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PLACE MANAGEMENT THROUGH  
DIFFERENT LENSES

NIKOLAOS-FOIVOS NTOUNIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of the Manchester  
Metropolitan University for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Marketing, Retail and  
Tourism

Manchester Metropolitan University

August 2018

# Declaration

I declare that this thesis and the work contained herein has been generated by me except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, with due reference to the literature, acknowledgement of collaborative research, and in accordance with the Institutional Code of Practice and Research Degree Regulations.

Parts of this thesis have previously been included in published research articles.

These are:

Ntounis N and Kanellopoulou E (2017) Normalising jurisdictional heterotopias through place branding: The cases of Christiania and Metelkova. *Environment and Planning A* 49(10): 2223–2240.

Ntounis N and Parker C (2017) Engaged scholarship on the High Street: the case of HSUK2020. *Journal of Place Management and Development* 10(4): 349–363.

Ntounis N and Kavaratzis M (2017) Re-branding the High Street: the place branding process and reflections from three UK towns. *Journal of Place Management and Development* 10(4): 392–403.

**Signed**

# Abstract

The main aim of this thesis is to tackle the lack of conceptual clarity that surrounds place management, and seeks to establish place management as an interdisciplinary boundary concept that combines a variety of conceptual lenses and allows for the problematisation of the field from different theoretical approaches. Throughout the thesis, the 'social spatialisation' of place management via the examination of emergent and deliberate practices that shape the strategic, economic, social and political use of places is suggested. Nuanced descriptions of place and space that stem from a plethora of geographic theories are combined with the adoption of ontologically and epistemologically diverse theoretical foundations, and suggest a turn towards an engaged, pluralistic theory of the place management concept.

By adopting a multi-sited ethnographic approach, coupled with the extended case method, this study seeks to understand how place management practices construct both global and local understandings of places. Reflexive accounts of the place management process, as this was observed and studied in ten UK towns, and in the squatted areas Christiania and Metelkova, are presented in the form of structural tales, and led to the development of a reflexive account of the place management process in multiple locales.

Based on the detailed analysis of both empirical studies, it is argued that a reflexive, hybrid approach towards place management allows for the development of more inclusive leadership models that gain more legitimacy and accountability. Furthermore, it is shown that place management is a deeply politicised process that signifies possibilities for alternative understandings of places from conditions of spontaneity, experimentation, and political engagement. Ultimately, it is argued that practices of collective knowledge exchange, place ownership, self-organisation and self-management, can prevent the vacillation, mundanity and annihilation of the soft spaces where place management is enacted. This reflexive deliberation opens up possibilities for dialogical understanding and consensus in place management, and fosters conditions for collective and co-creative capacities for place development.

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Manchester, 27 March 2018

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# Part I: Problematizing place management

This thesis is concerned with the advancement of theory in the field of place management. It is argued that whereas place management is an established practice that is happening since the commodification of places, there is a lack of conceptual clarity that surrounds it, which threatens its legitimacy and significance as an academic field. This central argument highlights the main aim of this work, which is to establish place management as an interdisciplinary boundary concept that combines a variety of conceptual lenses and allows for the problematisation of the field from different approaches. The first part of this thesis provides a brief background how place management has developed as a field so far, explains the rationale of the study (Chapter 1), and critically examines its main theoretical approaches that stem from a synthesis of adjacent fields (place marketing, place branding, strategic spatial planning, and placemaking) (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 is concerned with a review of theories of place and space from different strands in geography (phenomenological, critical, relational and pluralistic), in order to uncover place management as a socio-spatial process that pays attention to the constant interactions and associations between people, places, and spaces. Chapter 4 presents the rationale for the adoption of ontologically and epistemologically diverse theoretical foundations and pluralistic research approaches for the study of place management, and presents the research strategy for the empirical work.

# Chapter 1 Place management: An introduction

*“Current place management policy is struggling to resolve the paradoxes and contradictions that revolve around notions of localism/globalism, hierarchies/networks, heterogeneity/homogeneity, competition/cooperation, equity/efficiency and the like... the desire of places to be unique and different confronts a practice which more often leads to similitude and uniformity. It is also obvious that place management policies operate within societies of increasing plurality of cultures, life-styles, expectations and interventions. Place management has thus become more difficult, complex and unpredictable but equally more necessary, demanding, and indeed fascinating” (Ashworth, 2008)*

## 1.1 The historical emergence of place management across multiple scales

The concept of place management is nothing new; indeed, since the beginning of the first settlements and the creation of the first ancient villages, towns and cities, places have been developed as a result of people’s organising and managing efforts (Parker, 2011). In ancient Greece, city-states laid the blueprint for the idea of polis, a bounded, territorial, administrative, and politically autonomous city that nurtured intimate relationships with its citizens (Agnew, 1994; Takala, 1997). In the English context, place-based forms of organisation were the standard process that the Church, the parish, the market, or the electorate would run in the proximity of their territories (Stuart-Weeks, 1998). Such forms of management and organisation were explicitly rooted in the idea of place as a “terrestrial surface that is not equivalent to any other, that cannot be exchanged with any other without everything changing” (Farinelli, 2003: 11), which also highlights the significance of the process from a geographical perspective since the very beginning.

Of course, society has come a long way since then, and so has the practice of place management. As Parker (2011) explains, the rapid urbanisation of cities after the Industrial Revolution necessitated more formal and cohesive structures of management that mirrored the organisational structure of the private-sector. Adams (2008) arrives at a similar conclusion from a nation perspective, highlighting how

democratic states adopted rules, legislations, and functional forms of organising as a more efficient way of managing state business. Furthermore, the pursuit for economic growth spearheaded the first wave of promotional activities that have been part and parcel of the place management process ever since, such as the selling of the industrial city, smokestack chasing (generating manufacturing jobs and offering sites for lower costs and economies of scale), selling distinct tangible commodities such as agricultural land and houses, or promoting distinct aspects such as a city's attractions (Barke and Harrop, 1994; Kavaratzis, 2008; Ward, 1998).

As cities and towns started to face structural economic problems arising from deindustrialisation, sectoral shifts, and the globalising forces of neoliberalism and capitalism (Millington and Ntounis, 2017), a new narrative of constant competition appeared, which "brought places face to face with capital without the intermediation of the state" (Dirlik, 1999: 45), and necessitated new forms of governance and organisation with the aim of capital attraction from elsewhere. As such, an understanding of place management from the neoliberal perspective started to emerge, which suggests that management of cities can be improved by entrepreneurial modes of urban governance. The shift towards entrepreneurship seeks to promote a range of 'capacity-building' initiatives and to establishing public-private partnerships that value private enterprise and free-market economics as drivers of change in places (Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Harvey, 1989a; Sassen, 1991; Turok, 2009). This focus on competitive positioning has led to a new urban politics (Cox, 1993) of place that aimed to enhance the possibilities for better economic conditions by promoting and managing the city as an urban growth machine that caters for the resourceful private sector (Irazábal, 2009).

However, the negative outcomes from passively adopting an entrepreneurial stance towards economic development hit many cities in recent years. The standardising effects of globalisation and the preoccupation with the management of place products and public perceptions in order to bring places at the forefront of the global competition (Pugalis and McGuinness, 2013) have resulted in a series of homogenised trends, such as developing a similar mix of mega-projects, regeneration projects and buildings, applying similar urban policy solutions, and adopting



homogenised strategies of urban planning and design, which eventually result in urban monotony (Harvey, 1989a) and to the creation of corporatised non-places (Auge, 1995). Additionally, the ongoing processes of urban transformation deprive places of their distinctiveness and extract valuable resources via exploitative practices. By linking the above outcomes with the process of place management, it can be argued that the destructive mantra of place competition “not only contributes to an undermining of local distinctiveness but also weakens the power of civic institutions to affect local change as they become subject to remote decision-making” (Millington and Ntounis, 2017: 368).

However, as places are constantly undergoing “dynamic market-led and planning-led change, even in times of crisis” (Salet and Savini, 2015: 448), and their spatial organisation becomes increasingly polycentric and discontinuous (Hall, 1997; Massey, 2005), there is an increasing demand to address the problems of globalisation not only from top-down initiatives, but also from local forms of governance and organisation. Swyngedouw (2004) purports that the institutional (and non-institutional) arrangements of the national scale have simultaneously permeated supranational scales as well as regional, local and urban configurations. This suggests an interdependency between local institutions and networks of ‘partners’ and communities in the formulation and implementation of local policies and strategies for urban transformation, which vary considerably in different localities, despite being influenced by the same global circumstances (Parés et al., 2014). The blurring of scales adds to the complexity of managing places, as it renders the process highly dependent on network governance and its commitment towards collaborative, supra-local arrangements (Bafarasat and Baker, 2016). As such, the management of places relies “increasingly on the instruments of soft regulation and network management, as local government becomes ensnared in its reliance on other actors” (Blanco et al., 2014: 3133).

It follows from the above that the task of managing places in the era of “network local governance” (Peyroux et al., 2012: 112) becomes a “rather haphazard affair” (Parker, 2011: 5), as a variety of place stakeholders can exert different leadership styles at the same time during the place management process, in order to facilitate the dynamic

interaction between the local and the global, which shapes place development on an everyday basis (Coca-Stefaniak et al., 2010; Cox, 1993; DuPuis and Goodman, 2005; Jensen, 1997). Among these, local people and communities emerge as an important stakeholder group with new rights and powers that become increasingly significant in place management processes (Hewitt and Pendlebury, 2014). Thus, another important shift in contemporary place management approaches lies in the conflation of the civil and state society, and the exercise of flexible forms of citizenship that aim to safeguard mutual and equal benefits and equivalency in participation and decision-making for all place stakeholders (Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003).

#### 1.1.1 Place management in the local context

Place management has been cemented for decades in urban and public policy discourse, along with terms such as 'social capital', 'community engagement', 'community regeneration and renewal', 'community capacity building', 'social partnerships' and 'social entrepreneurship', which also aim to describe configurations of state/market/civil society relations (Reddel, 2002). These configurations have in part originated from a need to deviate from managerial and competitive market solutions in favour of a just decision-making regarding place commons, the emergence of public participation, and the shift from government to governance, which was initially linked to ideas of deliberative democracy, collaborative planning, and resident involvement (Amin and Thrift, 2002; Beaumont and Loopmans, 2008; Healey, 1996; Innes, 1995, 1996; Sorensen and Sagaris, 2010). Similarly, early place management research advocated the abolishment of departmental silos in favour of multidisciplinary management teams that try to achieve equity by customising services and allocating resources based on locational needs. From this perspective, place management is seen as an outcome-based approach, in which the place manager has clear responsibility and accountability to do what is needed to solve serious and complex social problems (Latham, 1998; Mant, 2008; Walsh, 2001). Thus, place management can be viewed as a central responsibility in the new governance era, since it:

- facilitates the fundamental restructuring of public and administrative sectors and state and local government
- offers promise as a policy framework for re-conceptualising community relationships with the state and the markets
- delivers improved community outcomes, particularly in the context of place based or spatial policies, for particular groups of people in particular communities (Mant, 2002, 2008; Reddel, 2002; Walsh, 2001).

Henceforth, effective place management presupposes a strong and proactive community, which acts locally in order to overcome issues in the area. It also stresses the facilitative role of the state and government, as strong vertical integration to support local area intervention is required, since place management is an intensive, continuous process that requires coordinated effort across a range of agencies (Walsh, 2001). As place management is increasingly concerned with tackling local problems that are usually an outcome of broader market forces, collaboration between civil society, the private sector, markets, state, and other governmental bodies is an essential requisite for everyone who is involved in the process. In this sense, success in place management is directly related to the effectiveness of people and partnerships that are engaged in the process, and on how much influence they have on the construction of new urban policy initiatives and practices, the creation of new economic and spatial imaginaries, the achievement of improved outcomes for their local areas, and so on (Jessop, 2013; Raco, 2000; Stubbs et al., 2002; Ward, 2003). It is therefore unsurprising that place management is progressively considered “as a symbiotic element of strategic significance in the long-term impact and sustainability of towns/cities”, which needs to be “at the heart of the planning, design and overall placemaking processes” (Coca-Stefaniak and Bagaeen, 2013: 532).

From this brief review, it is evident that a number of interdependent factors across multiple scales are driving the current place management debate. These include the turn into more localised forms of stakeholder participation and engagement, the increasing influence of global economic and market trends that influence a place’s

competitiveness in multiple arenas, the restructuring of governance mechanisms into networked forms that lead towards collaborative, supra-local arrangements, and the shift towards multidisciplinary management teams that aim to tackle siloed forms of place governance. As Adams (2008) states, these factors signify how place management, as a form of urban public policy, is increasingly influencing the social, economic, human and natural capitals in place. In this thesis, the view of place management as an emergent form of urban public policy is acknowledged.

## 1.2 The practice of place management

The multiple practices, activities, and processes that can be associated with place management accentuate the need for their itemisation, in order to understand what can be broadly considered as ‘place management practice’. In this respect, Yanchula (2008) provides a comprehensive hierarchical framework that lays out place management activities in a way that allows local partnerships and organisations to make a conscious decision regarding which activities they want to be in charge of, as shown in figure 1.1.

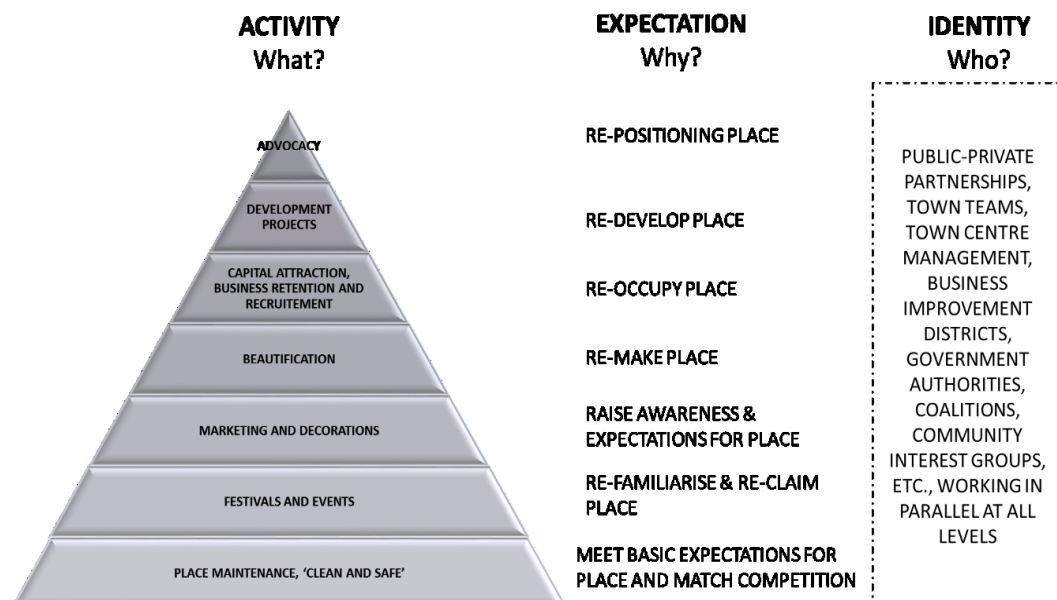


Figure 1.1 Hierarchy of place management activities and their expected outcomes, Source: Yanchula (2008)

The framework provides a holistic understanding of what can be considered as a place-related intervention in the context of place management. Place interventions vary from the trivial tasks, such as picking up litter and making sure that the place is clean and safe, to long-term developmental projects that mobilise and create short-term regimes that can steer public opinion and decision making (e.g. Geddes, 2006; Graham and Healey, 1999; Irazábal, 2009; MacLeod, 1999; Stoker and Mossberger, 1994; Stone, 1993). More importantly, it emphasises the co-operative nature of stakeholder relationships, and the need to develop effective partnerships (e.g. town centre management (TCM) schemes) in order to tackle different aspects of town and city centre decline, such as leisure provision, town planning initiatives, public health, poor image, publicity, etc. (Guy, 1993; Healey, 1996; Tomalin and Pal, 1994). Coca-Stefaniak et al. (2009) suggested that a place management approach to TCM is needed in order to encourage participation of all stakeholders in decision-making and enhance flexibility. Furthermore, the framework suggests the potential of place management to have a wider societal and financial impact and act as a key process for organising wider area-based regeneration. Business improvement districts (BIDs) fall into the category of partnership-based bodies that can develop the necessary mechanisms, frameworks, and managerial responses to tackle complex problems (Peel, 2003) and forge consensus regarding the long-term improvement of public realm quality (De Magalhães, 2012).

Such frameworks have proven to be very valuable to practitioners, as they clearly demonstrate the concept of place management in specific locations (e.g. a downtown area), and assist in the identification of what each local partnership can do for the place (depending on their resources and level of influence). Moreover, the selective delineation of place interventions can give an incentive to lower tier partnerships associated with low-level practices to increase their reputations, climb up the “place management ladder... and partner with or become development organisations that can increasingly leave a legacy of great or greatly improved places” (Yanchula, 2008: 99). It should be noted here though, that prescriptive place management frameworks, though summarising effectively what local partnerships can do and what can they become for their place, still adhere a nomothetic and mechanistic

approach that fails to address the interdependencies and traverses between different initiatives and practices, as well as between place management's theoretical underpinnings.

### 1.3 The problem with place management

Here lies the biggest drawback of place management theory, which constitutes the main argument of this thesis. Specifically, place management research that is focused solely on TCM, BIDs, and similar management-centric approaches confines place management as a mainly business, practitioner-led field with limited theoretical depth. Indeed, as Millington et al. (2015: 5) purport, decision making and management must become "less hierarchical and myopic and more place-based and 'porous' to allow more intelligence and input from the location". Furthermore, the emergence of an entangling and contesting pattern between top-down and bottom-up approaches to stakeholder engagement and partnership working, determines to a great extent the politics of place (Gibson and Davidson, 2004; Paddison, 1999) and the continuous need for practices of negotiation, judgement, learning and improvisation (Massey, 2005: 162) during the place management process. As such, this thesis seeks to make a contribution towards a participatory, pluralist and relational approach to place management, in order to escape the nomothetic trap, which is deeply engrained in management, marketing, and planning work. It is argued that in order to move towards a relational approach, and in order to advance theory in place management, a geographically sensitive approach to place management is needed, with a spatial and social emphasis instead of a business focus. As such, the main research aim of this thesis is:

***"To advance the theory of place management by adopting a geographically-sensitive approach, which gives equal emphasis on the economic, spatial, and social aspects of places"***

As it will be seen throughout this thesis, an emphasis on geographical approaches broadens the range and reach of place management, and supports the adoption of multiple theories and methods that engage with very different kinds of knowledge in order to grasp a fuller understanding of the subject at hand. This suggests that in

order for place management to gain theoretical legitimacy, a wider conceptualisation of its adjacent fields is needed, which will allow a fuller appreciation of the complexity and pluralism that are inherent in places. As such, it is argued that place management, as a synthesised, place-based process of strategic significance that aims to solve complex problems and produce specific outcomes for places and people, has the potential to act as an organising buzzword that is open enough to allow different fields and theoretical traditions to contribute in its development (Miettinen et al., 2009).

### 1.3.1 Place management as an interdisciplinary boundary concept

Place management is surrounded by ambiguity and vagueness both as a theoretical field - as it is constituted by knowledge sources from a multitude of disciplines (Coca-Stefaniak, 2008) - and as a practice - since it is a 'loose' process that can be applied in places in a variety of ways (there is no 'one right way' to manage a place or space) in order to produce a specific outcome (typically making places better) (Parker, 2009). Consequently, place management can include any process, tool, design, intervention or practice that aims to contribute in place, and how it is practised is open to anyone's interpretation of what is right and wrong for the place in question. Whereas this can be perceived as a major drawback for the field's generalisability, this thesis argues that a singular approach towards the study of place management prevents the incorporation of core geographical knowledge from the plethora of theoretical, conceptual and methodological choices that are 'whirling' in the heart of place management.

Therefore, this thesis seeks to establish place management as an interdisciplinary boundary concept. This understanding draws similarities with the notion of 'boundary objects' (Star and Griesemer, 1989:393), which highlight the simultaneous plasticity and robustness of those scientific objects that can have "different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation". It is argued that place management has similar properties that allow its conceptual development across intersecting social worlds, as it "can operate as concept in different disciplines or perspectives" (Mollinga, 2008: 24) and is "imprecise and open enough to allow

people from different traditions to join without renouncing their respective worldviews” (Miettinen et al., 2009: 1313).

The viewing of place management as an interdisciplinary boundary concept parallels with Parker’s (2008: 5–6) interpretation of place as a boundary that is shared by many disciplines, but also has a particular wilderness that cannot be claimed by any subject or discipline (similar to the idea of borderlands, vague, undetermined spaces that exist around borders and highlight the possibility of multiple plotlines (Anzaldúa, 1987; Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007), which, in turn, invites further research and development. Based on the above, this thesis does not aim to prescribe a uniform approach towards place management theory, but instead seeks to develop a set of conceptual tools from the combination of different conceptual lenses and theoretical approaches. It is argued that a pluralist theoretical approach towards place management research can produce surplus knowledge that will advance theory in place management and its sub-fields of place marketing, place branding, strategic spatial planning, and placemaking.

#### 1.4 Summary of forthcoming chapters

Chapter 2 builds upon the notion of place management as a symbiotic element of strategic significance in places and delineates the field of place management from the main theoretical underpinnings and approaches of its adjacent fields (place marketing, place branding, strategic spatial planning, and placemaking). Chapter 3 presents a review of theories of place and space from different geographical lenses and uncovers place management as a socio-spatial process that pays attention to the constant interactions and associations between people, places, and spaces. Chapter 4 provides the rationale behind the adoption of theoretical and methodological pluralism for place management research, and presents the reasoning behind the research strategy (multi-sited ethnographic approach, coupled with the extended case method (ECM) of the empirical part. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the empirical findings from research in ten UK towns and the squatted areas of Christiania and Metelkova respectively. In Chapter 7, I summarise the main contributions of both the theoretical and empirical parts and highlight recommendations for future research.



## Chapter 2 Delineating place management: A literature review of place management's adjacent fields

In this chapter, I will provide a critical appraisal of the place management literature, by identifying the recurring themes relevant to the advancement of theory and practice in the field. As argued in the introductory chapter, place management is progressively considered “as a symbiotic element of strategic significance in the long-term impact and sustainability of towns/cities”, which needs to be “at the heart of the planning, design and overall placemaking processes” (Coca-Stefaniak and Bagaen, 2013: 532). As such, place management can be understood and theorised as a synthesis of adjacent fields, which can give us a clearer outlook of what is included in its study and practice. Thus, the main purpose of this chapter is to underline the main theoretical underpinnings and approaches of these place management constituents, namely place marketing, place branding, strategic spatial planning, and placemaking. From this critical view of place management's adjacent fields, a heuristic framework for place management will be presented, which problematises the need to explore notions of ‘place’ and ‘people’ in place management also from a geographic lens.

### 2.1 Place marketing<sup>1</sup>

One of the main tasks in place management is the development of the place product and the construction of a sellable image that can highlight local difference (Harvey, 1993) and enhance a place's competitive position (Page and Hardyman, 1996). According to Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008: 151), “places have long felt a need to differentiate themselves from each other in order to assert their individuality and distinctive characteristics in pursuit of various economic, political or socio-psychological objectives”. Through the centuries, place selling and place promotion were extensively used in order to attract settlers to newly discovered lands and

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the term “place marketing” is used interchangeably with “city marketing”, “urban marketing”, “territorial marketing”, “metropolitan marketing”, etc.

migrants for the development of new towns, tourists in seaside resorts during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and big companies with subsidies for generating manufacturing jobs (smokestack chasing) in industrial cities (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994; Gold and Ward, 1994; van den Berg and Braun, 1999; Ward, 1998). However, those early practices reveal a focus on randomly-undertaken simple promotions of certain attractions and urban functions, based mostly on the intuition and 'gut feeling' of various individuals and organisations with an interest of promoting a place (Burgess, 1982; Kavaratzis, 2005; Ward, 1998).

Contrary to this view, place marketing has emerged as a more focused, integrated, and strategic approach for the development and management of places, and is recognised as an important instrument in regional and urban development, place positioning, public and international relations, as well as infrastructural and economic growth (Maheshwari et al., 2011). According to Kavaratzis (2005), the origins of place marketing can be traced in Kotler and Levy's (1969) work, which argued that the term "product" could take many forms (from physical products and services to people and entire organisations). The broadening of marketing to non-market and social activities led to the introduction of social marketing as a tool for social change that can be used by non-profit organisations (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971). These thoughts served as a forerunner for the introduction of place marketing among public sector agencies, which advocated that cities and towns need to market a wide range of functions and services to users in the light of growing interurban competition (Ashworth and Voogd, 1988, 1990; Cox, 1993; Gold and Ward, 1994; Harvey, 1989a; Kotler et al., 1993; Logan and Molotch, 1987; Page and Hardyman, 1996). The forces of globalisation, capitalism, neoliberalism, and managerialism have led to a political economy of place that supposedly mediates competition between places, puts them on the map, and produces 'market-oriented' solutions with the goal of capital attraction (in the form of residents, businesses, tourists, foreign investment, etc.) (Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Greenberg, 2008; Kornberger and Carter, 2010; Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003; Niedomysl and Jonasson, 2012). However, Niedomysl and Jonasson (2012) purport that places which adopt place marketing strategies are not necessarily trying to attract all forms of capital simultaneously, but they instead focus on those

forms that they are more accustomed to. For example, a seaside town may prioritise tourist attraction, a small town may give more emphasis on resident retention and business recruitment (e.g. finding jobs for young locals), and big cities may prioritise investments over businesses. Nevertheless, the aim of place marketing is to support the long-term economic development and occupation of places, with a focus on activities and practices that reflect the type of town, the local development potential, general market information, macro-economic trends, and so on (e.g. Kures and Ryan, 2012; Parker, 2009; Wrigley and Lambiri, 2014).

#### 2.1.1 The 'managerial' approach

As mentioned above, interurban competition between cities, and entrepreneurial modes of urban governance that seek to promote a range of 'capacity-building' initiatives coupled with local specificities (Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Harvey, 1989a), gave rise to the practice of place marketing (Williams, 1999). In order for place differentiation to occur, a range of collective local activities must happen, that are related as closely as possible to the demands of targeted consumers (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994). According to Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993), place marketing succeeds when:

*"...stakeholders, such as citizens, workers, and business firms derive satisfaction from their community, and when visitors, new businesses, and investors find their expectations met. [...] Place marketing means designing a place to satisfy the needs of its target markets [...]"* (Kotler et al., 1993: 37).

The definitions above highlight the development of place marketing theory and practice from a managerial point of view. This suggests that place managers need to formulate a place's objectives, implement the place's mission and offering, and deliver suitable marketing plans and processes, with the unambiguous aim to distinguish what position a place wishes to have in the minds of the target groups in the long term. The frameworks presented in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show what managers ought to do in order to successfully market their places. In the managerial approach, the implementation of a viable strategic marketing plan for a place becomes paramount, as the fundamental assumption is that all places, regardless of their

position, need to be marketed in order to secure prosperity and social welfare (Kotler et al., 1993, 1999; Rainisto, 2003).

Therefore, place marketing can be understood as a long-term strategic process in which thinking in terms of customers and the market is central, and the conscious application of marketing approaches (a toolbox with applicable insights and techniques) is essential for addressing the needs of a territory's different target groups (Hospers, 2011; van den Berg and Braun, 1999). This is also evident in Braun's (2008) definition, which is an altered version of AMA's current definition of marketing:

*“City marketing is the coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city's customers and the city's community at large” (Braun, 2008: 43).*

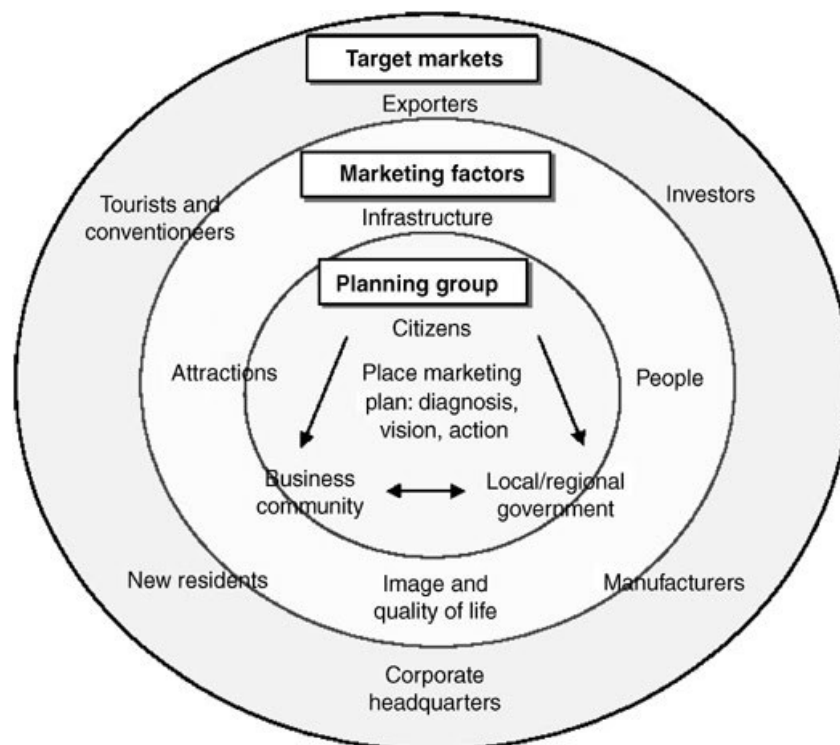


Figure 2.1 Levels of Place Marketing, Source: Kotler et al. (1993: 19)

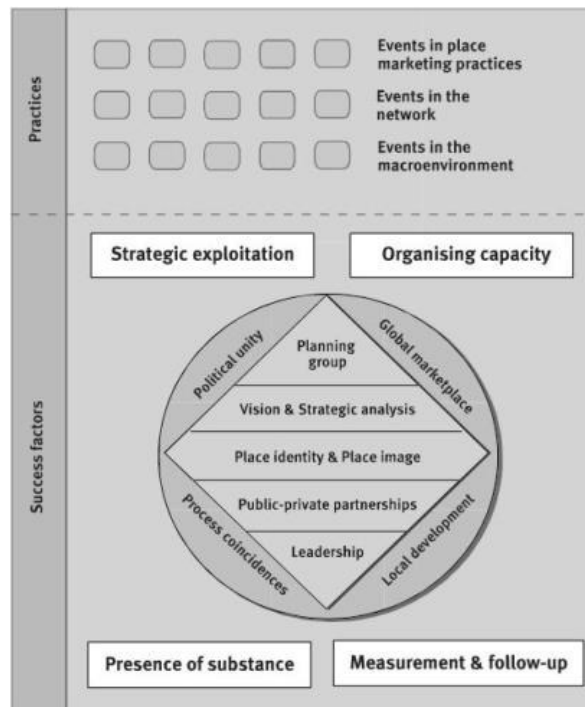


Figure 2.2 success factors of place marketing, Source: Rainisto (2003: 227-228)

This definition is following the trend of understanding marketing, and subsequently place marketing, as a social practice (Svensson, 2007), which can fulfil place stakeholders' demands in a way that will contribute to the overall long-term prosperity and sustainability of that particular place (Kotler et al., 1999). Indeed, place marketing needs to assist in the place's development, planning and cooperation attempts, and deliver propositions that will benefit society, without neglecting the persuasive role of marketing, in the form of value propositions and place promotions (Eshuis et al., 2013). Whereas Braun's definition highpoints traditional marketing approaches without addressing the varying characteristics of the place product (Warnaby and Medway, 2013), it also addresses the importance of coordinating marketing activities to maximise value not only for target groups, but for local communities and citizens as well. From this perspective, place marketing can be seen as "an 'umbrella activity' that coordinates different local policies from the perspective of businesses, citizens, and visitors" (Hospers, 2011: 371). This suggests that place marketing brings forward the views of multiple stakeholders in the policies that affect the place in question, however fails to address which groups have more

power during this process, and which ones are marginalised and lose their unique identity to the detriment of place (Warnaby and Medway, 2013).

#### 2.1.2 “Contemporary” place marketing

Nevertheless, it is now commonplace in place marketing theory to suggest that multiple stakeholders must cooperate and build diverse strategic networks that create conditions for organising capacity, which is defined as “the ability to enlist all actors involved and, with their help, to generate new ideas and to develop and implement a policy designed to respond to fundamental developments and create conditions for sustainable development” (van den Berg and Braun, 1999: 995). Warnaby (2009) argues that such relational exchanges can simply not only occur between place managers and place consumers, and therefore a consensual and inclusive approach to place marketing strategy making is required. As he further illustrates, place marketing has similarities with relationship marketing and specifically Gummesson’s concept of many-to-many marketing, “which utilises the network properties of marketing thereby allowing for complexity, context and dynamism” (Gummesson, 2006: 349).

This understanding of place marketing deviates from traditional managerial approaches and moves towards a service-dominant (S-D) logic approach that highlights co-creation and co-production of different kinds of value (Gummesson, 2008; Gummesson and Mele, 2010; Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008). In addition, the S-D logic in place marketing can put social narratives, localised forms of understanding, and the distinct interrelationships and social constructions between places and people, in the forefront of place marketing activity (Boisen et al., 2011; Lichrou et al., 2008; Warnaby, 2009; Warnaby and Medway, 2013). This is a decisive point for the appreciation of place in the literature, as it takes into account the discourse and meaning that local people attach to the place's culture, which are of central importance to the development of appropriate place marketing strategies (e.g. Hospers, 2010; Jensen, 2007; Lewicka, 2008). As Warnaby and Medway (2013: 356) argue, “marketing activity could be thought of as a means of telling the ‘spatial story’ of a particular place”, something that would be muffled from the standardised approach presented above. They continue by stating that place marketing requires

the widest possible stakeholder participation in terms of product development, and should become more bottom-up as opposed to top-down. In this case, the place product will emerge “as a consequence of co-created processes involving the full range of stakeholders rather the usual place marketing suspects” (Warnaby and Medway, 2013: 358). It is only more recently that this consciousness became prominent in place branding, the latest instalment of the place marketing epic (Kavaratzis, 2008), which extends the notion of place promotion by referring to the development of brands for geographical locations (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012) and will be discussed later in the chapter.

### 2.1.3 ‘Politico-economic’ place marketing

Somewhat neglected in the literature, the politico-economic perspective of place marketing is a critical branch of research associated with the new urban politics of entrepreneurial cities (Hall and Hubbard, 1998; MacLeod, 2011), and a focus on representational strategies for place marketing and city re-imaging (Kearns and Philo, 1993). According to McCann (2004a), place marketing, complemented with policies of urban restructuring, is constructing a recurring narrative of what a ‘best place’ is. This narrative is constructed via innovative combinations that involve both economic and extra-economic factors, where the former are defined as “commodities and fictitious commodities” and the latter are political and social factors that are “economically relevant” but are “not monetised and/or do not enter directly into exchange relations” (Jessop and Sum, 2000). He goes on to say that:

*“The elements of a city’s infrastructure, governance structure and culture that are necessary for its rise in the urban hierarchy are worked out through policy-making processes that combine economic and extra-economic factors”* (McCann, 2004a: 1914).

This implies a focus on mobilising factors such as quality of life and culture for the construction of narratives that support notions of cosmopolitanism, the global city, the creative city, authenticity, and so forth (Ley, 2004; McCann, 2004b; Rius Ulldemolins, 2014; Sager, 2011; Ward, 2010; Young et al., 2006). These imaginaries are discursively constituted and materially reproduced on many sites and scales

(Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008), and are essentially legitimising a particular set of actions or policies for future economic development, while hiding the potential negative consequences of economic development (McCann, 2004a). Despite this selectivity, place marketing has become an integral part of urban governance (Eshuis et al., 2013). Colomb (2012) argues that place marketing and image production are key activities in the present politico-economic context and important tools in the implementation of new urban politics and governance strategies. For her, place marketing is a phenomenon with three analytical dimensions:

- Place marketing as public policy, with its associated network of actors, agenda, policy narrative and instruments
- Place marketing as a discourse on the city and on urban change which in part is produced by visual representations
- Place marketing as imagery of the city and of urban change

She further encapsulates these three dimensions into a definition of place marketing:

*“Place marketing is the intentional, organised process of construction and dissemination of a discourse on, and images of, a given place (usually a city) and of its development, which involves the mobilization of a set of actors around that particular task (with specific goals and agenda). The goals of place marketing can be manifold, e.g. attracting tourists and investors or generating the support of local residents for a particular urban vision. The process is ‘spatial’ in the sense that it seeks to mediate or construct a defined identity for a particular geographical space, and usually makes use of spatial metaphors and of specific architectural symbols characterising that place in the process. Place marketing activities thus interact with place making activities (architecture, planning, urban design and urban development) and with the cultural politics of collective identity and memory construction through space” (Colomb, 2012: 26).*

The focus on the spatiality of practices and politics of place marketing (Colomb, 2015) and their examination in both their material and semiotic conditions (Jacobs, 1993; Ribera-Fumaz, 2009) is of great importance here. Conceptualising practices of place marketing from this perspective means that one has to take into account the fluidities, social constructions, struggles and contestations of places, without ignoring the material and physical spaces where these practices occur, whilst appreciating the



facilitating role that marketing can have in these over time. However, in this case, “practices are defined as being socially sustained by a normative accountability”, being visible due to place marketing activities that produce a “mass of practical knowledge and discursive (material-semiotic) practices that justify practices as morally and aesthetically acceptable” (Gherardi, 2009: 123). This poses a problem for the development of theory, as it disregards the dynamism of people’s relationships to place, and how places are made and maintained by everyday practices and interventions (Benson and Jackson, 2013).

Overall, it can be argued that while the literature urges the need for constant interactions between all stakeholder groups, the vast majority of place marketing initiatives seem to neglect place stakeholders' opinions. What remains marketed is a static, large administrative entity (city, region/district, and even country), with a perceived homogeneous place image that is irrelevant to place stakeholders and often alienates them. Typically, places and people are treated as passive entities for the manifestation of fixed sets of rules that are promising continuous growth. Places are seen as physically extended but otherwise familiar products in which fixed promotional marketing techniques (e.g. logos, slogans, USPs) can be applied. Sellable characteristics and the geographical nomenclature of places can be selected, modified, or manipulated by marketers in order to achieve maximum benefit from that use (in a form of competitive advantage) (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008), without taking into account local people’s input in the production of these ‘marketing strategies’, because the focus of such effort is usually external to the locations, such as investors and tourists. As Parker (2008: 10) commented, “the marketing of places has often been seen as something you do to those outside a place, rather than those within it”. Tackling this problem:

*“...requires a refocusing of efforts and perspectives away from the strategic and mythical aims of civic boosterism to a more micro-marketing perspective, in which the attitudes of individuals to place, and those factors which may directly affect such attitudes, drive place marketing activity” (Parker et al., 2015: 1106).*

Hence, normative theories and models are governing and undermining the quality and production of marketing work and our understanding of marketing processes (Ardley and Quinn, 2014; Nilsson and Helgesson, 2015; Svensson, 2007), as well as failing to connect with the people who consume, produce, experience and appropriate spaces and places for the benefit of themselves and their communities (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Tadajewski, 2010). By analysing practices of place marketing, we can illustrate the multiplicity of people's roles in places and spaces and the perplexity of social interactions that occur in these. This pinpoints place marketing's relevance as a complementary field for understanding how place management is practised.

## 2.2 Place Branding

Regarded as the most recent episode of the place marketing epic (Kavaratzis, 2008), place branding extends the notion of place promotion by referring to the development of brands for geographical locations (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012). Place branding, as a distinct focus within place marketing, (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2010) shifts the focus from strategies for place development towards a dynamic and relational paradigm (Hankinson, 2004) that encompasses the values and meanings that multiple stakeholders attach to places (Kavaratzis, 2004). According to Zenker and Braun (2010), a place brand is an amalgamation of network associations in people's minds, based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place. These associations are embodied through the aims, communication, values, behaviour, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design. In this sense, the dual aim of a place branding strategy is to construct a unique selling proposition that will guarantee exposure to external audiences, as well as reinforce citizens' local identity (Colomb and Kalandides, 2010). Thus, recent discussions in place branding favour a participatory approach that takes into account the roles and input of all stakeholders during place brand formation, with particular emphasis on the role of residents and local partnerships (Braun et al., 2013; Houghton and Stevens, 2011; Kalandides, 2011a; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014). In addition, place branding highlights how places emerge as social constructions that

are dynamic and constantly developed, redefined, and reinterpreted via human actions, spoken and written word, and a holistic understanding of a place's functional and representational dimensions (Giovanardi et al., 2013; Warnaby and Medway, 2013). Whereas the promotional aspect of place branding has been the primary interest of both practitioners and academics for many years, its socio-political influence and legitimacy have also been attested (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013; Kalandides, 2011a; Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016).

At first glance, place branding and place marketing seem interchangeable, which has led to apparent confusion regarding definitions and uses (e.g. Gertner, 2011; Skinner, 2008). However, as Lucarelli and Berg (2011) advocated, the place branding approach seeks to incorporate symbolic and cultural information about the place into the place brand, contrary to place marketing, which favours a managerial approach that deals with promoting, selling and distributing the place product (as a whole or as parts). Therefore, it can be argued that place branding is complementary to place marketing (or *vice versa*) (Govers, 2011), and that it has a distinct role of developing an image and reputation for a place, which subsequently informs the planning and implementation of the place marketing strategy (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2010). In this regard, place marketing is viewed as an all-around planning instrument that incorporates place branding into its array of techniques for place promotion, placemaking, and place development (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013).

#### 2.2.1 Early place branding approaches

Academics and practitioners concerned with the application of branding and communications theories form a substantial amount of the place marketing-related literature (Skinner, 2008). It can be argued that brand management and brand strategies can more easily be applied in places, as the associations, meanings, beliefs, views that they have about a brand are shaped and valorised in order to produce a certain image and build equity (Arvidsson, 2005). Aaker's corporate branding definition here is central, as it integrates all these elements into one success formula (Kavaratzis, 2005). He defines a brand as "a multidimensional assortment of functional, emotional, relational and strategic elements that collectively generate a unique set of associations in the public mind" (Aaker, 1996: 68). In this sense, a brand

acts as a differentiator and an identifier (Aitken and Campelo, 2011) that enacts, through the aggregation of its symbols and meanings, powerful associations to consumers' culture, behaviour, and overall lifestyle. As Arvidsson (2005: 239) argues, "building brand equity is about fostering a number of possible attachments around the brand... experiences, emotions, attitudes, lifestyles or, most importantly perhaps, loyalty". Thus, when incorporating place into branding, these attachments and associations can evoke a consistent place identity, which can form a sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions to the minds of potential consumers of a place (Kotler and Gertner, 2002, 2004).

Early place branding approaches did not differ too much from prescriptive place marketing ones, and highlighted the need for the production of a unified image. According to Kavaratzis (2005), common place branding trends within the marketing discipline are concerned with simple associations of products and places, such as place of origin branding, nations branding, destination branding, city branding, and co-branding of product and place. These associations can either accentuate people's stereotypical images of country-specific environmental conditions to products from a particular country (Laroche et al., 2005; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002), reinforce an emotional connection with a destination and positively influence destination choice (Blain et al., 2005), or help towards the attraction of FDI and political capital for a country (Anholt, 2007). It can be argued that the creation of a specific place identity and its use for desirable purposes is the main focus of such approaches. However, these largely ignored how this identity is constructed by people in the place branding process, and comfortably assume that "places are just spatially extended products that require little special attention as a consequence of their spatiality" (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005: 507). Therefore, a wider approach to understand how branding is applied to places, that goes beyond the creation and promotion of place images as part of place management, was needed (Kavaratzis, 2005).

In this vein, researchers started modelling the elements of place brands in relation with a place's target audiences. Kavaratzis (2004), in his 'city branding' framework (figure 2.3), makes a clear distinction between primary communication (the city's actions) and secondary communication (city's marketing practices) that a city evokes

to various audiences. The framework shows that the four areas that constitute primary communication (landscape strategies, behaviour, organisational structure, and infrastructure) are mostly concerned with the development of a city or place for the benefit of various audiences. It also stresses the role of citizen participation and strategic networks for the development of the place brand. In a similar note, Hankinson (2004) illustrated that the core of the place brand is created through relational networks of stakeholder groups. He argued that an effective place branding strategy can occur when a place's image and identity is extended through successful relationships between the stakeholders which form the brand relationships. All actors that are responsible for the brand communication and the delivery of a place image form dynamic relationships, which gradually extend the place experience and create a ripple effect in which brand relationships are gradually extended through a process of progressive interaction between the network of stakeholders" (Hankinson, 2004: 115).

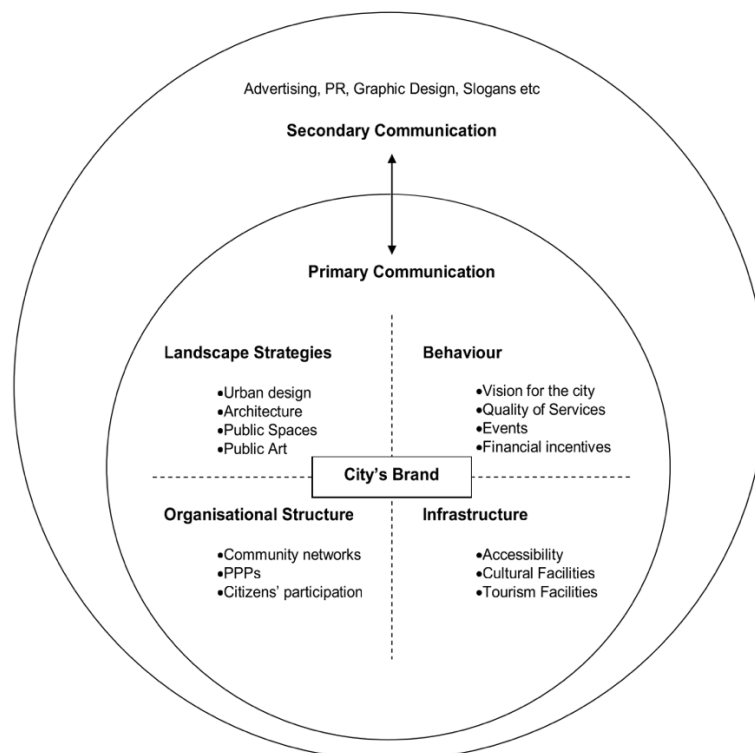


Figure 2.3 Communication of a city's brand, Source: Kavaratzis (2004)

Later place brand management approaches tend to follow a holistic approach, which bears similarities to place marketing management models. For example, Hanna and Rowley (2011) built upon previous models of place branding to develop the Strategic Place Brand-Management (SPBM) Model, which offers an integrative perspective of place brand management. The elements of the model (figure 2.4) show the cycle of place brand management, starting from brand evaluation and ending in Word-of-Mouth. The model stresses the relationship between stakeholders and leadership at the Brand Infrastructure stage, as this relationship is crucial for the creation of an optimal image. Measurement and evaluation of the brand is continuous, which supports the dynamic development of the brand, and shows a strategic approach of place brand management that is based on monitoring the brand’s effectiveness (Baker, 2007). Overall, the authors claim that such holistic models, informed “by earlier work in disciplines such as branding, marketing communication, regeneration, and tourism, offer an opportunity to benchmark practice and integrate knowledge bases in place branding” (Hanna and Rowley, 2011: 473). However, such models fall into a similar trap as conventional place marketing approaches, as they attempt to prescribe what the agents of place ought to do or what kind of place branding a place ought to have (Hunt, 1976).

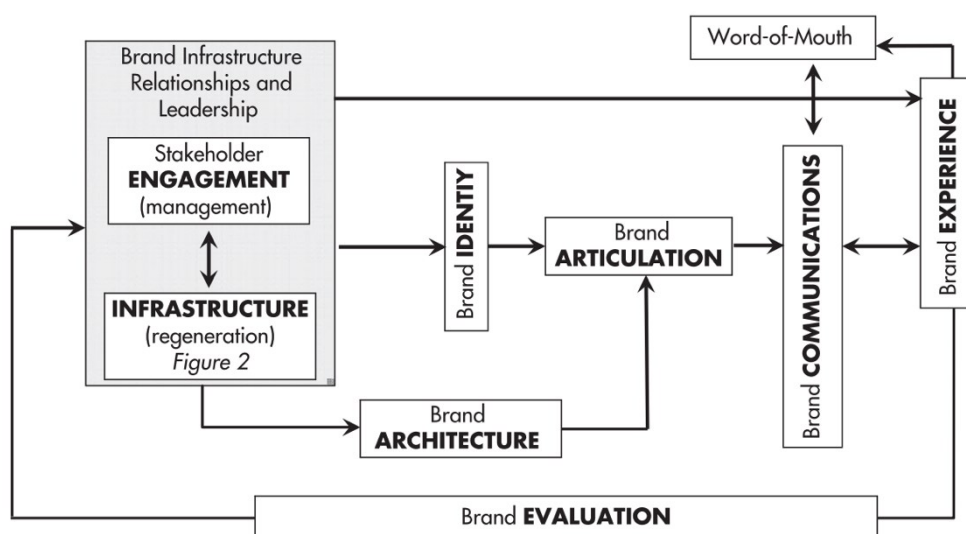


Figure 2.4 The SPBM Model, Source: Hanna & Rowley (2011: 463)

### 2.2.2 Paradigm change and participatory place branding

Similarly to place marketing, conventional branding approaches can be viewed as socio-political edifices that accentuate the “...struggle between a brand and its homogeneous, silencing effects, and the overflowing, polyphonic reality of people’s interpretations of a place” (Clegg and Kornberger, 2010: 8). Thus, the political economy perspective of place branding highlights power struggles between interest groups, and uncovers political agendas that prioritise certain images of the place, which favour “spatially uneven development through the orchestration of economic and social inequalities” (Pike, 2009b) and a form of pragmatism that cripples political debates (Eisenschitz, 2010; Gertner, 2007). According to Colomb (2012: 36), the political prioritisation of the need to use branding activities in order to create a favourable image of a place can also become a legitimizing argument for urban policy decisions that can have material impacts on urban spaces and populations. In this sense, place branding can be viewed as a removal of transparency that prevents the public from knowing what the public officials are doing (Greenberg, 2008), and creates a gap between image and reality by bypassing elected politicians, not consulting local communities, and neglecting marginalised groups (Bennett and Savani, 2003; Eshuis and Edwards, 2013). The commodification of place as a product or a brand via this approach leads to the loss of the place’s essence (Clegg and Kornberger, 2010; Eisenschitz, 2010), erases place-based differences (Waitt, 2008) and potentially alienates those who previously felt a strong attachment to it (Warnaby and Medway, 2013).

This traditional paradigm has been challenged in recent years by various scholars, who call for a participatory approach that takes into account the roles and input of all stakeholders during place brand formation, with particular emphasis on the role of residents and local partnerships (Braun et al., 2013; Houghton and Stevens, 2011; Ind and Bjerke, 2007; Kalandides, 2011a; Kavaratzis, 2012; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014). People’s capability to form unique relationships with each other and with the place establishes them as ‘co-creators’ of value and ‘co-owners’ of the place, thus constituting their presence in a constant ‘multilogue’ that is in the heart of the place branding process (Kavaratzis, 2012; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Warnaby, 2009;

Warnaby and Medway, 2013). Aitken and Campelo point out the significance of local people and groups in place branding processes, as they have specific roles, rights, responsibilities and relationships with the place they live in, that “have emerged from the social capital or communal practices of the place that are re- and co- created through community engagement” (Aitken and Campelo, 2011: 925). Thus, the co-creation paradigm brings forward the role of people in value-adding exchanges that emanate from ‘hard factors’ of the place such as infrastructure, landmarks and the built environment (the city of stones); and ‘soft factors’ such as quality of life, culture, education and representations (the city of words) (Giovanardi, 2012; Therkelsen et al., 2010; Warnaby and Medway, 2015).

According to Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015), participatory place branding allows us to think of place brands not only as a sum of mental associations, but as an interactive process, in which the constituents of place (materiality, practices, institutions and representations) are simultaneously the constituents of the place brand through the associations they cause. The ongoing, parallel process of placemaking and place brand formation (Figure 2.5) is “similar and interconnected to the process of synthesizing that allows people to make sense of places”. Further, it is based on a continual change of our associations with a place, which allows us to view “place brands as ongoing, multiple, open, and rather unpredictable, going against the dominant understanding of place brands, which sees them as set and fixed” (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015: 1375). Furthermore, place branding stems from a deeply political understanding of places that takes into account the democratic rights of citizens to partake in place branding practices (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015: 1378–79). Participatory place branding can contrast the dominance of the postmodern state that aims to largely attract economic activities (Cerny, 1997), in favour of deeper legitimacy in terms of transparency and decision-making openness regarding the place brand (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013), and social embeddedness (van Ham, 2008).



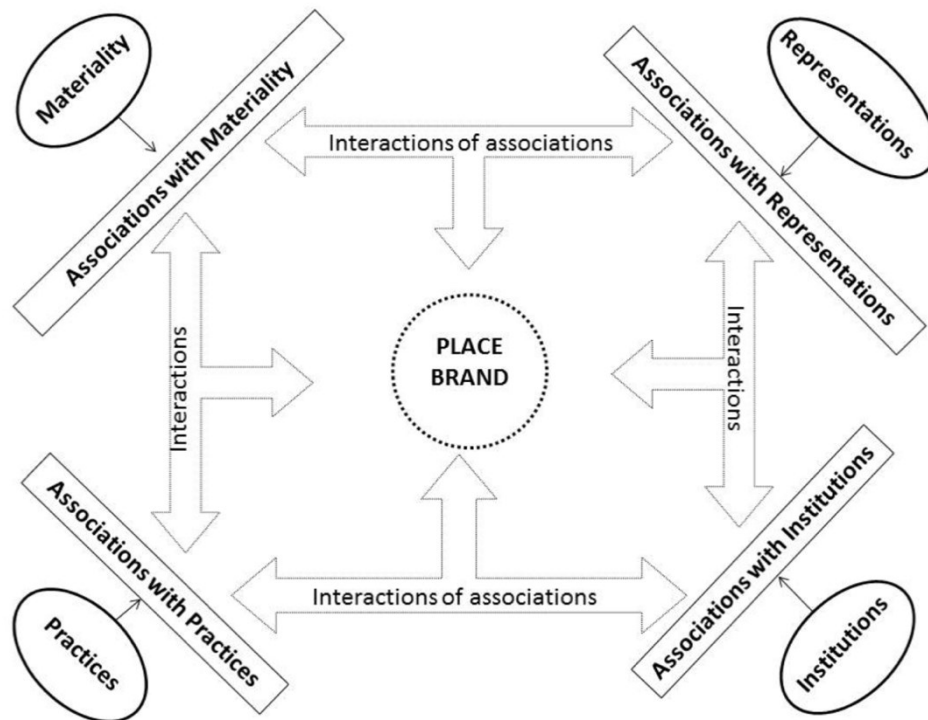


Figure 2.5 The place brand formation, Source: Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015: 1376)

In this sense, place branding can be viewed as a bottom-up approach that entails “dialogue, debate and contestation” (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013: 82) and encourages “...the widest possible stakeholder participation in terms of [place] product development” (Warnaby and Medway, 2013: 358). It can be argued that internal place branding efforts are consistently bottom-up as opposed to top-down, and include co-created processes (Medway et al., 2015) that highlight the heterogeneity of places, and refrain from presenting a sterilised, amiable image that is illustrative of a place’s power dynamics at work (Johansson, 2012). Embracing this heterogeneity though, means accepting the inherent conflicts between different actors (Braun et al., 2013), and the spatial and social complexities of place branding formation, that lead to a multiplicity of perspectives and competing narratives for the places under question (Giovanardi et al., 2013).

### 2.2.3 Place branding in the context of place management

Unarguably, place branding has evolved considerably over the last two decades and has become a sophisticated tool for communicating messages to different audiences

(Braun et al., 2014; de Noronha et al., 2017). However, the practice of place branding still centres around “a cacophony of logos, slogans, events and other types of interventions - all aimed at promoting, selling and marketing places”, and adopting a management philosophy which has moved from a business context to be applied to “public and spatial contexts” (Giovanardi et al., 2013: 366). Parker et al. (2015) also posit that place branding practice “appears to overemphasise promotion and, in particular, the visual communication aspects of promotion” (Parker et al., 2015: 1092), as it “frequently focuses on what might be called the visual triggers, such as marques, logos, straplines/slogans and names” (Hankinson, 2001: 135). This approach paralyses genuinely co-created processes (Medway et al., 2015) that help people develop mental associations with a place. These associations are not static but progress and change over time as they interact with each other on several dimensions (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015). They are also complex and contested, leading to the formation of different place brands for audiences that makes their integration in an overall brand inherently problematic. As Zenker et al. (2017:17) critically note, “because branding is often understood as a process of reduction and concentration on core associations... practitioners and researchers alike tend to react negatively to complexity”, thus avoiding the involvement of many stakeholders in the process. This hampers the strategic potential of place branding, as its focus on operational thinking hinders innovation towards more holistic approaches to place management (de Noronha et al., 2017) and a wider strategic framework for place reputation (Bell, 2016).

Therefore, the place branding process needs to be interpreted as part of a collective strategy-making process such as place management (Pasquinelli, 2014), with emphasis on mediating the complex relationships, contestations, and negotiations that are evident in places (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). By setting the tone for place marketing interventions, place branding practices can highlight people’s value-adding exchanges. In addition, meanings emanating from the place brand become part of a consistent ‘bottom-up’ as opposed to ‘top-down’ place branding approach (Medway et al., 2015), which becomes relevant for the people who live in the place and have vested interests in its development (Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017). By going

against the desire for fast and easy solutions in developing a place brand (Cleave et al., 2017), participatory place branding has the potential to support place management on an emotional level. Placemaking elements that constitute the place brand can speak to people's emotions, and can inspire them to engage in public discussions and consultations. Thus, place branding can become a starting point for people's further participation in practices of place management that go beyond the emotional and turn into real strategies for local development.

### 2.3 Strategic spatial planning

As evidenced in the previous sections, researchers rarely position themselves outside marketing- and management-led approaches, thus failing to convey a more strategic and spatial orientation to the study of place management and its constituents (Oliveira, 2015b). Whereas strategic spatial planning has been long recognised as an avenue for the management and marketing of places (Ashworth and Voogd, 1988, 1990), its existing and potential linkages within the place management terrain remain underexplored (Van Assche and Lo, 2011), with some exceptions (Ashworth, 2011; Johansson, 2012; Oliveira, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). This is rather strange considering the rich history of the field in attempting to grasp places in comprehensive ways, which can be translated into physical interventions that represent an 'integrated' conception of a place (Healey, 2006b). Planning's influence in the physical form of places has been widely acclaimed over a century ago, in utopian notions that shaped how societies should be functioning under specific urban designs (e.g. Howard's Garden City, Le Corbusier's Radiant City or Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City) (Johansson, 2012), and in technical/empirical methods of survey, research and analysis (Geddes, 1915, 1918) that were translated into plans and models of urban form for the optimal maintenance of a place (Brown and Campelo, 2014). These paved the way for the rise of conventional planning theory and practice for the greater part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which can be understood "as a general problem-solving teleology directed to such tasks as promoting human growth, securing the public interest, maximizing social welfare, and so on" (Scott and Roweis, 1977: 1112).

However, conventional theory was deeply rooted in idealist-utopian foundations that advocated a misguided rationality of what the real world ought to be, rather than what it is. This was inherently problematic, as it was dismissive of the social, political and property relations that create the necessary tensions, dislocations, and contradictions of a dominantly urbanised capitalist society, and are necessary concomitants of spatial planning (Scott and Roweis, 1977: 1114–1115). Planning theory and practice is also a social phenomenon that showcases the field’s socio-political role (Yiftachel, 1989) in understanding how places actually function in a social context (Jacobs, 1961). This was attested by focusing on comprehensive, problem-oriented approaches to community welfare that serve as counterpart to physical and economic planning (Gunder, 2010; Kahn, 1969; Perloff, 1965), or by criticising the role of planning within the capitalist state and its influence on capital accumulation, entrepreneurialism, uneven development, urban inequality, the rise of the creative class, and so on (Castells, 1977; Hall, 2014; Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Harvey, 1973, 1989b; McCann, 2004b; Sager, 2011; Zukin, 1991). From the above, it is easy to understand how planning traverses the physical and social aspects of place, with the ultimate goal to develop a sustainable town/city/region for the good of society (Albrechts, 2015). However, this rather unrealistic expectation cannot be implemented wholly; uncertainties regarding the future of a place will always be prevalent due to its complex nature, the different types of knowledge between actors (tacit/experiential knowledge of local communities versus traditional scientific knowledge), the changes in governance dynamics, different social, economic, and environmental objectives, and so on (Albrechts, 2015; Graham and Healey, 1999; Healey, 2006a; Olesen, 2012). In this sense, a strategic approach to spatial planning can be envisioned as:

*“The investigation of “virtualities” unseen in the present; the speculation about what may yet happen; the temporary inquiry into what at a given time and place we might yet think or do and how this might influence socially and environmentally just spatial form” (Hillier, 2007: 225).*

This rather loose thinking steers away from top-down, hierarchical spatial planning approaches, which mobilise resources according to planned events, and impose goals and policies that may be irrelevant for the majority of place stakeholders (Balducci et al., 2011). A speculative approach to spatial planning encourages “the emergence of particular development trajectories” (Healey, 2008: 8), and supports openness and experimentation during a process. Most importantly though, the outcomes of such a process are based on communication and involvement of place actors in planning (Balducci, 2008: 79). Therefore, it is another turn in planning theory and practice that is more relevant to the study of place management as presented in this thesis.

### 2.3.1 The communicative/collaborative turn in strategic spatial planning

The recognition that planning cannot be implemented as a solely technical or scientific exercise, but also needs to address value-laden and political questions that are inherent in its nature (Taylor, 1998), has led planning theorists to re-examine the role of the planner. This meant that planners needed to deviate from the so-called neutrality of their objectivity as scientists that supposedly granted them with the ability to divine either their clients’ will or the public will (Davidoff and Reiner, 1962; Long, 1959). Davidoff (1965) argued that it is imperative for planners to embrace their political role and act as advocates for client groups within the public, effectively opening the door to publics that were not represented in the planning process to become active participants. Citizens’ involvement in planning is associated with the broader concepts of democracy and power and can take different forms, as Arnstein (1969) argued. These start from degrees of non-participation (manipulation and therapy), to rising degrees of tokenism (basic information and consultation), and eventually to true engagement and partnership working, where citizens acquire some delegated power and local control over planning processes (Bailey, 2010; Sorensen and Sagaris, 2010; Woolrych and Sixsmith, 2013). Public participation and involvement signified the move towards more participatory and political approaches to planning (Damer and Hague, 1971), and the possibility of coordination and cooperation between social actors that share common norms and values.

Building on these notions, and drawing on ideas of deliberative democracy and intersubjective rationality (Habermas, 1984, 1987), the communicative/collaborative

turn (Forester, 1989; Healey, 1992, 1996; Innes, 1995) aims towards further democratisation of strategic spatial planning. It has been described as a paradigmatic turn that is “based on a participatory perspective of democracy and a dislike—or at least a grave suspicion—of free-market economies” (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998: 1978). Communicative/collaborative planning’s main goals are the limitation of the distorting influence of power relations (Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2016), the empowerment of discourse communities, values, and forms of reasoning that were previously excluded from the planning practice (McGuirk, 2001), and the encouragement of idealised forms of dialogue that can lead to a consensus between place actors (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012). Healey (1996: 231) advocates that communicative/collaborative planning needs to be seen as a normative proposal of how political communities can implement a communicatively rational approach to spatial strategy making (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). By following an institutional audit comprising monitoring, review, and evaluation of collaborative practices (Healey, 1997), these communities can build “institutional capacity focused on enhancing the ability of place-focused stakeholders to improve their power to 'make a difference' to the qualities of their place” (Healey, 1998a: 1541). In addition, communicative/collaborative planning can add value “to the on-going flow of placemaking actions, through building shared knowledge and understanding, generating opportunities for creative synergy, and developing the capacity among stakeholders to work together locally to solve common problems” (Healey, 1998b: 18). This integration of knowledge and resources between stakeholders during the formulation of spatial strategies leads to new forms of network power and synergy (Booher and Innes, 2002), that eventually can increase social cohesion and enhance social capital in a particular place (Sorensen and Sagaris, 2010). Overall, the communicative/collaborative turn in strategic spatial planning has relevance to the study of place management, as it contributes to the formation of communicative spaces (Habermas, 1996) that nurture an inclusive dialogic approach to shaping social space (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007), and encourage public participation, sharing of information, and production of social capital during place management practices.

### 2.3.2 Alternative approaches to strategic spatial planning

Despite communicative/collaborative planning's well-intended assertions, various researchers advocate that it falls to the same traps of idealism and utopianism as early planning did. The assumption of communicative rationality has been frequently criticised (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 1998b, 1998c, Hillier, 2000, 2003; McGuirk, 2001; Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998), as it assumes a compartmentalisation of power and other "communicative distortions" that is unrealistic in real practice. In most cases, traditional and collaborative planning approaches fail to recognise the uneven, contested and contingent nature of place, and end up suppressing the diverse, contradictory spatialities, socialities and subjectivities of local people and partnerships (Larner, 2005), in favour of sustaining the power relationships between elite forms of local governance or other key stakeholders (Geddes, 2006; Guarneros-Meza and Geddes, 2010). In the real world, there is always the possibility of the more powerful actors to not build trust and new power relations among participants (Bailey, 2010). As Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998: 1981) pinpoint, "even if actors (as stakeholders) sign up for an open, honest, and trustworthy discursive style of argumentation, an individual may feel inclined to act 'teleologically'". In addition, communicative/collaborating planning assumes that planners act only as facilitators in the face of competing or opposing interests, which constrains their power and undermines their professional status (Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2016; McGuirk, 2001; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). Another major issue stems from the potential manipulation of communicative/collaborative planning from powerful actors in order to obfuscate and undermine the entire project. This means that powerful actors will conveniently pursue a consensus strategy (in the form of consensus steering), in order to prevent the publics from asking uncomfortable political questions that can become important in planning politics (Pløger, 2004). As the most powerful actors can still retain certain control over the process, they can easily redraw and redefine the power and the 'rules of the game' to their advantage (Houghton and Allmendinger, 2008), install hegemonic assumptions in policy-making, such as neoliberal market logics (Purcell, 2009), and apply forms of metagovernance

(Jessop, 2003) that push decision-making back into back rooms, thus rendering the process undemocratic (Swyngedouw, 2000). In essence, as Brand and Gaffikin (2007) highlight, it is paradoxical to assume that collaborative planning practice can promote cohesion and inclusivity in a socially fragmented, competitive, and at most times uncollaborative, environment.

McGuirk (2001: 213) explains that what people encounter in consensus-building strategic spatial planning is the retention of the dominant relationships that “infiltrate the ‘soft infrastructure’ of bottom-up participatory practices, and then converge with ‘hard infrastructure’ geared towards top-down governance practices”. Inevitably, it is really difficult to sustain bottom-up communicative processes for reaching consensus (Flyvbjerg, 1998b), as ‘power is always present’ (Foucault, 1998: 11,18). In this sense, less illusionary approaches to planning, that build upon agonism and conflict rather than consensus, are needed (Amin, 2002a; Flyvbjerg, 1998a; Pløger, 2004). Such approaches share a mutual acknowledgement of people’s right to differ during democratic processes, and assert that a mobilisation of people’s/groups’ passions and emotions can lead to a model of ‘agonistic pluralism’ (Mouffe, 2000), which will have the ability to recognise contestations and understand the perspectives of different interests during interactions (Geddes, 2006). As Albrechts (2015: 517) argues, a more radical strategic spatial planning needs to embrace conflict and “create the practices, discourses, and institutions that would allow those conflicts to take an agonistic form”.

Thus, agonistic planning nurtures “the widest possible expression of a very differentiated plurality, and, at the same time, accepting the possibility of irreconcilable disagreement” (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007: 306). However, this ‘smart pluralism’ (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007) does not nullify the possibility of knowledge exchange between stakeholders, but rather brings it to the forefront of inter-stakeholder behaviours, in an attempt to maximise positive partnership outcomes (Le Feuvre et al., 2016). In this respect, planning approaches influenced by regime theory (see Irazábal, 2009) can also lead towards emancipatory knowledge. This can be achieved by bringing cooperating actors together, and making them self-conscious of their roles as unequal contributors in the reproduction of social practices (Irazábal,



2009; Stone, 1991, 1993). In the same vein, this work will build upon power as a productive and positive force in society (Gaventa, 2003; Stone, 1989). Transformative power uncovers the probability for development via place actors' capacity to freely use their resources for change if they can/want to do so (Sen, 2001). This notion aligns with concepts of participatory place branding and collaborative leadership that have emerged in place-based research and inform the practice of place management (Gibney et al., 2009; Kalandides, 2011a; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Purcell, 2009; Ruffin, 2010; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014).

### 2.3.3 Soft spaces in strategic spatial planning

Another important contribution in strategic spatial planning theory that is relevant to the study of place management stems from the emergence of soft spaces of governance (Allmendinger et al., 2016; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012; Haughton et al., 2013; Haughton and Allmendinger, 2008; Olesen, 2012). These stem from the need to promote new, informal multi-level types of governance (Albrechts, 2015) that are more attentive to relational views of space and place (Graham and Healey, 1999; Healey, 2006a, 2006b). As Olesen (2012: 911) explains, soft spaces can be understood as a mixture of spatial imaginations promoting new informal planning spaces outside the formal planning system, and new networked forms of governance that can bypass the rigidities of statutory planning practice. According to Allmendinger et al. (2016), the relative fixity of hard spaces in planning can be seen as detrimental for planning authorities that seek to create open and relational spaces and practices. Soft spaces uncover "the multiplicity of ways in which actors at all scales seek to address market, state, and governance failures" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009: 631), which encourage creative thinking and possibilities for future placemaking (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2008). However, soft spaces' emergence can be seen as a way to promote neoliberal policy agendas (Olesen, 2014) that further depoliticise the planning process. Whereas experimenting with soft spaces allows for a better understanding of how planning practices can affect placemaking at all scales, they also are:

*"...a particular form of neoliberal governmentality and displacement of political disagreement, involving a roiling entanglement of direct*

*interventions by selectively empowered quasi-state apparatuses and indirect techniques for self-management, which together have normalised and instituted the rationalities of neoliberal thinking and its postpolitical form into everyday planning and regeneration practices” (Haughton et al., 2013: 231).*

What this suggests is that soft spaces can destabilise existing practices and structures in strategic spatial planning (Olesen, 2012), in a similar way as communicative/collaborative planning approaches do. This stems from the need for spatial planning to be “simultaneously territorial and relational, regulatory and positive” (Allmendinger et al., 2016: 49). Therefore, the development of material planning practices (neighbourhood plans, town plans, town centre plans, regulations, etc.) can become a tricky process, as:

*“in any assessment of space as a material practice attention should be focused upon the struggle for space and how multiple factors such as national discourses and policy contexts (e.g. competitiveness, growth, sustainability, etc.), professional cultures (e.g. regulation and positive), identities and spatial imaginaries are interpreted, negotiated and contested within relatively enduring legal and institutional territorial contexts” (Allmendinger et al., 2016: 41).*

The struggle for space highlights the clash between soft spaces and hard spaces in their attempts to shape and reshape collective spatial identities and policy agendas, which subsequently influence formal planning arenas (Olesen, 2012; Walsh et al., 2012). And even though soft spaces are built upon collaborative and consensus-seeking stakeholder arrangements that allow a plurality of demands to be heard during planning processes, it can be argued that these demands rarely question and disrupt the formal, market-led planning processes in places (Haughton et al., 2013: 222).

Therefore, as Olesen (2012) purports, soft spaces can be more instrumental in fostering dialogue and cooperation that creates temporary spaces of consensus in spatial planning. These assumptions are applicable in place management, as it is operant in similar soft spaces with the purpose to develop place interventions, and is manifest in material planning practices that seek to promote community capacity

building, political reengagement, and social capital (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2008). In addition, the looser arrangements and networks that are prevalent in place management practices bode well with soft spaces' capacity to "organise the relationship between [all] actors in a more open and equitable manner and where actors can articulate their identities, traditions, and values" (Albrechts, 2015: 515). Thus, place management practices, as they are understood in this work, are outcomes of co-production - a collective endeavour, with people as a part of action not its object (Friedmann, 2005). Co-production can be seen as an alternative form of governance that strengthens citizens' local organisation base and negotiating position (Mitlin, 2008), and "as a learning process that permits a plurality of problems definitions, ambitions, and ways to achieve it for those inside and outside the system" (Albrechts, 2015: 516). In this sense, co-production becomes an important requisite for the co-construction of place interventions. As Oliveira (2015b: 40) argues in his work on place branding as an instrument of strategic spatial planning, a linkage between co-production and place management constituents is necessary, as it brings "a spatial consciousness to the branding [understood as part of the managing] process of places, and a focus on entrenched day-to-day social and economic issues". Therefore, an appreciation of co-production, and how soft spaces influence practices, can bring forward innovative and creative ways of managing places.

## 2.4 Placemaking

As highlighted in previous sections in this chapter, top-down, prescriptive approaches that frame place management practice, while still predominant, have been boldly challenged in favour of incorporating bottom-up, inclusive, and collaborative approaches that involve local people and communities. Such approaches were originally introduced as a response towards the overwhelming emphasis on order in planning the built environment, which led to the increasing alienation and disenfranchisement of local people from their own surroundings (Loukaitou-Sideris and Mukhija, 2016). The main argument of urbanists in the 60s and 70s (see e.g. Jacobs, 1961; Klapp, 1969; Sennett, 1970; Whyte, 1980) was that the standardisation of the built form and purification of public spaces not only was depleting the

meanings that people attach to places, but was also giving a false perception of 'pretended order' (Jacobs, 1961) that was weakening one's personal identification with locale (Buttimer, 1980; Cuba and Hummon, 1993; Relph, 1976). Unsurprisingly, early placemaking research focused mainly on the physical development of neighbourhoods and on how cities function from a social context, by examining "a human scale of development that would improve the quality of space and place" (Richards, 2017: 9). From this perspective, placemaking is considered an important part of the recapture of public spaces and the construction and preservation of the built environment.

Placemaking practices can also be seen as products/acts of resistance and as subversive activities against the dominant structural forces of homogenisation and development (Kipfer et al., 2013; Lefebvre, 1991; Marston, 2000; Mould, 2014; Oakes, 1997; Rose, 1994). They can be evocative of place marking/street beautification such as graffiti art (see e.g. Banksy, 2006), which can demonstrate people's antithesis towards alienation and their striving for a common place (Visconti et al., 2010). In other cases, the local community can take initiative and re-appropriate places by converting them from eyesores to places of hedonic and aesthetic value for the community; examples of such placemaking include adoption of train stations (Alexander and Hamilton, 2015; Thompson et al., 2012), creation of community gardens (Ghose and Pettygrove, 2014b), renovation of buildings (Kiisel, 2013), cultural and artistic interventions such as street art in public spaces (Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Rota and Salone, 2014), and so on. They can also be socio-environmental and socio-cognitive, such as transition town movements, in which the members of the community challenge existing ways of living, change their place by using radical methods of production and consumption (guerilla gardening, local food produce, permaculture, etc.) (Hopkins, 2008; Longhurst, 2015; Neal, 2013), and facilitate participation by all people in placemaking (Collier et al., 2013). Other examples include – but are not limited to – the use of corporate buildings as temporal urban spaces for practising parkour (Daskalaki et al., 2008), or the creation of heterotopian spaces that foster critique and experimentation and signify the 'otherness' and 'distinctiveness' of these and the people who appropriate them, in

the forms of culture, arts, music, discourses, public discussions, ways of thinking, etc. (Chatzidakis et al., 2012; Gadwa Nicodemus, 2013; Podoshen et al., 2014).

As a process, placemaking is not only happening by order or design, but rather from unplanned, informal and spontaneous activities (Loukaitou-Sideris and Mukhija, 2016) that are enhancing the identities of people and consequently, the identity of a place (Alexander et al., 1977; Fleming and Von Tschärner, 1987). In addition, practices of placemaking can also refer to the everyday, mundane activities, and the repetitive actions that are produced through heterogeneous spatialities and temporalities, which routinise our life-worlds and generate reliable rhythms and habitualised repetitions (Binnie et al., 2007). This highlights how places are not only made by one-off physical manipulations or creative events, but also “through repeated everyday actions and interventions that work on both the [community] and the individual” (Benson and Jackson, 2013: 794). Put simply, placemaking is both an all-encompassing practice and way of living that “generally refers to the processes by which a space is made useful and meaningful” (Paulsen, 2010: 600). These processes, when examined from an urban design perspective, involve both planners and residents, with the latter participating directly in the production of meaningful place (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014). However, placemaking is not only confined in urban design processes, but is also understood as the universal and constant human activity that transforms the places that people find themselves into liveable places (Pink, 2008; Schneekloth and Shibley, 1995). This highlights the anthropocentric nature of placemaking, and also emphasises the important role of communities in placemaking practices, which in turn influence the management of a place. Therefore, for the purpose of this work, placemaking is seen as the process of transforming spaces into liveable places, by building on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential (Beza, 2016; Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014). In this respect, placemaking practices are focusing on both the place and the people-in-place as the basis through which place interventions occur (Schneekloth and Shibley, 1995: 5). Therefore, it is crucial to examine people’s multiple roles in places and spaces that stem from flexible citizenship, collective discursive practices, and from one’s right to participate in

placemaking (Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003), in order to have a clearer understanding of their role in placemaking and, by extension, in place management.

#### 2.4.1 People, community, and relational placemaking

As individuals, we are not bound within a single place or space; in fact, we use and appropriate multiple locations and locales (Agnew, 1987), which allow us to construct multiple “senses of places” over time from our social experiences, relationships and subjective and emotional attachments (Agnew, 2011; Massey, 2006; Relph, 1976; Sack, 1988; Tuan, 1975, 1977). We construct, produce, and consume spaces and places through different ‘ways of operating’ and ‘making do’ (De Certeau, 1984) and we are constantly acquiring knowledge in a transactional way that allows us to be transformed, and transform those places and spaces around us, through social, political and environmental interactions (Balassiano and Maldonado, 2015; Harvey and Williams, 1995; Lefebvre, 1991). We are continuously learning to see the world from multiple positions, which becomes a means for understanding how the world as a totality works (Harvey, 1996). We explore and understand the abundance and dynamism of the places and spaces in which we live, work, fulfil basic needs, socialise, spend leisure time, go on holiday, indulge in artistic expressions, etc. (Graham and Healey, 1999). Through these cultural and social practices, along with our embodied experiences and performances (Rakić and Chambers, 2012), we attach meanings to spaces and eventually create places that can facilitate our concurrent roles as consumers, producers, and experiencers (Al-Amoudi and Willmott, 2011; Creswell, 2004). These spaces and places are, in their vast majority, relational, contingent, fluid, contested, and uncertain (Hubbard and Kitchin, 2011).

These multiple roles are not only evident in individuals, but also in groups. A community, as a spatial human togetherness (Tönnies, 1963), is an amalgam of everyday interactions, social activities and sensibilities in spaces and places (Bell and Newby, 1971; Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974) as well as a collection of interdependent and mutual social relations and ongoing productions that exist inside places (Landolt, 2012; Massey, 2005). It is in such communities of place where members are connected through geographical locations (McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Nasar and Julian, 1995) and social ties that are rooted in place (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). In

these places, people can engage in community building through symbolic constructions (Cohen, 1985) and material activities and routine practices of community-making (Neal and Walters, 2008). Through group work, communities produce benefits that collectively outweigh the individual input or gain and therefore build transformative social capital (Holt, 2008), which has diverse outcomes depending on the context of the spaces and places in which these communities operate (Naughton, 2014).

However, places are not only made via a community's shared commonalities, but also through social negotiation, including conflict and difference (Pierce et al., 2011). Place contestation is an inextricable part of community and placemaking, an ongoing political process that highlights a specific collective concern for a place from a group with shared sets of values, beliefs, goals, concepts and ideologies (Martin, 2003). As Pierce et. al (2011: 60) purport, such place-frames convey "the iterative co-bundling processes through which social and political negotiations result in a strategic sharing of place". As seen in previous sections, such processes are agonistic, an opportunity for communities to learn about social differences rather than suppressing them (Williams, 2014). Thus, relational placemaking approaches build upon such agonistic place-framing processes, "in order to identify points of contention and commonality in the elements of the place/bundles experienced by actors on opposing sides of a conflict" (Pierce et al., 2011: 60). From the above, it is evident that relational placemaking overlaps with strategic spatial planning and place marketing/branding approaches that nurture dialogue between conflicting stakeholders. The difference here though is that relational placemaking brings the notions of space and place<sup>2</sup> to the forefront. As Pierce et al. argue, relational placemaking is:

*"...an analytical approach that helps us do more explicitly what we are already doing implicitly: to consider the interconnections and co-constituencies among place, networks and politics by identifying specific conflicts and the places they produce, the dimensions of place-framing evident, and the multiply-positioned actors and places/bundles inherent in and underlying the conflicts. In doing so, we can more effectively unpack the multi-scalar, multifaceted place-frames enacted in contestations over competing place/bundles through research that focuses on the relationalities between diverse people, institutions, materials*

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<sup>2</sup> The notions of "space", "place", and "people" will be analysed in greater detail in the next chapter

*and processes that are inscribed in, and engaged through, socio-spatial conflicts” (Pierce et al., 2011: 67).*

From the above, it is evident that relational placemaking opens a dialogic space for the enactment of place contestations, by effectively positioning ‘grouped bundles’ in the social and political contexts (Ahlqvist, 2013). Furthermore, these bundles not only highlight the actual place change, but also reinforce the metagoverning role of leadership in placemaking. Thus, a relational placemaking approach stresses the need to move towards a relational politics of place (Amin, 2004; Massey, 2005, 2007) and scale (Swyngedouw, 1997), as suggested by the unpacking of multi-scalar, multifaceted place frames that stem from a multitude of social relations, connections and positionalities. This understanding takes into account the notion of places as “sites of heterogeneity within close spatial proximity, and as sites of multiple geographies of affiliation, linkage and flow [politics of connectivity]” (Amin, 2004: 38), and denies attempts to romanticise places as communities that effortlessly “lend themselves to territorially defined or spatially constrained political arrangements and choices” (Amin, 2004: 42). This resonates with Massey’s (2007) argument for building a politics of place that goes beyond place and against crude localism, and highlights the political dynamics of placemaking as a process that also emerges from social practices that depend on other places, people, and environments (Mason and Whitehead, 2012), and are expressed “in bodily, community, urban, regional, national, supranational and global configurations” (Swyngedouw, 1997: 144). So whereas placemaking approaches are inherently local, they also give “concrete meaning to the phrase globalisation from below” (Smith and Eade, 2009: 3), as they are framed by everyday practices that are:

*“...constituted through attachments and influences that are distanced, as revealed by the workings of diaspora communities, corporate networks, consumption patterns, travel networks, microworlds of communication and the many public spheres that stretch across space. These translocal aspects of the habitual cannot be written out of a politics of propinquity, yet they tend to be undervalued in accounts of the everyday taken as the geographically proximate” (Amin, 2004: 39).*



In this sense, placemaking is better understood “as constituted through complex relational and topological spatialities in the contemporary era of globalisation” (Jones, 2008: 78). A relational approach to placemaking also builds upon social, everyday practices that promote banal forms of cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2004; Ley, 2004), a key characteristic of post-national citizenship (Sassen, 2002a) that is both evident in large cities and small towns (Mayer and Knox, 2010). Such forms of placemaking promote a cosmopolitan regionalism that “draws upon an open sense of place, a politics of local and translocal engagement” (Amin et al., 2003: 37). However, as Castree (2004) argues, placemakers also need to strategically utilise the translocal for purely local needs (what he defines as ‘open’ localism). Placemaking, thus, as a practice, needs to be open to translocal practices that frame places in some respects, but also needs to use these for exclusive purposes in other instances (Castree, 2004). Therefore, placemaking should be subject to creative participatory processes that incorporate the social dynamics of the place, and also take into account both local and translocal practices, positionalities and relations (Collinge et al., 2010; Pierce et al., 2011). A similar understanding of place management will be presented in this thesis, which is fabricated through peoples’ complex topological and relational practices that construct both global and local understandings of places (Ahlqvist, 2013).

## 2.5 Encapsulating the theoretical context of place management

Overall, the literature suggests that a conceptualisation of place management as a synthesis of adjacent fields is as complicated as places are, accurately portraying the field’s “paradoxes and contradictions that revolve around localism/globalism, hierarchies/networks, heterogeneity/homogeneity, competition/cooperation, equity/efficiency and the like” (Ashworth, 2008, as quoted in Parker, 2008: 10). Nevertheless, several assumptions can be drawn from the theories analysed above, and are described in the following subsections.

### 2.5.1 The 8Cs

From the main approaches analysed above, we can identify a number of recurring themes relevant to place management, which can be seen in Figure 2.6. In typical

marketing fashion, I will name these as the 8Cs of place management, which include communication, competition, co-production, complexity, collaboration, contestation, coordination and co-creation. **Communication** can be seen as an inclusive approach that is not reduced to simple promotions and the introduction of new logos and slogans (Braun et al., 2014), but also entails numerous forms of dialogue. Such forms include communicative practices in contemporary media (e.g. social media) (Andéhn et al., 2014; Sevin, 2013), or collaborative decision-making processes rooted in the principles of communicative action, which aim to empower communities by building consensus and by nurturing mutual understanding and symmetrical relationships during the place management process (Habermas, 1984; Healey, 1996; Innes, 1995).

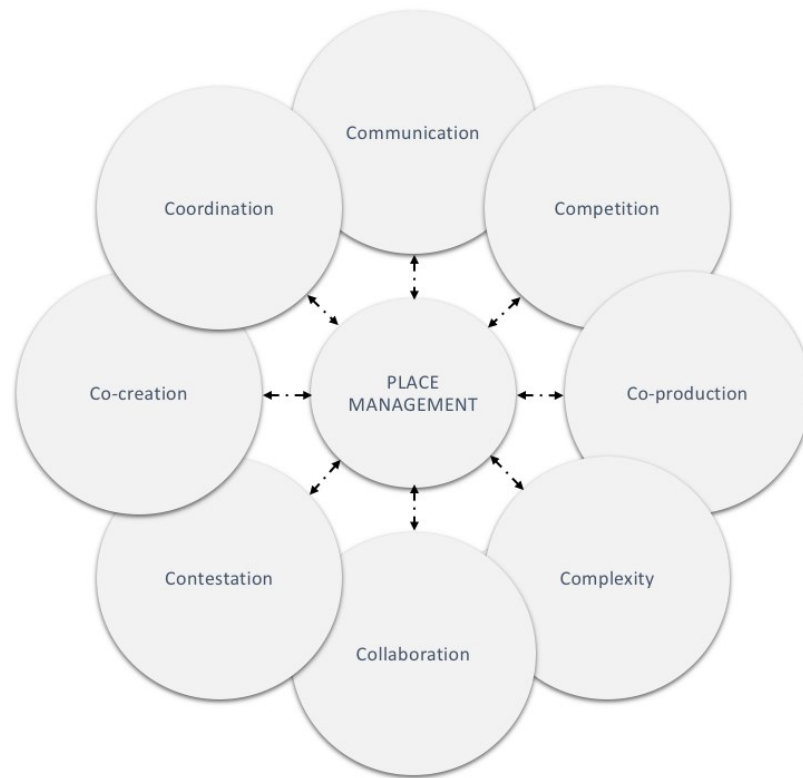


Figure 2.6 The 8Cs of place management, Source: Author

**Competition** outlines the strategic element of place management theory and practice, here understood as place's conscious attempts to accumulate capital in the form of companies, tourists, residents, and most of all talents (Zenker et al., 2013). It is influencing the management of places, driving decisions regarding future

strategies, planning and design of the urban space, marketing, vitality and viability, etc. Subsequently, competition leads to place reconstruction, which alters visual and symbolic meanings in the interests of market-led development (Raco, 2003). On the other hand, the goal of **co-production** in place management is to challenge established normative processes that stem from best practice, market competition, or by rules of how place management should be (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; McCann, 2004a; Williams, 2014), with citizens as part of the action. Co-production approaches, such as Knowledge Partnering (Eversole and McCall, 2014), provide a structured way to work with diverse stakeholder groups with the goal to organise knowledge from the ground-up, which will in turn produce new knowledge to guide desired futures. This way, co-production enables heterogeneous local partnerships to modify “the map of what can be thought, what can be named and perceived, and therefore also of what is possible” (Swyngedouw, 2007: 72) during the place management process.

**Complexity** is understood as a departure from homogeneous approaches to place management, by embracing the heterogeneity of places, their inherent conflicts, and socio-spatial variances. Instead, relational approaches show the importance of engaging with the everyday realities of people, groups and organisations with vested interests in a place’s success, as these are rich with contingency, multiplicity, and emergence (Clegg and Kornberger, 2010; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Stubbs and Warnaby, 2015). It also shows a departure from traditional mechanisms for information processing, market, and hierarchy that lack the capacity to deal the complexity of the place environment, in favour of place management processes that develop a collective capacity for action by assimilating the possibilities that internal, organised complexities create (Omholt, 2013). Consequently, **collaboration** between a variety of stakeholders and partnership working can offer solutions to so-called wicked and complex issues (Geddes, 2006). Collaboration is seen as an essential prerequisite for any place management approach that attempts to nurture trust-building, knowledge exchange and collaborative work across boundaries between local leaders from public, private and voluntary spheres (Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Guarneros-Meza and Geddes, 2010). In addition, the possibility of constructing a

collective identity and capacity for joint action for place management reflects the turn towards new approaches to governance that necessitate such collaborative efforts (Mayer and Knox, 2010; Omholt, 2013).

However, strategising with multiple stakeholders can create tensions, which, combined with the complex nature of the place product, create fissures through which different forms of **contestation** may arise (Warnaby et al., 2010). Such contestations can be jurisdictional (place product comes under ownership or management of different organisations), functional (different uses of the place do not necessarily complement each other), strategic (competing visions or alternative views on how a place product is managed/operated), or representational (stemming from issues revolving around symbols and representations of places) (Giovanardi et al., 2013; Warnaby et al., 2010). Furthermore, local conditions can facilitate different forms of contestation (Blanco et al., 2014), which makes the local a key site of political contestation, as it embeds an ambiguous range of meanings, political agendas and ideologies that are rooted in places (Tait and Inch, 2016). The complexities and tensions that occur due to the heterogeneity of people and partnerships (Blanco et al., 2014) necessitate **coordination** of all place stakeholders and creation of strategic networks that will nurture conditions for place development (van den Berg and Braun, 1999). The multiplicity of people's actions, in the forms of dialogues, debates, discussions and contestations, implies a process of interaction and coordination that manifests across different scales (Giovanardi, 2015), and enables value exchange and resource integration (Löbler, 2011). From a governance perspective, place management has become part of a political discourse that entails partnership working, consensus-building, and joined-up practices, thus demonstrating the ability to perform a coordinative function and improve public consultation and policy coordination (Haughton et al., 2013). In this sense, place management embraces pluralism and simultaneously facilitates a "discourse oriented toward 'deep' consensus, where conflict is welcome but might conceivably be resolved equitably through dialogue" (Davies, 2009: 94).

Finally, **co-creation** in place management facilitates "the exploration of communal and collective practices of groups of people" (Aitken and Campelo, 2011: 918) that

are “intertwined with the social roles of multiple stakeholders” (Archpru Akaka and Chandler, 2011: 244). Place stakeholders subsequently become co-creators of value either as sole actors or as part of a local partnership, as their roles are embedded within value networks which act as resources for value co-creation (Granovetter, 1985). In addition, co-creation and co-production create a continuum (Chathoth et al., 2013) in which people can be simultaneously co-producers and co-creators of place products, meanings, service offerings, value networks, etc. (Cova et al., 2011; Gummesson and Mele, 2010; Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). However, co-creation as a theme in place management is not just assuming harmonious discourses and mutual benefitting from value-in-use for all actors. Inferences of mutual and equal benefits, equivalency in participation and decision-making, and diffusion of uniform value-in-use (economic, social, political, etc.) for all place actors are neglecting messy and dissonant social realities and place contestations that are surrounding value co-creation (Laamanen and Skålén, 2015). Thus, co-creation in place management is always “intertwined, context-determined, culturally varied and connected to how we see our self and how we perceive our environment”, but nevertheless, it can foster “co-creative capacity in place-based development” (Horlings, 2015: 257).

#### 2.5.2 Moving from nomothetic to relational and pluralist: place management as a strategy formation process

What is also evident from the literature is the change in the theoretical trajectories of place management’s adjacent fields. As argued above, prescriptive and nomothetic approaches to place management fail to address the interdependencies and traverses between different strategic place interventions. In reality, place management processes do not only follow a clear-cut, logically structured sequential pattern (Braun, 2008), but are also emergent, fluid, open to interpretation, and reflect the ‘messy’ realities of people and places (e.g. Healey, 2006; Irazábal, 2009; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Osborne and Ballantyne, 2012). As Omholt (2013) claims, places have been long viewed as organisations with specific hierarchical structures and strategies. However, recent policies at the local level highlight the need to develop a collective capacity for planning, strategising, and regulating places. In this sense, place management coordinates strategic place interventions that take into

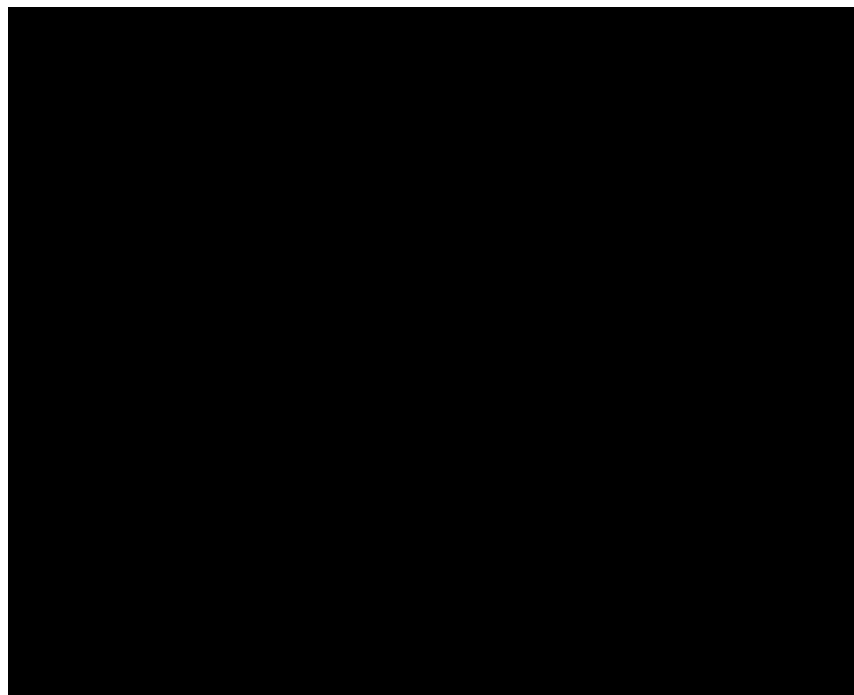
account the external and internal complexities of “the relatively autonomous systems, sectors and organisations that need to be coordinated if places are to maintain and develop their competitiveness” (Omholt, 2013: 29).

Places, as social systems, are often under-organised and loosely and informally coordinated, due to being dominated from conflicting operating subsystems that create further environmental complexities (Omholt, 2013). These tensions in the system can be alleviated by community-focused participatory forms that are built upon people’s dialogical understanding, feelings, emotions and knowledge in place interventions, and can lead to value-related place management processes that can contribute to effective place development (Eshuis et al., 2014; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Ogbazi, 2013; Omholt, 2013; Parés et al., 2014; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014). Thus, place management calls for socially embedded actors to acquire meaning and value from communicative interactions in a complex psychological and cultural landscape (Hackley, 2001), and from non-cognitive and embodied elements (formed from past experiences and structures), which are shaping current practices, structures and our propensities to think, act, and feel in predefined ways (Bourdieu, 1984). These can be translated into place interventions that can construct new norms regarding a place (Sevin, 2011), based on traits such as mutuality, interconnectedness, negotiation (Jackson, 1996), from historically-culturally shaped practices and knowledges (Reckwitz, 2002), everyday and banal activities (Binnie et al., 2007), and so on.

The difficulties of addressing the fuzzy problems of places require arenas (in the form of soft spaces) in which a plurality of interests, opinions, conflicts, different values, and power relationships are addressed, and consequently challenge existing knowledge, conventional wisdom, and practices (Albrechts, 2015; Brand and Gaffikin, 2007; Forester, 2010; Hillier, 2007). Thus, as argued above, place management can be viewed as a coordinative strategic process, which shapes and is shaped from socio-spatial, socio-economic, symbolic and political negotiations that eventually result in a strategic sharing of place (Pierce et al., 2011). As such, place management is based on how people actually ‘do strategy’ (strategy-as-practice) (Whittington, 2006). Examining place management from a strategy-as-practice perspective does not

negate the importance of formal place strategy work (local government, planning, and consultancy reports, town centre health checks, place marketing/branding strategies, etc.), but rather re-envisages how strategies can be renewed or emerge from the everyday practical coping actions (Chia and Holt, 2006) and the non-analytical skills of the people and communities who carry these strategies out (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington et al., 2006).

This understanding of place management, as portrayed in Figure 2.7, takes into account that intentional and deliberate strategy-formation processes “may be significant initiators of new discourses that flow into and transform practices” (Healey, 2006b: 184), but also acknowledges that strategies, can be emergent social products that cannot be predicted in advance (Mintzberg, 1994). Emergent place management processes can travel across significant institutional sites of urban governance, which leads to the creation of new communities of practice (e.g. local partnerships and organisations) that can accumulate enough ‘network power’ to be able to produce new discourses and practices that may effectively shape the future of a place (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Innes and Booher, 2000). In this sense, it can be argued that place management processes:



*Figure 2.7 Formation of place management strategies, adopted from Mintzberg (1994)*

*“...involve mobilising actors in many different social networks, drawing on their knowledge and resources. Such processes create knowledge and re-order values which, in turn, feed back into networks and may create new networks and 'communities of practice' around a new strategic discourse. In this way, processes are both dynamic, emergent social constructions and also contribute to stabilising and ordering complex realities. A strategy that accumulates substantial persuasive power becomes a part of the structuring dynamics within which subsequent actions are embedded” (Healey, 2006b: 186).*

What is clear from this standpoint is that there is a transformative and emancipatory potential that lies in the multiplicity of tensions and stresses that occur during place management processes. As argued above, these tensions can create “all kinds of fissures and cracks which can be opened up to create and enlarge moments of opportunity for new ideas” (Healey, 2006a: 540). However, it is evident that we cannot entirely exclude the predominant logics, the normative processes, and the common worldviews that lay the foundations for strategy formation in pluralistic contexts (see Denis et al., 2007). Ideally, the people engaged in place management processes need to find the right balance between established and emerging discourses and practices. In other words, they strive to stabilise the cognitive and normative expectations of all place stakeholders, by developing adequate solutions to sequencing problems, and securing fair compromises between contested logics (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Denis et al., 2007; Jessop, 2001). Place contestation is inevitable, since each of us has our own view of what a place should be (Peel, 2003). Similarly, local partnerships and organisations operate based on their vested interests and opportunity costs (Herepath, 2014) that are associated with different place management strategies. From this perspective, place management practices are also mediating the contradictions that occur during people’s involvement in place interventions. In sum, managing places in pluralistic contexts is characterised by a relational complexity that requires us to acknowledge the frailties, place contestations, and conflicts that are implicit in all forms of participatory interactions, such as place-making interventions and value co-creation processes. Such complexity requires a holistic understanding of people and places, that can be attained through place management processes.



## 2.6 A heuristic framework for advancing place management theory

As stressed above, the inherent difficulties of theorising place management have hindered its development as an academic field. Thus, the main focus of the framework in Figure 2.8 is towards theory advancement, by allowing a fuller appreciation of the complexity and pluralism that are inherent in places and are evident in multi-stakeholder partnership approaches, such as place management. This may seem paradoxical, since the framework below is also constituted by a multitude of knowledge sources, but it is essential in order to uncover the practices that comprise the holistic place management process. In this work, place management is understood as a core activity that occurs in the place, and incorporates the adjacent processes of place branding/marketing, placemaking, and strategic spatial planning (described above). These ongoing, intertwined processes are seen as symbiotic elements of strategic significance (Coca-Stefaniak and Bagaeeen, 2013) for place development.

The upper part of the framework consists of the 8Cs of place management. As discussed above, the 8Cs are the main leitmotifs that direct place management theory and practice. From this standpoint, the 8Cs embrace the pluralism, complexities and conflicts that occur in places (competition, complexity, contestation), communicate all relevant information about the place that leads to more informed, inclusive and discursive communities (communication, collaboration), and coordinate the possibilities that occur through people's co-constructive place interventions and value-adding exchanges (coordination, co-creation, co-production). The 8Cs are also influencing the ways people are strategising in places. The strategy formation process here is concerned with how people do strategy in pluralistic contexts, and how their interactions and activities are producing emerging strategy outcomes that are consequential for the places in question (Cloutier and Whittington, 2013). Such emergent strategies, combined with intended and deliberate strategies, form reimagined place management strategies that are characterised by a relational complexity that takes into account both collective action and the fluidities and fixities of formal place governance.



*Figure 2.8 Place management as a mediating process, Source: author*

From the above, it is acknowledged that the process of place management becomes a mediating/coordinative one. This means that place management processes seek to alleviate tensions and conflicts that occur from interactions between multiple stakeholders, while at the same coordinate resources and activity for the same stakeholders in order to assist towards place development in a holistic way (Parker, 2009). Essentially, place management is a process that mediates three interrelated place constructs: the business of place, the politics of place, and the production of place.

***The business of place*** refers to the application of business principles to place (Kalandides, 2013), including the transition to more business-like approaches of governance and the use of management and marketing tools for improving the competitive image of a place. The adaptation of business paradigms to place management suggests a strategically focused attempt from local partnerships and

organisations towards tackling market competition via the development of a USP for the place (Pasquinelli, 2010; Warnaby, 2013). The rise of purportedly business-led organisations in place management (Pike et al., 2015), such as BIDs and local economic partnerships (LEPs), signifies how market and competition-oriented approaches are expanded and transferred into the urban functions of a place (Peyroux et al., 2012). These organisations indicate the shift from managerial to entrepreneurial forms of governance, and aim to achieve administrative and economic efficiency gains that will help them reach their strategic goals and reinforce their strategic regeneration roles (Hemphill et al., 2014). In addition, the business of place denotes the convergence of marketing and branding activities (exemplified in place marketing and place branding) that can lead to the commodification of the place product (Barke and Harrop, 1994), and the creation of a strong place vision that enhances place image (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). It is important to differentiate the notion of vision here as not an idealised one (Miles, 2010) that reflects the utopian thoughts of a particular elite, but as a shared vision that is constantly revisited and redefined by multiple stakeholders (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). Thus, the business of place must include not only the various TCM schemes, BIDs, town teams, and LEPs, but also the wider local community, as evidenced in participatory place marketing/branding processes (Kalandides, 2011a; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014). Maintaining a shared vision for marketing, managing and branding a place entails strategic local 'politicking' - the [co-]creation of an appealing narrative about the place through dialogue and cooperation, which will drive forward further interactions among stakeholders (Neal, 2013; Ooi, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2014).

***The politics of place*** indicates the roles of people and communities in these interactions and negotiations, as well as their humanistic understanding and sense of responsibility for the place, which will eventually facilitate a civilised politics (Kemmis 1990, 1995; Seamon, 2014). This sensitivity can lead to real, everyday possibilities of political action (Shelley et al., 2003), but is not only limited to areal boundaries and the local scale (Cox, 1998; Paasi, 2004). According to Escobar (2001: 166), the meaning of the politics of place lies at the "intersection of the scaling effects of networks and the strategies of the emergent identities" that are evident in the socio-

political construction of the local, the national or the global (Geddes, 2014). As seen above, a politics of place that goes beyond place (Massey, 2007) takes into account the multiscalar effects of globalisation and capitalism, but “does not deprive of meaning those lines of connections, relations and practices, that construct place” (Massey, 2004: 9). In this respect, the politics of place is not simply a politics of ‘community’ but a translocal one, where global connections can be envisaged from the familiar and routine of the local, and power is embedded within face-to-face interactions (Bradley, 2014). For place management, the politics of place connote the prospect of strategic manipulation, resignification, and promotion of particular visions and types of development for the place by certain regimes or powerful actors, that carry significant material and (discursive) political implications for the socio-economic character and composition of place (Leitner et al., 2008; Raco, 2003). Thus, the politics of place entails the widest possible stakeholder engagement, in order for them to become collectively creative regarding the political use of place (Courpasson et al., 2017), and the continuous need for practices of negotiation, resistance, judgement, learning and improvisation (Massey, 2005) during the place management process.

Finally, ***the production of place*** refers to all practices that enable the emergence and reproduction of place (Duff, 2011), from the most concrete (e.g. place-making) to cultural, social and symbolic ones (e.g. knowledge creation, place naming) (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014; Medway and Warnaby, 2014). The production of place, like the latter two constructs, is also complex and incongruous, consisting of often contradictory local and non-local processes that influence the spatial dynamics of capital and governance (Escobar, 2001). It is dependent on potentially antagonistic social relations that are embedded in places (Arefi, 1999), and occur within the context of greater globalisation of the spatial production of place. This displays that many stakeholder groups implicated in placemaking practices will have a diminished role towards place development (Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003). The interrelations with the politics of place are evident, as practices not only enable the production of place, but also enable narratives and stories of what the future should be (Willett, 2016), which can be manipulated at the expense of local identity. However, of equal

importance are everyday practices that “while appearing relatively passive, are in fact a way of discursively [as well as socially and materially] producing place through action” (Benson and Jackson, 2013: 806). In addition, affective dimensions that capture the emotional feel of place, identity, and belonging, supplement the tactics and strategies through which people produce places (Duff, 2010). From the above, it is evident that the complex topological and relational practices of place management are not only influenced by global flows, but are also grounded in the local, capturing the place specificity of the production of place (Escobar, 2001). Thus, producing place takes into account the here and now of practice and everyday life, and the global flows that convey material, symbolic, and political meanings, which eventually allow people to produce their locality in numerous ways (Appadurai, 1990; Nicolini, 2012; Virilio, 1997).

To sum up, the present framework highlights the interrelations between adjacent processes and practices of place management, by examining how places are “continually enacted in relations of people, objects and doings, in multiple situated realities” (Korica et al., 2017: 165). As argued above, this suggests a re-orientation towards relational and pluralistic approaches of managerial and strategic work that contrast the prescriptive, purposely coherent, ‘textbook’ approaches (Ardley and Quinn, 2014; Jarzabkowski and Fenton, 2006) that dominate place management theory and practice. This ‘turn’, as the framework suggests, advocates the ‘social spatialisation’ of place management via examining the complexities of ‘place’ and the multiple roles of ‘people’ during its process.

Similarly, place management practices are seen as not simply ‘doing’, but also as strategically selective, meaning-making, place identity-forming activities that imply a number of mediational tools, and a specific set of discursive practices that matter for the imaginaries, material practices and future trajectories of places (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Leitner et al., 2008; Nicolini, 2012). Such practices are both emergent and deliberate (Vaara and Whittington, 2012), and their contradictory and negotiable nature can enable intentional change in places (Giddens, 1984). This highlights the contradictory, contingent, recursive and spatio-temporal nature of the place management process (Jones and Jessop, 2010), and rebuts teleological views

of prescriptive place management approaches as a cure-all for economic development, efficiency, and organisation. Place management, as the framework suggests, is an open, complex project that pursues to mediate the relationalities between diverse people, institutions, materials and processes (Pierce et al., 2011), and consequently shape future trajectories through mutually, transformative, co-constitutive practices. Thus, the aim of this framework is to provide convincing accounts on how the activity and the practice of place management becomes possible, as expressed in people's roles in places, and in their daily doings as place management practitioners (Schatzki, 2012).

## 2.7 Conclusion

The literature review presented in this chapter establishes place management as a synthesis of adjacent fields (place marketing, place branding, strategic spatial planning, and placemaking), and a process of strategic significance that aims to solve complex local problems and nurtures collaboration between place stakeholders (Coca-Stefaniak and Bagaeen, 2013; Mant, 2008; Reddel, 2002). From a theoretical standpoint, the literature suggests that place management theory has moved from a prescriptive, managerial paradigm towards participatory, pluralist and relational approaches. In place marketing and place branding, the participatory turn, spearheaded by the application of S-D logic and relational understandings of place, situated place stakeholders as co-creators and co-producers of the place product (in place marketing) and the place brand (in place branding) respectively, and brings forward their role in value-adding exchanges (Aitken and Campelo, 2011; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Warnaby and Medway, 2013). The theoretical advancements in strategic spatial planning highlight the agonistic character of place stakeholder relations, the potential of 'smart pluralism' (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007) that aims towards emancipation, and the rise of soft spaces that aim to foster dialogue and contestation in an open and equitable manner via co-production (Albrechts, 2015; Olesen, 2012), in order to influence policy and practice. In addition, the unplanned, informal and spontaneous nature of placemaking plays an important part in the synthesis of place management, as people and communities enact places via

mundane, embodied, every day practices, and engage in co-bundling processes through which social and political negotiations result in a strategic sharing of place (Pierce et al., 2011).

From the literature, a number of recurring themes that are pertinent for place management theory were identified. The 8Cs of place management (communication, competition, co-production, complexity, collaboration, contestation, co-creation, coordination) highlight the common notions of pluralism and conflict in places, the inclusiveness in participation, and the joint co-construction of place interventions and value-adding exchanges. In addition, place management is characterised by a move towards relational and pluralistic strategy formation processes, which are espousing the relational dynamics of places and the multiplicity of place stakeholders. This leads to reimagined place management strategies that are amalgamations of formal strategic work and emergent strategies that stem from people's practical coping actions and everyday activities (Chia and Holt, 2006; Whittington et al., 2006). Thus, place management can be seen as a mediating process that is characterised by a relational complexity, and takes into account both collective action and the fluidities and fixities of formal place governance. In essence, place management is a process that mediates three interrelated place constructs (the business of place, the politics of place, the production of place). The heuristic framework, by examining the complexities of 'place' and the multiple roles of 'people', advocates the 'social spatialisation' of place management via the examination of emergent and deliberate practices that shape the strategic, economic, social and political use of place.

There is a need to further examine participatory and pluralist forms of place management in order to advance theory and unravel the inherent complexities of managing places to a certain extent, which is the underlying aim of this thesis. However, this cannot be done without considering significant contributions in geography that provide an understanding of 'place', 'space', and 'people'. The following chapter introduces these fundamental notions, by drawing on significant contributions from geographical fields.

## Chapter 3 ‘Place’, ‘space’, ‘people’: An overview of main contributions in geography and their importance for place management research

*“Geography...has meant different things to different people at different times and in different places.” (Livingstone, 1992: 7)*

The field of geography has unarguably contributed the most towards the development of key concepts that have advanced our understanding of the way the world works and on the ongoing complex relationships between people, places, and their environment (Hubbard et al., 2008). Within the broad geographic field, the rigorous analysis and continuous development of the concepts of ‘place’ and ‘space’ has not only led to disciplinary progress, but has also paved the way of the use of such concepts to fields outside geography. Similarly, theories of place, space, and its constituents are evident in place management, even though are mostly ‘playing second fiddle’ to business and management theories, and are frequently ignored by practitioners and policy makers who favour a static view of place and space in their strategies and plans (e.g. Boisen et al., 2011; Kalandides, 2011b; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Niedomysl and Jonasson, 2012; Warnaby and Medway, 2013). However, it is important to acknowledge the key concepts of place and space along with their fluidities, mobilities, and progressions, in order to have a good understanding of how these have shaped societal, structural, cultural, political and economic transformations throughout the years (Agnew, 2011), and to situate them into the place management literature.

This requires a departure from descriptive understandings of place as a node in space that was reflective of universal physical, social, and economic processes (Agnew, 2011), or place as “location, a unit within a hierarchy of units in space” (Tuan, 1975: 151) and a fixed spatial container (e.g. Casey, 1997; Pred, 1984; Withers, 2009). Similarly, a departure of understanding space as independent of any matter and as a



container of elements of earth's surface (Harvey, 1969), and as an obstacle (e.g. distance) that constrains our behaviour (Zipf, 1949) is needed. Whereas these aspects of place and space are still relevant to the conceptualisation of place management and its adjacent fields in a descriptive sense (emphasising place particularity), a broader understanding that highlights how place and space are manifested through human experience and emotions, social relations, power struggles, broader economic phenomena, everyday mundane practices, among other factors, is needed (Agnew, 1987; Cresswell, 2004). Thus, the aim of this chapter is to present a review of theories of place and space from different strands in geography (phenomenological, critical, relational and pluralistic), in order to uncover place management as a socio-spatial process that pays attention to the constant interactions and associations between people, places, and spaces.

### 3.1 Phenomenological accounts of 'place' and 'space': Humanistic geography

Contrary to dehumanised and alienated abstract concepts of positivist 'space' and 'place' that stem from their theorisation as bounded geographic entities (Portugali, 2006; Tapsell and Tunstall, 2008), humanistic geographers claim that place and space play a crucial role in human experience (Seamon and Sowers, 2008). Humanistic geographers are mainly influenced by phenomenology, which focuses on the subjective experience and perception of a person's lifeworld (Husserl, 1970), and uncovers the previously forgotten structures of being (such as time and space), in order to make a practical sense of the human condition of being-in-the-world (*Dasein*) (Heidegger, 1962) through lived experience, everydayness, tacit knowhow, bodily knowledge, mutual understanding and mundane activities (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Peet, 1998; Schutz, 1967). In this sense, a phenomenological approach of researching place and space emphasises on subjectivity while capturing peoples' shared lived experiences, in order to reach on a deeper, inter-subjective understanding of a phenomenon (Giorgi, 1997). As Cresswell (2004) pinpoints, the phenomenological approach conceptualises place from the viewpoint of human existence and thus is more concerned with defining how humans are necessarily and importantly 'in-place' (thrownness). In short, places are seen as "a series of locales in

which people find themselves, live, have experiences, interpret, understand, and find meaning” (Peet, 1998: 48).

In humanistic geography, there is a clear distinction between social place and geographic space; Tuan (1975: 164) argued that space is “open, empty, and lacks content”, and can only have value after people attribute socially constructed meaning in it. It is then transformed into a place as it acquires definition and meaning (Tuan, 1977). His notions of topophilia (love of place) and topophobia (hate of place) (Tuan, 1974) are based on these meanings and experiences, and further demonstrate how an abstract space can become a felt and experienced place (Cresswell, 2008) when “is related to the consciousness or ideology of he who lives in it” (Bailly, 1993: 247). For Relph, a place combines human and natural order, and is any valued spatial centre of a person or group’s lived experience (Relph, 1976). He identifies different types of spatial experience based on a heuristic device that is grounded in “a continuum that has direct experience at one extreme and abstract thought at the other” (Relph, 1976: 9). With this in mind, he differentiates people’s experiences in space, from bodily, instinctive, and immediate (for example pragmatic, perceptual, and existential space), to cerebral, ideal, and intangible (for example planning, cognitive, and spatial space).

Thus, Relph pinpoints the heterogeneity and multi-dimensionality of space, and conceptually engages space and place as dialectically structured in our human experience, since we understand spaces through the places we dwell, which in turn derive meaning from their spatial context (Seamon and Sowers, 2008: 44–45). In addition, Relph’s notions of insiderness and outsiderness give a clear understanding of how people develop a sense of belonging and identification or a sense of alienation and detachment with a place respectively (Seamon, 2014). He also introduced ‘placelessness’, a term used by researchers who criticise the phenomenon of casual eradication of authenticity in places in favour of “standardised landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place” (Relph, 1976: ii). Placelessness is evident in the standardisation of places via market processes, non-places, inauthenticity, globalisation, mass culture, loss of attachment to territory, homogenised urban design and planning, and so on (e.g. Auge, 1995; Carmona et al.,

2003; Crang, 1998; Depriest-Hricko and Prytherch, 2013), which leads us to live our lives increasingly without any sense of place (Agnew, 2011). In this sense, placelessness is perceived as part and parcel of the prevalence of globalisation and modernity (Relph, 1976; Escobar, 2001). However, it can be argued that the original position of placelessness is a bit out of touch with the reality of places today (Seamon and Sowers, 2008), as senses of local attachment, insideness and belonging still exist, but are constantly being transformed in order to elucidate place in relation to technological modernity, dwelling, and people's mobile existence (Malpas, 2008; Tomaney, 2016).

'Sense of place' is an elusive concept to define but can be understood as the local structure of feeling that subjectively and emotionally attaches people to places, and is constructed from particular interactions and mutual articulations of social experiences (e.g. Agnew, 1987; Massey, 2006; Relph, 1976; Sack, 1988). A sense of place can be acquired from outside knowledge, like seeing objects of high imageability that can be considered as aesthetically beautiful, of public symbolic significance, or as tangible expressions of communal life, aspirations, needs, and values (Buttimer, 1980; Pred, 1983; Tuan, 1977). Time and experience are also of great importance to the development of a sense of place (Tuan, 1975). In this way, sense of place is formed through a variety of automatised everyday activities in-place (time-space routines), which give the feeling of insideness and belonging (Seamon, 1980). 'Sense of place' shares commonalities with other elements of human experience in places (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001), such as:

- *Place identity*, the formation of one's or a group's identity based on their interaction with places and their incorporation into a subset of self or group identity, through patterns of ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, memories, values, goals, and behavioural tendencies (Hernández et al., 2007; Lewicka, 2008; Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky et al., 1983; Stedman, 2002)
- *Place attachment*, the affective relationship between people and a place that goes beyond cognition, preference, or judgement, the bonds that people develop with places (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Lewicka, 2011; Low and Altman, 1992; Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Williams et al., 1992)

- *Place dependence*, which refers to people's functional or goal-directed connections and their instrumental bonds with a place (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Schreyer et al., 1981; Stokols and Shumaker, 1981)
- *Genius loci*, which refers to a location's distinctive atmosphere, the spirit of place or a locality (Norberg-Schulz, 1980)

Based on the above, it is clear that that sense of place is a multidimensional construct (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001) that explains people's affective relationships with a place (Hauge, 2007; Lewicka, 2010), and "takes into account the genius loci, the atmosphere of place, as a shared sense of the spirit of the place and relates it to its representation and expression as habitus" (Campelo et al., 2014: 155). Shared affective representations of place include place attachment, place architecture, the bonding between people and places, and the social context in relation to community ties and ancestral connections (Hay, 1998; Jorgensen and Stedman, 2006; Speller, 2000). The amalgamation of these concepts illustrates the centrality of 'sense of place' to the human condition, and how the term encompasses the feelings of belonging, togetherness, and attachment that a place evokes (McKercher et al., 2015).

### 3.1.1 Situating humanistic geography to 'people' and 'communities'

Humanistic geography offers an extensive analysis of representations of place and space from the viewpoint of human subjectivities and everyday human experiences, and encapsulates "people's first-hand involvements with the geographical world in which they live" (Seamon, 1979: 15–16). It delineates people's bonds with places and spaces in a delicate manner that cherishes the rituals, myths, histories and symbols of places (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977), and connects materiality to meaning in a continuing process that combines social, cultural, and natural dimensions of place (Harvey, 1996; Sack, 1988). In addition, a focus on human experience and meaning can potentially explain how material space turns into meaningful place, and how people and their environments are dialectically engaged with each other (Ley and Samuels, 1978).

Therefore, by focusing on the subjective experience and perception of a person's lifeworld (Husserl, 1970), phenomenological place is linked with a dynamic, interactive, cyclical and never-ending process of place identity formation, which is influenced by the different experiences of people who are associated with the place (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Relph, 1976). Under this lens, place management can be understood as socio-cultural processes that are deeply rooted in the distinctive characteristics and identities of places. The discourse and meaning that local people attach to the social aspects that define the place (quality of life, sense of place, place identity, place attachment, place dependence, and so on) are of central importance to the development of appropriate place interventions (e.g. Hospers, 2010; Jensen, 2007; Lewicka, 2008). When people are participating in place commons, local governance, placemaking, policy making, etc., a first point of departure for successful cooperation is the participants' sense of place, which:

*"...can be a valuable source of information as the knowledge of inhabitants about their place, their sense of belonging and the way they attach meaning to their place and construct identities can inform multi-stakeholder processes of place-shaping and interactive policy-making" (Horlings, 2015: 267).*

Similarly, participation in local partnerships presupposes a 'locality of being' (human-being-in-place) (Casey, 1997; Malpas, 1999, 2009) that conceptualises the phenomenon of people-experiencing-places as complex and dynamic, and incorporating universal properties of places that give rise to aesthetic appreciation, place-related emotions, and can shift or stabilise a place's experiences and meanings (Lewicka, 2011; Seamon, 2013). Thus, another important characteristic of humanistic geography is the intimate relationship between quality of life and quality of place in which that life unfolds and vice versa (Seamon, 2014). This notion involves an articulation and expression of place as a lived relation with one's own life, and posits that "...to care and attend to our own lives thus demands that we also care for and attend to place" (Malpas, 2001: 232).

From the above, it can be argued that theories and concepts in humanistic geographies of 'place' and 'space' provide us with the initial reasoning behind

people's participation in local partnerships and their engagement with place interventions that aim to make places better. The concepts that underpin people's involvement with the place commons include:

- people's sense of place that integrates place identity, place attachment, place dependence and genius loci, and acts as a container of local knowledge about the place's past and present (Campelo et al., 2014; Hay, 1998; Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Lewicka, 2010; Relph, 1976; Stedman, 2002)
- people's feel of belonging and togetherness, which stems from their everyday interactions and activities in-place and from the familiarity with the place over time (Gieryn, 2000; Seamon, 1980; Tuan, 1975, 1979)
- people's feel for social responsibility and sustainability, which stems from the lived experience and the direct (positive or negative) influence that human actions have in people's quality of life and quality of place (Denis et al., 2007; Depriest-Hricko and Prytherch, 2013; Horlings, 2015)

These humanistic 'antecedents' provide a solid underpinning for understanding the rationale behind place-based research, and for justifying local partnerships' role in place management, place branding, place marketing, and placemaking as a necessary prerequisite for social solidarity and collective action (Agnew, 2011). However, people's goodwill, subjectivities, and their almost nostalgic view of their place cannot solve the problems that are inherited in them, as places are representing "the inherently unstable terrain of modernity - marked by paradox and contradiction - where human subjectivity meets the forces of abstraction and objectification" (Oakes, 1997: 510). Thus, we need to consider the broader economic, social, and political forces that influence places, spaces, and people when examining place-based phenomena from a critical perspective.

### 3.2 'Space' and 'place' under a critical perspective

According to Seamon and Sowers (2009), humanistic geography has faced numerous conceptual and ideological criticisms from critical approaches to geography (postmodern, poststructuralist, critical realist, Marxist, feminist, etc.), which

eventually led to the rise of these latter approaches and to the marginalisation of the former. They summarised these criticisms by charges of:

- **Essentialism**, the assumption of a universal human condition that will leave behind a manifest core of human experience when all other non-essential qualities of places (e.g. historical, cultural, personal) are exposed (e.g. Cresswell, 2004; Peet, 1998; Pratt, 2004; Sayer, 1979, 1997)
- **Authoritativeness**, based on the refute of feminism as a necessary corollary, and the favourability of men as capable of making accurate depictions of the geographical situations and experiences of all human beings in all human situations (e.g. Bondi and Domosh, 1992; Bondi, 1990; Massey, 1994; Pollock, 1988; Rose, 1993)
- **Voluntarism**, a tacit view of society and the world as a product of planned, willed actions of individuals and autonomous human agency through an appropriately articulated discourse at the expense of societal structure (e.g. Jessop, 2004; Pred, 1983; Roberts, 2001)
- **Ideological bias** toward bounded, static, exclusionary places, resulting in favourability of 'places over placelessness, insideness over outsideness, authentic over inauthentic places, rootedness over mobility, and place as a static, bounded site over place as a dynamic, globally-connected process' (Cresswell, 2004; Massey, 1994a; Peet, 1998 in Seamon and Sowers, 2008: 48).

Even though one cannot deny the importance of place and its centrality in 'dwelling' and 'being' (Seamon and Sowers, 2009), other forces, such as power, exclusion, capital, resistance, justice, economic and political processes, are constantly shaping place and space in different forms. These inherent conditions in places and spaces are never fixed but fluid, and contribute to an endless reconstitution of society and space that moves flows of people, capital, information, and power across borders and between scales (Ley, 2004). This in turn has implications to places, which are continuously evolving through socio-political contestations and negotiations (Hudson, 2001). Under critical geographies, views of 'place' as a fixed, self-contained

unique unit and 'space' as lacking content have been rejected, and new definitions and concepts, which will be analysed below, contributed to their reframing in the era of globalisation, large-scale transformation, urbanisation, and capital accumulation (Jessop et al., 2008).

### 3.2.1 Space in critical theory

The extent of phenomena influencing the production and reproduction of places in everyday life, such as globalisation, capital concentration and centralisation, time-space convergence, and the rise of the urban (Thrift, 1983), posed new challenges for geographers regarding the relationship between place, space, and people. A re-appreciation of 'space' from a politico-economic perspective emerged, and the relationships between the social and the spatial came in the forefront. The works of Lefebvre (1976), Harvey (1973, 1982), Castells (1977), and Soja (1980) among others, popularised the notions of political, social and contested spaces, and how these socially produced spaces contribute to the conservation of capitalism and the production of uneven geographies through processes of capital accumulation. From a critical realist point of view, Massey (1984, 1985) stated that an overemphasis on distance, local variation, and uniqueness in previous geographical works meant that space was only seen as a social construct, and not as a product of stretched-out, intersecting social relations of the economy. In addition, Urry (1985, 1987) stressed that space should not be seen as an absolute entity, but is a nexus of different kinds of spaces, spatial relations, or spatialisations, in which the relationships between social entities are spatially and temporally structured.

The work of Lefebvre (1991) attempts to provide a more nuanced view of space, which highlights the material and immaterial production of it (Ribera-Fumaz, 2009). As Stanek (2008: 63) pinpoints, Lefebvre's aim was "...to develop a theory that would grasp the unity between three 'fields' of space: physical, mental, and social". Starting from the premise that "(social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre, 1991: 26), Lefebvre illustrates how natural spaces have been continuously suppressed in favour of new, appropriated spaces, how social space influences the social relations of production and reproduction in the capitalist state, and how these social relations are symbolised in order to maintain coexistence and coherence in society (Lefebvre,



1991: 31–33). In order to disentangle the complex interplay between the different aspects affecting the production of space (Merrifield, 1993), Lefebvre developed a spatial triad that extricates three types of spaces:

- ***Spatial practices*** (objective space), the common-sense space that is taken for granted and is neutral. Spatial practices symbolise the physical and experiential deciphering of space (Lefebvre, 1991: 38), embrace production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practices must have a certain cohesiveness, but this does not imply that they are coherent (Prigge, 2008).
- ***Representations of space*** (conceived space), which are tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations (Lefebvre, 1991: 33). An entirely mental space, it is the dominant space in any society, and represents views of ‘experts’ in the management and control of the spatial (e.g. planners, architects, bureaucrats, cartographers), as well as ideological, cultural, political, and social attributes of places (Shields, 1999)
- ***Representational spaces*** (lived space), space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of the inhabitants and users. It can be perceived as the outcome of the potentialities that come out of objective and conceived space, and overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects (Prigge, 2008; Shields, 1999; Soja, 1996).

Thus, social space is “the outcome of a process with many aspects and many contributing currents” (Lefebvre, 1991: 110). In Merrifield’s view, the different moments of space (phenomenological, perceptual, and material) comprise a framework that appears to solve the place-space problematic by subsuming space and place as two facets of a dialectical process, analysing their conflicts and contradictions as different aspects of a unity. He further posits that these contradictory and conflictual processes between space-place, global-local, and micro-macro levels are important for the development of robust, progressive politics

in place (Merrifield, 1993: 527). However, whereas recent theories in place management, place branding, and place marketing literature identify the importance of the interplay of these levels in the development of places, it is still quite unclear how conflicts and contradictions that stem from different viewpoints, ideologies, and power positions influence these processes. Lefebvre's work not only offers a non-fetishised notion of space that "emphasises the dialectical relationship between identity and urban spaces" (McCann, 1999: 168), but also highlights the struggles of everyday life that stem from homogeneous, fragmented spaces. This allows us to enhance the political dimension in place management research, and also explain participatory placemaking, marketing and branding processes that stem from generalised, self-managerial, spontaneous mobilisations in the city/town (e.g. autonomous town teams) (Kipfer et al., 2013). The latter argument has direct implications on the role of these teams as parts of local partnerships, and on how their actions can be interpreted in place management practices.

Lefebvre's work further acknowledged the fluidities and mobilities in space and how these are forming social relations (Cresswell, 2010, 2011), how space is "shaped and reformed over time by complex social, cultural, economic and political forces" (Overton, 2010: 753), and how unpromising associations and hegemonic imaginations of space deprive it of its significance (Massey, 2005). *The production of space* was also re-appropriated by Soja (1996), who offered a postmodern insight of the triad in order to refine his own concept of Thirdspace. Similar to Lefebvre, he postulates the existence of three autonomous spaces (physical, mental, and social), and argues that the Thirdspace (viewed as strategic social space) is the deconstruction of a binary between the physical, dominated First Space, and the mental, dominant Second Space. Therefore, Thirdspace borrows and blends elements from First and Second spaces in a two-way process of hybridisation, in order to create possibilities of transformation of all spheres; it is a site where practices get produced from the melding of different cultures through discussion and discourse, a site of ambivalence, openness, otherness and margins; a site that acts as a bridge in order to create places of transformation (Bhabha, 1994; Moje et al., 2004; Soja, 1996; Spielmann and Bolter, 2006). By drawing on Lefebvre and Soja, it can be argued that

social space needs to be acknowledged as an important part of the place management literature, as it is the intersection of people's views and the spatial forms of a place. The content, the processes, and the events that construct spaces and spatial relations (Massey, 2005; Smith, 2004), are inseparable from the concept of place. By considering a more nuanced version of space in the place management discourse, we can have a better interpretation on why certain practices and interventions prevail against others, and on how the blending of different voices, cultures, and opinions shape these spaces and places not only from an economic, but also from a socio-cultural and socio-political view.

Another important strand in critical human geography is also concerned with a relational view of space, but one that approaches the lived space by engaging it as an ongoing, performative accomplishment. This involves an emphasis onto the elusive, tacit performances and practices that shape everyday life, and the co-constitutional activities that mutually shape humans and things, thus explaining 'what happens' in the world (Thrift, 2004, 2008). According to Lorimer (2005), non-representational theories examine the more-than-human and more-than-textual worlds we live in, and question phenomena in our lives that seem remarkably insignificant:

*"...focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions...which escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimate representation" (Lorimer, 2005: 84).*

Thus, non-representational theories do not seek to prioritise representations as the means by which we make sense and recover information from the world (McCormack, 2003: 488). Instead, non-representational geographies focus on everyday practices, their emergence in place, their connection to human performativity, embodiment and bodily movement, and on how affect emerges from spatial associations and actions and helps in the process of 'becoming' (Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Andrews et al., 2014; Beyes and Steyaert, 2012; Binnie et al.,

2007; Cadman, 2009; Lorimer, 2008; Thrift, 2008). In addition, non-representational theories bolster an interest in materiality, as they also focus on the material relatedness of the body and the world (through things, practices, technologies), and on their emergent capacities to act and interact, and eventually understand the 'stuff' of life (Ash and Simpson, 2016; Simpson, 2010). From a place-based perspective, non-representational theories offer a "performative and open-ended concept of spacing that sees space as an excessive composition of multiple forces" (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012: 48). These multiple forces are performing space through affective materialities that helps them to "engage with the intensities and the forces of organisational life, an event across bodies from which sensible experience emerges" (McCormack, 2007, as cited in Beyes and Steyaert, 2012: 52). In this space, "matter turns into a sensed-sensing energy with multiple centres" (Thrift, 2008: 17). By moving this notion to the place management project, it can be argued that the performative, embodied, uniquely individual experience of each participant can actively differentiate the repetition and remaking in place management practices, through developing a sensory awareness that stems from experiencing these practices in the 'present' and during their emergence (Henshaw et al., 2015; Thrift, 2010). Therefore, this approach sees place interventions as not only tied to human subjects, but as emergent, material-relational bundles of 'all manners of resources' that elicit unforeseen encounters and transformations in places (Doel, 1999; Thrift, 2008).

### 3.2.2 Place in the globalised world

Like space, theorisations of place under a critical view followed a similar pattern, and authors started to develop concepts about the multiple roles of place in the wider context. Specifically, Agnew identified that place is comprised of three elements; *locale*, the place for social interaction and the set of informal and institutional relations; geographic *location*, the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction; *sense of place*, the local structure of feeling associated with places that subjectively and emotionally attaches people to them (1987: 27–28). Moreover, Agnew integrated structuration theories in his attempt to develop a consistent analytical framework of places (Shelley et al., 2003). He defined place as:

*“...the geographical context or locality in which agency interpellates social structure. Consequently, political behaviour is viewed as the product of agency as structured by the historically constituted social contexts in which people live their lives – in a word, places”* (Agnew, 1987: 43).

Whereas Agnew’s concept of place pays specific attention to politics and people’s political behaviour, some generalisations for other elements of social life (e.g. economic, socio-cultural, institutional) can be made, but not without caution. For example, he notes that “the structuration of social relations in everyday life contains many similar elements from place to place . . . but produces many different outcomes in different places” (Agnew, 1987: 42). This notion can explain why *à la carte* place management, place marketing and place branding processes usually fail to produce the same results from one place to another (e.g. Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Parker, 2008; Parker et al., 2015; Warnaby and Medway, 2013), or why the mundane and banal everyday activities are offering an abundance of potentialities and are differentiating places in terms of performance, rather than only situating them as placeless entities in an increasingly normalised world (Binnie et al., 2007).

The interrelations between the global and the local in spaces and places, and the possibility of a ‘global sense of place’, are central arguments in Massey’s (1991; 1994b, 2004, 2005) works. For Massey (1994b: 154–156), a place is “constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus”. However, these places are not enshrined by boundaries that separate the internal from the external, but rather are pictured as networks of economic, social and cultural relations and understandings that “are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent”. A ‘global sense of place’ can highlight the linkages of places with a wider scalar context, by helping us understand how social and spatial forces integrate the global and the local in a positive (or negative) way, in order to mould the character, feel, and reality of places, and people’s perceptions of them. Therefore, Massey develops a new, progressive view of place, in which:

- The concept of place is absolutely not static but is seen as a process, it consists of social interactions that are mobile and not frozen in time
- Place boundaries are not necessary for the conceptualisation of the place itself
- Place is full of internal conflicts, is a site of multiple identities and histories, a site where different social groups have distinct relationships and different influence in relation to different flows and interconnections (a notion that Massey calls 'power geometries' (1994b: 149))
- The specificity of place is continually reproduced by its wider interactions; even social relations that are increasingly homogenised are reproducing the place, and its uniqueness stems from a "distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations" (Massey, 1994b: 156).

Massey's interpretation of place highlights the important role of globalisation in the social construction of places. However, Massey does not perceive globalisation as an abstract, destructive space that annihilates the notions of local place and culture (e.g. Escobar, 2001; Massey, 2005), and shares the view of other researchers (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 2002) that we are subjected to a disempowering discourse that dramatises the unstoppable force that is capitalist globalisation, without realising that "...materially the local identities through globalisation vary substantially" (Massey, 2004: 11). Therefore, places are not only seen as victims of the global or defenders against it, but are also "...moments through which the global is constituted, invented, co-ordinated, produced. They are 'agents' in globalisation" (Massey, 2004: 14). In a similar vein, the works of Sassen (1991, 1998, 2002a, 2002b) espouse a theory of globalisation as a process that can also produce differentiation rather than only bringing us closer to a "global human condition" (Sassen, 2002b: 18), and which helps people experience themselves as parts of global non-state networks from the micro-spaces (or local spaces) of daily life (Sassen, 2002a: 221).

From a scalar perspective, Swyngedouw (1997: 138) argues that processes of restructuring can be better articulated as glocalised, wherein "local actions affect

global flows, and global processes affect local actions". Additionally, Ritzer (2003, 2004) argues that glocalisation needs to be complemented with the concept of globalisation, which emphasises the ambitions of global organisations, nations, and corporations to impose certain subprocesses (e.g. McDonaldisation, Americanisation) in order to overwhelm the local. Processes of glocalisation and globalisation play an important role in the restructuring of place and in the metaphorical and material production and transformation of scales (Swyngedouw, 1997: 142). Consequently, they contribute to the creation of new forms of urban politics, which transform and transgress the entangled scales through social struggles over the meaning of space (Brenner et al. 2003; Smith, 1995; Swyngedouw, 1997). Furthermore, capital mobilities in globalisation highlight how states can manipulate transnational flows of capital in order "to generate highly differentiated national and subnational economic zones within an increasingly global economic space" (Ferguson and Gupta, 2005: 124). These actions connote different place-bound institutional orders and power-geometries that make places more susceptible or more resistant to the levers of globalisation (Massey, 2004; Sassen, 2003).

Place differentiations can offer new understandings of how, for example, transnational policies and politics are producing different effects in different places, "by virtue of their embeddedness in, and interactions with, local economic, social, and institutional environments" (Peck and Theodore, 2010: 173), or how social and material practices of the everyday can form a series of selective, spatial policies that are mobilised and preferred over others, like for example BIDs and creative city policies (e.g. McCann, 2008; McGuirk, 2012). This implies a poststructuralist turn to encompass Foucauldian theories of governmentality and Deleuzo-Guattarian ideas of assemblage in places, in order to find ways to intervene upon the problems of everyday life and transform social reality and the regimes that render it, as well as to comprehend how heterogeneous arrays of elements and actors can produce disparate activities that become entangled with one another, but can later become parts in other assemblages across different spatialities (Anderson et al., 2012b; Bjerrisgaard and Kjeldgaard, 2012; McFarlane, 2009; Mckee, 2009; Saldanha, 2012). Such a turn can have potential benefits in understanding how global practices,

imaginaries, and technologies can organise everyday practices and discourses in places (Ong and Collier, 2005), and how these are in turn reinterpret notions of globalisation.

To sum up, space and place have both eradicated fixed notions of ‘containers of stuff’ in which “...we act out our social and material lives, but rather are actively negotiated, created and changed through all manner of relationships” (Goodman et al., 2010: 13). This means that spaces and places are never fixed and static, but under continual construction, a co-product of our prioritised actions but also emergent from our practices, fluid and open for reflection, and this openness encourages different forms of participation in their ongoing constructions (Cresswell, 2004; Thrift, 2003; Woods, 2007). As Cresswell (2004) pinpoints, “places (and spaces) are constructed by people doing things, and in this sense, are never ‘finished’ but are constantly being performed” (2004: 37). Similarly, place management processes can follow the same trajectory. The theories analysed so far cannot simply explain in detail how key relationalities, such as production, consumption, policies and politics, are actively constructing spaces and places. In the next section, the roles of ‘people’ from a critical viewpoint will be presented, and how their place-specific interventions are ‘matching’ with critical theories of place and space.

### 3.2.3 ‘People’ and ‘Communities’ under a critical lens

People and groups are in a ‘quest’ to discover the terrain that will allow them to best perform the spectacular or the banal, mundane social activities of everyday life and subsequently create their identity and sense of belonging in relation to that space/place (e.g. Binnie et al., 2007; Campelo et al., 2014; Lichrou et al., 2014; Merrifield, 1993). Through the lens of everyday activities, a place becomes a practised space (De Certeau, 1984). In Lefebvre’s view, what is practised is “a clash between capitalist utilisers and community users” (Lefebvre, 1991: 360), which can either lead to the production of surplus value or the production of gratification and happiness. Marston (2000) also emphasised the tensions that occur between structural forces (such as capitalism, labour, the state, gender social relations) and the practices of humans, and how these reconfigure geographies. For Oakes (1997), it is these clashes and struggles that change symbolic, cultural, and physical



consumption and production in places and spaces and therefore embellish (or destroy) the elements (materiality, institutions, relations, people and their practices) of a place's identity (Kalandides, 2011b).

From a Lefebvrian viewpoint, the interaction between space and place and the dialectical unity between place construction and transformation is of great importance if we are to understand how people's everyday place-bound social practices that are embedded within the material landscape are influencing the place as a whole (Merrifield, 1993). The right to the city is a right to inhabitation, appropriation and participation that acknowledges people's needs to redefine and reconfigure their city/town in a way that will allow them to maximise use value for them, rather than maximising surplus value for capitalist utilisers (Purcell, 2003; Vasudevan, 2015). In its most positive form, the right to the city is a collective right that allows the democratic management and redistribution of urban surpluses (Harvey, 2003), participation on all networks of communication, information and exchange in the city (Lefebvre, 1996a), and the right not to be marginalised in decision making (McCann, 2002). This means that equally important rights can definitely come into conflict, and this necessary trade-off may downgrade rights that some groups deem important in favour of others (Attoh, 2011).

As these decision-making processes are in part a result of socio-cultural and material interactions, it is possible to mould Lefebvre's right to the city into a critical, but also open-ended, view of how social spaces and places are recursively produced, by "placing the urban in the middle of an open-ended social totality, as a level of reality in a mediating relationship to everyday life and state-bound and 'global' social institutions"- (Kipfer et al., 2013: 117). However, the re-appreciation of materiality as a shaping force of how we think and make meaning in the world (Anderson and Wylie, 2009; Scott et al., 2014; Thrift, 2008) implies an entanglement of matter and meaning that views places as space-time configurations that are created from the encounters between people and things (Agnew, 2011), and reflect "practical means of going on rather than something concerned with enabling us to see, contemplatively, the supposedly true nature of what something is" (Thrift, 1999: 304). In this sense, the individual's identity, culture, body, performances, and experience through her

continual appropriation, participation and presence in city/town spaces, as well as the material practices that are produced in these, are added to the equation. Therefore, the concepts of emergentism, assemblage, contingency, alienation, performativity, materiality, and corporeality can be thought of in a dialectical manner, in order to explore how the possibilities in everyday life can frame structural reproductions or elaborations of spaces and places, and can differentiate the very practices of the 'now' that are constantly constructing these (Anderson et al., 2012a, 2012b; Cadman, 2009; Kipfer et al., 2013; Lefebvre, 1991, 2008; McCann and Ward, 2011; Merrifield, 2002; Thrift, 2008).

#### 3.2.4 Criticisms of critical geographies

Undoubtedly, critical geographies have reified the roles of 'space' and 'place' in human and social sciences, by eventuating a spatial and cultural turn that ascertained multiple and contradictory ways in which we understand 'space', 'place', and the recursive power relations and practices that (re)constitute our experience in these (Berg, 2004; Soja, 1999). However, the plethora of theories, ideologies, ontologies, and epistemologies adopted, as well as the antagonism between proponents of Marxist political economy, poststructuralism, and postmodernism have led researchers to question the relevance of these approaches when we are faced with traditional concerns of political economy (neoliberalism, capitalism, uneven development, social exclusion) (Castree, 2010; Martin and Sunley, 2001; Peck et al., 2010). This argument is reinforced by economic geographers who posit that critical geographers find difficulties in differentiating between social influences and 'pure' economic activity, or in theorising how embeddedness in 'social networks', 'power relations', and 'society' influences activities, affords knowledge exchange, and transcends an array of socio-economic practices beyond institutions and the local scale (Bathelt and Glückler, 2003; Grabher, 2006; Hess, 2004; Jones, 2008; Yeung, 2005).

In addition, critical geography (much like humanistic geography) has been accused of establishing a masculine discourse of space and place (e.g. Acker, 1990; Domosh and Bondi, 2014; Mott and Roberts, 2014; Rose, 1993, 1994). Feminist theories cover paradoxical and oppositional views of consumption, production, and experience of

places and spaces by groups that are resisting dominant representations of place identity (Oakes, 1997), and can tackle notions of prejudice and inequality that surround places and spaces (Rose, 1994). However, as Cox (2013) acknowledged, “the idea of gender as a distinct structure of social relations entailing particular interests and practices had been an important one but this was displaced by the attractions of identity construction and the politics of difference” (2013: 5). Bondi and Domosh (1992) highlighted the political struggles over meaning and how the power of masculinity is used to persuade and control meaning, rather than inform, thus linking the production of space and place to the phallogentrism and violence of its discourse (Longhurst, 1995; Tyner and Inwood, 2014). In addition, Massey (1994b) also posited that ‘spatiality cannot be analysed solely through the medium of a male body and heterosexual male experience’ (1994b: 182), thus questioning the absence of social gender relations in the construction of space and place.

Anarchist geographers, who favour decentralised and non-hierarchical productions and consumptions of spaces/places that stem from horizontal networks (Graeber, 2002), as well as the everyday do-it-yourself, voluntary, and mutual aid actions that assert “everyday revolutionary ways of being” (Gibson, 2014: 286), are also disapproving of critical geographies that embrace a Marxist perspective. Their critiques of the state and authority, and on how power structures deprive people from their positive freedoms and from the opportunity to live a free and fulfilling life (e.g. Goldman, 1969; Ince, 2012; Newman, 2001), clash with Marxist critical geographies that favour “a proletariat-led state to arise out of a post-revolutionary conjecture” (Springer, 2014a: 415), an idea that in anarchist thought asserts enslavement of the people in order to liberate them. Instead, anarchists proclaim the ideas of prefigurative politics, by seeking ways to reflect a future society from the political and organising principles that they enact in the here-and-now (Gordon, 2012; Graeber, 2009; Ince, 2012). Prefigurative politics embrace a flat ontology (Marston et al., 2005) and the “temporal fluidity that is latent to space” (Springer, 2014a: 412), which highlights the close relationship of anarchism with poststructuralism, and particularly with the anarchistic sensibility in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (Purcell, 2012). Therefore, they focus on direct actions in space

and place (Graeber, 2002, 2009) and in the rebellious potential of everyday practices (Springer, 2014b), rather than “the politics of waiting that is so deeply and problematically entrenched in Marxian thought” (Springer, 2014a: 407).

### 3.3 Socio-spatial processes, relations, and practices in place management research

In sum, this extensive review of the geographic literature and its criticisms highlighted the fundamental complexities of spaces and places, and tried to shed light on some of theories concerned with how people construct, produce and practise them. The abundance of theories in geography denotes such an attempt very difficult to begin with, and in this brief exploration of the field, an important question arises for place-based approaches to research in place management: is all this knowledge ‘too much to handle’ for place managers and researchers? The fact that place management is mainly practitioner-led explains in part the lack of socio-spatial thinking and the overreliance on other concepts (e.g. marketing, branding, entrepreneurship) that are commodifying place as a product (Warnaby and Medway, 2013) and contribute to a placelessness and lack of engagement in place interventions. The richness of geography has much more to offer in the field, and the turn towards participatory and networked modes of (local) governance that is evident in recent place management literature supports this argument, as it favours social, relational, and cultural geographic approaches, among others.

Therefore, in order to answer the question above, I will reiterate calls from geographers (Barnes and Sheppard, 2010; Brenner et al., 2011; Merriman et al., 2012; Sheppard, 2008), who stress the need to make the most out of the plethora of theoretical, conceptual and methodological choices by moving towards pluralism, and “fully appreciate the ‘kinds’ of insights that perspectives based on diverging assumptions [tend to] offer” (Varró, 2015: 27). The final part of this chapter will embrace geographic knowledge as the underpinning of a methodological framework for place management, and will introduce a practice-oriented synthesis of the place management process that enfolds concepts from humanistic, critical, poststructuralist, and non-representational human geographies.

### 3.3.1 Place management as a socio-spatial process

In order to wholly embrace the essential role of geography in a methodological framework for place management, we need to consider the place management process, which encompasses processes of place marketing, place branding, placemaking, strategic spatial planning, urban planning, etc., as primarily socio-spatial. Following Naughton's (2014) argument on the relation between economics, sociology, and geography, I argue that if place management is embedded in social relations (e.g. the participatory 'turn' of the fields strongly advocates that), it follows that those relations will also be embedded in a socio-spatial context, which will allow researchers to criticise present place management, marketing, and branding theories by reinserting "socio-spatial contexts that provide alternative imaginaries to contest the dominant discourse" (Naughton, 2014: 7). This argument is in line with Harvey's (1982, 1985) view that social processes always have geographical aspects that are essential to them rather than contingent, and with Massey's (1984) explanation of the inseparability of social and spatial processes. By accepting that "there are no purely spatial processes, neither are there any non-spatial social processes" (Massey, 1984: 51), we apprehend that processes such as (capitalist) production, capital accumulation, social reproduction, state regulation, consumption and so forth are "...ongoing, self-transforming modes of social life [that] cannot be understood outside of geography... and cannot be theorised apart from space" (Cox, 2013: 15).

Similarly, the place management process needs to be viewed as a series of spatialised, internally differentiated practices that operate in a complex mixture of nodes, networks, places, spaces and flows, and in concomitance with other socio-spatial practices, relations and interdependencies (Brenner, 2001, 2005; Healey, 2006b; Manson and O'Sullivan, 2006; Marston et al., 2005; Naughton, 2014). Place management as a 'process in space' can encompass non-hierarchical patterns of association, with unpredictable flows and movements generating centreless networks that mostly ignore boundaries or containments (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988; Kogl, 2008; Sloterdijk, 2004). In this sense, the place management process co-exists and negotiates its boundary condition with other processes. These are never attainable by or detachable from one another (isolated connectivity), and form

systems or aggregates that form contemporary societies (Couture, 2011; Ritter, 2012). This understanding of place management processes highlights the hypercomplex notions of space, place, networks, and societies, and shows how difficult it is for place management to operate in a chaotic world.

#### 3.3.1.1 *Socio-spatial relations*

The definition above underlines the complexity in the operationalisation of place management processes due to the multivalent meanings of space and place. As was explained in detail in the previous sections, there is no single dimension of space and place, and by extension, socio-spatiality. Therefore, it is vital not to reduce the study of place management in simplistic, mono-dimensional approaches that leave no room for geography to advance place management theory. As Brenner supports, it is “methodologically imperative to view socio-spatial processes as complex crystallisations of multiple, intertwined geographical dimensions and consequently to subject them to sustained analysis” (Brenner, 2009a: 32). In his article, he refers to Lefebvre’s thesis on the “superimposition and interpenetration of social spaces” (Lefebvre, 1991: 88) in order to interpolate the multiple, asymmetrical and diverse patterns of space and place in formations of uneven spatial development. From this point of view, he posits that:

*“...the geographies of any social process – such as urbanisation, state power, capital accumulation, or uneven development – cannot be understood with reference to a singular principle or all-encompassing pattern. Instead several intertwined yet analytically distinct dimensions of socio-spatiality may be distinguished”* (Brenner, 2009a: 31).

The methodological turn towards multidimensionality is emphasised in the works of Jessop et al. (2008) and Leitner et al. (2008). In the former, Jessop et al. present a heuristic territories-places-scales-networks (TPSN) framework that refutes privileging of a single dimension of socio-spatiality; helps researchers to provide spatially sensitive explanations of complex phenomena that involve at least two or more of these dimensions; and “emphasises the importance of contradictions, conflicts, dilemmas, marginalisation, exclusion, and volatility at once within and among each of these sociospatial forms” (Jessop et al., 2008: 394). Leitner et al. also

arrive to a similar conclusion; by examining complex and multi-faceted socio-spatial practices, they posited that “a variety of spatialities (place, scale, networks, positionality and mobility) matter for the imaginaries, material practices and trajectories of contentious politics” (Leitner et al., 2008: 169). Consequently, geographically variegated place management practices, which (re)produce different discourses and eventually shape socio-spatial change in places (Brenner et al., 2010; Varró, 2015; Yeung, 2005), need to be analysed with reference to the co-constitutive elements of socio-spatiality, and the multidimensional character of socio-spatial relations. This notion also takes into account the polymorphic character of space (Brenner, 2009a) and its multiple function as a site, object and means of governance (Jessop, 2009). This view of space is highlighting the heterogeneous, fluid, contingent, open-ended, strategically selective, spatio-temporal, recursive nature of the place management process (Jones and Jessop, 2010), negating views of it as merely a means to an end strategy for place organisation.

#### *3.3.1.2 Socio-spatial practices*

As mentioned in previous sections, place management encompasses a variety of material, symbolic, and discursive socio-spatial practices that are continuously constructing space and place (e.g. Cresswell, 2004; Shields, 1991; Thrift, 2007), and transcend between local, glocal, and global networks and scales (e.g. Amin, 2002; Leitner and Miller, 2007). However, just as in the case of socio-spatial relations, it is important to move past oversimplifications of ‘practice’ (e.g. as something that just happens in space) or from the fuzziness of the term, and examine socio-spatial practices from an analytical and pluralistic perspective. For example, Jones and Murphy (2011) move past conceptualisation of practices as highly formalised, ritualised routines, and present an analytical framework that also focuses on the micro-social practices of the everyday. Such practices have the potential to “influence and embody the complexities, contingencies, and meanings that constitute socio-economic and politico-economic phenomena” (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 367). By demarcating practices “with respect to their intentions, consequences, and socio-spatial dimensions” (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 382), a heuristic framework is offered that isolates practices into four dimensions (perceptions, performances, patterns,

and power relations), and situates them in specific space-time contexts and spatial settings. Jones and Murphy's (2011) four-dimensional framework uncovers the importance of:

- Cognitive derived representational (symbols, identities, discourses, meanings or ideas) and constitutive elements (motivations, desires, rights, morals, choices, capacities) that derive from one's self and empower or disempower him/her from a particular practice (e.g. Callero, 2003; Murphy, 2006)
- Social interaction and communication that will or not lead to intersubjectivity (orientation towards a common object, share of relational logic, existence of mutual understanding, reciprocity, respect of participants' orientations, we-relationships, etc.) depending on the skills, knowledge, material and/or technical devices available (e.g. Blumer, 1969; Callon, 1998; Mead, 1934; Schutz, 1967)
- Rules, norms, routines, conventions, and materials that mobilise, resist, or guide everyday actions and demonstrate "who actually practises a practice" (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 383)
- Power as a transformational or repressive and/or dominating force that shapes or limits opportunities available to actors through power-geometries, and is manifest in strategies and tactics of powerful actors that seek to control, align or mobilise others (e.g. Massey, 1999; Sheppard, 2002; Yeung, 2005).

According to these authors, their framework needs to be used as a complement to other theoretical approaches. They posit that a practice-oriented approach can bridge micro- and macro-level approaches, and that by examining practices as demi-regularities (Lawson, 1997), researchers can draw significant results regarding how everyday activities explain broad socioeconomic processes (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 386). Whereas this argument was made for the subfield of economic geography, it seems to have relevance for place management as well. Place management has become a commonplace activity "at jurisdictional scales ranging from the local and



neighbourhood to the national and even continental” (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008: 151), and is co-constituted by macro-, meso-, and micro- place-making elements (institutions, practices, materialities, representations, power relations, networks, class structures, gender inequalities, etc.) that synthesise place management and its internal processes (e.g. place marketing and place branding) (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015). This perspective is similar to Massey’s ‘global sense of place’, as it interconnects global, regional, national, and local phenomena to the social and spatial forces that construct space and place. Therefore, place management consists of higher-order phenomena that are enacted, (re)produced, and/or transformed by everyday actions embedded within them (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 367), and socio-spatial practices that (re)produce, consume, and constitute different types of social space.

From this viewpoint, we can understand why higher-order phenomena, such as out-of-town and internet retailing, are a staple in place management strategic agendas, or how everyday practices such as shopping, can create new cultural spaces of consumption, or transform existing ones (e.g. major changes on the high street). Socio-spatial practices that ‘sit in the middle’ of everyday actions and higher-order phenomena, such as protective mechanisms of local resistance (Coca-Stefaniak et al., 2010; Hallsworth and Worthington, 2000), exemplify how these practices, as part of a place management process, are shaping future trajectories “through a mutually transformative evolution of inherited spatial structures and emergent spatial strategies within an actively differentiated, continually evolving grid of institutions, territories and regulatory activities” (Jones, 2009: 498). According to MacKinnon (2011), this view of socio-spatial practices highlights how space is effectively shaped and layered by ongoing processes and practices (Paasi, 1996), and how certain processes, structures, and practices can become (temporarily) fixed, privileged, and prioritised over others. Henceforth, in strategic-relational terms, the place management process also emphasises the constraints and opportunities for action that these emerging, strategically selected practices create. In turn, this leads to structural contradictions and strategic dilemmas between actors who participate in

place management, leaving the process vulnerable to failure (Jessop, 2001, 2002, 2004).

### 3.3.2 A pluralistic, practice-oriented framework for examining place management practices

As mentioned above, place management can be viewed as a non-hierarchical assemblage, made up of loose structures of national, regional and local actors (companies, regional development organisations, technology development organisations, state organisations, public–private hybrids and academic actors); mixtures of scalar and relational linkages constructed by different agents; and different governmental structures nested in certain locations. All these stakeholders are engaged in complex sets of mobilisations (political, social, economic, cultural, legal, touristic, artistic, and so on) at one point in time (Ahlqvist, 2013; Allen and Cochrane, 2007; Farías, 2014). However, in assemblage theory, we need to maintain “a certain ethos of engagement that attends to the messiness and complexity of phenomena” (Anderson et al., 2012b: 175), and that emphasises the open-ended nature of social relations. In addition, assemblage theory insists on the autonomy of component parts, and sees agency as the source of emergence and transformation of the assemblage and as a product of the part and the whole, sourced from new actors and from unused capacities within existing actors, component parts and wholes (Bennett, 2010; DeLanda, 2006).

These claims embrace a pure flatness that renders the analysis of place management almost impossible; as Saldahna (2012) posits, the flat ontology of assemblage theory refutes concepts such as scale, society, and structure, and traditional verticalities between base and superstructure, human and non-human, engineering and art, matter and language, power and meaning. Therefore, traditional assemblage theory equates everything and embraces the inherent complexities in the world, leading Saldahna (2012: 195) to argue that “without some reductionism it is then impossible to describe, map or diagram an assemblage”. Akin to place management, a qualified reduction of socio-spatial relations and practices can lead to a clearer description and mapping of the process. Therefore, we can acknowledge that place management as an assemblage holds an everlasting position in space, but in order to theorise place

management, we need to analyse the structural properties of networks, the inequalities between actors, the power relations that mobilise certain strategies in favour of others, the subjective and emotional experiences of people participating in the process, the influence of everyday practices, and so on.

Figure 3.1 illustrates a methodological framework for place management from a practice-oriented perspective. The focus on practice as an analytical object is in line with the plea for pluralist theorisations, as the categorisation of practices requires the unfolding of ontologically and epistemologically diverse theoretical foundations that can be associated with practice-oriented research. Indeed, as the figure shows, a complex set of wider theories and associations that perpetually construct spaces and places (rectangles on the outer edges of the figure) are the main antecedents of socio-spatial practices (rectangles on the inner circle), which in turn are constantly interacting with each other (arrows) in order to synthesise the place management process. The outer rectangles are not portraying reducible sets of associations with a place, but rather pinpoint the key theoretical fields that influence a particular dimension of practices. For example:

- Socio-spatial practices that derive from **perceptions** are mainly influenced by an individuals' subjectivities, representations, intentionalities, and positionalities in space and place. The key theoretical field here is humanistic geography, and the focus of these practices could be the reinforcement of place identity and place attachment through practices that tackle placelessness and emit a sense of place that boosts quality of place and quality of life for the individual (e.g. Cuba and Hummon, 1993; Proshansky et al., 1983; Relph, 1976; Seamon, 1980; Tuan, 1979).
- Practices that are influenced from everyday **patterns** can be mainly explicated from non-representational theories, as their focus on tacit, ongoing mundane activities that co-shape humans and things can explain how the individual is experiencing the lived space as a series of simple behavioural regularities, repeated actions, and perpetual customs (e.g. Bathelt and Glückler, 2014; Lorimer, 2005, 2008; Thrift, 2007).

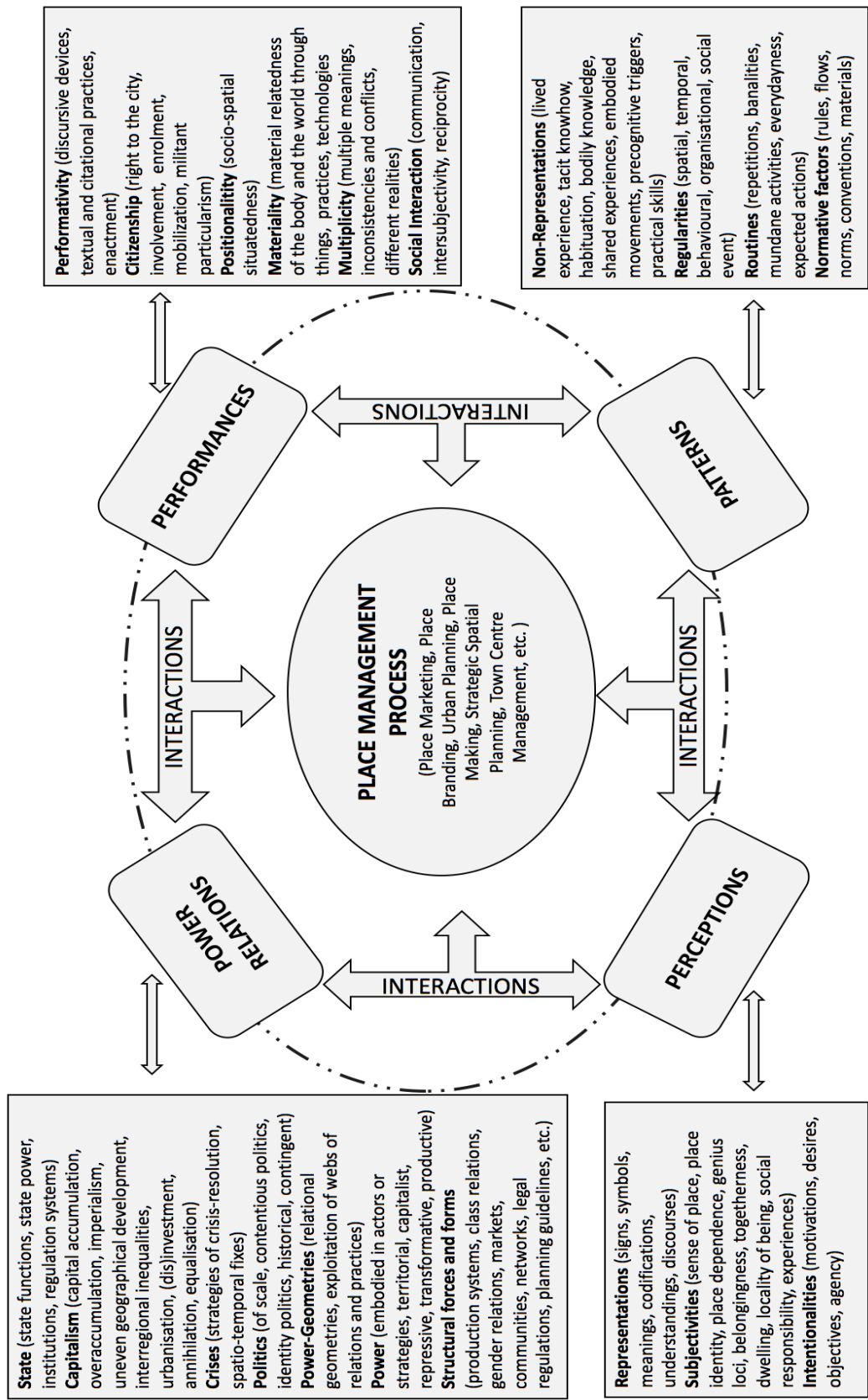


Figure 3.1 A synthesis of the practice-oriented place management process, author's conceptualisation, adopted from Jones and Murphy (2011) and Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015)

- Socio-spatial practices that arise from people's **performances** have commonalities with people's patterns, as they also highlight everyday relations, but are more concerned with people's and groups' situationally appropriated actions, and their material and abstract performances. Thus they are influenced by both non-representational and critical theories, and they underline social interactions in groups, discursive and textual devices that frame performance and shape places and spaces, as well as discourses and forms of urban citizenship that lead to mobilisation, involvement in place commons, contestation, etc. (e.g. Anderson and Wylie, 2009; Butler, 1997; Lefebvre, 1996b; Merrifield, 2002; Pine, 2010)
- Lastly, practices that are the outcome of **power relations** are primarily conditioned by structural forms and actions, regulations, urban regimes, hegemonic projects, neoliberalism, etc. Critical theories that focus on uneven relationships, the influence of capitalism, the roles of the state and other decision-making institutions, crises and their outcomes, provide the means for understanding how power is distributed and privileges certain places through accumulation strategies and hegemonic projects, and which particular forms of power (transformative, contingent, agentic, knowledge, bio-power) are influencing practices (e.g. Gaventa, 2003; Harvey, 1973, 1982; Jessop, 2001, 2005; Jones, 1997; Massey, 1994; Smith, 1995; Swyngedouw, 1997).

The framework leaves room for these associations to continuously 'travel' across dimensions through the constant interaction of socio-spatial practices, as the double and dashed arrows connote. For example, people's 'sense of place' can also influence power relations and performances, and embodied elements and tacit know-hows can also affect individuals' intentionalities and positionalities, and subsequently perceptions and practices. As Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) attest, place associations and the constitutive elements that synthesise place management processes indicate:

*“what the place means for people, what— if anything—it adds to people's lives, how it makes people feel, how it connects people to each other or not,*

*and how it affects their relationships, how it helps people construct their identity or not, and many more such functions. The evaluation of the attributes takes place in an interdimensional manner as the associations that people hold with a place on a certain dimension interact with associations they hold on a different dimension. The one influences the other, thus constantly changing the evaluation, which can therefore never be final but is always under reconsideration” (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015: 1376).*

Thus, the framework in Figure 3.1 not only illustrates a reasoned reductionism of socio-spatial practices, but also emphasises the interrelationships between interactions, associations, ontologies, epistemologies and theories, as well as the recursive nature of place management. In addition, the outer circle that encompasses socio-spatial practices and the place management process represents (strategic) social space (as per Lefebvre and Soja) as a socially practised product. This view of social space acknowledges the perceived, conceived, and lived dimensions of space, and allows us to examine place management processes and strategies from “...their material (perceived) aspects, their representational, institutional, and ideological (conceived) aspects, and their affective-symbolic (lived) aspects” (Kipfer, 2008: 200). Lefebvre’s theory epitomises people as the essence of place management practices, thus instilling both representational understandings and non-representational experiences of the world in these (Hayden and Buck, 2012). In this sense, the social spaces in which place management occurs have a participatory component that allows people to interact with each other and “engage in an exchange of knowledge claims through being embedded in social networks, as well as a lived, non-representational component, where individuals physically negotiate their surroundings in an embodied way” (Carolan, 2007: 1267).

Additionally, by conceptualising space and time as essential aspects of social practice and as both result and precondition of the production of society, we can acknowledge place management as a process comprising of socio-spatial and historical relations and practices. Inclusion of historical processes, practices, and relations allows for a more powerful theory of place management that takes into account the historic nature of the process, and the social constellations, power relations, and conflicts that occur during place management (Schmid, 2008). However, emphasis on

historicity does not preclude analysis of current and imaginative or mental spacetimes of the future. Therefore, the social spaces in which place management occurs can also highlight the main possibilities of economic development that take place in a given time, by articulating space as a social product of “reciprocal relationships between economic behaviour, the politics of representation and identity, state power geometries, and the sedimentation of these practices in spacetime” (Jones, 2009: 501).

Finally, the contingent, constructed and always emergent nature of the social space allows for a more complex inquiry of the strategic dilemmas and the structural tensions that occur between different socio-spatial dimensions (territory, place, scale, and networks) during the place management process (Jessop et al., 2008; Jones, 2009; Jones and Jessop, 2010). Acknowledgement of the multidimensionality of socio-spatial relations and practices will shift place management theories towards ‘thicker’ descriptions of concrete - complex phenomena that will involve the dynamic articulation of at least two or more among the four dimensions of the TPSN framework (Jessop et al., 2008).

### 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter laid the foundations for a more-rounded comprehension of the geographic field in the study of place management. In the first part, an extensive review of main contributions in the field of geography was presented. By emphasising the interrelationships between people, places, and spaces, and how people construct these through a constant re-appreciation and re-formulation of material and historical practices, I affirmed the significance of taking into consideration more nuanced descriptions of place and space in the study of place management. The dialectical interactions between space and place, people and their environments, and place construction and transformation, are signifying contradictory and conflictual processes between space-place, global-local, and micro-macro levels, that eventually shape and structure place management processes. However, the roles of groups and individuals, their everyday practices and how these emerge, their embodied movements, and the meanings and feelings that they attach to a place are also crucial

antecedents of the place management process. Therefore, the main argument of this chapter is that a plethora of geographic theories (from phenomenological accounts to critical, postmodern, and non-representational conundrums) are 'whirling' in the heart of place management, and a full awareness of these theories is needed in order to move towards an engaged, pluralistic theory of place management concept (Barnes and Sheppard, 2010; Varró, 2015).

The second part of the chapter delineated the polymorphic character of socio-spatial processes, relations, and practices, and presented a practice-oriented methodological framework of the place management process. It is argued that the engagement of all geographic theories from a practice-oriented perspective can lead to a better understanding of how certain place management practices are prevailing over others; of how people and groups feel, experience, and perform in the social spaces where place management is produced; and on how external forces, such as globalisation and capitalism, are structuring and framing socio-spatial relations and practices that subsequently alter place management. The framework not only refutes the privileging of a single dimension of socio-spatiality for theorising place management, but also explains why a focus on practices, with an emphasis on the constant interactions and associations between people, places, and spaces, can advance theory, by highlighting the open-ended, heterogeneous, fluid, contingent, emergent, strategically selective, spatio-temporal, and recursive nature of the place management process (Jones and Jessop, 2010).



## Chapter 4 Research Methodology

As explained at length in the previous chapter, identifying and categorising place management practices requires an unfolding of ontologically and epistemologically diverse theoretical foundations, and a shift towards pluralistic research approaches. The first part of this methodological chapter delves into the creative interplay of perspectives, shared beliefs, models, and worldviews (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009) that facilitate synthesis and holistic thinking in order to understand what place management is and how it can be theorised (DeLyser and Sui, 2014). The ontological and methodological pluralism employed in this study seeks to bridge the gap between predetermined, taken-for-granted assumptions and recommendations that stem from managerial views and abstract, theoretical and complex notions of place and space that are pertinent in geographic research. The ontological and epistemological position of the study is explained, with emphasis on the interplay between realist and relational views of place, the emergence of practices, the openness and situatedness of place knowledge, and the reflexivity of the researcher towards theory construction. The research strategy is presented, with emphasis on the flexibility of the qualitative research design, and the abductive and retroductive processes that guided the study. In addition, the chapter discusses the research methods and data collections techniques that were used. Finally, it presents the reasoning behind the multi-sited ethnographic approach, coupled with the extended case method (ECM), and discusses the sampling, access, data collection, data analysis and quality assessment stages of the work.

### 4.1 A pluralistic research approach for studying place management

As explained above, place management is constituted by knowledge sources from a multitude of disciplines (Coca-Stefaniak, 2008), and characterised by a complex relation between theory and practice, which leads to the inherent confusion of what it actually is. In addition, by situating place management in the field of geography, a plethora of geographic theories regarding place, space, networks, territories, socio-spatial relations and practices need to be taken into account in order to move towards an engaged, pluralistic theory of place management (Barnes and Sheppard,

2010; Varró, 2015). From the above, it can be argued that no single paradigm or research programme will be able to fully address the relational complexity of place management theory and practice. In this sense, a pluralist standpoint for place management is seeking to understand the various facets of place, people and practices from a critical point of view and from multiple, competing vantage points. This requires immersion within the varied paradigm cultures of geographic, management, marketing, and planning research, and familiarisation with the different 'languages', methodologies and methods used in these fields (Hassard, 1991, 1993). As Lewis and Kelemen (2002) purport, this process is important, as it allows the researcher to experience the tensions and paradoxes of theoretical pluralism, and develop an understanding that encourages tolerance and theoretical diversity, which can reveal "assumptions that are otherwise difficult to identify from within any particular vantage point" (Williams, 2014: 75). This way, the 'splicing' of methodological, theoretical, and 'on the ground' pluralisms will not only be aligned with the stated aims of the research, but can also be a vehicle towards the production of more insightful knowledge.

In line with the above, this work embraces theoretical and methodological pluralism; that is, drawing upon multiple theoretical lenses that can flow into methodology, and hence encourage the use of a wider variety of methods in order to inform research, theory and practice (Midgley, 2011). Pluralism in research implies the development of a continually evolving methodological position that supports critical thinking in relation to the circumstances of an inquiry. This allows researchers to "explore different possible boundaries and choose between them in the local contexts of their research" (Nicholson et al., 2014: 405). This means that the problem under study cannot be answered with one person's limited resources and capabilities, which leads researchers to adopt a participant frame of reference and engage in a reflexive, collective learning process that respects all other kinds of knowledge production (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009; Hendrickx, 1999).

#### 4.1.1 Theoretical Pluralism

Exploring place management from a pluralistic view entails delving into different theoretical underpinnings (e.g. from geography and its subfields, marketing and

management theories, urban studies), which allows us to take on a more 'rounded' view of the process of place management. This allows different theories and concepts "to stand in a kind of dialectical relation to each other" (Nicolai and Seidl, 2010: 1273). It can lead to an increase in conceptual relevance, by developing a "complicated understanding" (Bartunek et al., 1983) of what place management is and how it can be framed in different ways. Since the objective of this work is to strengthen the weak theoretical underpinning of place management, a shift from instrumental to conceptual relevance that will develop both academics' and practitioners' understandings of the complexities and decision-making processes in places is appropriate (Nicolai and Seidl, 2010). This way, place management will not be reduced to a set of predetermined, taken-for-granted assumptions and recommendations for 'best practice' or course of action, but can instead lead to a better appreciation of the decision situation and the co-production of new, novel knowledge from the differences, convergences and conflicts between place stakeholders and/or academics (Augier and March, 2007; Luhmann, 1994; March, 1999).

#### 4.1.2 Methodological pluralism

Producing new knowledge in the place management field means that one also has to bring together different methodological perspectives and sets of methods that will allow researchers to undertake projects in a variety of different contexts (Midgley, 2011). Indeed, as I argued earlier in this thesis, place management cannot be reduced to simple dimensions of socio-spatiality, or to management and marketing techniques that perceive places as homogeneous. To address this methodological issue, a more holistic appreciation of place management's adjacent, but seemingly divided fields, along with their methods, is required. This means that one has to bring different perspectives into play (Hassink et al., 2014) and even into dispute, in order "to draw out fresh insights, ideas, and methods from their collision" (Pike et al., 2016: 126). In this sense, methodological pluralism can be viewed "as a means toward improved understanding and explanation" (Pike et al., 2016: 139) of the place management field.

It is important to highlight that the kind of methodological pluralism adopted in this work does not condone relativist positions that imply that anything goes, which according to Nicholson et al. (2014: 399) “is as naive as fundamentalist faith in a single, supposed ‘metatheory’ or narrow set of methods”. In line with Lamont and Swidler (2014: 155), I adopt a view of pluralism whereby “reflective choices of methods are purposefully made based on the needs of the question at hand”. This means that understanding the relational complexity of place management demands an exploration of both notions of ‘place’ and ‘people’ in different contexts (e.g. neighbourhoods, small towns, cities, or even different spaces where place management is practised), where each context is grounded in a set of its own methodological and substantive assumptions (Longino, 2002). Given the fact that this work is geographically conscious of the differences of the places under study and the complex and varied problems that these encounter, embracing methodological pluralism, with its commitment toward different and divergent methods (DeLyser and Sui, 2014), is perceived as appropriate for advancing place management theory and practice.

## 4.2 Ontological and epistemological perspectives

Ontology, the study of what makes up reality, and epistemology, the way we try to develop knowledge and justify our explanation claims, have important implications on the way researchers choose their theoretical and methodological positions in any field (Blaikie, 2004). It provides an understanding of how to undertake research in practice, and specifies how we develop what we deem as appropriate knowledge from an amalgam of contentious, multiple realities, or multiple understandings of reality (Gruber, 1993; Peters et al., 2013). For place management, ontological and epistemological considerations are contingent to the practicality of its adjacent fields. In this respect, research in practitioner-led fields (e.g. TCM, place marketing, and place branding) is less likely to engage in lengthy discussions about ontology and epistemology. However, avoiding such discussions can connote a deprecation of geographic thought and an overreliance on functionalist and normative conceptions of marketing and management work, which has led to the dominance of prescriptive

place management, marketing and branding approaches in the literature (Ardley and Quinn, 2014; Jarzabkowski and Fenton, 2006; Warnaby and Medway, 2013).

On the other hand, research in strategic spatial planning and placemaking is more attentive to multiple ontological and epistemological views of space, place, people, and their practices. For example, proponents of collaborative planning share relational understandings of place and space (Graham and Healey, 1999). These adopt a non-Euclidean perspective, which highlights the relativity of distance and spatial relationships and unlocks the rich and crucial complexities of real life (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007; Jones, 2009). Such views also highlight epistemological challenges of how different types of knowledge (e.g. tacit/experiential knowledge of local communities versus traditional scientific knowledge) are relevant for planning, or how the multiplicity of ways in which actors seek to influence the process of planning can be reflected in a place's strategic plans and actions (Albrechts, 2015; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009). Similarly, as seen in chapters 2 and 3, relational views of place and placemaking focus on unpacking multi-scalar, multifaceted place frames that stem from a multitude of social relations, connections and positionalities (Amin, 2004; Massey, 2005, 2007). According to Williams (2014: 78–79), placemaking is characterised by both an ontological and epistemological pluralism that regards place as both an object in the world and as a way of understanding or seeing the world (Creswell, 2004). As such, ontological views differ from place as being a static product of a bounded, localised, and subjectively experienced history, to place seen as a relational, networked, fluid, and politically constituted phenomenon. Similarly, epistemological pluralism highlights how people's variety of spatialities (place, scale, networks, positionality and mobility) can lead researchers towards different ways of practising theory in place management, as it encourages the application of "multiple methods that engage with very different kinds of knowledge" (Pierce and Martin, 2015: 1293).

In line with Healey (2006b: 257–258), I purport that the study and practice of place management is dependent on the multiplicity of our daily practices, interactions and experiences in places. As argued in Chapter 2, managing places in pluralistic contexts is characterised by a relational complexity that requires us to acknowledge the

frailties, place contestations, and conflicts that are implicit in all forms of participatory interactions. Such complexity, as seen in table 4.1, requires a holistic understanding of different experiences, knowledges and ways of reasoning, an opening up of strategy-formation processes, and promotion of arenas where these different ontologies and epistemologies can be negotiated in creative ways. As such, an ontological framework for place management that epitomises places, people and their practices as the main properties of its study should: 1) examine how and why certain place management practices are prevailing over others; 2) how people and groups feel, experience, and perform in the social spaces where place management is happening; and 3) how external forces, along with everyday negotiations, socio-spatial relations and practices, alter place management via their mutual constitution. This connotes a turn toward a more engaged epistemology, where careful interpretation, continual reflexivity, and preparedness to review the different knowledges that are embedded in place management can lead to the theoretical advancement of the field.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Implications for epistemology</b>	<b>Suggestions for place management research and practice</b>
<b>Multiple logics and rationalities (epistemologies)</b>	Recognise the diversity of logics, 'rationalities', and the very different kinds of knowledge in places	Respect different ways of reasoning, understand how different knowledges can be embedded in place management
<b>Multiple identities, positions and trajectories (ontologies)</b>	Recognise that what is sensed, valued and understood varies with identities, positions and trajectories	Search out experiences from multiple positions, understand the rich complexities and multiple realities of social life
<b>Multiple sites of encounter between ontologies and epistemologies</b>	Promote arenas where different ontologies and epistemologies can encounter each other	Encourage generative encounters between identities and rationalities that aid to the production of new discourses and practices of place management

*Table 4.1 Place management's multiple ontologies and epistemologies, adopted from Healey (2006:258)*

#### 4.2.1 Ontology, place and space

In this work, the need to consider notions of place, space, scale, people, and their practices denotes that the process of place management entails multiple ontological assumptions. As argued in Chapters 2 and 3, the process of place management requires explanation by reference not only to a place's uniqueness but also to particular forces external to itself (e.g. Burawoy, 1991; Massey, 1991, 1994, Sassen, 1991, 2002; Swyngedouw, 1997). This interdependence (of all places) and uniqueness (of individual places) advocates a relational understanding of space which sees "places, regions, nations, and the local and the global as internally complex, essentially unboundable in any absolute sense, and inevitably historically changing" (Massey, 2004: 5). In this sense, relational places are emergent, fluid and open for interpretation, and are constituted from a multitude of social relations, connections and positionalities. This ontological view of place reflects the 'messy' realities of the social and the material, which is made through complex topological and relational practices that construct both global and local understandings of places (Ahlqvist, 2013; Amin, 2004; Collinge et al., 2010; Creswell, 2004; Law and Urry, 2004; Massey, 2004, 2005; Pierce et al., 2011; Thrift, 2003).

However, as MacFarlane (2017) highlights, an ontology of pure flux implies that no stable point could be made at any point during the analysis of socio-spatial practices and relations. He uses Harvey's (1996: 7) words to describe a major drawback of relational ontologies: "[i]f everything that is solid is always instantaneously melting into air, then it is very hard to accomplish anything or even set one's mind to do anything". As argued earlier in Chapter 3, relational and flat ontologies, while opening a multiplicity of possibilities, are embracing the inherent complexities in the world to a point that they render any analysis almost impossible. Therefore, with respect to the heterogeneity of places, it is important to emphasise that some form of engagement, reasoned reductionism, and permanence is also needed in order to describe a complex process such as place management. Harvey (1996: 7–8) purports that the forces of flux, flow and process deserve ontological priority, but not to the detriment of "the 'permanences' that surround us and which we also construct to help solidify and give meaning to our lives". This means that in our daily practice, we

have to acknowledge the “relative fixity of things” (MacFarlane, 2017: 313), and that whereas relational space is full of multiple potentials, “factors can constrain and structure space” (Jones, 2009: 493). Based on those assumptions, Harvey’s ontology deviates from Hegelian reductionist tendencies and thus presents a complexly relational, open-ended dialectic, “where many trajectories are possible, where there is space to transform the world for the better, in any number of unexpected ways” (Sheppard, 2008: 2606).

In this work, this form of dialectical inquiry helps us to understand the relative fixity of structures and entities such as the local government, local partnerships, LEAs, BIDs, town teams and the like, along with the spaces in which these bodies are engaging in place management processes. Such ‘permanences’ can be interpreted as obstacles that are waiting to be challenged by new relational practices, flows, and processes that will eventually lead to new reimagined place management strategies (Allmendinger et al., 2016). This way, the transformative potential that lies in the multiplicity of tensions and stresses that occur during the place management process, a dialectic between fixity and flow (Barnes, 2006), is upheld. In this work, this form of dialectical reasoning helps to uncover how place actors try to find the right balance between established and emerging place management practices that stem from people’s multiple realities and the rich complexities of social life (Healey, 2006a).

This position further emphasises the parallels between realist and relational ontological positions when examining change through place management, and how these positions can be mutually constitutive in terms of theory. As Sheppard (2008: 2609) argues, both approaches start with change as the only constant, to accept the heterogeneities and contradictions within and between entities, the relational emergence of properties, the contingencies and uncertainties of future place trajectories, and the intimate relationalities between the human and the non-human. As seen in Chapter 3, this contingent, constructed and always-emergent view of social space allows for a more complex inquiry of the place management process, which steers away from a casual and mechanistic thinking. Based on the above, the dialectical reasoning of this study allows us to examine place management not as a



reductionist, prescriptive process, but a “much more complex process of relations and flows that are manifest as things” (Harvey, 1996: 49). In this sense, the practices that are part of this process, and help place actors to reimagine place management as ongoing emergent strategies, also require ontological consideration.

#### 4.2.2 Practices and place

So far in this thesis, I briefly touched on the notion of practices from a strategy-as-practice perspective that highlights how people ‘do strategy’ (Whittington, 2006), and how everyday and mundane practical actions can lead to emerging, reimagined place management strategies that shape new imaginaries and future place trajectories (Chia and Holt, 2006; Chia and MacKay, 2007; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Nicolini, 2012; Whittington et al., 2006). I also presented a practice-oriented framework, which illustrates a reasoned reductionism of socio-spatial practices that ‘sit in the middle’ of everyday actions and higher-order phenomena. As such, practices can be seen as demi-regularities (Lawson, 1997) that “provide significant insights regarding the mechanisms driving economic and social change” (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 380), but nevertheless are sensitive to the fluidities, dynamism and multidimensionality of the entities that constitute them.

Place management, as conceptualised earlier in this work, bears similarities with organisation, strategy, and management studies, which have embraced a re-turn to practice that seeks to bridge the gap between practice-driven theorising of what people do and academic theory-driven theorising about it (Yanow, 2006). It can be argued that practices, defined here “as meaning-making, order-producing, and reality-shaping activities, orderly sets of embodied and materially mediated doings and sayings aimed at identifiable ends” (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2016: 114), can be constituted as the basic units of analysis for examining the place management process. In this sense, practices not only highlight what people do, “but are also social sites in which events, entities and meaning help compose one another” (Schatzki, 2005 as cited in Chia and Holt, 2006: 640). As such, practice theories, the body of work that explicitly focuses on practices, are seen as inherently ontological projects that offer an extended vocabulary to describe the world (Nicolini, 2012). Whereas it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive review of practice

theories, it is important to present some of their underlying principles that exemplify the “relationship between specific instances of situated action and the social world in which the action takes place” (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011: 1241).

Practice theorists argue that situated everyday actions are consequential in the production of social life, meaning that what makes any activity a practice is “that the action of engaging in it is consequential for the development of the activity” (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011: 1242). This implies a continual and repeated reproduction of “social practices ordered across space and time” (Giddens, 1984: 2) that are always connected to other practices in different ways (Shove et al., 2012), and often negotiated through a constant stream of tricks, strategies, and manoeuvres (De Certeau, 1984) that enacts social orders (Schatzki, 2002). The consequentiality of practices implies a relationality in a sense that practices are not only driven by external forces or demands, but primarily from the qualities and standards of its practitioners (MacIntyre, 2007). This indicates how actors, through the development of their own practical senses via different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural), generate relevant actions and meanings that lead to the perpetuation of a field’s practices and conditions (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Schatzki, 2005).

In the context of this work, the consequentiality of practices highlights how place management cannot simply be rethought as an externally-dictated bundle of socio-spatial practices that is detached from the place. It is rather its enactment by the people who live in the place, in the form of their everyday and mundane activities (Binnie et al., 2007), habits and commonsensical routines (McCourt, 2016), and historically-culturally shaped practices and knowledges (Reckwitz, 2002), that alters the contours of the place (Feldman and Worline, 2016). Warnaby and Medway’s (2013) analogy of de Certeau’s (1984: 91–93) ‘panorama city’ (a view from above) and ‘the ordinary practitioners of the city’ (who live down below) in the case of the I Love Manchester marketing campaign is a good example of how official marketing representations can also enact, and be enacted in, people’s socio-spatial practices and experiential portrayal of a place.

In addition, practice theories build upon the rejection of dualisms and thus adopt a relational perspective that treats theoretically dichotomous elements (e.g. structure/agency, micro/macro, local/global) as inseparable and mutually constitutive (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Michel, 2014). As Nicolini (2012) purports, the shift toward understanding the social world through practices helps us to dissolve such enduring dualisms, by embracing the relationality between individuals and systems or structures. This ontological position deviates from the rationality of *homo economicus* that treats individuals and structures as independent of one another, or the norm-following behaviour of *homo sociologicus* that privileges the existence of social structures (Feldman and Worline, 2016: 309; Reckwitz, 2002: 245). Instead, the relational position embraced by practice theories sees *homo practicus* as a carrier of practices, a body/mind who ‘carries’, but also ‘carries out’, social practices, and whose individual interests and social norms cannot be separated in practice, but always form a mutually constituted duality (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, Giddens, 1979, 1984; Reckwitz, 2002: 256).

This relationality is accurately portrayed in Bourdieu’s habitus and Giddens’ social systems. For Bourdieu, the constant confrontation and mediation of actions and experiences within the habitus denotes a dynamic relationship (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014), in which the habitus can “structure or organise practices and representations of practices while also being structured by those very practices” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 191). Giddens’ underlying premise in his structuration theory is that structures exist in and through the activities of human actors, and this recursive attribute of human activities is what creates structure. As a result, the relationship between human agency and the structures that contextualise it are so interwoven that they form a duality (Peters et al., 2013). This reflexive dynamic informs the relational ontology in this work as it highlights how practices aimed at managing a place can have meaning only through other similar practices that happen in the spaces where the process of place management occurs (Feldman and Worline, 2016). As such, practice becomes “a convenient and usable ontological unit” (Nicolini, 2009a: 1411) for making sense of the relational constellation of practices that fabricate place management.

#### 4.2.3 Epistemological considerations for place management

As mentioned above, a pluralist standpoint for place management requires engagement and familiarisation with its adjacent fields, and an understanding that encourages theoretical diversity. This process requires researchers to use multiple perspectives to highlight the plurality and paradoxes of a complex and ambiguous phenomenon such as place management (Lewis and Kelemen, 2002). As such, a pluralist epistemology that rejects the notion of a single system in which we can advance knowledge and learn about the truth in a given field is preferable, as it delimits socially constructed paradigm boundaries and allows us to explore alternatives (Hassard, 1993; Spender, 1998). In this sense, one must acknowledge that the different logics, rationalities, and kinds of knowledge that are embedded in places leads us to assert “that there is no predefined or predetermined methodology or criteria to judge the veracity of our knowledge” (Bechara and Van de Ven, 2007: 39). Thus, the study of place management calls for an epistemological awareness that can widen and vary a researcher’s horizon via a self-critical and careful interpretation and reflection of multiple lines of inquiry (Alvesson, 2011; Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009).

As justified thoroughly in previous chapters, places and spaces are understood in this work as both relational and territorial, suggesting a mutually transformative evolution of inherited spatial structures and emergent spatial strategies in place management (Jones, 2009). There are parallels here with Pike’s (2009a, 2009b, 2011) notion of geographical entanglements, originally developed for brands and branding, but extended here for places and place management processes. The geographical notion of entanglements highlights how place actors’ material, symbolic, discursive and visual forms of geographical attachment, as well as their spatial associations and connotations, can implicate the process of place management. Such entanglements move “beyond the constraining binaries of either territorial or relational thinking about space and place and focus upon considering their tensions” (Pike, 2009b: 640).

In addition, the multiple, co-existing and neighbouring epistemes (Law and Mol, 2006) that characterise place and space reveal the “openness and incompleteness of place knowledge” (Pierce and Martin, 2015: 1295). Because places and spaces are

neither finished and open, nor fixed and static; they generate multiple kinds of knowledge, an outcome of the multiple epistemologies and methodologies that come into play or even dispute during their continual construction (Creswell, 2004; Thrift, 2003). Thus, adopting a pluralist approach that is both realist and relational exerts a “kind of methodological demand that researchers acknowledge the epistemological multi-dimensionality of places, and makes room to uncover and advocate for alternative possible future productions” (Pierce and Martin, 2015: 1295). This is an important implication for the study and practice of place management, as the multiple kinds of knowledge that define the field “are not only worth having but also demanded if policy, legislation, and practice are to be sensitive to social needs” (Lincoln and Cannella, 2004: 7). It requires not only respect towards different ways of reasoning, but also an understanding of how different knowledges coexist through their mutual relation and (desire for) engagement, in order to “become the very stuff of creative knowledge production (Longino, 2002 as cited in Sheppard, 2008: 2609).

#### *4.2.3.1 Local epistemologies*

What is evident from the above is that the kind of engaged, methodological pluralism employed in this work does not seek to produce an artificial, monist viewpoint of what place management is. Rather, it seeks to describe place management as an open-ended process, generated through constantly changing knowledge that stems from ongoing debates and mutual criticism between “differently positioned knowledge producers, willing to learn from one another’s local epistemologies” (Sheppard, 2015: 1115). A ‘local epistemology’ is defined as substantive knowledge that is generated locally by a variety of different actors and factors in any situation of inquiry, and grounded in a set of methodological and epistemically acceptable assumptions (Longino, 2002).

Any field, if seen as an ecosystem of knowledge production, is initially consisted of multiple local epistemologies. From these, certain theories can dominate others and advance to a monist status, albeit not from the acceptance of their universal validity. Instead, local epistemologies can gain hegemonic status over others via deeply politicised processes that prevent new theories and knowledges from coming into

play. By relegating ‘competing’ theories and knowledges to the periphery (Lakatos, 1970), hegemonic local epistemologies become the centre of calculation (Latour, 1987) in their field, asserting and defending their taken-for-granted claims within and beyond academia (Leitner and Sheppard, 2016). It can be argued that the field of place management is also a ‘victim’ of such hegemonic local epistemologies, being regularly (mis)understood and (mis)interpreted as a prescriptive and ‘textbook’ managerial approach (Ardley and Quinn, 2014) for places, which is based on “theories and ideas that have done much to strengthen the management practices that we are all now so loudly condemning” (Ghoshal, 2005: 75).

Thus, a turn towards a geographically conscious place management approach that is considerate to the complexities of ‘place’ and the multiple roles of ‘people’ and their practices necessitates an openness to as-yet-neglected or unseen theoretical possibilities and attention to the relationality of theory (Elwood et al., 2016). This is pertinent to an epistemology that brings together different theoretical perspectives, without reducing them to monist knowledge (Barnes and Sheppard, 2010; Longino, 2002). In this work, being geographically conscious suggests: 1) an openness to the plethora of theories in geography that can explain what the ‘place’ in place management is; 2) an understanding of the complex nature and characteristics of the place ‘product’ (Warnaby and Medway, 2013); and 3) an attentiveness to “the geography of how humans produce knowledge—to where and when ideas become persuasive, the mechanisms through which they move through space–time, and their effects on the world” (Sheppard, 2015: 1115). The ways humans produce knowledge is, as described above, via practices that create the conditions of possibility for understanding place management (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Such practices are characterised by their situatedness, temporality, materiality, historicity and the tensions they harbour, allowing us to generate different understandings of how place management is unfolded through complex textures of interconnected practices in different times and spaces (Bjerregaard and Klitmøller, 2016; Bourdieu, 1977; Nicolini and Monteiro, 2016).

#### 4.2.3.2 *Reflexivity in place management*

Being attentive to the complexities of places and the distinct characteristics of practices entails a recognition of the situated nature of knowledge and knowledge production, which demands reflexivity during the research process (Shepherd and Suddaby, 2017). Seen not only as an epistemology but also as an embodied activity, process and method of the researcher (Joy et al., 2006), reflexivity “enables both an examination of the grounds upon which claims to know the social world are based, and an exploration of the strengths and limitations of forms of knowledge” (May and Perry, 2014: 109). For the study of place management, this suggests the careful exploration of place management practices in the context of each particular place under study. Such practices are seen as processes of knowledge production that become the subject of investigation. Because practices are embodying the complexities, contingencies, and meanings that constitute places (Jones and Murphy, 2011), they need to be subjected to a realistic analysis that expresses the social, material and historical conditions under which place management processes function. As such, reflexivity “makes possible a more responsible politics, both inside and outside of academia” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 194), that legitimates knowledge production through public debate between the researcher and the researched (Beck, 1996; Johnson and Duberley, 2003).

Alvesson (2011) highlights that reflexive practices can be broadly differentiated between those that stress the problematic notions of a given field (intellectually, politically or ethically), and those that try to generate fresh insights and perspectives. For Alvesson, reflexive research lies in the dialectic between those two broad categories of reflexive practices. This means that the problematic notion of place management that lies in strictly managerial thought needs to be deconstructed and destabilised in order to expose its unreflective reproductions of dominance in research and practice. At the same time, place management needs to be inculcated with alternative theories, paradigms and perspectives that will re-balance and re-frame how we conduct research and will open up “new avenues, paths and lines of interpretation to produce ‘better’ research ethically, politically, empirically and theoretically” (Alvesson et al., 2008: 495). This dialectical understanding of reflexivity

aims to make audiences aware of the uncertainties surrounding place management, and incline them to try to bring their own interpretations and alternative lines of reasoning to the table, thus producing new possibilities for knowledge production (Alvesson, 2011). This type of reflexivity is in line with the aim to construct a theoretical background for the study of place management that challenges the dominance of managerial thought and brings forward a geographical consciousness.

In conclusion, the ontological and epistemological arguments described above suggest that one needs to adopt a pluralist standpoint that will lead towards improved understanding and explanation of the place management field. In this sense, the ontological and methodological pluralism employed in this study seeks to bridge the gap between predetermined, taken-for-granted assumptions and recommendations that stem from managerial views and abstract, theoretical and complex notions of place and space that are pertinent in geographic research. Ontologically, the dialectical interplay between realist and relational understandings of places and practices highlights the relative fixity of the structures in which place management practices are enacted, and how these structures can be challenged via new, situated, emerging practices and everyday actions. Epistemologically, place management needs to steer away from hegemonic epistemologies and embrace the incompleteness, openness, and situatedness of place knowledge. Therefore, being attentive to the complexities of places and the distinct characteristics of practices demands a dialectical reflexivity that simultaneously destabilises and re-frames the place management field by bringing a practice-oriented, geographically conscious perspective to the forefront.

### **4.3 Research strategy**

Having addressed the ontological and epistemological arguments that are relevant for the study of place management, attention will now be paid towards the research strategy that was developed for this work. As seen above, the complexity and ambiguity that surrounds the place management field “demands use of multiple perspectives” (Bechara and Van de Ven, 2007: 70) in order to generate relevant knowledge. Accordingly, understanding and explaining place management suggests



a departure from 'off-the-shelf' fixed research designs that call for a tight pre-specification of the entire research process (including which theories or concepts will be tested) before data collection (Robson, 2011). Instead, place management research, as understood in this work, favours flexible research designs that emerge and develop during data collection. As Robson (2011: 132) highlights, good flexible research typically includes multiple (mostly) qualitative data collection techniques, the presentation of multiple realities, the involvement of participants during method development and evaluation, rigorous approach to data collection, and a thorough understanding of existing research traditions in the field, which can eventually be employed in order to accommodate the study of complex phenomena. It is evident from the above that flexible research also calls for flexible researchers; Robson (2011: 133-134) explains how researchers need to rely mostly on their own skills and competences in order to develop a unique, 'do-it-yourself' design that will most accurately answer their research question(s). In this sense, flexible designs demand the researcher to become the main instrument of data collection (researcher-as-instrument), and demonstrate certain qualities, such as having an open and enquiring mind, being able to adapt and grasp issues in an unbiased way, finding a balance between rigour and reflexivity, and being a good listener and interpreter of the issues at hand.

Unarguably, most place management studies fall into the flexible research design category. This is evident from numerous reviews, particularly in place marketing and branding (Gertner, 2011; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Skinner, 2008; Vuignier, 2017), which show that the majority of studies follow an interpretivist stance that produces "inductively-derived mnemonics and typologies rather than deductively-applied theories as such" (Brown and Campelo, 2014: 425). As seen in the literature review, normative theories and models that stem from deductive reasoning (Gertner, 2011) can undermine the quality and production of theory by imposing rules of how place management should be (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; McCann, 2004a; Williams, 2014). However, embracing inductive flexibility has also been dubbed as a peril for the theoretical and conceptual validity of the field. In his recent systematic literature review, Vuignier (2017) purports that 56% of the articles use qualitative methods,

and two thirds of those qualitative articles adopt a single case study approach. In addition, most articles are descriptive in their nature, simply offering a presentation of phenomena or case studies. However, observable facts regarding the multiple facets of place management (marketing strategy, vision, place branding, place-making, planning etc.) or the relationships between stakeholders in a specific context can only produce, at best, novel predictions about the place under investigation. Such interpretivist place management therefore is prone to a 'storytelling' discourse and representation of phenomena, which means that most of its concepts and theories are vague in their substance. These abstract claims are rarely supported from validated data, which explains the reluctance of researchers to test their models empirically in order to support their theories (Niedomysl and Jonasson, 2012; Skinner, 2008). By favouring mostly case studies, one of the three flexible research designs according to Robson (2011) (the other two being ethnographic studies and grounded theory studies), place management research has so far been largely based on anecdotic evidence (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011) that is guided from the prescriptive approach of consultants and other practitioners (Niedomysl and Jonasson, 2012). As such, place management is treated as a non-reflexive field with a weak theoretical underpinning that requires more academic rigour (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Skinner, 2008; Vuignier, 2017).

#### 4.3.1 Abduction

It follows that for the purpose of this study, neither deductive nor inductive research strategies are considered as ideal for advancing knowledge in the field of place management. Instead, the present study adopts abductive and retroductive reasoning. The words abduction and retroduction have often the same meaning and are used interchangeably (Richardson and Kramer, 2006), but it is important to distinguish them as distinct moments in the research process. Essentially, abduction refers to "an inferential creative process of producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence" (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012: 170). The word 'creative' is of essence here, as it denotes that a set of iterations (that may or may not constitute new theory and knowledge) usually begins with a hunch or guess that is inspired by data or literature (Hargadon and Sutton, 1997). In abduction, the

surprising observation(s) is treated as a breakdown from theory or our understanding of reality (Bechara and Van de Ven, 2007). These surprising facts are the consequences that lead the researcher towards the formation of an explanatory hypothesis (Peirce, 1934), based on the following logic:

*“The surprising fact C is observed.*

*But if A were true, C would be a matter of course.*

*Hence, there is a reason to suspect that A is true.”* (Peirce, 1934: 117).

By acknowledging the following logic, we perceive that social phenomena can be related to other observations in multiple ways, and we try to understand how these phenomena reflect to the social world via the process of sensemaking (Hansen, 2008; Weick, 1995). As Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015: S8) purport, sensemaking is “social, retrospective, grounded on identity, narrative, and enactive”. Particularly sensemaking’s retrospective character fits well with abductive reasoning, as it shows how the constructive practice of sensemaking includes how:

*“people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage ongoing events from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively while enacting more or less order into those ongoing events”* (Weick, 2001: 463).

From the above, it can be argued that the researcher and the research participants follow more or less similar abductive patterns, in which individual facts are collected and connected together in a bottom-up fashion (Richardson and Kramer, 2006). In abduction, formal theories are also treated as inferences and heuristic tools, and can be used constructively and creatively with patterns of data in order to explain the surprising facts that occur during the research (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Hansen, 2008). Such systematic combining (Dubois and Gadde, 2002) allows researchers to work towards theory advancement rather than theory generation. Consequently, abduction allows for cross-fertilisation between unanticipated phenomena, theoretical insights, the cases under study, and the original theoretical framework,

which leads to the development of new combinations “through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality” (Dubois and Gadde, 2002: 559). In this sense, theory advancement via abductive reasoning is achieved via a dialectic of cultivated theoretical sensitivity<sup>3</sup> and methodological heuristics. This requires researchers to “enter the field with the deepest and broadest theoretical base possible and develop their theoretical repertoires throughout the research process” and examine phenomena in a way “that may trigger a novel theory [that] emerges methodologically through careful data analysis against a background of cultivated theoretical expertise” (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012: 180).

Based on the above, it follows that abductive reasoning is in line with the present work’s aim to advance theory in place management via making sense of people’s practices in their everyday lives (Johannisson, 2011), and by connecting these empirical data with existing theories in the field in a way that allows for a deeper understanding of the place management process (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). By adopting abductive reasoning, this work does not seek to forcefully generate new vistas of place management, but rather seeks to develop place management theory from a situational fit (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) between place management practices as happening in places and existing theoretical underpinnings from the management and geographic fields. This connection between theory and data requires a specific methodological strategy that makes it possible to (re)develop theory in a close relationship with empirical evidence (Sæther, 1998), and not move linearly from theory to empirics (deduction) or vice versa (induction).

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<sup>3</sup> Theoretical sensitivity is here understood as a departure from Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) notion as the ability to have theoretical insight that solely stems from the researcher’s background and experience in the field. As Timmermans and Tavory (2012: 170) purport, this understanding of theoretical sensitivity “creates an epistemological and practical dilemma: Researchers were admonished to generate new theory without being beholden to pre-existing theories, but they still required theoretical sensitivity based on a broad familiarity with existing theories to generate new theories”. In this study, a more reflexive view of theoretical sensitivity is employed, which is not only based on the researcher’s manipulation of the data in a way that explains reality, but also incorporates the interactions between the researcher and the participants, as well as the interaction of the data with existing theories and frameworks (Hallberg, 2006).

#### 4.3.2 Retroduction

The process of retroduction can be seen as the combination of all 'ductions mentioned above (Miller, 2003). Essentially the continuation of abductive reasoning, retroduction starts with a point of conjecture that is developed because of the discovery of surprising and interesting phenomena during the study. Such phenomena give rise to a plausible alternative explanation to the existing status quo explanation. The researcher tries to make a guess from the theory-laden data and attempts to explicate it and relate it to ideas and frameworks that guided the research so far, finally developing a defensible theory through deductive logic. This theory is then tested on the basis of continued observation (inductive inferences) (Bechara and Van de Ven, 2007; Sæther, 1998; van Heur, 2010). The retroductive process is not linear or cyclical, but instead highlights the messiness of real research, in which analytical moments "will interact and co-constitute each other at all stages of the research project" (van Heur, 2010: 422). As an accurate depiction of the research process, retroduction is a term that highlights its 'retro' (constant backtracking) nature, which is exemplified by false starts, modification of hypothetical explanations that lead to collection of further data, and constant interaction between data and theory until the final write-up stage (Miller, 2003).

My retroductive journey in this study was characterised by the aforementioned research moments. Specifically, my research project started with the aim to categorise practices of place marketing and explain how these influence a place's stakeholders. The initial pilot study, a preliminary content analysis of place-related websites (Ntounis et al., 2014) (not part of the findings section as the scope of the study changed significantly) highlighted that many of these practices cannot be deduced as solely place marketing ones. This difficulty of conceptualising place marketing practices, due to the apparent confusion in the field (Skinner, 2008), meant that a broader theoretical perspective needed to be taken into account. From there, I started to incorporate system and communication theories in my conceptualisation of the field, in addition to the collection of qualitative data from ten towns (explained below). Further analysis led to the depiction of place management as an interaction system that is based on different and problematic types of communication between

place stakeholders. Place marketing, place branding, and planning practices were now conceptualised as practical, emotional, strategic and operational interactions within the system, and the initial findings suggested that place management needs to emphasise these multiple patterns of communication in partnership arrangements in order to enhance participation and engagement within town partnerships specifically (Ntounis et al., 2015).

However, an interesting pattern of how place actors perceive practices led to a re-reading of the data collected thus far, which provided different insights and perspectives (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009), and made me re-evaluate the premise of place management as an interaction system. This meant that I needed to steer away from structures (such as town partnerships) and move back to practices and their enactment in place. From there, and after discussions with my supervisory team, I embarked on further reading of geographical theories, in order to incorporate significant contributions in geography that provide an understanding of 'place', 'space', and 'people'. Furthermore, I continued data collection in different settings and places, in order to discover parallel and comparative accounts (Burawoy, 2003) of how people enact place management practices. The movement between the object of the study (place management), the necessary and contingent conditions that were portrayed through data collection and analysis, and the emergence of unique outcomes that led toward the reframing of the study, highlight the iterative and reflexive nature of the retroductive process (Pratt, 2009).

The retroductive approach adopted in this study not only helped me to find theoretical patterns and structures that built bridges with my empirical observations in the field (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 1994), but also to focus on the practice-oriented and socio-spatial perspectives of place management. During analysis of the phenomenon of place management, the identification of the relevant practices that seemed to constitute, influence, or drive such a process was of primary importance. This allowed me to focus on how these sets of practices constitute the process, identify the conditions and the tendencies (e.g. directions of change) that drive the process toward its particular manifestation, and develop an appreciative theory based on my own articulation and via a reflexive and continuous 'dialogue' between

theoretical interpretations and empirical observations (Castellacci, 2006; Downward et al., 2002; Downward and Mearman, 2007; Jones and Murphy, 2011; Lawson, 1997, 2003; Yeung, 1997).

In addition, a focus on practice helped me to situate and demarcate place management practices in relation to the space-time contexts and spatial settings where they occur, and reveal their determining characteristics, spatial and temporal contingencies, and uncertainties and inconsistencies, while retaining an analytical openness to the unexpected or inconsistent (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 381). From that, I was able to apprehend why significant practices occur when they occur, if their enactment is characterised by synchronicity, continuity, and/or immediacy (Knorr Cetina and Bruegger, 2002; Schutz, 1967), and how these practices are “constituted by the places, spaces, and material contexts where they are performed” (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 384). Thus, I was able to discover scalable and generalizable insights regarding place management, based on how place management practices were produced and reproduced by place actors within or in relation to particular time-space assemblages. Overall, the retroductive process enabled me to retain the necessary analytical openness to the unexpected or inconsistent while focusing on demarcating place management practices, in order to produce a refined theory of place management that better accounts for the nature, diversity, and complexity of places (Jones and Murphy, 2011).

To sum up, abductive and retroductive processes as articulated in this work depict both reflexivity in terms of how the “researcher revises, reconstructs or develops the initial pre-concepts in the light of empirical findings” (Belfrage and Hauf, 2017: 259), and flexibility in terms of incorporating a range of different research methods while moving back and forth between theory and data (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009; Belfrage and Hauf, 2017; Miller, 2003). Most importantly though, both processes highlight how the study was implemented and experienced corporeally. As such, abductive and retroductive processes as adopted in this work resulted in a tentative and subjective interpretive synthesis, in which existing theories and empirical observations commingled and sensitised my understanding of place management practices during the study, through both immersion in the field, and through my own

perspectivity and subjectivity (Belfrage and Hauf, 2017; Burawoy, 1998; Hansen, 2008). This interplay between deduction, abduction, and induction led to the emergence of new conceptualisations and into a deeper understanding of the internal processes, external forces, spatial and temporal contingencies, and inconsistencies that characterise place management practices, with the goal of reconstructing and advancing existing theory in place management (Burawoy, 2003). The steps involved during the design and implementation of the study will now be explained in further detail.

#### 4.4 A multi-sited ethnographic approach for the study of place management

Based on the arguments above, focus now will be given to the ethnographic approach that was followed in this work. The traditional view of ethnography is rooted in anthropological research and involves thorough description and analysis of the culture and social structure of a specific group for an extended period of time (Robson, 2011; Van Maanen, 2011). An ethnographer's task is to analyse the everyday life and characteristics of a particular group by becoming "an accepted member of that group including participating in its cultural life and practices" (Robson, 2011: 142). By immersing herself/himself in the field, the ethnographer then reports in an interpretative, informative and documentary way ('bringing back the news'), strictly by using locally grounded data (Deegan, 2001; Van Maanen, 2011). As such, the goal of ethnography is to provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of a particular culture, excavating knowledge in a way that allows others to get an insider's perspective of local phenomena.

Is there only one way to define ethnography though? As Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) pinpoint, the term ethnography can refer to a research paradigm that requires total commitment by the researcher, or to a method that one uses when appropriate. Ethnography as a research paradigm has been subjected to widespread critique due to its privileged association with interpretivism (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), exaggerated claims about its utility (Brewer, 1994), links with holism and functionalism that render it as ahistoric, static, and consensual (O'Reilly, 2009), and



its production of, at best, naïve descriptions that neither test nor generate theory (Hammersley, 1990). As Atkinson (2005) argues, these critiques, coupled with the exponential growth in qualitative methodologies, have led to the flourishing of diverse ethnographic approaches that adopt a plurality of methods to the collection and analysis of data. He further illustrates though that in most cases, researchers are oddly enthusiastic about particular methods of data collection and analysis, which inexplicably leads them to develop their research programmes on the basis of one technique or research strategy exclusively. However, most research fields can accommodate – if not encourage – “a good deal of topical variety, methodological imagination, and stylistic diversity” (Van Maanen, 2011: 226). Therefore, it can be argued that whereas most ethnographic approaches hover around the central methodological orientation of “studying at first-hand what people do and say in particular contexts” (Hammersley, 2006: 4), they are still relatively artistic, improvised, situated, and pragmatic models of social research, “where the lasting tenets of research design, canned concepts, and technical writing have yet to leave their mark” (Van Maanen, 2011: 227). Additionally, adopting an ethnographic approach involves accepting, understanding and incorporating emergence in the study, and developing a research design that is adaptable and exquisitely finessed to the context of the study and the complexity of the field (Campbell and Lassiter, 2015; Thorp, 2006).

Notwithstanding the above criticism of traditional ethnography, there is still obvious value to its employment, albeit in different ways. Nowadays, contemporary ethnographic approaches are more likely to take into account the role of history, geography, the researcher’s role in the project, and the interrelatedness of people and institutions, rather than solely labouring in the investigation of the life of a group of people, its customs, and its tradition (Glaeser, 2005; O’Reilly, 2009). This is a more realistic approach to ethnography that enables researchers to explore complex challenges by looking at on-the-ground manifestations in the everyday lives of individuals and groups (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), while simultaneously embracing existing theories, histories and external forces (e.g. globalisation) (Burawoy, 2001, 2003; Marcus, 1995). As such, contemporary ethnographies

maintain the sense of a group or a locality, but also address more complex relations (be that economic, political, social, cultural) in the regional or global scale (O'Reilly, 2009). Additionally, contemporary ethnographies are also likely to deviate from the 'single tribe, single scribe' s way of doing ethnography (Nadai and Maeder, 2005), in order to understand how broader cultural, social, economic, and political structures are produced, maintained and transformed across different sites (Ó Riain, 2009). Such analyses require ethnographic approaches that allow the circulation of practices, meanings, objects and identities across and within multiple sites of activity, thus purporting that the study of social phenomena cannot be accounted for ethnographically by focusing on a single site of intensive investigation (Falzon, 2009; Marcus, 1995, 1998).

In light of the arguments above, I adopt a multi-sited<sup>4</sup> ethnographic approach (Ekström, 2006; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995) for the study of place management practices, which expands into multiple social spaces and physical sites. I further 'augment' my approach by adopting elements from Burawoy's (1991, 1998, 2001, 2003) extended case method (ECM). The reasoning behind adopting such a strategy stems from the ontological and epistemological arguments discussed above, which advocate the maintenance of a complexly relational, open-ended dialectic between the global and the local in spaces, places and spatial scales (Gupta and Clarke, 1996; Harvey, 1996; Massey, 1994b, 2004, 2005; Sassen, 2002a; Sheppard, 2008; Swyngedouw, 1997). As discussed in previous chapters, place management integrates the global and the local in order to mould the character, feel, and reality of places, as well as the people's perceptions of them. This is accomplished by practices of place management that are continuously constructing both global and local understandings of places, and allow people to produce their locality in numerous ways (Appadurai, 1990; Cresswell, 2004; Nicolini, 2012; Virilio, 1997).

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<sup>4</sup> In my approach, I adopt Falzon's (2009) view that multi-sited ethnography implies some form of (geographical) spatial de-centredness. This approach involves conducting multilocale fieldwork and/or translocale (or transnational) analysis (Hannerz, 1996), but as Ekström (2006: 503) mentions, "it is more common to use the term 'multi-sited', which also includes translocale (and multilocale)" to describe all of the above.

As per Glaeser (2005), I maintain that in order to understand how place management practices construct both global and local understandings of places, one needs to extend cases in both time and space (Burawoy et al., 2000; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1998), and develop temporally and spatially extended ethnographic procedures. These procedures need to acknowledge both the micro-level world and the macro-level structures that shape or constrain everyday life (Samuels, 2009). This goal can be achieved via the ECM, which allows researchers to both “uncover the participants’ multiple realities by ‘seeing’ the world from their perspective” (Wadham and Warren, 2014: 10), and bring forward a transformative potential for places via place management practices, all by elaborating existing theories (Burawoy, 1998). As such, ECM can be viewed as a dialogic ethnographic praxis (Bjerregaard and Klitmøller, 2016; Wadham and Warren, 2014) that enables researchers to both carry out ethnographic work in collaboration with their subjects, resulting in ‘multiple knowledges’ that reflect the position of different actors within a social situation, and reconstruct existing theories by combining understanding and explanation from the case(s) (Wadham and Warren, 2014: 10,14). In this work, ECM, coupled with multi-sited ethnography, aims to present rich descriptions of how people produce and experience local practices of place management while living the global conditions of time-space compression and intensified competition (Peltonen, 2007).

In addition, committing to the tenets of ethnography while studying practices demands both an ethnographic and a practice sensibility. Particularly in this work, an ethnographic sensibility implies flexibility and adjustment during immersion in the field (Schatz, 2009), and being attentive to the links between macro-level forces and micro-level meanings (Peltonen, 2007) that frame the:

*“...social relations and interactions between place actors that produce meaning in everyday practices. This is particularly relevant in contemporary urban governance settings characterised by ‘networked’ or ‘joined-up’ approaches with multiple actors involved in planning and policy development processes” (Henderson, 2016: 30).*

Similarly, a sensibility for practice can “capture and convey the actual work that goes into any practice” (Nicolini, 2012: 221). Thus, the researcher needs to focus on what people actually do, understand the complexity of everydayness and the routinised character of practices, as well as how these are assembled and carried out (Sedlačko, 2017). This can be achieved by recursively zooming in and out (Nicolini, 2009a, 2009b) on the data and between data and theory. As Nicolini purports, the zooming in phase helps us to make sense of how the practice is accomplished locally by focusing on local sayings and doings, methods, strategies, repertoires, and lexicons that provide a rich source of information and understanding of the activity at hand. The zooming out phase helps us to expand the scope of our observation by following the practice(s) across different sites. In this work, following the practice(s) relates to Nicolini’s third way of zooming out, which involves comparing different sites where practices of place management are carried out. This is consistent with the comparative nature of multi-sited ethnography (Kjeldgaard et al., 2006) that calls for juxtaposition of phenomena such as place management. This way, researchers can thus shadow the practice and extend their observation to the different places where it shows up, discover patterns of association that transcend the local scale, and examine the effects of global practices on the local (Nicolini, 2009a).

After discussing the particularities of my ethnographic approach, focus will now be given to the actual ‘stages’ of my research. By putting quotation marks to the word stages, I simply position my study in line with ethnographic approaches that deny any ‘cookbook like approach’ to research (Visconti, 2010: 26). As Spradley (1980) purports, the ethnographic process is not linear, as all the basic steps (outlining the research topic, sampling, immersion with the field and role justification, data collection and analysis, and writing and reporting) happen simultaneously. Instead, ethnographic projects are reflexive and spiralling by nature, hence the need to apply flexible research designs in order to modify them when unexpected or irregular events occur (Gobo, 2008). The following subsections will place emphasis on the successive phases of the research, explaining in detail the ethnographic steps adopted in this study during the overlapping tasks of fieldwork, headwork, and textwork (Van Maanen, 2010, 2011).

#### 4.4.1 The retroductive process of outlining the research topic

As mentioned above, the preliminary stages of my research were surrounded by ambiguity of what is to be studied exactly. After initial meetings with my supervisory team, I was encouraged to explore the place marketing field and formulate a research problem in a very open fashion. I started with very broad but central questions (what is place marketing?, how is place marketing practised?, what is the theory behind place marketing?), that soon led to the identification of several issues that were evident in the literature. The foreshadowed problems (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) stemmed from a dissatisfaction regarding the theoretical underpinnings of the field, which have led to the confusion of what place marketing really is (Skinner, 2008), and from the absence of detailed knowledge regarding what place marketing means for the place stakeholders who actually practise it. Henceforth, my problem formulation was theory-driven, triggered by dissatisfaction regarding existing knowledge and approaches in practice (Weick, 1992), and primarily aimed at expanding and modifying the scope of place marketing theory (Tavory and Timmermans, 2009). As Alvesson and Sandberg (2013) argue, this is a typical strategy where the researcher creates an opportunity to contribute to a certain field by finding some 'deficiency' in the literature. In this work, I initially claimed that the place marketing (and afterwards place management) literature was inadequate in terms of overlooking the people in the process of place management, and incomplete in terms of overemphasising the marketing or business side of place management (Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997). Thus, my initial research aim was to reshape the theoretical scope of place marketing by emphasising the dynamic role of a place's stakeholders, particularly those who live and experience the place in their everyday lives, in the strategic attempt to position a place in the marketplace (Kalandides, 2011b; Kavartzis and Hatch, 2013).

However, as described in the retroduction section, this initial research aim and the research topic was about to change soon, as new aspects of the research problem emerged while I became more involved in the field and with the literature. Both Robson (2011) and Gobo (2008) state that ethnographic research is flexible and adaptive, which means that the research topic will be defined with greater precision

later in the course of the study. Whereas I developed initial research questions (Which practices can be considered as place marketing ones? What is the role of a place's stakeholders throughout the process of place marketing? How should 'place' be conceptualised in 'place marketing?') and a theoretical framework, I was prepared to change those based on the data collection and discussions that followed afterwards. The following extract from my memos highlights this:

*"The data suggest that this is a study of what people are doing in order to change things in their town, it is a study of interventions needed to drive change, in terms of town image and prosperity, sustainability and regeneration. It is basically people from different stakeholder groups who are not happy with the situation at the moment and most importantly are people who want to help towards making their town/place a bit better. It is a matter of: What (is needed) AND How (shall we do it) ..."*

The above memo shows that place marketing was an insufficient term to encompass the plethora of interventions and practices that are evident in places. As I was becoming more involved in participants' discussions during my data collection, I decided to refocus on the broader array of practices, and reformulate my aims and objectives, as well as the research topic. Place management was adopted as an all-encompassing term that includes practices of place marketing and branding, planning, and place-making. Furthermore, I changed the focus of the study from practices to patterns of communications between stakeholder groups. By taking a social interaction system approach, I conceptualised place management as an amalgam of practical, emotional, strategic and operational interactions that need to be communicated effectively in order to enhance participation and engagement. Mistakenly, I went a step too far in my analysis and presumed that this is how people approached place management. This is what Berry (1989) calls an 'imposed etic', and occurs when a researcher draws meaning and interprets phenomena solely from her/his previous knowledge and culture. It took further data collection and a surprising moment, when participants interpreted place branding in a rather unusual way (indicating that their town's brand value lies in offering free parking) that shifted my attention again to practices. After further discussions with participants during

data collection, and a re-reading of data, it became clear that the initial focus on practices was the right one. What was needed though was a geographical focus that was “abandoned” midway through the study for the systemic approach.

Having realised from discussions that people are more concerned about how place management practices reflect on the actual place, and not so much on their communication patterns, I was compelled to refine the research topic and focus on how people enact place management practices. This is similar to what Visconti (2010) refers to as negotiated interpretations between the researcher(s) and the participant(s), which aim to improve the research relevance for both parties. It was a pragmatic reflection that helped me understand that my ethnographic approach needed to relate “the words spoken and the practices observed or experienced to the overall cultural framework within which they occurred” (Watson, 2011: 205–206), rather than be solely used as a method of data collection. In addition, a focus on practices revealed insight-provoking anomalies between theory and what happens on the ground (Burawoy, 1991), which led to further data collection in different settings in order to increase the empirical content of the study (Wadham and Warren, 2014). The whole retroductive process also highlights the reflexive and spiralling nature (Figure 4.1) of ethnographic research, “where conceptualisation and operationalisation interweave in a constant reflexive process of reciprocal adjustments by virtue of the possible re-specification of the original formulation of a concept, or the re-conceptualisation of the datum” (Gobo, 2008: 86–87). As such, the research problem remained open, broad and flexible in order to adapt to emergent phenomena (Lloveras, 2014), even after the adjustments on the research topic and the switch toward understanding place management practices under a geographical lens. This openness led to a certain instability and fluidity of meaning regarding the research problem, which, even at the final stage of writing, does not lead to a naïve closure alien to the open-ended character of the field (Tavory and Timmermans, 2009; Van Maanen, 2011).

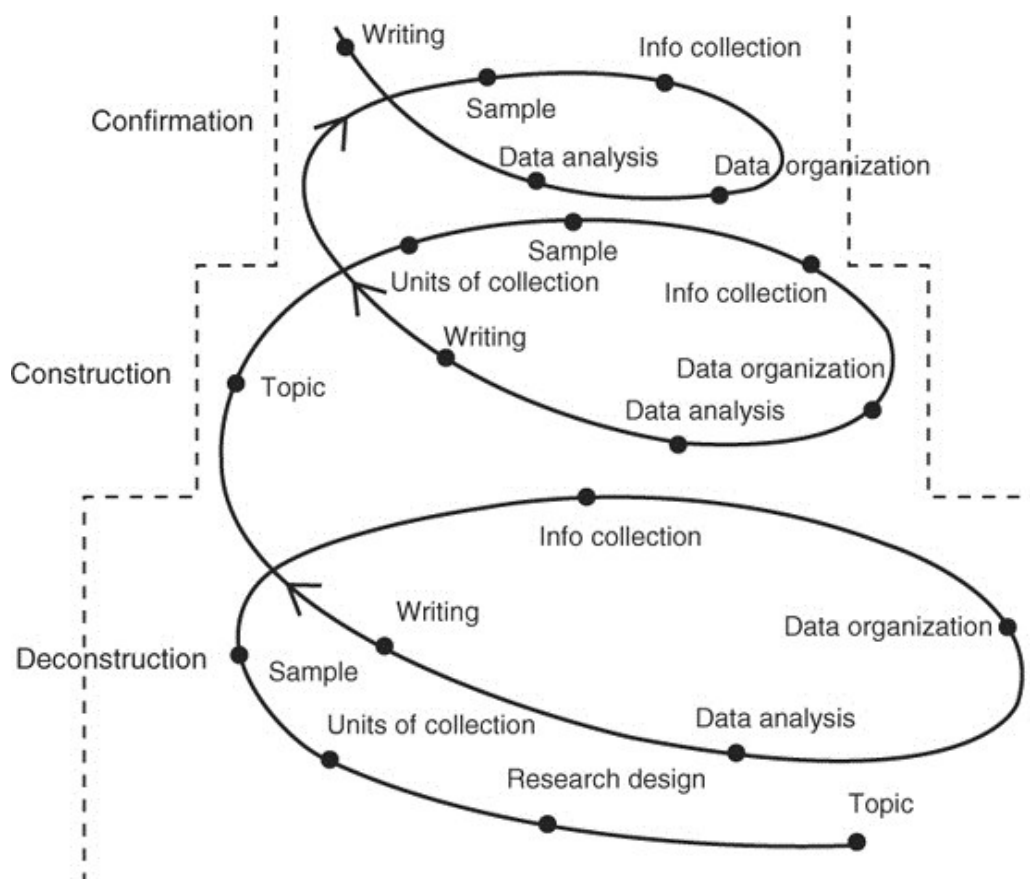


Figure 4.1 The spiral-shaped model of ethnographic research, (Gobo, 2008: 86)

#### 4.4.2 Sampling and access

Parallel to the process of outlining the research topic, decisions needed to be made regarding the ‘casing’ and sampling for the study. I use the word ‘casing’ because ethnographies can be linked with the case study approach, even though case studies are not necessarily ethnographic (O’Reilly, 2009). In this work, the set of cases selected follows Stake’s (2003) reasoning that a case study is a choice of what is to be studied. Based on my initial conceptualisations, I needed to also determine the fields or settings (O’Reilly, 2009) that would give me the best chance to study people’s practices in places. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 32) suggest, researchers need to differentiate between the choice of settings and the selection of cases for study. For them, the setting selected needs to come first, as foreshadowed problems, research aims and questions will spring (and later modified) from studying, participating and observing people and groups in these. However, the choice of setting(s) will rarely provide all the answers to the problems and questions of the



researcher. Hammersley and Atkinson recognise the impossibility of selecting an ideal setting and argue that:

*“At best, it is a matter of identifying the sorts of location that would be most appropriate for investigation of the research problem, as currently formulated. When a type of setting has been decided on, it is advisable (if possible) to ‘case’ possible research sites with a view to assessing their suitability, the feasibility of carrying out research there, and how access might best be accomplished should they be selected.”* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 29).

Based on the above, two issues are clear. First, that selection of settings and cases is not random. Second, that researchers are basically left with two options in sampling, that is opting for either an opportunistic (convenience) or a reasoned (purposive, theoretical, snowball) sample (Gobo, 2008). Drawing on both options, I developed my sampling strategy in terms of accessibility, convenience, and theoretical appropriateness based on the likelihood of a case to extend or contest the emergent theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). Furthermore, conceptualisations of cases (particularly during purposive sampling) reflected the ECM, as selection was made by developing both an a-priori theoretical framing (Tavory and Timmermans, 2009) and by the emergence of interesting outcomes during the study (Robson, 2011). Therefore, sampling in this work is understood as “a continuous process than a separate stage in the study” (Dubois and Gadde, 2002: 559) that overlaps with fieldwork and data analysis. These choices will be discussed in further detail. For the sake of clarity, the sampling and access discussion will be split into two subsections, since fieldwork was conducted in two stages that involved different settings, sampling procedures, and access negotiations.

#### *4.4.2.1 Sampling and access in Stage 1 of the study*

Before I describe the choice of sampling, it is important to highlight how my extracurricular activities guided the first stage of data collection. Prior to even starting discussions about data collection, I was presented with the opportunity to

participate in a research project<sup>5</sup> that was focused on place management and knowledge exchange on the high street, for which I had already conducted a short literature review in my first year of PhD study. I was assigned the role of research assistant, working closely with other researchers on developing a state-of-the-art review of the literature, identifying research priorities (Parker et al., 2014), developing a model for high street change, and building a framework for place interventions. Project activities also included the conduct of workshops in ten partner towns, visiting locations and engaging in discussions with place stakeholders, as well as having regular meetings and discussions with key informants. For each town, I had to engage in further reading and develop an understanding of each place from archival data and data given by the key informants. These data provided descriptions of local stories, information about town partnerships and their actions in the place, and details about the problems and challenges that each town was facing (for a similar approach see Campelo et al., 2014). During this process, it became evident that the problems that specific towns face in terms of place management and marketing were quite similar to my theory-driven problematising of place marketing practices (at the time). Therefore, and after discussions with my supervisory team, I decided to take advantage of the plurality of settings and cases presented to me and conduct multi-sited fieldwork based on the project sample.

My initial sampling model was a convenience/opportunistic one, and was determined by practical considerations, such as my presence in particular settings that allowed participant observation and interaction with relevant place actors. At first, the retail-oriented nature of the project suggested that I was in danger of collecting data that were not close to my research considerations. However, during my first interactions with project participants, it became evident that discussions hovered around the challenges of managing places and the practices that are either implemented, or needed, in order to make places better. After careful consideration, I decided to continue with data collection, as the settings studied remained close to the research aim and objectives, and even gave me the opportunity to further the research topic

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<sup>5</sup> A brief summary of the research project is provided in the introductory part of Chapter 5

(moving from place marketing to place management). As O'Reilly (2009: 197–198) states, employing opportunistic/convenience sampling in this way “can be viewed in a positive light if it means that the researcher is led by the demands of the research and by the feelings and thoughts of the participants to sample people and places that arise as an opportunity”. Even though I was unaware of what exactly was interesting in the particular research settings at first, I decided to proceed with the data collection, get a feel for the situation, and eventually frame the research topic in a slightly different way. As Zussman (2004) pinpoints, this creative and rigorous process of simultaneously finding and making cases is the best way to use opportunistic sampling when studying people in places.

As data collection occurred simultaneously with my involvement as a research assistant in the high street project, I did not personally negotiate access directly with the gatekeepers involved. Instead, access was already negotiated as part of the original project preparation, and official partners (town centre managers, town partnership leaders, or other local figures) were approached for joint collaboration during the project. Furthermore, gatekeepers were also responsible for inviting people to the workshops in which I conducted participant observation. At this stage of the research, I did not have to design a strategy for ‘getting in’ (achieving physical access to the place) (Cassell, 1988: 93–95), but I had to justify to the gatekeepers how the data collected from the observations in workshops and other town activities might be appropriate for my research. Whereas my role as a project research assistant was clear to all participants, my role as a PhD researcher was known only to the gatekeepers and participants who I engaged in informal discussions with after workshops. The latter is what Gobo (2008) explains as semi-covert observation. It was necessary to approach the field in this way so that I could perform my tasks as a research assistant in relative freedom, while also allowing participants to express their opinions and beliefs as freely as possible (as they were already constrained from the obtrusiveness of our presence) for the purpose of my PhD project.

#### *4.4.2.2 Sampling and access in Stage 2 of the study*

During my initial data analysis, I was surprised at how some participants would interpret and understand specific practices of managing and marketing places.

Indeed, an emphasis on finding solutions that are not entirely based on established structures and modes of place management and place governance suggested a slightly different understanding of place management that resembled an anarchic approach, with a focus on direct actions in space and place (Graeber, 2009), and in everyday do-it-yourself, voluntary, and mutual aid practices (Gibson, 2014). The study was then reframed, with emphasis on the enactment of bottom-up, direct practices of space and place. Consequently, I had to select new cases that could offer parallel and comparative accounts (Burawoy, 2003) of how people enact place management practices, in order to build a theoretical narrative that is based upon tensions or contrasts (Eisenhardt, 1989; Shepherd and Suddaby, 2017). This purposive approach is similar to what grounded theorists call 'theoretical sampling' (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which focuses on "finding new data sources that can best explicitly address theoretically interesting facets of the emergent analysis" (Clarke, 2003: 557). However, my focus at this point was to broaden the theoretical perspective of place management by primarily focusing on the analysis of interactions within social situations of inquiry that constitute meaning, attitudes, and even knowledge (Burawoy, 1998), rather than on individuals.

Based on the above, I decided to conduct further research in cities with autonomous sites. This coincided with another research project that I was working on with another colleague, in which we examined the relationship between legal geography and place branding in squatted areas (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017). I identified two sites (Christiania in Copenhagen and Metelkova in Ljubljana) that were outside the UK, thus adopting a transnational approach in my multi-sited ethnographic project. This is important as place management and the practices that surround it are seen in this study as transnational phenomena. As such, thick description and deep immersion comes from embracing the mobility of transnational phenomena (such as place management) and 'going with the flow' from one site to the other (Burawoy et al., 2000; Hannerz, 2003; Kjeldgaard et al., 2006), rather than staying in a single field for an extended period of time. Furthermore, the selection of these sites was based on the prefigurative politics that are evident in those places (practising and organising in the here-and-now as a bottom-up process), which are seen as strategic and tactical

moves towards making a place (and its society) better in the future (Gordon, 2012; Ince, 2012). Since these areas have an unusual status (they are, or were until recently, officially squatted), they fall into a specific type of purposive settings sampling, which is called extreme case or deviant sampling (Saunders et al., 2009).

In this type of sampling, the researcher identifies cases that can be particularly informative (Neuman, 2011) due to their unique status and particular attributes (Gobo, 2008). As Burawoy (2009) argues, such cases are selected due to their possible contribution to reconstruct theory, “by allowing the tracing of differences between cases and external forces” (Ridder, 2016: 143). By pursuing research in these sites, I had the chance to identify the differences and similarities of how the practice of managing places is understood in these opposing cases. This way, I included a comparative dimension that is integral in multi-sited ethnography, since I studied practices and phenomena that were previously seen as “worlds apart” (Kjeldgaard et al., 2006: 527) due to the differing nature of the sites involved. Like Van Maanen (2011), I contend that the social situations where practices of place management are evident are interesting for both their unique specificities, and their similarities. Henceforth, my choice of sampling is supported by the premise that the findings from these unique sites will be relevant in understanding or explaining what place management is in more typical sites as well (Patton, 2002).

Unlike the previous stage of the research, access needed to be negotiated in some way for both places. I allowed myself sufficient time (Saunders et al., 2009) in order to contact representatives who could inform me of the possibility to gain access in some of the settings where everyday practices are enacted. Specifically, I contacted the person responsible for ongoing research activity in Christiania (Christiania Researcher in Residence), and the program coordinator of a non-governmental organisation (ŠKUC) that has its offices in Metelkova. My initial communication started a month prior to my visits, when the first introductory letters were sent via email. I provided brief information about my research and my role in the project. In addition, I contacted several place stakeholders, including citizens, town planners, and marketers who work closely with the city council, in order to conduct interviews with them. I provided assurances that anonymity and data confidentiality will be

ensured. Access to conduct interviews in both sites was guaranteed prior to my visits, and was also supplemented by snowball sampling during the data collection process, as the participants themselves suggested to interview other people who live and work in these areas.

Since both places are open to all citizens as any other part of their respective cities, physical access in the broader area was not an issue, as was assured to me in my initial communications. However, I was not able to gain further access in particular settings, such as spaces where people engage in direct democratic practices and discuss about issues in their places. Thus, I was limited to participation in various events during my visits, and to walking around the sites for many hours during the day, observing the practices of people in these places. The former approach resembles Shields' (1994) interpretation of the researcher as *flâneur*, since my goal was to observe practices of place management without intention to intervene or change them, but rather to reimagine and map them so that I can make my own reflexive interpretation of them. Whereas this approach probably alienated me from the social situations and social relations that were evident in both sites (Shields, 1994), it gave me the ability to code up the practices and the images observed in a way that allowed me "jump to other places where the same or associated phenomena occur within the work" (Featherstone, 1998: 921). Featherstone (1998) describes this function of *flânerie* as important for uncovering the traces of social meaning in the places under study. From the above, it is evident that I followed a different approach for conducting fieldwork in the second stage of the research. This is in line with multi-sited ethnographic work, as not all sites are treated by a uniform set of fieldwork practices, nor is the intensity of fieldwork the same in all sites (Kjeldgaard et al., 2006). Table 4.2 summarises the research stages and the methods used. In the next section, I will describe the methods in further detail.

#### 4.4.3 Data collection methods

In this subsection, emphasis will be given to the methods and techniques used for collecting data throughout the duration of the study. Like in most ethnographies, I relied on a creative combination of formal and informal data collection techniques. The distinction between formal and informal is made here to signify the difference

between: conversing with people in the course of, or after, certain activities; reading documents that provide a ‘lay’ account of everyday life in the place under study (e.g. from social media accounts); and arranging a formal meeting (through a workshop or a pre-arranged interview). Particularly when having informal discussions with participants, “the dividing line between participant observation and interviewing is hard to discern” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 108). However, I feel that this distinction needed to be made, in order to highlight how it is the researcher’s responsibility to filter these types of data as the primary research instrument of the study (Lloveras, 2014). Nevertheless, informal discussions were particularly important especially through the first stage of my research, where I had the chance to collect opinions from a multitude of place actors and stakeholders, including members of the research team. Such discussions helped me to identify emerging concepts that would later lead to the refinement of the research topic (Neuman, 2011). I will now focus on participant observation, the interview, and documents as methods of data collection.

<b>Research Stage</b>	<b>Location(s)</b>	<b>Methods of data collection</b>
<b>Deskwork Stage 1</b>	Manchester	Desk research of secondary data from project towns (e.g. town documents, strategic plans, marketing campaigns)
<b>Fieldwork Stage 1</b>	Multiple locations in 10 towns in the UK	Participant observation, informal discussions, field notes
<b>Data analysis 1</b>		
<b>Deskwork Stage 2</b>	Manchester	Desk research of secondary data from the autonomous sites and the cities they are part of
<b>Fieldwork Stage 2</b>	Copenhagen (Christiania) and Ljubljana (Metelkova)	Participant observation, <i>flâneuring</i> , informal discussions, interviews, field notes
<b>Data analysis 2 Textwork</b>		

Table 4.2 Research stages of the study

#### *4.4.3.1 Participant observation in formal and informal settings*

While a variety of methods are now acceptable in ethnographic studies, observing is unarguably the “primary ethnographic sensibility for ethnographers to engage in” (Neyland, 2008: 163). Observation methods warrant particular emphasis during research design due to their directness to offer a first-hand experience of the social worlds being studied (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; O’Reilly, 2009). Participant observation not only requires a physical presence in the field but also being part of a group or organisation (Robson, 2011), and having an understanding of ‘how things work’ in settings. Thus, the researcher needs to both participate and observe activities, ask questions, converse with participants on their own terms, and read relevant documents (Watson, 2011: 207–208). As Falzon (2009: 1) highlights, the ethnographic method entails the situational combination of field techniques (e.g. interviews, note taking, recording, examination of archival data and indigenous literature) that are rooted in the ideal of participant observation, itself dependent on the relationships of trust developed during time spent in the field. He goes on to say that with respect to multi-sited ethnography, participant observation still remains of utmost importance, but since the object of study is “mobile and/or spatially dispersed, being likewise surely becomes a form of participant observation” (Falzon, 2009: 9).

Thus, the method is understood in this study in its abbreviated version, “where involvement is measured in weeks or even days” (Robson, 2011: 320), and an emphasis on following the practice and on breadth over depth is given (Hannerz, 2003). However, this does not change the fact that participant observation can maintain its rigour and reveal fundamental processes, as well as tensions and contradictions that indicate potential anomalies within multiple settings (Wadham and Warren, 2014). Additionally, from an ECM perspective, participant observation reveals the interpersonal and micro-level experiences of participants that can then help the researcher to contextualise them with macro-level structures (Samuels, 2009); or what Burawoy (2003) calls a practical demarcation between what lies in the participant observation arena and what happens outside of it. Put simply, a certain



reflexivity is required during participant observation, as the field notes produced are in “a continuous dialogue between observation and theory” (Burawoy, 2003: 668).

Notwithstanding these caveats of participant observation in multi-sited ethnography and ECM, the level of participation and involvement in settings is a key issue that needs to be addressed prior to data collection. For example, Gold’s (1958) typology of participant observation describes how researchers can select between four types of observation (complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer). Spradley (1980: 58) elaborates on this to provide some clarity on the blurring roles of participant-as-observer and observer-as-participant (Saunders et al., 2009). He does this by adding levels of involvement, ranging from high (complete participation), medium-high (active participation), medium-low (moderate participation) and low (passive participation), to none (non-participation). Adopting either a complete participant or complete observer view is highly problematic though, as the researcher can lose any objectivity by going ‘native’, or become completely detached and lose any ethnographic sensibility respectively (O’Reilly, 2009).

Thus, the researcher is more likely to move between the participant/observer continuum and decide herself/himself when to become more involved or detached, and when to take a participant or observer stance. In this work, as explained above, my dual ‘identity’ at the first stage of the research (both as project research assistant and as PhD researcher) meant that my role in participant observation was not always clear cut. During fieldwork, I was adopting a more active stance when I was participating in workshop discussions that involved me expressing opinions about the town’s challenges relating to high street change. And when a certain workshop activity was happening, I would also go around tables and help participants express their views about certain aspects of place management in their town. However, I adopted a moderate to passive stance later in the workshops, when participants were split in groups to engage in mutual dialogue in order to decide what place interventions are needed in the town. This way, I was able to discover interesting practices that would not be clearly articulated or easily discussed otherwise (Henderson, 2016), and also understand “the complex interplay between (formal)

social structure and (informal) social organisation” (Kubik, 2009: 33). Furthermore, being less active during parts of the fieldwork allowed me to write down *in situ* notes, thus minimising chances of losing rich and informative data (Neyland, 2008).

Overall, I collected data from 14 half-day workshops in ten towns, and from formal meetings with project participants<sup>6</sup>. Apart from these formal events, I also collected data from informal events and activities. Indeed, in the second stage of my research, all participant observation was informal. Such activities included:

- going to a pub, café, or restaurant after workshops (stage 1)
- visiting stores and streets with participants (stage 1)
- participating as an expert on an urban design event in one of the project towns (stage 1)
- visiting other public venues (both stages)
- going to clubs and other cultural events (e.g. an art exhibition, and the theatre) in Metelkova (stage 2)
- guided activities (walking tours) in both Metelkova and Christiania (stage 2)
- participating in an event on alternative economies in Christiania (stage 2)

My informal participant observation emphasised more on combining my etic perspective and reflections on each place with the participants’ own emic perceptions and reflections. Additionally, given the fact that both stages of research were collaborative (with fellow researchers and participants being involved in fieldwork), I had the opportunity to further my data collection from more discussions, even after fieldwork, based on my colleagues’ own ethnographic accounts. This reflexive ongoing process (Campelo et al., 2014) is in line with Pink’s (2008) argument

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<sup>6</sup> Participants included town centre managers, major retailers, independent retailers, market managers, supermarkets, retail property owners, shopping centre managers, local politicians, MPs, Mayors, council officers (economic development, planning, tourism, town centre services), residents, volunteers, charities, headteachers, planning consultants, SMEs, youth workers, care workers, civic society and local history groups, gallery owners, banks, restaurants and bars, fast-food outlets, leisure operators and police.

that reflexivity is more likely to happen during casual talks and when collaborative ethnographic fieldwork practices are employed.

#### *4.4.3.2 Interviews*

For the ethnographic project, interviewing is usually seen as a complementary technique to elicit further information from participants. An ethnographic interview is a specific type of discursive interview that is conducted during the researcher's time in the field (Spradley, 1979). O' Reilly (2009) highlights that ethnographic research already employs a variety of interviewing tools through participant observation, as the researcher asks questions and converses with participants during fieldwork continuously. However, there is a need occasionally to further engage in longer conversations in order to discuss in depth certain aspects of the research topic that can be more elusive under daily interaction. In multi-sited ethnographies, interviewing is a method of continuing importance for data collection. Hannerz (2003) attributes this on the time limitations of multi-site projects, as the researcher, unable to conduct long stints of participant observation, jumps from field to field in a hurry, and in language barriers between foreign correspondents during participant observation. The latter requires the researcher to spot the participants who can be interviewed in a language that the researcher commands, which explains why most interviews in multi-sited studies are carried out in English (Marcus, 1995).

Such challenges became more apparent during the second stage of my research. Since ethnographic work for the high street project spanned, with breaks, for more than a year, I knew beforehand that it would be difficult to collect the same volume of data in just a couple of weeks in Christiania and Metelkova. Thus, ethnographic work in these two sites was more selective, consisting of particular observations, and a mixture of pre-arranged and ethnographic interviews. In both areas, interviews helped me to structure the field as access to meetings in both places was not feasible<sup>7</sup> (Elmholdt, 2016). Moreover, interviews tackled the elusiveness of the research object, and provided the bulk of information regarding how practices of place

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<sup>7</sup> Even if access was granted, the language barrier would make any observation unreliable in both sites, probably even with the help of an interpreter.

management are enacted from both a top-down (e.g. municipality, tourism agencies) and a bottom-up (e.g. residents, artists) perspective. Whereas most of the interviews in this work lie in the 'manufactured data' category (Silverman, 2007) that is opposed by most ethnographers, I argue that their incorporation allowed me to discuss a variety of issues regarding place management, and produce material which allowed comparative analysis with the accounts of others (Watson, 2011). Moreover, it was through pre-arranged interviews that I managed to build a relationship with community representatives, who would then help me to approach participants that would be hard to identify (Robson, 2011). Because of that, some interviews were held impromptu at the setting, a typical characteristic of the ethnographic interview (Gobo, 2008).

A total of 14 in-depth interviews (seven in each site) with municipality officials, urban planners, tourism and marketing agents, and community representatives were held. In-depth interviews are informal, non-standardised and open-ended, meaning that the interviewer has not designed a predetermined set of questions (although a clear idea of the phenomenon/a explored exists), and that the interviewee is allowed to speak freely about events, beliefs, experiences and behaviour regarding the area under study (Robson, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). The conversational, non-structured approach of in-depth interviews allowed the participants to talk in their own terms about their everyday lives, their roles and activities, how they perceive place management, their views and opinions regarding practices of place management, and so on.

I prepared an interview guide prior to the interviews, with basic themes around place management, and a list of probes that helped me to shape the conversation, or expand on particular responses where I felt that an interesting theme was emerging (Neyland, 2008; Robson, 2011). The interdisciplinary nature of the research topic meant that progression during the interviews happened in a rather exploratory manner that resembles the explorative interview approach (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Moreover, the conversational style of the interview permitted "co-production of meaning and understanding" (Hakansson, 2015: 188) between myself and the participants. This meant that my interactions with them were flexible enough to

accommodate different ways of reasoning regarding the practices of place management, or follow a different path when new themes were emerging (Lloveras, 2014). Overall, the interviews enabled insight into the place management process that would not be possible to be drawn otherwise, and allowed me to make sense of the social situations and developing strategies that happen in everyday practice (Henderson, 2016).

#### *4.4.3.3 Documents*

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note, most ethnographic settings contain a plethora of documents that provide integral information about the settings being studied and/or their wider contexts, and can even dictate the activities that take place in a particular setting. As contemporary field studies are relying less on participant observation, documents have become a valuable data source, albeit one that demands “new skills in composition and synthesis” (Ekström, 2006: 505). Moreover, as Ó Riain (2009) highlights, documents and other archival materials can be compared with our observations in the here-and-now, thus casting light to historical actions and practices, and studying them under the present prism. Because documents are not primary data materials, they must be used as supplementary material to field notes and interviews. However, documents are not separate from action. Since their production usually aims at intervening, modifying, and influencing actions and processes (such as how to manage a place), they need to also be examined in terms of their agency (Gobo, 2008).

Similar to other studies that employ a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Aitken and Campelo, 2011; Campelo et al., 2014; Giovanardi et al., 2013), I engaged with a variety of documents, namely cultural texts, news articles, social media channels, official and promotional governmental documents, legal materials, town and city plans, town strategy documents, previous studies, and minutes from meetings and public consultations. This occurred prior, pursuant to, and after fieldwork. I used Hammersley and Atkinson’s (2007) typology of formal, informal, and official documentation in order to classify collected material. Informal documentation, such as information gathered via social media and websites, was used to identify emerging themes and interesting aspects of everyday life prior to fieldwork. Such documents

were particularly helpful prior to my visits in Christiania and Metelkova, which have little to no official documentation. Additionally, more informal documentation, such as cultural texts and books, were offered by several research participants during fieldwork. Formal and official documents were also primarily assessed from various place-related websites (e.g. town and city councils, BIDs, town partnerships, town teams). Formal and official documentation was particularly helpful during the first stage of the project, as I was able to corroborate evidence regarding which bits of information on the documents were framing the dialogues between place actors regarding practices of place management (Neyland, 2008). As such, I gained a better understanding on how these texts communicate regulation and place governance, and how people's opinions and behaviours are shaped from their interpretation.

#### *4.4.3.4 Field notes*

Taking field notes is a major technique for recording observations and interviews during fieldwork. Field notes are the accumulation of all the periods of observation, such as jottings, full notes, ideas, emotional reflections, and so on (O'Reilly, 2009), "later to be coded, sorted, and analysed when all the data are collected" (Burawoy, 2003: 668). Though it sounds like a simple process, several authors (Emerson et al., 2011; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; O'Reilly, 2009) have noted that field notes need to be taken with care, self-consciousness, and a sensibility that comes from one's immersion in the field. Since field notes are central to the ethnographic project, they can be thought of as a reflexive account of the researcher's attempt to make sense of a particular setting. Accordingly, field notes require careful treatment, analysis, consideration and questioning by the researcher throughout the project (Neyland, 2008). This was especially evident after stints in the field, where I would try to elaborate on my headnotes and jottings and expand them into more analytic accounts (full notes). Naturally, my descriptions were highly selective and reflected my own positionality, personal sensitivities, and choices of interaction (Emerson et al., 2011). These caveats aside, there was still an opportunity to translate these notes into reflexive, developing theoretical frameworks (O'Reilly, 2009).

#### 4.4.4 Analysing and writing the findings

As argued above, ethnographic work is reflexive and spiralling by nature, allowing for a constant re-specification of a concept/theory through multiple readings of data. This involves “moving forward from idea to theory to design to data collection to findings, analysis, and back to theory” (O’Reilly, 2009: 15) via abductive and retroductive reasoning. Data analysis is therefore an iterative phase during which initial concepts and theories are reconstructed, revised and developed in light of empirical findings (Belfrage and Hauf, 2017), until we reach “a stage where we feel we have collected enough information to say something significant about our findings, and where we feel we have sufficiently explored the various issues that excited our interest” (O’Reilly, 2009: 14). Based on the above, data analysis in this study is characterised by a practical reflexivity about the condition of theorising (Alvesson et al., 2008).

I moved away from prescriptive forms of analysis and towards a self-consciously situated form of critique (Willmott, 1993), which involved a critical interpretation of everyday place management practices as they are enacted and understood in specific social settings (Flyvbjerg, 2001), and their translation into wider social and spatial relations by highlighting the similarities and differences of place management practices across locales (Herbert, 2010). The complexities of places and the complex relations that these encounters meant that a “methodology of engagement, not detachment, of informal dialogue as well as formal documentation” (Ley, 1988) was needed to guide the study. Based on these assumptions, data analysis was directed by elements of multi-sited ethnography and the ECM, coupled with the analytic procedures of thematic analysis. As the practice of place management is mobile and multiply situated, it implies a comparative emergence that stems from the juxtapositions of phenomena in the different real-world sites of investigation (Marcus, 1995: 102). This emergence is consistent with the analytic stage of ECM, which examines similar phenomena in order to explain their differences based on external forces (Burawoy, 1991). This section will now focus on how ECM and thematic analysis were combined during data analysis.

#### 4.4.4.1 ECM as a data analysis method

As mentioned above, ECM is a methodological approach that seeks to develop theory in an iterative analytical process, and which moves between the micro-level world (analysed through interviews, participant observation and document data in this work) and macro-level structures that shape or constrain everyday life (Bjerrisgaard and Kjeldgaard, 2012; Samuels, 2009). As ECM presupposes the elaboration of existing theories prior and during data collection and analysis, it is viewed as both a mode of data analysis and theory reconstruction (Kates, 2006) that puts empirical research into a dialogic relationship with pre-existing theory (Broad, 2016). This means that the researcher undergoes several cycles of confrontation between theory and data, and each iteration is directing the process of additional data collection and use of additional theories and concepts (Danneels, 2002). Essentially, the ECM is comprised of two “running exchanges” (Burawoy, 1991: 10–11) between data analysis and literature review, and data collection and data analysis, as seen in Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2 The two “running exchanges” of ECM in this study, adapted from Burawoy (1991: 10-11)

Data analysis is therefore the central activity in ECM and dictates the iterative process. In the first running exchange, data analysis happens in conjunction with extensive analysis of the literature, pointing in relevant theories and concepts that need to be included in the study in order to aid data interpretation. In the second exchange, the researcher goes back and forth between data collection and analysis, and collects more data based on suggestions from initial data analysis and the



literature (Danneels, 2002). From this dialogic approach to data analysis, the researcher is able to formulate historically and contextually bound explanations of cases, social situations, and in this study, particular outcomes from place management practices (Burawoy, 1991: 280). Additionally, findings are also interpreted in light of the macrosocial, cultural, and contextual forces that affect the social situations being studied (Kates, 2006).

#### 4.4.4.2 *Double hermeneutics*

As mentioned above, the reading of data is essentially a reflexive and continuous 'dialogue' between theoretical interpretations and empirical observations (Castellacci, 2006; Downward et al., 2002; Downward and Mearman, 2007; Jones and Murphy, 2011; Lawson, 1997, 2003; Yeung, 1997). I consequently followed a hermeneutic process that draws on Giddens' (1984) idea of double hermeneutics<sup>8</sup>. The concept implies a two-way movement between the researcher and the researched (Sayer, 2000) that accounts for the "concomitant production of meaning and meaning-making within a research process" (Brogden, 2010: 323). The double hermeneutic acknowledges that the researcher reads texts<sup>9</sup> with the aim to interpret something that is in fact pre-interpreted (Jessop, 2005). Texts are produced by use of previous knowledge, from which people are informed in order to "make choices and alter their practice" (Nicolai and Seidl, 2010: 1262). Thus, the process of interpreting requires reflexivity from the researcher, who, in light of the historical, contextual, and contingent production of meanings associated with theory and practice, reinterprets these meanings, and resituates them both within the research study and the field of knowledge. Concomitantly, the researched are also influenced by the actions of the researcher, who "is similarly implicated, because the act of researching also

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<sup>8</sup> According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009: 271–278), the double hermeneutic can be extended to include other levels of interpretation, particularly a critical interpretation and a self-critical and linguistic reflection (what they term *quadri-hermeneutics*). In this work, I argue that the latter two levels of interpretation are reflected in the dominating levels of empirics and interpretation, as suggested by the extended use of the literature and theories during the data analytic process of ECM, and an ethnographic sensibility that adjusted my own positionality and personal sensitivities throughout the study and was subsequently reflected in text.

<sup>9</sup> By texts I mean any forms of written text collected and produced during the research (from interviews, field notes, documents, archives, memos, etc.) and also any meaningful signs (videos, audios, photos, social interactions) that can be broadly defined as texts (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009).

contributes to the production of knowledge within the research context” (Brogden, 2010: 324). The dialogical relationship between researched and researcher alters their meaning-making throughout the research process, effectively resulting (after the interpretation of data) “in a social [scientific] understanding which actually can change human activities” (den Hond et al., 2012: 244). Therefore, double hermeneutic data interpretations are products of the dialogical interactions between the actions and texts of researchers and the researched.

#### 4.4.4.3 *Thematic Analysis*

A thematic analysis was conducted in order to identify and categorise implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Guest et al., 2012). Thematic analysis is a generic approach used for the identification and analysis of themes and patterns in qualitative data (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Lapadat, 2010). Although widely used as an analytic method, it has been poorly demarcated in the past (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which might explain why it is used as a tool across different methodologies (Boyatzis, 1998). Notwithstanding this ambiguity, thematic analysis enables researchers to “use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases the accuracy or sensitivity on understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organisations” (Boyatzis, 1998: 5). As Clarke and Braun (2013) note, thematic analysis is not tied to any particular theory or explanatory framework for human beings or practices. Instead, it remains theoretically flexible and can be used within different frameworks and methods, and do different things within them (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In this study, thematic analysis is used as a contextualist method, acknowledging “the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 81). This is consistent with ECM’s commitment to study social action in context and understand the local contexts under study within the broader cultural, historical and social processes and meanings that the same local contexts (re)produce and experience (Abbott, 1997; Burawoy, 1998; Ó Riain, 2009). As thematic analysis has the “power to yield insightful interpretations that are contextually grounded” (Lapadat, 2010: 927), it helped me understand the meanings embedded in local

practices of place management, and “identify the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content” of place management practices to reveal meaningful themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 84 as cited in Campelo et al., 2014:158). Therefore, this latent level of analysis is consistent with interpretative work, as it involves the development of themes that are not just descriptions, but already theorised (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Attention now will be given to the analytical steps that are based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) phases of doing thematic analysis. This study involved:

- ***Familiarisation with the data***: Data from interviews, observations, documents and field notes were stored and/or transcribed with the aid of NVivo. Repeated readings of the data followed in several stages before the final rereading of data after the completion of data collection. During this, I took notes and also wrote memos about coding ideas and initial themes. As Locke (2001) pinpoints, memoing is a reflexive practice that facilitates sensemaking and helps the researcher to understand what is going on with the data. Essentially, familiarisation with the data is entangled with the following two phases of initial coding and identifying themes (Robson, 2011).
- ***Generating initial coding***: In this step, initial codes were generated from data extracts after close inspection and reading of all text. At this stage, I looked for recurrent themes, topics, or relationships that stemmed from the participants’ specific acts, behaviours, relationships, interactions, activities, practices, strategies, and meanings attached in the process of place management. Whereas most of initial coding is descriptive, it facilitated the identification of interesting aspects that would later lead to theme identification and towards theorisation.
- ***Identifying and reviewing emerging themes***: This phase involves moving back to a broader level of analysis by sorting the different codes into potential themes. After initial identification, emerging themes were modified and refined based on the double hermeneutics process and the two running exchanges of ECM. This guaranteed that the themes developed are not only

“accurately reflecting the meanings evident in the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 91), but are also reflecting the theories, histories and external forces that are pertinent in their production.

- ***Interpretation and labelling of themes:*** At this point, the abstract constructs that represent the sets of shared meanings identified above, start to take shape through further analysis and refinement. Consistent with the tenets of ECM, this stage involved the extension and detailed analysis of themes from the constant comparison between emergent theory, literature, and data (Danneels, 2002). Then, a holistic account of each thematic area was produced, which showed how the themes produced portrayed an accurate story of how places are produced, negotiated, marketed and contested via the practices of place management (Braun and Clarke, 2006).
- ***Writing the report:*** At the final stage, the themes of the study are articulated and written. The final product should provide a “concise, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 93). For this study, an analytic ethnographic narrative was produced, which included data extracts and vignettes that capture the detail of the field (Orr, 1996) and illustrate clearly the prevalence of the themes. I adopted a reflexive style of writing that is attentive to the reader and allows her/him to “situate and appreciate in context the content of the ethnographic account” (Watson, 2011: 212). This style of writing is concerned with the “situated nature of knowledge” (Alvesson et al., 2008: 480), and acknowledges that the researcher can never be ‘free’ of culture, discourse, existing theory, or her/his own positionality. My writing approach resembles what Van Maanen (2010) describes as structural (or analytic) tales, which are characterised by a pursuit of advancing theory in a particular domain, and by a distinct approach to writing, which highlights certain social situations “that extend into but also beyond the studied scene” (Van Maanen, 2010: 247).

The research process is illustrated in Figure 4.3. Focus now will be given to issues regarding the quality and rigour of the study.

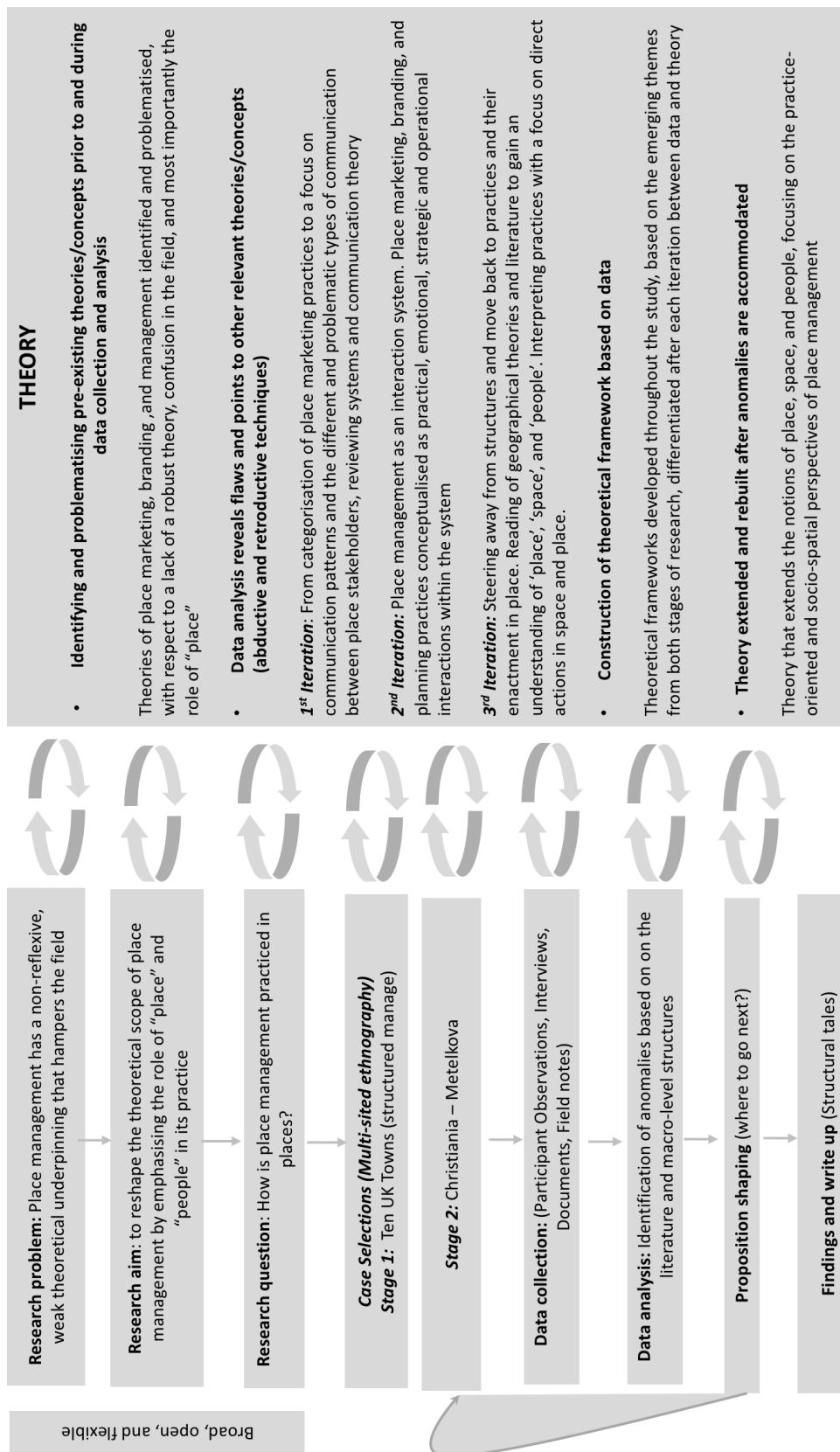


Figure 4.3 Research process: Author's conceptualisation, adopted from Ramdorai and Herstatt's (2015) illustration of the ECM

#### 4.4.5 Assessing the quality and rigour of a reflexive, qualitative study

In qualitative research, discussions about quality issues have shifted away from terms such as 'reliability' and 'validity' that restrict researchers within a modernist, scientific paradigm used in quantitative studies (Seale, 2010). Instead, qualitative inquiry seeks to assess quality "from the inside with a how-to perspective" (Flick, 2007: 1). Selecting criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research (Schwandt, 1996) is linked more to the soundness, rigour and practicality of the research process, rather than to its standardisation and control (Flick, 2008). In short, quality "refers to the transparency of the whole research process" (Seale et al., 2007: 377).

I assessed the quality of my work based on the criteria from the seminal works of Lincoln and Guba (1989; 1985), who argue for assessing the quality of qualitative work based on its trustworthiness and authenticity. According to them, trustworthiness is achieved when four criteria are met: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Table 4.3 provides evidence and explanation of the four criteria in relation to the study, and the issues that I encountered. Furthermore, the criterion of authenticity can be elaborated in numerous value-laden ways. Firstly, the study demonstrated fairness by employing a range of different theories and by endorsing a variety of stakeholders for data collection (Seale, 2010). Furthermore, by focusing on the theoretical advancement of the field and by providing an enhanced theory of place management, the study demonstrated ontological authenticity. Educative authenticity was demonstrated during the first stage of the study and mainly due to the collaborative work of both researchers and stakeholders in understanding and interpreting findings during fieldwork. Finally, the study has potential to inspire further action (catalytic authenticity) and influence the actions of members of the public (tactical authenticity). Parts of the study are already published in academic journals and are available online. It is my aspiration that my findings will stimulate further discussions between participants and relevant place stakeholders (including the academic community) in terms of how place management can be practised in towns.

Criterion	Explanation	Application to the study
<b>Credibility</b>	To establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prolonged and persistent observation of the practice of place management ("following the practice") and identification of the characteristics and elements that were most important to the study</li> <li>• Within-method and within-sources triangulation (Denzin, 1978) of findings</li> <li>• Parts of the thesis already peer-reviewed prior to viva voce via members of the academic community</li> <li>• Use of deviant sampling to include the cases of Christiania and Metelkova that broadened and confirmed the emerging themes</li> <li>• Member-checking was possible for the first stage; parts of findings were shown in the form of models and frameworks. Member-checking not yet happened for the second stage, members of the municipalities were sent parts of this study (in the form of a published article) and feedback was requested.</li> </ul>
<b>Dependability</b>	Findings are consistent and could be repeated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal auditing by members of the supervisory team and colleagues</li> <li>• Written and audio records of all data kept in NVivo, including interview templates</li> <li>• Chapters were sent to supervisory team regularly for assessing their consistency and rigour</li> </ul>
<b>Transferability</b>	Showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts through detailed descriptions within settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of multi-sited ethnography and ECM as methods for transferring themes across sites</li> <li>• Most findings from stage 1 of the study were transferable to Christiania and Metelkova</li> <li>• Tracing place management practices across different sites via multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995)</li> </ul>
<b>Confirmability</b>	The researcher has acted in good faith during the research process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflexive and continuous dialogue between theory and data</li> <li>• An embedded objectivity (Burawoy, 1998) that prioritises the production of knowledge throughout the process via constant revision, reconstruction and continual improvement</li> <li>• Reflexive ethico-political commitment (Leitner and Sheppard, 2016), prioritising responsible relationships with participants and ensuring mutual understanding</li> <li>• Contemplation of my own positionality in the context of the study of place management</li> <li>• Ethical considerations (informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality) in accordance with MMU Application for Ethical Approval and MMU Ethics Checklist were met, however some of my observations were semi-covert, which means that not all people would be able to be aware of my role at all times</li> </ul>

Table 4.3 Criteria of trustworthiness for this study, based on Lincoln and Guba (1985)

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a pluralistic account with regards to place management's diverse ontological, epistemological, methodological and theoretical underpinnings. Such an approach aims to understand place management's relational complexity, with respect to how it is practised in different local contexts, and how this situated knowledge can be fused in the multiple, competing vantage points of its emerging theory. By acknowledging the dialectical interplay between different theories and concepts, different ontologies and epistemologies, and between reflexive destabilisation and re-framing of the field, I made the case for a practice-oriented, geographically conscious view of place management that brings place and people to the forefront. Furthermore, I presented the reasoning behind applying a reflexive, qualitative research design, which allowed me to engage in a reflexive and continuous dialogue between theory and data. A multi-sited ethnographic approach, coupled with the ECM, was adopted. This form of contemporary ethnography allowed me to follow the practice of place management across multiple locales, examine how place management is practised and understood in local contexts, and understand how the macro-level structures that shape or constrain everyday life influence it. Finally, the research practices of each stage of the research were presented, which focused on my retroductive journey, my approaches to sampling, data collection and analysis, and my continuous reflections regarding theory and data that assisted the development of a reflexive account of the place management process in multiple locales.



## Part II: Following the practice of place management

The next chapters in this thesis provide reflexive accounts of the place management process, as observed and studied in both formal and informal settings. From these accounts, the key themes stemming from the practice of place management are presented and analysed in comparison to existing concepts and the emergent theory. In Chapter 5, I present findings from ten UK towns that participated in a High Street research project focused on place management and knowledge exchange. I explain the research background and how local partnerships are involved in the practice of place management. Then, I provide an analysis on how place management practices are enacted in these towns, along with the overriding themes that emerge from these. In Chapter 6, I examine the cases of Christiania and Metelkova, both squatted areas in the centre of two cities (Copenhagen and Ljubljana respectively) from a heterotopic lens. Firstly, I provide the reasoning behind examining alternative approaches to place management based on my own reflections from the study of the ten UK towns. Then, I briefly present the concept of heterotopia, its principles, and its relational abilities that allow places like Christiania and Metelkova to act as both a method and empirical object of the study. Then, I describe the history and present status of both places. In the thematic analysis that follows, I present the practices of place management that both formal institutions and the place users of these places enact. In both chapters, the interplay between formal and informal institutions and agents stresses their divergent views on a number of issues pertinent to place, and the diversity of logics and rationalities regarding the practice of place management. Based on those encounters, and by drawing on the parallel and distinct themes that emerged in both stages of the study, I present the main contributions in this work in the concluding chapter.

## Chapter 5 Uncovering the practice of place management

In this chapter, I present how place management was understood and implemented in the context of a specific project designed to transfer knowledge relating to structural retail change to stakeholders in ten UK towns<sup>10</sup>. Data collected from fieldwork and deskwork (participant observation, informal discussions, field notes and secondary data), both during and after the project, are analysed in order to reveal the practice of place management. From the findings, I demonstrate how place management has a pivotal role in discourses regarding the future of towns, and how it becomes a collaborative instrument for place users to affect change, through the enactment of socio-spatial and material practices.

### 5.1 Addressing structural changes and the need for multi-stakeholder decision-making: An introduction to the high street project

In recent years, towns in the UK have been facing one of their biggest and most enduring challenges as the dwindling of traditional retail has led to the inevitable decline of town centres and high streets. This period of turbulent change has been well documented in policy-related reports (BIS, 2011; Portas, 2011; Experian, 2012; Grimsey, 2013; Wrigley and Lambiri, 2015), which identified the global economic downturn of 2007-2009 and the rise of out-of-town and internet retailing as direct

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<sup>10</sup> The empirical context of this chapter, as described in the introductory section, is based on the following works that were written during, and after the completion, of a wider ESRC funded high street research project into the future of the UK High Street:

1. Ntounis N and Kavaratzis M (2017) Re-branding the High Street: The place branding process and reflections from three UK towns. *Journal of Place Management and Development* 10(4): 392-403.
2. Millington S, Ntounis N, Parker C, et al. (2015) *Multifunctional Centres: a sustainable role for town and city centres*. Manchester: Institute of Place Management.
3. Ntounis N and Parker C (2017) Engaged scholarship on the High Street: the case of HSUK2020. *Journal of Place Management and Development* 10(4): 349-363.
4. Millington S and Ntounis N (2017) Repositioning the High Street: evidence and reflection from the UK. *Journal of Place Management and Development* 10(4): 364-379.
5. Parker C, Ntounis N, Quin S, et al. (2017) Improving the vitality and viability of the UK High Street by 2020: Identifying priorities and a framework for action. *Journal of Place Management and Development* 10(4): 310-348.

factors that affected vitality and viability in high streets (Hart et al., 2013). The results are quite dramatic, as retail spend continues to drop in town centres, more shops are closing, and online sales are forecasted to reach 21.5% in 2018 (CRR, 2018). The scale of the problem has made it difficult for place stakeholders to take action and respond effectively to these changes (Parker et al, 2017). In addition, from a policy perspective, the current state of town centres and high streets is also a by-product of outdated geo-demographic classifications within retail catchments. Indeed, the planning and design of most town centres is based on retail location and organisation models (e.g. central place theory<sup>11</sup>) that have lost their explanatory power as new patterns of retailing emerged (Brown, 1991; Fernandes and Chamusca, 2014). Nevertheless, the principles of central place theory have underpinned all UK policy and guidelines for town centre development and continue to do so (see, for example, Planning Policy Wales (Welsh Government, 2016), Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (DoE, 2015), Scottish Planning Policy (Scottish Government, 2014), National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, 2012)), thus posing more challenges for towns.

There is, therefore, a need to reassess the functionality of town centres. Once territorialised as large mono-functional retail areas (McMorrough, 2001), town centres nowadays need to emerge as multifunctional hubs that support leisure and recreation, employment, tourism, heritage, culture, housing, employment, education, health and wellbeing (Millington et al., 2015: 5). For this reason, the practice of place management comes to the forefront as a tool for addressing the challenges that towns and cities are facing, as, as well as being a practical, local response, it has the potential to assist with the production of more relevant planning

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<sup>11</sup> In central place theory, the highest order centres provide all the services to a particular market area, whereas intermediate and lowest order centres provide only some or basic services that need to be close by to people (Christaller, 1933). In retailing literature, researchers built on the principles of central place theory, both testing the predictions it made (see Berry & Garrison, 1958; Grove & Huzsar, 1964; Thorpe, 1975; Walmsley & Weinand, 1990) and measuring centrality by creating various measures, classifications or indices (see, for example, Schiller & Jarrett, 1985). These ideas progressed into hierarchical classifications of locations as shopping centres (e.g. metropolitan, supra-regional, regional, sub-regional, area, major, district, local, not classified) based on census measures such as population, area size, income, number of centres/stores, retail sales data, etc. (Berry, 1967; Carruthers, 1957, 1967; Mertes, 1949; Smailes, 1944; Smailes & Hartley, 1961; Smith, 1968; Thorpe, 1968) and have remained dominant in the retailing and planning practice.

and development strategies and policy. The High Street research project was designed to support the policy of ensuring the vitality of town centres (DCLG, 2012), as well as promote innovative and multi-stakeholder approaches to town centre change (Parker et al., 2016).

#### 5.1.1 A brief summary of the project

The project involved retail experts, academics, town centre managers, and key high street stakeholders (retailers, town centre partnerships, local authorities, property owners/developers and residents) from ten locations in a knowledge exchange process for building a framework for High Street intervention. Table 5.1 provides the basic information and some of the challenges that these towns faced at the time. During the first stage of the project, focus was given to the formation of a reliable knowledge base regarding factors that influence high street performance. By adopting an engaged scholarship<sup>12</sup> approach that nurtured collaboration between place stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners, a model of high street change<sup>13</sup> was developed and presented to the ten towns. The assumption that town performance is mainly a reflection of retail performance underpinned our approach, and served as an initial theory worthy of further investigation, as it stemmed from the knowledge and experiences of diverse stakeholders. Based on this model, we attempted to tackle the misalignments between academic and practitioner knowledge by enabling a mutually beneficial, reciprocal exchange of knowledge

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<sup>12</sup> Engaged scholarship is a participative form of research for obtaining the understanding of a complex problem in its particular context (Van de Ven, 2007) from key stakeholders (usually people actually affected by the problem). As a collaborative research method that advances scientific knowledge, it helps researchers to understand real complex problems, and also has transformative potential (Huzzard and Johansson, 2014; Strumińska-Kutra, 2016). Engaged scholarship has strong bonds with critical management studies, collaborative inquiry, and participatory action research, as it is also advocating that academics be actively involved in practice and in the creation of practice-based knowing to achieve transformative goals in society (King and Learmonth, 2015; Willmott, 2008; Wolfram Cox et al., 2009).

<sup>13</sup> The model was developed by the combination of literature-based and practitioner-based engaged scholarship. It includes 201 factors of change that can interest researchers and also help practitioners and place stakeholders in their everyday work. In addition, we realised that in order to bring further clarity, we needed to identify the Top 25 priorities for change. This decision was mainly informed by the interests and perspectives of the town partnerships involved in the project, which, given their lack of time and resources, wanted to focus activity and resources on action that will have the most impact on vitality and viability (Parker et al., 2016).

between ourselves and relevant place stakeholders (Phillips et al., 2013; Van de Ven, 2007). Furthermore, the model has helped local agents of change to identify the factors in which they have control over, understand their information requirements, and get access to accurate knowledge that can improve the quality of decision making in their towns (Parker et al., 2016).

Even from the basic information provided in table 5.1, one can observe that the drivers of change and the key challenges affecting town centre performance are not only related to retail. Town centre retailing is an indispensable element of place, a fundamental function for the vitality and viability of the town (Bennison et al., 2010), and a generator of capital attraction for places (Niedomysl and Jonasson, 2012). Therefore, retailing cannot be understood independently of the locations in which it is embedded, hence the development of ‘town centre management’ and ‘place

<b>Name</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Key facts and challenges</b>	<b>Main local actors involved in the study</b>
<b>Alsager</b>	12500	Cheshire East	Major changes with the closure of Manchester Metropolitan University Alsager campus, the loss of manufacturing businesses, and improvements in and around the town centre with the inclusion of new anchor stores (e.g. ASDA)	Alsager Town Council, Alsager Partnership (Town Team), Alsager Civic, Cheshire East, Alsager Chamber of Trade, citizens and traders
<b>Altrincham</b>	52400	Trafford	Revamping of the Altrincham Market and the Historic Market Quarter, new developments such as a new transport interchange and a hospital and plans for improving the public realm and linkages in town, creation of BID, negative perceptions of town centre and town in general (UK’s highest vacancy rate in 2010)	Trafford Council, Altrincham Forward, Altrincham BID, Altrincham Market, citizens and traders
<b>Ballymena</b>	27000	Mid and East Antrim	A town centre partnership was established and voted for a BID in February 2015. Ballymena BID was Northern Ireland’s first BID, and it aims to tackle the negative perceptions of the town centre. A report in 2014 showed that 86.8% of traders and 74% of shoppers	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (Ballymena Town Centre Partnership), Ballymena BID, Ballymena Town

			perceived Ballymena town centre environment to be average, poor or very poor	Centre Development Limited, retailers, Fairhill Shopping Centre, citizens
<b>Barnsley</b>	91000	South Yorkshire	In January 2014, a town centre regeneration was agreed, redesign and redevelopment of the metropolitan centre and indoor market, creation of a new public square, leisure and retail offer, car park and construction of a new purpose-built library. The town centre strategy has now expired and a new one has not been prepared yet due to the redevelopment of the town centre. New town centre college building opened in September 2015 next to Town Hall, problems with antisocial behaviour	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Town Centre Communities Partnership, retailers, Arcadia Shopping Centre, citizens, Barnsley Market
<b>Bristol (St George)</b>	11300	Bristol	Church Road, the main road in St George, crosses into two Neighbourhood Partnership areas and three wards, causing issues about definition of area. Closures on the road including bank branches, negative impact on sales in adjoining units.	Bristol City Council, St George Neighbourhood Partnership, St George Community Network, Church Road Town Team, citizens and traders
<b>Congleton</b>	26500	Cheshire East	A major town centre development for a large town centre supermarket, raised town square/market area and additional retail units has been discussed for years, plans have been passed and work is expected to start this year but still no start date. A public realm strategy was approved in 2010 – but improvement plans have been delayed due to lack of available funding for public realm works.	Congleton Partnership, Cheshire East Council, Chamber of Commerce, citizens and traders
<b>Holmfirth</b>	5200	Kirklees	Holmfirth's international fame as the setting for "Last of the Summer wine" means that the show remains the main attraction for people to visit, albeit waning every year. Traffic congestion and high vacancy rates in the town centre, poor retail diversity, young people leaving town	Keep Holmfirth Special, Kirklees Council, Holme Valley Parish Council, citizens and traders
<b>Market Rasen</b>	3900	Lincolnshire	Successful period of funding initiated by the Town Team, and national recognition as a Portas Pilot Town. Joined up thinking from independent	Market Rasen Town Council, Lincolnshire Chamber of

			retailers is very difficult. The Town Team was made up of volunteers, had finite resources, and project results rarely delivered the income to guarantee sustainability	Commerce, MR BIG, citizens and traders
<b>Morley</b>	44400	Leeds	Victorian heritage town undergoing demographic change, sustainability of independents is challenging due to lack of support for local retailers from landlords. Morley has been named in the press as the 'most patriotic town in the UK' mostly due to the annual St George's Day festival	Morley Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Morley Town Centre Management Board, Vision for Morley strategic partnership, Leeds City Council, Morley Town Council, White Rose Shopping Centre, traders and citizens
<b>Wrexham</b>	61600	Wrexham	Largest town in Wales and a regional centre for North Wales. Partnership are focusing on a lot of operational issues in town, attempts to create a new effective partnership. Lot of focus on non-council issues that are beyond the partnership's remit are slowing the process of place management	Wrexham Council, Wrexham County Borough Council (Wrexham Town Centre Forum), Eagle's Meadow shopping centre, traders and citizens

*Table 5.1 Basic information regarding the ten towns participated in the study*

management' outlined previously in Chapter 1. As such, strategies that are solely based on boosting retailing, without considering the wider place environment, are unlikely to result in improved vitality and viability. Town centre performance has long been associated with different types of engagement, such as business engagement (Coca-Stefaniak et al., 2005; Dawkins and Grail, 2007; Parker et al., 2014; Wrigley and Dolega, 2011), multiple stakeholder engagement (De Nisco et al., 2008; Omholt, 2013; Warnaby et al., 2005) and community engagement (Coca-Stefaniak and Carroll, 2015; Woolrych and Sixsmith, 2013), which are integral in place decision-making. As Geddes (2006: 87) argues, effective stakeholder engagement can lead towards "more efficient, inclusive and pluralist local governance, bringing together key organisations

and actors (from the three spheres of state, market and civil society) to identify communities' top priorities and needs, and work with local people to provide them".

The second stage of the project, therefore, was mainly focused on setting the foundations for the development of a holistic framework for managing change (Parker et al., 2016). The recognition that place interventions and their implications influence more than just retail led to an examination of a broader range of factors and forces that shape place development (such as ongoing economic, political and social changes, changes in planning policies and government structures, changes in demographics and consumer culture). This was a crucial point of departure in the project, as it led towards a better understanding of potential strategies and tactics that can be collaboratively employed for the development of the place. As focus shifted away from retailing, new place interventions were contextualised in partnership with each town, in order for place users to identify alternative and sustainable ways to secure the future of their towns, as well as developing action plans for achieving that aim. Consequently, the following analysis of place management practices draws heavily from place users' variety of ideas and views regarding place development, and from the "growing trend of community action in place-making and place management" (Coca-Stefaniak and Bagaeeen, 2013: 535) that encourages effective collaboration between all stakeholders.

Having discussed the context of the High Street project, I will now move towards the main constructs that emerged from data analysis. These are portrayed in terms of people's interactions with the place, and based on how their place management practices mediate the business, production and politics of place. Whereas the constructs are presented separately for clarification, they should be thought and interpreted as overlapping and interlinked during the place management process.

## 5.2 'Communication is the key!': Communicative practices and their importance in place management

The first theme that emerged from the data analysis is related to the multivalent concept of communication in place management. During the study, it became apparent that communicative practices in place management are not only limited to



visual promotional aspects of a place, but rather seek to explain “the communicative effect of all the city’s actions, both good or bad” (Kavaratzis, 2004, as cited in Parker et al., 2015: 1106). This statement has parallels with Omholt’s (2013) treatment of place as a social communication system, which argues that the process of place management incorporates not only logos, marques and slogans, but also texts, reports, plans, documents, conversations, and embodied elements that shape people’s communicative practices. This broader understanding of communication in place management also highlights the generation of interactions and communication flows among place stakeholders (Ooi, 2004), place stakeholders’ attempts to acquire meaning and value from communicative interactions in complex environments (Hackley, 2001), and the strive for consensus and understanding between stakeholders in the communicative spaces where place management is negotiated (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Based on the above, I will now demonstrate the main communicative practices that emerged during the study.

#### 5.2.1 Communicating a desired ‘sense of place’

To better understand communicative practices, it is important to situate their enactment in the reasoning behind people’s participation in place management. In this respect, conceptual links between the empirical context of the study and how people subjectively create their identity and sense of belonging in relation to the places they find themselves in (Peet, 1998) can be made. Specifically, I will focus on how communicative practices in place management are influenced by individuals’ subjectivities, mental representations, group meanings and positionalities, and interactions with places, and on how their enactment aims at enhancing an individual’s/group’s place identity and place attachment. As such, practices communicating a preferred ‘sense of place’ take into account the affective, emotional and interpretive representations of place, such as its distinctive atmosphere and spirit (*genius loci*) and the feelings of togetherness, belonging and attachment that a place evokes (McKercher et al., 2015).

In most towns, a romanticised sense of place is habitually enacted in the discursive practices of the majority of place stakeholders (Orlikowski and Yates, 1994). For example, people would occasionally express nostalgic views of place during

consultations or informal discussions regarding the future of their towns. The following extracts highlight these:

*“I have lived and was born in the town. For the first time, I feel it’s just lost its identity. You see people opening shops that we really don’t need... There has to be more of a variety of things to do for all ages. I have to say I’m losing my love for the village, well it’s a town now. And if it’s a town we need to move with the times.” (From communication with town resident 1).*

*“I really don’t want to lose our village, it has a fab (sic), safe, community feel about it. I’ve lived around here all my life and would never consider moving away. But also, very keen to keep it alive and kicking.” (From communication with town resident 2).*

*“I am 47, lived in town all my life, but I believe that in the last three years the town has lost its feel and identity. It isn’t as nice nor as local now. I want to see this trend change.” (From communication with town resident 3).*

Unsurprisingly, these views were mainly expressed by citizens who have lived all, or most of, their lives in these towns. Normally, people that have lived in a particular place for a long period of time have stronger affective bonds with it compared to new residents, commuters, visitors, investors, or other stakeholder groups (Hernández et al., 2007). Consequently, their sentiments were echoed in most research workshops with the aim to mobilise other people to participate and take initiative in driving change in towns. As I became more involved in the workshops and in discussions with participants, it became evident that these appeals to the emotional are vital to the enactment of discursive practices for place change. Usually, discussions regarding the future of a town would start with an appreciation of what the town was in the past, or how good things were in the past in general. These discussions aimed to paint the picture for all participants regarding how the place once was, providing first-order meaning (Leydesdorff, 2010) in terms of place history, past successes, and present and future challenges. Thus, cherishing a romanticised sense of place can be understood as a genre (Orlikowski and Yates, 1994) of place-related communicative action, where people’s own emplacement and depth of local knowledge are seen as instrumental in the enactment of communicative practices. This genre of practices was integral in preliminary discussions regarding the place brand, where participants’

belonging, emplacement, and attachment acted as humanistic antecedents that would bring the emotional side of places to the fore during the place branding process.

However, such perceptions entail a longing for place that can be treated as reactionary and old-fashioned from other place stakeholders, who may express different views regarding the future of their town. In the smaller project towns for example, conflicts regarding the character and the size of the town were evident during meetings and workshops. Whereas some people wanted the place to remain a village, thus maintaining its sense of community and village feel, others would find such statements anachronistic:

*“I think the residents of the town need to move with the times, things evolve, we don’t live in Emmerdale!” (From communication with town resident 4).*

In addition, antagonisms and contradicting views between stakeholders are often evident in official town documentations, such as consultations regarding town strategies. In Alsager, a draft town strategy document was the subject of such antagonisms by including both a village feel, a vibrant and viable town centre, and the development of additional housing as strategic aims in the town vision. The above goals were treated by scepticism in the consultation documents by many place stakeholders:

*“The vision as set out in the plan is to keep a distinctive character and village feel and yet is to have new housing. This is a contradiction. Alsager used to be a village but is now a town and more housing would create a larger town with no village feel to it because it would no longer be a village.”*

*“The [housing] theme talks about providing new development within the town, which would be contrary to keeping a village feel to the place.”*

*“The Vision has conflicting aims: Village feel/ town centre. Therefore, unsure whether the planners know the difference between a town and a village.” (From council documentation, Cheshire East Council, 2012).*

Here, the absence of a common (and arguably clear) vision was evident in the communicative practices of the Council, inadvertently highlighting the contradictory opinions between place stakeholders regarding the future of the town. Thus, coming to an agreement regarding a vision for the town necessitated a change in how this vision would be constructed. Optimally, a common vision has to be meaningful to every stakeholder by appreciating their local needs, goals, and priorities, and by highlighting what the place stands for and represents (Stubbs and Warnaby, 2015; Thompson et al., 2015). Agreeing on a common vision (let alone a common strategy) though can be quite challenging, and it was identified as an important issue in Alsager:

*“I feel that people are quite wary of the conflicts and arguments in the town. Not a pleasant atmosphere for networking but it’s changing with new people joining [the partnership], more “touchpoints” [are created] for future interaction.” (From a town workshop in Alsager).*

Here, it can be argued that the governance culture under which the town vision and strategy were constructed effectively restricted communication between the partnership, residents, and the local government (Peel and Parker, 2017). Whereas such relational difficulties were undermining the role and legitimacy of the partnership, the public perception in Alsager was altering due to increased citizen participation. This was evident during the last Alsager meeting, where a plethora of place stakeholders engaged in a constructive dialogue regarding a new town vision and a new place brand for the town. Such discursive practices are of course embedded in participatory place branding approaches, but can often fall prey to powerful place stakeholders, who would control the place branding process by embedding their own unitary forms of dialogic practice (Bakhtin, 1981). As such, the place branding process, when perceived as a communicative practice, engaged place stakeholders to forge a constructive collaboration that combined their different perspectives and capacities in a mutually constitutive process of meaning (Feldman and Worline, 2016).

In Alsager, the place branding process ultimately became the communicative practice that constructed a desired sense of place. Here, the practice of place branding was enacted for the development of a preferred vision and brand from a polyphony of voices. This was an interesting moment during the study, as the participants not only included their emotional values about the place in the discussion, but also functional town benefits and improvement efforts. For example, one of the peculiar brand values that was discussed by stakeholders was 'free car parking', which would by no means seem to be a pillar of the place brand strictly by existing literature. However, after further deliberation, stakeholders explained to us that the free car parking in town was a 'win' after years of dialogue with the local government. They felt proud of this achievement, as it showed that they had some agency and control over one of the major factors they perceived to affect town performance. As such, their translation of free car parking as brand value entails notions of dynamism and local pride, and thus their efforts and aims need to be communicated, by making place interventions known to the wider public (Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017).

Ultimately, emotional sentiments based on previous place interventions and place associations led the discussions regarding the important values for the vision and the brand. From these, it was agreed by almost all participants that Alsager's brand needs to communicate the following values: a big village rather than a small town, with great community spirit, village feel, and dynamic people who are proud of their town. For them, it was important to develop a strategic vision that puts community spirit and friendliness at the forefront, and these place associations acted as a guide towards further dialogues and discussions between local stakeholders, even after the completion of the research project. The place branding process in Alsager thus draws attention to the recursive and reflexive nature of communicative practices, building on selected first-order meanings that could make a difference in the rebranding process (Leydesdorff, 2010), which created the possibility for reflexive communications within the complex system of place management (Hendry and Seidl, 2003). As members of the research team mentioned to partnership representatives in a follow-up meeting, "rebranding, to Alsager, does not mean reinventing the town – it means reminding residents of the town's assets and communicating the values of

Alsager". This way, the place brand was embedded in people's own personal values, nurturing the possibilities for effective and easier communication while reminding residents of the town's assets and values (Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017).

#### 5.2.2 Shifting perceptions and their challenges: Delving into the communicative practices of local partnerships

In the Alsager case, the place branding process was clearly influenced by elements of agonistic and communicative planning, by nurturing wide stakeholder participation and by building upon a conflicted vision for the town that was based on people's contradictory spatialities and relationalities (Larner, 2005). In this sense, place branding, as a communicative practice embedded in the place management process, instilled a spatial (albeit solely phenomenological) consciousness (Oliveira, 2015b) to the branding process of Alsager. However, a plethora of other communicative practices need to occur, in order for such attempts to have at least a chance to match the high-level aims and aspirations created through the place branding process (Parker et al., 2015). For most place stakeholders, the difficulty to communicate effectively the good things that happen in the town was perceived as one of the biggest challenges for town prosperity.

In Altrincham, such problems were highlighted during the workshop. The town, once labelled as the UK's bleakest ghost town, with over a third (37%) of its stores lying empty, was in the midst of massive redevelopment during the project. With new improvements in accessibility and the public realm (Altrincham Transport Interchange, Altrincham Hospital), the refurbishment of Altrincham Market and the Market House, and the revitalisation of Stamford Quarter, Altrincham's goal was to become a more attractive and vibrant town (Altrincham Unlimited, 2016). Additionally, a rebranding process in Altrincham was also underway, and was based on the concept of 'Modern Market Town', a testament to the town's history as one of the first market towns, which aimed to place the market into the heart of the brand (Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017). With this shared vision in mind, the Altrincham Forward initiative brought together the town's key stakeholders in a single partnership to affect change via a collaborative approach. During workshops and meetings, local stakeholders acknowledged the positive energy and momentum from

town developments, but also admitted that more needed to be done in communicating positive messages for the town. The market had become the pillar of communicative practices in the town centre, as it is a core element in the vision and strategy, a vehicle of brand communication, a signifier of the town's distinctive identity, and an anchor for the local community. The multifunctional character of the market thus acted as a catalyst for change in Altrincham, but these aspirations needed to be nested in all stakeholder groups.

However, according to participants' views during workshops, initial local support for the new Altrincham brand was low, and the town was downplayed in tertiary word-of-mouth communications, despite the fact that key place stakeholders have already been collaborating under a single partnership (Altrincham Forward). The transition from 'Ghost Town UK' to 'Modern Market Town' was characterised by residents' lack of engagement and unawareness that Altrincham was changing (Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017). For partnership members, this was deemed to be a communication problem, as the positive energy and momentum from public realm developments that drove partnership initiatives was not changing town perceptions within relevant target groups. As one participant mentioned during the workshop:

*"There is negativity and criticism on the partnership's actions, I would say that this is not based on facts... and has repercussions [in the work that the partnership does] that are influencing town perceptions. A common theme is that communication is the key, better communication between local people and retailers would help perceptions and hopefully drive investment [in town]. At the moment, anchor stores and even small businesses say that they don't like what they see and hear, so they don't come back." (From a town workshop in Altrincham).*

Similar problems were mentioned in other project towns. In Holmfirth, partnership members declared their pessimism in implementing a participatory place branding approach, as the majority of residents had remained silent and uninterested to contribute to the town's wellbeing. In Market Rasen, despite the fact that the local town team (MR BIG) had benefitted from widespread national PR and funding due to its involvement in a government-backed programme (Portas Pilot), little of the initial

media ‘buzz’ or the partnership’s actions reached local people, as partnership members acknowledged:

*“We’ve struggled to maintain early impetus purely down to balancing resource demands between ‘doing’ and communicating. Additionally, the glow of national PR, which kick-started pride and ownership was short-lived – centralised positive reporting has been a major shortfall of the Portas programme, leaving local teams ill-equipped to contend with negative national coverage [regarding High Street and retail decline].” (From Market Rasen strategy review documentation, Market Rasen Business Improvement Group, 2014: 5).*

What is clear from these examples is the misalignment between partnership expectations and place stakeholders’ perceptions regarding change in towns. It seemed that some partnerships, even without realising, were effectively communicating mostly negative stories (like failures to get everyone ‘up to speed’ regarding their place interventions) that overshadowed their successes. Additionally, some partnerships were operating in almost complete isolation, leaving many people either completely unaware or disinterested in their existence. However, even when local partnerships are prolific in their activities and able to communicate their plans to key place stakeholders, these can be hampered by inertia in mind-sets and people (Parker et al., 2014: 179). Such inertia can lead key protagonists to question their role within the partnership and the wider responsibilities of their partnership, as without strong bonds within the partnership and a strong network with other stakeholders, their attempts are likely to fail. In Market Rasen, years of volunteering meant that the core team was exhausted both physically and mentally, and sacrificed too much time and resources after the funding ran out to keep stakeholders informed and engaged. This was one of the main factors behind the eventual dissolution of the partnership.

### 5.2.3 Towards reflexive communications

From the above examples, it became clear that in order to improve communication between place stakeholders, partnerships would need to recognise the multiple types of communication that emerge from the place management process, and



establish appropriate communication channels for each stakeholder group. From my discussions with stakeholders during meetings and workshops, I realised that place stakeholders define communication in numerous ways. For residents and local traders, their interactions with other stakeholders and partnerships were perceived as communicative practices for increasing involvement and participation in the town. Such practices involve door-to-door visits, invitations to public meetings and consultations, printed and online newsletters regarding partnerships' actions and future issues, and being involved in social media, where people would participate in online discussions regarding news about the community and future events. Also, most workshop participants would distinguish these practices from place promotion ones, which were perceived as supply-driven, marketing communication practices with the aim to capitalise on a place's offerings in order to increase attention amongst selected target audiences (Boisen et al., 2017). Perhaps the most interesting, and problematic, pattern of communication though was between town partnerships and other bodies (Councils, Chambers of Commerce, BIDs, LEPs, town teams, etc.). Here, multiple communicative practices occur in order to assist the aforementioned bodies to operate on a more strategic decision-making level, with some communication practices defined by the body's statutory responsibility. However, as was evidenced during the workshops, finding the right way to get everyone up to speed with what is going on in the town is extremely challenging, mainly due to the different languages and communication styles that each body adopts during the process.

For example, in more than one case, a council's communicative actions via policy documents and regulations were criticised as largely bureaucratic and as a waste of resources in favour of the development of unfinished plans, projects and pointless reports. Similarly, business-related bodies, such as BIDs and Chambers of Commerce, would also employ a similar type of language in their communicative practices, driven by the financial and economic aims of their stakeholders. And whereas both local government and business-driven partnerships' communicative practices are highly likely to lead to some common ground, due to their emphasis on entrepreneurialism and the need to "align urban policy with the objectives of inter- and intra-local competitiveness and economic efficiency" (Peyroux et al., 2012: 116), the same

cannot be said for community-driven partnerships that are left isolated and excluded.

As a partnership member highlighted:

*“It is indeed the corporate language used in these reports that will probably deter the majority of us in trying to read them and form our own opinion on the matters that concern us [and the town].” (From communication with town resident 5).*

What the statement above reflects is that the use of ‘corporate’ or ‘business’ language can alienate residents and community-driven partnerships from participating, collaborating with other partnerships, and being an important part of their town. Perhaps this justifies why such stakeholder groups will approach communicative practices in a more straightforward and transparent way, which is reflected in their place interventions as well. Ultimately, what most place stakeholders agree on is that a middle-ground needs to be found in order to tackle communication and participation barriers in towns. Whereas taking such a stance would appear compromising for most (in not all) parties involved, it can also be seen as a move towards more reflexive communicative practices. In Ballymena, this shift was evident through the duration of the project, and was spearheaded by the Council’s move towards a more facilitative role:

*“Ballymena Borough Council along with its citizens wish to have a town that is fit for purpose moving forward for the next 20 years. This means change, not just physical but, in the way we think and do things. In order to do this, we must learn from best practice elsewhere, to give ownership of the town and to development [sic] its citizens, ensuring they have access to consultation to have their say. This can be developed in partnership to baseline where we are now.” (From project document).*

Here, a change in mind-sets and access to consultation are seen as steps towards reflexive communication, which is unfortunately hidden behind jargonish language (e.g. ‘best practice’, ‘give ownership’) that perpetuates the inherent officialism in participatory approaches to place management. Nevertheless, by acknowledging the important role of residents in communicative practices, the Council not only sought to cultivate local ownership (Amin, 2005), but also to nurture deliberation between

community-related partnerships in order to further develop their communicative aspirations (McGuirk, 2001). Similarly, in Alsager, participants recognised the importance of fostering a culture of consultation and ‘listening’ in the town, along with the need to inform, educate, and map different stakeholder groups for the development of communicative networks that can reinforce their rebranding process (Hankinson, 2004; Hanna and Rowley, 2011; Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017). Furthermore, a suggested policy can become a communicative practice in itself in order to mobilise stakeholders. Recently in Altrincham, a Neighbourhood Forum consisting of more than 100 members of the local community was created with the purpose to prepare a Neighbourhood Business Plan (NBR) for the town centre. During the process, the Forum designed a comprehensive marketing communications campaign, consisting of a brand for all consultations (I’m in Altrincham – Your Town Your Plan), and by communicating its actions via a forum website, social media accounts, leaflets, and letters to the majority of the town. Additionally, they ran a series of public consultations, with the purpose to ensure that the NBR would be equally driven by the weight of public opinion and business-driven stakeholders (I’m Altrincham, 2016). As such, they managed to gain a high level of support for the policies and actions that were proposed in the recently accepted plan.

From these examples, interesting postulations can be made regarding place management’s capacity to lessen the contextual inconsistency generated by the different styles, languages, and discourses of place stakeholders and partnerships. As evidenced particularly in the Altrincham case, the communicative practices of place management have the potential to tackle fractured modes of reflexivity, and nurture conditions for meta-reflexive modes of communication that can foster possibilities for place transformation (Archer, 2003, 2010; Herepath, 2014). A meta-reflexive mode presupposes though that people need to develop a critical look upon the actions and practices of all place stakeholders, including their own (Caetano, 2015).

In this respect, more ‘traditional’ communicative practices, such as practices of place promotion and place marketing are also susceptible to critique. In most project towns, for example, promoting events and festivals is seen as a way to celebrate the place and its rich heritage. The example of Morley stands out, which has been named

as the ‘most patriotic town in the UK’ and is host to the biggest annual festival in the North (St George’s Day festival). As a representative from Morley said: “this is something that contributes to our DNA, one that we are proud of and wish to capitalise on”. Similar sentiments were echoed in most workshops, where participants argued that an emphasis upon communications and on event and festival promotion, in particular, can bring communities closer to the town. Additionally, participants in the smaller towns also highlighted the need for communication to attract new businesses, residents and younger people to invigorate the town’s image. In the case of Holmfirth, shrinking tourist numbers after the cancellation of the famous TV show *Last of The Summer Wine* emphasised the need for a diversified economic basis that could be more appealing to the younger generation (Ntounis and Kavartzis, 2017). Similarly, in Barnsley, the opening of a big town centre college also spurred discussions regarding the appeal and relevance of the town to young people. However, a common rationale between place stakeholders is that future marketing and promotion practices need to emphasise how special and distinctive a town is. This was reflected in all communicative practices that regarded the delivery of the place marketing strategy, including official documentation from councils, marketing agencies, other governing bodies, or even partnerships themselves. As the majority of the communicative practices fail to escape the ‘special’ and ‘distinctive’ imageries that are advocated from the marketing/branding literature, they communicate a place image that is probably unrealistic; if every town is special and distinctive, then no town is. As a town resident highlighted in an after-workshop discussion:

*“You [addressing the research team] go to each town and you probably hear the same thing every time. How great and special the town is, and how it has a great sense of community and community spirit that needs to be [communicated] in our brand, vision and strategy.” (From communication with town resident 6).*

Therefore, it can be argued that such communicative practices reinforce the status quo of the place rather than challenging it (Richards, 2017), as they help market a desensitised version of the place product. For some participants, a different approach

that is based on the affective and tactile aspects of communication seemed to be more important. As one participant mentioned:

*“What I would like to see in the town is people [to] smile more. There is no “feel” in towns anymore... just imagine if your first interaction in the town is a smile, this might be crucial for the overall [town] experience.” (From a town workshop in Alsager).*

In this statement, it is implied that a move beyond the representational to the non-representational aspect of practices can enhance the communicative effect of a place. In this sense, tactile practices that are reproduced in the daily lives of place users are better sources of meaning (Pink, 2008), and thus better suited to establish links and engagement with other place stakeholders. In the next section, I further discuss the theme of engagement in stakeholders’ practices.

### 5.3 The pursuit of engagement in place management

Engagement practices mostly entailed a ‘let’s roll up our sleeves!’ attitude from the people involved, regardless of the main stakeholder groups being targeted. This behaviour was evident in almost all members who participated in the workshops, and was rather unsurprising, as most workshop participants were very active in organising practices of place management, either via collaborative government models (e.g. neighbourhood plans), or via business-led and community-led partnerships. Even though all practices of engagement entail a plea towards active participation, the motives and the reasons behind these differ, a testament to the multiplicity of people’s roles in places and spaces, and the perplexity of social interactions that is reflected through daily practices, interactions and experiences. In order to shed light to this complex construct and its importance for place management, I will highlight certain practices of engagement in this study, and reveal how these reflect people’s multiple forms of citizenship, the struggle for effective place leadership, and the shift toward new forms of place governance.

#### 5.3.1 The multiple forms of citizenship in practices of engagement

As mentioned in previous chapters, the notion of flexible citizenship (Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003) highlights how people engage in a multiplicity of roles in places and

spaces that challenge the idea of citizenship as a given status and move towards a more performative act. During fieldwork, it became evident that place users were mobilised and organised as a reaction to the different perceptions and attitudes of what constitutes good practice in place management. In essence, their citizenship acquired a performative identity that became material by taking certain action (Pine, 2010), such as creating new partnerships that were more engaged with the locality. Such actions enabled place users to exercise their right to place by bypassing more formal and process-oriented approaches towards community engagement (Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003). However, active involvement in decision-making was an aspiration for all partnerships. In Bristol, the members of the local town team explained to us that even though they had some trepidation towards doing certain things (e.g. basic place maintenance, park clean up, restoring deserted shops) that can influence the future of the place, they really wanted to see change. As such, they started to develop their own vision, and looked to formalise action and create action plans with the help of volunteers. With this goal in mind, they have constantly tried to engage with more people, and they did manage to expand their membership from the project workshops. Similarly, in Wrexham, a new town centre focused group drawn from businesses, the community and the public sector was formed in response to the High Street project. Ongoing interactions with stakeholders during the lifetime of the project were deemed as a catalyst for action (Parker et al., 2016), and have led to the creation of a town centre masterplan for implementing a new vision for the town centre.

What is evident from these attempts to mobilise action in the context of town centres (and towns in general) is that the multiple positionalities of people are manifested into multiple forms of citizenship that occur simultaneously during practices of place management, such as the formation of town teams and new steering groups. These practices are not only attempting to enhance possession of rights for place users (thus reflecting a more political outcome), but the practices are also trying to engender a form of collective identity and attachment to the place, as well as generating economic, social, and cultural benefits (Sassen, 2002a). Therefore, for a person who operates her business in the town centre and also lives in the same area,

her participation in such partnerships can reflect several forms of citizenship. As a business owner, her involvement takes the form of economic citizenship (Fernandez Kelly, 1993), which aims to bring forward business-related issues (such as increasing business rates, leases, vacant units, car parking charges and provision, etc.) and put a stop to the increasing marginalisation of businesses in decision-making, a phenomenon that transcends the local scale (Bennison et al., 2010; Coca-Stefaniak et al., 2005; Sager, 2011). Concurrently, such organised mobilisations are also forms of insurgent citizenship (Holston, 1999), as they illustrate an aversion toward the current and future state of town centres as marketplaces, which, in light of the great transformations in retailing (demographic, lifestyle, technological), have been significantly altered. When council preferences are aggregated in these transformations, the marketplace can become extremely vulnerable, difficult to predict, and impossible to manage (Balsas, 2014). For most independent retailers in the project, such instability meant that their business might become non-viable in the short term, even before councils realise the results of their decisions. 'Survival instinct' becomes the main drive behind flexible citizenship from this stakeholder group.

In many project towns, conflicts between independent retailers and the council regarding car parking charges and provision resulted in passionate arguments. During workshops, retailers highlighted how they perceive high parking charges and inconvenient parking spaces to be destroying business and damaging their morale. In one of the towns, people mentioned that a new parking policy felt like 'a kick in the teeth' and blamed the council for taking bad decisions without their input. As a symbolic act of protest, independent retailers in that town boycotted a town meeting, before eventually engaging in more dialogue and interaction with the council. From these acts, a new steering group for economy and business was created, which was tasked to speed-up processes regarding issues in the town centre. Whereas these heated discussions reveal how crucial factors such as car parking can create fissures on how the place product is managed (Warnaby et al., 2010), they also highlight how acts of citizenship open dialogue and debate for strategic decision-making. A business person's insurgent citizenship highlights her constant struggle to

maintain business during a time of economic downturn and change in retailing habits globally, and also becomes a performative act that seeks to empower her position in local decision-making. However, other people who may not have a financial benefit from the town centre also participate actively in town teams and partnerships. In such cases, engagement with other members of the community seeks to also strengthen people's sense of belonging and civic identity. Therefore, in the context of town centres, cultural citizenship becomes also embedded in economic and insurgent citizenship, and explains the attempts to reclaim town centres which have been "eroded as a consequence of powerful processes of corporate, economic, and social relocation" (Zukin, 1995 as cited in Lloyd and Peel, 2008:75) and make them appeal to the genius loci of the place again.

Consequently, other types of citizenship can be melded into discussions regarding place management. For example, in Holmfirth, the clean-up of the river that runs through the town centre was a central focus for local people, as it is an indispensable part of the place's character. This initiated a series of actions and the creation of an environmental group for the river. Similarly, in St George, town teams and partnerships are actively involved in the conservation and promotion of a park, a key anchor for the area and home to a series of local events, recreational activities, and a variety of markets. Here, emphasis is given to the sustainability of green spaces and natural environment by performing practices of environmental citizenship that can result in increased civic engagement. However, as the river and the park are also parts of the wider place product, a number of stakeholders also benefit from better management of such areas (Buta et al., 2014). Thus, people's conservation practices in these areas aim to generate better ecological and social benefits, but they also then can integrate these places into the wider discussion regarding place management decision-making, and ultimately these better-managed green spaces can become features that can attract more people to the town.

### 5.3.2 Leadership as a collaborative approach?

Overall, the 'meshing' of multiple types of citizenship indicates a desire to become more informed on the multiple challenges that a place is facing, more active in participating in place management practices, and more reflexive while engaging with



other stakeholder groups. For this to occur, citizenship needs to be shifted from being a 'privileged' status one could have due to birthright towards a more flexible citizenship that is constantly performed in the spaces where place management occurs (Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003). But for engagement practices to empower and enable more place stakeholders to shape what happens in the locality, other shifts need to happen as well. In this sense, leadership in place management decision-making comes to the forefront as ongoing and transformational practice/set of practices. In the context of place management, leadership can be understood as a series of movements for developing a strong vision and strategy for the town/city (Collinge and Gibney, 2010). This seems somewhat elusive, but highlights how leadership in places transcended (or at least aims to) the actions of individual leaders to a series of more collaborative movements and shifting trajectories that focus on conversational processes as the actual work of doing leadership (Simpson et al., 2017; Tourish and Jackson, 2008). Indeed, in an era when 'devolution' and 'localism' are buzzwords that suggest the reduced role of the state in the management of urban change and a shift of power all the way down to the local communities (Colomb and Tomaney, 2016), discourse on leadership in the project towns was consequently focused on how strong leadership can be established in a pluralistic environment.

As such, the performative practices that arose from stakeholder interactions during the project revealed the contingent nature of leadership models and how these can affect engagement. In most towns, common practices that aim to problematise current leadership models and their processes can occur during formal consultations. An extract from a consultation regarding a future town plan in Wrexham showcases this:

*"We feel that the phrase 'be consulted' is often interpreted by individuals as a process that has to happen, but where their views will not really influence final plans. This is often due to a mix of consultation fatigue and experiences of consultations leading to no change or any justification of why views on changes have not been implemented. We therefore recommend that full and active engagement of communities be adopted and the wording amended... to state "be actively engaged and influence how local services are delivered." This commitment should assist in overcoming some of the barriers to engagement, when combined with accessible and community language*

*events and formats; multiple consultation and engagement methods; and working closely with local community groups and the third sector to promote and conduct involvement.” (From Wrexham Local Service Board, 2013).*

Further examples from other consultations also suggest an aversion towards ‘jargonistic’ leadership talk and a level of distrust in how place users’ suggestions could actually influence anything. In many cases, people would respond to future strategies by pinpointing their dissatisfaction with the way these are communicated, thus leading to disillusion and disengagement. In a consultation document from Alsager, comments like “You might want to actually put something in there other than general and meaningless words”, “Sorry there is no substance to these statements to agree to”, “This means anything you want it to mean”, and “The Plan simply draws on what are popularly known as ‘weasel words’” (Cheshire East Council, 2012), highlight a contested struggle for meaning (Tourish and Jackson, 2008) between a leader (in this case the Council) and its followers (in this case the wider community).

In the context of managing places though, contestation in leadership is not only meaning-related, but can also occur due to unequal power relations for developing a strong vision for the town. For example, in one of the towns, the status of the local partnership was disputed by other people and groups that seemed to be more influential in decision-making. This was evidenced during one of the meetings, where people expressed their uncertainty about who belongs in the partnership that was initially steering the place management process. The outcome was the creation of a different group for the town that capitalised on its influence in local governance (backed by several councillors) to subjugate the previous partnership and takeover leadership of the process. The now dominant partnership made clear with its practices that a re-negotiation regarding the vision and strategy for the place was needed. In this sense, the group’s socio-spatial positionality (Leitner et al., 2008; Sheppard, 2002) was imposed within the town’s network due to its “disproportionate discursive and material power within the network” (Routledge, 2003 as cited in Leitner et al., 2008:164). As such, power shifting over which partnership will have

primary control was based on contentious politics and practices that managed to supersede other groups' practice repertoires (Laamanen and Skålen, 2015).

In other towns, where several groups' positionalities were clashing without a clear 'winner' to lead the place management process, discursive practices were mostly enacted in isolation between groups. This meant that messages, when being sent within the existing silos, were either muffled or muted, thus creating connectivity deficits (Eversole and McCall, 2014) among local groups. In towns where these deficits were more evident, there was little to no cooperation between groups and thus no evidence of coordinated leadership. The following extract from a project meeting highlights this:

*"A fractious and tendentious meeting... There were a number of people with strong points of view on particular issues, there were other people not represented in the meeting who also had strong views about how and at what pace the town as a whole should be developing... The people attending were not a group, did not seem to have a leader and were very uncertain about their roles or the roles of others... On a number of occasions some of the participants asked the team to "tell us what we should do". However, there was very little support for the work done by two of the participants who had applied lessons from our earlier workshops and begun to draft a strategy for consultation and discussion... It is clear that the issues of communication were much deeper and related to lack of structure and understanding, there are silos with major defensive walls around them." (From project meeting brief).*

As shown in this extract, conflictual practices between place stakeholders and each group's reservations regarding who is in control of strategising can lead to a stalemate during the process of place management. Such practices can be viewed as practices of disengagement as they are furthering the division between involved groups, and are also discouraging wider engagement in place management. Additionally, conflictual practices infiltrate the soft spaces of place management, thus creating uncertainty about how the town will develop and negativity in the way that actions and interventions are implemented. As a participant commented during one of the workshops, consultations and collaboration activities in its town were so far seen as "exercises in futility", a comment that emphasises people's disappointment and distrust that things can change in the town.

As such, some stakeholders would display ambivalent, and even caustic, behaviour (Le Feuvre et al., 2016) towards engagement practices during workshops and during partnerships' attempts to initiate collaboration. They would employ practices of resistance based on apathy and despondency during interventions. These included avoiding participation in engagement activities (by e.g. sitting alone during the workshops when other stakeholders were assessing the town's positive and negative characteristics), expressing negative views regarding the town's potential (e.g. "I am optimistic about my own business since I do most of my trade online, but I wouldn't say the same about the town centre and the town, it used to be good but now not anymore"), being dismissive of partnerships' capacity to develop a strong vision and strategy for the town (e.g. "There is a sense that people want things to get better but don't support these changes"), and by walking out of meetings, consultations and workshops as a form of protest.

Whereas such practices and tactics were mostly enacted as a form of frustration and alienation toward formal engagement and participation initiatives (Woolrych and Sixsmith, 2013), certain people or groups would employ such practices as a form of reasserting their power and local status in decision-making. The following vignette explains the latter behaviour, which became apparent during a project workshop in one of the smaller towns. This was the second open workshop in this town, and the partnership's attempts to ensure a wider participation paid off, as more than 40 people attended. There was a broad range of existing and potential partnership stakeholders in the audience, particularly retailers and people who lived in the area but who had not engaged in such activities in the past. Consequently, the workshop provided a great opportunity for collaborative interactions between stakeholders, and further engagement with and enlargement of the partnership.

Before the workshop started, I helped partnership members to collect information, which included talking to participants, asking them to put their name on a register and also give some contact details (email and/or telephone number) so that the partnership could send them newsletters and other information regarding town issues. While most of the people in the workshop willingly gave these contact details, three of the participants refused politely. At this point, I thought they may have

misunderstood my purposes, thinking that I may use this information to send unrelated content. As the workshop progressed though, their subversive behaviour was exacerbated. At first, they were disinterested to participate in the discussion regarding factors that influence town performance, and when all other participants started a workshop activity that focused on town centre performance in a different room, they remained seated and instead started discussing town issues on their own.

It was evident that this group had some strong opinions regarding the town, but they were unwilling to engage with the rest of the participants. I briefly discussed this with the rest of the team, as it was peculiar for me that people could be so provokingly disengaged during a workshop regarding place interventions and place management. We encountered similar behaviour before, and it could be just a matter of people not finding the workshop of interest to them, being there for the free food, or to catch up with somebody. However, after asking some of the partnership members, I learned that these people were actually former councillors, landlords and shop-owners, with notable influence in town decision-making in recent years. A member of the town partnership explained to me what they thought their presence meant:

*“They probably came here to make sure that what was discussed here is in line with their views for the town. I do not believe they had any interest to participate in the first place, they were just making a [power] statement”  
(From communication with town resident 7).*

While most participants were engaged in discussions regarding strategy and vision, effectively laying the foundations for a more influential town partnership, it can be argued that the presence of that group in this space somehow disrupted the process of place management, and particularly practices targeted towards a more inclusive model of place leadership. Rather than participating in the discussions and through not just being absent from the workshop, the group exerted a form of non-coercive power with its presence that partially subverted the meaning of the space where practices of engagement, and subsequently practices of place management, occurred (Bradley, 2014). Whereas the active and emergent nature of such spaces (Jupp, 2008) would lead towards challenging existing views and positions for the town, the feeling

of empowerment during the workshop would eventually curtail the space's potential for pluralist and transformative engagement (Bailey, 2010). In the minds of some participants, such power relations in spaces of place management are likely to reinforce groups that are in control of a place's resources and processes, such as planning and development ones (Gaventa, 2004; Haughton et al., 2013). In a number of occasions, this feeling of empowerment led to pessimistic statements regarding the future of the partnership, or how impetus could be maintained after a successful workshop or consultation. This showcased hesitance to reiterate the performative practices of leadership and engagement that were enacted in most meetings and workshops, in order to bring change in the place (Bradley, 2014). In other instances, where the potentialities for place management as a transformative process were realised and enabled, leadership practices became more focused and targeted towards more successful organisation.

### 5.3.3 Towards coordinated leadership and place governance

The above vignette is indicative of how leadership can be envisaged as a process that can be moulded and influenced by a few seemingly powerful individuals, as well as how the exertion of non-coercive power can undermine the place management process. As mentioned earlier though, barriers towards effective leadership were evident in most towns. It was clear that in most partnerships, groups, and even individuals, there was confusion over issues of ownership and control for their respective towns. As one participant said during a workshop:

*"The ownership issue is conflicting and thus place visions are unclear. A vision is more like a meaningless model when it's not focused." (From town workshop in Ballymena).*

This statement highlights that place stakeholders can often feel 'entrapped' during the place management process due to conflicting views of place ownership. Ambiguity regarding the role of key stakeholders, such as the Council, was seemingly a major factor for some partnerships and groups behind these beliefs. Indeed, in one of the towns, the Council was blamed for its impeding behaviour. The people in charge of the partnership explained that whereas they had a strong bond with the

community, they had considerably more trouble persuading the Council to be an anchor for change in the town. Retailers also expressed their worries regarding factors such as red tape, bureaucracy and a lack of focus on their sector from the Council. The overall consensus was that the Council was putting up barriers to businesses, and in order to collaborate with the Council, the partnership needed to spend valuable time, in collaboration with other bodies, such as the Chamber of Commerce. In another workshop, similar behaviours towards the Council were noted, and participants highlighted how difficult it was for them to hold events in the town, or how the Council constantly under-estimated the amount of resources and work that their partnerships needed to do in order to drive the place management process.

In both cases, there was still “a perception that the Council will still do everything”, and would subsequently embrace a leader-dominant leadership style for addressing issues in the town centre. However, most councils are already in the process of devolution and reform in line with the Localism Act. The following extract from a council document illustrates this:

*“We need to understand all our customers, ensure that we take full account of the needs of the many equality groups across the Borough, and target commissioning and service delivery accordingly. This will mean that we will look to deliver services in different ways. This will necessitate the use of different delivery models, with a greater emphasis on doing things on a shared basis with others, encouraging greater self-reliance and targeting services towards those with the greatest needs... We are clear that leadership - politically and managerially - will be crucial as the Council evolves and adapts to the many challenges that it faces now and in the future. This leadership will take many different forms as we steer the Council forward as an organisation and put in place more effective arrangements with partners and local communities to deliver the priorities in this plan and the Borough wide Community Strategy” (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, 2012: 13–14).*

Whereas this statement clarifies that more flexible political and managerial leadership practices are needed in order to ensure engagement and collaboration between local partners, it fails to take into account that governmental bodies can still exert non-coercive institutional power that moves beyond the local, effectively

influencing the politics of place (Harvey, 1996; Massey, 1994a). As local partnerships are trying to develop a different and more inclusive leadership model, they enact practices of judgement and resistance. As such, participants would mostly comprehend the Council's intentions during workshops as an attempt to undermine or dissolve the 'spaces of dependence' (Cox, 1998: 2), through which local partnerships seek to gain more legitimacy and accountability for leading the place management process. In addition, people's generational negative attitudes towards the Council are also a reflection of previous beliefs regarding leadership, as a participant stated:

*"It is a perception rather than the reality that the Council can fund or run everything. People still see the Council as a superhero that can solve everything if they wanted to. Such [Council] attitudes are a peculiar thing!"*  
(From town workshop in Barnsley).

Consequently, this ambivalence has led several partnerships to engage in leadership and decision-making activities not only in order to communicate their collective place identity (Ghose and Pettygrove, 2014a), but also to reinforce their territorially-bounded political identity. During the project, local partnerships, in collaboration with the local government, started cultivating possibilities for place-based action (Martin, 2003) at multiple scales. At the neighbourhood scale for example, the Bristol St George case exemplified the shift to a new model of coordinated leadership and governance. At the workshops, there was a real recognition of the important issues that surrounded the area. Whereas people have noticed a significant change over the past few years, there was still a feeling that the area was deserted, littered, and disjointed, with lots of empty shops and a poor retail diversity that was hampering the image of the neighbourhood. A strong sense of community feeling and willingness from the local people to work together and be part of making changes in the area was expressed, and the wider town team group had discussions regarding a future strategy and vision for the area, however there was little understanding of how to build links with other partnerships/initiatives, and how to organise place interventions and events for the park, which was recognised as the key anchor in the



area. Several participants even expressed their “fear for doing such things as a partnership”, thus implying potential barriers in partnership working and a pluralistic form of place governance.

It was clear that a shift in perceptions was needed in order to encourage coordination between local partnerships, and put together new plans and actions. Indeed, the neighbourhood partnership and the town team were already establishing formal actions for supporting businesses in the area, such as the painting of tired facades and creation of a Christmas Event. Such actions, as one member of the town team highlighted, not only aimed to promote the identity and character of the place to the people of St George, but also to encourage engagement and participation in the future (“This work is as much about building community as supporting businesses”) (St George Neighbourhood Partnership, 2015). Another crucial element towards coordinated leadership was the council’s accommodating and supportive role during the restructuring of St George. Firstly, the Council became actively engaged with the neighbourhood partnership, and participated by sending representatives in town workshops, and by organising neighbourhood forums, public meetings where residents could meet with each other, Councillors, Council and other bodies. Additionally, the council was accommodating in terms of defining the area of action for the St George Neighbourhood Partnership, by facilitating ward changes that would allow the partnership to have a better sense of ownership and control over the area (the main road was part of two Neighbourhood Partnerships and three wards).

Recently however, the Council announced that they will be ending their financial support to neighbourhood partnerships due to budget constraints. This decision initiated new discussions and dialogue between community groups, partnerships, citizens, and the voluntary sector, in order to establish new engagement practices under a different leadership model (Bristol City Council, 2017b). This paved the way for the formation of a new community-led organisation (St George Community Network), which acts as a community of community groups and is run entirely by local residents. In this case, the Council, despite reductions in central government funding, was committed to ensure a smooth transition by placing Neighbourhood

Partnership coordinators and officers in order to facilitate partnerships with their transition plans. Additionally, the Council embarked on alternative mechanisms for support, by establishing open and accessible community spaces for people to network, with the help of existing partnerships, and by providing a list of accessible venues for meetings between community groups (Bristol City Council, 2017a). As such, they were able to use their material resources in order to help local residents to self-organise and prioritise local action in their areas by providing space for place management. The following statement shows this:

*“We want to enable people to do as much as they can together without the city council getting in the way. We also want to work together on the things that really matter” (Bristol City Council, 2017a: 10).*

Thus, from a leadership perspective, the Council has started to embrace the emerging follower-dominant leadership model on the neighbourhood scale, which necessitated a switch towards reflexive modes of governance. Specifically, the transition to the new local regime (St George Community Network) is based on diffusion of power and control, acceptance of the variety of roles that place stakeholders espouse during place management, and an appreciation of their self-management and self-organisation strategies and practices that paved the way towards a new model of reflexive place governance (Collinge and Gibney, 2010; Rip, 2006). Here, the Council’s leadership practices reflect subtle forms of co-ordination and a steer towards loose governance models that take into account the bottom-up governance mechanisms in St George. Such practices reflect the metagoverning role of the Council and a steer towards reflexive self-management. In the St George case, the organisation of conditions of governance is ratified by embracing the complexity of places and plurality of place stakeholders, and also by promoting a certain image of what the future of places under the new local regimes could be (Jessop, 2003; Pedersen et al., 2011). For this purpose, the Council assumes the role of an ‘intelligent host’ (Collinge and Gibney, 2010: 486) via its dedicated coordinators, allowing for new leaders to emerge via metagovernance (or second-order leadership in Collinge and Gibney’s words) practices. As such, the Council abandoned former leadership

models that apply a unified strategic approach to manage all neighbourhoods that rarely meet the needs of individual localities and communities (Peel and Parker, 2017), in favour of a more inclusive, pluralistic leadership model that seeks to enhance engagement and pay attention to the “variation of strategies and practices across different local regimes” (Parés et al., 2014: 3251). Thus, the St George vignette showcases the variation in governance mechanisms from place to place, and how local factors can modulate the pervasiveness of neoliberal forms of urban governance and transformation, when alternative forms of place management are enacted. The next section will focus on how the theme of knowledge emerged from the research.

#### 5.4 Knowledge and its importance in the place management process

The previous themes of communication and engagement in the place management process emphasise how place actors’ practices attempt to break down the communication barriers and silos between different partnerships within the place. Whereas the success or failure of place management strategies relies heavily on the above, other factors that are normally overlooked are also influential. In this study, the theme of knowledge sprung out, partly due to the project’s focus on knowledge exchange practices, but also as an all-encompassing category. This means that when examining the possibility of knowledge exchange in place management, we need to take into account place stakeholders’ and partnerships’ different types of knowledge, how these knowledges are acquired, (co-)produced, circulated, and negotiated as they shape (and are shaped in) the spaces where the process of place management happens, and how they are integrated in place management practices that aim to solve common problems (Haraway, 1991; Healey, 1998a).

In this sense, knowledge and practices are inextricably linked with each other, as practice is essentially “a *topos* that connects ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’” (Gherardi, 2008: 517). This highlights the relations of containment, equivalence, and mutual constitution that exist between knowledge and practice, meaning that practices are composed with prior knowledge in mind (“practising is knowing in practice”) (Orlikowski, 2002: 251-252). Thus, practices and knowledge interact and produce each other, feeding their bits and pieces of information back “in the material world

and in the normative and aesthetic system that has elaborated them culturally” (Gherardi, 2008: 518). Based on these assumptions, this section pays attention on how situated practices of knowing become the locus of knowledge production, exchange, and reproduction, and how they help us understand the different forms, systems, and relations of knowledge that occur during the ongoing process of place management (Gherardi, 2008; Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014).

#### 5.4.1 ‘We really know what’s going on in the town!’: Practices of knowing based on tacit/experiential knowledge

The first stream of practices that became apparent during discussions with place stakeholders is concerned with practices that stem from people’s tacit/experiential knowledge about the place. There are similarities here with communicative practices that stem from people’s own sense of place, as people’s own emplacement and experience is a major factor for the development of local knowledge. This experience is often included in important decisions regarding town developments. In Alsager, opinions regarding the resilience of the town were mainly based on physical cues such as the linear structure of the town centre, and the abundance of greenfield sites that add to the ‘village feel’ of the town. Based on these distinct characteristics of the town, knowledge regarding what is needed and what is not in the town is developed. Therefore, as people want to maintain the big village feel of Alsager, they unleash their tacit and experiential knowledge into important town decisions, such as the proposal of new housing development or development of edge-of-centre shopping areas. As the majority of people experience Alsager as a big village, they effectively influence town decision-making that seems to threaten this place image. In this sense, knowledge that stems from town heuristics (‘rules of thumb’ regarding town perceptions based on minimum knowledge), processes of recognition through the flow of daily life (Healey, 2006b), and place schemata is effectively integrated in the process of place management (Brewer and Treyens, 1981; Kotler and Gertner, 2004). Hence, such knowledge can effectively influence the objectives and goals of the partnerships involved. However, such heuristics are usually based on very little information about a problem, and thus are preferred mostly to reduce efforts and speed up decision-making processes (Shah and Oppenheimer, 2008). In my

discussions with some workshop participants in Alsager, I was under the impression that to market and manage the town as a big village was of importance for most people, even though there was barely any other evidence supporting this approach. Based on my interactions with the people in Alsager, I started to buy into this narrative as well. For example, some people said to me, while having a pint after a workshop, “the place looks like a village, feels like a village, so we might as well treat it as a village!”. Even though this kind of thought seemed reactionary to me, I tried to bypass these feelings during practices of knowledge exchange, and learn more about these sentiments that were clearly infused in the town’s identity. For people in Alsager, developing practices of knowing based on the ‘big village’ place image was a way of emphasising people’s community spirit and friendliness. Clearly, these feelings were embodied in most people’s personal values, and immersed into the partnerships’ structures. Naturally, people would emotively and unconsciously refer to practices based on tacit/experiential forms of knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) during knowledge exchange practices in a cohesive manner, which was deemed important for their ongoing engagement with place management.

Thus, a clear dialectic in relation to space and place is upheld in Alsager, as nostalgic and reactionary beliefs and practices of knowing are permeating the seemingly progressive and transformative spaces where new place management practices are made. This is an important caveat of a place management process that necessitates the participation of as many stakeholders as possible, and particularly residents who are immediately affected by any changes in their town, but one that also aims to transform and reimagine places by bringing new ideas, visions, and strategies for development to the table. Based on my engagement in the discussions, I felt that practices of tacit/experiential knowing add to the complexity and ‘messiness’ of the place management decision-making process (Theodoridis and Kayas, 2017). However, their importance for continuing the discussion and start learning more about how places can be managed and marketed was undeniable. By constantly talking about local knowledge and things that happen daily in the town, place stakeholders ensured that their familiar patterns, which provide them with ‘ontological security’ and a ‘practical consciousness’ in their daily actions, (Giddens,

1991: 25,36) will not be excluded from the place management process. Therefore, it was clear that for Alsager, some sense of place was necessary to enable participants to engage more in knowledge exchange practices during the project, and in collective action during the development of strategic goals and vision for the town (Agnew, 1987). And whereas people's multiple roles as ambassadors, engaged citizens, and place communicators (Braun et al., 2013) is unarguably integral for place management, the Alsager vignette also shows that their actual local practices of knowing need to be carefully taken into account during this process.

#### 5.4.2 Developing knowledge through intersubjective practices

Having recognised the influence of local practices of knowing, it was intriguing for me to identify how the fusion of such knowledges leads in common understandings and meanings about the place. In the surface, I realised that there were some major agreements regarding town issues between the majority of people and partnerships. However, how people reached to these agreements differed from town to town, testament to the multiple meanings that people assign in the intersubjective practices through which knowledge about the place is (co-)produced. Intersubjectivity, according to Schutz (1967), necessitates shared understandings, reciprocity, and a mutual orientation towards a common goal, such as ensuring the vitality and viability of a town. However, in order to reach that mutual understanding, individuals and communities need to possess "the skills, knowledge, and power necessary to realise and recognise 'appropriate' social roles and that their perceptions of the situation at hand converge with those of the others involved in the interaction" (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 383). As such, developing knowledge that resides in shared understandings in order to support the process of place management becomes a "process of acculturation manifested through publicly available forms of communication, including language" (May and Perry, 2011: 86). Thus, when facing specific challenges and problems that require a certain degree of place management, multiple encultured knowledges (Blackler, 1995) that are acquired through socialisation and communication come into play to provide relevant information about the place.

Therefore, questions are raised not only about how encultured knowledges are (co-) produced in town partnership work, but also about how accurate, powerful, and important for the place management process these knowledges are. For example, much of the partnership work that town teams and similar community groups perform in a place might not even be considered as appropriate knowledge for the problems that this place faces by the Council or business-led organisations. As such, these partnerships would often try to join forces and engage in collaborative learning practices, in order to boost their knowledge claims about place management and enhance their stance during the process. For example, in Holmfirth, the general consensus was that a conference that will attract different community groups can bring more people to a festival of ideas, and also help the partnership to map who is involved in what network. Moreover, the partnership would constantly work on organising meetings and events in order to facilitate knowledge exchange between different stakeholders. Similarly, in Bristol, the St George Partnership established regular meetings with community groups in nearby areas, in order to foster a collaborative learning culture in which groups would share their experiences from partnership work, and would also engage in knowledge dissemination projects with the local Universities and the Council, such as the development of a neighbourhood plan based on a resident survey. In Market Rasen, a more detailed approach was followed, which included the conducting of several community group meetings for brainstorming future town team activities, and collaborative learning practices, such as learning about innovative funding models from the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM), and assessing regional funding opportunities with the Greater Lincolnshire LEP and the Council (Market Rasen Business Improvement Group, 2014).

Similar practices were enacted in most towns during the project, and showcase the different approaches that partnerships can use in order to strengthen their impact. What was interesting in the case of Market Rasen though was the top-down approach to knowledge production and acquisition. In Market Rasen, the marketing-oriented nature of the partnership meant that knowledge-intensive work was needed in order to build place reputation and a relevant place image that would attract new businesses and new visitors to the town. Thus, the knowledge acquired, produced,

and disseminated by the town team can be paralleled with the “encultured knowledge of ‘communication-intensive organisations’, whose success rests upon negotiating shared understanding through collective sensemaking” (Blackler, 1995: 1029, as cited in Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014: 10). However, the knowledge that the town team developed did not help them to engage with important stakeholders, such as big retailers, and local gatekeepers who would only be able to support low-cost community initiatives instead of the more ambitious plans that the town team has designed. Given the fact that the culture of the town team was highly influenced by knowledge-intensive work that aimed to promote the identity and image of Market Rasen (in a manner that was closer to place promotion than place management), it can be argued that their attempts to engage in knowledge exchange were partially scuppered from a lack of shared understanding with the aforementioned stakeholder groups. Thus, in the Market Rasen case, the shared understanding regarding the nature of knowledge being produced was mainly reduced inside the partnership and was prefigured by technical arrangements (Lloyd, 2010), such as using the right marketing tools for the development of information material (business reports and strategic reviews) that were unrelated with the people’s experience with the town.

On the other hand, the more inclusive, bottom-up approach towards knowledge co-production and exchange followed by the St George and Holmfirth partnerships appeared to have a more positive impact. In Holmfirth, prior to the workshops, I was invited to participate as a town centre expert at an event regarding the hypothetical redesign of Holmfirth’s town centre. The event was a public consultation between community groups, business owners and residents of Holmfirth, and architecture students from the University of Huddersfield, who were tasked to draw up plans to identify Holmfirth’s weaknesses and issues in the current layout and then come up with beneficial additions for the town. During the consultation, the students would ask relevant questions regarding the town’s demographics, history, architecture, communities, commerce, industry and the environment, thus allowing place stakeholders to immerse with their project, by adding their embodied experiences and their tacit knowledges in the study. Moreover, they were supplemented by additional explicit knowledge, such as best practice guides regarding retail



development from business owners, or by evidence and analysis regarding town centres from experts in the room (including myself).

The merging of different knowledges in the practices used by the students was very interesting to observe too. The students would supply each table with maps of the town, asking participants to highlight the potential sites for development or redesign. Whereas the map traditionally represents a Euclidean perspective of space, it was used by the students in a manner that highlighted multiple ways to imagine the town and challenge the preconceived ideas that most residents have. The students would come up with quality ideas based on their architectural background, suggesting new town centre uses, such as a new construction for sports and recreational activities that would incorporate the river in the design, or how to reconstruct an almost abandoned shopping centre into a hub for arts and crafts. Essentially, they developed a non-Euclidean view of the Holmfirth map that opened possibilities and potentialities for reimagining Holmfirth by acknowledging the multiplicity of space and temporarily highlighting the unexpected outcomes that can come from this engagement (Massey, 2005). This fresh thinking and the challenging of the socio-spatial relations that participants hold in Holmfirth by the students was an important knowledge exchange opportunity for a partnership that has set a goal to keep young people in the town and develop opportunities for them. Even in this hypothetical scenario, the co-production of knowledge between all participants was valuable for the partnership in its quest to develop communicative knowledge, which is acquired by such distinctive interactive experiences regarding the place that merge one's "presence, physicality, situational familiarity and sensitivity, practical know-how, and action – embodied capacities honed through practice over time" (Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014: 10–11).

#### 5.4.3 Acquiring, developing and using systematised knowledge in practices of place management

So far, my discussion on practices of knowledge has been mainly focused on the experiential/practical side, which is mainly co-produced through best practice guides, ideologies, and local knowledges that stem from people's and group's embodied and experiential understandings of place. Arguably, these types of knowledge are less

systematised, as people and partnerships who engage in the place management process rarely have the time and resources to engage with such explicit forms of knowledge that are codified and reside in scientific papers or technical practice guidance, in techniques and procedures, in the daily routines of policy practices, in manuals and databases, and so on (Healey, 2006b; Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014). Notwithstanding the above, some systematised knowledge is available to everyone (e.g. Census data), while other, such as footfall data, sales data, or local baseline data, can become available to<sup>14</sup>, or be acquired/collected by place stakeholders and their towns. Therefore, a better understanding of how these towns have used or can use such knowledge is needed, as well as how such knowledge complements other stocks of knowledge. In this work, I took advantage of my position as a researcher in a project that aimed to advance the need for codified knowledge to towns and provide relevant evidence that can complement their knowledge and influence place management decision-making practices. This gave me the opportunity to explore first-hand knowledge partnering (Eversole and McCall, 2014) or how codified/systematised knowledges can be combined with tacit/experiential knowledges in a way that would encourage place stakeholders to simultaneously engage in and challenge the place management process.

Why is it so important to understand the influence of systematised knowledge in the context of place management? This was an important question not only for the project I was working for, but also for challenging the theoretical underpinnings of the field. The obvious answer surely lies in the fact that the majority of decision-making activity in places is taken without considering available research and data that could help place stakeholders to inform their decision-making activities. From this perspective, systematised knowledge can help place stakeholders to understand their information requirements and get access to accurate and relevant information, which could improve the quality of decision-making and provide solid academic underpinning to future plans of action (Ntounis and Parker, 2017). Whereas the data

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<sup>14</sup> For example, during the project, towns benefitted from the presentation of footfall data that were used to explain different patterns of behaviour in town centres. From these interactions, most towns decided to acquire their own footfall data in order to monitor their town centre performance (Parker et al., 2017).

and information deriving from such knowledges portray an objective reality on various place aspects, ignoring them, or analysing and using them only for deterministic purposes, creates various fallacies in terms of how they can influence practices of place management.

Going back to the research project, one of our goals was to develop a suite of legacy products for the towns based on our knowledge exchange interactions. As such, we had to understand what types of systematised knowledge can assist place stakeholders in place management, and how this knowledge can be modified through co-production, thus enabling the mutually beneficial reciprocal-exchange of resources and information between the relevant parties (Phillips et al., 2013). Having recognised how limited the application of existing systematised knowledge (in our case academic) is in places, we applied a model of engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) in order to develop and exchange new knowledge of relevance and rigour with our towns. As a researcher, I was in the centre of this open-ended process of knowledge production. On one hand, I was engaged with the production of systematised knowledge with the rest of the research team, by conducting a systematic literature review, developing a model of town centre performance based on experts' opinions, and identifying town patterns from footfall data. On the other hand, I was trying to interpret how local knowledge, people's experiences, and local variations can be combined with our systematised knowledge in order to create relevant knowledge with the people who work, shop, live and use the towns on a daily, who in turn can pass this knowledge to other place networks (Ntounis and Parker, 2017).

However, my examination of project towns' local knowledges and local variations showed that the majority of place management decision-making is rarely informed by academic knowledge or other types of systematised knowledge. In my reading of town documents and reports, I came across several data sources, such as resident surveys and town centre baseline data (e.g. sales), but at the very best, these provided a basic understanding of a place's situation. This meant that draft strategic plans and important decisions on planning, housing, town strategy, and town centre development are being made without reference to a wide body of academic

knowledge (Parker et al., 2017) but also with little consideration for traditional metrics, such as vacancy rates and census data (Millington and Ntounis, 2017). The following extract from a project town highlights this:

*“[In previous consultations] we emphasised the need to protect the Green Belt and the countryside for its own sake and stressed the importance of a brownfield first approach being adopted to development... We urged the Council not to opt for very high housing figures because of the pressures this would place on Green Belt and the undesignated countryside. However, to date, all the language and thrust emanating from the principal authority is focusing on the need for growth and we have not seen evidence that social and environmental issues are being addressed with an equal level of emphasis... We are not saying the resulting strategies are necessarily wrong, but we do take issue with the way they were arrived at, lack of detailed data and confusing and inadequate processes.” (Extract from town document).*

Furthermore, even when basic data come into play in order to inform decision-making, they can still be disputed by other stakeholders. In one of the towns, monthly retail sales data from a sample of big retailers showed an upward trend on sales that was factored in decisions such as car parking provision and charges. These data were challenged by the town centre’s independent retailers, who felt that a similar sample of independent retail sales should be produced on a monthly basis as well in order to give a more complete picture. In another town, a shopper survey showed that 60% of people do their entire shopping in town, and more than 40% of them are elderly. Despite these figures, the local town team had considerable problems filling in their empty units with new retailers or convincing the existing ones to cater more for the needs of these shoppers, who wanted to see more apparel and craft stores, as well as better merchandise in stores. Additionally, they struggled to convince some of the owners to renovate their buildings and facades, and even consider mixed uses in their premises, highlighting the difficulty of some stakeholders to adapt and consider change even when presented with relevant and accurate evidence that states otherwise. In the majority of towns, systematised knowledge was fragmented, and often overpowered by the local knowledge claims of a few place stakeholders.

#### 5.4.4 Merging knowledges through knowledge exchange

From the above, it became evident that a big challenge is to develop processes and practices “through which what counts as valid knowledge and legitimate inference is established” (Healey, 2006b: 255). As place management is an open-ended process, valid knowledge needs to remain open-ended and constantly changing, and not subject to heralded sociocultural, material, and technical understandings of places that have permeated place management practices so far (Lloyd, 2010). This stresses the need for different approaches that combine systematised and scientific knowledges with the local, embodied, and tacit knowledges to come into play. From this perspective, knowledge-intensive work in the context of place management needs to become embedded “in [place stakeholders’] socially situated trajectories of experience and understanding” (Healey, 2006b: 14), and acknowledge the multiple logics that these differently positioned knowledge producers (Sheppard, 2015) bring to the table.

Before the project, one of the towns that worked towards understanding the multiple rationalities of its local people was Ballymena. Their goal was to develop a new town centre public realm strategy that would include not only systematised knowledge from top-down policies and regulations, but also people’s local knowledge corroborated with baseline data from various town events. The Council utilised a variety of practices in order to seek people’s views over a five-month period. In collaboration with central government and private bodies, they developed a comprehensive consultation process that was not just survey-based. Instead, they allowed people to send them letters, express their own views regarding the town on a public blackboard, and they invited them to public meetings, focus groups, and workshops regarding the town centre. In addition, they organised numerous events, such as closing an under-used street for a day of sporting activity, bringing a farm in the town centre, using underutilised parts of the town for different sports activities, and bringing in musicians, artists, and entertainers that not only brought a different vibe to the centre, but also helped them to collate information regarding the town. The collected data from these events served as systematised knowledge that was fed back to the local people in consultations even after the development of the strategy.

This way, the Council gained a fuller understanding of how town is functioning, stimulated public opinion on the future of the town, and encouraged greater participation of place stakeholders. As a public spokesman highlighted:

*“If you don’t do consultation, you are running a high-risk project. There is an awful lot of local knowledge, an awful lot of stuff going on that you don’t see when you go to a place, but if you start to talk to people, you start to ask them about it, and then you start to show them things that can happen differently, suddenly the ideas start to come”* (CultureNI, 2014)

Starting to show that things can happen differently suggests that emergent stocks of embedded knowledge need to be continuously infused with more relevant knowledge and factual evidence about places. For example, systematised knowledge in the form of footfall data and academic literature generated by our research project gave a clearer idea of the type of towns in the project – in relation to their function and what factors were influencing their performance, and how this evidence can influence their place management decision-making (Parker et al., 2016). In this context, merging knowledges in places not only enhances the possibilities for cooperation and collaboration between different knowledge producers, but also initiates co-production of good practices that signify adaptive change and help towards building a culture of benchmarking and continuous learning in towns (Zairi and Whymark, 2000).

Naturally, when trying to co-produce knowledge via practices of knowledge exchange, some caveats need to be taken into account. In all project towns, it was important to recognise local variations in places and partnership structures, and how produced knowledge can be situated in each town, given their unique specificities and characteristics. Local variations can be seen as locally specific systematic social processes that can modify or transform wider national or international processes and practices (Urry, 1987). Such processes and practices can refer to the ongoing pressures that towns face from national and regional government to embrace localism, build stronger communities, and engage in strategic place-related processes that reflect neoliberal forms of governance, while still experiencing the effects of a

wider economic crisis that has infiltrated the fabric of spaces where place management occurs. In addition, a plethora of micro and macro factors can alter micro-scale conditions and cause local structural changes in towns (De Kervenael et al., 2006). For example, the changing nature of retail in the UK might lead place stakeholders to make adaptive alignments to the form and structure of town centres, giving emphasis on permanent and temporary uses other than retail, in contradistinction to other factors that might promulgate extensive redevelopment and masterplanning for the same purposes (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Millington et al., 2015). Thus, when fostering the possibilities for knowledge exchange, the above conditions need to be considered, and reflexive deliberation (Archer, 2003) between place stakeholders is required.

Notwithstanding the variation of practices of knowledge exchange that were evident during the project, 'good practices' that enhanced the possibilities of knowledge exchange were established when partnerships engaged in a methodical examination of local variations and knowledges, along with systematic knowledge that was either co-produced by the research team or during project workshops. In the case of Wrexham, the co-produced information from the project revealed that several issues in the town have to be addressed by taking into account the evidence from not only our project's findings, but from other town reports that have been produced over the years. Thus, during knowledge dissemination, emphasis was drawn on addressing place stakeholders' information requirements regarding place management, which could improve their practices of knowing and the quality of place management decision-making by providing academic underpinning to future place interventions (Ntounis and Parker, 2017). People were concerned about the overall performance and positioning of the town compared to other centres. Some participants highlighted the need for Wrexham to be marketed as the commercial centre in North East Wales, thus reflecting their aspirations due to Wrexham's geographical proximity from major catchment areas, and also used information from previous reports that showcased Wrexham as the main social, retail, office, leisure, residential and education centre in the borough (WCBC, 2016).

Thus, combining local knowledge with our systematic knowledge findings provided an opportunity for people in Wrexham to examine how their existing stocks of knowledge stood up to the different understandings that our knowledge practices suggested. By using evidence from our literature reviews and our examination of footfall data, we challenged some of the notions that were prevalent in the town in terms of how significant its position is for further development. Placing more emphasis on economic goals in the town, such as developing strategies for cultural capital accumulation and investing in tourist key hubs for the visitor economy, was stampeding liveability goals that have not yet been prioritised. These goals included the quality of life of local residents, the viability of independent retailers, the lack of open spaces, the lack of coordination between businesses and partnerships, and the negative perceptions of the town due to its appearance. When explaining the priorities for change that were formulated in collaboration with place stakeholders prior to consultations, such discrepancies in town partnerships' goals became more evident. These were further corroborated with sales and footfall data from the town that showed a different image of the town than the salient image of a big regional centre. This information highlighted that the challenge for Wrexham was to first become a town that caters for its residents, rather than other target groups.

From these exchanges, participants in Wrexham were happy to focus more on factors that can have significant influence firstly at the local scale, such as improving the evening economy, improving the walkability and connectivity of retail in the town, and nurturing collective action and collaboration across all stakeholders. Reaching these goals necessitated further engagement and practices of knowledge production and exchange, which were showcased during the elaboration of a new local development for the town. During this process, place stakeholders were invited to a variety of consultations regarding the development of a town vision and objectives, discussing a preferred spatial strategy and alternative strategic spatial options, and also examining the soundness of the Plan. In addition, place stakeholders were invited to public meetings and workshops, where the purpose was to gather and share the existing evidence in the town, which would subsequently be discussed and incorporated as knowledge-based evidence in the development of the masterplan.



Engagement and partnership working was evident in the production of the plan for Wrexham and in its strategic objectives, which affirmed a turn towards advancing the town's local character and culture, as well as providing a range of services and facilities for a diverse and emerging community (WCBC, 2016).

Thus, in the case of Wrexham, evidence-based knowledge exchange between place stakeholders created the possibilities for alternative understandings of place transformation, which eventually influenced the processes of local governance and policy making. By identifying a potential 'identity crisis' in the town, which was also confirmed by systematic knowledge production, place stakeholders challenged the existing place narratives and co-produced new embedded knowledges that dislocated previous stocks of knowledge. In addition, the emerging narrative of a town that is attentive to its community created the opportunity for the renewal of existing practices of knowledge production, and enabled place stakeholders to articulate new forms of organisation and cooperation that combined local with systematised knowledges in the process of place management (Blanco et al., 2014; Brenner, 2009b). As such, the Wrexham vignette showcases that partnerships need to be more realistic in terms of their desired outcomes for the place (Mckee, 2009) while adopting specific governance practices, and take into account both local variations and established knowledge in practices of knowledge acquisition, co-production, and dissemination.

#### 5.4.5 Knowledge transfer and exchange: Connectivity and local embeddedness

One final outcome from the elaboration of practices of knowing in the context of place management is concerned with how co-produced knowledge can be circulated in different places, and to what extent is this feasible. For some stakeholders, particularly members of council who are tasked with the economic recovery of their jurisdiction, the close geographical proximity of most project towns with other similar towns within the council's jurisdiction raised questions regarding the practice of place management and the transfer of knowledge in these areas too. As one councillor highlighted in Holmfirth:

*"I do not see why the knowledge produced here today cannot be transferred in other nearby areas. When I think about Holmfirth, I don't really have to*

*worry about it. [Holmfirth] is doing fine. It already has the resources to move forward, but I don't feel the same about other places... [For example] Dewsbury has the potential to be an enthusiastic and energetic brand, but no one wants to get involved. There is nobody there [to transfer similar knowledge], which creates barriers to volunteering.” (From town workshop in Holmfirth).*

Similar views were expressed in Congleton, as workshop participants expressed their intentions to use the project's systematised knowledge in order to transfer and generate new knowledge with nearby towns such as Sandbach, Middlewich, and Macclesfield. For them, creating distinctive types of connectivity, such as retail and knowledge exchange connectivity, was deemed as a crucial factor for the future and viability of the town, and something that needs to be addressed with collaboration between paid bodies and volunteering groups.

The above examples highlighted an interesting approach in how place stakeholders understand the relationship between connectivity and knowledge transfer. In these towns, the need to create linkages between nearby locations occupies the agendas of those partnerships, bodies and organisations responsible for the economic growth of an area, albeit not in a competitive way. Whereas the narrative of the entrepreneurial city is still evident in urban policies and in some place management practices (e.g. place promotion and marketing), people during the project claimed that a networked approach towards knowledge exchange, which is not only based on geographical proximity but also on relational connectivities (Amin, 2004) geared towards acquiring relevant knowledge and social capital, is feasible and desired.

Naturally, a dialectic between knowledge transfer and exchange is evident. Place management practices that predominantly promote discourses of competitiveness and the entrepreneurial city are enacted by most towns for addressing problems and crises that are similar across different geographical contexts (Peyroux et al., 2012). However, such practices carry with them hegemonic global discourses that, as seen in this chapter, are irrelevant and alienate most stakeholders. Furthermore, building linkages and promoting connectivities solely on hegemonic practices of growth and competitiveness ignores the variety of spatialities (highlighted through different

economic, cultural, social, and political phenomena that shape socio-spatial change in places) and the knowledge deficits that such practices reproduce in places (Brenner et al., 2010; Eversole and McCall, 2014; Sheppard, 2015).

Thus, exchanging and transferring knowledges based solely from 'best practices' of places that are not subjected to similar challenges and crises can reinforce unevenness and inequality even between places that are closely connected to each other. However, the same place management practices can be seen as "strategic spatial essentialisms that are practised to achieve particular goals" (Graham, 2015: 869). In this project, the vitality and viability of the town centre was an overarching goal through which the possibilities of relational connectivities occurred. Notwithstanding the diversity of social relations and politics (McKee, 2009) between these towns, this common aim mobilised certain groups to build linkages across places and start processes of knowledge transfer and exchange with the support of local people. Whereas most practices of knowing are focused on problems that are evident in most town centres in and outside the UK (such as accessibility, activity hours, evening economy, vacancy rates, attractiveness, etc.), these were reoriented in order to address different towns' local variations. This reorientation of the seemingly hegemonic place management practices is testament to the role of communication in the construction of territorial circuits of place management knowledge (Peyroux et al., 2012). As such, relational connectivities are also imbued by the local, which plays an equal role in the co-production of knowledge and is embodied in the relational networks that are formed throughout the process of place management (Peck, 2005).

Thus, it can be argued that the spatial proximity between different partnerships, groups, businesses, and other relevant bodies is still a very important factor in the processes of knowledge circulation. Since these knowledge groups are locally embedded in the process of place management, the strength of network relations does not only depend on local and translocal place management practices that contribute to network building (network embeddedness), but also in practices of trust and reciprocity that are illustrative of a common culture and understanding for the place (societal embeddedness), and in the groups' commitment to that particular

location (territorial embeddedness) (Hess, 2004). In the bigger towns of the project, such commitment and trust stemmed from existing practices of knowledge exchange for mainly economic purposes between formal knowledge groups. In Morley, the emergence of a growing young professional population due to the increase in urban housing development meant that the changing demographic poses an ongoing challenge for the local town centre management board (ATCM, 2014). Morley's close proximity to Leeds and the White Rose shopping centre meant that a different approach towards repositioning the town centre was needed. This understanding stemmed also from workshops and meetings with town centre and White Rose representatives, who expressed their willingness to work collectively and cooperate to develop a repositioning offer that could cater for both younger families and the older generation (Millington and Ntounis, 2017).

The partnership between the town centre management board and the White Rose shopping centre involves a plethora of other place stakeholders (mainly town centre retailers, shopping centre tenants, visitors and residents) locally embedded "in a network of interconnected formal and informal relationships" (Teller et al., 2016: 7). Naturally, stakeholders' embeddedness is not static but relational, and their enacted practices within the network highlight the constantly changing connections of such networks with the place (Jones, 2008). Practices that alter the catchment's consumption patterns, such as retailing and leisure trends in both the town and the shopping centre are considered of crucial interest and importance for the success of the partnership, and are constantly acknowledged in order for the partnership to become an advocate for sustained transformational change in town (Yanchula, 2008).

In terms of retailing and leisure, town representatives and workshop participants highlighted that White Rose creates a positive link to Morley through practices of knowledge exchange and co-competition. Inevitably, both the town centre and shopping centre compete with each other in terms of customer revenue and retention. However, improving the profile of the town centre for Morley does not mean inserting lots of anchor retailers in the town centre. By exchanging knowledge and information about the catchment profile of the shopping centre, a decision to establish a new town profile for Morley as a key destination for shopping, leisure, and

culture with a focus on independents was made (Millington and Ntounis, 2017). The majority of Morley's businesses are independently run (89%) (Morley Observer, 2016), thus giving a sense of complementarity and beneficial competition (unique independent shops on the one hand and national multiples coupled with leisure on the other). Additionally, White Rose's close proximity to Morley town centre necessitates a high level of synergy in terms of physical connectivity and place promotion, with emphasis on improving accessibility in both locations and developing local loyalty schemes. These practices reflect a certain degree of cohesion in their respective action plans, with a common aim to enhance visitation and shopping linkages (Hart et al., 2014; Lambiri et al., 2017). The Morley example shows how embedded practices of knowledge exchange and data sharing on catchment profile have been proven essential towards both centres' cooperation (Millington and Ntounis, 2017) and successful embeddedness in the place management process.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the practice of place management, as this was uncovered during a knowledge exchange project in ten UK towns regarding town centre vitality and viability. I examined how place management is understood and what practices constitute it via the deployment of a thematic analysis. The three main interrelated constructs that emerged from the analysis showed that place management is essentially a complex process that seeks to nurture the possibilities of communication, engagement, and knowledge between place stakeholders. I highlighted the pitfalls of strategising in place management via numerous vignettes and also showed the multiple meanings of communicative, citizenship, leadership, and knowledge practices in places.

From the analysis, it became evident that the majority of place stakeholders' communicative rationalities emphasise on reactionary imageries of a desensitised sense of place, which in turn lead to overused practices of place promotion. By utilising place branding as a communicative practice, I demonstrated how participants' interactions can steer away such narratives and lead to more effective communication regarding a town's assets and values. Additionally, the challenges of

communicating with different stakeholder groups were highlighted, and the case for reflexivity in communication was made by showing how autonomous and/or meta-reflexive modes of communication, along with affective and tactile communicative practices, can enhance the communicative effect of a place.

In addition, the analysis showed the challenges of engagement in place management. I highlighted how the performative effect of citizenship, along with people's multiple forms of citizenship in a place are both a challenge and an opportunity for open dialogue and debate in strategic place management decision-making. I further delved into leadership practices in place management, and highlighted contestations surrounding effective leadership due to jargonish leadership talk, conflictual practices, and unequal power relations. Also, I examined the efficacy of different leadership models in the project towns and how these led to reflexive modes of metagovernance within the spaces where place management is practiced.

The analysis of the knowledge-based construct of place management highlighted the prevalence of tacit/experiential knowledge in decision-making practices that permeates the seemingly transformative spaces where new place management practices are enacted. In order to nurture valid knowledge, local knowledge of place stakeholders needs to be merged with other types of knowledge, and be redirected towards common goals and shared understanding. By showing how intersubjective practices of knowing come into play, I suggested a relational view of understanding space and place that challenges heralded knowledges and seeks to develop communicative knowledge. I showed how the merging of local, embodied, and systematised knowledge can be effective via an engaged knowledge exchange process between a plethora of stakeholders. I utilised the project's findings to show how co-production of knowledge can signify adaptive change, and how evidence-based knowledge exchange between place stakeholders can create possibilities for alternative understandings of places that can influence local governance and policy making. Finally, I highlighted how practices of knowing can be transferred through places via a networked approach, how knowledge producers are relationally embedded in formal and informal relationships during the practice of place management, and how their knowledge practices are simultaneously local and

translocal, thus highlighting the relational and constantly changing nature of embeddedness.

## Chapter 6 Examining place management from a heterotopic lens

In this chapter, I present alternative understandings of place management based on research conducted in the cities of Copenhagen and Ljubljana, and particularly in the squatted areas of Christiania and Metelkova. The chapter begins with the reasoning behind examining alternative forms of place management practice, and continues with a brief background of both squatted areas. The main themes, as evidenced in both areas, are then presented. From the findings, I demonstrate the unique place associations manifested in these areas, and how formal and informal place management practices are constantly negotiated and challenged by place stakeholders.

### 6.1 Towards alternative understandings of place management

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, place management processes and practices are characterised by the emergence of an enmeshing pattern between top-down and bottom-up approaches towards stakeholder engagement, partnership working, communication and place promotion, place governance, planning, knowledge exchange, etc. Indeed, this emerging trend was noticeable during processes and practices of place management in the high street research project, where a perplexity over what could be considered as a bottom-up or top-down place intervention was evident. My own reflection on the work that towns have been doing during the project though was that what many people perceived as bottom-up place management practices were indeed initiated from top-down initiatives and institutions. For example, giving more control to the communities in order to draw their neighbourhood plans entails direct, bottom-up practices of place governance and place making in that specific area. However, as these plans and strategies are initiated by bodies and institutions on higher levels of governance, they are subjected to the ongoing critiques of top-down governance practices. Such critiques, as mentioned earlier in the literature review, can hover around the retention of dominant power relationships; the displacement of political, economic and social disagreement; the marginalisation of volatile stakeholder groups; and the ignoring of



the diverse, contradictory spatialities, socialities and subjectivities of local people during the place management process (Geddes, 2006; Houghton et al., 2013; Lerner, 2005).

What is evident, though, from the previous chapter is place stakeholders' collaborative attempts towards a "less hierarchical and myopic and more place-based and 'porous'" (Millington et al., 2015: 5) place management decision-making process. In order to reach to a level of wider participation, communication, and engagement, a more collective and relational view of how places are understood, lived, experienced, and made is needed. Ironically, this goal may be obfuscated by top-down systems advocating this very thinking, including municipalities, local and regional councils, planning, commerce and housing committees, other coordinating bodies and organisations such as BIDs, and the state. The end result is disengaged, disinterested, and passive publics and local communities, which feel that the bureaucratic, jargonish, and technical nature of the place management process is merely disguised under a 'bottom-up' nomenclature. Additionally, any feeling or perception that the practices remain top-down endangers the fluidity and openness of the soft spaces of participatory place management. Essentially, the soft spaces of place management are subjected to the same vacillation as the formal or hard spaces where government or planning policies occur (Allmendinger et al., 2016).

Notwithstanding the importance of participatory, albeit top-down, approaches to place management, place development, and place governance, and by following the arguments made above, I was intrigued into moving my study to different places and settings where direct, inclusive and bottom-up practices of place management genuinely occur. Particularly, I was interested to study how practices of place management that focus on prefiguration, autonomy, do-it-yourself (DIY), direct action, and mutual aid constitute alternative ways of being (Gibson, 2014). Additionally, I wanted to examine how these practices, which represent a more anarchic approach to space and place, are translated in the established structures of place management and place governance, as well as how they influence the relationship between the official bodies and the communities. Therefore, I conducted research in two sites that have been recognised as two of the oldest and more

successful squats in Europe; Christiania in Copenhagen and Metelkova in Ljubljana. These places are characterised by their anarchic roots and consensus-based democratic processes, as well as contested relationships with other bodies inside and outside their areal jurisdiction, such as a paradoxical relationship with the law due to their squatted status and illegal activities (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017). Based on these characteristics, such places entail unique place associations and meanings that influence the processes and practices of place management both within, and outside, the squatted areas. The following section will focus on the heterotopic elements that these places possess.

#### 6.1.1 Approaching place management through a heterotopic lens

The concept of heterotopia, according to Foucault (1967, 1986), stems from the idea that every culture and civilisation consists of real places that are seen as counter-sites, simultaneously represented, contested and inverted in contrast with the other real places in society. As these places are “absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about” (Foucault, 1986: 24), they disrupt our taken-for-granted perceptions of normality, inject a touch of alterity into the sameness of everyday life, and juxtapose different spatial and social orderings that can co-exist with each other without necessarily seeking resolve (Chatzidakis et al., 2012; Hetherington, 1997). In short, heterotopias are “alternative social spaces existing within and connected to conventional places” (Stone, 2013: 80), spaces of deferral (Hetherington, 1997), experimentation, creativity and play (Hjorth, 2005) from where new processes of social orderings and alternative modes of being and doing “emerge to challenge the dominant social order” (Chatzidakis et al., 2012: 498). In this study, the squatted areas of Christiania and Metelkova are places that coexist within the respective cities of Copenhagen and Ljubljana, challenging the conventional understandings of urban living by advocating different ways of organisation, living, and being. From a political point of view, such squats can be seen as status quo disturbing heterotopias (Heynen, 2008) that can nevertheless “become normalised, and therefore assimilated by their surroundings, should the association between the spatial and the social allow it” (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017: 2224). From this, it can be argued that such places can simultaneously support and subvert the

mainstream of society, and this multiplicity allows for the concept of heterotopia to come forward when examining places where alternative approaches to place management occur.

It follows from the above that pretty much every place and space can be described as heterotopia. Indeed, Foucault's 'heterotopology' emphasises that heterotopias are universal and everywhere in the contemporary world, functioning in precise and determined ways that may change over time, both isolated and penetrable, but always in relation to all other spaces that exist outside and between them (Foucault, 1986). However, as Johnson (2013: 793–795) pinpoints, Foucault's use of absolutist phrases in order to show how heterotopias "are 'utterly' different from 'all' the others" has led various authors (Harvey, 2000; Hetherington, 1997; Saldanha, 2008; Soja, 1996) to criticise the notion of heterotopia as defective, incomplete, uncritical, and riddled with catch-all examples of spaces of difference that aim to simplify that difference and reduce it to an 'anything goes' postmodernism and anti-utopianism. Whereas it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive critical analysis of the concept, it is important to highlight why the concept of heterotopia can be useful for the examination of practices of place management, despite its conceptual ambiguity.

Firstly, heterotopias have been extensively envisioned as oppositional, marginalised counter-spaces, which contain multiple meanings and functions embedded around a set of spatio-temporal contradictions (Hetherington, 1997; Johnson, 2013; Ploger, 2010; Shields, 1991; Soja, 1996). The simultaneous multiplicity of co-existing meanings and functions renders the process of place management very strenuous, as heterotopic places can accommodate divergent practices of place management that can be simultaneously similar and different from the emplacements that they reflect or refer to. As such, a heterotopia can be seen as a relational concept that is characterised by a dynamic changing relationship with other emplacements (Johnson, 2013). This more nuanced approach in examining heterotopias can produce many variances or contradictions of what place management is, as it assumes that a heterotopic place is open to parallel, interconnecting and even clashing representations of place management practices.

Secondly, heterotopia can be seen as “a mode or style of study” (Johnson, 2013: 795) that forges new conceptual terrains for any field. For the study of place management, examining the squatted areas of Christiania and Metelkova as spaces of political, social and economic experimentation (Dehaene and De Cauter, 2008) opens up potentialities of what the place management process could be, thus nurturing hope and possibility while “acknowledging that problems, struggles and conflicts might also exist in this other-place” (Spicer et al., 2009: 551). As such, heterotopias can be seen “as sites where micro-emancipation might occur” (Koss Hartmann, 2014: 624), which, in the case place management, allows for progressive development of the concept via the examination of emancipatory practices in the squatted areas of this study. Finally, as heterotopias are envisioned as both mundane and extraordinary spaces that are “more macrocosmic or more microcosmic than everyday spaces” (Johnson, 2013: 798), they have the ability to exaggerate, recreate, or reduce existing other-places in different ways, by “generating new effects, experiences, openings and dangers; highlighting a network of semblances; and indicating the possibility of new alliances” (Johnson, 2013: 800). Thus, heterotopia in this study is both an empirical and conceptual starting point for analysis (Gandy, 2012) that allows for the playful experimentation and diversification of the place management process. By examining the contingent relationships of all place stakeholders during the practices of place management, I will highlight how heterotopias assist towards disrupting established thoughts of practice and human subjectivities, thus opening up potentialities for formulating new relationships and alliances in the place management process that can eventually develop its theory and practice (Johnson, 2013). The next section gives a brief context of the two areas under examination.

## **6.2 Setting the scene: Christiania and Metelkova**

### **6.2.1 Christiania**

Christiania is an autonomous enclave in the centre of Copenhagen, Denmark. Located at a former military base (Bådsmandsstræde Barracks) in Christianshavn, the area was originally occupied by homeless people in the late 60s. On 26 September 1971, the squatting was completed as hippies, artists, and political activists joined in to proclaim the creation of Freetown Christiania in a symbolic event that received

widespread media attention (Thörn et al., 2011). Over the following years, the ongoing momentum and the social impact of the squatting led the then Danish government to officially assert Christiania as a 'social experiment' in 1973, in a move that partially guaranteed the squatters' rights for the use of the area.

Since then, Christiania has operated under special conditions for almost 45 years. In 1989, the passing of Christiania Law initiated a series of collective framework agreements on the residents' continued use of the area spanning from 1992 to 2004, in accordance with a special national planning directive and a district plan (Søderdahl Thomassen, 2013). However, the repealing of the Christiania Law in 2004 marked a period of unrest, lengthy negotiations, and a legal battle that concluded in 2011 after a Danish Supreme Court ruling in which the state was awarded the full right of disposal of the Christiania area. After the victory, the government presented Christianites with an ultimatum: to either buy the land or Freetown Christiania would be redeveloped as a public housing association (Eriksen and Topping, 2011). Christianites decided to buy part of the 34-hectare area at a discounted price from the state, and an association (Christiania Foundation) was formed that took over ownership and control of the land. The Foundation also sells Christiania Shares as a vehicle for crowdfunding donations that contribute to the Christiania Fund, the body responsible for loan payments after the buying of the land. The result of the agreement also meant that Christianites are now tenants that pay rent and a form of "ad valorem" property tax for staying in Christiania.

More recently, Christiania has been subjected to ongoing urban rescaling processes by the state, the municipality, and private parties. These include the construction of a new bridge that links Nyhavn harbour to Christiania, and the relocation of NOMA, a world-famous restaurant, from the centre of Copenhagen to the outskirts of Christiania. Unsurprisingly, such processes create tensions between Christianites, the state, and the municipality, as Christiania "represents a hybrid autonomous space fully involved in a neo-liberal governance framework" (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015: 1153). Indeed, Christiania is still operating under its own 'Common Law' (No weapons – No hard drugs – No violence – No private cars – No bikers' colours – No bulletproof clothing – No sale of fireworks – No use of thundersticks – No stolen goods

(Ludvigsen, 2003)), which together with the principles of autonomy, deregulation, and consensus democracy establish Christiania as an alternative social, political, and legal system that inevitably leads to clashes with the surrounding status quo (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017).

Furthermore, the ongoing challenges posed by Christiania's tolerance on the sell and use of hash and marijuana on the area's most famous market, Pusher Street, has triggered numerous clampdowns by the state in an attempt to eliminate the presence of gangs in the area. Soft drug trade generates approximately a billion Danish kroner (£115m) per year, and is the most famous economic activity in the area (Jonasson, 2012). Despite recent events that led to the dislodge of the famous hash stands in September 2016 by Christianites themselves, the drug trade still continues, and Christianites' persistence to deal with the issue 'internally' means that "drug-related state legislation has succumbed to Christiania's own norms and laws regulating such activity" (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017: 2229). Nevertheless, and despite frequent unrest in the area, Christiania is one of Copenhagen's most famous tourist destinations, meaning that its preservation is of great importance to both the municipality and Christianites themselves. Christiania figures in Danish tourist guides and most tourism websites as a must-visit attraction, even though its image as a rough area of Copenhagen represents a form of 'soft' place demarketing (Medway et al., 2010). The appeal of Christiania as a tourist destination means that the state is more reluctant to pose serious pressure and harden its regulatory stance, as even members of parliament have admitted that: "We can't stop it, so let's try to make some money out of it, let's try to accept it and create a tourist attraction" (Thornburgh, 2012).

Unsurprisingly, Christiania has become the subject of lengthy and ongoing debates in research, policy, and practice. Thörn et al. (2011: 10–12) identified three distinct phases of Christiania that portray its evolution: The first era (1972-1979), refers to the social issues of hard drugs and crime that were prominent in Christiania and Denmark at the time, and to the exploration of Christiania as a possible alternative to modernist urban planning and the social institutions of the Danish state. According to Rasmussen (1976: 35), Christiania's sustainable and free society was a great

counterexample to the “heartlessly regulated and normalised and forced into the right shapes” parts of Copenhagen that reflected contemporary societies. The second era (1979-2002) started after a successful ban on hard drugs from the area, and was characterised by the resurgence of Christiania as an established counterpublic sphere; an alternative political and cultural space that was home for a wave of new social movements in neoliberal Denmark. The third era, which started after the repeal of Christiania Law in 2004, is concerned with the future of Christiania as an alternative space in the era of rapid urban development, and raises the question of the ‘right to the city’.

After the finalisation of the buying out deal in 2012, it can be argued that Christiania has entered another era that is characterised by the hybridisation of resistance, autonomy, and neoliberalism between the Christiania institutions, the City of Copenhagen, and the Danish state. As a result, Christiania can be seen as a hybrid space, “combining elements of autonomous and normalised governance” (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015: 1153). As such, a more nuanced and often contradictory approach towards place management in Christiania occurs, which takes into account Christianites’ principles of self-management, autonomy, and resistance, and how these intervene Christiania’s path of ongoing normalisation and insertion in wider circuits of capital. In the analysis below, I will highlight how the practices of place management that all the above parties enacted throughout the years - from the mundane and banal everyday activities in the Freetown to the long-term and ongoing dialogical practices between the municipality, the state and the citizens – have become entangled with one another. This offers a variety of potentialities and different outcomes for the place management process.

#### 6.2.2 Metelkova

Metelkova Mesto (translated as Metelkova City) is an alternative culture centre in the centre of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Like Christiania, Metelkova is also based on former army barracks, which were emptied by the former Yugoslav’s People Army in 1991, following Slovenia’s ten-day war for independence (Gržinić, 2007). Alternative artistic culture in Ljubljana was prominent in the 70s and 80s, and from there a new generation of underground activists, artists, and activist groups was cultivated (Bibič,

2003). This new generation petitioned the City Council of Ljubljana for use of the barracks as a creative culture centre, a view that clashed with the council's and other private parties' plans to convert the area into a commercial centre (Gržinić, 2007; Niranjana, 2015). After two years of negotiations between the then newly-founded Network for Metelkova (Mrêza za Metelkovo) and the Council, which furthered ambivalence regarding the status of the area, a private investor started illegally demolishing the buildings in the former barracks in late 1993. This move was contrary to the government's and the municipality's pledges to transform the area into a cultural centre, and spearheaded the occupation of the remaining barracks and the declaration of Metelkova Mesto as an autonomous zone (Muršič, 2009). Despite severe pressures at first from the municipal authorities to force activists to leave the squat (e.g. cutting off water and electricity supplies), the occupation of Metelkova continued. After 24 years, a big part of Metelkova still remains autonomous, albeit in legal and administrative limbo (Breznik, 2007). Nevertheless, Metelkova is viewed as a non-conforming cultural and social place, and a focal point in Ljubljana's cultural life, hosting numerous events, exhibitions, and concerts (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017).

Like Christiania, Metelkova's autonomy and relative success has not come without concessions, drama, and conflict. After the occupation, Metelkova was not only an artistic, but also a social squat, with people living in the buildings until 1997. However, after a fire that destroyed the Šola (school in English) building and claimed the life of a person, the Network came to an agreement with the city to solely use the place for artistic and cultural purposes, in exchange for water and electricity. According to Gržinić (2007), the municipality essentially held Metelkova hostage by depriving it from these basic services for so long, thus limiting the squatters' rights. Regardless, Metelkova still maintained its legal exception as an 'Autonomous Cultural Zone', a status that was once again threatened in 2006, when inspectors from the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning gave a demolition notice for Mala šola (small school), a building/installation that was erected illegally in place of the Šola building. Despite protests, the Mala šola building was demolished, while the remaining



buildings are until today under constant inspection by both building and health inspectors.

Additionally, Metelkova's success as a cultural and artistic space has led the city of Ljubljana and the state to take advantage of the momentum, and develop a complex of institutional museums (Museum of Contemporary Art MG+MSUM, Slovenian Ethnographic Museum) along with the reconstruction of the public space around the autonomous part. Alongside these developments, a former prison in the outskirts of the autonomous part was renovated in 2003 with the support of the city, and transformed into a youth-hostel theme park (Hostel Celica). In essence, Metelkova is not only a cultural zone, but also a commercial area, and a civil participation hub, where NGOs are located. Hence, it can be argued that there are three different Metelkovas (autonomous, institutional, and regulated), representing art and social life, civil engagement, and commercial activity. The autonomous non-conforming part operates in all three fields of activity as a hub for artists and craftsmen, as a refuge for Ljubljana's anarchist community, and as an area of well-visited bars and live music venues.

Nonetheless, the autonomous part resists all (perceived) gentrification attempts and proactively dissociates itself from the institutional and the regulated side of Metelkova, for instance by not partaking in collaborative art exhibitions. Despite this behaviour, Metelkova sits well with the local authorities, which "appear eager to accumulate and boost its place value, whilst turning a blind eye to illegal and unregulated activities" (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017: 2230). The massive appeal and the fact that Metelkova Mesto is host to more than 1500 alternative events, catering for a variety of subcultures, speaks volumes to its importance. This is highlighted by the sympathetic stance of the Mayor of Ljubljana, who sees the squat as a place for critical reflection, civic engagement, and as an area where ideas of all generations can freely flow (Niranjan, 2015). Indeed, he envisions Metelkova as an autonomous place that will grow, develop, and continue to be important for the promotion of the city of Ljubljana in the future (Janković, 2013). It can be argued that the city's vision for the area, alongside the development of the institutional and regulated part of Metelkova, poses a threat to the autonomy of Metelkova Mesto,

as it re-establishes “subtle control over partially autonomous spaces without the open use of force but through capitalism’s frequently used tactic of systematic urban gentrification” (Gržinić, 2007: 567). It is interesting to highlight, therefore, how practices of place management, as enacted by place users in the autonomous part of Metelkova, reflect on its other parts, and the city as a whole.

The next sections present the main themes from the analysis. Each theme is presented separately for clarification, but they should be thought of as overlapping and interlinked during the process of place management. As in the previous study (see Chapter 5), similar constructs emerged, such as communication, engagement, leadership, collaboration, and knowledge practices. However, these are not re-analysed; instead focus is given to the different approaches and the distinct ways that these are enacted in both places, and to the dialectical and dialogical practices between place users and other stakeholders that reflect their different experiences, emotions, positions and knowledges regarding the place. This represents an effort to uncover connections and commonalities in place management, when taking into account all degrees of pluralism and otherness.

### **6.3 Place management, prefiguration and autonomy in heterotopias**

An underlying principle that has dominated anarchist and autonomous thought for many decades is the idea of prefiguration. Indeed, Gordon (2008) identifies prefigurative politics as one of the ‘pillars’ of anarchism, along with diversity and open-ended future visions, direct action, and anti-authoritarianism. Prefigurative politics can be seen as social practices that aim to challenge the status quo and offer alternatives by forming relationships in the present that attempt to reflect a desired future (Cornish et al., 2016; Ince, 2012). In the heart of prefigurative politics lies experimentation, which necessitates the continuous reformulation of alternatives through trial and error, in order to ensure that the means of the present are appropriate towards reaching the goal of a future vision (Raekstad, 2017; van de Sande, 2015). In this sense, thinking of place management prefiguratively allows us to imagine how practices of place management can be rethought, by demarcating the physically possible and feasible options for their actualisation or wider adoption

in a particular place (Hillier, 2017; Schatzki, 2002). Furthermore, since prefiguration implies 'doing' in the here and now, it follows that a prefigured place management approach can also become strategic, thus allowing "the people who are 'doing' to participate in determining the goals" (Maeckelbergh, 2011: 13). I will now demonstrate the relationship between autonomy, prefiguration, and place management during the historical development of Christiania and Metelkova, as well as in the practices that place users enact in both places.

### 6.3.1 In the beginning: initial practices of direct action

When examining the history of both places, one cannot help but notice the similarities in terms of their history, location, and political situation, which initiated their eventual squatting. In Christiania, the closure of the former artillery base in the centre of Copenhagen came during a period when the Cold War was happening, and the influence of May 1968 was also a catalyst for countercultural student movements. As Bøggild (2011: 101) pinpoints, Christiania was thought as an offspring of these movements, a toleration zone that allowed all individuals who did not fit into the system to mobilise and organise alternatively. Similarly, in Metelkova, Slovenia's independence from the rest of the former Yugoslavia also created political instability that allowed the active cultural scene to squat the former Austro-Hungarian army barracks, which were based at the centre of Ljubljana, a prime real estate area. As such, the initial direct actions (squatting and occupation of the area) were essentially prompted by a political indecisiveness over use of both areas:

*"When they closed the area (Bådsmandsstræde Barracks), they didn't really have a plan. The minister of Defence at that time was willing to sell this property to the city of Copenhagen that initially wanted to take down most of the buildings and rebuilt the area with social, low-cost housing for the working class... after a while, the children started climbing the fence and using the area as a playground. The people of Christianshavn started tearing down the fence, and then the military was raising the fence again, this went on for a while... Eventually the area was occupied by hippies and squatters, and the minister of Defence, since the negotiations with the City were stalled, decided to give the land for free to us for three years, as a social experiment, in exchange of water and electricity. That is how we started the Freetown." (Interview with Christianite 1).*

*“In the late 80s, the Network for Metelkova consisted of artists, architects, students, anarchists and others, but it was very structured, and there were attempts to claim the place legally as a cultural centre. We were negotiating with the municipality and the government, but the process was totally different back then, and then there was discussion of squatting the place since a contract with the city wasn’t an option, which we did in 1993.” (Interview with Network for Metelkova member).*

From the above, it is evident that even the initial occupation in both places was preconditioned not only by political and social ambiguity, but also by certain forms of social organisation that aimed towards the liberation and subsequent appropriation of these areas. Specifically, the squatting and occupation of Christiania and Metelkova can be seen as spatial practices, technical moments of pre-planned activities, “when conditions, objectives and means can be and are ‘exactly’ determined” (Castoriadis, 1997: 77). As such, these practices initially solidified these places as temporary autonomous zones, imbued with impermanence as they try to elude the hierarchical structures of control (Bey, 1991) imposed by the municipality and state. However, the squatting and occupation were not treated as “means to an end” practices of direct action, but instead became an ongoing project of political and social spatialisation, which, true to its autonomous roots, was (and still is) characterised by creativity and spontaneity (Castoriadis, 1997; Newman, 2011). This was reflected during the early years of occupation, as the following extracts highlight:

*“In the beginning, if you wanted a house, you took it, everything was empty. Nobody came beforehand with the plan about Christiania, people came from everywhere and they built, when there were enough people we started to organise, and slowly we built a bakery, a kindergarten, evolution has come with “what do we need now?”. We organised a construction group, it was a ghost town before.” (Interview with Christianite 2).*

*“At the first years of the squat, there were also people living in the buildings, and the government, as any government does in these situations, applied pressures so that we leave, cutting down electricity and water, the main infrastructure for surviving. But Metelkova was clever, we did some experiments, we stole [electricity] from the city, we connected from a passing cable, and carried water from elsewhere. This happened until 1997, when we legally got water and electricity [after negotiations that led to the current status of Metelkova].” (Interview with Network for Metelkova member).*

Of course, direct actions were not only limited to resisting authority and the society outside. For example, one of the most important moments in Christiania was the famous Junk Blockade of 1979, when Christianites proceeded to the clearing of the area from hard drugs and their users. After a 40-day blockade, a successful and permanent ban on hard drugs was imposed, and this is one of the most important rules in Christiania since then (Thörn et al., 2011). Similarly, in Metelkova, the Network decided on the use of buildings only for cultural production after a fire that claimed the life of a squatter in 1997. The above extracts are characteristic of an anarchical approach of territorialisation as a set of contested, everyday practices that helped to forge and sustain the social relationships and political organisation of Christiania and Metelkova. Through these, we can also see an anarchical approach to place management, as both places' survival and tentative stabilisation relied on squatters' self-managed practices of territorialisation, as these emerged through the needs of everyday life and the necessary direct actions of inclusion and exclusion (Ince, 2012).

### 6.3.2 Further place interventions and the reconstitution of space

Therefore, the end of the first era in both places was signified by a violent, but in some ways necessary, reorganising of the social and lived space. In Christiania, the ban on hard drugs was followed by the eviction of hard pushers and most of the drug users. The adoption of a stricter policy, in line with the first rule of the Common Law ('no to hard drugs') was, according to a central figure in Christiania, "a critique of the ultraliberal way of living" (Nilson, 2011: 211). Furthermore, the violent biker gang wars<sup>15</sup> that frequently occurred in Christiania during the 1980s over control of the drug market led Christianites to establish more explicit rules to safeguard their lifestyles and their various cultural and entrepreneurial activities. In addition, numerous attempts to equate hash and marijuana with hard drugs led to "intensified public debate and mobilisation" (Nilson, 2011: 206), with pressures from Danish and

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<sup>15</sup> According to Karpantschhof (2011: 54), biker gangs and criminals associated their criminal activity with the outlaw style of Christiania and were also attracted by the profitable hash market. The new pushers came from the very egoistic culture that "not only was indifferent to the original sense of solidarity and responsibility to the community but also a culture that carried with its aggressive behaviour and a not very alternative materialism".

even Swedish authorities to demand the closure of Christiania. Nilson (2011: 206) further argues that the 'for and against' Christiania public debate was essentially a political divide between right and left, which led Christianites to produce "counter images of the Freetown as a 'drug nest' and instead show the 'real' Christiania to the outside world".

This tumultuous period towards legalisation, coupled with the growing appeal of Christiania to the people of Copenhagen, has led to some internal dissent and confrontation regarding the imposition and following of rules. It was a shift from an anarchistic towards an autonomous politics of place (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006), that attempted to legitimise the selling of soft drugs by promoting the image of a hippy, peace-loving, and unconventional commune (e.g. The Love Sweden Tour of 1982 that sought to restore Christiania's fame), while at the same time imposing rules and laws that aimed at countering the processes that constantly harmed Christiania. From this perspective, Christianites' autonomous practices branched out of the local, and became part of more complex translocal networks, echoing what Escobar (2001: 139) refers as "multi-scale, network- orientated strategies of localisation". It can be argued that whereas the "questioning and challenging of dominant laws and social norms" (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006: 1) (e.g. clashes with the police, illegal hash trade, resisting help from the state and municipality in terms of infrastructure) was (and is) still ongoing, the necessity to govern and protect Christiania has led to important place management decision-making practices.

For Metelkova, it was not only the critical moment of the Šola building fire, but also the designation of Ljubljana as the host city of the European Cultural Month in 1997 that spearheaded the shift towards a less anarchistic politics of place. This hallmark event was seen as a big opportunity by the Slovenian government and the municipality to raise the profile of Ljubljana across Europe, and build specific place brand associations that would promote the character and the ambience of the city as a 'city of culture' (Ashworth, 2009). Metelkova, as a new space for alternative cultural and social production was considered too important to be neglected by the officials:

*“After the fire, we agreed that people (squatters) who lived here would go out, and the space will only be used by artists for work. Coincidentally, Ljubljana was about to host the European Cultural Month in 1997, and at that time they decided to collaborate with Metelkova, so that it can be a space of alternative culture during the event.” (Interview with Network for Metelkova member).*

Of course, this agreement was more than a ‘coincidence’, but part of a wider structural plan to establish Metelkova Mesto not only as an alternative and anarchic space, but as a ‘container’ that would be the basis for artists. In the official programme, Metelkova was presented as:

*“...a new location which solves the problem of space by contributing space for the programme of approximately 180 groups and individuals. Eight buildings with a total ground surface of some 9,000 square metres offer sufficient space for numerous studios, rehearsals, galleries, social events, production activities and services”. (Študentska založba, 1997: 154–155).*

Thus, Metelkova’s new status as an established cultural space signified a much greater restructuring of the public space around the squat, which included the renovation of the wider area of Metelkova as part of the urban development of Ljubljana. The European Cultural Month solidified artistic and cultural activity in Metelkova Mesto, but it also signified the reconstitution of the social space around the area, and in the city as a whole, as the following passage showcases:

*“As an intermediary between local and foreign cultural activity, the project, which would present Ljubljana as a modern urban cultural centre... would assert the artistic activity of Ljubljana – and Slovenia – and its existing social and cultural network of events on the European scale. The basic objective is for the project to assert and at the same time re-evaluate the intermediary position of Ljubljana and at the same time contribute to the forming of its material infrastructure network according to the example set by European cities (institutions, forms of organisation)... “Integration” into Europe would be implemented through additional urbanisation of Ljubljana and through its policy of an open cultural city which with the internationalisation of its own activity increasingly embraces its inner specific and identity.” (Študentska založba, 1997: 144–145).*

It is evident from the above that the city of Ljubljana was happy to include the unconventional art initiatives and place-making practices of Metelkova (street art, graffiti, sculptures, or experiments such as turning prison cells into galleries and living areas for a year), in order to capitalise on its influence and develop policies that would later transform the whole area into an artistic and cultural cluster for the city (Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Rota and Salone, 2014). The importance of Metelkova Mesto for the successful implementation of the cultural project was further recognised when the area was partly registered as national cultural heritage in 2005 (Republic of Slovenia - Ministry of Culture, 2016). In addition, the cultural resurgence led to the opening of museums, cafes, and bars outside the autonomous part, and to the transformation of the former military prison in the outskirts of Metelkova Mesto into a hostel (Hostel Celica) in 2003. The latter, a joint partnership between the City of Ljubljana, the Student Organisation of the University of Ljubljana, and a private partner, has been considered by the official bodies as a 'success story' and a prime example of using part of the autonomous area for economic and touristic activities, thus modifying the use (Jacobs, 1961) of the social and urban space. As a tourist representative said:

*"We are suckers for Hostel Celica! It is a successful story for us and part of the green sustainable tourism programme of Ljubljana; it is not a luxury hostel, it's quite different and it goes well with the image of the area [i.e. the autonomous part]." (Interview with tourist representative).*

From the above, it can be argued that while the reconstitution of space in Metelkova did not alter the initial goals and future visions for cultural activity, it covertly influenced and, perhaps undermined, the notions of prefiguration and direct action that were evident in the first years of occupation. Actions such as the protest against the demolition of the Mala šola building were not as successful as others in the first years of occupation. However, regardless of these changes, the autonomous part was still able to operate as a hub for alternative artists and craftsmen; as an area of commercial activity with its own bars and music venues; and as a haven for Ljubljana's anarchist community, whose presence set the tone for future (self-)organising



practices in this part of Metelkova (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017). What is claimed by officials, however, is that Metelkova Mesto is not as radical as it used to be in its actions and programmes, particularly when compared to Tovarna ROG (ROG Factory), an autonomous space that is both a social and a cultural squat in another part of the city:

*“The real activists are in Tovarna ROG, they are much more radical than Metelkovites, who are institutionalised and more tamed now. [Metelkova] when it first started, was a little bit like ROG, but it’s like an informal institution now, for me is not like an autonomous zone anymore.” (Interview with official).*

### 6.3.3 Further shifts and ongoing practices of confrontation in Christiania

As seen above, the reconstitution of space and the path towards legalisation (and eventually normalisation, as will be shown in a later section) in both areas denoted a shift in the prefigurative practices of place management. And whereas it can be argued that Metelkova has been in a stable and balancing situation for more than a decade as a cultural squat with a special status that protects it from further normalisation (Niranjan, 2015), the same could not be said for Christiania until 2012. Indeed, the case of Christiania’s clash with the state for ownership of the area represents a great case of how place management was altered throughout the years.

In Christiania, the period after the passing of the Christiania Act, which legalised Christianites’ collective rights of continuous use of the area, was deemed as the start of a bourgeois era (Maagensen, 1996), spearheaded by a rapid visitor increase and the overwhelming support of Copenhageners (Karpantschhof, 2011) for the place. However, in 2004, the newly elected Liberal-Conservative government decided to amend the Christiania Act, thus ending the period of legalisation. As one Christianite purports, the reasoning behind this decision was influenced by the need for more urban development in Copenhagen:

*“In 1989, with the Christiania Law, we became legalised. The government didn’t want anybody else to move in so they didn’t allow us to build anything [at the time], we continued with our cultural happenings and our concerts, they even had one eye closed with the hash selling. But after the big*

*development boom of the 2000s, we were approached by the city of Copenhagen with the most ambitious plan for this area. At first, they wouldn't allow us to even build a fence, but their plan included high-rise buildings, golf courses, and they basically offered each person from Christiania his/her own high-rise building had we accepted the deal. But we didn't, it was a bad deal in all kinds of ways, next thing we knew is that the law that made Christiania legal was annihilated, and we were squatters again.” (Interview with Christianite 1).*

Following this decision, the city of Copenhagen, along with the state, participated in a lengthy negotiation process with Christiania. The previous soft regulation for Christiania meant that Christiania was treated as a conservation area, which allowed Christianites to stay there without further building. However, after the government's decision:

*“Christiania had to be part of the city and no longer a special area, so normal legislation would have to apply. The city had the authority to implement a plan. We have the experience in regulating, building and fire, so we can say ‘do this’ and ‘do that’ to them. We had to assess the situation, there was a premise to be fulfilled as part of the change in responsibility [assess buildings, area, water quality, etc.]” (Interview with city planners in Copenhagen).*

The shift meant that a new local plan, in line with Copenhagen's planning department rules and regulations, needed to be developed. The new plan included the splitting of Christiania into three parts with different governance structures. The alternative part would remain intact and autonomous, and according to the planners, only a few changes would be made overall to make the area more residential and accessible:

*“Then we talked about an agreement, developing a new local plan, 25,000 sq2 of more housing, and the way we develop it ensures as to get a profit to use for maintenance and restoration of the area... We wanted to create a new organisation where the people of Christiania start to pay rent, we were going to regulate the area via the new organisation and we were going to build more housing, as there is a need for that, especially for young and old people, and also some shops, more room for trade and small companies, they wanted to develop actually... A local plan in the Danish context regulates the future use of an area, not as it is now, but the goal of this area is open, green, no fences, and it's going to be room for experiments. We really wanted to give the local plan the colour of Christiania. It was not our mission to close it down, not at*

*all. The only interest Copenhagen had in this is that we wanted a bike lane through Christiania. It's a biker city, we wanted a more direct pathway to move in and out, we wanted a safe way to pass." (Interview with planners in Copenhagen).*

Keeping the unique elements and character of Christiania was a goal for the city, as even the housing association of Copenhagen promised to develop Christiania as a special area with experimental architecture. The plan also stated that Christianites would have an important role in the planning process, but would also have to forfeit certain privileges, such as choosing who their neighbours will be. But most importantly, legalisation and official insertion of Christiania into the urban fabric would signify the end of autonomy for the area and less control over managing it. Facing the danger of being left out from the entire process, Christiania decided to strategically challenge the plan and enter the negotiation with its own team and mandate. As Starecheski (2011: 271–272) pinpoints, this mandate provided an:

*"...explicit and concise articulation of Christiania residents' goals within the negotiation process, agreed upon through consensus... Christiania must be preserved as a whole, be allowed to choose who lives there and be protected from capitalisation of housing; they must maintain a diverse population and consensus-based self-government."*

What is evident from the above is Christianites' intent to slightly alter the rules of consensus democracy and direct action that are inherent in their decision-making processes. The creation of a group consisting of selected members of Christiania that had the power to negotiate represented a "small shift towards a more representative and less direct form of self-government" (Starecheski, 2011: 270), but at the same time a more strategic turn in prefigurative politics. This strategic turn was necessary, not only because of the need to defend Christiania's own mandate during negotiations, but also because of the diversity of goals and agendas that each Christianite brought to the meetings, which necessitated a more strategic process based on practice and participation (Maeckelbergh, 2011). Christiania's negotiation team strategy at that point was to be ambivalent. At first, Christiania neither

answered yes nor no to the first proposal on November 2006, asking for more clarifications and supplements to the original deal so that they could discuss the amended proposal with all Christianites. Then, Christiania failed to meet multiple deadlines in 2007 to answer on the deal, claiming that its citizens had more reservations on its conditions. Finally, in June 2008, Christiania said no to the agreement, thus sending its own action plan to the state (September 2008), with hopes for a quick resolution instead (Pedersen, 2016).

According to Starecheski (2011), it was due to this strategic turn that Christiania managed to resist government pressure and the impossible yes/no situation to accept the deal, under threat of bulldozing the area, as the altered consensus strategy became an agonistic tool for stalling the whole negotiation process. It can be argued that by not assuming autonomy and prefiguration as impossible to sustain under the circumstances, Christianites challenged the utopic, but for the majority repressive, promise of the local plan, and concentrated instead on localised resistance against the city and the state. Their prefigurative practices showcase a local politics of place that “values politics as a process rather than as end” (North, 1999: 72).

Eventually, negotiations broke down soon after, and a legal battle started, in which the state was awarded the full right of disposal of the Christiania area in 2011. However, this defeat signalled the beginning of more changes in Christiania. As a Christianite explains:

*“We took the government to court and we lost the legal battle to the Highest Court in 2009, and with it we lost all our rights to the area at the time. But after the battle ended, there were no investors left, banks were going down and the country was in crisis (referring to Denmark’s financial crisis at the time). With no investors, they (the government) didn’t really know what to do with this area. Then they said to us that ‘we are going to sell you Christiania but you have seven days to buy it’”. (Interview with Christianite 1).*

The decision to sell Christiania was deemed as a critical move towards the area’s normalisation. Apparently, years of negotiations had worn out the state, which prior to the decision to sell Christiania to its users, wanted the city to become the owner of the area, as one of the urban planners mentioned:

*“An ideal scenario for them would be to sell the area to the city, they offered Copenhagen to buy it, the then Mayor thought it was a good idea. But when the challenges and the problems were assessed, they decided ‘sell it to someone else, we don’t want it’. It would make sense of the city to buy it, because we need Christiania, it’s part of our brand, and in that aspect, we love it.” (Interview with planners in Copenhagen).*

Failure to find another owner meant that the state, which was so far tolerant of Christiania’s dissent and respected its politics and its consensus democracy, needed to challenge Christiania’s political space by employing similar vague politics in terms of the new deal:

*“When we asked about the details of the deal, the government didn’t really know what they wanted, they just wanted to settle it as quickly as possible due to upcoming elections. They hadn’t decided on a price to sell, or which parts of the area to sell, as a big part of Christiania is old heritage and military sites that are not to be touched. There would be a lot more conditions on the deal, but it was too vague at the time being.” (Interview with Christianite 1).*

Practically, the deal was not as vague as Christianites claimed, as the public body in charge (The Danish Agency of Palaces and Cultural Properties) offered two solutions: either implement the previous local plan that was initially rejected by Christianites, or the purchase solution that would allow Christiania to own the majority of the buildings (Pedersen, 2016). Essentially, the government implanted the idea of private property in Christianites’ minds, by offering to sell the land at a very big discount and with guaranteed loans. These tactics, coupled with increasing policing and selective bulldozing (Thornburgh, 2012) in the area, put the pressure back to Christiania to make a rapid decision. For Christianites, the ultimatum and the possible division of Christiania in parts was treated as “the destruction of the open, self-managed, experimental and socially inclusive Christiania” (Eriksen and Topping, 2011). For this reason, they decided the closure of the area for four days, in order to discuss the conditions of the deal and reach a decision that would satisfy the community:

*“At this point, we decided that the most sensible thing to do was to call our lawyers, go to our local gymnasium, set up a Powerpoint, sit down and get through this. We had to discuss the deal and everybody had to agree before*

*we could buy it. For this reason, we had to close Christiania to have this kind of a seminar, otherwise people would have to be at work everywhere.” (Interview with Christianite 1).*

The action to close Christiania, a public area that everybody has the right to access, can be seen as a practice of spatial enclosure that a gated community would enact. Indeed, studies in gated communities within cities (Levi, 2009; Low, 2008; Sager, 2011) show the heterotopic nature of such places, and how these reinforce the privatisation of space by making it more secluded, and by serving and protecting the interests of the more privileged, thus perpetuating notions of hegemonic power structures and legally facilitated separatism. In the case of Christiania, the barricading of the area was not a legal, but a contentious practice that facilitated the ability of Christianites to control access on the area, thus “creating socio-spatial boundaries that define who belongs and often become the object of contention” (Leitner et al., 2008: 161). This direct action, while necessary from a prefiguration standpoint, led to the oxymoron of closing an area that supposedly belongs to everybody. In a sense, whereas Christianites’ feelings of belonging and ownership necessitated this type of “communitarian self-defence”, leading eventually to a brief separation and to the creation of a common that is “bound and closed rather than open” (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015: 1156). This can be clearly seen in the following passage:

*“One guy, a member of parliament, usually cycles through this area, he came through and couldn’t get in. He said: “this area is national heritage, all across the other side of the lake, you have to let me through, it’s always been an open area and belongs to nobody”. He was absolutely right, it belongs to nobody, but we really had to close it for a few days.” (Interview with Christianite 2).*

The government’s immediate reaction was to order the reopening of Christiania, something that the police was not willing to do, as it was odd for them to reopen an area that they tried to shut down for so long. After four days of meetings, Christiania accepted the deal to buy the land as a community instead as individuals, by setting up their own association (Foundation Freetown Christiania). The deal specifies that Christiania owns the buildings and the area that is defined as the centre of Christiania

(where most of the amenities are), whereas more complex lease agreements are in place for the area and the buildings on the protected ramparts that are still owned by the state. With this deal, Christiania entered a new era of collective ownership, which allowed them to maintain their autonomy, albeit a regulated one (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015). Furthermore, the deal meant that Christianites would continue to envision an alternative way of living and treat the place as open and porous as possible:

*“We still all own it together but nobody owns it, we keep it a Freetown so people can be here. We could have bought it privately, and just kind of closed it off and had our own farm the way we want to have it for ourselves, not too much music, no tourists, but that’s the kind of intolerance that dominates the rest of Denmark, so we thought it was really important to keep it a free place.” (Interview with Christianite 1).*

Regardless of the claims to continued openness and complete autonomy, the case of Christiania against the state shows the uneven power relations between the former and latter, and the gradual disconnect of Christiania from the true anarchist place identity that was once engrained in the place. Indeed, this change has influenced all aspects of everyday living in Christiania, as each resident gave his/her house to the Foundation, and now pays a user’s fee, which is “not rent but like a membership to the Foundation, and the Foundation pays the government”. This creates a landlord-tenant-like relationship, which can subject Christianites to rent increases in order for the Foundation to raise the funds necessary to pay out the loan. This decision has not been received unopposed, with several Christianites claiming that Christiania has ‘sold out’ (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015). Nevertheless, the legalisation of Christiania, from a socio-political viewpoint, not only shows how the politics of place influence its subsequent management, but also the importance for prefiguration and improvisation during place-related decision-making processes. Indeed, Christianites seem to think their practices have given them a new lease on the area, and the opportunity to continue with their alternative way of living:

*“Christiania once was a social experiment, grown out of the reality of Danish democracy – and for that we are very grateful. Now we are no longer just an*

*experiment. We have been legalised! Therefore, you now might call this big playground, a continually cultural site of exercise – an EXPERIMENTAL ZONE” (Lillesøe, 2013).*

## 6.4 How (self-)organisation is enacted in Christiania and Metelkova

So far, I have mainly discussed the historical development of Christiania and Metelkova, and how critical events have altered their legal and social status, as well as the implications of this in a broader sense for the process of place management. In the following sections, I will focus on how people enact self-organising practices in both places, by taking into account their current status; the main decision-making instruments that both places use and how these can cause internal and external conflicts with multiple place stakeholders; and the organisational structures which both places operate under. It is my intention to not only show how these practices of organisation are enacted, but also how they constantly alter the leadership and the strategic goals in both areas, in order to adapt to the changing landscape of multi-scalar economic, social and political processes (Ince, 2010).

### 6.4.1 Practising horizontality in self-governance

As mentioned above, acting prefiguratively entails practices of experimentation, reformulation, and organisation in a manner that eludes vertical configurations of governance and control. This implies that the concept of organisation cannot be understood as a rigid and hierarchical structure, but rather as a non-hierarchical, non-linear network structure that emphasises process (getting organised) (Maeckelbergh, 2011). In his work on the organisation of globalisation movements, Graeber (2002: 70) asserts that non-hierarchical forms of direct organisation can be understood on ideological grounds, as their creation denotes the enacting of horizontal networks that are “based on principles of decentralised, non-hierarchical consensus democracy” and aspire “to reinvent daily life as whole”. From a scalar perspective, horizontality implies the possibility of flat alternatives in the form of inter-connected autonomous networks that are enabled by decentralisation, resilience, and autonomy (Escobar, 2007). From this, it can be argued that horizontality is a central principle for the creation of self-organised, autonomous spaces, as it:



*“provides more entry points... for progressive politics, offering the possibility of enhanced connections across social sites, in contrast to the vertical model that, despite attempts to bob and weave, is in the end limited by top-down structural constraints” (Marston et al., 2005: 427).*

As such, the practice of horizontality can be seen as new way of becoming, where people can make their own rules collectively, work together, and share knowledge in a non-hierarchical way (Caruso, 2016; Chatterton and Hodkinson, 2007), while challenging scalar understandings of place, hierarchies, and established “state-centric, capitalocentric and globalcentric thinking” (Escobar, 2007: 109). Therefore, practices of horizontality can be seen as the best way to challenge the structural and inter-personal inequalities that are widespread in social interactions (Maeckelbergh, 2011). It follows from the above that striving for an equality, diversity, and plurality of opinions via practices of horizontality can be paralleled with the participatory shift in place management and the call for citizen empowerment during decision-making.

In Christiania and Metelkova, the main instruments of place governance are the numerous meetings in which consensus-building and consensus-based decision-making is sought. These meetings, along with the open spaces in which they occur, provide the backbone for the practices of horizontality and self-organisation, as they aim to challenge the notion of centralised power and to promote equality and diversity in decision-making. By taking into account that horizontality as practice needs to remain “permanently open to the future and... to all future and different things that might come under that name”(Nunes, 2005), all meetings, from the most routine to the most important ones, are seen as pillars of autonomy and freedom. The following extract, which explains Christiania’s consensus democratic principles, highlights this:

*“The Freetown has always experimented with creating a society built on a large degree of active participatory democracy dedicated to the possibility of individual freedom and self-fulfilment. All of Christiania’s residents may participate on an equal footing in the democratic process which forms the local society. Important decisions are always made by consensus, that is, common and widespread agreement among the participants. Therefore,*

*Christiania's form of government is often called consensus democracy.”*  
(Residents of Christiania, 2004: 19).

However, self-organisation and consensus-seeking in a commune of nearly 900 people would be impossible if other formal practices were not in place. Christiania's self-organisation is practised through a series of local and thematic meetings (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015), each one with a different function for the community (see table 6.1). Most of these meetings are held on a weekly or monthly basis, with the exception of common or emergency meetings in which very important decisions

<b>Type of meeting</b>	<b>Description and purpose</b>	<b>Main people involved</b>
<b>Common Meeting</b>	The highest authority meeting in Christiania, deals with circumstances concerning all Christianites, such as agreement on the annual budget of the Common Purse, negotiations and cooperation with the Danish states, cases of violence, police disputes, etc. Also deals with settling disputes that cannot be settled in Area meetings or other thematic meetings. Has a legislative and judiciary function.	Open to all residents in Christiania, but closed to outsiders (same for every other meeting), unless they have been specially invited (e.g. urban planners invited to discuss Local Plan).
<b>Area Meeting</b>	The Area Meeting is normally held once a month and deals with the local problems of the 14 self-governing neighbourhoods in Christiania. This means that decisions concerning the residents' close environment (such as housing allocation, building renovation and maintenance, approval of new neighbours, neighbour disputes, new area projects, the payments of utilities and rents, etc.) are made in these meetings. Also used as preparation dialogue for community issues that are discussed in the Common Meeting.	All people who live in the area, some areas have ten residents, the larger have more than 80.
<b>Treasurer Meeting</b>	Meeting that takes place once a month to discuss and exchange information about the economic status and planning issues for each area. Propositions are then discussed in Area Meetings	The treasurer from each area and a representative from the economic group.
<b>Economic Meeting</b>	Deals with issues regarding the administration of Christiania's Common Purse (community budget) in all institutions and activities under its jurisdiction (the children's institutions, renovation, electricity and water supply, building maintenance, infrastructure, post office, information office, etc.). It is held once a month and decisions regarding payments from businesses, residents' rents, or applications for various projects and activities are agreed in this meeting.	Open to all residents of Christiania, arranged by the Economy Group, with treasurers of each area also present.

<b>Business Meeting</b>	Deals with common problems concerning businesses in Christiania. Discussions regarding payments to the Common Purse, logistics, and applications for new businesses are also presented for endorsement at the Economic meeting. Arranged by the Economy Group and held once a month at the different businesses.	Economic Group representative and business representatives.
<b>Building Meeting</b>	Dealing with the technical administration and evaluation of existing and future building projects in Christiania, as well as green infrastructure. Prioritisation of how the funds granted by the Common Purse will be used is also discussed. Decisions in this meeting are then implemented by the Building Office, which handles the daily running and the carrying-out of projects. Umbrella organisation for a network of self-administration groups such as the electricity group, water group, sewage group, gardener group, building and maintenance group, rubbish handling group, ecology group	All members of the Building Office, representatives from each area and all the umbrella groups.
<b>The Associates' Meeting</b>	Dealing with the common issues of Christiania's collectively-organised businesses. It has a central function in their running, as it deals with the future planning tasks and the economic health of all businesses. Held once a week.	All representatives from the collectively-organised businesses.
<b>The House Meeting</b>	Takes place in the large houses and the communes where many people live. Deals with issues in the individual house (maintenance, moving in and out, neighbour and housemate disputes. If an agreement cannot be reached then it is normally referred to the Area Meeting.	All people living in the large houses and communes.

*Table 6.1 Description and purpose of Christiania's meetings, adapted from Christiania's guide (Residents of Christiania, 2004) and Christiania's Green plan (1991)*

need to be taken, such as the recent dislodging of Pusher Street's stalls in September 2016 after the shooting of two policemen and a tourist by a pusher. However, if a Christianite decides that an important matter needs to be brought up to discussion, s/he takes the responsibility to organise a common meeting and inform everyone about it. Thus, there is an array of coordinating and communication practices that need to happen, such as finding a location for the meeting, requesting money from the common box for heating and other expenses, and making sure that the meeting is properly advertised:

*"For us to communicate, aside from our live Facebook in front of Indkøbscentralen (the grocery store), every Friday we have a weekly mirror, it's our newspaper. In this we read about the meetings, and anybody can request a common meeting if they want to make a rule about something, but*

*it has to be written in the newspaper first. When the meetings are held, we write what happened in the meeting, and who was at the meeting, and that constitutes a legal meeting.” (Interview with Christianite 1).*

Apart from the freedom to organise and discuss new rules and other important matters within the community, Christianites can also bring up a variety of ideas, such as the repurposing of an empty building in their area, do a pitch for a new business, or propose projects that require community participation, such as the creation of a new bridge or a new communal area. These propositions are normally discussed in more than one meeting, and will eventually need approval from those responsible for the budget and the planning of Christiania (the Economic Group and the Building Office respectively). Here, one can see a certain degree of hierarchical organisation in important decisions regarding the management and planning of Christiania, which is often bypassed by some:

*“If you have a business idea, you go to the meeting and you present your idea and people will decide. There is [sic] also people who don’t do it, and then you have people screaming at each other, it’s also very organic in this way, but you should always go to the meeting.” (Interview with Christianite 2).*

Despite such examples that showcase an undermining of collective self-organisation, most residents embrace Christiania’s organisational structure and the lengthy process of consensus building. This implies a trust in the processes of self-organisation, and highlights the fluidity of horizontality, in a sense that through dialogue and cooperation, the spatial and social imaginaries of Christiania’s residents remain open and multiple regarding the context of the intervention (Maeckelbergh, 2011). In this way, creativity and experimentation in the development of new ideas and initiatives for the future planning, management, and placemaking of the area is continually encouraged (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2008).

Similar sentiments of freedom and equality of participation can be found in the self-governance of Metelkova Mesto. As Metelkova is more manageable in terms of size

(27 times smaller than Christiania) and purpose (cultural squat), its internal self-governance lies in the responsibility of one body (Metelkova Forum):

*“The rules are quite loose, the main governing body of Metelkova is our forum, in which anyone who is working/creating in Metelkova can participate. [As a] Non-hierarchical organisation, the forum is community-led and democratic; we discuss on some projects and how we renovate the place, decisions are made through consensus, we don’t vote...” (Interview with artist 1 in Metelkova).*

Like Christianites, the squatters in Metelkova enact similar practices of horizontality in terms of space allocation and project funding. When a space becomes available, open calls for artists are made, and the Forum discusses which artist is going to occupy the new studio. Similarly, any artist or collective in Metelkova can pitch an idea for a new artistic project or cultural programme, which is also scrutinised in the Forum:

*“We try to make our decision-making as horizontal as possible, everybody has a chance to bring their own programme, if they are in line with some general agreements (by the collective).” (Interview with artist 2 in Metelkova).*

The majority of these programmes are presented in the galleries and the open spaces in Metelkova, even though some artists’ works are also displayed in the institutional museums. Whereas discussions regarding new projects and programmes dominate the meetings, there is also room for discussion of any requests or ideas that someone has, as well as discussions regarding day-to-day operations and common problems that Metelkova Mesto shares with the other institutional buildings, such as the hostel:

*“Our meeting is held every first Monday of the month. I am responsible for gathering the people, and also for setting the agenda for the meeting. I am sending some topics, and then the last topic is “everything” so everybody can raise something and be heard.” (Interview with artist 1 in Metelkova).*

Despite the seemingly loose organisation, Metelkova's governance is very focused on the artists' wellbeing and the smooth production of art and culture. This focus, coupled with Metelkova's dependence on funding from a range of external bodies (e.g. cultural programmes funded by the European Union or the Slovenian Ministry of Culture), and from external collaborations with the other institutional parts in the area, means that the practices of horizontality in Metelkova become extremely important in terms of situating the autonomous part as the pillar of alternative culture in Ljubljana. Practices of horizontality therefore become a vehicle for ensuring that Metelkova is positioned strongly in any attempt to apply for external funding, or in any collaboration with external actors. According to a member of one of Metelkova's associations:

*"In my opinion, this [horizontality] brought an equality in Metelkova, since we were pressured from the outside to accept decisions, to make some compromise. This rule of consensus made it difficult to do that, even if some members wanted to do that [to collaborate with external actors], we have to make a compromise within ourselves to strengthen our negotiating position to the outside actors and then continue with the outside [negotiations], [it's going] back and forth..." (Interview with artist 2 in Metelkova).*

The statement above emphasises the importance of connectivity within all actors in the network. Connectivity in this context can be thought as "communication characterised by reciprocal contamination", as actors in the network correspond simultaneously to a multiplicity of ideas and actions, and form links that enhance the network (inwardly and outwardly) while creating "structural changes in the political, economic, and social orders" (Maeckelbergh, 2011: 14–15). Hence, Metelkova's loose governance structure encourages flexibility in the pursuit of multiple and open goals (such as securing the status of the autonomous part, obtaining NGO statuses for galleries, or promoting the area's clubs and bars), while also focusing on the main goal of cultural production. Like Christianites, Metelkovites embrace this flexibility (mainly in the artistic sense) and enact their own creative cultural practices through networked connections-in-action (Gherardi, 2016), which allows them to further expand the network by attracting other actors. Cultural practices that stem from the

loose governance of the area have the potential to reinforce the network's coherence (in terms of linking several goals to the main goal of cultural production), but also contribute to the relative stability of Metelkova, as:

*“When you have this kind of public, the authorities cannot deny that there is interest for this and there is a good cause for its existence, as it adds value to the society. Whereas this cultural production is not mainstream, it has its own public which cannot be denied.” (Interview with artist 3 in Metelkova).*

6.4.2 The challenges of horizontality: Practices of conflict and dissent in heterotopias  
One of the outcomes of horizontality is the potential for emergence of new political and social subjectivities, which are constituted through communication, coordination, and negotiation during the enactment of collective, networked practices of governance (Juris, 2008; Maeckelbergh, 2009). However, as horizontal decision-making and the principles of consensus democracy are further consolidated, they create more room for conflicts and confrontations within the open, alternative spaces (Maeckelbergh, 2011) where place management is negotiated:

*“Our feeling is that on the other side of the fence, most [people] out there, they love things and use people. That's not the way we work in here. We work collectively and get a lot of things done, but we never agree on anything, because in 45 years only nine rules means that we don't make all kinds of rules...” (Interview with Christianite 1).*

*“Sometimes the organisation is a problem, because we are talking, talking, talking and we don't materialise the ideas. Metelkova is not one Metelkova, everybody has their own ideas of how Metelkova should develop and how they see it. You have the artists who are totally individual, then you have the associations, and inside the associations a community [forum] that's running the associations, this is really atomised, but it's also the sweet [sic] thing about Metelkova.” (Interview with artist 1 in Metelkova).*

The extracts above suggest that conflict, dissent, and disagreement are intrinsic qualities of both areas' internal governance structures, highlighting forms of smart pluralism in decision-making (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007). Such forms are bounded in the personal and collective identities of those who co-create the place, thus becoming elements of the cultural struggle for autonomy (Escobar, 2001) in

Christiania and Metelkova. From a network perspective, place actors enact practices that cause both conflict and change (Laamanen, 2017), which threaten the internal spatiality of the network (Sheppard, 2002). Indeed, as explained above, the dynamics of the network in Christiania were under threat when a quick decision had to be made regarding the future of the area. Many Christianites were opposed to the deal as they thought that it would be the end of autonomy for Christiania, whereas others saw the deal and the collective buying for the area as the only feasible option to maintain some autonomy. There were also others, as it will be shown in the extract below, that had completely different opinions, and in a way threatened the dynamics of the network and the legitimacy of practices of horizontality such as consensus decision-making:

*“Of course, it is not easy to agree with others. We are 700 people having to agree based on the principles of consensus democracy, but some people are misunderstanding what consensus democracy is. It’s not like everybody agrees and one person can screw it up and say “I don’t agree”. It’s more like we have to make sure that that person will also be able to at least not disagree in the same way. For example, one person really tried to fuck us over, in the process of buying Christiania. He wanted to be fully private, he wanted to buy the house and the area, be on his own and not being part of Christiania. Everybody was really angry with him, because he could easily buy a house somewhere else, whereas everyone else decided to continue living like a community. He said: “I can own my own house if I want to” and we were like “no you can’t, we are a community”. Anyway, he is still here, I’ve never seen anyone kicked out (in this area).” (Interview with Christianite 3).*

This incident shows the limits of horizontality and autonomy even in networks that operate under a collective leadership approach. Ironically, buying a house inside Christiania would be an act of resistance, and a testament to the principles of diversity and difference that characterise the management and governance of the place. However, it also stressed that even in autonomous horizontalism, there is a need for some form of strategical leadership and seizure of individual or collective power (Negri, 2015). Hence, even in autonomous leadership, one can see a certain centralisation of power, and that autonomy becomes a relational, temporary, and socially situated construct (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015), a set of power relations in



opposition rather than a commodity that an individual, a collective, or the very place itself holds (DeFilippis, 2004). In the case of Christiania, this internal clash over the meaning of Christiania and the struggle over territory resonates with Massey's (2004: 7) view that place "must be a site of negotiation, and that often this will be conflictual negotiation". Nevertheless, the example above demonstrates the persistence of such horizontal networks and the constant struggle of their actors to hold things together, despite the contingent and temporal nature of their internal spatiality (Sheppard, 2002).

#### 6.4.3 Mimicking practices of state and city governance

An important aspect of everyday self-organisation in Christiania and Metelkova lies in their ability to adapt their internal governance and management structures in a way that will represent a mini-society within the limits of the state. These mini-societies do not function only with their loose rules of governance though, but also by the reiteration and citation of essential place management practices from higher scales and their mobilisation for the continuous reconfiguration of space and place (Butler, 1997). Thus, citational practices in Christiania and Metelkova can produce scalar effects via processes of signification and resignification that subvert the original regulated processes of the state or the city, and subsequently forge the identity of the place (Butler, 1999; Kaiser and Nikiforova, 2008). The following extract from Christiania's guide showcases this:

*"Christiania's self-government has thus created an internal structure which in many areas replaces the administration which the Danish State normally handles. Apart from the fact that the Common Meeting in some cases replaces government, as well as judiciary and police, it is Christiania's Area Meeting which is the relevant instance when the right of use to a dwelling is conferred through the citizen's card. In the same way, it is the Economy Meeting which apportions business premises in Christiania through a right of use agreement."*  
(Residents of Christiania, 2004: 21)

As seen in previous sections, governmental, policing, and judicial practices in Christiania are relationally fluid and bound to the principles of horizontality and commonality (e.g. the recent dislodging of Pusher Street, the decision to buy out the

area, deciding if someone needs to be ostracised due to breaking one of the nine rules). In the everyday tasks and operations that concern the management and planning of the area though, there is a clear systemic element that is delineated by the loose hierarchical organisation of Christiania. Any planning and business application needs to be agreed by the relevant offices. Decisions regarding the building of new houses or other infrastructure (e.g. bridges, roads, electricity and sewage), as well as the renovation and maintenance of protected buildings are also discussed with the external planning department of the city of Copenhagen, due to the heritage status and the landlord-tenant-like relationship that still exists between Christiania and the city. Whereas most of the discussions revolve around the issues of permits and regulations, there is also a clear attempt by the city to develop practices of knowledge exchange with the planners and architects of Christiania:

*“We are spending a lot of time having dialogue and trying to persuade them that the regulations could help them, and we are making building legal there now; they ask before building anything... They come with ideas to the planners and ask if permits are required. Most of the people in the housing office of Christiania have common sense and they need cooperation, they listen to us they understand a good idea when they hear it... However, they have organised themselves as a copy of our department so when they want to build, they go to their office, they act like individuals in a community.” (Interview with planners in Copenhagen).*

Henceforth, Christiania’s planning office performances represent citational doubling, as they acquire knowledge and mimic the actions, operations and practices of Copenhagen’s Technical and Environmental office, thus resignificating on their own terms the rules, regulations and actions required in urban planning. However, one can also see an admiration (Finchett-Maddock, 2016) for the planning and legal practices of the city, as Christiania’s mimicking practices are dynamically reproducing space and place through the citational performance of Christiania-City relations (Rose, 1999). The reiteration of other city and state practices, such as paying rent and property tax for housing, or businesses paying an extra levy for trading in Christiania, further highlights the importance of having a finance mechanism and programme (Common Purse) similar to the state’s for securing the operation of services and

amenities (kindergartens, post office, tourist information office, financial office, building office, recreation facilities, and sanitation and health facilities within the Freetown), and the social welfare of its citizens. Christiania can therefore be understood as a micro-society that pays a premium (in the form of collective taxation) to repeat and mimic practices of state governance and management. The close relationship and influence of the city and state with Christiania after the deal also indicates that mimicking practices preclude the possibility of fully autonomous decision-making, but leave space for more situated, semi-reflexive strategies in terms of place management and governance (Kaiser and Nikiforova, 2008).

Whereas mimicking practices are more easily observed in the city-like structure of Christiania, similar observations can be made for Metelkova too. Here, the clubs, bars and galleries that operate in the area take care of its everyday maintenance, making sure that the place is clean and safe, particularly when the clubs are open. As clubbing is the main source of income for Metelkova Mesto and gives them freedom and flexibility to develop their cultural programmes, the activists take into some consideration the laws and regulations that are imposed by the state in terms of noise complaints and security:

*“We always have the problem of loudness of music, and also a problem with a new law that enforces security guards for a certain number of people for every cultural event in Slovenia... you have to hire official security companies that have to work on these events, which for some clubs this is very expensive and it costs them the freedom to produce their cultural programmes.” (Interview with club manager in Metelkova).*

Additionally, all alcohol sold in Metelkova bars is subjected only to sales tax, as the clubs and bars lack the official licencing for operations. However, new accounting and taxation laws in place necessitate some compliance by the clubs and bars:

*“There are some new laws, that enforce taxation and accounting programmes, which cost money. For example, every club needs to have a device now [referring to a Point of Sale (PoS) system] that is connected to the Internet. You cannot avoid that, so to some extent we pay taxes.” (Interview with club manager in Metelkova).*

Despite showing some compliance to state laws, Metelkova is still opposing the continuing regulation of the area, and ensures that building and health inspectors remain unwelcome there. Furthermore, they operate in a similar way to Christiania when it comes to the maintenance of buildings and infrastructure, in order to avoid dealing with the city in a more systematic way on these matters:

*“The problems come with the inspectors, fire, safety, and water regulations, and the businesses kicked them out. There was nobody to receive the inspector report so it went to the city... So, we started with the communication, some of them want to be a little more organised but others are not, we had a lot of meetings with individuals and tried to collaborate... I think that Metelkova is in quite good condition; they have made some progress to maintain the little things, do a little here and there. They are really good at taking the drug issue on their own and getting rid of the dealers... From time to time they (the inspectors) would do an inspection, we will say what’s going on, we try to force the regulations but they [the people in Metelkova] only care when there are lot of calls regarding something...” (Interview with city official in Ljubljana).*

It can be argued that Metelkova’s actions towards the management of the area reflect those of a ‘cultural BID’, which focuses on improving the conditions for the development of cultural programmes and events via commercial and maintenance practices that secure the place’s appeal to the public. These practices continue to bolster Metelkova as a place of hedonic and aesthetic value, where cultural and artistic interventions create a social commons in a manner alternative to what the city was imagining before the occupation (Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Rota and Salone, 2014; Visconti et al., 2010). Therefore, mimicking practices in Metelkova are not enacted in order to replace society, but to discourage further engagement with the city and the state. So far, Metelkova has achieved its purpose, despite the planners’ concerns about the area, as the following passage explains:

*“When it comes to Metelkova, the area is now considered as an area where maintenance can be done, and a detailed plan has been proposed. The plan is there, but it hasn’t been pushed forward, it is not part of the political agenda and my department [urban planning] will not execute this... [When asked regarding collaboration.] If it works, leave it alone, if there is no drug use and no crime, there’s no such things that would endanger the public interest. Metelkova is definitely part of the city, very much part of the city, and it’s actually an important part because of the programmes that it has and because*

*it's a social space. It's a question of how far you take it, what you do with it (if you preserve it or not). If you can build some sanitary facilities (which are very bad) and simply improve it. But then again, the place that it is ugly doesn't mean that it is bad. It is an excellent space..." (Interview with planning official in Ljubljana).*

#### 6.4.4 Expressive practices of resistance with the 'outside'

As seen above, a big part of both Christiania's and Metelkova's sense of identity and meaning springs from the continuing practices of resistance and confrontation with the 'outside'. As Laamanen (2017) purports, such practices are tactical in nature, engrained in the cultural mechanisms of such oppositional counter-spaces, and inciting collective action that aims to maintain the heterotopic structure while simultaneously trying to subvert the status quo (Heynen, 2008). It follows that practices of prefiguration and horizontality are inherent elements of tactical strategising, as they uncover multiple potentialities and possibilities towards reaching a vision or a final goal for the place (and the society at large), and mobilise network-based forms of organisation that challenge typical understandings of place management and governance (Healey, 2006b; Juris, 2008). However, there is also an important communicative element in tactical strategising, which is expressed via practices that aim to open up the political space necessary for experimentation and creativity, while safeguarding these places from terminal co-optation (Maeckelbergh, 2011; Martínez, 2014).

Such expressive practices are frequent in both areas. One of the most famous moments during Christiania's negotiations with the state before the buyout of the area was when Christianites responded to the government's ultimatum by sending a masked jester, accompanied by a flutist, to express Christiania's frustration through an interpretative dance. This tactic, according to Starecheski (2011), highlighted a failure to reach a consensus regarding the future of Christiania, but also gave an answer to the government in an absurd way that showed an openness to tactical innovation (Polletta, 2002) that is symbolic of Christianites' pride and collectivity. Similarly, the closure of Christiania prior to the agreement was another expressive practice that consolidated Christiania's role in the deal as a power player:

*“They closed Christiania down but they could not do that, they put up fences for three days, and our politicians asked if they were allowed to do so, but it happened so fast. They said “we need to think and keep it our own for a few days”, but I think they wanted to show they are still in charge – in a broader context it is a power game.” (Interview with city official in Copenhagen).*

Whereas the legalisation of Christiania put an end to the dispute over use of land, the inherent element of resistance is still prevalent in the struggles over the issues of Pusher Street and marijuana. Christianites’ expressive practices in this matter vary, from the very mundane (e.g. consuming marijuana in public) to the very intense, which includes frequent fights with the police, and protests against interferences and crackdowns. Powerful symbolisms are also evident in the art and graffiti that decorate the buildings and the public spaces of Christiania, where aesthetic expressions that hover around the issues of drugs, and police highlight the tensions between both parties. These tactics help Christiania to sustain an image of protest and resistance, but also creates a counter-image that is detrimental to the area:

*“Most of the tourists that come here have a certain narrative in their minds that is being promoted by the media and the politicians. The story is that we are criminals, we are ruled by gangs, we are all drug addicts, we are doing heavy drugs, we stole this area and we don’t pay rent, and if you want you can just move in because this area is a fool’s paradise.” (Interview with Christianite 4).*

Regardless of the negative connotations, Christianites have until recently defended Pusher Street as its existence partially regulated and discouraged other criminal activity, such as selling hard drugs, from the area. However, the recent dislodging and the closing of Pusher Street can be seen as a more powerful expression of Christiania’s tactics, even against its own people, in order to protect the image of the autonomous community.

Similarly, in Metelkova, symbolic expressions of resistance are evident in the public space and in the discussions with the city regarding the maintenance of the area. As a public space of cultural production, Metelkova is decorated by street art, graffiti, sculptures, paintings, and other experimental structures that aim to enchant and

surprise the public, and also create “a conversational commons wherein city inhabitants can confront one another” (Visconti et al., 2010: 521).

*“In the case of Metelkova there is an enormous wave of different cultural productions. Metelkova is converging many publics who want to see theatre, hear music, think and be critical, [have] free talks - they can do it here, this is the space.” (Interview with artist 2 in Metelkova).*

Thus, cultural production in Metelkova is not only a symbol of alternative culture, but also a continuous practice of resistance that helps artists and the public to overcome their dissatisfaction arising from the sterile image of the rest of the city. This is evident as Metelkova Mesto is purposely ‘dirty’ and run-down compared to the clean and tidy institutional part of Metelkova that represents the museums and the plaza:

*“Our mayor has a specific and individual vision of how the city should look... He’s repeating that Ljubljana is the most beautiful city in the world, and he’s tidying it, to look like an Austrian, clean town.” (Interview with city official in Ljubljana).*

As the artists proclaim, this vision parallels with the broader project of gentrification in the city, something that is not in the best interest for Metelkova Mesto. Therefore, the artists employ interesting tactics to make a mockery out of public administration (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017):

*“The government is all about structure, and that’s why they want to talk to one of us. So, we use the Metelkova brand as our strategy, when we go to the city to negotiate, we go [as] ten people not one, because this way they have to deal with ten different ideas, and they just give up, as they cannot talk with us. We always use this strategy to play with them, make a joke out of this, because they want to be really serious. This strategy, you see the results, 23 years of Metelkova, it’s working and it was the same strategy from the beginning. We always think of how to protect this [public] space [from them].” (Interview with artist 1 in Metelkova).*

Here, Metelkova’s functional and symbolic elements (consensus democracy, diversity, autonomy) afford legitimacy to the place brand, which is used as a tactical

practice in order to reinforce the autonomous identity of the place. Furthermore, this mockery, as in the case of Christiania, highlights a carnivalesque element in both places' expressive practices, where a temporary suspension of hierarchic distinctions, and the questioning of authority via practices of joyous anarchy and ridiculing, occurs (Bakhtin, 1984; Lachmann et al., 1988). It can be argued that these expressive practices, rather than simply entailing the danger of apolitical governance, help Christiania and Metelkova to sustain an alternative image that permeates into other networks and signifies alternative avenues towards place management.

#### 6.4.5 Self-management and everyday practices

Whereas explicit practices of resistance and self-organisation communicate a certain alternative image to a variety of place stakeholders, it is the tacit practices of the everyday, and how people practise collective self-management through these, that constantly reconfigure places as sites of resistance and multiple potentialities. As mentioned in earlier chapters, banal and mundane activities entail tactical elements that can destabilise and challenge strategic power and normality (De Certeau, 1984). This presupposes an understanding of everyday life not only as bland and repetitive, but also as spontaneous and spectacular. Hence, everyday practices can be identified as routines that can provide warmth and comfort, and as liberating acts that aim to change the structure and power relations of "the sites in and through which power works to alienate, subjectify, and exclude" (Binnie et al., 2007: 517).

Naturally, these sentiments are more explicit in the everyday life of Christianites and their daily attempts to sustain their social experiment in the heart of the city. Despite the buyout of the area, Christianites are still trying to remain true to their main principles of freedom and self-organisation that the originators of Christiania envisioned:

*"The objective goals of Christiania are to build up a self-ruled society, where every single individual can freely develop themselves under responsibility for the community. That this society shall rest economically in itself, and the common strife must still be to go out and show that psychological and physical pollution can be prevented... The main objectives of development in freedom can be divided into three fundamental principles, which have been deciding for the way in which we wish to arrange ourselves... The principle of self-administration and responsibility (for the individual, for the area, and for*



*Christiania), together with the principle of solidarity (that we stretch our interests from ourselves to others) may be regarded as the basic conditions for free individual development in the social community, and in balance with nature itself.” (Christiania, 1991).*

In my discussions with Christianites, this strong sense of responsibility and perseverance of the hippie and alternative life was communicated at every opportunity. While walking past the touristic and busy areas, one can explore a different Christiania where residents work together on numerous projects (such as replacing old roofs with new solar-panels, maintaining buildings and other infrastructure), or work in the many businesses (arts, crafts, bakery, bicycle workshop, info centres, offices, etc.) that are run collectively and constitute an important part of Christiania’s economy. More importantly, one can discover many places and spots where people interact together and discuss the state of life in Christiania and its future, or perform aesthetic and recreational practices that signify the free-spirited and carefree attitude of most of its residents:

*“This is our town, we have our little town functions in this area, a little shopping centre where you can get groceries and stuff, and there is a playground and some benches where people like to sit here and drink and discuss. There is always a musician or two playing music. For the people who live in Christiania this is something like a live Facebook, a real-time Facebook where we interact...” (Interview with Christianite 1).*

Of course, most of these activities and practices are rooted in the principles of autonomy and collective self-management that permeate Christiania, which entail a responsibility about one’s actions and a need to contribute as part of a community (‘we are 900 people living in a big farm’) in this ongoing social experiment. For Christianites, it is the simple things, like helping each other and working together that constitute a revolutionary attitude against the urban alienation that is happening next door to Copenhagen:

*“It’s the simple everyday activities and things, like inviting people in and talking to people, that is one of the more important aspects of living in Christiania, because it is still an experiment, an ongoing social experiment, and*

*it's important [to understand] that if you are going to live here, you will have to share it, it's not coming here and putting up fences and say "this is mine and keep out, don't look at me", pull up your curtains, etc. It's not why I'm here anyway..." (Interview with Christianite 3).*

*"We also give one weekend a month in work. You can work anywhere you want and contribute. The gift is in the work here. There is no control about whether or not you meet up to the action dates [public meetings]. Maybe some people will say to others "I see that you haven't been in any of the last five meetings", but they've misunderstood the concept. The gift is when you work together with others, and that always ends up with a party." (Interview with Christianite 2).*

It is evident from the above statements that the mundane and simple activities of Christianites signify a refusal to accept the everyday conditions that the city and the state dictate. Their practices entail open-ended and non-representational political articulations that produce Christiania in ways that challenge the routinising demands of the city and its (according to Christianites) capitalist ambitions (Vasudevan, 2015). Their self-management practices can be paralleled with the concept of autogestion, an everyday process of becoming that occurs when a (social) group tries to understand and master its own conditions of existence, while withering away from the state and capital (Kipfer et al., 2013; Lefebvre, 2009). Autogestion is inherently conflictual and contradictory, a characteristic of the radical politics in which Christianites claim to partake, and thus can be seen as a processual condition of intense political engagement and spontaneity that is continually enacted in the everyday management of Christiania (Brenner and Elden, 2009).

However, these practices aim to protect Christiania not only in terms of its place identity and meaning, but also as a territorial entity that allows for everyday practices of autogestion to flourish. In Christiania, people's bottom-up everyday practices, individual gestures, and social relationships are enacted daily in order to appropriate space for daily living (lived placemaking) (Balassiano and Maldonado, 2015). In essence, the hippie life that Christianites proclaim entails collective practices (such as sharing work, resources, helping each other with everyday tasks, and creating interesting projects for their neighbourhoods) that become practices of territoriality

and boundary making, exemplified by an 'us' versus 'them' attitude in most encounters with the outside. These create barriers for entry and participation, while also challenging top-down representations of urban life and capital; something that effectively put a halt to Christiania's reappropriation by the city in the past (Halvorsen, 2015).

*"[Talking about choosing who's moving in]. We want people who want to take part in it, it doesn't mean that you'll always agree, but you have to create things with your neighbours, even if you are different [politically]. That's the people I look for personally..." (Interview with Christianite 2).*

Despite this need to protect and safeguard the place, Christianites continue to embrace the diversity and appeal of Christiania to the wider public, thus producing more flexible boundaries to enable a less imposing framework of territoriality (Lloveras et al., 2017) within the area. Thus, one can experience this more reflexive attitude when interacting with Christianites as a visitor, something that is rarely happening in encounters with city or state officials:

*"I have no problem with the tourists. I have lived in Downtown Christiania too and I am familiar with them. I always have my door open for everyone. You can come in if you want to see my home, people are always very curious to see what's inside, see something that looks totally different and baffling to them..." (Interview with Christianite 3).*

*"You can be invited in somebody's house when you walk around Christiania, somebody might be moving some firewood, you might help him a little bit, and you might go in and have some coffee..." (Interview with Christianite 4).*

#### 6.4.6 Contestation over practices of maintenance and repair

Of course, as seen in previous sections, flexibility and collectivity are the driving forces behind DIY practices of development, maintenance, and repair in Christiania and Metelkova. As mentioned above, such practices were evident in both areas since the first days of the initial occupations, as the then squatters had to resort to innovation and improvisation in order to guarantee basic living conditions. Until today, a similar spirit is enclosed in the practices and workings that guarantee the daily operation of both areas. Naturally, practices of maintenance and repair are

enacted in a similar way as any other politics in both places; they are constantly discussed, reworked and reproduced in a continuous feedback loop of variation and experimentation, which enhances urban learning and produces big outcomes through small increments in practical knowledge (Graham and Thrift, 2007; Vasudevan, 2015). More importantly though, such practices highlight how people develop a collective capacity for managing their area, by learning from each other and doing all sorts of tasks (“I am a carpenter but I also help with plumbing and roofing, most of us are like a ‘jack of all trades’ here”) when it comes to contribute. Hence, practices of maintenance and repair not only afford opportunities for continuous experimentation, specialisation, and knowledge co-production, but they also act as a social glue that holds these communities together (Putnam, 2000):

*“We have meetings in which we decide what we want to do with the area. For example, there was a big house that was open, the person who was living there for 30 years has done nothing to maintain it, so the house was about to fall down. The person moved out and left a big debt aside, so we decided that we need to re-appropriate this house, create a common room for our meetings, a guest house with guest rooms... It’s really good to have an area room where we can facilitate different things, for example if some people need to have a party, or we want to have a common eating [meal] once a month, eat together, or we want to have a communal cafe at the summer time, where everybody can take turns running it, [such a space] opens lots of possibilities. This was our decision, it was our call to say what can be done with this building since it’s in our area.” (Interview with Christianite 3).*

Additionally, practices of maintenance and repair are also another tool in people’s attempts to retain autonomy and control. At the time of my visit, a new transformer station and an upgraded sewage system were under construction by the community from funds taken by the Common Purse. A similar approach is followed in Metelkova via the events route, as these provide:

*“...a good opportunity for us to raise money to maintain the buildings, we prefer to do it on our own, we don’t want the city to help with renovations.” (Interview with artist 2 in Metelkova).*

However, some decisions are contested by the city and the state, particularly due to the heritage status of both areas. Thus, the daily maintenance of buildings and infrastructure (and for Christiania, the physical environment) creates multiple functional and strategic contestations (Warnaby et al., 2010) that mainly have to do with the level and extent of interventions. For example, Christiania's attempts to switch to sustainable energy by building wind turbines and solar-panel roofs are met with scepticism by city and state officials, due to the potential aesthetic detriment to the buildings and the area in general. On the other hand, a high-scale intervention, when proposed by the officials, is always likely to be rejected and perceived as a normalisation attempt by the people of Christiania and Metelkova. Such was the case when the city offered a substantial amount of money for repairs in the more deprived areas of Christiania. The constant contradiction of any proposal is of course a tactic that is inherent in Christiania's anti-establishment mentality and refusal to be dictated to. It arguably sits as a paradox alongside Christiania's claim to be open to dialogue:

*"The biggest challenge is that Christiania don't [sic] want to be a part of Copenhagen, they tend to maintain that we are not a part of it, so we try with a lot of dialogue [to collaborate]."* (Interview with planners in Copenhagen).

*"I would have liked to cooperate with the planners, but they didn't want to cooperate the other way around. They wanted to dictate the process... All plans are discussed and we take plans from the city very seriously, we just have different ideas. We take it seriously, we are part of Copenhagen, but it's very hard to be the one who is always dictated [to], and they don't listen the other way, we should listen to each other."* (Interview with Christianite 2).

Similarly, in Metelkova, the daily maintenance and repair practices of the squatters are aiming to preserve the area at the bare minimum, as for them any other intervention will taint the aesthetic appeal of the area:

*"They have this classical idea to normalise the place, to renovate the buildings on that level, to have the programmes in nice, neat buildings, but if you do that that's the end of Metelkova..."* (Interview with artist 1 in Metelkova).

As in Christiania, the idea behind an upscale intervention in Metelkova is perceived as an attempt to bring the place to the same standards as the rest of the institutional area. However, for city officials, a joint partnership approach towards place interventions is considered as a step towards avoiding the hazards of run-down buildings, for which the city has responsibility:

*“A hostel Celica approach would be really OK with us, as it reinforces the brand and solves the problems which are present there. The spatial problems, the physical problems... However, place users might see any intervention from state authorities as an infringement of their rights, which is not necessarily the case. To make a place better it doesn’t mean that you change anything in the social status of the area. You are just making it technically better and you are bringing up the standards.” (Interview with planner in Ljubljana).*

As evidenced above, striving to secure autonomy and control, and the ongoing contestations over place interventions and place infrastructure, means that reflexive tactics and concessions need to be made by both sides. However, it can be argued that this ‘middle ground’ is a space where the city and the state can exert subtle power via consensual modes of metagovernance. Thus, the reflexive self-management approach that is employed in both areas covertly promotes the city and state agendas for the areas (Pedersen et al., 2011), something that fuels reactionary discussions and a return to the militant particularism (Harvey and Williams, 1995) of the early years of occupation:

*“All these buildings you see here, they were in bad condition, we have maintained it and built it up, used millions of kroner, and then a lot more money on top of that, I am really against this and I am considering that we should say ‘fuck the government’ and be squatters again.” (Interview with Christianite 4).*

Therefore, it can be argued that the everyday practices of place management in both areas oscillate from the conflictual, as evidenced by individual and collective practices of territorial autogestion, to the collective and consensual practices of maintenance and repair that afford a certain autonomy and control, but that are also influenced by subtle forms of city and state power. As it will be shown in the next section, this

hybridisation exceeds beyond the local and is co-produced in multiple formations, policies, and strategies that build upon notions of the alternative and autonomous.

## 6.5 Towards hybrid place management?

So far in this chapter, I have presented how the diverse, horizontal practices of autonomy, prefiguration, and self-organisation in Christiania and Metelkova have contributed to their collective and conflictual co-creation. As seen above, these (mostly) bottom-up practices cultivate a collective capacity for action (Omholt, 2013) that embraces people's and social groups' different spatialities, positionalities, and ways of practicing (Leitner et al., 2008). As such, place management can be understood as a socially situated, relational, territorial process that transcends the local by establishing a social, cultural, economic, political and legal presence for these places, in contrast with the jurisdiction they belong in (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017). Parallel to the ongoing internal transformations in both areas, a continuous process of hybridisation takes place, as practices that challenge the 'permanences' (in the forms of policies, laws and regulations) that the city and the state espouse (Kipfer et al., 2013) also assist Christiania and Metelkova to permeate the political, cultural, economic and social spheres, thus affording normalisation and insertion into the mainstream. In this section, I will further delve into how practices of hybridisation are simultaneously enacted by all place stakeholders at multiple scales; how these add to the complexity of managing places that are in a constant state of flux; and how these are reflexively fused with forces of resistance, autonomy, and neoliberalism in order to afford institutionalisation and normalisation while continuing to exert influence (Varró, 2015; Zanotti, 2013).

### 6.5.1 Re-appropriating the alternative

Earlier in this chapter, I demonstrated how Christiania and Metelkova are mimicking practices of state and city institutions in order to tailor their own practices of place management. Of course, this is a display of hybridisation, as the replication of such practices aims to discourage a more authoritative style of top-down place governance. However, the ongoing processes of learning and knowledge production in a heterotopic context disseminated various informal practices of place

management that were eventually circulated within state and city practices, as well as alternative everyday practices that infiltrated and changed urban living in both places. In Christiania, the principles of being in balance with nature and the goals of reducing physical and psychological pollution have led to the enactment of local, ecological models of managing the area since its inception, as Christianites experimented with various maintenance, waste, and energy approaches that were necessary for its survival since the area was lacking basic infrastructure at the time. From this experimentation, Christiania introduced various initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s that aimed to reduce the ecological footprint of the area, such as ecological, low-energy buildings, biological waste-water treatment systems, sophisticated waste, recycling, and compost systems, and a car-free politics that became one of the nine rules of Christiania (Hansen, 2011).

These initiatives formed the basis of Christiania's green plan in 1991, which aimed to define its status not only in social, but also in environmental and sustainability terms, by introducing an alternative place management and urban development discourse (Thörn et al., 2011). Since then, Christiania has won numerous prizes for its decentralised systems of garbage collection, recycling, and composting, and even collaborates with the city, which collects the end products free of charge from the recycling stations (Jarvis, 2011). With the advent of decentralised waste management and energy systems in Copenhagen though, and the development of waste-to-energy facilities such as the newly-built Amager Bakke, it has been argued that the existing models of Christiania, although still relevant, are not as efficient as in the past, thus pressuring Christianites to adjust to the city's environmental regulations in terms of buildings and infrastructure:

*"We have discussed environmental issues a lot in the past, they [Christianites] are very focused on that, they collect the garbage and they recycle and re-use it, they do a better job in terms of recycling than the municipality actually. They also collect wastewater from the houses and clean it in filtering stations, they heat up the area but nowadays [this] is not done in an environmental way [heating partly by second-hand wood]. But they totally disagree with the experts, they believe that they are still ahead in terms of environmental management, they were ahead in the 70s – 80s, but not anymore... As of now, we are spending a lot of time trying to persuade them that the regulations*



*could help them build houses that can be secure and safe, the energy consumption can be reduced, they won't burn and will not fall down, and they can still decide what the buildings will look like..." (Interview with planner in Copenhagen).*

From the extract above, it is evident that the decentralised practices of Christiania still have environmental relevance in its everyday maintenance and functions, however they have been surpassed by a set of similar decentralised practices of the city. Whereas the city offers the possibility for crystallisation of both approaches via practices of cross-referencing and co-evolution (Brenner et al., 2010), this can be seen as an attempt to fuse Christiania into the institutional policies of Copenhagen and continue the process of re-appropriation. This fusion is of course evident not only in environmental policies that are commonplace in almost every big city, but also in other aspects, such as the hippie lifestyle, the culture, and the use of products that symbolise Christiania in the minds of Copenhageners. One of these products is the Christiania bike, a three-wheeled cargo bike that is used extensively for carrying anything from groceries and raw materials to wheelchair users and small families. According to Christianites, the growing popularity of the bike in the 1990s forced Copenhagen to widen the bicycle paths in the city in order to accommodate it. A Christiania product has therefore contributed to the cycling culture of the city and also had a direct effect on its transport policy. Other social practices that are the norm in Christiania since its inception, such as organic and vegan eating and cooking, crafting, blacksmithing, woodworking, knitting and so on have also scaled up (Birtchnell, 2012) to become synonymous with the new healthy, hipster urban lifestyle that is apparent worldwide. As a Christianite explains, this form of cultural appropriation has permanently altered Christiania's identity and uniqueness, as everyday practices that are synonymous with Christiania's tactical urbanism are constantly re-appearing as new trends and tactics of informal urban living in the city (Vasudevan, 2015):

*"The brand and our lifestyle became the mainstream; our food and our clothes are now like that. Same with the bicycles, every family with respect for themselves in Copenhagen has a Christiania bike, and solar and wind energy.*

*Only hippies had it, but now they see it's the way forward. A lot of things in Christiania were considered crazy or stupid, and you were told you were crazy. Christiania is the place where you can do things the other way, try new things, and if it doesn't work try something else, and then maybe 20 years from now, what was crazy is actually mainstream..." (Interview with Christianite 2).*

In Metelkova, the process of hybridisation is evident in the practices of the institutional part of the area, which aim to preserve and promote contemporary art and culture in a highly antagonistic economic environment. An example of this hybridisation is Ljubljana's triennial of contemporary art, which is organised by the Museum of Contemporary Art in collaboration with cultural centres, galleries, NGOs, and the Ministry of Culture. During the triennial, many artists based in the autonomous part of Metelkova contributed to the exhibitions and the projects, despite the fact that there was no consensus for Metelkova Mesto to participate and present its projects at the exhibitions. As one of the artists in Metelkova explains:

*"We look at them [the museum] as kind of gentrification of the place, because we are still for them some kind of exotic zoo, because this kind of art that is produced in Metelkova, they don't accept. We have some conceptual art, and 30 artists that are totally different; some of them are doing contemporary art, some of them are craftsmen, some of them are really experimental, but we are not at the same level... Now they are recognising Metelkova as a live art project [not as an autonomous centre]..." (Interview with artist 1 in Metelkova).*

The turbulent relationship with the institutional part of Metelkova was a central theme in the previous triennial, where artists and curators addressed the local problems and issues over the use of space in a series of events and debates that highlighted:

*"...the symptoms and unease of, and the existing or emerging relations between neighbours in, the urban space in which the Museum plaza with its four museums is located and which directly relates to the legendary Autonomous Culture Zone Metelkova. Employing a variety of approaches, some of the participating artists and neighbours also reacted critically to the concept." (Petrešin-Bachelez, 2013: 8)*

The use of the plaza as a hybrid space for promoting contemporary art was contested by the autonomous part, which protested the triennial by installing a barrier between the plaza and Metelkova Mesto with the legend 'No pasarán', a critique towards the insertion of the autonomous part in the wider, gentrified area. Apart from the spatial practices aiming towards appropriation, triennial participants' discursive practices were also infused with the principles and the spirit of the autonomous part. The themes of resilience and sustainable co-living monopolised discussions between artists in the Metelkova area. In these discussions, the need to explore ways to revive community principles such as 'do-it-together' and co-working was stressed, in order to adapt and develop new strategies and collaborations in the here and now between all parties. For the institutional part of Metelkova, engaging in such discussions with the autonomous part is essential, as both parties "are dependent on the same cultural politics, which puts their struggle for survival in a mutually dependent relationship with their collaboration with one another" (Petrešin-Bachelez, 2013: 8):

*"There is a need to combine forces, because this situation is not leading anywhere and none of us is profiting from competing for funds. There is this neoliberal mentality that all art should go to the market and that's why we are in a stalemate, but all contemporary artists should unite and fight this mentality [fight for art]... As a museum we need to be careful to protect the legacy of contemporary art and also to host as many initiatives as possible..." (Interview with museum curator).*

Whereas joining forces may seem as the only sustainable solution for both parties, it also requires concessions and the adoption of a hybrid governance model that for the autonomous part may still carry neoliberalist tendencies (McGuirk, 2005). For the autonomous part, the promotion of mixed uses and other placemaking activities in the plaza, combined with plans to expand the walking paths to Metelkova, is another example of gentrification. However, it seems as a preordained outcome, based on the area's success and its function as a cultural hub:

*"If the area attracts art and culture, everyone would benefit from it but also everyone has to have their own profile. We need to make it more comfortable and more usable. There are summer projections and other activities/events;*

*we try our best to make the area pleasant...” (Interview with planner in Ljubljana).*

#### 6.5.2 Co-optative place management practices

The previous examples showcase that despite both areas’ resistance towards normalisation, other processes, such as gentrification and adoption by the mainstream are gradually propelling Christiania and Metelkova to that path. Whereas both areas are still imbued by conflict, contestation, and illegality, their social acceptance and co-existence with the social, cultural, economic, and legal surroundings of the city and the state has afforded them to scale-jump into wider public and spatial environments (Layard and Milling, 2015; Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017). For place users in both areas, this is an outcome of neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 1980), which encompasses subtle forms of control and rules of conduct that the city and the state covertly enact. This continuing centrality of government needs to be challenged and accepted at the same time, as evidenced above in the practices of horizontality and consensus, as well as in the individual, daily practices that both Christianites and Metelkovites perform. However, these practices are highly dependent on the tolerance of state and city, and thus gain legitimisation within the neoliberal context in which they occur (Spigel, 2017). According to an artist in Metelkova, this mentality redefines place-specific practices and leads towards hybridisation:

*“The main problem is that subjects that are heteronomous claim autonomy and try to collaborate and work in this supposedly autonomous place. Whereas the place might be autonomous, all the clubs and organisations here are heteronomous, and that’s their mind-set. However, this is a spontaneous mind-set, it’s not necessarily planned, this is how things work here, you have to collaborate in some aspects with the municipality and the state... That problem [the neoliberal agenda] is not easily detectable, we all talk about how bad neoliberalism is and what its perils are but we all try to collaborate and work under it, because we don’t have a thick skin to fight it in the first place.” (Interview with artist 3 in Metelkova.)*

For place users in Christiania and Metelkova, working under the 'truth claims' (Springer, 2010) of neoliberalism and capitalism means accepting the processes of gentrification and commodification of space that are a staple of both cities' urban entrepreneurship strategies and policy frameworks, and develop relatively unconventional practices that combine market and autonomous logics (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015). In both Christiania and Metelkova, business and market practices are hybridising free-market and regulated market logics in order to maximise flexibility and profit for the community:

*"In Christiania, all the shops and restaurants work as a commune but they also have to pay to be in Christiania. There is no business here that everything (profit) goes to the community. It's not like you have to live here, work here and give everything to the community. It's not Stalinism. You can also have a little business and have a little bit of capitalism." (Interview with Christianite 2).*

Such practices aim to support experimentation and autonomy in place management at the micro-local level, but they cannot afford legitimisation without co-optation from above. As both places face external pressures from the entrepreneurial spatial governance approaches of the city, they rely on the lenience and the freedoms that the city's management gives them. In short, Christiania and Metelkova enact practices of creative resistance that are encouraged by top-down, co-optative, place management initiatives in their attempt to exercise technologies of control and regulated autonomy from above (Allmendinger et al., 2016; Hjorth, 2016). The following extract describes how co-optation is exercised in Metelkova:

*"The state and the municipality exercise soft power to Metelkova by permitting them to sell drinks without paying direct tax, albeit only the indirect purchasing tax, or giving other freedoms, in order to capitalise on the area's success. Also, the Hostel is completely regulated and separate from Metelkova. They don't support what Metelkova does but they tolerate and collaborate so that they can make extra profit of the buzz." (Interview with artist 3 in Metelkova).*

It is evident that capitalisation of both areas is directly related to their convenient and powerful city-centre location, which combined with their unexpected permanence, helps them to retain some autonomy and self-management in decision making. Following Martínez (2014), it can be argued that the practices of co-optation and tolerance from above have afforded flexible permanence in Christiania and Metelkova, allowing its place actors to enact a reorganisation of space in both conventional and unconventional ways. However, the continuing co-optation deprives both areas of their heterotopic qualities, as more and more people are inserted into the setups of marketisation and capitalist production (Genocchio, 1995):

*“Which ruler is taking the extra profit? The place is not really open, you can get the place, when you have a project that you need the place, but in that situation all the clubs and societies here are prevailing, they overrule such decisions, these heteronomous subjects can make jobs with the state, the city, and nobody who needs the place or has some innovative idea cannot get the place from these bodies, because the place is full... The prevalence of heteronomous bodies is explained by the support of state and the relatively liberal relationship with the law, as most people are just doing normal jobs, making concerts, exhibitions, this is a cultural industry, and we need that (as artists) because we need jobs.” (Interview with artist 3 in Metelkova).*

From this perspective, it can be argued that such forms of co-optative place management attempt to lead autonomous places towards full state or city assimilation, where a conventional repertoire of actions and practices is enacted. For Metelkova Mesto, this is exemplified by its cultural programmes and the numerous events that are funded by the state.

*“You can think of Metelkova and its society as a fractal which at the smallest possible scale exhibits similar outcomes to bigger scales, the process of Metelkova’s cultural programme is similar to the Slovenian state’s approach to culture and entertainment; it is essentially an entrepreneurial behaviour but without border. So, from this, the everyday people get nothing, they are just paying [financing via taxes] these programmes like they supported big banks. It is not only about art, it is also about entertainment in the cultural industry.” (Interview with artist 3 in Metelkova).*

The last extract highlights how a big part of Metelkova's survival depends on public money, which leads place users to make certain concessions in order to enable strategic couplings with the state, the city, and other networks. Here, co-optation, coupled with prefiguration and autonomy, gives rise to a "cultural politics of place-making that is based on democratic, pluralistic, and non-exclusionary goals" (Escobar, 2001: 150). However:

*"I think that now Metelkova is more organised, but less flexible, and this is what we are afraid of further and further, and in the end you look like a bureaucrat, but it's a necessity that we have to take, with the independent funding and the rules of governing we are trying to overcome that, we are asking for people to come and contribute and create initiatives and make the place as open and active as possible." (Interview with artist 2 in Metelkova).*

As Metelkova Mesto moves from autonomy to legitimisation, it becomes a place where the political content of cultural production is lost in favour of symbolic and cultural commodification. Thus, Metelkova becomes mainly produced via the staging of events and festivals, and this eventalisation of place brings forward different connectivities, that are associated mainly with the reconstruction of the place brand for further appropriation via tourist attraction (Ploger, 2010).

*"It is easier to collaborate with the municipality or the state because most of the times our opinions are the same, even though our aims might be different. The problem is that the aim in Metelkova is not production activity anymore. The production is organising concerts, club nights, exhibitions, etc. Sure, art and culture is what is 'sold', but these are not produced here. In this sense, everything is festival, we have guest artists who produce art and culture somewhere outside Metelkova, which means that you have a powerful piece of land here, and that piece of land produces nothing." (Interview with artist 3 in Metelkova).*

### 6.5.3 Normalisation via place branding

It follows from the above examples that both areas' marketing and touristic appeal play an important role on their path towards normalisation. In both areas, years of political decision-making and contested bottom-up processes contributed to the continuous co-creation of an unpredictable place brand that draws the attention of

a number of publics. Place branding in Christiania and Metelkova can therefore be understood as a heterotopic process of socio-political, spatial and economic ordering. Here, a plethora of place users is continuously re-constituting the place brand via naturally occurring practices (Medway et al., 2015) that are crucial for the sustainability and perseverance of both places' intangible and tangible elements (Lucarelli, 2017):

*"If you go through Metelkova, sometimes it's really hectic, it's really changing, it's functioning as multiple personalities, the structure is like this from the beginning. You can't find a person who can say 'I know the truth of Metelkova', because there are many truths." (Interview with artist 1 in Metelkova).*

Despite this multiplicity, the unique place branding associations of both areas form a consistent alternative image which is communicated to the wider publics. In Christiania, these associations highlight the principles of autonomy, self-organisation, and communality, whereas in Metelkova, as a place that is dedicated to art and social life, such associations underline the non-conforming cultural and social production, and the rise of the civic society and gay activism in the years prior to, and after independence from former Yugoslavia:

*"Christiania has a very famous brand, when I see the flag, it represents my hometown, the experiment and respect for the community and the opposite of egoism and capitalism, when you look for the group instead of the individual - and the outside world in my opinion is very much about individual, personal gaining and profit. For me the brand represents a little bit of revolution outside the system. From where I stand, the brand was always like that..." (Interview with Christianite 2).*

*"Metelkova was a very important place when the civic society rose in the 1980s and 1990s, for artists, the LGBTQ movement, and non-institutional art. The Metelkova brand existed prior to the occupation, it is a squat for cultural production, and this is the main image of Metelkova... activism, gay rights and culture are intertwined in the brand." (Interview with artist 2 in Metelkova).*

As seen repeatedly in previous sections, most practices enacted in both areas are consistent with their unique place branding associations, thus allowing the creation



of different types of knowledge (political, social, economic, cultural) that aim to challenge the status quo. In both areas, this leads to a politicisation of the place brand as ideology, power-politics, and an instrument that sets the tone in multiple stakeholders' political and urban agendas (Kavaratzis et al., 2017; Lucarelli, 2017). As also seen previously, this conjoint understanding of the place brand contributes to the fluidity and openness of the soft spaces of place management, which for Christianites and Metelkovites translates into tactical, mimicking, and expressive practices that aim to discourage further involvement by the city and the state in the everyday decision-making and organising activities of both places.

Parallel to these narratives that convey socio-political meaning to both places' brands, the growing success and popularity of the two areas has paved the way for more traditional, top-down marketing and branding activities to come to the forefront. Such practices are not only enacted by official promotional channels, such as tourist boards (e.g. Visit Ljubljana, Wonderful Copenhagen), but also by businesses and place users themselves. For example, Christiania is often marketed by Christianites as a political counter-version of aestheticisation in Copenhagen, that contrasts the contemporary aestheticisation of everyday life in Tivoli Gardens - an amusement park that is also famous for its events and festivals (Thörn et al., 2011). These top-down representations serve to counter the images of constant conflict and change, by portraying both places with a favourable image that also becomes a legitimising argument for urban policy decisions (Colomb, 2012), as the development and promotion of the institutional part of Metelkova showcases. This pinpoints the pervasive role of top-down place branding, which along with other state-originating activities (e.g. law enforcement, land registries) clashes with the bottom-up principles that characterise both areas.

Inevitably, the influx of visitors and tourists in both areas is not always perceived as positive, as they are seen as a public that disrupts the flow of everyday life and subsequently alters the identity of the place:

*"If you look at it, we are a self-declared, independent alternative culture. It's kind of not flattering to be featured in the mainstream as an exhibition, as an amusement thing for tourists, and I think... any radical artist would want to*

*have a wider social impact and not be treated as mainstreams. That is the curse of the times that we live in. Openness is a quality of Metelkova, its openness to anyone who like[s] to see the culture, immerse herself in the culture, have this experience, but we do not take kindly to purely touristic attitudes when one would demand certain services... We do not care if someone has a bad tourist experience, this is not the place for that" (Interview with artist 2 in Metelkova).*

*"If we are busy selling hot dogs, burgers, and crap memorabilia, then we don't have time to find the next crazy idea that will be the new future. And I want the tourists to come, but I also think that they can prevent us from thinking that, but we also need to make money, and no one is making these crazy ideas... It's like Tivoli, I really feel like a monkey [being observed] but I also want people to come here and see that Christiania is fantastic, and go home and make their own crazy idea, and change their way of thinking. I want people to be inspired, but I also want people to give us peace, so it's very strange." (Interview with Christianite 2).*

These contradictions behind tourist activity in Christiania and Metelkova highlight the hybridity of both areas. As both places become more touristic, the principles of autonomy, non-conformity, community, familiarity, and self-determination are inadvertently commodified by place users, who assume their roles as place brand ambassadors so that visitors can experience the staged authenticity (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973) of the commodified place brand (Brown et al., 2013) and product (Warnaby and Medway, 2013). From the place users' perspective, this disruptive impact of tourism in the community necessitates a certain degree of reflexivity from both sides, in order for tourists and place users to embrace the ambivalence, complexity and uncertainty of such place brands that act as a ballast that slows the processes of gentrification and normalisation (McKercher et al., 2015; Mkono, 2016; Urry, 2001). Both areas are examining ways to interact with visitors, and are open to alternative forms of tourism (such as ecotourism or work-tourism) that combine placemaking and place brand formation that allows people to make sense of both areas' history, spirit, and everydayness (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015)

*"It's awful that Metelkova is promoted as a tourist attraction, it is good for the protection of Metelkova in a sense, but mass tourism is obviously not great. Tourists that come during the day, taking pictures, it feels exotic, and for this reason we don't want to have that touristic guide for Metelkova, but*

*we can't stop it either as we are an open space... We did something like alternative tourism, where we hosted several people and we said that you can stay here, but now you are part of the community and you need to contribute too, so they helped us with renovations and maintenance. Since they are here, do something in the spirit of Metelkova, we need to make these tourists participate in Metelkova life, this kind of concept should be interesting.” (Interview with artist 1 in Metelkova).*

Despite attempts to move away from predefined meanings, the strong place branding associations that have been preserved for decades in Christiania and Metelkova have created an almost static perception of the place brand, which legitimises multiple parties “to internalise the place brand and perpetuate the uniqueness of its heterotopic ambiguity” (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017: 2235). The positive (autonomy, alternative living, aesthetics, creativity, culture) and negative (incivilities, social struggles, illegal activities) connotations of both brands are communicated in such a way that prioritises “mental conceptualisations of place, over its material and lived dimensions” (Butler, 2009: 323). This is evident in the top-down place marketing practices of tourist bodies, which implement demarketing strategies that are effectively a de facto promotion by “stealth” (Medway et al., 2010), as emphasis is given to certain characteristics and traits that distinguish Christiania and Metelkova from more traditional destinations.

*“Christiania is not a part of a [tourist] package, we don't sell any, but is featured in our website, and we have a thorough description of what is going on there, and also the rules of Christiania, you can't do whatever you want there, it is a complicated place... But sure, we do talk about Christiania, and it is an important factor of the city. Very unique, interesting construction, but we don't do any official things, we don't promote Christiania, it would be stupid to do so as it is a self-promoting place. People go there, they have a good time, they tell the story. We only make it practical, we make sure people can find it, which bus to take, what are the rules, what expectations can be raised for people, etc.” (Interview with tourist representative in Copenhagen).*

*“Metelkova is mostly targeted as alternative, young-at-heart, punk rock attitude place. We are collaborating with the people of Metelkova as part of our guided tours, and every tourist gets to see Metelkova as part of the cycling tour. We try to explain about the two locations [the autonomous and the institutional part] because it is quite problematic, but they are treated as one destination, and that is how they are promoted by the tourist board... As a*

*tourist, I would go to both parts, as they intertwine the culture and the history of Ljubljana.” (Interview with tourist representative in Ljubljana).*

The previous extracts highlight that despite both areas’ unique statuses, official representations are presenting them as any other part of their respective cities. Indeed, Metelkova Mesto is being marketed top-down as part of Ljubljana’s cultural tourism, with guided tours offered to both tourists and the media. The influx of tourist activity in the area, combined with the co-optative practices that businesses and galleries enact, have rendered the area more like an informal institution than an autonomous zone. Metelkova’s recognition as an important contributor to Ljubljana’s cultural scene leads to problems and illegalities being overlooked, but also lessens its autonomy.

In Christiania, the path to normalisation is even clearer; for Copenhagen’s tourist representatives, Christiania aligns perfectly with the meta-themes of diversity and sustainability, which are showcased and promoted consistently via social media. Here, the stories that visitors and tourists share about Christiania seem to align with the brand positioning of Copenhagen today: freedom, creativity, architecture, free lifestyle, and art are centrepieces of Christiania, and are still in the middle of the brand.

*“When we talk to a lot of visitors, some of them don’t know the factual part, what’s there. Is it anarchy, or is it legal? For most of them, it is an alternative part of the town, they can spend a few hours there, a night there, listen to concerts, hang out with your friends, have a drink. I am not sure that a lot of people put a lot of time to understand what’s the core, what’s in the DNA of Christiania. That’s what the tourist information does, but I think that in general people go there for a couple of hours, have a great time, and feel it as a natural part of the city.” (Interview with tourist representative in Copenhagen).*

As such, Christiania’s official narratives and meanings (Lichrou et al., 2008) hover around the positive experiences and interesting stories that Wonderful Copenhagen communicates via digital media, which perpetuate Christiania as the dominant embodiment of counterculture in Copenhagen (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017).

This image is favoured by some Christianites themselves, and has been partially attributed to the normalisation of the area, particularly after the land agreement, and contributes to Christiania's scale jumping by inserting the uniqueness of the Freetown into wider circuits of capital (Deckha, 2003; MacKinnon, 2011):

*“NOMA, the world's best restaurant, are moving to the outskirts of Christiania which adds to the area. It is a gutsy move; they want to change the concept of the restaurant and build an urban farm out there [in the outskirts] and be self-sustained. I think that they for sure capitalising on the brand of Christiania, the anarchy and creativity, that's a big part of the DNA of Christiania, it's very aligned with the concept that the owners have, creating interesting dishes, and that's an interesting fit. It is going to be experienced as it is Christiania, even though it is not officially in the area.” (Interview with tourist representative in Copenhagen).*

Consequently, the capitalisation of Christiania aims at appropriating and commodifying its symbolically charged cultural capital (Harvey, 1989a), and raises serious challenges in terms of place management. For the officials, the apparent problems caused by the drug trade are posing a serious threat to Christiania's sustainability, and they see the brand's impending capitalisation as a good opportunity for Christiania to move into a service economy and become a de facto tourist destination:

*“It's very much from Christiania, from the information office, the networks and the people there to find a place in the tourism landscape and do the management with the municipality of the city. They have a lot of things that they need to do. They need to figure out if they want to be a place for tourists, do they want to build an economy on that?... They should build the strategy on what to do; they can easily, if they were a little clever, push out the drugs and live from the brand, the service economy, the houses, the cafes, NOMA is coming, the media and the world is going to be there within the next two years, so this is their golden moment to act fast and change for this.” (Interview with tourist representative in Copenhagen).*

From the example above, it can be argued that accepting Christiania's unique status “is a sine-qua-non-condition for any regulatory and capitalistic intervention” (Ntounis and Kanellopoulou, 2017: 2232). The implicit promotion of Christiania's alternative

image and illegal activities seems to benefit the city and the entrepreneur seeking to appropriate and capitalise on the brand. This pinpoints the pervasive role of top-down place branding, which, combined with other state-originating activities (e.g. law enforcement, land registries), ossifies the plurality of voices of the bottom-up place brand and subsequently mongrelises the autonomous and neoliberal parts of Christiania towards normalisation (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015; Maiello and Pasquinelli, 2015). Furthermore, as Christiania's survival is greatly dependent on the tourist industry, new co-optative practices that will further solidify its passage to a regulated autonomy are beginning to become part of the place discourse. Such practices pinpoint the importance of adopting place management practices that would prevent further marginalisation due to the emergence of tourism activity and the continuous appropriation of the brand:

*"We are the biggest tourist attraction in Copenhagen and we had 3,422 cultural happenings last year. Unfortunately, there is no group for tourism and promotion in Christiania, but I would very much like that, we get more than one million tourists a year, which is too much pressure in a small group of people, and it's very hard to find each other. Everybody is talking about it, but now we need to address it and think about the future." (Interview with Christianite 2).*

## 6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to provide a holistic and reflexive view of place management practices, as these are understood and enacted in heterotopic places. By adopting a heterotopic lens, I endeavoured to gain a more direct and inclusive understanding of bottom-up practices and processes of place management. I argued that an understanding of heterotopia as both an empirical and conceptual starting point allows for a diverse analysis of the place management process, which opens up new possibilities and potentialities, and seemingly contrasts jargonish and bureaucratic understandings of top-down place management approaches that are often disguised as bottom-up.

The chapter provided an analysis of place management in the anarchistic communities of Christiania and Metelkova. These heterotopic places mirror direct

democratic practices of place governance and management and are imbued with conflict and continuous power struggles with the city and state, as well as within the community. Furthermore, they are both considered as important locations of cultural and aesthetic significance within their respective cities. In the thematic analysis, I described how practices of prefiguration and autonomy have compensated the democratic deficits imposed by local governments and the state during both places' development. These practices have paved the way for a more democratic management of both areas, which after numerous conflicts and struggles secured their status as important cultural and aesthetic landmarks in their respective cities.

From the analysis, I showcased how bottom-up practices of self-organisation and horizontality, as exemplified by the principles of autonomy and consensus democracy, are enacted within the open, alternative spaces where place management is negotiated. I highlighted how place users' practices cause both conflict and change, which leads to the constant renegotiation of a place's identity and meaning. Furthermore, I highlighted how both sites employ citational practices from top-down institutions, such as paying rent and developing organisational structures that allows for the maintenance of their autonomous identity. In addition, I showcased how place users' expressive practices allow for joyous anarchy that sustains an alternative image that is further communicated beyond the local scale, and how autogestive practices of the everyday, that include practices of place maintenance, contribute to self-management and the strengthening of community ties within both places.

Finally, in my analysis of both areas' hybridisation, I showcased the paradox of their continuing success and autonomy, as they both permeated into broader political, cultural, economic and social spheres, thus affording their normalisation and insertion into the mainstream. Both places continuously face the pressures of technologies of governance, such as neoliberal governmentality, and facing the dangers of complete assimilation, which nowadays results in a more lenient place management approach that adopts practices of co-optation, such as collaboration and coordination with the city and the state for a number of activities. Whereas these practices aim to sustain the autonomous identity of both places, it was shown that a

number of bottom-up and top-down place branding practices contribute to both areas' insertion to the mainstream, as both places' brands are capitalised and give rise to processes of gentrification and normalisation. It can be argued that alternative place management approaches in both areas are a mixture of autonomous, horizontal, co-optative practices that afford a certain degree of regulated autonomy within the urban environment.



## Chapter 7 Conclusions and contributions

In this thesis, I investigated the field of place management from multiple lenses and theoretical positions, in order to provide a comprehensive, augmented analysis that contributes to our understanding of what place management really is. In order to achieve this goal, I moved away from prescriptive and nomothetic approaches that have confined place management as a mainly business, practitioner-led field with limited theoretical depth, to encompass a multitude of knowledge sources from the broader field of geography in my in-depth analysis and empirical work. As such, the main argument of this thesis is centred on situating place management within the broader geographical discourse and adopting a geographically-sensitive approach to place management, which gives equal emphasis on the economic, spatial, and social side of places. This logic broadens the range and reach of place management and supports the adoption of multiple theories and methods that engage with very different kinds of knowledge in order to grasp a fuller understanding of the subject at hand. I will now present a summary of the thesis' main points, key research findings, contributions, and implications for future research, as these were drawn from the literature review, the methodology of the research, and the empirical analysis.

### 7.1 Contributions from the literature review

In this section, I will summarise the main contributions from the literature review chapters in this work. Emphasis will be given in how place management can be seen in a holistic way, and how a socio-spatial, relational and pluralistic understanding can help towards advancing theory by unravelling the inherent complexities in places.

#### 7.1.1 Place management as a boundary concept

This work builds upon an understanding of place management as an 'umbrella term' that encompasses the topics of place marketing, place branding, strategic spatial planning, and placemaking, in order to define place management as a synthesised, place-based process of strategic significance that aims to solve complex problems and produce specific outcomes for places and people. Whereas place management

draws little attention in the majority of the existing literature, it is argued that it has the potential to act as an organising buzzword that is open enough to allow different fields and theoretical traditions to contribute in its development (Miettinen et al., 2009). Thus, a contribution from the literature review is the establishment of place management as a boundary concept with strong cohesive power that affords analytical primacy to its adjacent fields, by acknowledging the multiplicity of place-related theories up front rather than limiting the field to one dominant theoretical perspective in the place management process (Allen, 2009; Löwy, 1992; Midgley, 2011). Nevertheless, the critical review of the literature highlighted the prevalence of nomothetic and mechanistic place management approaches, which fail to address the interdependencies and traverses between different initiatives and practices, as well as between place management's adjacent fields.

In order to escape the nomothetic trap, which is deeply engrained in management, marketing, and planning work, place management theory needs to move from a prescriptive, managerial paradigm towards participatory, pluralist and relational approaches. By analysing this strand of literature, I showcased how place stakeholders' multiple roles as co-creators and co-producers of the place product and the place brand are constantly negotiated in the soft spaces of place management that foster dialogue and contestation. Furthermore, by drawing upon strategic spatial planning and placemaking theories, an important outcome from the literature was the recognition of agonistic, conflicting forms of co-production in the soft spaces where place management is practised; the importance of everyday, mundane practices that situate people-in-place and construct global and local understandings of place; and how social and political negotiations lead to a more strategic sharing of place via place management (Pierce et al., 2011). By paying equal attention to the spatial consciousness that strategic spatial planning brings to the forefront (Oliveira, 2015b), and to the multitude of social relations, connections and positionalities that are central in our understanding of placemaking practices, this thesis contributes to a wider understanding of place management, not only in strategic and economic terms, but also from socio-spatial and relational perspectives.

### 7.1.2 Place management as a heuristic vehicle for understanding pluralism and complexity in places

It follows that within the context of place management and development, a number of recurring themes (communication, competition, co-production, complexity, collaboration, contestation, co-creation, and coordination - deliberately abbreviated as the 8Cs of place management) highlight the conflictual, heterogeneous and pluralist nature of people and places. Additionally, the 8Cs contribute towards an understanding of place management as a heuristic platform for examining the co-construction of strategic place interventions and value-adding exchanges through participation, dialogue, synergy, inclusiveness, collective organising capacity, and contestation. Therefore, it is argued that place management, as a strategic process, uncovers two modes of strategising, one at the periphery and one at the core of places (Chia and MacKay, 2007). Whereas strategising at the core gives attention to intended, goal-oriented, and deliberate strategies, strategising at the periphery encompasses the everyday coping actions (Chia and Holt, 2006) and the non-analytical skills of people and communities (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington et al., 2006). This leads to emerging strategy outcomes that are consequential to the places under question (Cloutier and Whittington, 2013). These emergent strategies, combined with those more intentional and deliberate strategic actions, result in a form of place management characterised by a relational complexity that takes into account both collective action and the fluidities and fixities of formal place governance.

These assumptions led to the development of a heuristic framework for place management that builds upon three interrelated and dynamic place constructs (the business of place, the politics of place, and the production of place). The aim of the heuristic framework is not to offer a totalising account of how theory in place management should be developed. On the contrary, it is used as a suggestive and flexible device that aims to explain the relational complexity of places and the multiple roles of people during the place management process. This advocates a shift towards a social spatialisation of place management, via the examination of emergent and deliberate practices that shape the strategic, economic, social and

political place usage. Following Jessop et al. (2008), one of the purposes of the heuristic framework is to address the polymorphy of socio-spatial relations and to confront one-dimensional understandings of place within the domain of place management that favour managerial and promotional analyses of the business of place, and teleological views of prescriptive place management approaches as a cure-all for economic development, efficiency and organisation. Thus, a major contribution of the framework is the establishment of a multi-dimensional view of places that can provide convincing accounts on how the practice of place management becomes possible from people's multiple roles within those places, and from their daily doings as place management practitioners (Schatzki, 2012).

### 7.1.3 The importance of place and space in place management theory

The delineation of place management as a process that is constantly negotiated through interdependent place constructs raises the importance to further situate place management in the geographical field (rather than in fields of business), which will allow for its better theorisation. In this thesis, I opted for a detailed analysis of phenomenological, critical and relational theories of place and space, with the purpose of incorporating core geographical knowledge from the plethora of theoretical, conceptual and methodological choices that are 'whirling' in the heart of place management. A full awareness of these theories is needed in order to move towards engaged and pluralistic place management theorisation (Barnes and Sheppard, 2010; Varró, 2015), which will allow for a better interpretation of the field from a socio-spatial perspective. Thus, place management can be viewed as a process of spatialised, internally differentiated practices that encompasses hierarchical and non-hierarchical patterns of association, and co-exists and negotiates its boundary condition with other processes that affect the materiality and meaning of places and their institutions (Brenner, 2001; Cresswell and Hoskins, 2008; Manson and O'Sullivan, 2006; Naughton, 2014).

An important contribution from the literature is the focus on socio-spatial practices as an analytical object of study for the advancement of theory in place management. Following Jones and Murphy (2011), I argued that a demarcation of the variety of material, symbolic, and discursive socio-spatial practices, "with respect to their

intentions, consequences, and socio-spatial dimensions” (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 382) can bridge the gap between contradictory and conflictual processes (e.g. space-place, global-local, and micro-macro), which will allow for a more nuanced, relational understanding of place management. By situating practices into four broader dimensions (perceptions, performances, patterns, and power relations), and in relation to the space-time contexts and spatial settings where they occur, a thick analysis of the place management process that reveals spatial and temporal contingencies, uncertainties, and inconsistencies, while retaining an analytical openness to the unexpected or inconsistent (Jones and Murphy, 2011: 381), is possible.

Thus, the practice-oriented view contributes to a better understanding and explanation of geographically-variegated place management practices that (re)produce different discourses and eventually shape socio-spatial change in places (Brenner et al., 2010; Varró, 2015; Yeung, 2005). Figure 7.1 is an extension of the heuristic framework in Chapter 2 and serves as a tool for the systematic performance of pluralist, relational, and practice-oriented thinking for advancing theory in place management. The framework contributes to the establishment of a reasoned reductionism of socio-spatial practices for the advancement of place management theory, which allows for a holistic examination of the place management process from its material (perceived), representational, institutional, ideological (conceived) and affective-symbolic (lived) aspects (Kipfer, 2008).

## 7.2 Methodological contributions

7.2.1 A pluralist theoretical approach for advancing place management theory  
According to various authors (Boisen et al., 2017; Gertner, 2011; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Lucarelli and Brorström, 2013; Vuignier, 2017), research in place management and its adjacent fields (particularly place marketing and branding) rarely escapes from the practitioner-led approach towards theory advancement, which glorifies the “place as a product” narrative adopted by the majority of consultants, and leads to the endorsement of best practices in a prescriptive, rather than critical, manner. In

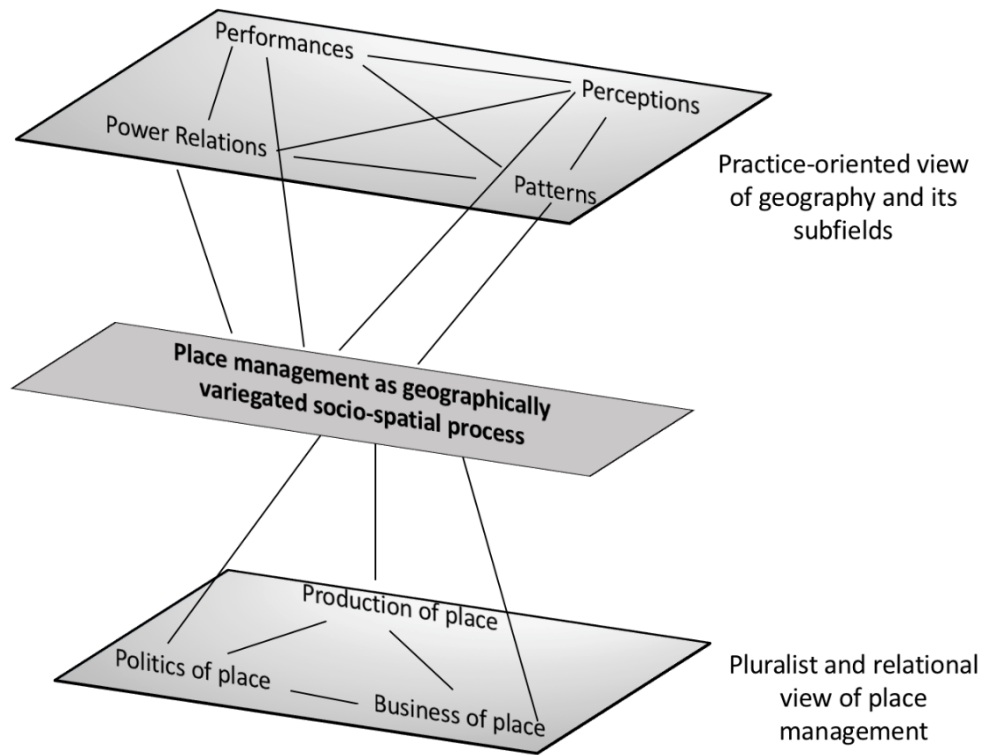


Figure 7.1 Extended heuristic framework for advancing theory in place management, Source: author

this work, I argued that there is a need to adopt a pluralist standpoint that embraces the multitude of knowledge sources and theories that constitute place management. This approach refrains from pleas that call for a move towards a “normative stage of building theoretical knowledge” (Gertner, 2011: 112), as a normative orientation would continue to reiterate narratives of “good practice” that the managerial discourse espouses. Instead, the present work argues that no single paradigm or research programme will be able to fully address the relational complexity of place management. Thus, this work advocates that researchers need to be open to different perspectives and understand the various facets of place, people and practices from a critical point of view and from multiple, competing vantage points, in order to draw out fresh insights, ideas, and methods from the collision of theories (Pike et al., 2016).

Consequently, a pluralist standpoint requires immersion within the varied paradigm cultures of geographic, management, marketing, and planning research,

familiarisation with the multiple logics, rationalities, knowledges, identities, and realities of places. As the process of place management is dependent on the multiplicity of our daily practices, interactions and experiences in places, it follows that a more engaged epistemology, where careful interpretation, continual reflexivity, and preparedness to review the different knowledges that are embedded in place management can lead to the theoretical advancement of the field. In this regard, this thesis argues in favour of a pluralist theoretical approach for the study of place management. This will allow for generative encounters in arenas where different ontologies and epistemologies can be negotiated in creative ways (Healey, 2006b). In this thesis, this goal is achieved by giving ontological primacy to the relational constellation of practices that fabricate place management, which challenge the relative fixity (or permanence) of spaces where structures, institutions, and entities shape the place management process. It is argued that this dialectic between fixity and flow unleashes the transformative potential of place management, which lies in the multiplicity of tensions, heterogeneities, contingencies, and contradictions that occur between and within entities (Barnes, 2006; Sheppard, 2008).

Furthermore, the pluralist approach adopted in this study aims to move beyond constraining boundaries of epistemological thought; thus acknowledging the multi-dimensionality of places. This position also allows for as-yet-neglected and unseen theories of the periphery to be brought together and compared with hegemonic local epistemologies of the centre. Bringing together different theoretical perspectives without reducing them to monist knowledge (Barnes and Sheppard, 2010; Longino, 2002), and a sensitivity to social needs and ways of reasoning, allows for the simultaneous destabilisation and re-framing of how we conduct place management research, which can open up “new avenues, paths and lines of interpretation to produce ‘better’ research ethically, politically, empirically and theoretically” (Alvesson et al., 2008: 495). Thus, in this work, a dialectical understanding of reflexivity is deemed as of utmost importance for the progression of the field - not only in academia, but also in policy, legislation, and practice, as it makes us aware of the perils of place management and challenges us to consult alternative lines of

reasoning and theories that can produce new and more relevant knowledge (Alvesson, 2011). Reflecting on this methodological choice, it was my intention to adopt this perspective and deliberately create a tension between boxed-in and box-breaking place management research. This trajectory reflexivity contributed not only to the adoption of alternative geographical theories for the advancement of theory, but also to my own personal development from a one-trick-pony researcher, to a 'bricoleur' who embraces multidisciplinary and pieces together a richer, more varied picture by viewing research from different angles (Alvesson et al., 2008; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2014).

#### 7.2.2 Adopting flexible strategies and methods for examining place management practices

In order to generate new vistas of place management, this work favoured the adoption of abductive and retroductive reasoning, opting to develop place management theory from a situational fit (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) that makes it possible to (re)develop theory in a close relationship with empirical evidence (Sæther, 1998), and not move linearly from theory to empirics (deduction) or vice versa (induction). It is argued that this approach alleviates some of the bias of purely deductive or inductive research in place management (normative theorising, descriptive analysis, threats to conceptual validity, findings based purely on anecdotal evidence) that have often compromised its academic rigour (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Skinner, 2008; Vuignier, 2017). Whereas abductive and retroductive reasoning necessitates a constant backtracking in the research process, which in this thesis led to at least two false starts, it can be argued that such an approach was essential in order to retain analytical openness and provide a subjective interpretive synthesis of place management practices from the interaction between existing theories and empirical observations.

Furthermore, the adoption of a multi-sited ethnographic approach, combined with the extended case method (ECM), can be regarded as an appropriate methodology for retaining the complexity and openness of the multiple social spaces and physical sites where place management is practised. Whereas the combination of both methodologies may imply a tacit holism in terms of contextualisation that is common



in traditional ethnography (Falzon, 2009), I purport that a certain degree of partiality is required via the development of temporally and spatially extended ethnographic procedures in order to understand how place management practices construct both global and local understandings of places (Burawoy et al., 2000; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1998). Following Peltonen (2007) and Wadham and Warren (2014), I argue for a wider application of combined methodologies in place management, that bring forward its transformative potential. This allows for rich descriptions of the phenomenon while juxtaposing it with the global conditions of time-space compression and intensified competition. In addition, the adoption of the ECM as a methodology allowed me to shadow the practices of place management and single out their unique and surprising enactments that could lead to an insight-provoking anomaly between theory and what happens on the ground (Burawoy, 1991). This can be seen as a methodological contribution for the study of place management, as it puts empirical research into a dialogic relationship with pre-existing theory (Broad, 2016) in a way that requires continuous reflections regarding the nature of the data and theory, and eventually can lead to a theory of place management that is sensitive to the macrosocial, cultural, and contextual forces that affect the social situations being studied (Kates, 2006).

### **7.3 Conclusions and contributions from the empirical investigation of place management practices in different settings**

In this section, I will highlight the key outcomes from both empirical studies. These outcomes serve as the key contributions for the advancement of place management theory and are drawn in a comparative manner from the small differences and the causal connections between practices of place management, as these were observed in all sites.

#### **7.3.1 Place management as a form of reflexive place governance**

In recent years, the rescaling and deregulation of the state, and the shifting of responsibility for outcomes back to local communities and individuals, have contributed to the prevalence of network governance models and particular representational practices that legitimise top-down hegemonic performances;

promote place imageries that are antithetical to the majority of place stakeholders; and scupper the possibilities for progressive action and sustainable place development (Blanco et al., 2014; Davies, 2011; Jessop and Sum, 2001; McGuirk, 2005; Tait and Inch, 2016). As argued in this thesis, place management has been perceived in the past as an amalgam of material and discursive practices that supports entrepreneurial and neoliberal place narratives, while depoliticising the power struggles, conflicts, and contestations that are evident across scales. This has tempered the role of place management in place development.

In this study, the notion of place management as a process that works part and parcel with models of network governance was both acknowledged and challenged. Evidence from the ten UK towns suggested that underneath the 'bottom-up' banner of wider participation and collective and relational understanding within place management and governance, lies a top-down system (including municipalities, local and regional councils, planning, commerce and housing committees, coordinating bodies and organisations such as BIDs, and the state) that exerts coercive meta-governing power via bureaucratic, jargonish, and technical discursive and material practices. Similarly in Christiania and Metelkova, practices of autonomy and horizontality are highly dependent on the tolerance of the state and city, and thus can gain legitimisation within the neoliberal context in which they occur (Spigel, 2017). Consequently, place management in these areas is also subjected to the subtle forms of control and power that are central to all decision-making practices, and which are pertinent to neoliberal governmentality. Furthermore, both areas' commercial and touristic appeal encourages top-down practices of place marketing, branding and promotion, which contribute to an acceleration of the processes of gentrification, capitalisation, and normalisation.

Notwithstanding the interminable influence of neoliberalism to place management practices, this study reveals the possibility of a reflexive, hybrid approach towards place management, which allows for the development of more inclusive leadership models that gain more legitimacy and accountability for leading the place management process. In the context of towns, such leadership models embrace emergent follower-dominant logics that are based on: diffusion of power and control;

an acceptance of the variety of roles that place stakeholders espouse during place management; and an appreciation of their self-management and self-organisation strategies and practices (Collinge and Gibney, 2010; Rip, 2006). The emergence of steering groups and town teams during the empirical part of the research also showcases the importance of mobilising action via symbolic and discursive practices, as well as how the performativity of citizenship, along with people's multiple forms of citizenship in a place, are both a challenge and an opportunity for opening dialogue and debate in strategic place management decision-making. Place management practices that predominantly promote discourses of competitiveness and the entrepreneurial city (Harvey, 1989) are enacted by most towns for addressing problems and crises that are similar across different geographical contexts (Peyroux et al., 2012). However, such practices carry with them hegemonic global discourses that, as seen in this chapter, are irrelevant and alienate many stakeholders. Furthermore, building linkages and promoting connectivities solely on hegemonic practices of growth and competitiveness ignores the variety of spatialities (highlighted through different economic, cultural, social, and political phenomena that shape socio-spatial change in places) and the knowledge deficits that such practices reproduce in places (Brenner et al., 2010; Eversole and McCall, 2014; Sheppard, 2015).

These opportunities for reflexive dialogue are usually hindered by either the overriding logic of neoliberalism that becomes hegemonic in governance models, or the reactionary communicative practices of local regimes that cherish a romanticised sense of place in a naïve way that negates global perspectives in favour of contextually specific outcomes (Blanco et al., 2014). As such, this work suggests a middle-ground approach in order to tackle communication and participation barriers, which relies on place management's self-organising capacity to lessen the contextual inconsistency generated by the different styles, languages, and discourses of place stakeholders and partnerships. This approach can be seen as a move towards reflexive communicative practices that necessitate one's development of a critical look upon the actions and practices of all place stakeholders, including one's own (Caetano, 2015). It can foster possibilities for place transformation and lead to more

inclusive, pluralistic leadership models that encompass a variation of strategies and practices from both global and local discourses (Parés et al., 2014).

Similar outcomes that highlight a turn towards reflexive modes of place governance via place management are evident in Christiania and Metelkova. Indeed, this study reveals the ongoing hybridisation of autonomous and prefigurative practices in Christiania and Metelkova with institutional practices. Such practices vary from citational and mimicking practices that leave space for more situated, semi-reflexive strategies in terms of place management and governance (Kaiser and Nikiforova, 2008), to practices of co-optation that afford flexible permanence and the freedom to reorganise space in both conventional and unconventional ways, albeit by compromising some autonomy. Following Coppola and Vanolo (2015), it is suggested that a more lenient and reflexive place management approach, that adopts a mixture of autonomous, horizontal and co-optative practices, can sustain Christiania's and Metelkova's regulated autonomy. However, this requires some degree of collaboration, coordination and reflexive communication with other place stakeholders.

Finally, by addressing place management from a governance perspective, this study parallels to Vuignier's (2017) valid concerns of the field's lack of interest in the political and institutional contexts of place. Indeed, as the findings suggest, place management is a deeply politicised process that signifies the possibilities for alternative understandings of places from conditions of spontaneity, experimentation, and political engagement. These conditions can create opportunities for the renewal of existing practices of knowledge production, and enable new forms of organisation and cooperation between place stakeholders, which combine local and systematised knowledges in the process of place management (Blanco et al., 2014; Brenner, 2009b).

### 7.3.2 'Micro-emancipating' the soft spaces of place management

In this work, the portrayal of place management as a relational and pluralist concept, which encompasses people's complex topological and relational practices that construct both global and local understandings of places (Ahlqvist, 2013), aims to

open up discussions regarding the social dynamics of the places under question. These dynamics are constantly negotiated and transformed in the soft spaces of place management that seemingly embrace a dialectic between fixity and flow in order to create open and relational spaces and practices, thus opening up the possibilities for transformative potential in a number of unexpected ways (Sheppard, 2008). Engagement with the soft spaces of place management during the empirical part of this work highlights their potential in fostering dialogue and consensus for the development of place interventions within a loose organisational framework.

Nevertheless, findings from the study in ten UK towns suggest that the soft spaces of place management are infiltrated with dominant actors that exert coercive power and stabilise practices of territorialisation that lead to conflicts and contestations regarding who is in control of the place management process. Whereas conflict can be a welcome outcome that facilitates wider engagement within these spaces, it also leads to practices of disengagement that can further the division between involved stakeholder groups, thus creating uncertainty and negativity in the ways place management is practised. Here, soft spaces are imbued by a regressive fuzziness that can be seen as a deliberate tactic to mask clarity in the process of place management and subvert the active and emergent nature of such spaces in favour of reinstating territorial place identities and positions that curtail the possibilities for pluralist and transformative engagement (Bailey, 2010; Haughton et al., 2013). As explained in detail in this study, such behaviours lead to practices and tactics of apathy and despondency, which while they are enacted as a form of frustration and alienation toward 'democratic' engagement and participation initiatives, or because of generational negative attitudes toward formal bodies and institutions, are contributing to the reassertion of dominant paradigms and reactionary beliefs in place management practices. Essentially, the soft spaces of place management struggle to deal with the vacillation and indeciveness that is normally apparent in the hard spaces of statutory governance and planning. As evidenced in this study, soft spaces are mostly used to circumvent dealing with the place-related issues that they need to confront in the first place (Allmendinger et al., 2016).

Consequently, it is argued that place stakeholders who deal with place interventions need to encourage experimentation, debate, and creative thinking in the soft spaces where place management is enacted, in order to tackle the problems of accountability and legitimacy that threaten to reduce place management to a futile exercise (Haughton et al., 2013; Haughton and Allmendinger, 2008). This approach entails a shift towards small practices of micro-emancipation, understood here as specific tactics and practices of horizontality that aim to craft spaces of autonomy and freedom from the bottom up (Spicer et al., 2009). In the cases of town partnerships, practices of micro-emancipation include discursive practices that stem from a shift towards performative interaction and talk, and reflexive communicative practices that do not simply regurgitate 'best places', 'special', 'distinctive', or 'best practice' narratives, but also highlight relational and affective aspects of human resistance and everyday life. Such practices consist of both global and local understandings of places and use fuzzy boundaries as a deliberate tactic to challenge territorial forms and spatial essentialisms (Haughton et al., 2013). This allows place management to be reimagined as a transformative process that is benefited by successful collaborative leadership and organisation.

In the cases of Christiania and Metelkova, it is argued that the earlier emancipatory practices of squatting and occupation have initially liberated the soft spaces where struggles over use of the land were negotiated. In both areas, practices of direct action were not treated as a 'means to an end', but instead became an ongoing project of political and social spatialisation, characterised by creativity and spontaneity (Castoriadis, 1997; Newman, 2011). This is evidenced by the creative ways in which Christianites and Metelkovites self-organise in these soft spaces and that helped to forge and sustain social relationships. Furthermore, the shift from anarchy to autonomy signifies a move towards practices of collective and conflictual self-management that exemplify the fluidity and openness of soft spaces. Such practices can be tactical (protests, fights, incivilities), inciting collective action that aims to maintain the heterotopic structure, and discourages annihilation from formal institutions by the temporary liberation of soft spaces through carnivalesque elements. Practices can also be expressive, offering alternative imaginings and

symbolic expressions of places that converge publics into dialogue, co-production and co-creation. Finally, practices can be autogestive practices of the everyday and collective practices of maintenance and repair (Graham and Thrift, 2007), which simultaneously strengthen community ties while also producing more flexible boundaries that afford a certain autonomy and control via less imposing frameworks of territoriality (Lloveras et al., 2017).

It seems that Christiania and Metelkova can be viewed as an amalgam of political, economic, and social experimental spaces where reflexive tactics and practices are enacted daily, and where new alternative identities, interests and needs are constantly co-produced. From this analysis, a relational understanding of the soft spaces of place management that highlights the ephemerality and changes that communities experience (Massey, 2005) can be gained. Spatial ephemerality is also an important characteristic of heterotopias that highlights the multiplicity of social identities, the temporalities of lived space, and the processes of unprivileged openness and closure that are essential for building a politics of place that goes beyond crude localism (Amin, 2004; Cenzatti, 2008; Massey, 2007). This ephemerality of the autonomous areas of Christiania and Metelkova affords them flexible permanence and allows an understanding of place management as a hybrid process that allows partial and regulated autonomy. It is argued that such heterotopic qualities can be transferred and instilled to the practice of place management in non-autonomous areas (e.g. towns, neighbourhoods, town centres), as a way to prevent the vacillation, mundanity and annihilation of their soft spaces.

### 7.3.3 Place management as collective endeavour and responsibility

According to Healey (2006b: 265–266), adopting a relational lens to the analysis of places highlights how meanings are made, how relations are understood in social contexts, and how collective action can be imagined, mobilised, organised and practised to ‘make a difference’ to urban conditions. In this study, a viewing of place management as a complex and relational socio-spatial process that is intertwined in multiple geographical dimensions embraces the relationality between individuals and systems or structures, and highlights how the collective practices of groups of people can only be understood through other similar practices that happen in the

spaces where the process of place management occurs (Feldman and Worline, 2016). Essentially, the relational lens advocates that place management practices are driven not only by external or structural forces, but primarily from the qualities and standards of place users (MacIntyre, 2007). Place management practices are therefore understood in this study as outcomes of co-creation and co-production; a collective endeavour with place stakeholders which forms an integral part of the action (Friedmann, 2005), and that affords the possibilities for alternative forms of governance that strengthen citizens' collective capacity for action and negotiation (Mitlin, 2008).

This study has demonstrated that a great deal of place management initiatives are hampered by inertia, apathy and despondency from people and their mindsets, and though a siloed 'departmental thinking' between different stakeholders that creates connectivity deficits among local groups and leads to eventual disengagement for participation (Bishop, 2016; Eversole and McCall, 2014; Parker et al., 2014). Notwithstanding the messiness and dissonance that surround all collective endeavours, this study showcases that in order for place management to gain legitimacy and accountability as part of place governance, a sense of responsibility for the place, which will eventually facilitate a shift towards a civilised politics of place (Seamon, 2014) and respect (Childs, 2003), is needed. As evidenced in the cases of Christiania and Metelkova, the strong sense of responsibility and perseverance of an alternative place commons has led to the cultivation of a sense of collective place ownership via practices of self-organisation and self-management that nurture real, everyday possibilities of political action within and across the local scale (Paasi, 2004; Shelley et al., 2003). Whereas collective endeavours in autonomous areas are inherently conflictual and contradictory, it is suggested that they nurture the possibilities for political engagement and flexible boundary making in the everyday processes of place management and organisation. This flexibility and collectivity is also evident in the everyday practices of place development, place maintenance, building, and infrastructure, which enhance urban learning and practical knowledge via continuous experimentation and variation (Graham and Thrift, 2007; Vasudevan, 2015).



This suggests that in order to cultivate local ownership (Amin, 2005) and nurture deliberation in the practice of place management, people, partnerships and formal institutions need to treat ongoing conflicts and place contestations not as polarising divisions, but as grounds for respectful disagreements (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005). This opens up the possibilities for dialogical understanding via practices of consensus and meaning-making, thus fostering conditions for collective and co-creative capacities for place development (Horlings, 2015). As the empirical work in the ten towns shows, several partnerships and institutions are embracing a facilitating role that ensures a more collective local ownership of the town via processes of reflexive communication and collective sensemaking. These can lead to a shared understanding of a given place's problems and challenges. This co-production of knowledge allows a plurality of opinions to permeate the practices of place management, thus becoming an important requisite for the co-construction of place interventions. Furthermore, nurturing a collective capacity allows for multiple practices of knowledge transfer and exchange to come to the forefront of place management activity. These vary from tacit/experiential practices of knowledge that stem from people's sense of place and afford a practical consciousness to their daily actions (Giddens, 1991), to knowledge-intensive, systematised practices of knowledge that aim to co-produce accurate and relevant information for the town from mutually beneficial, reciprocal exchanges between place stakeholders.

As seen throughout this study, it is essential to foster possibilities for knowledge transfer and exchange, and acknowledge both local variations and established knowledge during the interconnected practices of knowledge acquisition, co-production, and dissemination. This requires reflexive deliberation from place stakeholders, who need to uphold a dialectic between hegemonic global discourses that are converted into established knowledges and local knowledges that rarely move past a place's local variations. In this study, the merging of local, embodied, and systematised knowledge via an engaged knowledge exchange process highlighted the relationality of knowledge transfer and exchange during the place management process. Finally, as knowledge groups are locally and translocally embedded in the development of engaged knowledge practices, it follows that a

relational view of embeddedness is necessary in order to understand how knowledge practices in place management contribute to network building between different stakeholder groups, and how enacted practices within the network highlight the constantly changing connections of such networks with the place (Jones, 2008).

#### 7.4 Recommendations and further research

Drawing from the contributions of this study, several recommendations can be made for future research. Firstly, the treatment of place management as a boundary concept opens up the terrain for new conceptualisations and understandings of place management from different fields and theoretical traditions. Whereas this work provided a comprehensive analysis of the main theories in geography and business studies, it is suggested that further research should approach the field from other viewpoints too. For example, an analysis of place management practices from the perspectives of quantitative geography and critical GIS can broaden our understanding on how place management influences the spatial structure of towns and the spatial competition between town centres, or even when it is mobilised as a politically and socially progressive practice through different areas (Schwanen and Kwan, 2009). Additionally, further exploration of place management from the perspective of critical management studies (CMS) is also encouraged, in order to provide a more constructive critique on CMS's claims regarding the possibilities of micro-emancipation against managerial control and domination from, for example, a critical theory viewpoint, which recognises the fallacies of capitalism and managerial approaches to places, and thus can propose a place management theory of full emancipation and human freedom (Klikauer, 2015).

Furthermore, this study recommended a heuristic framework that can be used as a basis from which to develop place management theories, and as a tool for the systematic performance of pluralist, relational, and practice-oriented thinking for advancing theory in place management. Whereas it is argued that this framework allows for a reasoned reductionism of socio-spatial practices and a holistic examination of place management as a process, further research can subject this

heuristic framework to a comprehensive review or utilise it as a starting point for empirical work.

Moreover, the present study advocates that research in autonomous sites can enhance our understanding of bottom-up practices of self-management and self-organisation. It is argued that a closer examination of such practices can provide useful insights into how centralised power is challenged, and how freedom, equality and diversity in decision-making is enacted. As local partnerships are increasingly becoming decentralised from councils and other institutional bodies, there is a need to develop place management practices that do not fetishise any particular model of organisation, but instead seek to improve the existing ones (Bookchin, 2014). From this perspective, further ethnographic work and participant observation in autonomous sites can provide a deeper understanding of place management practices that are rooted in the principles of consensus and direct democracy.

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