with it. The initial reading base for this study was

obtained from the extensive bibliography of the *Urban Design Theory* course (as mentioned in section 1.2), part of which I used in that course to write a 1500 word 'compare and contrast' essay on the place theories of Edward Relph and Doreen Massey that I have built upon in this research. I have been well guided here by Tim Cresswell's *Place – A Short Introduction* (2004), which provided a thorough overview of diverse views on place within geography over time, and Carmona et al's *Public places – Urban spaces* (2010), which offered succinct and comprehensive accounts for various aspects of place in theory and practice related to urban design. Both publications were useful guides to the interdisciplinary field of place studies, and pointed to further readings.

Additional source material – primarily scientific journal articles – was found in scholarly databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar, using search phrases based on the words *landscape*, *architecture*, *place*, *space*, *theory*, *genius loci*, *assemblage*, and *design*. Some material, in particular to exemplify current use of the concept of place, has also been found on blogs and company websites through standard Google searches with the same set of keywords.

In addition to the above, I would also like to emphasize that after five years of university studies, especially in a field with so many touch points with everyday life and society, one *just knows* certain things. Some sources, references and ideas are not researched from questions or keywords on a blank paper, but picked from things I am already familiar with or have happened to come across along the way.

In regards to selecting and synthesizing source material, the vast and diverse range of theories and views of place that exists across the multiple discourses mentioned is hardly possible, and certainly not desirable, to here cover in full. For the purpose of this work, I have made a qualitative selection of theories on the grounds that they:

- Discuss place explicitly and in depth
- Clearly differ from one another (or could be grouped together)
- Offer foundations for constructive discussion in relation to landscape architecture

When studying and comparing different theories of place, I have paid attention to the disciplinary context, methodological approach, and ideological agenda of each author. I find that different theories tend to be crafted in response to different situations and postulated conditions, and I therefore believe that the different uses of the concept of place cannot be fully understood if theories are severed from their contexts of emergence.

Based on my research, I have organized selected theories into four different paradigms:

- Place as natural essence
- Place as experiential phenomena
- Place as relational construct
- Place as assemblage

The paradigms are based primarily on the works of, respectively, architect Christian Norberg-Schulz, human geographer Edward Relph, radical geographer Doreen Massey, and architect and urban designer Kim Dovey. Other writers and ideas also figure and serve to support, complement, or challenge the theoretical paradigms described.

In order to find and clarify resemblances and differences between the theoretical paradigms, they are all outlined in Chapter 4 according to the same principles. Firstly, an account of the context in which the ideas have emerged is given. Secondly, the description of each particular paradigm includes references to common hinges for analytical comparison. This is done by showing how each paradigm views meaning in place; puts place in relation to the closely related concept of space; understands place in the course of time; values the relationships and features of local places in an increasingly globalized world; and finally either prescribes, implies, or can be tied to particular design approaches. These hinges have been chosen because I find them to be critical points of differentiation between the ideas of different paradigms that also tie in with matters of significance for landscape architecture.

It should be noted that these paradigms do not form a complete account of the existing interdisciplinary field of place theory, and they are certainly not mutually exclusive. They offer a range of lenses through which to view and respond to place, that illustrate the disparate meanings that the concept can hold and underscores the importance of aware application. In Chapter 5, I analyze these paradigmatic lenses of place from the landscape architecture perspective defined in the framework of Chapter 3, in response to my research questions.
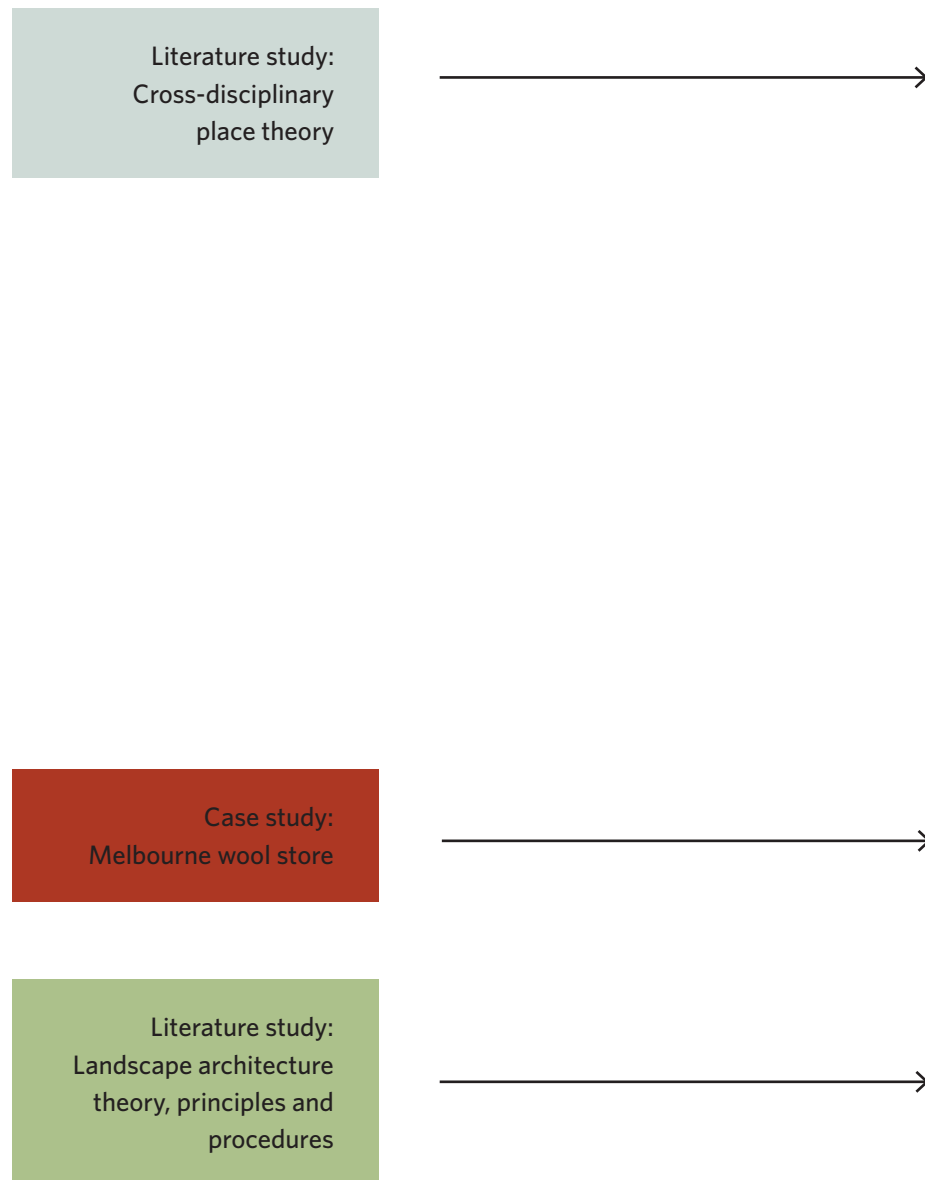
Figure 2. Diagrammatic illustration of the methodological components of the research and their structural relationships in the research process. It should be noted that this is a generalization of the process, which in practice also contains continuous refinement of research questions and scope as the project progresses and finds its form.

1. Formulation of research questions and definition of relevant scope

2. Cross-disciplinary literature study on place theory

3. Selection of relevant theories

4. Synthesis of theories into different paradigms

5. Outline of paradigms with emphasis on how they relate place to meaning, space, time, local/global relations and design

6. Reflections on the Melbourne wool store case study through each paradigmatic lens

7. Analysis of paradigms in comparison to one another and in relation to landscape architecture

8. Sorting out understandings of place not suitable for the contemporary discipline

9. Proposal of relevant understandings of the concept of place

10. Definition of opportunities for further research

2.2.2 CASE STUDY: MELBOURNE WOOL STORE

Alongside the literature studies, the research draws upon my personal experiences and documentation of a particular place in Melbourne as an exemplifying case to illustrate implications of the different place paradigms presented. The case study centers on a derelict wool store in the semi-industrial neighborhood of North Melbourne, illustrated in Figure 3 on the opposite page (all images contained in the thesis depict this place). I studied the wool store as part of the course *Representing and Remembering Place* during exchange studies at the University of Melbourne in 2013 (as mentioned in Section 1.2). The reasons for including it in this thesis project are both personal and pragmatic.

The profound insights I gained about place-related issues through my studies at this particular location inspired me to develop this thesis, and thereby form a foundational source of inspiration and knowledge upon which this research is building. The case study has not been conducted in accordance with any systematic methodology, but been structured ad hoc to perform the functions described below. It does however, in a rather experimental form, relate to Dovey's reasoning that when it comes to place studies (2010:8), "Case studies are a testing ground for theory, but not in the normal sense that the test proves or refutes a theory. Rather the theory proves more or less useful in making sense of place". Let me describe the procedure by which I have tried to make sense of the wool store through the theories herein presented.

I was not able to revisit the place while working on this thesis, and therefore the empirical material available as well as my own memories and associations are all hinged on what I gathered, experienced and developed during my time in Melbourne. While this can be seen as a weakness – setting the case study to a great extent in my subjective memory – I have regarded it primarily as a constructive limitation to the research in the sense that it gives a predefined amount of material to work with.

The gathering of material and information available to this thesis project was carried out during a 12 week semester of studies. The above mentioned course was structured around a set of themes and techniques for understanding,

exploring, and documenting place. I visited the wool store a total of ten times, documenting it through photography, mapping of observed uses, sound recordings, sketching, gathering of physical material and journal notes. In addition, off-site studies included cursory research of historical maps and the history of the Melbourne wool industry, as well as creative writing exercises creating narratives (which are not related to the accounts written for this thesis). These practical exercises were supported by literature studies, where the most prominent influence for this thesis has been Burns and Kahn's (2005) *Site Matters*. My project amounted to a physical installation titled *Wool Stor(i)e(s)*, made out of photographs, wool yarn and material from the site to represent the wool store in an object for exhibition.

Based on this available material and my memories, I have reflected on the wool store in relation to the theoretical paradigms of place developed in this thesis. The reflective accounts have multiple functions in the thesis as a whole. Primarily, they serve to clarify and illustrate theoretical views on place, and offer up literal examples for elaboration in analyses. In addition, they also bring a more personal voice and perspective into the largely academic thesis, aimed at contributing to a dynamic reading experience.

IMAGES FROM THE CASE STUDY SITE

The street

The wool store building

The freeway overpass

The lot

Figure 3. Photographs taken by the author at the Melbourne wool store.

03

A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FRAMEWORK FOR PLACE THEORY EVALUATION

This chapter establishes a foundation for the research by describing aspects of landscape architecture central to consider when relating place theories to the discipline. Section 3.1 gives a brief overview of theory in landscape architecture, and clarifies the position that this thesis takes based on its aims and approach. Section 3.2 constructs a framework of landscape architecture comprised of the purpose, work roles, goals, design process, and contemporary tendencies central to the development of the discipline with regards to its engagement with place matters. Finally, Section 3.3 elaborates on the relation between the concept of place and the similar concepts of landscape, site, and space in order to aid the navigation between these words that are all central to landscape architecture but often used interchangeably.

3.1 THEORIZING PLACE FOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

To be able to contribute to the development of theory of place for landscape architecture, it is necessary to first establish some fundamental knowledge about theory, place and landscape architecture respectively. Let us start by looking at how theory in general serves the discipline, and work out what kind of theory would come in question in this thesis with regards to place.

Theories are sets of generalizations or principles – a form of codified knowledge – that explain things and situations and form a basis for practical action (Swaffield 2002:1-2). Landscape architecture has developed primarily as a practical field, and theory within the discipline is therefore typically inductively derived from practical experience and empirical observation, rather than deduced from principles and testing of formal hypotheses as is characteristic of the natural sciences (Ibid.).

The theoretical body of landscape architecture can broadly be divided into two types of theories: *substantive* and *procedural* (Murphy 2005:27-28). Substantive theories describe how things are and explain why they are that way; they help us to *know*. Procedural theories describe methods and functional relationships that guide the application of substantive knowledge in practice; they help us to *do* (Ibid.). Thus, proposing ways to understand place within landscape architecture would be to formulate substantive theory, while developing methodological approaches for how to design places based on that understanding would be to formulate procedural theory. This thesis is primarily concerned with the former, but it is important to note that there are no sharp dividing lines between substantive theory, procedural theory, empirical observation and practice (Butler 2014:23) – just as observations of the world inform theories, so can different theories inform the way we see the world (Cresswell 2004:15), and in turn influence practice.

What does constitute a division between landscape architecture theories of all types, however, is whether they take on an *imperative*, *interpretive*, or *critical* role (Swaffield 2002:1-3). While imperative theory is explanatory and formulates stable and generally applicable frameworks of knowledge, interpretive theory is descriptive and seeks to establish understanding

rather than drive change, and critical theory is disruptive and stimulates the search for new knowledge and work approaches by destabilizing current thinking and challenging taken-for-granted positions. The crux of this distinction is the degree of universality to which different theories aspire. Imperative theory tends to be highly generalized with the objective of applicability in a wide range of situations or scales, while critical theory recognizes ideas as inevitably grounded or *situated* in particular historical and social contexts, even when addressing apparently universal phenomena (Ibid.).

This thesis positions itself in a niche of critical theory, since the premise of the research is questioning and critique of prevailing uses of the concept of place within landscape architecture, and the aim is to offer alternative ways to understand and apply it within the discipline. I agree with critical theory advocate Meyer (2002) that knowledge is always situational, and landscape theory thus is always specific. The contingencies of its particular situation condition both the formation and import of theory, and as Swaffield (2002:2) puts it, "In order to have an effect upon society, in this [critical] view, theory must be recognized as part of that society" [author's addition]. In line with this reasoning, we cannot theorize place for landscape architecture in an objective and universal sense, but only do so from a particular vantage point in relation to conditions of our present time and society; from where we stand in the here and the now.

It seems to me a curious correlation how these implications of a situated, critical perspective on theory mirror the conditions posed by place as a target for theorization: that it is also locally situated, and historically and socially relative. We can neither remove ourselves from the context of the places that we aim to understand to observe objectively in a scientific sense (Cresswell 2004:15), nor can we detach places form their spatial and social contexts to study them in clinical isolation. "Places are cases", Dovey (2010:8) writes, pointing to the paradox that a general theory of place must somehow account for the particularities of places, since "the differences between places are central to definitions of place" (Ibid.). This brings us to consider the multiple ways in which differences between places become manifest (experientially, spatially and discursively,

to echo Dovey's (2010:13) statement), and how these particularities of places converge into the generalized conceptions we apply to describe them.

3.1.1 UNDERSTANDING PLACE AS CONCEPT AND AS PHENOMENON

In approaching place as a target for study and theorization, I find it useful to distinguish between place as a *phenomenon* and place as a *concept*. The former accounts for places as we experience and know them as humans in our everyday life; as "things in the world" (Cresswell 2004:11); particular locations in the physical environment defined by names or specific characteristics or our subjective valuations of them – not explicitly categorized but all the same typically "wrapped in common sense" (Cresswell 2004:1). The latter concerns how we understand place as a concept intellectually; as "a way of understanding the world" (Cresswell 2004:11). In short, the concept of place is a generalized and abstracted denotation of the shared characteristics of specific place phenomena.

Just as there are many different place phenomena in the world, there can be multiple understandings of place as a concept, as highlighted in Section 1.3. But while place phenomena are thoroughly integrated with our everyday lives and require no awareness of their possible conceptualizations to be of effect or importance (it is not necessary to have an intellectual understanding of what it is that makes a place a place in order to appreciate particular places), place as a concept cannot be considered in depth without reflecting upon the ways in which it is manifested and experienced as a phenomenon (see Dovey 2010:8, as quoted in the previous section).

This thesis is focused on place as a concept; on trying to understand and describe it intellectually within the particular disciplinary discourse of landscape architecture. Consequently, this will bring the research to also consider ways in which place phenomena affect people's lives, and how landscape architects affect them through design of the public environment. Taking the distinction between place as a phenomenon and as a concept as a way to clarify the line between experiential matters of everyday life and systematic professional concerns, I will now proceed to sketch a framework of landscape architecture parameters emphasized in this research. These will provide hinges on

which to peg different aspects of the place theories accounted for in Chapter 4, and analyze their impact and relevance for the theory and design practice of the discipline in Chapter 5.

3.2 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE HINGES FOR PLACE THEORY EVALUATION

In order to systematically analyze the impact of different place theories on landscape architecture theory and practice, it is necessary to first ask a couple of fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of landscape architecture as a discipline. This is needed in order to understand what impact different views of place may have on the outcome of our work, and at what point of different processes such impact has its bearing. The aspects highlighted in this framework should not be regarded as criteria for evaluation in the sense of simply boxes to tick, but rather as a defined set of landscape architecture parameters to support coherent critical reasoning on the implications of different place theories.

3.2.1 THE DISCIPLINE

Landscape architecture is a broad discipline of environmental design that can take many forms. The International Federation of Landscape Architects (2003) offers the following definition of what landscape architects do:

Landscape architects conduct research and advice on planning, design and stewardship on the outdoor environment and spaces, both within and beyond the built environment, and its conservation and sustainability of development.

In addition to this, Murphy (2005:2) states that the overarching goal of the profession is the creation of order and harmony in human relationships with the landscape. This is facilitated by providing "site planning, design, and management advice to improve the landscape for human benefit" (Ibid.). These descriptions of the purpose and role of the discipline are broad and general, but for our present enquiries they highlight that place phenomena both 'within and beyond the built environment' are relevant to consider, with emphasis on how the design of place may facilitate sustainability and harmonious relationships with the landscape. Further, they hint to the vast breadth of contexts in

which landscape architects work, and may thus be engaged with place matters. Let us have a closer look at the range of work roles these include.

3.2.2 THE WORK ROLES

The practical work of landscape architects spans contexts of planning, design and management at all scales, and may be carried out by private consultancies or public offices. Each context has its own typical processes, but they all overlap in the greater disciplinary aim of human benefit and sustainable development noted in the previous section.

Planning, as in the creation of plans and policy, defines the long-term structure in which transformations of the landscape and built environment is permitted to take place. Design is a brief but intensive and often costly mission by which change is conceived and subsequently developed. Management of the landscape, in the form of advice or hands-on maintenance, is the low profile but crucial instance by which the quality of the natural or built environment is upheld over time.

An important condition of landscape architecture is the inherent work role relationship between a client, the expert (whether as a planner, designer or manager), and an end user (often the general public). As Dovey (2008:57) points out, the interests and desires of clients and users are rarely singular. Thus, the landscape architect needs to mediate between different agendas and synthesize sometimes quite disparate aims into a functional whole (Thompson 2000:124-125).

These different work roles, and how they play out in individual projects depending on the particular situation and relations to client and users, point to an important thing in regards to landscape architects' engagement with place. This compartmentalization of roles entails a segmented approach to place, where planning, design and management respectively have different stakes in, and influence over, the development of places, and respond to somewhat different objectives, regulations, financial constraints and so forth depending on the context of the project. This stands in contrast to the fact that places are typically understood and experienced as wholes not defined by zoning regulations, property lines or other formal divisions central to development

processes (Carmona et al 2010:123).

From this we may understand that landscape architects in any given work role or position typically only have influence over certain aspects of places and their development, and that the capacity to exercise influence is further conditioned by the structure and constraints of a particular project (in terms of budget limitations, power hierarchies in decision making and so on).

This means that while theorizations of place for landscape architecture may be idealistic in promoting certain 'good' views or approaches, in reality these may not be possible to fully adopt or apply. However, regardless of these limitations to landscape architects' influence, there are some greater goals of our profession that we should aim for in any given context, and that may help guide our decision-making in situations of conflicting interests.

3.2.3 THE GOALS

Since the landscape architecture profession spans such a broad range of contexts and work roles, it is hard to nail down detailed goals that apply across the board. I am wary that the disciplinary aim to "improve the landscape for human benefit" as stated by Murphy (2005:2) can be a deceivingly simple generalization that conceals the difficulty of establishing a consensus as to what does, in fact, constitute an improvement of the landscape, and what humans in particular are benefitted thereof.

With the treacherousness of generalizations in mind, part of the role of being an 'expert' is to make calls as to what is better or worse in a world replete with disagreement. Guiding this navigation is a common overarching aim of landscape architecture to employ sustainable practices and contribute to a sustainable development (see Murphy 2005:28-34). In its most general formulation, this means that our work should meet "the needs and aspiration of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (United Nations 1997). Ideally the three core pillars of sustainable development are all adequately considered, resulting in environments that are economically, socially and ecologically viable. In addition, at heart of the landscape architecture profession is the aspiration to fuse these considerations into environments that are also beautiful and pleasant, or *delightful* (Thompson 2000).

I will not pursue a delineation of what sustainable practices may entail for landscape architecture in this work, as that is a complex question of its own, but only highlight that this general aim needs to be translated into concrete objectives and approaches based on the particular situation and brief of a project. For this research, this means that when evaluating different theories of place in relation to landscape architecture, it is important to reflect upon the ways in which they frame the views of, or approaches to, the various aspects of sustainability, and the extent to which they allow them to be considered and negotiated in relation to the contexts of particular projects (i.e. are they merely framing the way in which a place is viewed, or are they prescribing particular ways in which it should be handled?).

Let us now look at the different phases in the design process that may be subjected to impact of the varying professional parameters and goals outlined so far.

3.2.4 THE DESIGN PROCESS

In the scope of this thesis I will consider planning and management in schematic terms, and focus primarily on the process of design in relation to place theory (as stated in Section 1.6). Individuals may go about the process of design in their own ways, but I will here refer to the common simplification of the design process as a progressive sequence of the phases Survey-Analysis-Design (S-A-D). As landscape architecture professor Hideo Sasaki (2002:35-36) elaborated on this method over a half century ago, it incorporates an initial phase of research (ideally both at the project site and from other sources), analyses of all the relationships relevant to the problem at hand, and a synthesis into a designed form. In such a fashion, the result was believed not to stem from preconceptions of the designer, but from the actual situation.

While accepting that this linear process description constitutes a generalization adequate for the purpose of this thesis, it should be noted that in reality the phases of a design process tend to overlap. As Lynch and Hack (2002:37) put it, "the real process is looping and cyclical", and so-called 'design thinking' is typically more of a spiralling iteration of ideas with an oscillation between phases (see Carmona et al 2010:73).

However, even if Sasaki depicted the process as unbiased, I here believe that place in landscape architecture design is never approached with a completely blank mind – just as the site of intervention itself is never a tabula rasa (Hough 2002:210). Both the given context of the project and the designer's own frames of reference inform and limit the design direction, guided by the client's brief which contains the 'problem' of design (Carmona et al 2010:72). I will assume that the brief (along with other restrictions of the particular situation) serves to frame a project from the outset, and thereby guides the choices made by the designer in the survey and analysis phases, as well as in how to represent the final design vision. It is with such factors in mind that this thesis inquires how place theory may serve to frame the process of design: what does it lead us to consider in the survey, highlight in the analysis, and prioritize in design execution?

Besides any given brief or any particular designer's mind, in line with the reasoning on situated theory the answers to these questions are also partly found in the stands and status of the discipline in a particular time, which will serve to impact on both. The tools available, the sentiments permeating practice, and the ideas going in or out of style at the time of a project surely also filter into the design processes more or less directly. In the light of this, let us now look at some prominent facts and particular tendencies that we may understand as central for contemporary practice and design processes.

3.2.5 CONTEMPORARY TENDENCIES

Landscape architecture has a relatively short history, emerging as a discipline in the 19th century, and its significance and scope has grown rapidly over the past decades. From an initial primary concern with garden and landscape design as an art form, separate from and secondary to that of architecture (McHarg 2002:39), it has come to be increasingly recognized as a diverse field encompassing and synthesizing everything from ecology to art and social matters, and cutting across old dichotomies of nature against city. It is concerned with both rural and urban environments, and with the wellbeing of ecosystems as well as the welfare of people (Murphy 2005; IFLA 2003).

Worth noting for this research are some of

the critical changes that the field has seen in the last half century, along with some contemporary tendencies that may help to analyze the impact of different place theories and evaluate their suitability for application to currently apparent and potential future issues. I will here address three key aspects of change, that will serve as important factors for analysis in Chapter 5.

The first aspect concerns the increase in methods and tools available to landscape architects for purposes of gathering, processing and representing information on place. The proliferation of new digital techniques has fundamentally changed the ways in which landscape architects work: Computer-Aided Design (CAD) tools, online maps and databases, Graphic Information Systems (GIS), Building Information Models (BIM), and increasingly powerful software to model and render design visions have had an immense impact on the workflow and the output of projects compared to the days of reliance on physical surveying and hand drawings. This has obvious implications for landscape architects' engagement with places, since they need not necessarily visit project sites in person to design for them. In many ways this wealth of information readily available and tools easily accessible makes a designer's work easier. But there is also an increasing gap between the kinds of information that can be gathered through first hand site experiences and the kinds that can only be provided in other sources removed or abstracted (statistics, historical data), revealing how the the very selection of methods to gather and process material as well as modes of design representation become factors that directs the project outcome.

The second aspect concerns the emphasis on user participation in processes of planning and design for public space that has been growing since the 1970's (Calderon 2013; Carmona et al 2010; Butler 2014). As urbanization and global migration increases and societies become more multicultural and pluralistic, the benefits of involving citizens in order to tap into their specific insights of areas slated for change – thereby honoring democratic principles and promoting social sustainability – are increasingly recognized in contemporary city development. The practical challenges in doing so however calls for development of non-normative theoretical knowledge that acknowledges the

importance of contextual adaption of ideas and processes (Calderon 2013), as well as new approaches and work processes in order to 'access' immaterial knowledge such as user sentiments of place. The *experiential landscape analysis* developed by Ian Simkins and Kevin Thwaites (2007) can serve as an example of the latter.

This emphasis on participation points to the important condition that when landscape architects face complex and multifaceted projects, particularly in diverse urban settings where they need to mediate between different interests not always easily reconciled, the social dynamics of the project may pose bigger challenges than solving functional problems. Further, in the role of 'expert' in such processes, we must understand as Murphy (2005:23) points out that "Although we believe that our point of view is correct and makes valuable contributions to society, it is important to remember that this is not an objective view, nor is it a view that is widely shared."

The third aspect regards an ongoing shift in emphasis from understanding things in the world not as static forms, but as interconnected and fluctuating processes. The need to reconceptualize ideas of the environment in relational rather than absolute terms has for example been stressed in contexts of ecology (Hill 2005), planning (Graham & Healey 1999) and landscape architecture (Braae & Diedrich 2012; Burns & Kahn 2005; Corner 1999). Murphy (2005:210) describes this as a shift from traditional design thinking and "a view of reality that focuses on the objects making up a system to an understanding of the systematic relationship among them", leading to the realization that "product and process are not different aspects of reality but the same thing seen from different points of view". These are all interrelated concerns indicative of a larger ongoing shift of foci from form to process and from closed to open systems in several discourses related to the natural and urban environment, informing new concepts and methodological approaches for analysis and design within landscape architecture.

An example of a process-oriented movement is the Landscape Urbanism discourse that emerged in the 1990's, which aimed to dissolve rigid disciplinary divides and re-position landscape not as a static backdrop to architecture and to human life, but as a rich field of processes forming the very

lens through which the contemporary city should be understood (Waldheim 2006).

These transitions within the theory and practice of the discipline are important to bear in mind when assessing the suitability of different theories of place to support contemporary and future practice, in order to understand how place theory may affect approaches and procedures that are central to the current conditions and future development of the discipline. Do they aid in establishing and justifying perspectives deemed desired for the discipline, or do they contradict and undermine them?

Keeping these theoretical and practical aspects in mind, before we explore what place theory has to offer we shall first make a brief excursion into semantics, elucidating some common connections and distinctions between concepts related to place.

3.3 DIFFERENTIATING PLACE FROM ASSOCIATED CONCEPTS WITHIN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Place as an everyday word has many possible synonyms and associated terms, which are symptomatic for its general versatility but not necessarily significant for its prominence within landscape architecture. Place as a concept in relation to landscape architecture more specifically, needs to be compared to in particular the similar but not synonymous concepts of landscape and site, as well as put in relation to the concept of space. The boundaries between these concepts are often fluid, and just as with the concept of place itself clearer definitions may not always be the ideal solution to differentiate between them. Pointing to some common distinctions and drawing out some of their differences may however help us to navigate between them, to see how place can be set apart in a landscape architecture context and underscore how a theory of place could help us choose our words and back them up.

The concept of landscape is central to the discipline of landscape architecture – which takes its name from it and defines its professional field through it – and the theoretical development of the concept is intertwined with the evolvement of the profession over time. Hence today we may, in a field once representing the art of gardening, speak of the urban landscape, and find landscape architects designing city hardscapes without a green leaf in sight. Both the application of the concept and the scope of the discipline has broadened over

time. This foundational status is highlighted by the recent definition of landscape in the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (Council of Europe 2000) as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors", which, although the concept remains contested (Butler 2014; Setten 2006), lends it formal stability and political weight. The ELC's emphases on perception and character of the landscape signify that the definition does not hinge on any specific physical attributes or objectively quantifiable land area, but allows for a broad range of landscape situations to apply in a continuum from the rural to the urban. The concept of place, on the other hand, does not have the same fundamental significance for the discipline, and therefore seems to slip through the cracks of its evolving theory.

As previously noted, in his short but comprehensive account for the developing body of landscape architecture theory, Murphy (2005) does not define place nor touch upon place theory even though he gives significant weight to the concept in passing. Relating the two concepts, he (2005:12) describes landscape as "A broad term, encompassing the totality of our physical surroundings; environment, *place*, region and geography to name a few" [emphasis added]. While architecture deals with the building of static form within this landscape, landscape architecture "is principally about *place making*" (Murphy 2005:13, [emphasis added]); an enterprise by which our relationships with the environment become expressed through the "ecological, functional and aesthetic characteristics of the *places* we create to facilitate human activity and to improve our use, experience and understanding of the landscape" (Murphy 2005:3, [emphasis added]). Put this way, landscape architects create places of certain characteristics within the greater landscape as part of our professional endeavors, and the landscape becomes interpretable through place.

Murphy's reasoning does not count for much of a clear distinction between the concepts – rather, I find that the lack thereof speaks of the undeveloped understanding of place within landscape architecture theory currently. It does however contain references to scale and to varying degrees of personal relations to and experience

of the environment as factors separating the concepts, which align with rather common ways of setting them apart in contexts of geography and philosophy.

Within discourses of geography where the respective concepts are both cherished and deeply contested, Setten (2006) points out that they often overlap, and are differentiated and argued about sometimes more to claim academic territory than explain actual differences. A common distinction is however to regard landscape as a more visual concept; a swath of land beheld from a distance, while place is a lived experience; something that we are inside of and from which we cannot remove ourselves in the present. Thus, Cresswell simply concludes that while we inhabit places, "we do not live in landscapes – we look at them" (2004:11), and philosopher Edward Casey (2001) contrasts the extensive landscape that expands to the horizon with the limited and internally coherent places that exists within that landscape, in which he regards the bodily subject of a first person as the only possible subject of place. Similarly, Relph (1976:123) notes that landscape can be both "the context for places and an attribute of places". But while he regards both landscape and place to be "imbued with meanings that come from how and why we know them", in place this meaning is focused on "an inside that is distinct from an outside" while in "landscape it is diffuse and without concentration." (Ibid.).

For the interests of the landscape architecture discipline and for this thesis, the landscape definition of the ELC makes impossible any strictly visual notions of landscape. But while both landscape and place can be seen as existing at different scales and in part be defined by perception, we may here understand landscapes as more general and spatially extensive, while places are more personally contingent and experientially intensive.

In the case of the concept of site, also central and extensively used within landscape architecture, theorization on the concept itself has been almost non-existing within the discourse until the publication of the anthology *Site Matters* by Burn and Kahn in 2005. The distinction between place and site that I will here promote is largely a distinction between the precognitive immersion of everyday life, and the selective attention

of professional work. Robert A. Beauregard (2005) describes site as a specific disciplinary social construction; a representation of space that is the property of planners, architects, and designers and that is inherent in any process of development. "All sites exist first as places" Beauregard (2005:39) writes, and in order to turn them into objects of planning and design, their many overlapping histories and intersecting narratives must be cleared so that the site may be open to receive the new design intention, and subsequently constructed anew as a place from the designers particular curated vision. Site, as he (Beauregard 2005:40) sees it, is thereby a social construct "conceived apart from the complexity of human relations" and emanating from professional contexts, while place on the other hand is grounded in lived experience and human encounters. From this we may understand site as a selectively constrained (whether spatially or operationally, as will be elaborated further in Section 4.3.6) representation of reality, while place is an environmental whole encompassing both the physical and social environment and our experiences and understandings of them, which does not necessarily confine to property lines or other formal delimitations.

In regards to the related concept of space, often posed in opposition to place with the two being addressed as binary couple, it is extensively theorized and deeply contested in particular within geography (Cresswell 2004; Kitchin & Hubbard 2010). One typical understanding is mathematical – to regard space as an empty container for things and events, in which place merely denotes a location or position. Another common and simple distinction is to regard space as the emotionally undifferentiated environment, within which particular places are set apart by their specific meaning – place as space claimed by feelings (Tuan 1979, Cresswell 2004). In this research I will engage particularly with the latter view, since it is more relevant for landscape architects to consider the ways in which the located or spatial qualities of place impact on the human experience of the environment, rather than where one place or another is located. To elaborate on a previous quote of Cresswell's (2004:23), the question here is not where this place or that place is, but how we may understand the justifications for calling it as such at

all. Yet another view is to think of space as created by social relations – made up by the relationships of things to one another – where places are constellations of relations that constantly change (Massey 2005).

Overall, the relationship of space to place is a minefield of contesting standpoints and in this section I will not provide more than these brief sketches for orientation. Instead I will use the conceptualization of space and space-place relations as a hinge for comparison of the place theories explored in-depth in Chapter 4. There could of course be additions to this hodgepodge of place-related concepts (such as city, region, context, grounds, territory and so on) but these are the ones I find most critical for landscape architecture in relation to place. While defining between them is no explicit task for this thesis, their distinctions will come into play and be accentuated through different theories on place.

The main ideas of the framework outlined in this chapter are summarized on the next spread. These will serve to inform the structure of place theories outlined in Chapter 4, and support analysis in Chapter 5. Let us now move to the core of the research, and have a look at some significant but disparate theories of place.

3.4 SUMMARY OF FRAMEWORK

Here follows a summary of the different aspects of landscape architecture
highlighted in this chapter, and their main implications for the research.

Theorizing Place for Landscape Architecture

- Theory within the discipline of landscape architecture can be *substantive* or *procedural*, with
  a *imperative*, *interpretive* or *critical* role. This thesis aspires to contribute to the formation of
  substantive place theory for the discipline of landscape arcitecture, and its approach in doing
  so is critical.

- In the context of this thesis, place is distinguished as on the one hand an everyday
  experienced *phenomenon*, and on the other an intellectual and professional *concept.*

Landscape Architecture Hinges for Place Theory Evaluation

- The discipline of landscape architecture is broad, and landscape architects' engagement
  with place may span the built environment and beyond.

- The work roles of the profession span contexts of planning, design and management,
  where the compartmentalization between roles as well as the client and users relations and
  particular conditions of a project acts to limit the actual influence that landscape architects
  have over the development of places.

- The goals of the discipline are to facilitate sustainable development in both ecological,
  social and economical terms, with an ambition to fuse these into delightful designs –
  general goals which need to be concretized in relation to individual projects.

- The landscape architectural design process can be simplified as a sequence of Survey-
  Analysis-Design (S-A-D), where both the brief of the project, its contextual setting and the
  designer's frames of reference serves to inform decisions.

- Contemporary tendencies central to consider when evaluating the implications of different
  place theories on the discipline are the ways that:
  - Digital tools condition the process of design (making physical presence at side
    technically redundant, and allowing for elaborate visualizations);
  - Increasingly globalized and pluralistic societies increase the importance of
    democratic and participatory processes, where landscape architects need to negotiate
    often complex and conflicting interests;
  - Growing recognition of the landscape as made up by interconnected processes rather
    than static parts implies a need for new approaches to design, conditions which equally
    pertain to issues of place.

Differentiating Place from Associated Concepts Within Landscape Architecture

- Landscape can in relation to place be understood as a spatially extensive area, in part defined by human perception just as place but less experientially intensive.

- Site can in relation to place be understood as a more professional concept, referring to the selectively constrained parameters considered in projects as opposed to experiential and existential qualities and subjective sentiments.

- Space can in relation to place be seen as a more general concept, referring to the spatial properties of the environment, while places are defined in part by human sentiment.

04

PLACE THEORIES

This chapter presents the place theories included in the research. It is divided into four main parts in correspondence with four different theoretical paradigms of place. Part 4.1 outlines the paradigm of place as natural essence; Part 4.2 that of place as experiential phenomenon; Part 4.3 place as relational construct; and Part 4.4 place as assemblage. Besides accounting for specific ideas of the individual paradigms and their contexts of emergence, each section provides hinges for analytical comparison by showing how the paradigms regard meaning in place; set place in relation to the closely related concept of space; view place in the course of time; values local/global relations in place, and relate it to design.

4.1
PLACE AS NATURAL ESSENCE

This part outlines the theoretical paradigm of place as natural essence. Section 4.1.1 begins with an examination of the concept of genius loci, its origin and manifold applications within landscape architecture. Thereafter the theory of place by Christian Norberg-Schulz is examined, with Section 4.1.2 describing its emergence as a critique on scientific and universal modernist architecture, Section 4.1.3 explaining its phenomenological approach and emphasis on existential dwelling in place, and Section 4.1.4 how natural and man-made places differ. Further, Section 4.1.5 explains how the paradigm sees place as articulated through space and character, Section 4.1.6 how places change with time, and Section 4.1.7 how the perceived loss of place brought about by modernism can be resolved through design. Thereafter Section 4.1.8 summarizes the key aspects of the paradigm, and Section 4.1.9 concludes with a reflection on the Melbourne wool store through the paradigmatic lens of place as natural essence.

Human identity presupposes the identity of place.

— Christian Norberg-Schulz

4.1.1 GENIUS LOCI: THE SPIRIT AND ESSENCE OF PLACE

Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.

  — Alexander Pope

The concept of genius loci is frequently encountered within landscape architecture, often used synonymously with expressions such as 'spirit of place' or 'sense of place'. Thompson (2000:25) notes how the dictum in Pope's 1731 epistle – to consult the spirit of place – has become "a central tenet of landscape architectural method", even dubbed the "Single Agreed Law of Landscape Design" by Turner (in Thompson 2000:25).

The idea of genius loci dates back to ancient Roman time, and the belief that every independent thing or being has its guardian spirit, its genius, which determines its character or essence. People and places – even the very gods – were seen to have their own spirit accompanying them through life (Norberg-Schulz 1980:18). The unique qualities of any place were understood to derive largely from the presence of this supernatural spirit (Jackson 1994:157), and it was of crucial importance that

people developed a good relationship to the genius of the locality where their lives took place, in order to secure their survival (Norberg-Schulz 1980:18).

This elusive but persistent idea of a lingering spirit in place is often encountered by students of landscape architecture early in their education, as a form of basic approach to understanding and responding to any place of study or intervention (Moore 2010:57-61). It suggests that we can experience something beyond the physical and sensory properties of a place (Carmona et al 2010:119). The oft-cited passage by Pope depicts the spirit of place as a force in nature that guides the landscape designer to adequately capture and enhance the essence of place in her work.

The meaning assigned to genius loci as a concept has slipped over the decades. In recent times, the idea of genius loci has been applied to an increasingly broad range of scales and types of environments, including urban ones. It has also been used to describe such things as atmosphere or character of place, gradually becoming entangled with a host of seemingly (but not quite) synonymous concepts, oftentimes resulting in confused and generic applications of the term (Jivén & Larkham 2003:68, 71).

This is exemplified in the introduction to landscape architecture and its central ideas offered by the Landscape Institute ([no date]), stating that the idea of genius loci is used within landscape architecture to

ensure the spirit of a place is always considered when designs and plans are drawn up. This applies to everyday places like streets and parks just as much as to significant places like public squares and motorways or natural places like national parks and coastlines.

This sweeping description gives as little guidance to how the genius loci is to be considered as to what, really, defines the place it is said to belong to. I find the statement symptomatic for the generally arbitrary use of genius loci today, a condition that according to landscape architecture professor Kathryn Moore (2010:57-61) serves to confuse and mystify the work of landscape architects (especially for the novice student) rather than clarify design processes.

However, as Thompson (2000:25) points out, Pope's instruction to consult the spirit of the place does not suppose a dogmatic adherence by the designer. While it may be appropriate to harmonize new developments with the surroundings, "other strategies based upon difference or contrast may be equally appropriate responses to the qualities of a site". And, put simply, to consult the genius of place may just be a way of saying that "a good design must be preceded by a good site survey and that this must include subjective as well as objective information" (Ibid). Despite being generally critical towards its use, Moore (2010:57) also acknowledges that the idea of genius loci, when simply used to guide a sensitive approach to the particular features of an environment, can be an efficient way of creating a narrative of place to inspire design and sell an idea – an activity far removed from any direct connection with some primordial spirit.

There is no need get sidetracked here by pointing out all the contradicting uses of genius loci within the discipline. It suffices to say that despite its lack of specific clarity, it is still frequently used as a concept to guide thinking about and designing for place. As such, it must neither be lightly affirmed nor dismissed. The idea of genius loci forms the backbone of the paradigm of place as natural essence, which I will now expand upon based on a seminal publication that brought it to the forefront of architectural theory and critique in 1980: *Genius Loci – Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture,* in which architecture professor Christian Norberg-

Schulz develops a theory of place specifically articulated in relation to architecture.

4.1.2 PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE RETURN TO THINGS

The theory of place put forth by Norberg-Schulz was a direct critique on modernist planning and architecture, and its observed shortcomings in providing meaningful life environments. The scientific, rational and abstract world view that underscored the modernist project, and hence was to be seen as the root of its deficiencies, did however stem from older times entirely. Let me rewind to clarify.

The scientific revolution that came to dominate in Europe from the era of enlightenment and onward brought about a paradigm shift from previous fascination and emotional engagement with the natural environment. The emphasis on rational and objective study of the world replaced the view of Earth as an organism – a nurturing mother – with one of nature as a machine, governed by the laws of physics explained in Isaac Newton's work. There was a profound belief that through human reason and rational experiments, the secrets of the natural world could be uncovered, and humanity would surely "make great progress once irrationality, ignorance and superstition were eradicated" (Simkins & Thwaites 2007:4). In a parallel transposition, the human mind was a separated from the body; the pure intellect posed in opposition to irrational sensations and emotions. The concept of place was consequently stripped of any spiritual connotations, and relegated to concern merely geographical or abstract location (Ibid.).

The emphasis on scientific, mathematical and abstract methods of studying and thus 'accurately' explaining the world prevailed in the modernist movement of architecture and city planning in the 20th century. A growing wave of critique against the resulting urban environments pointed to their lack of social and experiential qualities, partly due to a common disregard for local and site-specific conditions. The tabula rasa approach of placing building designs upon an undifferentiated field reduced varying site contexts to a static ground plane and generic backdrop (Isenstadt 2005). As a response to these issues, Norberg-Schulz advocated a return to and revaluation of the existential notions of human relationships with the

environment, and an emphasis on the at the time largely ignored experiential aspect of environmental design. Greatly influenced by philosophical works on phenomenology, particularly by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, he strived to develop a 'phenomenology of architecture'. That is to say, a theory that understands architecture in concrete, existential terms, and regards direct first person experiences as the primary way of understanding the environment (Norberg-Schulz 1980:5). The approach constituted a 'return to things' as opposed to a preoccupation with abstractions (Norberg-Schulz 1980:8), and urged a return to designs based on the specificities of local places.

For the paradigm of natural essence, this phenomenological approach means that we can only fully make sense of place inasmuch as we can know it directly through our senses. Through place, in turn, we understand and identify ourselves and our place in the so called 'life-world', and place is seen as a fundamental part of human life in this paradigm. Let us examine how we may understand our existence as grounded in places, and how the essence of place thus bears on our lives.

4.1.3 PLACE AND DWELLING IN THE LIFE-WORLD
Central to the paradigm of place as natural essence is the notion of the life-world – our concrete existence between earth and sky – as all we can truly know, and the source of meaning in the world. The life-world is made up of concrete phenomena that are 'given', as opposed to abstractions and models that are tools constructed for other purposes than our immediate everyday life. Trees, houses, towns, the stars and the seasons, even intangible things like feelings, are the concrete given "content of our existence" – and as such the content of places – while abstractions such as molecules, numbers and other kinds of data are removed from direct experience and thus void of existential meaning (Norberg-Schulz 1980:6,8). 'Essence' in this paradigm refers to this meaning inherent in the things of the world, and in the case of place it is denoted by the genius loci. It is 'natural' since it is here understood to always emanate from a natural setting; existing prior to human intervention or social processes. I shall return to these points for further elaboration, but first emphasize how place in this view is thus always directly grounded in a physical locality.

Place, in short, is here seen as a qualitative totality of the given things of its locality. Hence place is never merely an abstract geographical location on a map, and there can be no scientific, general knowledge about places that does not remove us as humans from the essence of the life-world and its particularities. In adopting a phenomenological view, the premise for any understanding of place is that we are ourselves an inextricable part of it – that to be is to be-in-the-world; to be situated in place. As philosopher Edward Casey (1996:18 in Cresswell 2004:23) puts it: "To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the place one is in". Place, then, is a "pre-scientific fact of life" shaping our experiences of the world (Cresswell 2004:23).

This fundamental importance of places as intimately tied to human identification with the environment is in the paradigm of place as natural essence denoted by the human ability to dwell. The concept of dwelling is borrowed from Heidegger and means "to be at peace in a protected place" (Norberg-Schulz 1980:22), essentially signifying the way in which a person exists in the world. To dwell is to have an existential foothold, which is secured through the knowledge of where one is in the world, but also how to relate to the surroundings: "To gain existential foothold man has to be able to orient himself; he has to know where he is. But he also has to identify himself with the environment, that is, he has to know *how* he is a certain place" (Norberg-Schulz 1980:19). In this way, place is an essential part of our lives, and the architecture of place facilitates dwelling (Norberg-Schulz 1980:5):

> *'dwelling', in an architectural sense, is the purpose of architecture. Man dwells where he can orient himself within and identify with an environment, or, in short, when he experiences the environment as meaningful. [...] Architecture means to visualize the genius loci, and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell.*

According to Norberg-Schulz (1980:21), the ability to orient oneself and identify with the properties of place is developed during childhood. We may understand this as a process of learning to 'read' places – understanding their genius and relating to their essence. As a child gets acquainted with its environment, it develops a 'perceptual schemata' that determines all future experiences. This

comprises both universal structures and cultural contingencies; Norberg-Schulz suggests that we possess schemata of orientation as well as identification. "The identity of a person is defined in terms of the schemata developed, because they determine the "world" which is accessible" (Ibid.). Thus, we gain our identity depending on our understanding of places and of our own relation to them. That is an important reason for why we tend to identify ourselves based on our geographic belonging: to say that I am a Swede or a Stockholmer is not merely to point to the location of my home, but to hint of my identity by virtue of my belonging to these particular places.

In relation to the above, important to note for the paradigm of place as natural essence is the one-directional relationship of place to personal identity. The essential natural meaning of place always exists prior to human identity. Put differently; while the identity of people in this paradigm is seen to depend on their belonging to and identification with place, it is not people that give to place its identity. According to Norberg-Schulz, the meaning and essence of place is already inherent in the world, and by means of architecture we can concretize and make visible that meaning; bring forth the genius loci.

This means that while places are of crucial importance for meaningful human existence in the world (dwelling) and for our identities as people, meaning or identity of place cannot be created through design (as it already exists in an essential form) but only responded to and at best clearly visualized. Let us proceed by examining how this essence of place can be understood in natural and man-made environments respectively.

4.1.4 MAKING PLACE EMERGE: NATURE AND SETTLEMENT
In the paradigm of place as natural essence the natural environment is seen as the origin of all places, and all meaning they may possess. Norberg-Schulz makes a clear distinction between places that are natural and those that are man-made, and nature is seen as a guide that directs where humans settle. In the beginning "the man-made place has to know 'what it wants to be' in relation to the natural environment" (Norberg-Schulz 1980:180). Norberg-Schulz (1980:17-18) describes the human response to natural places as a threefold conduct – to visualize, complement

and symbolize – by which we express our understanding of the environment and create our settlement, our place to dwell. When sometimes the natural environment is undifferentiated, here understood as generic sites, human architectural intervention can act to accentuate the natural essence and thus make place emerge from the landscape and uncover its latent meaning: "The existential purpose of building (architecture) is therefore to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment."

The essence of natural places in the landscape is the foundation for that of the human settlements constructed in relation to it, but spatially landscape and settlement has a figure-ground relationship (Norberg-Schulz 1980:12). While natural places tend to be defined by the extent of landscape, the distinctive quality of man-made places is enclosure. Both natural and man-made places are said to have different environmental levels which correspond to scale, and which may comprise each other: for example a house, neighborhood, and city as a whole (Norberg-Schulz 1980:58). In any case the place is clearly bounded, and the relationship of the inside to the outside is fundamental to the definition and experience of place. The boundaries that define place (walls for example), give both spatial separation and architectural characterization (Norberg-Schulz 1980:10-15), and place is said to "begin its presencing" from the boundary (Norberg-Schulz 1980:58). While we may understand that the boundary does not represent the very essence of place, it is the structural element that defines its extent and within which we may feel protected and able to dwell.

While traditional vernacular settlements of the farm and the agricultural village are typically directly structured in accordance with the topography and character of a particular natural place, hence succinctly expressing the essence of their localities, the relations of the urban dwellings of town and city to the natural environment are often weak or entirely lost. This means that in urban settlements the initial natural essence of the place is typically less discernible, and their identities may depend also on a gathering of forms that stem from other localities; on symbolization. However, urban places are still understood to possess their own genus loci, "determined by

what is visualized, complemented, symbolized or gathered", and "ought to comprise the spirit of the locality to get "roots", but it should also gather contents of general interest, contents which have their roots elsewhere, and which have been moved by means of symbolization" (Ibid.).

4.1.5 PLACE, SPACE, AND CHARACTER

When visualizing, complementing and symbolizing the environment through architecture, spatial structures and the character articulated in these are the main defining elements of place and should express its essence. Space, as Norberg-Schulz uses the concept, is not seen as an entity or phenomenon opposite or separate from place, but simply denotes the "three-dimensional organization of the elements which make up a place". It positions a person in the spatial matrix of horizontal-vertical relationships of the earth and the sky, and inside-outside relationships of man-made building and settlement respectively. In this way, space is "not primarily a mathematical concept, but an existential dimension" (Norberg-Schulz 180:10-11) – something we experience rather than calculate. Norberg-Schulz uses the term 'existential space' to describe the basic relationship between a person and the environment. Existential space can be broken into the complimentary terms 'space' and 'character', which correspond to the psychic functions of 'orientation' and 'identification'. While places are designated by nouns (concrete things), space is denoted by prepositions (location in relation to things) and character is denoted by adjectives (the qualities of things). In this way, Norberg-Schulz (1980:16) sees his structural analysis of places confirmed in our everyday language.

Norberg-Schulz (1980:19-20) alludes to Kevin Lynch's (1960) ideas of spatial structure as a determining factor for human orientation, where concrete things in the urban fabric create characteristic imageability in places. Lack of imageability makes us lost and is the opposite of dwelling. Architecture is the "concretization of existential space" (Norberg-Schulz 1980:5), and has the potential to counter such tendencies.

Thus in this paradigm, place is not set apart in space by being 'a meaningful location' as it is often seen, since meaning is here understood to emanate from nature and not be determined by human feelings. Instead, space is a component of place that is important to understand and reinforce appropriately in any design intervention in order to ensure that places are spatially legible and characteristically coherent, in line with the genius loci.

4.1.6 GIVEN MEANING, TIMELESS PLACE

As mentioned Norberg-Schulz (1980:170) regards the genius loci, the spirit of place that denotes its essence, as inherent in the concrete life-world, and its meaning is thus not seen as a product of politics, economy or social discourse:

We understand that the given economic, social, political and cultural conditions do not produce the meanings concretized by a man-made place. The meanings are inherent in the world, and are in each case to a high extent derived from the locality as a particular manifestation of "world". The meanings may however be used by the economic, social, political and cultural forces. This use consists in a selection among possible meanings. The selection therefore tells us about the actual conditions, but the meanings as such have deeper roots.

In other words, place in this paradigm is in no way understood as a social construction but always as totality of concrete and given things, even though the meanings of place may be appropriated for various social purposes and hence mirror prevailing social conditions of any given place. Asserting that "a strong place presupposes that there exists a meaningful correspondence between site, settlement and architectural detail", Norberg-Schulz (1980:179-180) puts all emphasis on the physical features of place – whether natural or man-made – as embodying and exposing its essential meaning, and as a foundation for a variety of social conditions developed thereupon. In this view, we can never create meaning – we can only find and respond to it. Regardless of who we are as architects or people, the given meaning is the same.

Similarly in regards to temporality, in the paradigm of place as natural essence the meaning in place is not understood to be subject to change in time per se. For Norberg-Schulz, the four-dimensionality of place is considered in terms of shifting hours, seasons and weather. However by translating temporal sequences into spatial

properties, the movement – the direction and rhythm – of life can be expressed, as for example in a path, which concretizes the dimension of time. But this does not alter the inherent meaning in place as it is initially derived from nature, and place is considered stable in its essence despite the changes brought about through history (Norberg-Schulz 1980:18):

To protect and conserve the genius loci in fact means to concretize its essence in ever new historical contexts. We might also say that the history of a place ought to be its 'self-realization'. What was there as possibilities at the outset, is uncovered through human action, illuminated and 'kept' in the works of architecture, which are simultaneously 'old and new'.

In this sense, time differs from space in not being constituted in the 'totality' of place: "Time is not a phenomenon, but the order of phenomenal succession and change" (Norberg-Schulz 1980:56). This is to say that we cannot experience time phenomenologically as a concrete thing in itself – time only becomes manifests through the change in other things of the life-world. By conserving the essence of place despite changes imposed through historical eras, a continuity of the spirit of place; stabilitas loci, can be achieved (Norberg-Schulz 1980:18).

4.1.7 THE LOSS OF PLACE AND DESIGN AS ITS RECOVERY

The way that the concretization of meaning has shifted in modern times is a cause of worry for Norberg-Schulz (1980:194), who considers the architectural outcome of mainstream modernism to be an 'environmental crisis'. This, he asserts, really constitutes a human crisis because of the loss of literal and existential orientation that it brings. He considers this to be a particularly urban problem, where the loss of spatial structure (modernist confusion of scales and scattering of buildings in the open field of the landscape) and distinct local character (the rise of an international style) nullifies local context in favor of a universal and object-centered architecture. To reverse this development, Norberg-Schulz (1980:198) argues that the tendency of modern architecture to understand things in a formalistic sense, rather than an existential, must be overturned, and the

pitfall of mistaking 'order' with concrete reality must be avoided. That is basically to say that modern architecture has lost touch with the essence of places.

Norberg-Schulz believes that the lack of understanding of the environmental problem can only be countered through a theory of place that acknowledges its uncompromisable essence and brings focus anew to its existential importance. He points to Kevin Lynch and Robert Venturi as great contributors to such a theory in their descriptions of structure and character and symbolism respectively. A viable theory of place should, in the view of Norberg-Schulz (1980:201), offer a comprehensive conception of the relationships between people and the essence of the environment, and show us how "modern architecture has a direction and a goal: architecture as the recovery of place".

Christopher Alexander (2007) advocates around the same time for an even more extreme solution, envisioning building projects sprung straight from the visions and desires of people, unmediated by the lifeless exercise of architectural expertise or the blunt and prescriptive planning regulations of modern time. He calls it a 'timeless way' of building. Similar to that of Norberg-Schulz it reflects a view of meaning in built form as derived from, and in complement to, the essence of the given natural environment through a phenomenological perspective.

While Norberg-Schulz does not propose quite as drastic measures as to sack the architects, he believes that locally adapted approaches are necessary. Building from the topology and structure of local environment and visualizing it through appropriate choice of form and material can be a generally viable approach, resulting in "analogous but circumstantially different solutions" for different places (Norberg-Schulz 1980:200). This can give us understanding and direction for our work, which is not dictated by science or politics, but existentially relevant and rooted in our everyday life-world, bringing us back to the things of place from the alienation of abstractions. In the paradigm of place as natural essence, the task of the landscape architect is to ask 'what does the place want to be?'.

4.1.8 SUMMARY OF KEY ASPECTS

The paradigm of place as natural essence is grounded in a phenomenological outlook on the world. Its premise is that we can only gain meaningful understanding of place and our own belonging through direct experiences of concrete things in the life-world. Place is seen as an inescapable way of being-in-the-world, and it is in and through place that we ground our existence and gain both literal and existential wayfinding so that we may dwell harmoniously.

The theory was conceived as a critique of generic modernist architecture and city planning, and it builds on the ancient idea of genius loci as a spirit of place that is found in nature, which all man-made building and settlement should respond to.

Places are seen as stable entities in fixed locations, clearly contained within boundaries. They constitute 'insides' within the greater expanses of the landscape. Local climate and character of the landscape are manifested in local places, which informs and sustains local cultural practices and traditions.

Within the paradigm of place as natural essence...

... *Meaning* is seen to always already exist, embedded in the things of the life-world. All meaning in place originates from the natural environment, and is transferred into the human settlement by the means of architecture.

... *Space* is the three-dimensional realm of our existence, which contains the things of the life-world. It is seen as a property of place that affects our experience, rather than a separate entity. It denotes prepositions of the spatial layout and structure of place, and is in itself not a thing charged with meaning.

... *Time* is seen as an external factor of place. It becomes manifest primarily in the cycles of seasons and days. The genius at the heart of place is understood not to change in essence through time, even if the fashions in which we respond to it might. It is important to preserve a 'stabilitas loci' in changing historical contexts.

... *Local/global* relationships are seen as rather antagonistic and polarized. Global influences such as international styles and context-less designs are a threat to particular local places, weakening their genius loci and causing a loss of existential foothold for its inhabitants.

... *Design* is a way of enforcing the spirit and sense of local place by sensitive approaches to its unique spatial and characteristic features. A given environment is a 'site' in the sense of a possible space for human intervention, and its inherent meaning is brought out – and site turned into place – when the natural environment is concretized, complemented and symbolized in imageable and characteristic built structures of man-made place. Thereby design can act as the 'recovery of place' in modern time.

In relation to landscape architecture, the paradigm of place as natural essence entails an understanding of place that focuses on the natural, concrete and original aspects of the environment, and prioritizes its material components over the social in order to read its genius. Landscape architects should act in the 'interface between people and place', delivering the genius in material form for people to relate to.

4.1.9
THE WOOL STORE AS NATURAL ESSENCE

When looking at the wool store through this paradigmatic lens, it emerges as a man-made place quite far removed from its natural origin. Whatever was the natural state of the site is long since transformed and paved over, built up with industrial warehouses and large-scale infrastructure. What meaning was here concretized?

I think I see the heart of the old natural place still present, mutated and obscured but not annihilated: the creek. Before the British colonization, before the city of Melbourne sprawled inland from the bay, before this wool processing facility was built on the crest of an industrial wave and abandoned at its decline, people lived here for the water. Now channelized and concrete-lined for swift storm water management, the creek carries off the water as a threat to city, not a bringer of life. What is the essence of this place? Is there a genius still lingering here, persevering through all the changes, or has it simply been lost?

I wonder about dwelling. The birds and the bugs dwell here, they live their little lives. But people? To dwell. To feel at home in a protected place. To feel a firm existential foothold. Orientation and identification. To know where one is, but also who one is in a certain place. This place was never meant to be anyone's home, but it has surely been part in distinguishing identities of wool workers, landowners, trespassers. And now it is making me a stranger, cautiously treading unknown grounds. I do not possess a specific perceptual schemata of this place.

I have not grown up in it or with it. But through my own cultural roots I know a city, an industrial district, a factory. I am searching for my foothold as much in what I already know, as in what I here find.

The spatial structure of the wool store is rigid. The sense of enclosure and physical insideness is strong within the lot surrounded by brick walls, fences, and the towering freeway overpass. The character is on the one hand rough and raw; barbed wire and tagged-up brick, and on the other delicate; flower petals and butterfly wings. A juxtaposition of concrete things whose meaning seems to shifts before my eyes the longer I look.

The fences and the shut-tight walls that say this place is dead and done for, nobody is welcome here anymore. And then the sparrows, the spiders and skateboard riders that defy them. If this place tells me anything, it speaks of the force of all life and the curiosity of people. It breathes of the possibility for a thing and a place to become meaningful in new ways. Whether that meaning emanates from its primordial core, reinterpreted over time, or arises from the projections of other beings, I cannot claim to know. What is clear to me regardless is that an existential foothold can be secured in unexpected ways.

4.2
PLACE AS EXPERIENTIAL PHENOMENON

This part outlines the theoretical paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon. Section 4.2.1 accounts for the origin of ideas with the emergence of human geography and its concern with phenomenology and place. Section 4.2.2 explains how place in this paradigm is considered as a trifold totality of physical features, activities and meaning, Section 4.2.3 how places are seen as centers of human meaning and intention in space, Section 4.2.4 how they are understood to be relatively stable over time, and Section 4.2.5 how local place is percieved to be under threat by generic and placeless development spurred by globalization. Section 4.2.6 highlights how a subjective understanding of place identity has implications for design practice. Section 4.2.7 summarizes the key aspects of the paradigm, and Section 4.2.8 concludes with a reflection on the Melbourne wool store through the paradigmatic lens of place as experiential phenomenon.

The meanings of places may be rooted in the physical setting and objects and activities, but they are not the property of them – rather they are a property of human intention and experiences.

— Edward Relph

4.2.1 THE HUMANISTIC TURN IN GEOGRAPHY

The attempts of Norberg-Schulz to counter the generic architectural modernism with a new emphasis on human subjectivity and experience were paralleled in the field of geography by the emergence of human geography in the 1970's.

Modernism had brought about an increasing focus on space in spatial science and the field of geography. Following more 'scientific' research ideals, space became the new way of talking about geographical regions; "a generalized and de-humanized realm that allowed for the creation of generally applicable laws of spatial mathematics and geometry" (Cresswell 2004:19). In this context place was deprived of any notion of experiential or emotional meaning: "Within spatial science place was simply a location" (Ibid.). In contrast, the humanist engagement within geography took a distinctly philosophical turn, where ideas of phenomenology and existentialism were central. However this was not manifested in a return to ideographic concerns with particular places which had characterized the early half of the century within (regional) geography, but instead place was seen as "a universal and transhistorical part of the human condition" (Cresswell 2004:20). Instead of focusing on describing particular places of the world, the focus was put on place as a way of being-in-the-world.

Among the most notable writers on the topic of place within human geography are Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph. I will here examine in particular the theories of place developed by the latter in his seminal 1976 publication *Place and Placelessness.*

Relph (1976:6-7) derives his theories of place through a phenomenological approach to life-world experiences, clarified by observation and description, where the individual's direct experience of the environment is a fundamental starting point. Although drawing on the phenomenology of Heidegger just like Norberg-Schulz, in Relph's work (and human geography generally) the focus is shifted from a question of what *essence* is held within place, to that of what *sense* it has to a person or a group; the ways in which we experience place depending on who and where we are. Within the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon, the concept of place denotes perceptual and existential experiences that – albeit still based partly in its physical constitution – is understood to depend on human intention towards and engagement with the environment, rather than something that holds meaning prior to human experience. From this starting point, Relph offers a fairly straightforward categorization of three interrelated aspects understood to make up a place within this paradigm, which we may start by outlining.

4.2.2 PLACE AS A TRIFOLD TOTALITY WITH MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

In the paradigm of place as experiential phenomena, places are seen as fusions of both human and natural order. They are focal points of human action and intention that can be profound centers of existence and points of orientation in the world. Relph defines places as constituted in a trifold way out of the physical setting, the social activities that take place, and the subjective

associations of memory and meaning attached to place (1976:61). The concept of place is thus not abstracted, but denotes "directly experienced phenomena of the lived-world" that are "full with meanings, with real objects, and with ongoing activities" (Relph 1976:141).

To explain how such activities are motivated and associations arise, Relph borrows from Husserl the concept of *intentionality*. This refers roughly to the 'aboutness' of human consciousness that "constructs a relation between the self and the world" (Cresswell 2004:23). It means that "all consciousness is a consciousness of something; we can only act or think in terms of something", and that that something is always a thing in its place: to be human is to be in place, and place acts as a center of action and intention that is "incorporated into the intentional structures of all human consciousness and experience" (Relph 1976:42). Places can be seen both as the context or background for intentionally defined objects, or they can be objects of intention in their own right (Relph 1976:43). In short, within the paradigm of place as experiential phenomena, we must understand that we always exist in place, and that places determine our experiences. Relph (1976:4) quotes Lukerman to stress that "consciousness of place is an immediate apparent part of reality, not a sophisticated thesis; knowledge of place is a simple fact of experience" – an experience that precedes consciousness and choice (Relph 1976:41).

Given that our existence in the world is grounded in places, the way in which we respond to a place and understand its identity – our "sense of place" or the subjective associations that we have of it – depends on our relationship to that place, primarily on whether we are "insiders" or "outsiders". Thus the same place will be seen differently between different people and groups (Relph 1976:44-78). While to be an insider is to understand and relate to the place – certain of one's own place within it – to be an outsider is on the contrary to be strange to the place and its customs. There can be different degrees of insideness or outsideness of a person in relation to a place (see Relph 1976:49-55 for an outline) but for our understanding of place within this paradigm the main point is that there is no way to experience or understand place that is isolated from who you are as a person.

This emphasis on subjectivity also gives that culture and community – the components of social activities and subjective associations in place – may sometimes be more important than its physical setting for how we identify with place and hence understand its identity. "In this context places are 'public' – they are created and known through common experiences and involvement in common symbols and meanings" (Relph 1976:34). But while social structures and processes in this way can be seen as foundational for the identity of place (as opposed to a genius loci or nature-given essence of place that we saw in the previous paradigm), the notion of place as a 'locus of collective memory' with an identity "created through the construction of memories linking a group of people into the past" (Cresswell 2004:61) should not be accepted as unproblematic. Harvey (in Cresswell 2004:62) argues that while it might be true that memories can be concretized through the production of place, the use of place to project certain memories is representational of a social order where some memories are inscribed into place on the expanse of others: "Places do not come with some memories attached to it as by nature but rather they are 'contested terrain of competing definitions'" (Harvey in Cresswell 2004:62).

Thus, for our understanding of place as experiential phenomena, we must note that place is defined by subjective experiences and any given place will have as many identities as there are people to experience it. Thereby we must also realize that any consensus images of identities reflect a social dominance of certain views that override others. The notion of insiders and outsiders critical to the understanding of place experiences in this paradigm does not give primacy to either – it does not imply that a place belongs to its insiders, but only denotes a difference in the way we experience places by virtue of our relationships to and familiarity with them.

From this understanding of individual relationships with place as foundational for its definition, let us proceed to look at how we may understand individual places as set apart in the world as a whole.

4.2.3 PLACE IN SPACE: MEANINGFUL, BOUND, AND COHERENT

Relph (1976:8-28) defines space as the "conceptual and experiential context" of places, and he classifies a range of different types of space in a continuum from the directly experienced to the abstract. Within the diverse spaces that frame our human existence, different kinds of place experiences emerge, where as we saw in the previous section, the identity of a particular place is constituted by its physical setting, activities and meanings, and place is set apart in space by the meanings that inform the individual's identity with that place (Relph 1976:47). "Those aspects of space that we distinguish as places are differentiated because they have attracted and concentrated our intentions, and because of this focusing they are set apart from the surrounding space while remaining a part of it" (Relph 1976:28). This is a view similar to the common and most straightforward place definition – a meaningful space (Cresswell 2004:3) – but we may define it further to reach a more specific understanding within the framework of this paradigm.

From the emphasis on subjective experience follows that what is understood as 'meaningful aspects of space' will vary between persons and situations. While a fundamental defining characteristic of place in relation to space in this paradigm is the way that place has a boundary that defines an inside, *here*, from an outside, *there*, it is thus understood that "As our intentions vary, so does the boundaries of outside and inside move" (Relph 1976:50). But whatever form or scale a place may have, the inside/outside dialectic is central to the definition of the concept of place. It links the experience of physical insideness to the state of existential insideness, and thus Relph (1976:49) writes that "To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place". It is associated in turn with notions of safety/danger, feelings of enclosure/exposure, and distinctions of here/there. Hence, to be in a place is to 'know where one is' and perhaps feel protected from that which lies outside (Relph 1976:49-50).

In line with the above, Relph (2009) does not view places as necessarily constrained in their expanse in space, but similar to Norberg-Schulz 'environmental levels'; "large places must be loosely comprised of smaller ones" and vice versa. However, at any scale place constitutes a whole entity: "The identity of place takes many forms, but it is always the very basis of our experience of this place as opposed to any other" (Relph 1976:62). Tuan (1977:149) takes this point even further by claiming that places can be said to exist in a spatial span so great as an armchair on the one hand, and the whole world on the other. He considers space as an open arena representing movement, while place is about stopping and resting and becoming involved (1977:6). Relph echoes this view of space as "amorphous and intangible and not an entity that can be directly described and analysed. [...] In general it seems that space provides the context for places but derives its meaning from particular places" (Relph 1976:8). Commenting this relationship, Cresswell concludes that "the continuum which has place at one end and space at the other is simultaneously a continuum linking experience to abstraction" (2004:21).

In regards to the analogy of space/place as movement/pause, we may highlight that even though place is constituted partly by physical setting and typically has a clear geographical location, place as experiential phenomena need not necessarily have a permanent location. Relph (1976:29) quotes Susan Langer:

A ship constantly changing its location is nonetheless a selfcontained place, and so is a gypsy camp, an Indian camp, or a circus camp, however often it shifts its geodetic bearings. Literally we say a camp is in *a place, but culturally it* is *a place. A gypsy camp is a different place from an Indian camp though it may be geographically where the Indian camp used to be.*

Regarded in this way, place need not be fixed in any location denoted by coordinates, but it is still the relative stability of the internal physical constitution of place and the continuity of its social activities and subjective associations that gives rise to its 'sense' and identity.

For our understanding of place as experiential phenomenon, we should note that places are different from surrounding space to the extent that they have been 'claimed by feelings' through human intention, and that they are characterized as bound and enclosed entities even though the nature and extent of the boundary may shift as

intentions and perspectives change. This brings us now to consider the way that place as experiential phenomenon relates to time.

4.2.4 TIME AND CHANGING PLACES

Similar to the paradigm of place as natural essence, in the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon time is not seen as a component integral to the concept of place, but as one dimension that affect our experiences of it (Relph 1976:32-33). Places inevitably change over time as their physical setting is altered, social activities shift, and people themselves change. But the ways in which these components of place also show continuity over time – being upheld by repeated activities and reinforcement of significance through traditions – enable places to persevere and retain their identities despite changes. Seen from a temporal perspective, place as experiential phenomenon is "present expressions of past experiences and events and hopes for the future" (Ibid.). But when rituals are abandoned and traditions cease to be important place becomes changeable and its identity can wither away. Putting it drastically, Relph (1976:32) notes that

> *Some places have died – the world is indeed full of the skeletons of dead places, Stonehenge and Carnac, the ruined cities of the Aztec and Incas, ghost towns, and abandoned farms, which have been stripped of their original meanings and become little more than objects of casual and uncommitted observation for tourists and passers-by and other outsiders.*

Despite the emphasis given to subjective experience in defining the identity of places, Relph (1976:61) also notes how any identifiable place has "unique content and patterns of relationships" which expresses the "spirit of place". Unlike the paradigm of place as natural essence where the spirit of place is seen as primordial and given, the spirit in Relph's (1976:48-49) terms denotes "the very individuality and uniqueness of places" which can be reflected by anything from its topography to social and even economical functions and which may persist despite significant changes in the basic components of a place. Thus, the spirit of place is here understood as a relatively stable composition of place over time, which makes for enduring identity. Relph (1976:48) quotes Rene Dubois exemplifying how "Distinctiveness persists despite

change. Italy and Switzerland, Paris and London have retained their respective identities through many social, cultural and technological revolutions."

From this we may understand that the continuity of the components of place and the upholding of tradition over time is critical for place to retain its significance and identity. We may contemplate the importance of places as 'profound centers of existence and points of orientation in the world' in order to fathom the consequences that a deterioration of place identity entail for people's existence.

The 'withering away' of local place identities apparent to the human geographer's of the 1970's, resulting from context-less modernistic developments and increasing globalization, is largely what theories of place as experiential phenomena were conceived in response to. Relph characterized this development as increasing 'placelessness', and we shall now see how the concept of placelessness in the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon serves to label the characteristics associated with global place types.

4.2.5 PLACELESSNESS AS A LOSS OF THE LOCALLY SPECIFIC

Relph is of the strong opinion that local significance is under threat by increasing global similarity and profit-oriented mass culture that produces "placeless" environments. He introduced the concept in *Place and Placelessness* published 1976, but has held on to it in subsequent publications over the decades (see Relph 1996; 1997; 2009) so that we may apply it also to a contemporary world. Relph argues that while modernist designs and their emphasis on 'technique' (an overriding concern with efficiency in its own right) eradicate authentic places – having "no need for geography; they are equally applicable anywhere" (Relph 1997:216) – postmodern interest in the specific produces only shallow, ready-made veneers of inauthentic place products. Accordingly, "sense of place today is far more diffuse and distributed" than just a few generations back, and because of this he believes it must "in some ways, be shallower" (Relph 1996).

Placelessness is symptomatic of the modern environment and modern lifestyle, where it both results in and spreads through the increasing rootlessness of people. Anthropologist Marc Augé (2008) has also worded a severe critique on the placelessness of what he calls *supermodernity* (the postmodern era), and its spaces of circulation,

consumption and communication for being "spaces where people cohabit or coexist without living together" – sites where tradition or history are not specific or relevant. Typical examples of placeless environments are freeways – starting everywhere and leading nowhere (Relph 1976:90) – airports, shopping malls and similar outlets of generic mass culture. Placelessness can stem from both an overly rigid preservation of local character – resulting in museumization – and the turning of places into superficial kitch. Disneyland is the ultimate example of this latter place degeneration; conceived as a form of 'imagineering', constructed only for outsiders and reproduced in multiple locations with no regard to the existing local context.

The concept of placelessness is linked to a notion of insideness in place, and the understanding that without authentic or sincere relationships to the environment – being existential insiders – it is difficult to create truly meaningful and locally grounded designs. The notion of placelessness implies an environment where people are not able to relate in any existential or meaningful way to their surroundings. However, As Jon May shows in his research on gentrification (in Cresswell 2004:75-79), the forces of change that act to transform a place can be perceived very differently by different people; for some it is what pulls them towards a place and makes it attractive to them, for others, who may well be longtime residents, it means an eradication of the place character they used to identify with and a subsequent loss of meaning and feeling of alienation.

Thus, Relph firmly states that place and placelessness should not be put in simple dichotomy, where places of the past are seen as good and the present placelessness is bad, giving that we should make places in the 'old way'. This is to fix meanings of places and provide ready-made judgment, which does not favor dynamic places (1976:145). Placelessness is rather a form of 'sense of place' just like that of any distinct place. Over-emphasizing local place identities can fix them into simplified excuses for exclusion of unwanted outsiders or development, and Relph calls a "poisoned sense of place" that which "stresses uniqueness to the virtual exclusion of a recognition of shared qualities" (1997:223).

For our focus in this exploration of theory, we may understand that placelessness does not refer to a different type of phenomena than does

the concept of place, but simply denotes places where the identities are contrived or detached from the local setting and tradition, so that they may not act as 'profound centers of existence' with which people can easily identify. However, as shown by May (in Cresswell 2004:75-79), we should be wary to apply these characterizations of place sweepingly, since in the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon we understand that individual experiences give place its significance, and that placelessness may equally be a contested identity depending on the human subject. Based on the subjectivity inherent in the concept of place in this paradigm and the multiplicity of place identities that it entails, let us now look at what consequences it has for designing places.

4.2.6 EXPERIENTIAL PLACE AS MULTIPLEX PLACE: IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGN

The emphasis on subjective personal experiences as foundational for place identity in the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon highlights that all understandings of place will be characterized by interpersonal or inter-group differences. These are critical to recognize in contexts of planning and design for public space, as they may indicate contradicting desires and interests amongst the public (Dovey 2008:57), as well as conflicts as to whose interests are prioritized, and how social interests are weighed against economical and ecological considerations. Just as we have seen that social activities and subjective associations of place may be more important for its 'sense' and identity than the physical setting, we must understand that social context and struggles over influence on a project may be more important than its physical setting when it comes to design – in short, that processes of planning and design for public space are contextual and political (Calderon 2013:60-63). The emphasis on experience in this paradigm means that when we say 'this is a great place', the underlying question begging recognition is 'for whom?'.

This implicit question of 'for whom' places are being planned and designed brings forth the need to engage the pluralistic public in processes shaping public space. From this acknowledgement follows several difficulties, of which a prominent one is that it is not given on what grounds the success of a project should be measured. Let us look at a concrete example that shows how place is

understood differently between people and groups, and highlights the divide between the role and sentiment of expert and user that characterizes landscape architecture processes (see Carmona et al 2010:331-7 for more information on communication gaps).

In a blog post on the organization's website, founder and president of Project for Public Spaces Fred Kent ([no date]) compares his experience of visiting Sherbourne Common, a recently completed waterfront park in Toronto, with that of a high-end sculpture garden:

> *Everything is placed* just so*, in a way that has created an environment so totally uninviting and ignorant of how human beings want to use public space that I knew, within moments of arriving, that what I was seeing was undoubtedly an 'award-winning' design.*

Disregarding the specific sarcasms of the post, Kent's critique is not merely concerning Sherbourne Common, but gives voice to a general distrust in the ability and interest of the greater design community to address the needs and desires of the public in any integrated manner. Designers are accused of being primarily concerned with impressing their peers and adorning each other with awards and merits that no public vote is ever part in distinguishing, and the juries consist of people educationally brainwashed into "tastemakers, not placemakers" (Ibid.). I understand the whole premise of the organization to be based on a similar concern – that placemaking needs to be driven and cultivated from the grassroots, as the only way of achieving truly appreciated public places. I would not dismiss this critique as a lack of aesthetic understanding or appreciation, rather it highlights in quite drastic terms the divergence of the design process and the everyday business of 'the public'.

The paradigm of place as experiential phenomena does not rule as to whether the designer's or the public understanding of place and appropriate design responses are more justified (nor does it imply that they are necessarily in conflict), it only asserts that each and everyone will have their own view. We may here remind ourselves of the client, and the fact that the brief for any project always comes from *somewhere*, and that the role of the expert entails mediation

between the client's demands, the (manifold) public interests and the general goal of arriving at sustainable solutions. The fact that the 'end user' rarely is a homogenous and easily pleased public means that most of our work is deemed to delight some and dismay others. Compromises are inevitable, the critical question is whom we include in a conversation, and how we weigh and take responsibility for the social priorities (see Calderon 2013:60-63).

This brings us to consider ways in which place is being negotiated in design practice, and how in line with this paradigm inclusive and participatory design processes become critical for an understanding of place. In developing a methodology for conducting participatory *experiential landscape analyses*, Simkins and Thwaites (2007:37) suggest one possible approach to achieve a design process more inclusive of diverse user sentiments. The emphasis is clearly put on the social over formal: "Experiential landscape is an approach to open space design that stresses social relevance over appearance." They draw on research that concludes that landscape architects and regular users of place understand and take note of different aspects of place. While landscape architects, oftentimes from 'outside', tend to focus on physical and 'objective' qualities in their perception of landscape, 'inside' users tend to respond depending on the associations and meanings places hold for them, which may not have anything to do with their visual attributes (and is therefore not accessible to the landscape architect in a typical site survey). Thus Simkins and Thwaites (Ibid.) are convinced that "the most useful understanding of place comes, not from privileging either professional training or public consultation, but by being able to bring both together in a collective view".

In line with this reasoning, Calderon (2013:60) argues that we need to move beyond the limited definition of design as a professional matter with a simplistic binary division between the designer and user. In this context we may also mention the critique of typical (normative) procedures for participatory planning and design, which according to Dovey (2008:218) can often be stereotypical and manipulative, despite good intentions. "The public interest does not exist pre-formed but is constructed in the design process" he (Ibid.) writes, and in accord with the inextricable connection of

people to place in this paradigm overall, "Good participatory processes are transformative in that they change people as well as places; designers as well as participants".

There is clearly little consensus as to how this multiplicity in place should be handled in design, and whether participatory processes are any guarantee for better places. While Kent clearly thinks that designers often create work that is elitist and not truly intended to be used, Moore (2010:198-9), on the contrary, thinks there is an overemphasis on public involvement nowadays (or at least an underestimation of the need for a qualified designer to tie it all together) which is detrimental to the aesthetic qualities of places. This brings us now to consider the fact that even if this paradigm poses the concept of place as founded on subjective experience, it is not experience alone that drives the development of places. Dovey (2008:219) argues that

the idea that design expertise can be disavowed, rendered transparent or reduced to the technical has been one of the more damaging ideologies of participatory design – the demolition of the designer creates a vacuum that is most easily filled by the instrumental imperatives of the state or the market.

This points to the presence in any design process by forces that do not put the 'public good' foremost, but rather exploits good public will at chance. Hence while "Design expertise needs to encompass the social processes […] the knowledge base needs to incorporate critiques of power" (ibid). The next place paradigm to explore will take us deeper into the relations of power to place, but first let us summarize the main characteristics of the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon.

4.2.7 SUMMARY OF KEY ASPECTS
In the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon places are regarded as profound centers of human existence, which informs our identities and from which we orient ourselves in the world. It is grounded in a phenomenological world-view, and highlights interpersonal and inter-group differences and the different perspectives they entail as crucial for how we experience and understand places.

Places are seen as made up by their physical setting, the social activities that go on in them, and the subjective memories and meanings they hold for the community and the individual. How we experience a place will depend on our relation to it – whether we are insiders or outsiders – and the identity *of* a place depends in part on the individuals identity *with* that place, giving that there are many identities of the same place.

Within the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon…
… Meaning in place is understood to emanate from direct human experience and intention, and will thus differ for each individual and inform different identities of place for different people and groups.
… Space is put in conceptual opposition to place and is characterized by lack of definition and special significance. While place is enclosed, particular and meaningful to us; charged with human intention and intensity, space is open, general and indifferent; a backdrop to places.
… Time is seen as external to places. Places do not change because time goes by, but changing practices and traditions that may come about in time will serve to alter the place identity and the continuity of what we may perceive as its 'spirit'.
… Local/global relationships in place are polarized, in a sense that the particularities and significance of local places are under threat by forces of global economy, politics and style to be exploited as superficial and disneyfied kitsch, or museumized to a point of petrification. Rapidly developed and generalized designs characterizing modernism and international style tend to create placeless environments, where mass culture thrives but the sense of place is shallow.
… Design is what structures the physical components of a place, but it is the activities it facilitates and the significance that people may attach to it is equally important for the totality of place. This stresses the need for participatory processes, but also highlights the difficulties of conducting them successfully.

In relation to landscape architecture, the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon makes the social processes and personal attachments to place central to its understanding. While it is important to uphold local building traditions and ensure imageability in design, it is in the human interactions with the physical environment that the key to successful and lasting places lies.

4.2.8
THE WOOL STORE AS
EXPERIENTIAL PHENOMENON

Stepping into the wool store lot for the first time, I was a definite outsider: a foreigner from the other side of the world, new to the city, alone after work-hours in a suburb replete with industrial ruins and traces of vagrants and vandals. I immediately labelled the place a dangerous trap in the cul-de-sac street grid, and a general eyesore in its withering state. If someone would have asked for my opinion as to what to do with it at that point, I would likely have responded 'tear it down'.

But after coming back in daylight, after seeing other people come through the lot as part of their everyday routines, it ceased to scare me. Instead I was increasingly fascinated by the history it embodied; the story it told by its mere disintegrating presence. Old routines had come to end. The spirit and sense that once characterized the place had faded. But in its dormant decline, the wool store was becoming appropriated for new uses and overgrown with new life.

The birds, the weeds and flowers; its beauty revealed itself to me. It sounds peculiar perhaps, but in the course of my repeated visits I transformed from a stranger out of place, to a curious explorer, and into an affectionate friend.

I was becoming an insider. Not what Relph would call an existential insider, it is not as if it felt like home. But I did feel a sense of belonging and a sense of ease, like it was natural for me to be there. The space had been claimed by my feelings perhaps, but so in part because I could see how it had been claimed also by

the feelings of others. When I spoke to other people coming there, to skateboarders and bicyclists, the place was as much mine as it was theirs. We shared an appreciation for it that, despite doubtlessly being experienced differently, nonetheless was mutually genuine. And if someone would have asked for my opinion as to what to do with it at that point, I would likely have responded 'don't touch it; it's perfect'.

4.3
PLACE AS RELATIONAL CONSTRUCT

This part outlines the theoretical paradigm of place as relational construct. Section 4.3.1 describes how relational views of space and place have emerged as new conceptualizations in response to a global world. Section 4.3.2 explains how globalization causes increasing time-space compression, and how this results in shifting global power-geometries. From this understanding of a new world order, Section 4.3.3 outlines how space and place can be described as social relations, and Section 4.3.4 explains the notion of a global sense of place. Section 4.3.5 accounts for the inherent temporality of place argued within this paradigm, and section 4.3.6 gives examples of how relational place concepts have been treated in in planning and design, including an in-depth comparison of the concepts of place and site. Section 4.3.7 summarizes the key aspects of the paradigm, and Section 4.3.8 concludes with a reflection on the Melbourne wool store through the paradigmatic lens of place as relational construct.
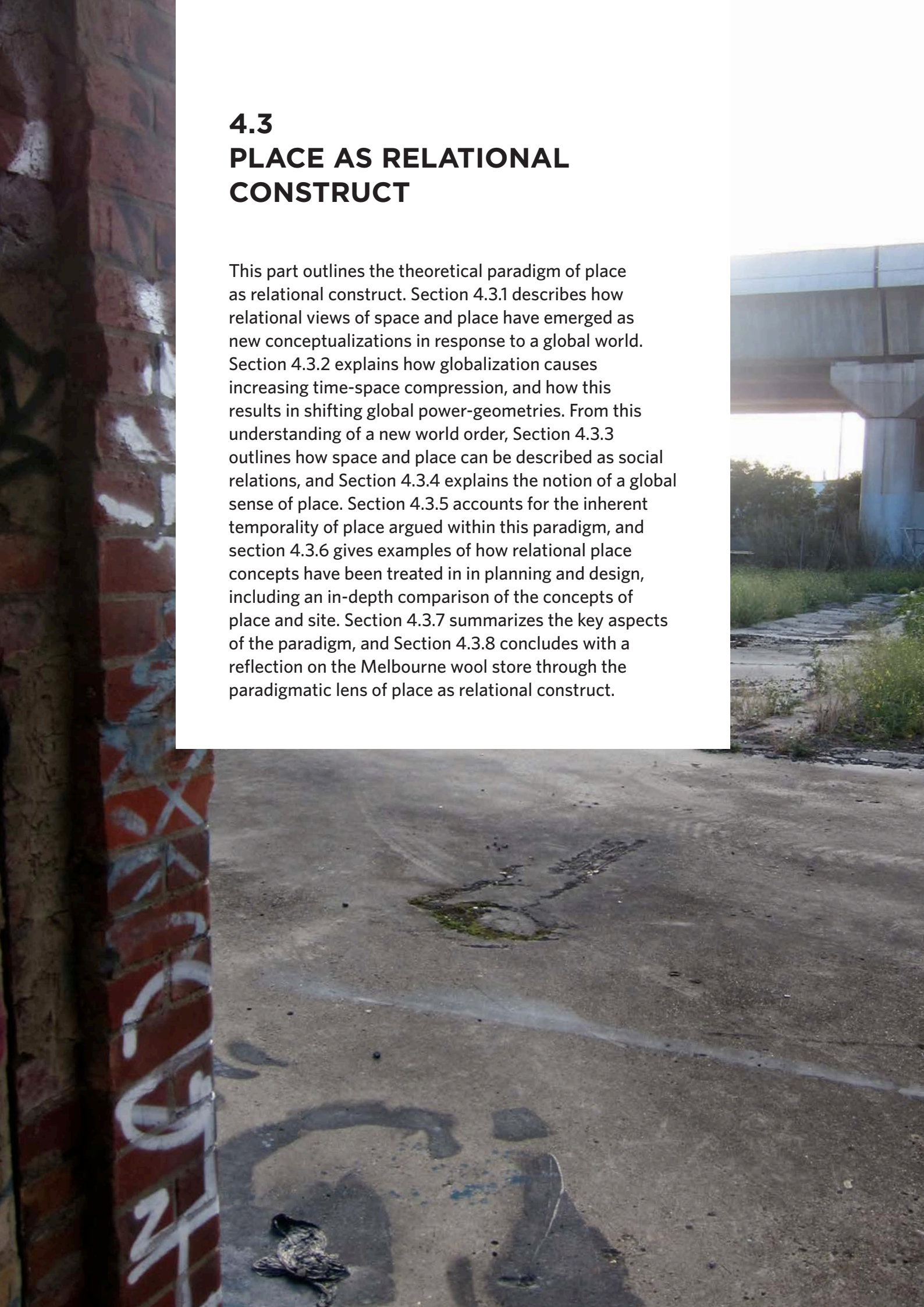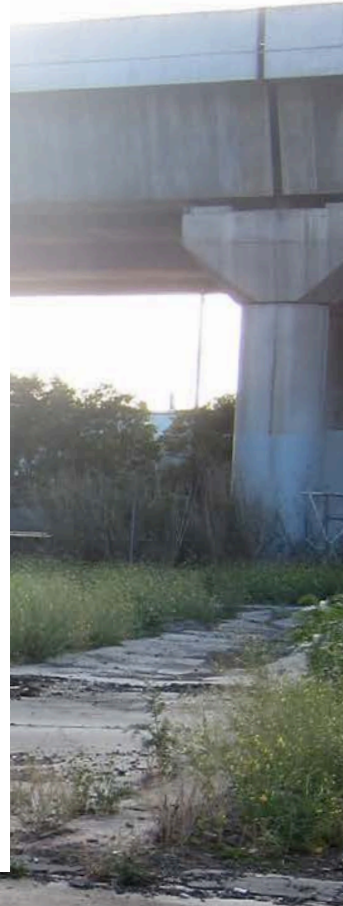
If space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. Their character will be a product of these intersections within that wider setting, and of what is made of them. And, too, of the non-meetings-up, the disconnections and the relations not established, the exclusions. All this contributes to the specificity of place.

— Doreen Massey

4.3.1 NEW TOOLS FOR NEW TIMES

The phenomenological views of place exhibited in the two paradigms presented so far, despite the difference between their essential and experiential foci, gives for similar understandings of place as an existentially meaningful and bounded entity in space. They favor traditional notions of place where 'home' is the ultimate core of existential belonging. These ideas have been criticized as reactionary and nostalgic, not giving enough weight to the roles which things like class, gender and race play in the dynamics of places (home is far from always a haven of safety and peace for women) (Cresswell 2004; Massey 1994). In contrast to these largely introvert views of place (focusing on inherent essence or internal relations of people to place), we shall now look at a one that instead highlights extrovert relations, and in the light of new global conditions proposes a wholly different way of conceptualizing space and place.

Understandings of place as a relational construct have been gaining ground since the late 20th century, growing out of new conceptualizations of space. Notions of space as relational; as a product of relations that are socially conditioned, has for example been put forth by the philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991) in his famous theory on social space. Such views countered long-standing ideas and unconscious references to space as an absolute, a priori and empty container being filled with material things and events. In this light, space is released (and by extension, place as

well), from dichotomist separations of the absolute and the experienced, the mathematical and the social, posing instead the spatial and the social as mutually constitutive (Ibid.).

Within geography, relational notions of space and place emerged as a critique of the insufficiency of 'traditional' (regional) geographical and phenomenological notions of place to describe and explain the changing conditions and inequalities of an increasingly mobile and globalized world. For radical geographer and key proponent Doreen Massey (1994; 2005; 2007), this entails a reconceptualization of both space and place that recognizes the relations between things (material and immaterial) as determinants for what they are and what we make of them, rather than any essence of things in and by themselves. These views constituted a political turn in geography, which opened up for new ways of understanding and analyzing place in relation to meaning and power; issues largely ignored by previous regional and human geography (Cresswell 2004:28-29).

Although more abstract in her theorizations than Norberg-Schulz or Relph, Massey approaches the place discourse empirically and strives to demystify and explain the forces that affect and manipulate our everyday lives (Cresswell 2004:27). She draws on statistics and research to explain how conceptual ideas and prevailing assumptions are linked to (or contradict) conditions of the 'real' world in both a political and everyday sense; revealing relationships that allows some people and

places prosper while others are kept in poverty.

As a Marxist and feminist, her conceptualization of place is a tool to explain spatial (uneven) distribution of power (Massey et al 2009), and she is often concerned with issues of class, gender and race in relation to space and place. She argues to debunk prevailing myths about the inevitability of globalization, the separation of space and time as each others separate counterparts, as well as ideas of place as bounded and enclosed and belonging to certain people or groups based on notions (illusions) of historical stability as grounds for cultural and social entitlement (Massey 2005). While human geographers in the 1970's delved into the different ways that place is *experienced*, Massey is concerned with new ways in which place can be *understood*.

For our exploration of theory and its implications, this means that in this paradigm places should not be seen through a phenomenological lens. We must step out of our own immediate subjective situation to analyze the forces that act upon places in order to understand that very situation – why places are the way they are. While, as I mentioned previously, phenomenology may explain the ways that we directly engage with and make sense of places, it is not those experiences per se that drive the development of places, but also political and other forces that may be less obvious but all the more impactful (Calderon 2013; Dovey 2008; 2010).

4.3.2 TIME-SPACE COMPRESSION AND POWER-GEOMETRY
To begin with, we must understand that an important aspect of the relational view of place is the ways in which space and time function differently in the modern, globalized world. With increasing technological improvement in everything from built infrastructure to telecommunication and digital information transmission, the ways in which we travel physically and communicate technically have changed immensely throughout the 20th century and on. In this sense, space and time are being increasingly *compressed* because we can travel further faster and communicate across physical distances without moving in space (Encyclopedia Britannica 2015).

The linear relationship between space and time that applied when travelling by foot or horse is today incongruent and relative across the world. Travel and communication between certain places is made increasingly swift (flights between metropolises; live web calls between international business centers), while other places are becoming comparatively even more remote for lack of infrastructural connectedness. In effect, the establishment of a long-haul flight route might serve to bring two capitals on different continents closer to each other than they are relative to parts of their respective countries (Massey 1994).

What this also entails is a changing dynamic, *power-geometry*, between those who are served and make profit by new technical advancements, and those that are impoverished and displaced by it. Governing this dynamic are primarily economic and political forces that allocate resources and push development of certain regions (typically urban ones) and favor certain social groups (typically the ones with investment capacity), while exploiting or ignoring others. What emerges from this is a world where proximity is no determinant for access, and any one's place in the world (socially and physically) is defined by power-relations that enable or restrain action (Massey 1994:148-151).

4.3.3 SPACE AND PLACE AS SOCIAL RELATIONS
Understanding the world as constituted of relations rather than essences, Massey (2005: 4-6) opposes any view of space as dead realm void of meaning, or a continuous flat surface on which places are sprinkled that we simply travel across. She (1994:2-4) conceptualizes space in a seemingly abstract way as constructed "out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales" where the spatial is "social relations stretched out". However, although not depending on human subjective experience for its definition, space is explicitly understood as based on concrete phenomena in the world, as these are not abstract but actual relations with real content (Massey 1994:155).

Space in this sense is produced through practices of material engagement; it unfolds as interaction and is therefore to be seen as a social dimension – "Not in the sense of exclusively human sociability, but in the sense of engagement within a multiplicity" (Massey 2005:61). This conceptualization of the spatial also implies that the lived world consists of a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces (Massey 1994:3):

cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one another, or existing in relations of paradox or antagonism. Most evidently this is so because the social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions as part of it.

Thus space can be seen as a "simultaneity of multiple trajectories" (Massey 2005:61), where countless contemporaneous stories are unfolding in parallel.

From this understanding of space, place is expressed as "particular constellations of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey 2005:130). In this way, places are defined by their connections rather than their boundaries; by their routes rather than roots (Dovey 2010:5). Massey also offers an articulation of place that acknowledges the multiplex history of relations that has given place its shape at any given moment, suggesting that space be regarded as "a simultaneity of stories-so-far", from which it follows that "places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space" (Massey 2005:130). Thus for Massey as opposed to Norberg-Schulz and Relph, place should not be seen as defined by essences or internal relations between people and an immediate physical setting. Rather, it is the very relations themselves (between things and people equally) that constitute places, and construct that very setting as a function of those relations.

While I should emphasize that the ideas of social relations are not the same as social constructions (the first simply denoting the relative relations of material or immaterial components of place to one another, and the latter would imply that place is a purely social product), a question raised by the relational view of place as compared to essential and experiential notions is in regards to what is inherent in our very existence (place as existing 'before consciousness and choice') and what is socially constructed. On this chicken-and-egg dilemma, Malpas (in Cresswell 2004:31) writes that although place can be seen as encompassing the social, it is not merely a social construction:

Indeed the social does not exist prior to place nor is it given expression except in and through place – and through spatialised, temporalised ordering [...] It is

within the structure of place that the very possibility of the social arises.

Likewise, he argues that place is the foundation for the establishment of subjectivity, rather than being founded on subjectivity (Ibid.). This is to say that we cannot construct anything without first being in place – that "place is primary to the construction of meaning and society [...] because it is the experiential fact of our existence" (Cresswell 2004:32). In relation to social constructivism Cresswell (2004:33) points out that all things are socially constructed, but many things are there whether we construct them or not. Place in this sense, as he puts it, is neither quite like toothpaste nor gravity: "It is a construction of humanity but a necessary one – one that human life is impossible to conceive of without. In other words there was no 'place' before there were humanity but once we came into existence then place did too." And, we may add, if humanity disappeared, place would too. DeLanda (2006:1-3) can help us understand this integration of the physical world and human conceptions of it, through his realist approach to social entities that involves accepting that they exist independent of our minds, while at the same time acknowledging that they would disappear if human minds disappeared altogether.

To Massey (2005:10), space is a product of interrelations; it does not exist prior to entities or identities and the relationships between and within them (and hence neither does place). The conceptualization of space in terms of social relations does neither oppose the physicality of place nor deny the importance of social constructions – they are equally parts of, as well as the concrete outcomes of, the relations that construct place in a multiplicity of dimensions. I will repeat the crucial point that with social relations, she is not referring only to human sociability but to "engagement within a multiplicity" (2005:61). The difference here is that with a view of place as relational in both a social and material sense, there is no 'either or' in regards to what comes first of the environment or our understanding of it, but there can only be a 'both and' as a mutually constitutive totality. As Cresswell (2004:123) puts it, "Places are produced by the people that constitute 'society' but at the same time they are key to the production of relationships between people.

Place, in other words, is right at the center of humanity".

Finally, another important clarification is that this relational understanding of space and place does not entail the view that everything is already linked to everything else through relations in some complete and closed holistic system. Place is not what DeLanda (2006:8-25) calls a *totality*, characterized by reciprocal relationships and a complete fusion of its parts. The specificity of place is as much a result of the non-meetings-up; the loose ends and missing links, as of the established connections (Massey 2005:130). This challenges traditional views of the environment, for example as put forth by Ian McHarg (2002) in his introduction of an ecological method, where he argues that place is *because* (the causality of all the past is the answer to its present form). The openness of space inherent in Massey's definition is what allows for a changing power-geometry; where some relations are rigid and some are loose and some yet are never established. It is the condition for an equally open future; for possibilities of politics and change, instead of a world perceived as a deterministic clockwork. Compared to the paradigms of place hitherto accounted for, this means that place in a relational view should not be seen only as a logical *because*, but equally as a relative *because not*.

4.3.4 A GLOBAL SENSE OF PLACE
While many writers, as we have seen, lament the 'loss of place' in modern times – a sacrifice of the local to international style and economy – Massey challenges the notion of places as specific entities destroyed through globalization. She (2007:84) questions "the geographical imaginary of globalization itself" and the way it is evoked as "a place-less force; yet it only exists and is reproduced [...] through locally situated processes".

Massey's concept of place is unbound and extroverted; it does not put place in opposition to neither other places nor a wider global world, but on the contrary sees it as interconnected with them so that place is defined "in part, precisely through the particularity of linkage to that 'outside' which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place" (1994:155). She conceptualizes local place as existing in a web of interrelations that extend beyond the scale of that which "we happen to define for that moment as the place itself,

whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent" (1994:154). Such an understanding of the links between any place and the wider world constitutes to her a 'global sense of place', and, I would say, virtually makes impossible a perceived dichotomy between authentic and inauthentic place and even the concept of placelessness, since such views stem from subjective evaluation of place qualities, rather than any actual polar differences between the relations that constitute such places respectively.

For landscape architects, this conceptualization of place as being formed in part by its external connections means that we can never delimit place to its formally apparent boundaries. The connections that sustain it – both literal roads and travel routes, as well as flows of capital, political forces, mental images and so on – condition and in part determine what we perceive as the 'inside' of a place. To narrow the perspective and omit such connections in favor of the literal (physical or immediately experiential) aspects of place would in effect be to work with blinders on, and not be able to understand the power-geometry that affects it.

4.3.5 TIME AS INTRINSIC TO SPACE AND PLACE
Massey considers space and place to be inseparable units of the spatial and temporal, constellations that evades traditional two-dimensional (and even three-dimensional) representation. She sees places "not as points or areas on maps, but as integrations of space and time; as spatio-temporal events" (2005:130) which must be understood as four-dimensional (1994:268). There is no opposition of time to space, and certainly there is no hierarchy between them – space should not be seen as the representation of time (such as we have seen for example Norberg-Schulz refer to the path as the spatialization of time in Section 4.1.6), but as inextricably intertwined with it (Massey 2005:27). On this note, Massey (2012) dismisses the common view of space as a "static slice though time", since

If the instantaneous moment were not itself imbued with temporality there could be no temporal trajectory. Correspondingly, for time/temporality/becoming to exist, space has to be imbued with the temporal. As a slice through time, space is a dynamic simultaneity and that is quite different from a stasis.

This gives that we can never hold a place still, and any attempt to represent it is to try to represent space-time as a whole.

While this condition is increasingly prominent in the present era of accelerating space-time compression (Massey 1994:146-7), it applies to also seemingly stable phenomena. To Massey (2005:139), even nature itself is constantly "moving on", which gives that "'here' is no more (and no less) than our encounter, and what is made of it. It is, irretrievably, here and now. It won't be the same 'here' when it is no longer now". There is no pause or fixity, but what we perceive as stable and still is rather a matter of varying duration of events. Let us look at an example.

Contemplating the mountain Skiddaw that forms a mighty backdrop to the picturesque town of Keswick in the English Lake District, Massey (2006) notes that even this mountain, with its geomorphological origin being traced some 500 million years back, has not risen out of the place where it now seems so inevitable and immobile. It has come into being in what was then a sea, south of the equator as it were, through volcanic activity deep in the crust of the earth, gradually molded into its present form whilst being dragged north by tectonic shifts. This mountain; these rocks that we look upon as a natural foundation of settlement and place, are migrant, immigrant, just as the people who have colonized its slopes. And it is not that they are still, fixed in this present, but it is only that the pace of their movement and the duration of the event of migration is so different from the pace of our own lives that it seems to us like something that has always been, something 'natural' (Massey 2012). DeLanda (2006:49) calls such apparent fixity an "optical illusion", produced by different rates of change. The point of this realization, for Massey, is the way it renders political arguments based on notions of stability or balance in nature impossible.

A slightly different rendition of the impact of time on relational place is offered by Marxist geographer David Harvey (in Cresswell 2004:57), who pictures the process of place formation as a carving out of 'permanences' from the shifting relations that make up spatio-temporality. But similar to Massey's view, the 'permanences' – no matter how solid they may seem – are not eternal but always subject to time in 'perpetual perishing'".

In paradigm of place as relational construct, there cannot be any deeper essence or meaning of place than its configuration at any given moment, and our simultaneous understandings of it. The 'history' of place can however still be understood to persist as contained, although modified, in places insofar as it impacts the continuous reproduction and reconfiguration of the relations that constitute place through time, and re-etches itself in place with greater force than it is being effaced. However, the meaning of this history must be regarded as social constructions on which we pin our ideas of belonging, tradition and sense of home, and any construed essence or enduring spirit of place is not intrinsic within place itself but a human conception.

For our landscape architecture understanding of this paradigm, we must hence regard the physical and temporal aspects of place as one and the same, and spatiality and temporality not merely as interconnected but as integrated. The importance of time may be illustrated by examples such as a sport's stadium when it is full and when it is empty, or a city downtown by day and night – in one sense they are still the same places, but based on the particular time their physical composition and experiential potential is very different.

4.3.6 RELATIONAL PLACE AS A TARGET FOR PLANNING AND DESIGN

While an understanding of place as a relational construct may seem like a more conceptually abstract theory than the previous paradigms outlined, I would argue that it is actually precisely the opposite, and that it offers a view of place that considers its full, un-tamable, and ultimately un-representable turmoil. The great complexity of places brought forth by this paradigm however entails many challenges when it comes to understanding and working with place in design.

Although Massey does not explicitly concern herself with questions of design, her work along with other accounts for new ways of understanding the world in relational terms have taken root and been developed further in discourses related to planning, landscape architecture and design of the urban environment (e.g. Burns & Kahn 2010; Calderon 2013). Let us look at some critique of prevailing modes of planning and design in light of a relational perspective, highlight some of the challenges it brings forth, and exemplify some

existing attempts to grapple with them in order to understand what a view of place as relational construct means for design.

First off, conceptualizing place as a relational construct gives that fully understanding particular place phenomena requires a complexity of simultaneous thought that may not even be possible for the human mind. Christopher Alexander (1986) noted in his famous essay *A City is Not a Tree* that the human mind is not capable of envisioning the multitude of activities and interactions that saturate the city at any given moment, and that we therefore tend to simplify and rationalize it. He argues that this incapacity of the human brain has led planners to create 'tree-like' city structures (characteristic of modernist planning), where the parts of a city are disjoined from each other spatially and functionally, and city life in turn rendered inflexible without the synergetic benefits of co-existing activities accidental encounters. From the perspective of planning, Stephen Graham and Patsy Healey (1999) note that even though the Euclidian, deterministic and one-dimensional notions of place inherited from the 'scientific' approaches of the 1960's and 70's are no longer sufficient, "the spaces of cities are still commonly conceived in object-centered ways, and the time-space of the city is still often conceptualized as a 'container' bounding the activities which go on there" (Graham & Healey, 1999:624). They lament that such fixed ideas of place and insufficient modes of addressing the full dynamism of the socio-spatial and spatio-temporal relations of contemporary place still prevail.

The issue to be resolved here is both one of understanding the implications of new conditions brought on by globalization, "apparently 'stretching' and deepening the relations between places, tying them into multiple webs of capital, technology, data and services, human interaction, and ways of thinking, at proliferating spatial scales", and how these should be translated into new practices (Graham & Healey, 1999:623). Graham and Healey argue that we need new modes of representation, since conventional two-dimensional plans tend to offer single and 'objective' representations of urban space, expressing "a representation of space which enables idealized conceptions of the city" from which are derived methodologies of

planning and design that "depend on the reduction of realities to geometries", often rendering users as "an undifferentiated whole ascribed the same disempowered role" (Graham & Healey 1999:626).

Perceiving of space and place as a multiplicity of contemporaneous trajectories indeed makes the task of representation seem impossible without simplification. But the point here is that simplification is a subjectively selective process, and that the selection in itself is an act of power. As Graham and Healey put it, depicting, mapping and planning for a 'uniplex' reality is "a power-laden act" (1999). This rings true for contexts of planning and design alike.

A relevant example of tackling this challenge constructively is the relational reconceptualization of the concept of *site* by adjunct professor of urban planning Andrea Kahn (2005) in relation to urban design; in many ways parallel to Massey's urge to dislodge the idea of place from associations of rigid boundedness and fixed physical location. While serving as an enlightening elaboration on ideas of relational conditions and design thinking, the concept at issue for Kahn is not the concept at issue in this thesis. However, by looking closer at conceptualizations of site, we may shine some light on the concept of place by resolving to what extent they are synonymous and in what ways they diverge in this relational view.

Defining the concept of site in an urban design discourse poses similar problems to that of place, in that there are a number of synonyms tied to it, while there exists no specialized terminology for urban sites. Kahn (2005) is looking to lay out an operationally based definition, focusing on what a site *does* rather than *is*, and argues that a site represented as having multiple (and porous) boundary conditions and stretching across multiple scales is better set up for urban design intervention. Analogous with Massey's relational place concept and with time-space compression in general, Kahn notes that physical proximity sometimes matters less than operational connections between sites in regards to how they work and affect each other.

Suggesting new conceptual tools to understand and work with urban sites as dynamic and relational constructs, Burns and Kahn (2005:xii) defines three levels of site reach: the area of *control* (within given property lines), the area of *influence* (comprising the forces and systems that impact

on the site and often transgress its legal and formal boundaries), and the area of *effect* (the domains beyond the site that are affected by design within it). None of these areas are however singular or homogenous in themselves, but can consist of physical as well as immaterial forces and be formed by multiple systems at multiple scales – the fields of influence and effect can operate at local, metropolitan, regional, national, and global scales at once (Ibid.). For example, if a marketplace sees a shift in vendors that may create new global import routes, bring new customers to the site, and change both its local character and its regional and global influence. This, Kahn points out (2005:286), gives rise to multiple interpretation where many simultaneous realities occur that must be recognized when defining site in operational rather than static terms. There is nothing neat about an urban site, and nothing easily confined or defined – "they are crisis objects that destabilize our certainty of the real" (Ibid.).

Much of Kahn's (2005:285) definition of site chimes with the relational place concept described by Massey:

Treating urban sites as operational constructs recasts their boundedness. Instead of demarcating simple meters and bounds, defining urban site limits requires accounting for co-present, but not necessarily spatially coincident fields of influence and effect. Urban sites encompass proximate as well as non-proximate relations, physical as well as non-physical attributes. As settings for interactions and intersections that transgress abstract property divisions, urban sites are conditioned by, and contribute to, their surroundings.

Although the definition of urban site here is in many ways similar to the relational concept of place, the conceptualization of site is in this account is pinned specifically to the context of professional design intervention (as we saw in the distinction by Beauregard in Section 3.3). Site construction (in the sense of establishing specific disciplinary images) will inevitably be colored by a preconceived idea of a future intervention or desired focus of analysis (in the design process this is represented by the brief), which informs the selection of aspects and relationships that are being examined.

However, while in line with Kahn's reasoning a relational view of place can be adapted to design and made more tangible through an operational approach, this has particular implications for the framing of the design process within the paradigm of place as relational construct. I will highlight three critical aspects.

Firstly, breaking down a relational place in accordance with its operational functions is an approach to understand how it *works*, and consequently how different interventions may affect it, but it does not in itself prescribe any particular way of designing – such decisions are instead functions of particular forces in the form of desires, goals, or similar, that enter into the operational constitution of the place through the very design process (such as a brief defining a design program or financial grants permitting extensive interventions, both which become in this context 'operational' only as they assume an actual function in the design process). This is so because, in contrast to the previous place paradigms where place is defined as meaningful through a pre-given essence or by its function as a center of human identity and root of existence, place as relational construct has no inherent meaning or prescribed valuation of its features other than those that are socially ascribed. Thus, in comparison to the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon, place as a target for design is not defined by its significance to different people per se, although the multiplicity of trajectories that make up a place inevitably contain those people and their subjective associations of place, hence begging recognition in the process of defining and working with any given place.

Further, in a translation of the full relational flux of place into defined scales of operation there is an inevitable selection by the designer as to what aspects to consider as more or less significant to include, driven in part by the situation and goals governing the design process. To understand place as a relational construct we must understand that as designers, we are not able to accurately represent it, and that our representations always are in response to something – be it a brief, a personal vision or just general convention. Since space-time is essentially un-representable (each representation instead creating its own instance of space-time, just like a portrait can never contain the full or 'pure' image of a person but itself is a material instance

of a certain projection of that person), no attempt at representation can ever be said to be objectively true. This brings forth the power inherent in all actions of planning and design as highlighted by Graham and Healey, and underscores what Dovey (2008:220) notes – that design is never an autonomous endeavor. As Isenstadt (2005:158) puts it in relation to *context*, another related term that may be understood similarly as site reach:

As often as not, an architect's description of an existing context will soon underpin a subsequent series of decisions to intervene in that context. A characterization of context smuggles into the design process a set of confirming values camouflaged as description of existing conditions and facts; the details of any description of context will usually indicate whether the speaker aims to respect or reject it. Dressed as an inventory of what is here now, the architect's analysis of context is often a preliminary step in the struggle for what will come next.

This illustrates how as landscape architects, we ourselves occupy a particular position in the power-geometry of place, and our actions serve to alter the social relations that form it to various extents.

Finally, these descriptions of the necessary selectivity and simplification of working with place in design confirm the distinction adopted from Beauregard in Section 3.3 – that landscape architecture design for place effectively serves to turn the full, un-representable configuration of its spatio-temporal event into a selectively limited and manageable site. Thus, put frankly, within the paradigm of place as a relational construct, place as a whole is too much for any designer to handle, and they can only act to transform places through the deliberate means of limited site design.

Building on the notion of *transformation* of place, I will end the presentation of this paradigm by mentioning the design approach proponed by Braae and Diedrich (2012) as a possible way to avoid a complete subscription to the view of design as manipulative and site as a canvas for the staging of novel place images as Beauregard describes it. Braae and Diedrich (2012:24) note how the traditional method of architecture (from which landscape architecture derives) centers on the production of new forms, where the visual

production of imagery as diagram/plan/perspective plays an important part in the processes, creating a privileged and edited view and entailing a certain working method. Against this they offer the method of transformation, which "takes the existent as its point of departure and oscillates between finding out what is there and testing what it could become". To transform a site through design in this approach is to work with the existing constitution and materiality, rather than clearing it from past matter and associations and imposing design as written on top (Ibid.):

While the traditional design act is associated with originality in terms of 'the new', novelty in transformation is rather associated with the ability to create a dialogue with the existent, depending on site-related knowledge: developing 'new views' on uses, aesthetics etc., ideally focused on enhancing relations between the nostalgic /place-bound and the un-nostalgic/ nomadic, between the material and the immaterial, and between the present (including the past) and the future.

This is reminiscent of the place-grounded design approach suggested by Christophe Girot (1999), which he frames in the phases of *landing*, *grounding*, *finding* and *founding*. Here, personal interaction with the site slated for design is imperative to achieve any deeper understanding of the existing condition on which to build a transformative design proposal, guided by subjective as well as 'objective' information gathering.

In this way, an approach to design for place as *transformation* neither dismisses the existing aspects of the place in favor of a wholly re-invented idea, nor conceals the fact that the design process is always in part driven by subjective factors.

4.3.7 SUMMARY OF KEY ASPECTS
The paradigm of place as relational construct is founded on a view of the world as a product of social relations, where modern technology and global economy is creating increased space-time compression and affecting the power-relations that govern the development of places and people's positions in relation to them.

Place is conceptualized as articulations of particular constellations of social relations; convergences of stories-so-far at particular

loci. They are never uniform or bound entities, but crystallize out of a multitude of intersecting relations.

This theory of place is not hinged on direct human experience, but neither does it deny the relevance of such experiences; they form a part of the relations that make up place, just as its physical components, not at least because the way we understand place will depend on the actions we take to shape place.

Within the paradigm of place as relational construct...

... Meaning is no pre-given, natural or stable feature in place; meaning is a relationally contingent social construction.

... Space is not put in opposition to place, but constitutes the greater weave of social relations that make up our world, within which particular places are constructed as convergences of relations. Places are interconnected with the space beyond, as well as with other places, and are thus not enclosed in space.

... Time is regarded as intrinsic to space (and vice versa), and hence also intrinsic to place. There is no space, and no place, that does not contain time, and thus fixity cannot exist in place, only varying durations of events. Place may therefore be described as a spatio-temporal event. Every relation that makes up the constellation of place is imbued with both spatiality and temporality, and therefore constantly changing.

... Local/global phenomena are regarded as interconnected and thereby interdependent. The global is seen to only exist as local instances, and a global sense of place grows out of the acknowledgement that local places are shaped by and dependent on connection to that which lies outside their apparent boundaries. Thus the local does not stand in opposition to the global, but they are directly linked and reinforce each other.

... Design approaches are not prescribed, although from Massey's political angle we may understand social justice as a priority of any design for public space. But from recognizing that place is made up by a multitude of simultaneous trajectories follows that design cannot address place in its totality. Some propose that the simplified 'version' of place that designers construct for themselves and deal with in professional work is more aptly labelled 'site'.

In relation to landscape architecture, the paradigm of place as relational construct forces us to assume a more abstract way of thinking about places; what forms them and where they begin and end. It entails an understanding of the temporality of place as integrated with its spatiality, and in addition to grasping this four-dimensional *becoming* of place we must also understand in what ways we have and choose to exercise power over its transformations.

4.3.8
## THE WOOL STORE AS RELATIONAL CONSTRUCT

Through the paradigmatic lens of place as relational construct, the wool store cannot simply be seen as one place with one identity and one story to tell. It is a set of many different trajectories coming together, here, in this place I call the wool store but that may be known by other names. Some of the relations of this place have come about because of each other and some independently, some by deliberate action and some by unexpected accident. Some have changed everything about the place and some are scarcely noticeable. Regardless, they all coincide in this instant – some novel and some like echoes of past events still reverberating – to form this particular place in this provisional space-time.

The many different forces that have steered the development of this place, specifically located and spatially enclosed as it appears, are not to be traced merely within the confinement of the lot perimeter. Nor do they halt at the city limit of Melbourne, or even the Australian shore. The wool store may have been built right here because the location suited its purposes at the particular time of its construction, conveniently connected to the sheep farms beyond the city and the merchants within it. But the story of its decline is not set on this ground. It is a story about the effects of politics and economy, of plummeting stock prices, of discontinued production and abandoned infrastructure. The story of what we often simply call 'new times', but that is equally – necessarily – a story of 'new places', in this case told in innumerable iterations by laid off workers, closed-

down farms, re-routed fabrication and trade.

But the wool store as it is today is not merely an ending to that story. It is not a dead, passive entity onto which people spray their tags or lean for the night. It is still a focal point of many unfolding stories, meeting up with every visitor.

Just as the wool store was an episode in my life; a discovery and an encounter that changed me, I myself form part of the wool store's narratives. There and then, we were a physical meeting-up of trajectories. My presence, and my representations of the place in photographs, writings, installations, have acted to reconfigure and add to some of the relations by which it is formed. I have changed it, in my own small way.

My leaving the wool store behind physically does not mean it is now stuck in some immovable past. Its stories are still unfolding, with and without me. I cannot know who goes there now. But I still carry the wool store with me as I remember, re-tell and reconstruct it from memory. And through these relations, the wool store is a place that now also extends to wherever I may go. We are not untangled.

4.4
PLACE AS
ASSEMBLAGE

This part outlines the paradigm of place as assemblage. Section 4.4.1 describes how the ideas are positioned on a middle ground between views of place as a pre-given essence and a social construction. Section 4.4.2 describes assemblage theory and how it can be applied to place, and Section 4.4.3 develops the definitions of dimensions and codes of assemblages. Section 4.4.4 explains how notions of embodied difference in place dissolves polarization between the local and global, Section 4.4.5 how place is set apart in space through notions of social intensity, Section 4.4.6 how place is seen as always becoming in time, and Section 4.4.7 highlights how design in this paradigm is always tied to power. Section 4.4.8 summarizes the key aspects of the paradigm, and Section 4.4.9 concludes with a reflection on the Melbourne wool store through the paradigmatic lens of place as assemblage.

These places are lived and embodied; they are structured, ordered, transformed, infiltrated and negotiated; they are symbolized, packaged and marketed. In each case they are local places enmeshed in global fields of power: capital markets, nationalisms, design professions, mass media, rural-urban migrations; they are subject to global flows of materials, design formulae, information, capital, heroin, design styles and reputations. They are also fundamentally local – constructed from the contingencies of site and society, climate and economy.

— Kim Dovey

4.4.1 REJECTING DICHOTOMIES AND DISCIPLINARY DIVIDES IN PLACE STUDIES

So far I have accounted for a range of quite disparate understandings of place, emphasizing natural essence, human perception and social relations respectively. I will finish this delineation of place theory with one that seeks to reconcile some of these polarized positions in an understanding of place that is grounded in local contexts and everyday practices, but recognizes these as tied up in social relations and global flows.

Refusing to pick between opposing place paradigms in a "false choice of place as pre-given or as socially constructed", architecture and urban design professor Kim Dovey (2010:6) seeks instead to construct a theory of place that is neither abstracted "from its instances in daily life, nor deferred to a presumed deeper or higher source". To do this, he adapts to place studies the *assemblage theory* introduced by philosopher Gilles Deleuze in the later decades of the 20th century and developed by Manuel DeLanda, as well as the concept of *habitus* used by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

Through assemblage theory, place can be conceptualized as an objectively existing (concept-independent, i.e. not socially constructed) whole, with properties emerging from the interactions between its constitutive parts. By focusing on the particular historic and contingent processes through which assemblages are created and accounting for their diverse complexity without conflating them

into general categories, assemblage theory offers an approach to place that neither reduces it to static essence nor socially constructed text (Dovey 2010:16), and that cuts across the nature-culture divide (DeLanda 2006:3). Through the concept of habitus, the unwritten social rules that govern human behavior in different situations – our 'feel for the game' – can be seen as codes that stabilize the identity of an assemblage (Dovey 2010:7).

Dovey (2010:14) challenges us as designers to step out of our disciplinary comfort zones and stretch our minds, since conceptualizations of place based on Deleuzian theory requires

> *that we enter into this system of concepts rather than contemplate from the outside or from above. We might treat this assemblage of concepts like a strange place – we visit, we explore, we use it; we may or may not get a feel for the game of inhabiting, and we may or may not feel at home.*

Dovey exemplifies the potential of these theoretical tools in various case study analyses of neighborhoods, global place types and social and political processes in place, all which underscore his general view that all place studies are multidisciplinary and best approached through a range of methodologies that link phenomenology, spatial analysis and discourse analysis. Different paradigms of knowledge can help to enlighten us about different aspects of place, and in order to arrive at an understanding of place as a

general concept, we must understand also the particularities of different places. "Places are cases", he notes, and case studies here are not used in the traditional sense to test, prove or refute a theory, but rather the theory is useful if it helps to make sense of the place (Dovey 2010:8).

I would like to begin the explanation of assemblage theory with a clarification of the staggered source materials here drawn upon. As mentioned, the concept of assemblage was originally introduced by Deleuze, but the explanations of assemblages and of other concepts used to characterize them are rather sparse and dispersed throughout different publications of his (in particular found in his collaborative work with Felix Guattari) (DeLanda 2006). Hence DeLanda (2006) has reconstructed, developed, and further elaborated the Deleuzian ideas in a succinct account on assemblage theory aimed at introducing a new approach to social ontology and analyzing the complexity of social entities. Further, Dovey (2008; 2010) has developed the ideas of Deleuze and DeLanda to apply assemblage theory to studies of place and power, pairing it with additional theories and concepts from other writers to create a set of theoretical tools by which places can be analyzed. In this thesis I use all three 'layers' of ideas (without going into Deleuzian theory to any depth other than as employed by the other writers mentioned), with the aim of showing how assemblage theory frames understandings of place phenomena and conceptualizations of place from a landscape architecture perspective. Let us start by explaining what assemblage theory is all about, and what it gives when applied to place.

4.4.2 ASSEMBLAGE THEORY APPLIED TO PLACE

In its most general sense, an assemblage is a whole whose properties "emerge from the interactions between parts" (DeLanda 2006:5). The parts of any assemblage – material or immaterial – are connected through relations of *exteriority*, meaning that they are not defined by their function to the whole, nor are their internal relationships reciprocal or necessary to the whole but merely contingent. Since the parts of an assemblage are never interdependent and seamlessly fused into totalities (the diametrical opposite to assemblages), they can be taken out without loosing their identity and plugged into a different assemblage where

they may function differently – like the parts of a machine (DeLanda 2006:9-11). Similarly, a collective of smaller assemblages may interact in such a way that they form "more or less permanent articulations between them yielding a macro-assemblage with properties and capacities of its own" (DeLanda 2006:16-17), which can in turn form part of even larger-scale assemblages.

All places can be understood as assemblages, and in line with the above they may be seen as particular 'state of affairs' (Dovey 2010:16). Dovey takes the example of a street, which is not merely a thing nor simply made up by a collection of discrete things like trees and sidewalks and moving cars: it is the relations of these things and practices to one another that form the street, and the dynamic flows of "life, traffic, goods and money that give the street its intensity and sense of place", in turn defining it in relation to other assemblages such as city parks or squares, and interacting with them to form the larger assemblage of the city as a whole (Ibid.). Using this example to clarify the contingency of relations of exteriority, I may point to the fact that if we remove the trees from the street the street will not cease to be a street, nor will the trees cease to be trees. We could go ahead and replace the trees with waste bins on the street, and move the trees to the city park instead; actions which would alter the constitution of the respective assemblages but not automatically affect their identities, nor necessarily (although possibly) have any significant impact on the properties of the larger assemblage of the city in which they form part.

What needs to be stressed in assemblage theory with regards different scales however, is that any assemblage at any given scale – from a single person up to the nation-state made up by a succession of progressively larger assemblages such as networks, organizations, governments, and cities, to use DeLanda's (2006) own case example for social assemblages – are understood as an individual entity. This applies regardless of whether they are spatially concentrated or dispersed in networks of low density. Thus, in an ontological sense, assemblage is a flat category where all assemblages are singularities with their own unique identities, contingent on their constitutive parts and the historic processes of their formation (DeLanda 2006:28). In relation to the above example, this gives that the street, the park and city are never

to be seen as a different categories of places, but always as individual wholes – the particular street, particular park, particular city.

The constitutive parts of an assemblage can equally be material things (organic and inorganic) and social practices, but whatever their independent properties are, each component may serve a different function and exercise its capacities to different extents depending on its relation to other components within the assemblage as well as to the properties of other interacting entities that serve to constrain and enable performance (DeLanda 2006:34-35). The mechanisms that govern assemblages are mainly causal, but not necessarily of a linear causality, and in the case of social assemblages involving also reasons and motives. DeLanda (2006:19) emphasizes that in order to understand the synthesis of emergent properties of assemblages, the complex mechanisms behind them must be properly elucidated. I may use myself as an example of this complexity, since as a person I form part of many different assemblages. With my parents I am a daughter, with my husband I am a wife, abroad I am a tourist and in my street I am a local. I am myself, but in these different instances of assemblages we call 'family' and 'place' I take on different roles and act in different ways based on both physical and social circumstances that force or induce certain behaviors.

This serves to show the sense in which assemblage theory dismisses general categories and instead asserts the singular status of each particular assemblage. It also explains why the properties of assembled wholes cannot be reduced to the properties of its components, and how the assemblage may be literally or analytically "taken apart while at the same time allowing that interactions between parts may result in a true synthesis" (DeLanda 2006:11). Finally, it points to the way that assemblage theory lends itself not to conceptual but causal (however not as in linear causality) analysis, and underscores the importance of understanding the part-to-whole relation of the components of an assemblage in successive scales in order to discover the actual mechanisms that operate at a given spatial scale, and thereby explain the emerging properties of the assemblage as a whole (DeLanda 2006:19).

Relating this to place, I will emphasize that any assembled place is its own whole, and the concept of place in this paradigm thus always denotes places as singular wholes, regardless of their scale. This is so because, as already outlined, the emergent properties of the assemblage that arise from the interactions between its constitutive parts give that the properties of an assemblage of any scale are different than the sum of the properties of its components. Thus the city forms a whole place, whose properties are not simply a function of the properties of its streets and parks and squares (being at one scale their own assembled wholes, but to the city acting as components of its larger assemblage), but of the way they interact. However, the whole of the city cannot be understood without also understanding its components and the way they exercise their capacities. Let us now proceed to outline some of the processes that form and alter assemblages.

4.4.3 DIMENSIONS AND CODES OF THE ASSEMBLAGE

There are two main dimensions in which any assemblage may be defined, structured as intersecting axes in the "tetravalence of the assemblage" (Deluze and Guattari in Dovey 2010:16). The first dimension defines the roles that the components of an assemblage may play, spanning between *materiality* on one end and *expression* on the other. These roles are variable and any component may be capable of performing a combination of both by exercising different sets of capacities. The material components of an assemblage of place may be its physical locale, but equally the bodies of people who occupy it. The expressive components can be both linguistic, such as verbal conversations, written signs, and symbols, or it can be non-linguistic such as body language, gestures or social poses. The materiality/expression axis represents an analytical side of the assemblage, since all its components can be ascribed these qualities to varying degrees (DeLanda 2006:12-14).

The second dimension defines the processes by which components become involved in and act to either stabilize or destabilize the identity of an assemblage, described by the concepts of *territorialization* on one end and *deterritorialization* on the other. Also these may exist in mixtures, since an assemblage may have parts that act to stabilize and destabilize it at the same time. Territorialization

stabilizes the identity of an assemblage of place "by increasing its degree of internal homogeneity or the degree of sharpness of its boundaries" (DeLanda 2006:12). It pertains primarily to quite literal definition and sharpening of spatial boundaries (which we may illustrate very literally by the example of gated communities), but can also refer to social processes that increase the internal homogeneity of an assemblage (such as ethnically or economically segregated neighborhoods) (DeLanda 2006:13). Deterritorialization destabilizes the identity of the assemblage by instead erasing its boundaries and increasing its internal heterogeneity (such as new development breaking with a traditional character of an area, or transgressive practices challenging established norms of style or behavior). The territorialization/ deterritorialization axis represents synthetic functions of the assemblage (DeLanda 2006:13-14), dependent on a repetition of occurrences that can illustrate Dovey's (2008:45) statement that "Place is a product of practice rather than an effect of built form".

Besides these two dimensions, there is an additional synthetic process in assemblage theory that we should take note of: that of *coding* and *decoding*, performed by the two specialized expressive entities of genes and words and acting to produce and maintain the identity of assemblages (DeLanda 2006:14). As DeLanda writes (2006:15), "While territorialization provides a first articulation of the components, the coding performed by genes or words supplies a second articulation, consolidating the effects of the first and further stabilizing the identity of assemblages." This genetic and linguistic coding is not, importantly, a defining essence of the assemblage, but one process that operates side by side with the other dimensions of the assemblage and equally relates to its other components in external ways (DeLanda 2006:16).

Dovey (2010:7, 31-33) proposes that we use Bordieu's concept of *habitus* as a form of social code for the assemblage of place. Habitus refers to "people's embodied dispositions towards everyday social practice", informing their behavior in a given social 'field'. "The habitus conflates 'habit' and 'habitat' to construct both a sense of place and a sense of one's place in a social hierarchy", and is something we learn and develop growing up

(Ibid.). As a form of coding the habitus stabilizes the identity of an assemblage by encouraging particular behaviors; subtly defining between insiders and outsiders of a place or a social group that it 'belongs' to. It separates the individuals who possess the right kind of cultural or other capital to have a 'feel for the game' from those who do not, and therefore are 'out of place'.

For our theorization of place, assemblage theory offers a straightforward framework for describing and analyzing in a concrete fashion some of the complex aspects of place, through the concepts of materiality/expression, territorialization/deterritorialization, coding/ decoding, and habitus. It is important to understand that none of these properties or qualities exist as absolute opposites. In every assemblage of place they all figure to varying degrees, and the internal balance between them is never permanently settled. Dovey (2008; 2010) has elaborated on this understanding that place as assemblage is never characterized by polarizations of extremes, but by the embodiment of difference. This will be exemplified in the next section. Continuing to outline this theory, I will break with the structure of content dominant in the previous parts of Chapter 4 and first show how assemblage theory can be used to understand the relations between local and global aspects of place, in order to build a logical order of information and avoid unnecessary repetition.

4.4.4 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AND WITHIN PLACE: WEIGHING THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL

Building on the central idea of assemblage theory that assemblages may display opposing characteristics as variables in mixture, rather than being pulled between them as polarized extremes, Dovey (2008:56) states that place can be construed as an "assemblage of dialectic processes". Using concepts from multiple theorists, he (2008:53,56) exemplifies this through a series of binary pairs by which place can be described, which aside from the territorialization/ deterritorialization already mentioned may include smooth/striated, sedentary/nomadic, arboreal/ rhizomatic, strategies/tactics, lived/conceived, being/becoming, home/journey, local/global and more. These are far from mutually exclusive opposites, indeed "the way they fold into each

other is one of the keys to understanding place – tactics become strategies, the lived becomes conceived, private becomes public, smooth becomes striated, the journey becomes home and local becomes global" (2008:56).

This serves to highlight that places are always in a state of change or *becoming* where identities will slip, but also that this two-sided thinking gives that "constructions of place are equally a product of difference [...] if place embodies 'identity' then it also embodies 'difference'" (Dovey 2008:56). Lucy Lippard[3] (2005:1) illustrates through the concept of site how such 'folding' can play out in practical terms, and how place identity is contingent both on parts of the assemblage and entities outside of it:

Like everything else, a site is defined not merely by its 'own' qualities and quantities but by those of its neighbors. When the surroundings change, the site and what has been built on it changes too. Open may become closed; tall may become ordinary; striking contrasts may be obliterated. Views of (the outside) and views from (the inside) can contradict each other.

Turning to the issue of local and global places or forces, with this dialectical thinking there is no complete division into separate categories – all places will to some extent be both. Local and global (perhaps more aptly thought of as specific/generic) are two different sides to place identity that can be more or less pronounced in the constitutive parts of its assemblage but always co-exist in a changing relationship. While "Globalization has transformed place experience and fuelled a proliferation of global place types" (Dovey 2008:53) such as the shopping mall and the corporate tower, there is no saying that global influences necessarily entail an eradication of local styles or customs. With the example of a central neighborhood in Bangkok, Dovey (2010:167-184) shows how local traditions and international features in various fashions fit side by side in an eclectic dynamic.

How the impact of global forces will affect any given place assemblage depends on its constitution. As DeLanda (2006:20) explains in relation to the mechanism of nonlinear causality that govern the effects on assemblages, there is a certain threshold to an assemblage's ability to be affected which is

conditioned by its parts and their relations. This means that the same cause can have different effects on different assemblages (just as different causes may potentially result in the same effect), and that the relation of cause to effect is not necessarily proportionate. Thus, depending on the constitution of the assemblage, global forces may act to replace local traditions, but they may just as well act to instill new practices that exist alongside them.

In relation to this, Dovey (2008:57) makes a crucial separation of the notion of *difference between places* from that of *difference within places.* The former is what distinguishes places of all scales (room, house, neighborhood, city) from one another, while the latter concerns the degree to which difference is permitted within a place – whether it embodies difference of is 'purified'. The important distinction to Dovey is that between places of difference and places of purity – those that are sites for new spatial practices and formations of identity and culture, and those where identity is already fixed and 'finished'. For our interests in assemblage theory and place, this distinction may be more constructive to employ than the generic categories of local and global places. From it we may conclude that places with low tolerance for difference are more vulnerable to change; that the rigid identity of a 'purified' place is more likely to be altered by new and 'generic' developments, than that of a place where diversity is already part of its identity, hence being open to new practices. Just like the old saying 'what does not bend will break', the place identity that cannot adapt will diminish.

If assemblage theory can help us to model places of practically any scale, all which will embody difference to various degrees, how may we understand what really sets place apart from its surroundings? Let us now look at how we may understand the binary of place/space within the paradigm of place as assemblage.

4.4.5 SOCIALITY AND INTENSITY SET PLACE APART IN SPACE

Like the twofold nature of the binary concepts highlighted in the previous section, it is easy to associate space and place with opposing characteristics. Dovey (2010:23) however rejects any such polarization of the two concepts:

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3. Lippard makes her comment in regards to the concept of site, but it aptly illustrates the effects of different perspectives both within and on place just the same.

This conceptual opposition between points of stability and lines of flight, between 'wings and roots' to add another metaphor, makes it tempting to add the conceptual opposition of space versus place and to identify space with freedom and movement in contrast with the stability and rootedness of place. I think this is a serious mistake and that place is best conceived as the assembled mix.

Instead of being conceptually opposed, space and place are seen to differ mainly in the way that intensity connects sociality to spatiality in a place. "When we say 'this is a great place' we mean something more social and less formal then 'this is a great space'. [...] While space may have physical dimensions, it is intensity that gives place its potency and its primacy" (Dovey 2010:3). This is an understanding of place as a form of 'peak' in space, where heightened intensity (of experiences, activities, social meanings and the like) sets it apart from its surrounding and gives it a certain sense.

This is not implying that the sense of place is static; a fixed pause in the journey through space, and indeed intensity may vary greatly over the cycle of days, as well as transform over the course of years. The streets of the business districts empty at night, while the neon and the music of a nightlife strip bloom out somewhere else, transforming the character of the street and bringing about a different intensity of life that permits other social behaviors (a different habitus, or differently coded assemblage) than do the daylight hours or the office space.

Space and spatial boundaries constrain and enable certain activities in place physically, and through social codes they also permit conditional access of individuals and groups to different places. The lecture hall is open to students and teachers on a regular basis, but not to just any passer-by (Dovey 2010). What these examples highlight, however, is that the while the intensity of place is intimately linked to its sociality, it is also highly dependent on temporal processes.

4.4.6 PLACE AS BECOMING IN TIME
Emphasizing the dynamism of assemblages, within this paradigm Dovey (2010:13) calls for a view of place that breaks with notions of static essence or being:

Place is a dynamic ensemble of people and environment that is at once material and experiential, spatial and social. [...] The task for place theory is to move from conceptions of place as stabilized being towards places of becoming.

With such a view of place as always in a state of becoming and never fixed into being its four-dimensionality is given. The way we experience places in our everyday lives – as relatively stable contexts within which life takes place (Dovey 2010:3) – can rather be seen as plateaus; a relative consistency of place over a certain time, in the course of its perpetual change (Dovey 2010:26).

We may understand the dimension of time as integral to the assemblage of place in practice through the recurring events of territorialization and deterritorialization that inscribe and erase the boundaries and identities of places. As Van Eyck (in Carmona et al 2010:121-2) wrote, "time in the image of man is occasion", and repeated occasions are what form places. The ways that repetitive events inscribe themselves into place both literally, as paths in the dirt where many feet tread, and in the social understanding of that path, adds to the physical constitution as well as the perceived identity and sense of place. In this view, we may say that for things to *take place* are for them to *make place*.

We may exemplify this process of local, everyday practices enforcing place identities by Jane Jacobs (2011:65-71) description of the "sidewalk ballet" of her Greenwich Village street, serving to enforce a sense of stability and belonging through familiarity of shared and repeated routines. Important to note in this context is also that the spatial and temporal scales of an assemblages of place may not correlate (DeLanda 2006:40-44) – the assemblage of Jacob's street may not be very large, but if resident's are stable and there is an overlap between them which uphold the practices of territorialization then the place may outlast other assemblages of significantly larger size (more spatially extensive or assembled through a large number of parts).

Natural or cultural processes are not different in this regard, as they equally territorialize assemblages through concrete spatio-temporal events, and are linguistically coded. The ritual morning dog walk is once instance of this (Dovey

2010). The ever-different waves that roll onto shifting sands, tides rising and falling with the pull of the moon – in relation to the moon in a most physical sense – is another: transient and provisional motions that persistently re-inscribe themselves onto the surface of the earth and into the consciousness of our minds, so that for every crashing wave it stabilizes the identity of a shore; a shore; a shore.

For the concern of landscape architects, this means that we must not only understand the different components of an assemblage of place, but how they exercise their capacities to stabilize or destabilize it through repeated practices over time. To do so we must also understand the mechanisms that serve to enable or restrain action by the components of place, in order to understand how we may approach places as targets for design intervention. For that we must in turn understand how places are enmeshed in relations and practices of power.

4.4.7 PLACE, POWER AND DESIGN

Although place in many cases acts as a taken-for-granted backdrop of events, the impact of its physical structures, social codes and symbols on our lives runs deep. In creating these structures and images, all design of the environment is inherently complicit with social structures of power - whether working with or against the normative grain (Dovey 2010). As Dovey (2010:37) highlights with Derridean deconstructivism as an example, even avant-garde design that explicitly attempts to overthrow aesthetic ideals tends to loose its shock value over time, be cleared of its subversive power, appropriated and incorporated into a mainstream canon where it serves to symbolize an idea of 'edge' - one that is no longer sharp and therefore poses no risk. The eternal idea of 'the new' fuels architectural progress and feeds a social 'meaning market' where images sell architecture and vice versa, but in reality it creates little actual change (Dovey 2010). Ideas and images of change are far more liquid assets to transact than their realization. And while real places cannot possibly be cleared of their images, images of place can be detached from real lived experience. When architecture becomes superficial imagery, the user value of design gets surpassed by symbolic meaning: "Architectural drawings have gained value as art, as the 'end' rather than

the 'means' of architecture" (Dovey 2008:39). For place, assemblage theory and landscape architecture this begs contemplation on the actual impact of design actions on the assemblage of place, and their justification. Dovey (2008:219-220) writes:

Designers have a leading role at a certain moment in the life of a place – fixing some forms within which life will be lived, upon which memories will be hung and meanings constructed. [...] The task is to keep alive the liberating spirit of design without the illusion of autonomy.

Landscape architecture is a practice of power that in effect serves to enable and constrain people and processes. Its outcome is not uniform, for it may enable certain people or practices while constraining others, and it may strive to embody difference or single out an identity to express. Design can serve to further stabilize the territorialization of an assemblage by enforcing its established boundaries and identity (gating off the affluent neighborhood from the rowdy public park) or it can deterritorialize the assemblage by proposing interventions or transformations contradicting an established or emerging order (creating a shared space zone instead of a stoplight crossing). As designers, are we changing the actual components of an assembled place, are we changing their capacity to perform, or are we changing the way that the assemblage is socially coded? The application of assemblage theory throws light both on the complex processes of place formation on the one hand, and the particular incentives for and mechanisms of our work to affect them. Its potential lies in offering an holistic approach to place without neither compromising the individuality of its parts nor concealing its complexity. As Dovey (2010:30) summarizes:

The concept of place-as-assemblage enables us to overcome simplistic divisions between design and planning, form and function, diagram and design. It enables us to develop a sophisticated approach to concepts of territoriality and spatial structure, and to see all places as embodying twofold concepts such as rhizome/tree, difference/identity, but also global/ local and open/closed. Most importantly it enables us to encounter and understand the sense of place as an everyday experience rather than either an essentialized 'genius loci' or a myth.

But however theoretically potent, the application of Deleuzian theory and other tools to analyze and explain place phenomena may not always be straightforwardly applied to practical situations, or simplify communication. It requires a similar level of understanding of these concepts for different parties in a conversation to understand one another. Otherwise, the esoteric nature of the descriptions and explanations will doubtlessly alienate the less informed client or member of the public, thereby failing to bridge the gap of diverging understandings of place even if the designer in this case has a firm grip on the theory and her own take on it. This identifies yet another layer of the power-structures in which landscape architects practice with regards to developing the theory of the discipline; that it creates a threshold between those able to access and make use of ideas, and those to which they appear unintelligible. Theory can indeed be practical, but to differentiate oneself through intellectual stature is also an act of power. The challenge here is to make ideas accessible, and put them to use in inclusive ways.

4.4.8 SUMMARY OF KEY ASPECTS

Place as assemblage is understood as a whole with properties emerging from the interaction of its parts. In assemblage theory, places of all scales can be theoretically modelled and analyzed concretely in their components - from the armchair to the world. The interactions of the components may result in emergent properties of the synthesized whole of the assemblage that are more than merely the sum of the properties of the separate components. This also gives that the components of an assemblage can change without changing the identity of the whole.

The assemblage of place becomes stabilized through repeated practice – territorialization – or destabilized through practice that contradicts established identities or increase internal heterogeneity.

Within the paradigm of place as assemblage…
… Meaning arises as social valuation of the assembled components of place, based both on its internal composition and its relation to other places.
… Space is not put in opposition to place but they exist in an assembled mix, where the social and experiential aspects of place are its defining characteristics. The intensity of experiences and heightened concentration of applied human intention is what sets place apart from wider space.
… Time is seen as inherent in place, and its constant transformation is described by the notion of becoming. This is illustrated by the ongoing territorialization/deterritorialization of place through repeated practices, and the way its identity slips between different mixtures of binary characteristics over time. With emphasis on personal experiences of place as crucial for human existence and identity, the notion of becoming-in-the-world should replace the static being-in-the-world.
… Local/global features and forces both impact place and its continuous becoming. Global economy has transformed places in the modern world, but although enmeshed in various global forces and flows place is still necessarily in part locally grounded, and the extent to which local and global mechanisms act on the components of the assemblage of place will vary between different places.
… Design is not prescriptive or ascribed any particular task by assemblage theory per se, but it is conditioned by the fact that there is no autonomy of architectural practice, and no independence from the power-relations in which the world as a whole as well as any place or aspiring designer is inexorably enmeshed.

In regards to landscape architecture, the paradigm of place as assemblage de-mystifies notions of place identity and sense of place, framing places as concrete assemblages of identifiable components and traceable practices. We may act to change the assemblage of place by imposing change to its constitutive parts or to the performance capacity of its components, but we must also understand that in doing so we ourselves become components of that assemblage.

4.4.9
THE WOOL STORE AS ASSEMBLAGE

Contemplating the wool store as an assemblage, it is clear how it is not just the building, nor just the lot or the freeway, that epitomizes the place, but the way they are configured together. It is an assemblage easily generalized as 'derelict industrial site', quite familiar to anyone who has explored cities beyond their main streets. Looking closer, however, one can penetrate the generic label and find clues to the particular history and character of this place.

Several historical layers can be traced in the physical elements of the assemblage. The once open creek now restrained and channelized. The tracks where freight trains used to cargo raw wool from the farms to the wool store for processing and auction, now only carry commuter trains that move people around the growing city. And towering high over them both, the freeway overpass, with cars supposed to supersede the slow trains below, but often zooming straight into a rush hour of congested independence. The forces of global economy, of local politics and personal enterprises have all been tugging on this place to make it what it is today.

Although the place may first appear to be frozen in a past time, traces of new uses are apparent and the shifting functions of the place also point to a shift in meaning. The striated structure of the lot with its straight-angle walls and rigid fencing is smoothed out by the informal use as a thoroughfare for shortcuts and a canvas for artistic expression. The closed walls have been forced open, and the route that leads from the nearby gyms to the train station is revealed by

the openings in the fence on opposite sides of the lot, even though no trail is yet discernible on the concrete surface. The former identity of the wool store is being deterritorialized, while new users are in effect reconstructing it in a new form. The materiality is slowly fading as the building disintegrates, but the expressive qualities are changing with different spray tags covering its walls and flowers breaking through the cracking surfaces.

Being equally physical relationships and historical narratives figuring in the assemblage of the wool store, these components assume their particular functions in this particular constellation. Change the parts and you alter the place. Tread the path and you become a part of it. Do unexpected things and you destabilize it. This place, as an assemblage, is emerging as a negotiation of space and time by its components – physical and intangible – all the time. That is how it is becoming.

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05

IMPLICATIONS OF PLACE THEORY FOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: ANALYSIS OF PARADIGMATIC LENSES

This chapter brings together the information from the framework constructed in Chapter 3 and the place theories outlined in Chapter 4 for analysis and discussion in relation to the research questions. Section 5.1 synthesizes and summarizes the main points of divergence between the place paradigms, and analyzes the implications of these differences in response to RQ1. Section 5.2 evaluates these implications and argues for their suitability in relation to contemporary landscape architecture in response to RQ2, and Section 5.3 provides an analysis and concluding discussion in response to RQ3. Section 5.4 summarizes the contribution of this thesis and provides concluding comments on the research, and section 5.5 applies these findings in a final reflection on the wool store case.

5.1 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION IN RESPONSE TO

RQ1: *How can different understandings of the concept of place frame the processes and impact the outcomes of landscape architectural design?*

To answer this question, I will in the following sections first highlight the divergent implications of different perspectives on place by analyzing some main theoretical differences between the paradigms. Thereafter I will analyze how a schematic design process might be impacted by the application of each paradigm respectively, to elucidate their consequences for the process and its outcomes. This is done primarily by drawing on the comparative hinges by which the paradigms were outlined in Chapter 4, and relating these to aspects highlighted in the landscape architecture framework for place theory evaluation developed in Chapter 3, with emphasis on the work roles, goals, and design process of the profession.

5.1.1 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MAIN THEORETICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARADIGMS

The four place paradigms explored in this thesis illustrate how the pendulum of ideas swings back and forth through time. The theory of place as natural essence emerged as a critique of the abstracted ideals and scientific methodologies of architectural modernism. Similarly, the urgency to reevaluate experiential aspects of place, and protect the authenticity of local places perceived to be diminishing under placeless forces, was a response to modernist lack of contextual awareness and the effects of globalization. In turn, arguments for a relational reconceptualization of place embracing the flux of the postmodern world challenged the view of place as bound and fixed in space and coherently contained in time, in order to more accurately address the conditions of an interconnected world. The view of place as assemblage was put forth to reconcile the divide between emphasis on the existential significance of place and its relational qualities, aiming for a more constructive approach to the complexity of place.

From these various outsets of differing world views, each paradigm establishes its own ideas of what place is, what it means, and how it develops. As we have seen in Chapter 4, they position place on more or less different ends of spectrums relating it to meaning, space and time, as well as

express varying sentiments about the relationships of local and global factors in places. It would not be possible to plot these differences on the same chart since they do not all pertain to the same kind of properties, but some overarching differences as well as specific points of divergence crystallize from comparison of the paradigms. These have consequences for how place may be understood and approached in contexts of landscape architectural design, which I shall here outline.

Place as Phenomenological Experience or Analytical Abstraction

A fundamental distinction between the paradigms is whether place is considered as something that is experienced through the human senses – as a purely phenomenological thing that can only be meaningfully comprehended by a first person subject being-in-place; or conceptualized as a relational construct understood beyond the reach of immediate human sensuous experience, where the grasping of analytical abstractions is required in order to understand place and how any phenomenological experiences of place are conditioned. In a simplified sense, the theories span a range from place as concretely experienced in the paradigms of place as natural essence and place as experiential phenomena, to abstractly conceptualized in the paradigms of place as relational construct and place as assemblage.

These two angles on the concept of place frame in rather different fashions the ways in which landscape architects may approach place phenomena as targets for design intervention. From the concrete phenomenological viewpoint, we should strive to always see place phenomena from the vantage point of a person in place (which may not necessarily be ourselves), to understand how it makes sense (structurally, characteristically and socially) and how we may enhance that sense through design. From the more abstracted relational viewpoint, we should look beyond immediate or directly relatable aspects of place phenomena to trace the relations (in anything from physical morphology and infrastructure to intangible social and political forces) that may help us understand why the structure, the character and the social functions and sentiments are the way they are, and how we may act upon them to steer desired change.

In the case of the wool store this distinction would entail, with the former perspective, emphasis on my experiences visiting, perhaps developing ideas for change by sketching at the site, talking to passers-by, pondering ways to breathe life into the place anew – resuscitate its spirit so to speak – without losing its legacy. With the latter perspective, devising such ideas would also necessitate zooming out – whether by poring over historical maps or the computer screen or simply walking about other nearby neighborhoods – to understand how the place makes sense in relation to its history and its surroundings, how it is being pictured and represented in other contexts, and how its entanglement in various power-relations of the past and present govern its future potential.

This overarching division between concretely phenomenological or abstractly relational approaches to place runs as an undercurrent in subsequent divergences that set the paradigms apart. We will now look at more specific distinctions between the paradigms that become central when thinking about ways to understand and design for place. Firstly; whether the meaning in place is construed as essential and thus singular, experiential and thus personal, or socially constructed and thus relative.

Meaning in Place as Essence, Experience or Social Construction

In regards to the view of meaning in place – what it is and where it stems from – three principal stands can be identified between the paradigms. The distinctions are whether meaning is seen to be inherent in the world; to emanate from personal human experience and intention; or to develop as a relative social construction.

In the paradigm of place as natural essence, meaning is regarded as an essence of things and places that always already exists in the natural life-world. It is defined by the genius loci, the enduring spirit of place that denotes its essence. In this view, a landscape architect cannot create meaning, only express and enhance the meaning that is given.

In the paradigm of place as experiential phenomena, meaning in place is seen to arise from people's direct experiences of places, and the intentions and relationships they have for and with them. Hence it will vary between individuals and groups, and landscape architects must therefore interact with various users of a place in order to gain insights into some of the range of meaning it holds, and how they may facilitate meaningful experiences through design.

In the paradigm of place as relational construct, meaning is considered to be a social construction; something that emanates from human understanding and common classifications of phenomena in the world, and not from the phenomena per se. Meaning is therefore understood as relative to varying cultural and social contexts, and it will shift between people and groups as well as change in time as a result of shifting social relations overall. This is to say that people will reevaluate the meaning of place both as the physical place and its activities changes (new buildings get developed, new user groups emerge), as the conditions which frame the understanding of the place changes (the way it is pictured in media, its social status) and as they themselves change as individuals (growing older, having new needs and opinions). For landscape architects, this view means that meaning is both fleeting and manifold, and they must both interact with different users and analyze prevailing social images of a place to gain insights of some of its shifting meaning and arguments for how to contribute to its formation through design.

The paradigm of place as assemblage essentially subscribes to the view of meaning as a social construction, but emphasizes that for the human component of the assemblage this meaning is largely phenomenological and experiential. This interrelation forms two sides of the same coin of meaning – albeit of a very instable currency. In this view, meaning in place is seen both as something directly and deeply personal and as something socially constructed and contingent on various forms of power and capital (social and cultural as well as political and economical), compelling landscape architects to ponder both the existential significance of place for its various users, and the power structures to which it is tied.

The most critical distinction among these different views of meaning in place, paramount in framing landscape architects' approach to understanding and designing for place, is whether places are seen to have single or multiplex meanings, and in turn one or many identities.

Place Identity as Single or Multiplex

The ways that the different paradigms picture place identities are indeed quite incompatible. Within the paradigm of place as natural essence, the notion of a single identity of place, based on its intrinsic genius, is diametrically opposed to the idea of multiple and socially contingent place identities; relational and shifting with different people, different convergences of relations, or differently composed assemblages. For landscape architects, it poses the question of whether place identity is something that they can create through their work, or only try to respond to. These differences between views on identity of place are crucial also in the way that they are tied to the identities of people – whether we say that people get their identities from places (as in the paradigm of place as natural essence), places get their identities from people (as in the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon), or the identities of both people and place necessarily affect each other through their relationships to one another (as in the paradigms of both place as relational construct and place as assemblage).

For landscape architects, these varying views of identity bring about different foci in processes of design. A perceived single identity of place challenges the designer to conceive adequate and coherent responses, true to the genius loci. Indeed, following this logic a dissatisfactory design outcome, weakening the place identity, could be traced back to incongruences between the genius loci and the formalized interpretations of the designer, who could then rightfully be accused of being insensitive to the place. A view of places as having multiple identities on the other hand brings forth issues of negotiating what identities are to be recognized and enhanced through design – a matter whose import gets amplified when we consider the foundational importance that place is often ascribed as existential grounding or point of orientation and identification for people in the world. Thus, dismissing particular identities of place as irrelevant or undesired may in effect be to dismiss the identities of certain inhabitants or users.

From a contemporary perspective – whether considered as 'placeless' or simply increasingly multicultural and globally influenced – these negotiations relate to the notion of politics of place

emphasized in the paradigms of place as relational construct and assemblage respectively, with the addition that it is not only individual people or groups that have personal stakes in the identities of places, but also political and commercial forces which leverage images of identity for advantage and profit. This in turn implies that landscape architects are not only relating to subjectively contingent identities of place, but also to desires to 'manufacture' identities through design for reasons far removed from supporting existential security. Finally, it lies upon us to weigh the significance of stable identities against other possible priorities of place, such as improving sustainability by promoting perhaps ecological functions over social, or other considerations that are not explicitly catering to social needs.

A question that follows on the contemplation of meaning and identity of places is where one place ends and another begins; where do meaning end or begin, how do identities transition? Places can be of different scales as we have seen, "from an armchair to the world"as Tuan (1977:149) put it, so how can we define the limits of places conceptually? This brings us to consider how place is posed in relation to space in the different theoretical paradigms, and how place is defined in that binary.

Place as Bound and Introvert or Open and Interconnected

The concepts of place and space respectively are ascribed different conceptual characteristics in the different paradigms, and thus understood differently as phenomena. The fundamental difference is whether place and space are construed as essentially different things and put in opposition, or just different aspects of the same thing that do not oppose but simply contrast one another in accord with varying intensity and socially ascribed significance.

The common and most basic way of distinguishing place as 'meaningful space' or 'space claimed by feelings' could essentially be argued to apply for all paradigms in different ways. In one sense it can be seen as a nature-given essential meaning, in a second as subjectively identified experiential meaning, in a third understood as meaningful in the sense of creating a constellation of social relations that noticeably stands out from the surrounding space of relations (i.e. if it was

not meaningful or significant it would not be an apparent convergence of relations that we would end up calling a place), and in a fourth, similarly, as a particular assemblage of components that humans identify as a place. However, I would say it is too generic and loose a definition to offer grounds for a landscape architecture understanding of place (although it underscores the general importance of place), and it does not capture the different implications of the paradigms overall.

The related definition of place based on a view of space as a general open arena for movement and place as particular pauses I understand as based on a similar idea. Since Tuan, who promotes this view, notes that place can be 'both an armchair and the world', I take that place as pause in his understanding denotes not necessarily a literal standstill in space, but that which the human mind lingers upon. Place, then, becomes a node not just within physical space, but a node of human attention and concern. Neither this notion however offers much guidance to help us map out and pin down where place begins and ends. Instead, I would pinpoint another important difference between the paradigms that serves to frame place in very different ways: whether place is seen to be defined by boundaries – separating them from other places as well as surrounding space – or defined by connections and thereby tied up with the surrounding space as well as with other places. These different understandings inform profoundly different design approaches, for they determine the extent to which a particular place is considered to reach.

This distinction goes in line with either a phenomenological or relational world-view. In the first two paradigms, it is the physical or experiential boundaries and the enclosure of a meaningful inside that define the place and where it 'begins its presencing'. In the two latter paradigms, we must look beyond the immediate experiential qualities of this boundary, and question both its necessity for the upholding of place, and its permanence.

I find the notion of enclosure to be the crux of the matter in multiple ways. Literally, the particular boundary that creates the enclosure, whether it is an obvious physical entity such as a city wall or a shift in character defining one place from another, provides the type of imageability that Lynch (1960) promotes. Figuratively, the

importance of this boundary seems to me tied to the existential significance of place; the foothold presumed to be provided by place in the sense of orientation and identification, and thereby its sense of familiarity, protection and safety. This notion of enclosure as protection can be applied to all possible scales of place. To develop Tuan's example, we may contemplate how the armchair with its cushions and armrests moulds to embrace and harbor the human body, and how the earth with its thin atmospheric shield protects us from the harshness and death of outer space. The boundary of the atmosphere may serve as more literal protection of our earthly lives, while the boundary of the armchair is rather a figurative delimitation of personal space and a metaphor for comfort, ease and contemplation, but they both constitute enclosures within which we can feel safe to live and ponder.

Comparing these ideas to the views of place as relational construct and as assemblage, where places are never seen as separated enclosed entities but as existing partly conditioned by what lies beyond any apparent limit, the boundaries seen to separate places are little but mental strongholds of the communal mind – they do not by definition uphold that which is held within, even if serving sometimes as a quite literal circumscription (like a moat) or a clear symbolic denotation of limits (such as between neighborhoods of contrasting character). Indeed, with a relational view of place, we may even understand the celestial bodies as open places where the earth, defined and enclosed as it seems, only hold its positions and maintain its orbit by the gravitational forces of other masses in outer space. The continuity of life on our planet is upheld by the interaction with stars and planets beyond the earth. Thus outer space is a relational space too. The comet that supposedly wiped the dinosaurs off the face of the earth many millions of years ago may be one of the most impactful spatio-temporal events besides the Big Bang. But intriguing as the outer space is, we shall not stray too far from our focus on landscape architecture. My point here is merely that the common understanding of limits and the existential significance vested in places is not necessarily in opposition to a relational understanding of place as a concept, but constitutes one kind of relation that makes place what it is.

Thus for landscape architects to be able to identify the limits of place, it may be relevant to explore both the experiential boundaries and the ones that serve to define place operationally, as outlines by Kahn (2005). Both these approaches, despite their differences, contrast the view of place as natural essence in that none see the identity of place as strictly grounded in a fixed locality. An understanding of place as enclosed and defined by a boundary is not the same as understanding place as bound to a particular location in space. Here, Relph's quote by Susan Langer (see Section 4.2.3) indicates that a place as experiential phenomenon is defined more by the continuity of its internal configuration of physical elements, social activities, and subjective associations than by a fixed geographical location. This marks a difference to the ideas of place as natural essence, where the particular given site is where that very essence stems from. In this case, although particular place features may be transferred or mimicked in other places through symbolization, a particular place in itself cannot be moved from its location and still remain the same place, nor can a location be turned into a wholly new place since the essence of place quite literally is seen to emanate from its very grounds.

Place regarded as relational construct or assemblage need not be tied to a location, however if place moves as a consequence of its constitutive relations or components changing location – such as a ship – it will change in accord with the changing setting in which it figures. Picture for example a luxury cruise ship with an artificial beach on upper deck. It is enclosed within its hull, it is defined by its stable features and repeated activities. But while surely being exotic on the seas of the northern seas, if cruising the Caribbean tropics the juxtaposition of environments will be diminished, experiences of it undoubtedly change, and the ship no longer appear in the same way. It is relative in this way to its surroundings; it is mixing up assemblages as it drifts. I would think, then, that it is not the boundedness or fixity of place per se that enables its existential significance, but rather its familiarity to us in whatever form or location it may be found. If I may allow myself one final venture into outer space, I would say that even planet earth is an example of this – it is constantly shifting its absolute location in space,

and its relative location to other heavenly bodies, yet to us it remains the same place. Because we are familiar with its motions, they are part of its identity to us. On account of these motions, however, it is showing us its different faces of days and nights and seasons, thus highlighting that while the limits of places are not spatially fixed, places are also defined by the ways they are bracketed in temporal sequences.

Places as Fixed of Fluxing: Perishing or Becoming in Time

The significance attributed to time displays a great variance between the different theories of place. The bottom line is whether time is seen as external to or inherent in place, and consequently whether places change as a function of time or retain a stable essence.

In the paradigm of place as natural essence, the essence of place is unchanged by time and by the temporal shifts of weather and seasons, and its spirit may endure if we respond to it in appropriate ways through changing historical eras. For place regarded as experiential phenomena place is not static in time, but neither is time an integral part of its constitution – it is merely an order of events that serves to either uphold or change it. Thus from the perspectives of these paradigms, despite their differing degrees of emphasis on social processes, place becomes something that design should act to protect from the gradual wear of time – by staying true to traditions, to the vernacular, and to the locally derived.

From a perspective of place as relational construct on the other hand, place is seen as inescapably spatio-temporal – a view that makes impossible any separation of the physicality of place and the point in time. This highlights the inherent processes not only within design, but in that which is designed - that design of place is not to be seen as a product but in itself a process that will not be fixed when it is 'finished' but always be in a state of change; of becoming. This is an equally prominent condition in the view of place as assemblage, where the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization can serve both to stabilize a place identity that may perhaps be quite informal, or destabilize an identity of a place that is highly designed and 'purified'. They are drivers of the becoming and the perishing of place

which serve to highlight how even if landscape architects plan and project certain type of place identities and experiences, they are never in full control of how they unfold, slip between identities over time, or completely slip away.

For landscape architects, it is however important to think of time in both the sense of cyclical changes such as seasons and days, and the changes imposed through time. In regards to the latter, I see the notion of *becoming* as a more generally optimistic understanding of the perpetual change in place, while *perishing* points to a loss of something rather than the emergence of something else. The sentiment, indeed sometimes sentimentality, about the past and the future of places that differentiates the paradigms is apparent especially in discussions about the relationship of local place qualities to global forces and flows, and the notion of placelessness as a feature of modernism. Let us examine how we may navigate these images of environmental dystopia, and handle questions of the local and global in relation to place and design in our present time.

The Local, the Global, and the Placeless

How the place paradigms construe the relationship of the local to the global in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world is another point of differentiation based on the theoretical outlooks. Within the paradigms of place as natural essence and as experiential phenomena, the local is identified with the context-specific, particular, and traditional, and put in opposition to the global which is instead associated with the general, generic, and modern. This relationship is contested in the paradigm of place as relational construct, where the local and the global are regarded as interconnected and thereby interdependent. The paradigm of place as assemblage, on the other hand, seeks to find a middle ground that recognizes both the inevitably local grounding of places, and the complex reality of global relations in which they are enmeshed and that affect the degree to which components of place can exercise their capacities.

However, I would not regard this relationship between the local and global as a core distinction for what defines place as a concept within any of the paradigms. Rather, it is the valuations of the place features associated with local and global

place phenomena that become a point of quarrel between the theorists, and that more or less explicitly prompts designers to take particular stands in the approach to and design for places.

On the one hand there is the notion of loss of place, or placelessness, that urges the designer to return to concrete, context-based and local design approaches. Hence Norberg-Schulz plea that architects make the 'recovery of place' their goal, and Relph's suggestion that the task for design should be to 'transcend placelessness'. On the other hand is the concern that excessive emphasis on bounded localities and historically grounded perceptions of place serve to fortify places, exclude perceived 'outsiders' or 'others', and increase xenophobia. Thus Massey proposes that we adopt a 'global sense of place' to recognize how we all – people and places alike – depend on others outside of ourselves to sustain, and Dovey highlights that the difference tolerated within place may be more relevant to consider than the difference maintained between places.

These diverging sentiments are strongly linked to the respective theories' historical grounding, mirroring contemporaneous concerns of their time of emergence and thereby highlighting the importance of regarding theory as situated and contextual (see Section 2.1). The two former paradigms responded to the results of de-contextualized architectural modernism and internationalization that at the turn of port-modernism was seen to move from clone-like environments to superficial and gimmicky interpretations of the local through disneyfication, museumization or contrived imagineering. The two latter paradigms respond to a situation where globalization – largely due to neoliberal economy and politics – is neither a force to embrace nor resist, but so established that it has become simply a framework of power-relations to comprehend and to work within (although, as Massey shows, this does not mean that it cannot be questioned, criticized, and contested). The important shift here is that globalization is not seen as an abstract force, but as founded upon specific local situations and particular relations of power and access, with quite different consequences for different places and people depending on their position in the global power-geometry that materialize from these relations. Although highly complex,

these relations can be traced, analyzed, and to varying extents affected, and there is thus nothing absolutely general or uniform about globalism as a phenomenon, even though some of its impact is seen in the form of stereotypical and globally dispersed place- and architecture typologies (such as the shopping mall or the corporate tower, see Dovey 117-192 for an range of accounts).

Analyzing the wool store through these different lenses can render quite disparate images. The store can be seen as a poor local victim, bled dry as local politics, global economy and space-time compression reconfigured the trade map and the blade of global commerce cut demands on Australian wool. Turning the perspective around, the 'blade of global commerce' is no abstract force, but made up of equally locally significant industries elsewhere (in this case predominantly China) that flourished to the benefit of their respective workers and local communities. Is it now placeless, its spirit crippled or even irrevocably lost? Equally, the wool store can be seen as a deterritorialized assemblage that is gradually assuming a new identity, independent of any primordial essence, where new emergent properties arise from the changing configuration of components, turning it into a ground for new ecosystems and creative explorations of various kinds.

This example serves to underscore the implications of different views of place and the significance of local/global relationships, in order to understand how they affect our approaches to the matter from a landscape architecture perspective. If we regard places as bounded, local entities and put them in opposition to forces of globalization, we stage them as vulnerable victims of an almost supernatural abstract force of modernity, coming at them through broadband wires and stock index charts and anonymous trucks on generic motorways. This frames the relationship of the global to the local as antagonistic, where our efforts as designers should be summoned to protect local places from ruin (a ruin that in turn severs our existential grounding as humans). If we on the other hand see places as assemblages, it is rather a constructive question of how we by means of design can make local and global components of interact in a way that creates positive emergent properties of the assemblage as a whole – how we can make their relationship synergetic.

Clearly, different valuations of local and global phenomena and the understanding of the relationships between them frame the task of designers in quite different ways. I shall return to matters of globalization and placelessness later in this analysis (see section 5.3.2), with emphasis on how we may constructively understand it in a contemporary landscape architecture discourse. For now let us keep the various differences outlined under the previous headlines in mind, and look at how the four different place paradigms might frame and impact the design process.

5.1.2 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN THROUGH DIFFERENT PARADIGMATIC LENSES

From the various points of divergence between the paradigms and the different ways in which they frame landscape architecture ideas and processes in relation to place, let us now make a succinct comparison of how the schematic design process (as described in Section 3.2.4) would be framed and impacted by the different paradigmatic views of place.

The following analysis will not describe a step-by-step methodological procedure in relation to a particular design situation, but rather illustrate how different understandings of place may frame the design task generally, direct the efforts and inform priorities in regards to survey, analysis and design for any given place.

Designing for Place as Natural Essence
If we adopt the paradigm of place as natural essence denoted by the genius loci, the role of the designer becomes much like that pictured in the epistle by Alexander Pope (see Section 4.4.1) – to interpret, extract and enhance the structure of nature in order to organize the human settlement, and thereby make accessible the life-world's well of existential meaning so that people can secure their existential foothold through orientation and identification, and dwell meaningfully.

Through thoughtful interventions, the designer becomes a metaphorical midwife 'at the interface between people and place' as Merrick Denton Thompson put it, who delivers the meaning inherent in nature and turns an undeveloped site into a place for human dwelling, or reinforces the meaning already vested in an existing man-made settlement. In this paradigm, place is primary

to any design agenda because it is primary to all meaningful human existence – 'to know is first of all to know the place one is in' – and the question that overrides any details of a brief is 'what does the place want to be'?

The paradigm of place as natural essence frames the process of design as a one-directional succession of phases, since all the meaning in a project is to be harnessed from the existing life-world and refined into architectural articulation. The task to design in accordance with a genius loci aligns neatly with the steps of the schematic S-A-D process of landscape architectural design: the spirit of place is what the survey should uncover, the analysis interpret, and the design proposal express and enhance.

The emphasis of all the steps of the design process is here put on the spatial relationships and physical features of the environment at all scales, since to achieve a strong place the designer must create a 'meaningful correspondence between site, settlement and architectural detail'. Thus, the survey and analysis methods should be focused on considering the structural disposition as well as aesthetic articulation of surfaces and details of the given context, and the design should align the character of built additions to the existing environment, be it natural or man-made.

Design in this paradigm is a top-down process. Considerations of social or cultural aspects of the environment are not primary to the design process, since the meaning and existential significance of place is not a property of social sentiment or cultural habit, but only influences them as a consequence of the makeup of the natural place or settlement. As such, social activities and cultural meaning are products of the essence of place, developing in response to the particular geographic and climatic conditions.

The paradigm's emphasis on concrete things and direct relationships between people and the physical environment as the only way to truly understand the world renders the increasingly complex processes and elaborate tools of design practice problematic. Decision-making in regards to urban development is typically, to varying degrees, removed from the local context where it applies. All forms of maps, not to mention digital renderings and data collection systems, are removed from direct experience and simplify the world into abstraction. In this paradigmatic perspective they are inherently 'untrue' to place, and the only way of fully experiencing and knowing how to design for place is by being inside it, first-hand, and understand its essence.

In short, the paradigm of place as natural essence advocates designing places that make sense to people by making the genius loci sensible. This prompts the designer to use local materials and adhere to building traditions so that new ideas adequately complement the legacy of the past and preserve the stabilitas loci. It also urges the designer to be concrete and specific in her work. Along with the reasoning of this paradigm, things are only truly meaningful if we can understand them directly and concretely. If landscape architects develop and describe ideas in too abstracted or conceptual terms, they cease to be grounded in lived place, and thus cease to be existentially significant to people.

Designing for Place as Experiential Phenomena

If we take the paradigm of place as experiential phenomena as the premise of our work, we may interpret the role of the designer to be that of supporting existing architectural and social customs, and ensuring that the specificity of place is reinforced in new development. Thereby the local identity and sense of place can be retained, and places remain profound centers of existence and points of orientation in the world, significant to insiders and outsiders alike. With the paradigm's emphasis on meaning derived from the human identification with place rather than any essence of place, there is no permanent root or eternal spirit of place to be found, but place may however keep a stable identity and integrity over time if the designer honors the specifically local in her work, and does not succumb to application of generic style or expressions of mass culture.

With the view of place as experiential phenomena, sensitivity to local context and tradition is paramount in any given project in order to preserve the sense of place while adapting it to new needs. In this paradigm, however, this does not merely regard spatial setting and building tradition, but cultural habits and individual sentiments as well. From the regard of social activities and subjective associations as principal to the creation of meaning in place follows that the needs and

desires of the community and its members are equally important to consider for the design of meaningful places.

Following this, to design within the paradigm of place as experiential phenomena is to be humble in the role as an expert, and be sensitive to the manifold experiences of place that parallel one's own with equal significance. But while the process of design should thus never be a top-down imposition of ideas, the degree of public influence in a bottom-up approach will depend on the context of the project. Designer may ultimately have to make decisions that favor some interests or identities over others. In any case the designer does not by definition hold a superior position in the process of designing for change in places, but can just as well create successful results by guiding local initiatives and water the grassroots. The key is that design should foster organic change in places, informed by new cultural habits and public desires, rather than push design-driven and large-scale developments forcing new behaviors that are less likely to be positively upheld over time.

The trifold view of place that signifies this paradigm informs a triple approach to the design process. In regards to survey, firstly the physical setting should be noted and analyzed based on its structure and character. Secondly, the social activities observed, mapped and analyzed based on patterns of use. The third leg of the trifold totality of place – the meaning it has for people – is more difficult to research, and for the designer to gain access to cultural and personal sentiments she must interact with the public. Hence in this paradigm, participatory processes and various forms of public inquiry are crucial for any aspiration to understand and support something of the range of place identities held by people who know and use them. It is also such understandings of public desires that the designer must negotiate to find appropriate priorities of analysis foci and design directions, balancing a given brief with the overarching task of reinforcing the existing significance of place.

The implication of the phenomenological premise that the designer (just as everyone else) is locked in her own experienced life-world, approaching place from a certain position of insideness or outsideness but never able to remove herself to observe or analyze objectively and from a distance, necessitates self-awareness and a conscious approach in design. It implies that visiting the site of intervention in person is critical to understand its existential significance and potential, but accordingly that the designer needs to have an empathic and open approach to the various ways in which others may understand the same place. To borrow Thompson's (2000:125) statement, "landscape architects involved in these kinds of projects need to know as much about people as they do about soils or plants or paving slabs." For design in the paradigm of place as experiential phenomena, this is an incentive to invite collaborations with other professions and organizations better informed about local social processes, and to regard design for place as an interdisciplinary practice.

Designing for Place as Relational Construct

The paradigm of place as relational construct does not prescribe an explicit design approach to places. No thing or place is seen to have any inherent essence or meaning in and of itself, but it is through internal and external relationships (physical and intangible social relations) that we understand it, and in our own understanding of the thing or the place that we deem it meaningful (or meaningless). Hence meaning in place in this view is socially constructed and should be seen as a process that landscape architects are part of steering through design, and not some existing well we tap into. Within the paradigm of place as relational construct, the only right and wrong in design for place is according to socially derived ethical compasses, subjected to public verdicts. Based on that premise, I then interpret the role of the designer to be that of tracing, directing and supporting the relations of place that contribute to its sustainability and social equality.

The implications of a relational paradigm of place on the design process are profound. Recognizing places as relational constructs imbued with temporality – as spatio-temporal events – defined by routes, sustained by links to that which lies outside their immediate locale, and with manifold meanings conditional both to impermanent physical relationships and social and personal sentiment, gives that they shift and change perpetually and evade the designer as objects for survey, analysis and design. Place in this

paradigm is by definition a moving target.

Thus the designer cannot possibly consider all different and potentially meaningful aspects of a place, and can never aspire to grasp its totality. We must limit and simplify the aspects of place that we consider relevant to the scope of our interventions, and thereby in relation to the brief and context of a particular design project decide on what kind of relations to survey, what kind of objectives to structure an analysis on, and what the design should achieve. The process is neither inherently top-down or bottom-up, but can be either or just the same. The crux is to realize that whatever the structure of the process, the landscape architect will always make decisions that serve to re-configure the relational pattern of place, and its position in the power-geometry of space, and is hence engaging in practices of power.

A concrete implication of a relational view of place for the methods and procedures of the design process is that the scope of any project to understand or design place cannot simply conflate to the perimeter of the immediate project site. Survey and analysis methods must necessarily extend beyond the immediate spatial locale of the project, and also beyond the phenomenologically apparent edge of the place. The relations that bear on the formation and development of place are both spatial and social, and for the success of a design it may be equally important to understand the geological conditions that constrain a project's possibilities, as the particular incentives that granted its financing. This in turn gives that the methods for survey and analysis cannot be limited to the kind of information that may be obtained by site visits alone, but can involve everything from historical research to sociological mapping and financial projections relevant to the place, in order to understand the relations that govern its present constitution and enable its future potential.

From the four-dimensionality of place, we may conclude that any design endeavor is to be considered an ongoing process – not only the process through which the design is conceived, but also the way that the designed outcome develops over time. If space always contains time, so does form always contain process. Design within this paradigm can thus be seen as the articulation and facilitation of an evolving narrative of place – one amongst the many. To design within the paradigm

of place as relational construct is to configure changing relations. It is to orchestrate processes, rather than assign form.

Designing for Place as Assemblage

If we adopt the paradigm of place as assemblage, the role of the designer can be compared to that of a creative engineer or machinist – working to transform the assemblage of place by either replacing or altering its constitutive parts, or impacting on the emergent properties of their interaction by calibrating their ability to exercise capacities. We may thus understand design as both constructing and 'programming' the assemblage – the latter being done by limiting or enabling its components either concretely (for example through physical restraint such as barriers, or oppositely enabling connectivity) or through the application of various forms of coding (such as policy for development or enforced rules of use, or instilling new codes for social behavior).

Similar to the previous paradigm there is no prescribed universal approach to design for places. While places are recognized as profound centers of existence from the perspective of their human components, there may be other components of the assemblage (businesses, political organizations, and so on) with other motives driving their performance. The process of design is thus neither inherently top-down nor bottom-up, but rather the 'bottom' and the 'top' in the power hierarchy of an assemblage of place can be seen to form different components with different properties and capacities to act on each other and on the assemblage as a whole. The notion of places as singular wholes means that the appropriate ways of approaching a design process must be settled on a case-by-case basis because no assemblage is the same, and additionally, because the designer herself is but one component in the assembled structure, whose properties and capacities for impact will vary with the design situation and the relation to client and users, the particular brief and budget, and so on.

Applying the conceptualization of place as assemblage to the schematic design process, the initial task for a survey would be to map out its components to understand its configuration, capacity, and the emergent properties. As in the previous paradigm, this needs to be done in multiple ways and at multiple scales, in correlation with the

extent and character of the material and expressive qualities of the components, to trace the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization by which they are instilled or erased. Thereafter these qualities and processes may be analyzed in relation to the objectives of the project, to discern how they may be affected through design in a desired way, and appropriate means of intervention (as outlined above) be proposed and executed.

While this sounds like a very abstract description of a procedure, from a perspective of assemblage theory all the components, properties, capacities and so on can be concretely tied to actual entities or processes of place. However, due to the complexity of most place assemblages it inevitably involves selective attention (reflecting one instance of the limitation to a designers capacities of using her full potential properties in transforming place), and as such highlights the nonobjective nature of design work.

Aware of these constraints and conditions of the process to instill change, we may say that to design for place as assemblage is to facilitate and steer its becoming in a desired direction.

5.1.3 CONCLUDING COMMENTS ON RQ1
From the clear implications of different theories of place on landscape architectural design, I would argue that it does indeed matter how we as landscape architects understand place as a concept; it informs how we approach place as a phenomenon through our professional work, and thus impacts on the processes and outcome of design. Based on the comparative analysis of the four place paradigms, I find the overarching theoretical differences to be whether places are regarded as local entities bound and enclosed in space with essential meanings fixed or stable in time, or as open and interconnected in space with socially constructed meaning always in a state of flux. As shown in the descriptions of the design process through the respective paradigmatic lenses, these differences serve to frame the design process in different ways, and have profound impacts on directing the focus and methodological approaches to survey and analysis and hence impacting on the designed outcome.

The fundamental distinction that I see arising based on whether place is regarded as bound and fixed or open and fluxing, is whether landscape

architectural design for place should be construed as a giving of form, or as an orchestration of processes. If the meaning of place is seen to already exist and persist in nature and the task of the designer is to uncover and enhance it, to design for place is to concretize that meaning in architectural form. But if, on the other hand, the meaning of place is seen as relational, relative, manifold and always changing, the task of the designer is not to contain the essence of place in stable form, but to facilitate its becoming by orchestrating processes of change that recognize multiple user groups and that are adaptable to shifting interests over time.

In addition to this, I note another important consequence hinging on the paradigmatic lens adopted. Throughout the analysis of the different place paradigms it becomes increasingly clear that not only do various place theories frame the processes and impact the outcome of landscape architectural design, but they also frame the professional identity of the designer. Just like place is often said to be an important factor in the identity of an individual, so I would claim that a theory of place frames the role of the designer and thereby conditions her professional identity-formation as well. This conclusion reveals another, more personal, dimension to my first research question, expanding it from concerning not only *what does place theory mean for my work*, but also *who does it make me as a professional?*

I may borrow a statement from Cresswell (2004:160) to wrap up these conclusions: "Being informed by place involves far more than simply writing about [or designing for] this place or that place. It involves thinking about the implications of the idea of place for whatever it is that is being researched [or designed]" [author's additions]. Moving now to relating these observations of the impact of theory to the contemporary tendencies of landscape architecture highlighted in Chapter 3, the following section will present arguments for distinctions I believe would be suitable for the theory and practice of contemporary landscape architecture in regards to place, and the ones I think we better do away with in our work.

5.2 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION IN RESPONSE TO

RQ2: *What understanding of the concept of place are relevant to contemporary landscape architecture theory and practice?*

I have already highlighted how the four paradigms of place represent the zeitgeist of different movements in different times; from criticism of the late modernism to constructive adaption in the era of rapid globalization. Part of the challenge in evaluating the relevance of different place theories for landscape architecture in our current time, is to identify what goals should govern the formulation of the theory and for the discipline presently and for the future, and what contextual considerations will necessarily mediate it. Due to the limited scope of this thesis I am not able to elucidate such goals or considerations to any great depth or detail, but I will use the contemporary tendencies highlighted in the framework of landscape architecture for place theory evaluation in Chapter 3 (which highlighted the proliferation of digital work tools, the increasing emphasis on user participation in planning and design, and the tendency to consider the landscape in terms of fluctuating processes rather than fixed form) as references to critically analyze and evaluate the theoretical views on place outlined in the previous section, in order to answer the second research question. Rather than returning to every single point already made, I will here build on them to argue for the principal stands I believe that landscape architects should take in regards to place theory, and what approaches we should eschew. Additionally, I will elaborate on the associated concepts highlighted in Chapter 3 (landscape, site, and space), and discuss how we may handle them in accordance with the proposed theoretical positions.

5.2.1 PLACES AS MULTIPLEX, RELATIONAL, AND OPEN – SACKING THE SINGULAR GENIUS

I suggest we better not subscribe to any view of place as having a pre-given, natural essence and meaning beyond the social and cultural frames of interpretation. The ancient idea of genius loci must necessarily be modified to be of use to landscape architects in the modern world of secular politics and design for public space. It is unfortunate that this modification seems to come about largely as unthought and un-explicit use of the concept in new contexts. To consult the genius loci of a motorway, as the Landscape Institute suggests, showcases a rather drastic shift of understanding of the concept in recent years compared to the approach proponed by Norberg-Schulz and Relph. To them, the motorway epitomizes the placelessness characteristic of the modern landscape, conceived and constructed in ways far removed from any deeper considerations of the spiritual qualities of the places that it traverses or the place it in itself materializes. This serves to exemplify how the modern use of genius loci is laden with contradictions, but even in its historical interpretation any attempt to consult the 'true' genius of a place seems to me about as practical as trying to rub a genie out of a lamp.

The fundamental problem with genius loci and a view of place as natural essence is the way in which it frames meaning as a singular and fixed entity, always already given outside the realm of human perception, which consequently leads to an equally singular understanding of place identity. To Norberg-Schulz, even the most urban environment is seen as derived from an initial natural state (even if mutated and distorted by inadequate modern development). But to picture the essence of place as resting in the bosom of nature until concretized by human intervention is, I would argue, not only astoundingly conservative, but a cul-de-sac for creative visions of a better future. It is to deny social and cultural relations any potential to create meaning in their own right, and to neglect the impact of interpersonal and inter-group differences when it comes to the experience and existential identification with place.

This deficiency of a one-dimensional understanding of place is increasingly pertinent in our current era of global mobility, multiculturalism and individualism. It is neither reasonable nor constructive to claim that a particular local place should have the same significance and meaning to different people, nor to assume that culture is only significant in relation to a fixed local place. The stand taken by Norberg-Schulz appears outdated in this regard, and unfit to address the contemporary situation. While Michelangelo gazed upon his immobile block of marble and envisioned a form within it to carve into life; the place before the landscape architect is already very much alive and never seems to hold quite still enough

to be captured in a lasting image. To imagine that natural places are predisposed for a certain architectural intervention seems single-minded and deterministic in a way that does not chime with the complexity and flux by which we characterize the word today.

Further, in making the question of what the place 'wants to be' central to architectural practice, the questions of 'what people want' or 'what society would benefit from' become secondary or even redundant. The inherent plurality in processes of public participation – that there may be multiple issues, needs, desires and solutions in parallel – is relegated to a second-hand condition with the belief in only one genius loci. It is a stand that portrays the sensitive designer as the expert interpreter of place, while the people that dwell in places are passive recipients of the meaning concretized and not its co-creators. As stated by Norberg-Schulz, it is people that gain their identity from place and not the other way around (see Section 4.1.3). At its worst, such a view of place shackles both the creative imagination of the designer, and the democratic aspects of the planning and design of public space, by locking them into a search for something already presumed to exist, rather than trying to negotiate between different desires and find appropriate solutions for an open future.

5.2.2 RECONCILING PHENOMENOLOGICAL SUBJECTIVITY AND RELATIONAL MULTIPLICITY IN PLACE

I believe that the concept of place within a contemporary landscape architecture discourse should not be limited to consider only experiential or relational conceptualizations of place. Even though phenomenology and relational constructivism constitute two different perspectives on place, they are not mutually exclusive but, I would argue, equally relevant.

Acknowledging that different people may experience the same place differently not only based on how they see, smell or sense, but also on the basis of whether they are familiar with the social context and carry particular personal associations, is a highly relevant approach to place in my view. We are all of us locked into our own life-worlds with our own frames of reference, and the experiential place paradigm clearly underscores the relevance of contemporary tendencies towards increased public outreach and user-participation in processes of planning and design for public space. But to acknowledge the phenomenological perspective as a given condition of how people understand places is not in contradiction to seeing place as a relational construct. The personal view is simply a component of that construct, whose relations may (spatially and operationally) expand far beyond the sphere of direct experience.

Thus what a reconciliation with a relational view implies for the paradigm of place as experiential phenomena is not a dismissal of the importance of personal identification with place for its conceptualization, but an overthrowing of the distinct separation made by Relph between the physical setting, the social activities, and the subjective associations in explaining what makes up place identities. With a view of space and place as relational, the physical constitution and spatial configuration, the social activities, and the personal sentiments of place are conceived as a convergence of shifting relations, where one kind always forms and informs the others. They cannot be compartmentalized but must be seen as interdependent.

In relation to the above, I may also emphasize a central point of convergence between these paradigms in regards to the multiplicity inherent in place. Just like an experiential view points to a multiplicity of place identities based on individual relationships to place (i.e. multiple interpretations of the above mentioned interconnections), so does a relational view emphasize that these interconnections we know as places are formed out of a multiplicity of trajectories, and thus are never singular. Hence, places are multiplex both in an experiential and relational sense.

This gives that if landscape architects understand place as always in part experienced and interpreted phenomenologically, we must understand that the concrete things that we experience are products of social relations, and that our very understanding itself forms an inextricable part of those relationships we regard as place. Just as the phenomenological perspective tells us that we cannot remove ourselves from the places we study, the relational place paradigm tells us that we cannot untangle ourselves from the (power-) relations that constitute the places of our foci. They constitute two complementary perspectives

that serves to broaden our understandings of the concept of place, and the complexity of place phenomena.

These two premises and their implications for existential and political aspects of place are not coincidental, and as Cresswell (2004:122) writes, "The basic unavoidability of place in human life makes it a very important object of politics". A relational view of place clearly frames the way in which no act of planning and design, however so small or seemingly insignificant, is ever objective, freestanding, or isolated from impact on and of other things, other acts, and other forces. An experiential view of place frames the way in which such acts may have profound effects on people's lives. Both of which are necessary to consider if we are to create sustainable and just places.

I would like to state in addition to the above, that while I here argue for a relational view of place to be applied in conjunction with an experiential perspective, I am by no means discounting the view of place as assemblage. While I have argued against a view of place as natural essence for principle reasons of its reliance on singular essential meaning, I would say that an understanding of place as assemblage is highly relevant for landscape architects to employ. This because it is compatible with the principles of both a relational and experiential perspective, and that it offers a pragmatic way of merging them in a concretely applicable approach to place as a target for landscape architecture theorization as well as design.

The conceptualization of place as an assembled whole, with individual components giving rise to emergent properties, offers a way of concretizing and modelling the relational constitution of place which also accounts for its experiential aspects. By breaking places down into concrete components (whether material or social) and explaining how these may operate based on various mechanisms acting on the individual components (enabling or constraining the exercise of capacities given by their individual or emerging properties and so on) or the assemblage as a whole; offering ways to analyze them in terms of materiality and expression, and ways to describe how the identities of places are inscribed and erased by processes of territorialization and deterritorialization as well as stabilized by social codes; assemblage theory

indeed provides a toolbox for dealing with places concretely, however abstract it may at first seem. It is a matter of learning how to use the tools for the tools to be useful. However it is critical to note that no such model of place as assemblage will in reality be able to fully and completely account for all the contemporaneous multiplicity of place, and as such will constitute a partly selective and hence partly subjective rendition of the reality of place, colored by the reasons for its creation.

5.2.3 BECOMING IN TIME AND PLACE: GRASPING SPATIO-TEMPORALITY

I would argue that an understanding of place suitable for contemporary landscape architecture adopts a view of place as four-dimensional – of time as intrinsic to place as a concept, as well as to its properties as a phenomenon. Based on this I further believe that the notion of places as *becoming* suggested by Dovey, and the idea of place-aware design as a *transformation* of place suggested by Braae and Diedrich are constructive ways of thinking about the continuous shifts in place through space-time, and the ways in which we may affect those shifts through design.

The idea of time as central to the concept of place may not seem far-fetched for landscape architects, given that the dimension of time is important to landscape architecture matters generally. Typically, time is considered an inherent condition of any project even if not seen as a part of its spatiality per se. Landscape architects are accustomed to consider the gradual development of plants, the life span of surface materials, the dynamics of changing seasons and the like in their work. However, the reason I would argue for a view of time as intrinsic to place is not merely because it appears to align neatly with already present conditions of landscape architecture practice, but because the views of time as separate to space and place – as merely an order of successive events – simply seems impossible upon closer scrutiny.

As we have seen, both the paradigms of place as natural essence and experiential phenomenon regard time as external to place. While I will not concern myself with the essentialist view of a permanent essence in place over time, as I have already dismissed the premise of the first paradigm as unfit for theorizations on place for contemporary landscape architecture generally, I cannot so easily

disregard the view of time proponed in the latter paradigm as I have herein endorsed its experiential perspective. Hence, let me make a couple of points in the case to eschew any view of space and time as separate.

As elaborated in Section 4.2.4, in the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon time is seen merely as a dimension in which we experience place – it denotes the order of events that inform our experiences, but has no part in defining what a place is. I would point to this as a paradox of this place paradigm, since the recurrence of particular events or occasions at particular times (or on the contrary their discontinuation) are what constitute the very traditions that are here seen to preserve place identities through time (or cause them to wither away). The social activities that Relph holds as one of the trifold aspects of place are represented by such events or occasions (weekly local markets, seasonal holiday celebrations and so on). I understand them to be the bridge between the physical setting and the subjective associations in continuous reconfirmations of place significance, which thereby can be seen to imply a coming-together of all the components of place in this paradigmatic view. But must not an event or occasion necessarily always be both situated in space and structured in time in order to be recurring? Van Eyck (in Carmona et al 2010:121-2) was assertive of the hierarchy of meaning in space and time in his statement that "space in the image of man is place, and time in the image of man is occasion". But while this seems to align with the paradigmatic view in question (that place is a subjectively 'meaningful space', and time is denoted by occasion) I find that my objection here – that an occasion is never merely temporal, but always also spatially situated – is underscored by the very phenomenological premise of the paradigm of place as experiential phenomenon: that nothing can be without being-in-place.

Here we find a contradiction. If we understand time as manifested by recurring occasions, and those occasions to be necessarily situated in place, does it not give that both time and place are logically necessary aspects of the occasion, and thus in turn are both foundational for the place identities that arise and persevere from repeated occasions? I think it does, and that my arguments here aligns with Massey's (2012) view that "for

time/temporality/becoming to exist, space has to be imbued with the temporal". Put simply, if time was not internal to place, there could be no change in the first place.

Based on this I challenge Relph's view that social activities and subjective associations can be dislodged from their temporal contexts and still retain their particularities and significance for places and for people. In line with the reasoning here presented, I would argue that 'occasion' must be seen an experiential derivative of time and place together, and that time should indeed be considered integral to both space and place even from an experiential perspective. Further, I would say that if we then go ahead and make the necessary alteration of the phenomenological premise of existence as *being-in-place* into the more appropriate *being-in-space-time*, it amounts to the same import as has the notion of *becoming*, which we may then substitute to use from here on to denote how all things are situated in space and time at once, in line with Dovey's suggestion. While in this way having showed why we should abandon a conceptual separation of space and time, let me proceed to describe how we may adopt of a view of space and time as one; as space-time, and the implications for landscape architects of acknowledging their essential inseparability in places as spatio-temporal events.

In this view, time is apparent through spatial motion or change, and space unfolds through time. Practically, we tend to notice the expression of time in spatial matter when things change, quite as Van Eyck wrote: the sprout grows from the seed; the leaf falls in autumn; the wood withers as the tree dies. But if we are to grasp what it means to see space and time as mutually constitutive, to see places as spatio-temporal events, and to think about our world as an extent of space-time, then we must peel these scales of casual assumption from our eyes and try to grasp another image. We must recognize the time also in things that seems not to change: the time in the rocks that rest. If we, in line with Massey's arguments, understand space as a multiplicity of contemporaneous trajectories, we must also understand that these may be of different durations and paces, of which some appear quick to us and some so slow that we do not notice their inherent motion – but still it is there.

For landscape architects, such a view means that we must abandon the customary separation of thinking on the one hand about product and on the other about process; about the thing itself and the things it does. As Murphy (2005:210) notes, they are only aspects of the very same thing. Hence if we recognize the temporal dimension of place as an inextricable part of its spatial and social qualities, then all design solutions must address the issue of continuous change and negotiate becoming. This can be both challenging and liberating. If we understand place as open (in the sense of being constituted by a set of relations open to change; the opposite to deterministic), it makes our work conceptually more difficult, but also opens the door to endless opportunities. The history of place, and the future of place, is no more and no less than what we make of right now – it is a provisional and partial consensus that can and will be challenged. It gives that a design should not be seen as a final solution, but as an invitation for practices that directs the becoming of place.

Based on Massey's elaboration on perceived stasis as a matter of varying durations of events – or an 'optical illusion' as DeLanda put it - I would suggest that we may regard apparently stable form as process temporarily stabilized or 'slowed down'. This argument is essentially a call for a different view of the world and our work as landscape architects – a way of avoiding thinking in terms of fixity – rather than pointing to a practically altered condition of it. It is essentially to say that we are always working with processes, regardless of whether we recognize it as such or not. But we do not necessarily do so consciously, and to me that is the catch. Without the understanding of what this distinction means, there is no deliberate 'orchestration' – only an initiation of processes, misunderstood as a finalized design result, can stem from such unawareness. If we create a good result by accident that is still good, but we are less likely to do it again if we do not understand what made it good in the first place.

5.2.4 POSITIONING PLACE AMONGST ASSOCIATED CONCEPTS

In Section 3.3 I have given an introductory sketch as to how the concepts of landscape, site and space are often understood in relation to place, and in some of the place theories herein examined (most

prominently the paradigm of place as relational construct) we have seen more specific distinctions. While it is no explicit focus of the research, understanding place within landscape architecture involves navigating between these concepts. Without aspiring to fully resolve the differences, the research hitherto presented provides grounds for reflection on some differentiations useful to the discipline.

We have not encountered any explicit comparison of the concept of landscape to that of place, and that seems symptomatic of the fact that none of the theories included in the research is developed by a landscape architect. Views of landscape as a backdrop to place emphasizes its physicality and extent in opposition to a perceived heightened sense or intensity of a limited place, and understanding it as a property of place is likewise to consider it in terms of physical and spatial properties at a smaller scale. Such views retain an illusion of distance; beholding the landscape, experiencing place. But given the ELC definition landscape can no longer be considered a primarily visual entity, but must be defined in part by human perception. This emphasis makes it open to personal sentiment and interpretation just as we have seen place be characterized as an in part experiential phenomena. Still, while the concept of landscape is flexible enough to refer to a wide range of environments, it neither permeates everyday language nor have the same broad application in general parlance as do place – neither an armchair nor planet earth are typically thought of or referred to as landscapes. While this research provides no ground to propose a solid distinction it seems that place encompasses both a greater spatial/geographical and conceptual range than do landscape, whose conceptual boundaries appears to be pushed from within the discipline of landscape architecture rather than society or academia at large.

Similar to the concept of landscape, site does not have the same broad application and extensive use in everyday language as does place, but it is central to landscape architecture discourse and practice. This distinction between everyday words and professional concepts is also at the core of what sets them apart in landscape architecture practice: site is only a relevant concept with something specific in mind. A site of something,

for something. It is with such intentions that the professional gaze transforms place into site. The immediate boundaries of a site are therefore more clearly defined, however not necessarily experientially discernible (such as property lines bisecting areas of undifferentiated land). Kahn's (2005) operational definition of site is an attempt to expand on this customary perception and render sites as more complex and hence more realistic, but still the concept remains characterized by the selective constrains of professional definition. Even though the different 'levels' of the site are recognized as extensive, all the forces that bear on the development of that site cannot fully be traced. Thus site can never be conceptualized as the whole that is place, because of the selective professional attention.

We have also encountered site as defined by the lack of particular human concern – lack of intensity and experiential qualities that define places. Dovey (2010:24) positions the concept of place in a realm of experience more so than site through the notion of intensity: "[place] is an assemblage of spatial practices but also of meanings; more than a location or site it is also distinguished by intensity of experience". In regards to landscape architecture theory, Swaffield (2002:229) makes a conclusion along the same lines, although phrased reversely, when stating that a growing influence of phenomenology on the discipline, with awareness of the landscape embodying multiple experiences as well as scales, highlights that "every site is also a place: a locus of human experience and meaning". This underscores the difference between phenomena and concepts – a given physical setting exists whatever we choose to call it, but whether we describe it as place or site will depend on the context and conditions of our engagement with it.

In regards to space, I have already thoroughly elaborated on different conceptualizations of space and its relation to place in the different place paradigms. Based on the views of place I have promoted in this thesis, space can be regarded as relational just as place, but our understanding of it is informed by personal experience and sentiment. However, it is never a void or an emptiness – rather it can perhaps be seen as a form of tension between points of intensity; as the stretching relations between things. If relational space is seen

to construct space by the relationships of material engagement, then what we often call a 'void' – a room between walls or street between facades – is formed, stretched in a sense, between them, gaining its experiential properties by their particular constellation: a small or large room, a narrow or wide street all produce different experiences of being in the space. Hence we may understand space not as an 'empty container' with things put in it, but that the things themselves create and define the extent of space.

If we are to sum up the approach to place from a perspective of human experiences and with attempts of linking it to landscape architecture theory, I would say that empirically, place is a phenomenon – hence subjectively observed and never objectively measured in research. Intellectually, place is a concept that we can describe and define to theorize substantively in relation to landscape architecture. But practically, place is always negotiated and selectively limited, and hence all that procedural theory or methodological approaches can serve to do, is to turn place into site for landscape architects to work with.

It remains an open question just how much it matters whether we call an area of land landscape, site or place if we work with a given environment all the same. But recognizing the possible distinctions between the concepts allows us to reflect upon our own approaches and reach a deeper understanding of the choices we make in our work – choices of words as well as methods – and the consequences they have for the processes we employ and in turn for the landscapes, sites, and places we intervene in.

5.2.5 CONCLUDING COMMENTS ON RQ2

To summarize the answers elaborated in response to the second research question, I am arguing that a place theory suitable for contemporary landscape architecture would understand the concept of place as denoting a subjectively experienced, relationally contingent, multiplex and perpetually becoming instance of space-time.

This entails a dismissal of any notions of singular essences or primordial spirits in place, in favor of a dynamic view where places are understood to hold different meanings to different people and in different contexts. It gives an understanding of the parts of a place, whether conceptualized in terms of converging social

relations or components of an assemblage, as giving rise to the specificity of place through their interaction, as opposed to by virtue of any essentially meaningful qualities in themselves. The meaning of place is hence understood to be socially constructed, but as such it is always multiple and contested, implying that the role of landscape architects to negotiate such meanings is never objective but always an act of power that is politically charged. It also underscores that all meaning in place and all aspects of place as a whole is always in a state of change, denoted by the notion of becoming.

Let me take these propositions for a theoretical approach to place as a foundation for elaborating on the consequences such understandings of place would have for the landscape architecture discipline.

5.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION IN RESPONSE TO RQ3: *Based on the understanding of place promoted as relevant in this thesis, what are the implications for landscape architecture theory and design practice?*

While we have clearly seen that different paradigms of place lead to different design approaches, for the purpose of evaluating their suitability for landscape architects we must consider not only their ability to provide adequate contemporary understandings of place theoretically, but also their feasibility to support design action. Some of the theories can easily be developed into methodological tools and frameworks for design, while others seem utterly impossible to translate into concrete practices. Although I do not believe that the only constructive theory is the one that lends itself to development of simple guidelines for practice, I think that the relation between theoretical potency and practical feasibility is important to reflect upon for the purpose of this thesis. Based on the proposed understandings of the concept of place, I will here sketch a couple of consequential effects and considerations for the ideas and work of landscape architects based on the proposed understandings of place.

It should be noted that since this thesis is concerned with theory of a substantive and critical nature, I will here not aspire to make any procedural categorizations or construct methodological approaches for how to apply these place ideas in

practice. Especially since the thesis provides no grounds for empirical testing or evaluations of the proposed conceptualizations. In response to the third research question I will point to how ideas herein promoted may serve to frame our work, inform particular approaches, or bring forth the need for development of new ones.

5.3.1 PLACE AS AN INFINITELY COMPLEX TARGET FOR DESIGN

The conceptualization of place as a subjectively experienced, relationally contingent, multiplex and perpetually becoming instance of space-time gives rise to a number of considerations for the landscape architecture discipline and its engagement with place matters. First off I shall state that in no way do I regard it to be a particularly straightforward or accessible description – as an outcome of my analysis of place theory in relation to landscape architecture it is not intended as a quick-fix explanation of the concept of place (indeed I believe there can be no such thing that does not also loose the potency of the concept that lies in its flexibility), but to adequately emphasize the aspects of place central to a contemporarily relevant understanding of the concept. As such, it will require some theoretical unpacking to be comprehensible to landscape architects in general. Since the previous parts of the thesis has provided guidance as to that, I will not further repeat myself but proceed by pointing to some general and particular effects of this stated conceptualization for the discipline.

Overall, the above conceptualization of place renders it an infinitely complex target for design. To avoid being struck by complete analysis paralysis in the face of that fact, let us look at what consequences the particular aspects of the conceptualization entails, and break it down into some appropriate responses.

To begin with, the notions of subjective experience and multiplex meanings in places highlights their inherent politics in being grounds for conflicting interests, and bring forth the need for participatory processes in pursuit of democratic and socially sustainable processes of development of public space (as described by Calderon 2013). This poses challenges for landscape architects, where I find that social complexity of such processes and the complexity in place generally has a lot in common. The complexity of place in theory

and practice outlined in this work, confirms the necessary interdisciplinarity of place studies which I initially took as its premise, as well as encourages an interdisciplinary approach to the design of place. The complexity of many processes of planning and design for public space in contemporary pluralistic societies similarly calls for a bridging of professional breaches. Even if landscape architects possess a broad range of knowledge and skill, we cannot claim to understand all instances of place. Just as places often cross over the property lines that confine sites of design intervention, so do the social aspects of place both intersect and extend beyond the formal processes of design that may call upon them to participate.

In the light of this, the often rigid compartmentalization of work roles in the typical planning/design/management structure becomes problematic. Places do not adhere to nor do they emerge from any particular end in such a divide. The formal structure of power and political influence of the nation, city, municipality – together and respectively – is a tree, but place is rhizomatic and crosses over such formal boundaries. If the forces that act to shape place are so dispersed and diffused across multiple spatial (the near is tied up with the far) and temporal (different durations of processes overlap) scales, the traditional disciplinary separation of planning on the one hand and design on the other becomes insufficient in order to address issues of place. I think that a closer and more overlapping practice between these roles is desired for a more holistic treatment of places that are not apt for the compartmentalization into separate aspects that is the norm in the political and procedural frameworks of development of public space.

This also motivates initiatives to engage expertise from other fields or other actors in design processes. To take participation seriously we must not be vain in our professional roles, and keep firmly mind that our work as landscape architects is neither a solitary practice nor a single determinant factor of the character and identity of place.

Through integrated and participatory practices, the complex aspects of place are more likely to be considered in context-sensitive development of public space, which can result in places that are more than mimicry of form or museumization of tradition. This demands new work approaches,

integrating ideas of planning and design into more holistic and adaptable solutions, where the outcome is not merely design of formal elements but the staging of phases and orchestration of unfolding processes over time, open to change and working with the inherent flux and multiplicity of relations as part of the given condition to be responded to, not something that needs to be resolved through fixation.

However, the multiplex meanings in place imply not only the weighing of different interests and desires between social groups in a pluralistic society, but also negotiating between use or protection of resources. In regards to the aims of promoting sustainable development, different projects may vary in the degree to which they concern the respective categories, but sometimes clear priorities need to be made between them – a sanctuary for endangered birds may not tolerate school classes visiting for ecology studies.

As insisted throughout this thesis in relation to the place theories promoted, this once more enforces the fact that design can never be objective or autonomous. In our role as experts of design, I do not think we have to make objectivity our goal – indeed I would argue based on the perspectives here adopted that it is not at all possible. There can be no complete and rational objectivity in design, and there is never a singular true story to uncover or a perfect solution to propose. That prompts us to make our subjectivity explicit. As experts, we make choices that we think will be for the better (of someone, of something). But just as there are many users of place that never get queried, and many relations of place that never get traced, there are many possible trajectories in a design process that never get developed. If we understand places as intersections of many parallel trajectories; many contemporaneous stories, the design of place must be understood as the articulation of selective narratives. To be able to interpret and design for place, our job is to simplify and compromise – turning them into sites if you will – exercise self-aware subjectivity in our doing so, and also – importantly – to recognize also the narratives that we exclude.

In addition to these implications of multiplex place, the relational contingency of place highlights the need for multiple and dynamic approaches to survey and design of places, given that they are not

necessarily operationally confined to their perceived locales. A relational conceptualization of place has profound effects for how we approach them as targets for design, and it begins with the way the view of space is fundamentally altered.

Replacing a traditional 'scientific' view of space as a priori given, isotropic, and void of meaning and time with that of space as produced by a multitude of shifting tangible and intangible social relations, renders many traditional design approaches and modes of architectural representation unfit. While it is easy to see how a perceived mathematical space of geometry of form and geography of areal differentiation is represented intelligibly in two-dimensional maps and plans, it is far more difficult to imagine ways to represent relational space that would do justice to its multiplicity and flux. The understandings of place here promoted would thus require development and refinement of methods both for their survey and analysis, and for appropriate ways of presenting design visions. The need is to integrate physical, social and temporal aspects of place in design methodology and in modes of representations. To find ways of representing place as less static, to show process somehow and not just images of finished and seemingly stable design products.

This appears virtually impossible to do in full. The complex and perpetually shifting render of reality that derives from application of a four-dimensional place concept – that of place as a spatio-temporal event – is challenging to grasp and impossible to accurately represent. In pinning it down, creating the by Massey so detested 'slice through time', we take the life, the temporality, out of it. But in order not to be paralyzed by the overwhelming multiplicity of place, and to make possible any constructive design processes, we must accept the inevitability of simplifications and generalizations in working with place. In order to dissect a frog we have to kill it. We can never fully represent reality without mutilating it some way or another, and this we cannot help. While we will still must try to do it justice in our work, we need to recognize is that our representations of and visions for place is a form of reality in itself, equally constituted by relations, which serves to construct an image of place that, in this logic, ends up being part of also the place it serves to portray. This is how, as highlighted by Graham and

Healey, all drawing of boundaries, all mapping and visualization, are acts of power – they come to bear not only on the representation, but ultimately also on that which they represent. So how are we as designers to handle the responsibility that such insights lay on us?

This is not a new situation to any designer, as the whole premise of design is the making of (better) choices between endless options. Lawson (in Carmona et al 2010:359) offers a soothing response when faced with the stress of endless insufficiency of knowledge, reassuring us that design oftentimes

requires action in the form of decisions, even in the face of inadequate time and knowledge. For these reasons sometimes it is useful to oversimplify in order to structure thought enough to make design decisions slightly less arbitrary. We cannot hope to make them perfect.

But while this may be true and necessary, I would argue that such oversimplification is exactly what leads one landscape architect to boldly label design services as placemaking, while another refuses the very premise that place can be a product of design. To acknowledge that we cannot make perfect does not mean that it does not matter what we do. To be aware of one's shortcomings in any given situation is not the same as to escape responsibility for decisions and actions. To orchestrate processes of becoming through design is inevitably to pull on the strings of the power-geometry of place.

5.3.2 LOCAL PLACES IN A GLOBAL WORLD – NEW PREMISES FOR PRACTICE BEYOND THE PLACELESS
As in the theoretical paradigms presented, the conceptualization of place proposed in this analysis does not in itself contain any reference to local or global aspects of place. However, it has implications for how we may value such notions. Firstly, from a dismissal of all ideas of places as fixed and essential follows that 'local' has no intrinsic value other than the way it becomes meaningful to people and assume meaning in socially constructed forms. This is not to deny the importance that places may have as 'points of orientation' or 'existential footholds' for people, that serve to support the identity-formation of the individual. But it is to say that there is nothing

permanent or universally justified in any particular view - as made clear in contexts of gentrification (see Section 4.2.5), one person's identity founded in place 'as it was' may contradict another's in place 'as it becomes' in changing (space-)times.

To me, this understanding of place as central to the stability of human life and identity explains why change to 'local' places in 'global' times have been seen as placeless forces by the writers of late modernist era. The crux is not the fading of some latent spirit in place, but a deterioration of the existential foothold as in loss of the *familiar*. In Norberg-Schulz reasoning, the existential recognition of meaning in the life-world is dependent on a cultural upbringing that explains and reinforces that meaning (similar to Bordieu's habitus) – if we have not acquired a perceptual schemata to explain it, it will likely not be intuitive for us to interpret. But in line with that reasoning, can one not likewise acquire a perceptual schemata of cookie cutter suburbia, or the town center mall? Growing up in such environments, removed as they may be from direct geographic and topographic adaption, should still inform the existential foothold of a new generation. Perhaps even one that is recognized to be provisional, changeable, and mobile.

While I would not argue that airports are personal or that the proliferation of urban freeways have improved neighborhood character, I feel that Norberg-Schulz and Relph's critique and rendition of a modernist dystopia in some ways reflect the despair of loss of the world as they knew it growing up – incongruences with their perceptual schematas – reinforcing our understanding that placelessness is not a universal phenomenon but partly a personal sentiment, in this case characterized by a generational divide.

It is a fact that contemporary landscape architecture is not only dealing with places that are increasingly subjected to impact of global economy and competition, but the very design service itself is becoming less grounded in limited localities. Today, the services of landscape architects are globally available, as are the ways we share and draw inspiration from ideas and projects, and even the materials we use to build. We browse international blogs, read international magazines and attend international conferences. We may design for sites across the globe that we have never seen in

person. The hardwood deck may be made out of wood from tropical plantations, or even composite made from nobody-really-knows-what. But while it can be argued that this makes for increasingly homogenous designs, detached from local places, it is inevitably a condition in response to a larger world order and social shifts of our times.

Today, urban amenities, designs and lifestyles are less dictated by local natural geography. Consider for example the ski slopes in Dubai, or the artificial beach on board the cruise ship used as an example on page 84 – detached from defined locality to such an extent that it can bring the beach to whatever desirable point on the sea. These phenomena are not derived from the conditions of a natural place, but from transposing symbolic meaning from one place to another in order to construct a sense of place that is clearly artificial. They are neither locally bound nor 'genuine'. But rather than seeing these, as Norberg-Schulz doubtlessly would, as contrived and perverted places, I find that they illustrate how our desires are far from being simple functions of a primordial geographical belonging, where a firm grounding in place is the prerequisite for an intelligible culture. Such insinuations are balancing a dangerous line of ethnical determinism that can fuel forces of exclusion, where claims of authenticity and the right to place is turned into ammunition for xenophobic political armory or worse.

The understandings of place promoted in this thesis do not endorse any such notions of entitlement to place, but instead Dovey's distinction of difference within place as critical for tolerance for new practices is here paramount to understand that the 'local' can only prevail if it has the resilience to handle fluctuating conditions and the adaptability to change over time. A local place with a rigid and purified identity is the one that will be fragile, and that will be seen as placeless if it changes. Designer's may address this by designing for multiple user groups, flexible uses, and high accessibility in place as well as adaptability of place in time, and thus work to increase the tolerance for dissimilarities to coexist; for synergies of diversity rather than compartmentalization of differences (such as age, gender or race) into different spatial zones.

Applied to issues of the local and global, we may understand that new or 'modern' development

need not completely erase or rule out particular local place or culture, but as Dovey (2010:167-184) shows in his analysis of the Bangkok quarter, the old and the new, the global influences and the local customs, may exist side by side and flow into one another if informal behaviours are permitted to smooth out the formal striations of space and legislation.

I think that the approach of Braae and Diedrich to regard design projects as *transformations* of place could be a constructive way to move towards increased difference in place while avoiding both museumization and drastic eradication of site-specific qualities in a project by striking a balance between present features and future opportunities. Through such an approach, also the 'placeless' structures of 'hypermodernity' (Augé 2008) – the freeways, the culverts, the airports – may be constructively addressed through a re-imagination of the use and possible multiple functions of infrastructure (Hung 2011; Swaffield 2002). Infrastructure as an extensive grid of opportunity, capable of catering for numerous functions both social and ecological, re-positions the existing structures as grounds for future opportunity rather than eyesores of a historical wrong-turn at the road fork of modernism. It is a question of integrating multiple scales and processes in projects, and addressing social, cultural, and ecological opportunities alongside those of technical approaches and constraints. This approach is about adaption of the products of the past to suit the future, transforming the generic into a particular asset, and in such a fashion we may see it as opportunities of 'localizing' the global artefact – such as building a skate park under the freeway bridge.

Whether viewing the local and global as antagonistic or not, landscape architects should never act as sentries of place. While the use of local material is potentially a sustainable practice in design, and community and personal sense of belonging in place is an important aspect of social sustainability, there may be causes more important than being 'true to place' in a literal and reactionary sense that govern a design process – otherwise there would not be any windmills built on the plains, to take a typical example of a conflict between local character and general benefit.

The understandings of place here promoted aligns with the views of Dovey (2008:53-56) that the local and the global are two aspects of places that exist in a mixture, and any notion of placelessness is a subjective experience or constructed opinion just as much as the idea of place itself. Cresswell (2004:49) highlights the inherent contradiction of the argument itself, which neatly summarizes the gist of this matter: "If place is a necessary condition of human existence, it cannot vanish with modernity however much our habits change".

5.3.3 CHALLENGING THE NOTION OF PLACEMAKING IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

This thesis has been developed in response to the largely taken-for-granted use of the concept of place within landscape architecture. As stated in the introduction, the appropriate response to the situation and its associated problems is not a rigid definition of place but rather to for deeper understandings of the diverse range of meanings it can hold to inform problematization and more conscious application. Now, as I have thoroughly explored a range of different place theories, showed how they may serve to frame and impact on the work of landscape architects, and argued for suitable understandings for our contemporary discipline, I find it a necessary conclusion to point to one practical application I believe we should be wary of – that of landscape architecture as placemaking.

With the exception of the paradigm of place as natural essence – where design is seen as a the act that turns site into place and concretizes its genius loci – neither of the place paradigms explored in this thesis support a view of place as being a product of design solely. In the view of Beauregard, designers do the exact opposite through their process – they reduce existing places to confined sites, and reconstruct them as digestible and sellable design products cleared of all conflicting notions.

As previously outlined I agree with Beauregard's distinction that site is a more professional and selectively constrained construct, while place is the whole relational totality; physical matter, personal emotion, collective memory, re-told histories; all the messy stuff of humanity that is difficult to pin down in maps and that is absolutely certain to be full of contradictions. As such, which I have pointed to in multiple instances, place is not quantifiable

or measurable in any traditional sense. It is not an objective entity that can be produced and delivered as a whole. Thus, even though all design interventions act to change places, placemaking cannot be understood as a design service per se. Rather, design is a part of a bigger and more complex process of place transformation, which besides professional planning and design initiatives is necessarily both communal and personal, regardless of whether the formal planning and design processes are rooted in public involvement or imposed from the top down. Based on the understandings of place promoted in this thesis, I would argue that design for place can only be understood as the articulation of selective narratives. Hence the notion of placemaking within landscape architecture appears less of a signature service and more of a sales pitch. While I am aware that landscape architecture is a business for profit with incentives for marketing tailored accordingly, I still think that landscape architects do well to humbly consider the impossibility of grasping the totality of place as a target for design, and the fact that places are ultimately never made in AutoCAD.

As Dovey (2008:45) states, place is a product of practice rather than an effect of built form. Thus, to consider design as an orchestration of process and not the giving of fixed form is to take seriously the possibilities of unfolding stories of the future, rather than pride oneself about the 'result' of design as it looks at the ribbon-cutting inauguration. Good design enables positive uses, and it is the use that over time breathes life into the physical structures of a place. I would agree with Carmona et al (2010:123) who assert that while urban designers, and similarly landscape architects, "cannot make places in any simplistic or deterministic manner, they can increase the 'place potential' – the likelihood that people will consider the space a significant and meaningful place."

Based on the research presented in this thesis, it is clear to me that as a landscape architect, I am not by any means a sole 'placemaker'. My pen is no wand that through some simple lines brings new places to life. I intervene in a world that is already highly alive, and charged with the memories of history, the signifiers of meaning, and the potency of desires for the future. My task as a designer is not to do right by place, but to do place better. And part of any design process is to define what that means.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS ON RQ3

From the conceptualization of place promoted in this thesis; as a subjectively experienced, relationally contingent, multiplex and perpetually becoming instance of space-time, several consequences and questions arise in order for landscape architects to handle its excessive diversity.

I have here highlighted how the notions of subjectivity and multiplicity emphasizes the importance of participatory processes in planning and design for public space, as well as an overcoming of rigid professional and disciplinary divides. Further, the multiplicity and four-dimensionality of place call for the development of new approaches to the work tools by which landscape architects designs and represent their visions of places, so that they may more accurately depict the dynamic becoming of places, rather than freezing them as static 'slices through time' in cropped and curated views.

Admittedly, just like some of the theories examined, my conclusions in this project are rather idealistic. In real life projects, there are many parameters to consider and many factors that limit the capacities of landscape architects to impact on the becoming of place, many of which may not align with place-related questions. But regardless of our particular work roles and the limits imposed on them, we need to be explicit with and take responsibility for our subjective role, by acknowledging that the design of place is necessarily a matter of selective narratives. In light of that, I question that placemaking can at all be a justified concept by which to describe the work of landscape architects.

The multiplex nature of places highlight the fact that any particular design can only be seen as an articulation of selected narratives, where the selectivity both implies that there are manifold possible views omitted in the process of design, and highlights that the very act of selecting thus is a (unavoidable) act of power that gives primacy of certain views at the expense of others. But the more that different views and acts may be expressed and able to coexist in place – rendering it diverse without compromising its identity – the more resilient it will be for the new needs and new practices that will doubtlessly be brought upon it in time.

Ultimately, we are bounded only by the breadth of our knowledge and the depth of our prejudices.

— Kathryn Moore

5.4 CONCLUDING COMMENTS: CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE THEORY OF PLACE

The concept of place is chameleonic. From effortless use in everyday language to forehead-folding contemplations on place in academia, place as a word, a concept and a phenomenon is as evasive as it is ubiquitous. Still, as landscape architects we must not take it for granted in our work, for even if our applications of the concept are often arbitrary, the implications they have in both theory and practice are not.

In order to address the prevailing taken-for-granted – indeed sometimes even strikingly contradictory – use of place within landscape architecture, this thesis has argued the need for a theory of place better articulated in relation to the discipline, and suited to undergird its frequent use. It has sought to contribute to such theory formation by drawing on ideas from related disciplines; tracing diverse understandings of place beyond the commonsense meanings of the term and into the deeper reaches of place theory as tools to explain physical, social and spiritual aspects of the environment and human relationships with it. By analyzing the findings from a contemporary landscape architecture perspective, their issues and potentials for the discipline have been elucidated.

In doing so, this thesis has shown that the paradigms through which we view place serve to frame our role and professional identity as designers, direct our attention and inform the processes we employ in design, and impact on the outcome of our work. Based on the research and the analytical findings, this thesis proposes that an adequate conceptualization of place for contemporary landscape architecture is to understand it as a subjectively experienced, relationally contingent, multiplex and perpetually becoming instance of space-time. While this conceptualization is not proposed as a direct and easily accessible link between theory and applied practice, or between theorists and practitioners, I believe that by breaking down this understanding in its premises and implications as illustrated in this thesis, it may serve to guide landscape architects to a deeper understanding of the concept of place, which in turn also has the potential to inform entirely new ways of understanding the world in which we intervene trough our work, as well as our own place in it.

Alas, there cannot be a quick-fix disciplinary definition or a traditional scientific way of pinning down place truths that does not miss the whole point of the flexibility of the concept, and the inherent flux of the phenomenon of place. Places are not like bundles of tangled-up yarn that we can unravel and straighten out to expose their individual components; they twist and morph as we pull on the strings, our own hands get caught, knots come loose and new ones are tied and there are dead-ends and loose strands abound. There cannot be a fixed approach or methodology to designing good places. Places are cases, and their complexity evades us by default. But while recognizing that we cannot reasonably grasp every aspect of place in our work or gain understanding of all the meaning it holds for diverse arrays of users, we must also recognize that we are responsible for drawing the lines between what we acknowledge and what

we ignore, what we target for change and what we leave be. It is our responsibility to question our own intentions and to be aware and explicit about the choices we make and the causes we prioritize, because they deal in the justice of today, orchestrate the future, and construct our history.

In recognizing the interrelatedness of social relations of place and their articulation of 'stories-so-far' lies the realization that the future is not something that might happen tomorrow but it is inherent in that which we do today. If we regard space as open and place as open, from which it follows that both history and future are open, then the act in the present serves to construct both the history and future simultaneously, over and over again. When as designers we draw inspiration from the past, we do not pick and choose from some fixed succession of factual events, but we are actively constructing a present narrative of a certain historical trajectory, and using it to impact on the future. This is not to say that there is no history in place or that our choices are arbitrary, but it is to say that there is no singular historical truth and that our choosing is an act of power.

A constructive theory of place for landscape architecture should not hoover abstract and intangible above the practical actions and interactions of everyday life and work. But neither should it offer dogmatic or prescriptive singular definitions of place and placemaking. To theorize place for landscape architects is to tread a balance beam between the esoteric and the over-simplified, but one thing is clear: when you talk about place, write about place, map place, project place – be specific, even with the seemingly intangible. Give it straightforward nouns, practical verbs, and evocative adjectives that reflect your understanding and your vision – ideas that can then be countered, questioned or developed. But do not fall back on lazy and under-developed jargon, leaving clients and users to fill in the blanks – doubtlessly with other images than you had in your mind – increasing the risk of discrepancies between the promise and the delivery of design, and impairing straight and transparent communication about the becoming of places that concern us all.

5.5
LEAVING PLACE: CONTEMPLATIONS AT THE WOOL STORE

Upon my first visit, the wool store was a strange place and I was an outsider. I didn't know my way around or what I could expect to find. I felt afraid. I didn't know if there were any real cause for worry, or if the place just played tricks on my mind with its grit, its dark corners, its remoteness. I doubted whether it was wise to find out.

The reconciliation was brought about through time and my presence in the space. My repeated visits were a form of territorialization, inscribing my being in the space until I believed I belonged there just as much as anyone else. I circled around with my camera, my notebook, cam recorder, plastic bag for special finds, until I had claimed my ground. Then I stopped looking over my shoulder. When I understood the place I felt at ease, because I also understood who being there made me: an explorer.

By exploring this place, my own journeys and stories became interwoven with its many unfolding narratives, added to its shifting assembled mix of elements and repeated events. The wool store was not waiting there, still and dead and empty, for my arrival. I was not discovering some mute and numb relic from the past, but we were meeting up in that instant, that spatio-temporal event, as an intersection of trajectories. Through the duration of my visits I caught glimpses of some of the stories intersecting in this place, and through my presence and my acts I became myself a part of it, embedded, linking up with and changing the configuration of social relations that form it.

Sitting on the concrete slab with the sun shining down on my face I felt a strange elation of at once peace and exhilaration. I had not conquered the place. I had overcome myself. My prejudice, my fear. The

sun moved west across the blue ceiling of the wool store lot, the shadow of the building grew towards me. This would be my last visit. Looking around, the same features still marked the place as the day that I first came. The imposing brick walls with their scars of age and contemporary artworks. The cracked concrete and weeds gently swaying in the wind. Nothing had changed to the eye, and yet everything was different. I knew then how all the inevitable change of this world – the big transitions and the subtly shifting nuances – can be propelled by forces within me as much as forces from the world around.

As I write this account, I am already narrating the story of the past. I trace my steps backwards and tell you what I experienced and what it made me realize, but if I go there today, the place would be different. I have changed. The wool store has changed. And so our encounter would not be the same. Perhaps new people are coming through, hanging out, leaving their marks. Perhaps the land is already sold and slated for development, the building being demolished by wrecking-balls as I type. The strings of power keep tugging on place, dictating what in the end is there to experience.

Perhaps they'll build a parking garage. Perhaps it'll be a residence one day, when all of North Melbourne gets developed into a mixed-use suburb. Perhaps it will still stand there as a living monument of a changing course of history; embodying a multiplicity of trajectories and intersecting with ever-new ones in the course of time and space. An eyesore to some. A secret paradise to others. The whole realm of life to a few. A place, indeed, in all the senses of the word. Experienced, practiced, construed and negotiated. No one truth, no singular story. All of the above and more. Becoming.

06

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT

This chapter presents a discussion on the process and outcomes of this thesis project. Section 6.1 gives a reflective account on my personal experiences and knowledge acquisition through the research. Section 6.2 discusses the relevance of the research questions, Section 6.3 the suitability of the approach taken and the methods used, and Section 6.4 the validity and usefulness of the results. Finally, section 6.5 concludes the thesis with suggestions for further research, for which the results herein presented can serve as a foundation.

6.1 A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Not unexpectedly, the finished product of this thesis project is not a response to the ambitions driving its initiation. As it were, I set out with the intent to represent and illustrate theoretical ideas typically 'locked' into academic writing in an unconventional medium like a film or a graphic novel – my ambition being to thereby both satisfy my analytical and artistic sides, and merge these significant but typically separate aspects of landscape architecture in an experimental and accessible product. Alas, reality caught up with me as I was outlining ideas on place theory intended to be my theoretical focus, and realized, as Einstein once more may echo, *how much I don't know*. While insufficient knowledge may be a perfectly suitable point of departure to make expressive art, it is less so when the intent is to communicate particular information. So I retreated. I read up. In the end I did exactly that which I had imagined this project pointing a figurative finger at – I wrote an academic text. At least now I know a lot more.

As always, what seems like pure and streamlined ideas at the drawing board are blurred and compromised by the notorious friction of practice in reality. The broad scope and fluid boundaries of this thesis made the process a challenging endeavor. The numerous touch-points between place and landscape architecture – both in theory and practice – offered many tempting sidetracks leading off course, and the line between place as a concept and place as a phenomenon is easily blurred which made it tricky to navigate the veritable ocean of available source material on my topic. Consequently, the thesis process has been plagued by many traits of so called 'scope creep' – the target has shifted and grown from my initial vision, and the work leading up to the finished thesis has been more time-consuming and less straightforward than I expected. But while this fact is a cue for me to hone my project management skills, it is just as much the source of new knowledge and unexpected insights beneficial to the end product. One never knows exactly where a project such as this will end up, and if one did, there would be less motivation in developing it. Curiosity is both a blessing and a curse, but it always serves to take you places.

With this project I assigned myself a more difficult job than I realized, but I do feel like I have grown with the task. Gradually, with increased understanding of the subject matter, I have felt more comfortable to take charge of ideas and edit my own voice into the text more assertively. Although it took a turn for the dryer, the project has still offered me a ground for experimentation in regards to writing, where the combination of academic and personal exercises challenged me to negotiate the boundary between academic adequacy and personal expressivity. It is an iterative exercise, and this process for me has really served to reinforce how the writing itself is a form of research into one's own mind. Sometimes it seems as if ideas generate by the very motion of your fingers typing, rather than exist as pre-formed products of thought. Writing is part of the process of understanding the read material, and the curse of iterations is that and by the time you get to the end of one you have gotten a bit wiser and are typically compelled to change everything again from the beginning. I still do not feel nearly done.

In moments of doubt and confusion, however, I try to savor the privileges of being a student. It is a position that grants me some room for error and forgiveness for pretensions as I try to gain a foothold amongst ideas, but it also compels me to lower the protective shield of learning behind which I may hide in order to strain my bow and try a few shots with little to lose. In this case I have done so by seriously attempting a contribution to the body of thought that forms the object of my study. I do not claim to have concluded the case – the search for answers is always a battle against a hydra: for every one thing that falls into place new questions crop up. But at the end of the day, in a project like this I am only fighting myself – against inhibitions, doubts, and fears – and I credit myself with more victories than defeats overall. I believe that I have through this work fulfilled the aim of contributing to the development of place theory tied to the landscape architecture discipline. I hope the ideas herein presented may provide grounds for problematization and personal reflections, and inform more conscious application of the concept in practice despite the academic nature of this thesis.

6.2 RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Running as a thread through the thesis is the emphasis on the relational and relative nature of things; how something appears depending on the particular way in which it is framed or approached in a specific situation. Given, then, is the way that the initial research questions frame the possible answers, and that differently phrased research questions would have led me to different results. As part of the iterative development of the thesis as a whole, the research questions have been edited multiple times in line with new realizations and emerging foci during the research process. The final iteration reads:

RQ1. How can different understandings of the concept of place frame the processes and impact the outcomes of landscape architectural design?

RQ2. What understandings of the concept of place are relevant to contemporary landscape architecture theory and design practice?

RQ3. What implications would the understandings of place herein promoted as relevant entail for landscape architecture theory and design practice?

These three questions are intended to take a broad grip on the matter and in multiple ways tie place theory to the theory and practice of landscape architecture. By showing a range of place theories (rather than highlighting only preferable and promotable ideas) and their implications in RQ1, draw out arguments for the suitability or insufficiency of particular stands based on an understanding of landscape architecture theory, practice and trends in RQ2, and finally also highlighting how the promoted approaches would affect the views and processes of landscape architecture in RQ3, the questions make for a thesis that both tries to explain ideas and educate the reader, and draw conclusions based on those ideas in order to make a scholarly contribution. I find this explanatory approach to be 'academically generous' since it does not presume deep initial knowledge or force the reader to always go back to references. Its consequence, on the other hand, being that this product is rather extensive in length. Naturally, the questions and the broad approach are partly explained by fact that I did not already have a lot

of these answers up front – if I was to do this over now with the knowledge I have gained, I would be able to hone in on specific ideas and distill narrower questions. But that would, of course, result in a different end product.

Due to the successively progressive order of the questions, we can identify a bottleneck in the research as a whole in the number of understandings or theories of place that can feasibly be studied to answer RQ1 within the framework of this thesis project. Thus it is not only the very formulation of the questions but also the time afforded to go through different source material that constrains the possible answers. The broad and quite open research questions employed gives that there can also be broad answers. Had there been time to go further and deeper into both different place theories in Chapter 4 and in developing the landscape architecture framework for place theory evaluation in Chapter 3 the conclusions may have been slightly different. I do not believe they would have been fundamentally altered, but perhaps more nuanced or exemplified differently.

The research questions do, as outlined in Chapter 1, rest on an assumption that place theory matters for the work of landscape architecture, and that landscape architects would benefit form a disciplinary theory of place. It may seem that the aspiration to contribute to such a theory runs contradictory to my endorsement of Dovey's statement that place studies are necessarily multidisciplinary and cannot be limited within disciplinary confinements. However, the point here is not to find a way of molding the concept of place to fit neatly within the landscape architecture world-view and professional framework, but rather to recognize what that world-view and framework mean for our understanding of place and vice versa (which means also accepting the conclusion that within that world-view and framework, landscape architects are unable to fully grasp place as a whole). Saying that a theory of place relevant to landscape architecture should be articulated in relation to its specific disciplinary context in no way implies that theoretical paradigms and concepts or methodological tools from other fields are out of bounds. It only means that the usefulness of such ideas and methods should be evaluated in relation to landscape architecture theory and practice. I find

that the research questions herein employed have worked well to both embrace the multidisciplinary nature of place theory broadly, and tie it to the specifics of landscape architecture without carelessly bending ideas out of their original shape.

6.3 SUITABILITY OF APPROACH AND METHOD

The research in this thesis has been conducted primarily as a literature study, with sources consisting of written material of mainly academic traits. With the exception of the reflections on the Melbourne wool store as a case study, I have not engaged myself with empirical study or collection of real-life data. This approach was selected in order to focus my efforts on understanding, portraying and analyzing the broad-reaching field of place theory that already exists and tie it to landscape architecture, rather than attempting to theorize based on empirical research when I did not have a very deep initial understanding of the subject matter or existing research. This method has meant a rather solitary and introverted research process on my behalf, and other possible procedures tied closer to landscape architecture practice could also have generated relevant results while offering me integrated opportunities for interaction.

One possible alternative method would have been to gather data on different ways that the concept place is used within landscape architecture projects or written communication. Such an approach, although surely more enlightening of the general 'status of place' within the discipline than my selected few examples of disparate use in Chapter 1, would however not necessarily lead to any conclusions of what uses of place should be advised or discouraged. It would not have dug below the surface of place in customary professional application, hence being confined to analyze the typical uses and not deepening the understanding of other potential ways.

Another alternative method would have been to interview people – academics, practitioners, clients and users – in order to discern how people understand the concept of place in contexts of landscape architecture theory and practice. Equally, such an approach would have been enlightening of prevailing attitudes and understandings, but not necessarily offering constructive guidance as to how to best affect and add to those.

Ideally, my employed methods would be paired with these suggested alternatives to arrive at a product that both accounts for broad and interdisciplinary place theory and relates it to an in-depth understanding of prevailing uses and attitudes within landscape architecture. But with regards to the limitations of this thesis project, I find that the method and employed has been adequate to generate worthwhile results, and it also provides a platform for further studies on the topic where other methodologies may be used.

The critical approach adopted and the recognition of the work as situated in a particular context has affected the procedure of the research in everything from selection and evaluation of source material to the written product itself. As an example of this, I have not accounted for all the different aspects of place theory discussed by the writers included, but in my synthesis of paradigms focused on aspects relevant for a landscape architecture understanding of place. In light of this, it is unavoidable that my renditions of the theories to a certain extent stage them in relation to the purpose and aim of the study. For example, Relph's writing is sometimes balancing close to the line of essentialism that I have drawn as a distinction between him and Norberg-Schulz. But I have found it useful to stress the differences between the theories here (or sometimes to not bring up all their inherent contradictions), not in order to put the writer up against each other, but to make this product succinct and construct a focused discussion in relation to landscape architecture by clearly distilling the differences.

The Melbourne wool store is also a highly situated component of this research – it is not a case study in a very meticulous or traditionally scientific sense, and it is by no means objective. Rather than systematically testing ideas, I use it as an illustrative example to highlight various aspects of the theories accounted for. It was chosen largely for personal reasons, and I was not able to revisit the site during the course of this thesis project which means that I rely on memory and existing documentation. It could rightfully be argued that the case is somewhat dysfunctional to the targets of the research since it does not represent a typical case of landscape architecture design that I focus my analyses on generally (through the S-A-D process). With no brief to design for

the wool store, my observations and analyses are hypothetical and in a way lay closer to the work of human geographers in the sense of observing and explaining the environment and people's place in it. However, I think the case serves its illustrative role well, and the fact that I draw heavily on subjective experience does not compromise the potential of the case to enlighten others of the effects of place theory on the comprehension and representation of places – in turn inevitably affecting any possible design task.

6.4 VALIDITY AND USEFULNESS OF RESULTS

Since the premise of this thesis is a critical and situated analysis and discussion of place theory in relation to landscape architecture, the results can neither be wholly confirmed nor refuted within the very framework of the thesis itself. In the view here adopted, there is no universal right or wrong to be concluded when it comes to the concept of place, but there are more or less useful ways of understanding it in different situations (and better or worse arguments to promote certain uses). Hence, part of the contribution of this thesis is the very examination of place theories and the problematization of arguments presented, which serves to highlight the complexity of the topic and point to the need for contextual grounding whether theorizing or practically applying the concept of place. In addition, the particular conclusions serve both as a contribution to the multidisciplinary discourse on place theory broadly, and as bridge that links that discourse to landscape architecture specifically.

Phrased differently, I do not claim to 'prove' anything by results of this thesis, but to highlight connections, illustrate consequences, and suggest approaches. Based on a critical perspective on theory, I believe that such a 'fluid' outcome may nonetheless have significant influence on practice. While there can be no definitely phrased place theory that is perfectly applicable to any and all particular cases, a sensitivity to context along with an awareness of the fluid boundaries of that context are the keys to adapting and grounding the theoretical ideas herein promoted to concrete situations and practices. The conclusions of this thesis can and should be challenged both in argument (using different theoretical perspectives) and evaluated in empirical studies (testing or

evaluating their effects and implications in practice). And just like any design for place, they are only meaningful if they get put to good use.

6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The theoretical foundation and the conclusions presented in this thesis may be both complemented and challenged in further studies. This work can serve as a platform for further theorization on place in relation to landscape architecture, as well as inform research in regards to its role in planning and design practices. I suggest the following topics for further research to develop the understanding and use of the concept of place in landscape architecture theory and practice, and there may of course be many others:

- How is the concept of place understood and used by practitioners?

- How is the concept of place understood and used by clients of landscape architecture project, and by the public?

- How is the concept of place used within design communication?

- How can the concept of place be used as a tool to improve participatory planning and design processes?

- How can the disciplinary divides and compartmentalization between planning, design, and management be tackled in order to achieve more holistic work processes for place development?

- What would be suitable methodologies to design with and for place as relational construct?

- How could the four-dimensionality of place be represented in design processes and visions?

- How can the academic and sometimes esoteric language of place theory be transformed to better communicate ideas about place to uninitiated peers, clients and the public?

- How can the Swedish word *plats* be theorized in its national context?

SAMMANFATTNING
(SUMMARY IN SWEDISH)

BAKGRUND OCH PROBLEMOMRÅDE

Detta examensarbete tar sin utgångspunkt i begreppet plats, med avsikten att belysa och utvärdera platsteori utifrån ett landskapsarkitektoniskt perspektiv. Plats är å ena sidan ett vardagsord med bred användning och mångsidig innebörd, och å andra sidan ett begrepp som kan tolkas olika inom olika discipliner. Medan platsbegreppet är omstritt i diskurser inom närliggande fält som geografi, filosofi och samhällsstudier saknar landskapsarkitekturens teoretiska fält en vedertagen definition eller disciplinär teori för att förklara dess innebörd. Landskapsarkitekter tenderar att ta platsbegreppet för givet, och det används för att åsyfta allt från idéer om besjälade platser – genius loci – till gestaltade plats-produkter och medborgares inverkan på platsskapande processer i samhället. Problemen som följer av detta är dels att platsbegreppet används på ett motsägelsefullt sätt i olika situationer utan att närmre definieras, något som öppnar för missförstånd mellan såväl kollegor som beställare och brukare, och att bristen på en sammanhållen och för landskapsarkitekturen anpassad platsteori gör att landskapsarkitekter saknar en tydlig grund för att förstå, problematisera och inta medvetna förhållningssätt gentemot platsbegreppets innebörd och användning i olika situationer.

MÅL OCH FORSKNINGSFRÅGOR

Arbetets huvudsakliga syfte är att bidra till formulerandet av platsteori anpassad för den samtida landskapsarkitekturens fält. Ett andra syfte är att fördjupa förståelsen för och motivera en mer medveten användning av platsbegreppet bland landskapsarkitekter genom att problematisera konceptet och dess användning, och visa på konsekvenserna av olika synsätt för landskapsarkitekturens teori och praktik. Följande forskningsfrågor (FF) styr arbetet mot målen:

FF1: Hur kan olika sätt att förstå platsbegreppet vinkla synen på landskapsarkitektoniska designprocesser och påverka deras resultat?

FF2: Vilka sätt att förstå platsbegreppet är relevanta för den samtida landskapsarkitekturens teori och designpraktik?

FF3: Vilka följder har de sätt att förstå platsbegreppet som här föreslås som relevanta för landskapsarkitekturens teori och designpraktik?

AVGRÄNSNINGAR OCH MÅLGRUPP

Arbetet förhåller sig till ett internationellt och multidisciplinärt forskningsfält, där publicerade platsteorier inom för landskapsarkitekturen närliggande fält utgör kärnan i källmaterialet. Perspektivet är samtida, och inkluderade teorier

analyseras och kritiseras utifrån sin lämplighet att understödja landskapsarkitekters förståelse för och arbete med plats idag och i framtiden. Arbetet är akademiskt till sin natur, men riktar sig förutom till forskare inom fältet även till studenter och praktiserande landskapsarkitekter samt andra verksamma inom miljögestaltande discipliner eller samhällsplanering.

FÖRHÅLLNINGSSÄTT, METOD OCH GENOMFÖRANDE

Arbetet präglas av ett kritiskt och reflekterande förhållningssätt, där information och argument inom detta multidisciplinära forskningsfält måste förstås utifrån ett kontextuellt perspektiv utan anspråk på att vara universella sanningar. Mina egna erfarenheter och referensramar erkänns som en källa både till inspiration och begränsningar som ofrånkomligen i viss utsträckning påverkar arbetsprocessen och dess resultat.

Forskningsprocessens har genomförts med litteraturstudier och en fallstudie. Dels studeras översiktligt landskapsarkitekturens principer, processes och samtida tensender. Dels studeras platsteorier inom närliggande fält, vilka syntetiseras i fyra stycken teoretiska paradigm som sedan analyseras och diskuteras i förhållande till landskapsarkitekturens teori och designpraktik. Därtill tillämpas en fallstudie där utvalda teorier prövas och illustreras genom personliga reflektioner kring en specifik plats i Melbourne, Australien, som jag tidigare arbetat med under utbytesstudier.

PLACE OCH PLATS - SEMANTISKA SKILLNADER

Eftersom arbetet är skrivet på engelska är det viktigt att belysa skillnaderna mellan det engelska begreppet *place* och det svenska *plats*, samt att dessa i sin tur förhåller sig lite olika till närliggande och för landskapsarkitekturen central begrepp som l*andskap/landscape, tomt/site* och *space/rum, rymd.* Medan engelskans *place* i vardagstal syftar främst på en geografisk lokal eller plats i ett social sammanhang, kan svenskans *plats* även åsyfta utrymme. Engelskans *take place* anger en händelse i tiden, men svenskans *ta plats* handlar om att ta rum i anspråk – något som dock kan uttryckas i termer av att *äga rum,* som i sin tur också syftar på en händelse som knyts till både platsen: det rumsliga sammanhanget, och en speciell tidpunkt eller tillfälle. Av detta förstår vi att det inte alltid

går att direktöversätta begreppen utan att förlora deras konnotativa och sammanhangsbundna innebörder, men i detta arbete förutsätts ändå att en konceptuell förståelse för platsbegreppet kan appliceras likvärdigt på båda språken.

ETT RAMVERK FÖR UTVÄRDERING AV PLATSTEORIER UR ETT LANDSKAPSARKITEKTONISKT PERSPEKTIV

Arbetet definierar genom ett teoretiskt ramverk de centrala principer, processer och samtida tendenser som karakteriserar landskapsarkitekturen, mot vilka en systematisk diskussion kring olika platsteoriers genomslag och lämplighet för disciplinen kan föras. Inom detta görs en distinktion mellan plats som vardagligt och upplevelsebaserat *fenomen*, och plats som akademiskt och disciplinärt *begrepp*. Vidare belyses landskapsarkitekturens breda fält; landskapsarkitektens typiska arbetsroller inom planering, gestaltning och förvaltning; disciplinens övergripande mål för hållbarhet; designprocessens förenklade steg i Inventering-Analys-Gestaltning, samt nutida tendenser i form av digital teknikutveckling, ökat medborgarinflytande, och beskrivningar av världen i termer av relationella processer. Kapitlet diskuterar även skillnaderna mellan plats och de snarlika men inte synonyma begreppen *landskap*, *tomt* och *rum/rymd*, där plats i hög utsträckning definieras genom sina upplevelsemässiga och subjektivt meningsskapande egenskaper.

PLATSTEORIER

Arbetet presenterar fyra stycken platsparadigm, det vill säga teoretiska förhållningssätt till plats. För varje paradigm förklaras i vilket sammanhang idéerna uppkommit och vilken ideologisk agenda författaren i fråga har. Sedan belyses hur paradigmet beskriver mening i plats; ställer plats i förhållande till begreppet *space* (rum/rymd); till tid; till lokala/globala sammanhang; samt till design. Nedan beskrivs dessa mycket kortfattat.

PLATS SOM NATURLIG ESSENS

Detta paradigm grundas på en fenomenologisk verklighetsbeskrivning där direkta upplevelser av konkreta ting är grunden för människans förståelse för omvärlden och sin egen plats i den. Att finnas till är att alltid finnas i ett specifikt plats-sammanhang, och platser anses utgöra centrala punkter genom

vilka människan kan finna existentiellt fotfäste och förankra sin egen identitet. Platser utgörs av en helhet av konkreta ting i livs-världen mellan jord och himmel, och de har en bestående naturgiven mening eller essens som beskrivs genom begreppet *genius loci* – platsens själ. Genom att visualisera, konkretisera och symbolisera denna givna mening genom arkitektoniska interventioner – ge dem struktur som vägleder och karaktär som skänker identifikation – kan en plats själ framhävas i byggda miljöer så att människor finner sitt existentiella fotfäste i dem.

PLATS SOM UPPLEVELSEBASERAT FENOMEN

Detta paradigm utgår liksom det föregående från en fenomenologisk grund och tillskriver platser en central betydelse för människors existens, men framhäver skillnader mellan människor och grupper som centrala för deras upplevelser av platser, vilket i sin tur bidrar till att ge platser multipla och skiftande identiteter. Platser beskrivs som sammansatta av tre slags komponenter: den fysiska miljön, de sociala aktiviteter som sker, och de mänskliga associationer i form av minnen eller mening som kopplas till platsen. På så vis har de ingen unik statisk mening utan förändras både utifrån den enskildes perspektiv – huruvida denne är en 'insider' eller 'outsider' på platsen – och i takt med att seder och bruk skiftar. Om platsens komponenter kraftigt förändras eller traditioner överges kan dock platsens mening gå förlorad, och begreppet 'platslöshet' kan användas för att beskriva platser till vilka människan ej finner en meningsfull tillhörighet.

PLATS SOM RELATIONELL KONSTRUKTION

Detta paradigm utgår från en bild av rummet/rymden/världen som bestående av sociala relationer – helt och fullt konstruerad av dessa både materiella och immateriella relationer, vilka genom sina interaktioner skapar och omskapar själva rummet över tid. Inga fysiska ting eller sociala företeelser definieras utifrån någon inneboende essens, utan det är i egenskap av förhållandena till andra ting och företeelser som vi förstår dem och tillskriver dem mening. I denna komplexa relationsväv framträder platser som specifika artikulationer av sammanstrålande relationer, som möts och vävs ihop i något visst sammanhang eller geografisk punkt. Dessa platsskapande relationer

utgör inte något sammanhållet holistiskt system, utan platsers egenheter är resultat också av icke-etablerade relationer. De sociala relationer som utgör verkligheten i stort bildar dock vad som kan översättas till en makt/kraft-geometri, där relationer i olika grad har inflytande över varandra, och där all verkan för att förändra platser måste förstås som makthandlingar. Detta är särdeles framträdande i den moderna tidens eskalerande tid-rum kompression, där kommunikation och inflytande inte är avhängigt geografisk närhet.

PLATS SOM ASSEMBLAGE

Detta paradigm positionerar sig i ett gränsland mellan utgångspunkterna i de tidigare, genom att både se platser som grundade i specifika lokaliteter med stor vikt för människors liv och identitet, men samtidigt förstå dessa som sammanlänkade med globala krafter och strömningar. Genom att använda assemblage-teori för att beskriva platser kan dessa perspektiv förenas, och plats som assemblage är en sammansättning av olika enskilda komponenter (fysiska och sociala) som genom sina interaktioner ger upphov till en helhet med andra egenskaper än de konstitutiva delarna var för sig. En plats komponenter kan bytas utan att dess identitet nödvändigtvis går förlorad - delarna i ett assemblage är aldrig ömsesidigt beroende, och deras inverkan på varandra och helheten är aldrig linjärt kausal utan påverkas av inre och yttre faktorer. Platser som assemblage bildas och upprätthålls genom återupprepade skeenden, där identiteter kan stabilieras eller destabiliseras över tid och oskrivna sociala regler fungerar som koder för hur vi beteendemässigt förhåller oss till dem.

ANALYS, SLUTSATSER OCH DISKUSSION

Arbetets analys av paradigmens inverkan på landskapsarkitekturens teori och designpraktik pekar på en betydande skillnad i hur olika platsteorier vinklar förståelsen för platsen som designobjekt, de metoder som bör tillämpas för att förstå och arbeta med platsen, och de mål som styr arbetet. En jämförelse mellan paradigmen visar att de övergripande teorimässiga skillnaderna är huruvida platser ses som besittande en essentiell och evig mening eller 'själ' som är bunden till den geografiska lokalen och definierad och framhävd av dess gränser, eller om platser ses som föränderliga med mångsidig mening där relationerna mellan

såväl det som vi upplever som en plats och det som finns utanför den är avgörande för skapandet och upprätthållandet av platsen som vi känner den. Om vi som landskapsarkitekter förstår plats som en essentiell genius loci, förväntas vi söka efter en befintlig mening och svara mot den i vårt arbete; vi är låsta till en ensidig förståelse av design som förkroppsligande och förvaltande av naturgiven mening. Om vi istället ser platser som öppna och föränderliga så innebär det att frågan om platsers utveckling är öppen och förhandlingsbar, vilket understryker vikten av att beakta olika människors synsätt i processer för utveckling av offentliga platser, och den fundamentala insikten att gestalta – att förändra platsers makt/kraft-geometri genom att påverka deras konstitutiva relationer – är att utöva makt, vilket i ett perspektiv av platsers ständiga föränderlighet i praktiken är ett orkestrerande av processer och inte ett givande av fix och färdig form. Arbetets slutsatser är att platsbegreppet inom samtida landskapsarkitektur bör förstås utifrån ett perspektiv som förenar det fenomenologiska synsättet (att människans direkta upplevelser av sin omgivning är grunden för hur vi orienterar oss, identifierar oss, och finner existentiell trygghet genom plats) med ett relationellt synsätt som understryker hur dessa upplevelser beror av relationella förutsättningar, vilket pekar på dels att det vi upplever som platser i viss utsträckning beror av fenomen och krafter som sträcker sig utanför den upplevda platsens lokal, och dels att våra upplevelser av platser i sin tur bidrar till att påverka de relationer som skapar såväl platsens materiella som immateriella sammansättning över tid. I enlighet med detta så måste platser även förstås som mångsidiga, där olika människor ger dem olika meningsinnebörd och motstridiga intressen kämpar för att påverka dem, men där dessa motsägelsefulla faktorer är en given del av platsers identitet – och ju högre tolerans en plats har för samexisterande olikheter, desto större är dess identitetsmässiga resiliens. Slutligen måste platser även förstås som ofrånkomligen både rums- och tidsbundna – som sammanvävningar av spatiala och temporala aspekter i en helhet som i praktiken aldrig kan separeras. Detta innebär, tillsammans med avfärdandet av idén om bestående själar i platser, att ingen plats kan förstås som evig eller 'naturlig'. Dels måste vi förstå att alla ting och platser bär tiden i sig, vare sig den kommer till

uttryck i ett sådant tempo att vi uppfattar den eller inte, och dels måste vi inse att inga argument eller sociala projektioner av särskilda människors rätt till särskilda platser kan någonsin rättfärdigas med argument om historisk eller naturgiven rättmätighet – att ta plats eller äga rum är alltid en fråga om makt. Slutligen, i enlighet med arbetets kritiska och reflekterande utgångspunkter går det inte att säga att resultatet som här presenterats varken är rätt eller fel i någon strikt vetenskaplig bemärkelse, men däremot kan det säkerligen både utmanas och utvecklas i vidare argumentation eller empiriska studier. Följande frågor föreslås för detta ändamål:

- Hur förstår och använder yrkesverksamma landskapsarkitekter platsbegreppet?

- Hur förstår och använder beställare och användare platsbegreppet?

- Hur används platsbegreppet inom designkommunikation?

- Hur kan platsbegreppet användas som ett verktyg för att förbättra processer för medborgarinflytande inom planering och design?

- Hur kan glappen mellan olika discipliner och separationen av planering, design och förvaltning hanteras för att åstadkomma mer sammanhållna processer för platsutveckling?

- Vad kunde vara lämpliga metoder för att designa med och för plats som en relationell konstruktion?

- Hur kan det akademiska och svårgenomträngliga språk som ofta präglar platsteoretiska beskrivningar bearbetas för att kommunicera idéer om plats till icke insatta landskapsarkitekter, beställare och brukare?

- Hur kan platsbegreppet teoretiseras i sin svenska språkkontext?

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