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A place for locative media: A theoretical framework for assessing locative media use in urban environments

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Media Studies

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Abstract

By 2050, three quarters of the world's population will live in large urban conurbations. Within these environments, we see the rise of locative media – mobile technologies that capture and deliver location- and time-specific content and connections to their users. The key attribute of locative media that distinguishes them from other mobile media is *location*. Yet ideas of how locative media influence our relationship to the spaces we inhabit remain undertheorized. This gap arises because of an absence of interrogation into how and why people come to develop a connection with these spaces – how and why a space becomes a place to which its inhabitants ascribe meaning and in which social relations occur among them. This thesis proposes a theoretical framework for interrogating locative media in the context of everyday, embodied and mobile urban place-making, to better analyze the opportunities and challenges afforded through locative media.

Keywords

Locative media, space, place, the everyday, embodied experience, mobile, mobilities, urban

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Introduction

“I had this very stable life, very stable job, but I wasn’t happy in it. So, when you're not stable in your soul, nothing else matters.” - Hazal Yilmaz (Nokia, 2014a)

The road that led to this thesis

It all started when I was four years old. But I won’t go that far back. Instead, I’ll jump ahead to 2001, when I was offered a job in Finland with a small mobile telecommunications infrastructure company that made voicemail and prepaid billing systems for mobile telecoms operators. (They also made paging systems.) In 2004, I did what many foreigners living in Finland do: I started working at Nokia.

Over the course of the next eight years, I travelled around the world, working with an extraordinary group of marketers, designers, researchers, engineers and others, from both Nokia and external agencies. Through all of this, I learned a lot: about mobile phones; about how they work; about how they’re designed and why; about the roles they play in people’s lives; about the opportunities they afford and the challenges they pose; about how all of these things can vary depending upon where in the world you are. Of course all of this learning took place through the filter of a company whose main business was the manufacture and sale of mobile phones, mobile services and mobile infrastructure. As such, the picture was always an incomplete one, though I would say that none of the people that I worked with at Nokia were mindless technology cheerleaders. There seemed to me to be a genuine interest in and awareness of both the challenges and the opportunities. So, while I was learning much, I knew there was more.

In 2011 and 2012, I produced a series of videos for Nokia in which we explored the attitudes of people in their twenties toward their relationship with their mobile devices and the urban environments in which they live. In the first video (See Figure 1), we asked participants about their sense of stability because, we thought at the time, if people are more mobile, then they must be less stable. Their answers surprised me in two ways. The first is that, most participants in this video identified their mobile phones as their source of stability: because they can always be connected and, in an unstable world, access to knowledge and to other

people affords a degree of stability. Secondly, they preferred ‘instability to stability’. As one participant from Sao Paulo explained: “Instability provokes my creative instincts. Stability is monochromatic. It’s all the same colour” (Nokia, 2011).



Figure 1: "Instability provokes my creative instincts. Stability is monochromatic. It's all the same colour." From *Teddy Bears and Talking Drums*. (Nokia, 2011).

<https://vimeo.com/31435386>.

In the next two videos, we focused more on the participants’ relationships with their respective cities. In Istanbul, we interviewed a small group of young entrepreneurs who thrived on the chaos of their city (See Figure 2). As one participant described it, “it’s like dancing with lots of people you don’t know” (Nokia, 2014a). In Shanghai, we interviewed young artists making their way in the underground art community of China’s financial capital (See Figure 3). One participant explained Shanghai as “one of the more open cities in the country. It follows this spirit of the sea because it can accept all rivers” (Nokia, 2014b). Throughout my time at Nokia, my curiosity about these devices grew. But it was talking with these young people from around the world that inspired me to return to university to investigate this phenomenon more deeply.



Figure 2: "It's like dancing with lots of people you don't know." From *Istanbul: Dancing with Strangers*. (Nokia 2014a). <https://vimeo.com/85808564>.



Figure 1: "Shanghai is one of the more open cities in the country. It follows this spirit of the sea because it can accept all rivers." From *Shanghai: Just Below the Surface*. (Nokia 2014b). <https://vimeo.com/85808565>.

Upon returning to university, I started studying notions of space and place.¹ I started to notice fairly early on that a number of the discussions around place that I came across did not line up with the experiences and ideas expressed by the participants in the videos I worked on at Nokia, and I wanted to know why. Valuing instability, dancing with strangers, and accepting all rivers seemed to be at odds with notions of place in which stability, familiarity and likemindedness were essential components. This is not to say that I thought that the participants' thoughts were in any way representative of the thoughts of urban dwellers generally, nor of the inhabitants of their respective cities. However, this disconnect did lead me to look for an understanding of place that could incorporate the participants' voices. Because of my interest in mobile technologies, I was additionally curious to see if these technologies had a role to play in the relationship between cities and their citizens. Specifically, do location-based mobile technologies ('locative media') have a role to play in connecting citizens with their cities?

Beyond my own curiosity: why place and locative media matter in an urban context

By 2050, three quarters of the world's population will live in large urban centres comprised of many municipalities of varying sizes, what Castells calls *metropolitan regions* such as the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), with a population of almost 7 million (City of Toronto, 2017) and the Pearl River delta region of China, with a population of approximately 42 million (World Bank Group, 2015). Many of these people will be living in a city that they were not born in, and that their ancestors did not live in. In the GTHA, for example, approximately 40 percent of the population was born outside of Canada (City of Toronto, 2013). This new reality can strain people's sense of belonging and attachment to place. A sense of place is typically understood to arise from staying put – 'in one place' (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 2008). But within these metropolitan regions, there is already an increase of mobility within and between the various municipalities that comprise them. People may live in one

¹ For a discussion of the terms 'space' and 'place', please see Chapter 2.

city and work in another, and play in yet another. These mobilities are seen to give rise to a lack of belonging and a lack of connection to the spaces people inhabit.

With this significant rise in urban living within the next 30 years, are these traditional notions of place still relevant? Must people resign themselves to a reality where most will be disconnected and alienated from the spaces they are living in? Or, is it possible to re-examine and rework these traditional notions so that they better account for the ways that people inhabit urban spaces?

Within this increasingly urbanizing world, we see the rise of locative media, defined here as mobile technologies that capture and deliver location- and time-specific content and connections to their users. Locative media have the potential to connect people with their immediate surroundings in new and deeper ways. They have the capacity to enhance people's the experience of the world around them. Can locative media connect people to their surroundings and create for them a sense of belonging? Or, as mobile technologies, do they simply detach people further?

Research problem

Much research has been conducted on the use of locative media from a variety of perspectives: design (e.g., Bilandzic & Froth, 2012); navigation (e.g., Willis, Hoelscher & Wilbertz, 2007; Leshed, Velden, Rieger, et al., 2008); application use motivations (e.g., Sumter, Vandenbosch & Ligtenberg, 2017); racism (e.g., Mason, 2016); social relations (e.g., Humphreys & Liao, 2013), etc. But the one key attribute of locative media that distinguishes them from other mobile media is *location*. While some studies (e.g., the navigation studies) have touched on this issue with respect to locative media use, ideas of how locative media affect people's relationship to the spaces they inhabit remain undertheorized. This gap arises because of an absence of interrogation of notions of *place* within the context of studies of locative media. How do we theorize about *place* in the context of everyday urban life, and how does the use of locative media in this context inform and affect people's relationship with the urban spaces they inhabit?

This thesis contributes to the discourse around locative media use by proposing a theoretical framework for interrogating the role of locative media in place-making in urban environments. Traditional notions of place² – as static, tight-knit and homogeneous – are, as Tonkiss (2005) asserts, anti-urban. Analyses that employ such traditional notions of place, therefore, risk misinterpreting locative media use in urban contexts. This thesis attempts to forestall such misinterpretations by developing a theoretical framework situated in an understanding of place that is rooted in the everyday, lived experience of people in urban spaces.

Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 1, I establish the context that frames this interrogation of the intersection of place and locative media: The everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience. I start by explaining why each one of these terms – everyday, embodied, mobile and urban – are important components for the rest of the discussion. I then examine each term separately, and explain how they will be used in this thesis. Finally, I combine them, to explain the underlying meaning of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.

In Chapter 2, I examine notions of place and space in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience. I start by discussing traditional notions of space and place, along with related concepts – placelessness and non-place – that further fill out the traditional notions of space and place. I then discuss key criticisms of these traditional notions. From there, I propose an understanding of place for the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.

In Chapter 3, I look at locative media. I start with an explanation of what locative media are, and how they differ from other computer-mediated communications. I then analyze locative media from the perspective of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience, to highlight some key challenges and opportunities that arise from locative media use in the

² For a discussion of traditional notions of place, please see Section 2.2.2. “From space to place”.

context of this experience. I conclude Chapter 3 with a proposal for a theoretical framework for analyzing the role of locative media in everyday, embodied, mobile, urban place-making.

I wrap up my discussion in the Conclusion section. Here I highlight key findings from this examination, and propose an area of further study, which will inform the research I will pursue during my PhD studies.

Chapter 1

1. Background

In this thesis, I develop a theoretical framework for interrogating the role of locative media³ in the development of place,⁴ in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban⁵ experience. In this first chapter, I establish the parameters of each of these terms. At the end of the chapter, I provide an explanation of the entirety of the concept: the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.

The everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience is a decidedly awkward phrase. However, each component is, to my mind, essential to the study of the intersection of notions of place and locative media. On the everyday, while there is no shortage of extraordinary uses of locative media, such as art projects. (Hemment, 2006), their most significant uses involve mundane, *everyday* tasks such as navigational aid (Leshed, Velden, Rieger, Kot, & Sengers, 2008). Unlike other forms of computing, such as virtual reality, the use of locative media is an *embodied* experience. Where people are physically present, and what they are physically doing, affects the way in which locative media work (Roth, 2014). Locative media are *mobile* media. They accompany people wherever they go and, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, this mobility – this movement through space – is an essential component of becoming familiar with a space, attaching meaning to it, and making it a place (Farman, 2012; Amin & Thrift, 2002). Finally, while locative media can work anywhere where there is supporting

³ *Locative media* is a term used to describe a set of mobile technologies – hardware and software – that make use of an individual’s spatial and temporal location to capture and deliver content specific to a particular moment in a particular place. At the device level (e.g., smartphones, tablets, smart watches), specific software applications (‘apps’) make use of the device’s GPS (global positioning system) receiver, accelerometer (the component that tells the device which way is up, down, sideways, etc.) and compass, to identify where the individual is in the world, and then these apps capture and deliver content relevant to that particular place and time. For a more detailed discussion of locative media, see Chapter 3.

⁴ In this thesis, *place* is a space which is inhabited by people who ascribe some sort of meaning to the space, and in which they engage in some sort of social relations with one another. For a more detailed examination of the notion of place, see Chapter 2.

⁵ I have chosen this ordering of the terms within the phrase – everyday, embodied, mobile, urban – to coincide as best as possible to the general rules of ordering adjectives in the English language (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

infrastructure, I focus my study of locative media on urban spaces. As McCullough (2006) says, much of the activity in the field of locative media is urban in nature. In this Chapter, I do not present an exhaustive examination of each term, but rather I clarify the context with which I use each term as well as what the phrase in its entirety means.

1.1. Urban spaces

In this section, I outline the changing nature and growing importance of urban environments throughout the world, specifically urban spaces that Castells (2002) refers to as ‘metropolitan regions’. I then explain the way in which I employ the term ‘urban’ in this thesis.

Additionally, I describe two critical attributes of urban environments that have potentially very important implications for a discussion of locative media use in urban environments: the nature of difference and diversity in an urban context, and the nature of social relations in urban environments.

1.2.1. The rise and significance of the metropolitan region

Castells (2002) notes that, by 2050, three quarters of the world’s population will live in large urban centres. He calls these centres ‘metropolitan regions’. A metropolitan region is a large urban area comprised of a collection of municipalities, including cities, suburbs, towns and rural areas. These regions occupy vast geographical areas, and are home to millions of people. They will continue to grow as more and more people move into these areas in the coming years. Examples of a metropolitan region include

- The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), with a population of almost 7 million people (City of Toronto, 2017)
- The Pearl River delta region of China, with a population of approximately 42 million (World Bank Group, 2015)
- The Delhi-Lahore area of India and Pakistan, with a population of approximately 73 million (Ellis & Roberts, 2016)

For Castells, these regions have a particularly important place in an increasingly globalized world that is

Organized around the opposition between the global and the local. Dominant processes in the economy, in technology, in the media and authority are organized largely in global networks. But day-to-day work, private life, cultural identity and political participation are essentially local and territorial. (p. 552)

The significance of the local level, that is, the metropolitan regions where people live and work, stems precisely from the increasing importance of the activities taking place at the global level, which make the world more complex and harder to control. The local level, by contrast, is seen as being more relatable and potentially controllable. There is a sense at this level that the governments of the various municipalities that comprise the metropolitan regions are closer to the inhabitants and, therefore, potentially more relatable and responsive (Castells, 2002).

Castells (2002) notes that there exists a functional interdependence among the various municipalities that comprise these metropolitan regions. Despite this interdependence, though, it is difficult to define the exact size or shape of these metropolitan regions. Unlike traditional cities, these regions do not have fixed borders. They typically do not have any sort of over-arching regional government to coordinate activities among the various components (Castells, 2002b; Florida 2008). These regions arise over time when various municipalities grow in size until their borders gradually touch other neighbouring municipalities (Florida, 2008). To further complicate the picture, the metropolitan region is comprised of a variety of types of municipalities: from the countryside to large urban centres (Castells, 2002). For example, the GTHA includes urban centres such as the Cities of Toronto and Mississauga, as well as towns such as Kleinburg and East Gwillimbury, and rural areas such as King Township (City of Toronto, 2016). Florida (2008) proposes a solution developed by Tim Gulden for approximating the size and shape of metropolitan regions. Gulden uses night-time satellite images of the earth to locate large areas of continuous or near continuous light (see Figure 4). Given that these metropolitan regions typically do not have defined geographical

borders, this approach has the advantage of demonstrating the approximate size and shape of these regions (Florida, Gulden, & Melander, 2008; Florida, 2008).



Figure 2: Night-time satellite image of the Delhi-Lahore metropolitan region. Delhi is the bright light in the bottom-centre of the image. Lahore is the smaller bright light above and to the left. Image source: NASA Worldview.

1.2.2. What is *urban*?

Sociologist Louis Wirth (2011 [1938]) wrote about the difficulties of characterizing cities and urban life as a distinct mode of human organization different from other modes of operation. However, he insisted that such a distinction exists. He identified three key characteristics that mark out urban environments and lead to a distinct ‘urban personality’: the size, diversity, and density of population. Amin and Thrift (2002), noting the work of Pile (1999) and Massey (1999), expand upon these three characteristics in important ways. First, they look beyond just the human populations of cities and include other elements: “things, institutions and architectural form” (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 3). Secondly, Amin and Thrift are concerned with the ways in which these diverse elements “juxtapose in close

proximity” (p. 3). The development of urban personality lies within the density at which these juxtapositions of difference occur, and in the social interactions that it causes among the various elements. The effects that arise from this density of juxtaposition – ‘social detachment’, social engagement beyond family and kinship, and a ‘tolerance of difference’ – comprise key components of the urban personality. As Knopp (1998) notes, the density of a city has an important role to play in marking out an urban space. For him, urban space happens “at a density and scale at once sufficiently large and complex as to feel overwhelming and almost incomprehensible, yet which remain navigable and meaningful in many particular respects from the vantage points of people’s daily lives” (pp. 150-1). For Simmel (1997), the density and scale of urban spaces – as distinct from rural spaces – bring forth a greater intensity of sensory stimulus which, in turn, gives rise to a key characteristic of the urban personality – the ‘blasé attitude’: “There is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which has been so unconditionally reserved to the metropolis as has the blasé attitude. The blasé attitude results first from the rapidly changing and closely compressed contrasting stimulations of the nerves” (p. 178). I introduce this notion here to demonstrate the role of density in the definition of what constitutes an urban space (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Pile, 1999; Massey, 1999; Knopp, 1998; Simmel, 1997).

For the purposes of this thesis, an urban space is first and foremost marked out by its density – particularly with respect to the density at which the juxtapositions of difference occur – distinguishing cities from smaller municipalities such as towns and rural areas. Beyond density, there are two key aspects of urban environments, identified above, that are important to the topic of this thesis: the nature and role of the diversity, and the nature and role of social relations in these environments. I will discuss each of these in the next two sections.

1.2.3. Difference and diversity in the urban context

Difference has long been a key characteristic of the modern city. This difference manifests through “gender, race, ethnicity, age, life course, sexuality, or any other referent” (Fincher & Jacobs, 1998, p. 5). More than likely, difference will be present in any of a number of combinations of these referents. The result is that different citizens experience the city differently from one another, even differently from their next door neighbours. This

difference is a serious concern for Castells (2002), particularly in the fast-growing metropolitan regions. He argues that a lack of a dominant culture to facilitate some degree of assimilation leads to a lack of common vocabulary and values, and therefore no way to communicate with one another and coexist successfully in the metropolitan region (Fincher & Jacobs, 1998; Castells, 2002).

To put Castells' concern (2002) into context, it will be useful to briefly highlight a common narrative of life before the rise of these metropolitan regions,⁶ during the 'pastoral era', which Quan-Haase (2013) describes as a "characterization of pre-industrialized life, where communities were composed primarily of locally based interactions in closely bounded groups" (p. 243). Augé (1995) provides a useful description of notions of place at this time, what he refers to as 'anthropological place':

The indigenous fantasy is that of a closed world founded once and for all long ago; one which, strictly speaking, does not have to be understood. Everything there is to know about is already known: land, forest, springs, notable features, religious places, medicinal plants, not forgetting the temporal dimensions of an inventory of these places whose legitimacy is postulated, and whose stability is supposed to be assured, by narratives about origins and by the ritual calendar. All the inhabitants have to do is *recognize* themselves in it when the occasion arises. (p. 44)

This notion of place as it might have existed during the pastoral era is one where everyone had the same experiences and understandings of place, everyone had the same values, and everyone had the same vocabulary to communicate these things. This arrangement of commonalities is seen to have served, at least in part, to maintain and reinforce common social norms and thereby facilitate social control within these places. Whether this is an accurate description of the way of life during the pastoral era is in some doubt, as evidenced by Augé's characterization of anthropological place. The accuracy of this description is

⁶ For a discussion of traditional notions of place, and criticisms of these notions, see Chapter 2.

beyond the scope of this thesis, but I present it here simply to provide context for Castell's (2002) concerns (Quan-Haase, 2013; Augé, 1995; Castells, 2002).

Regardless, it is not at all clear that this lack of assimilation is a problem in today's (or tomorrow's) metropolitan regions. Jacobs (1969) argues that the opposite is true. In her research into the key characteristics of successful and unsuccessful American cities, she found that neighbourhoods with significant diversity were more successful than homogeneous ones. In her analysis of the Pittsburgh suburb of Chatham Village, for example, she reports that the largely homogeneous inhabitants struggle to cooperate with people from surrounding neighbourhoods who are from a different economic class.

For Jacobs, it's not just the population of a city that must be diverse. There must also be a diversity of uses. The ideal urban configuration combines residential, office and commercial spaces, rather than separating them out into distinct areas. This diversity in close proximity results in more vibrant streets and more vibrant neighbourhoods. Some theorists and urban planners, she notes, dismiss this type of urban configuration as chaotic. But Jacobs disagrees. She argues instead that it is a "complex and highly developed form of order" (Jacobs, 1969, p. 222). This complex intermingling is essential to the fabric of the urban environment. It provides the potential for unexpected moments of creativity and dynamism (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Massey, 1999; Castells, 2002; Jacobs, 1969).

Lefebvre (1996) similarly sees urban spaces as a site of potential creativity and dynamism. To this end, he sees a symbiotic relationship between citizen and city. He contends that there should be an interplay between the physical and social growth of a city, much like a seashell develops in response to the needs of its inhabitant. For him, the ideal example of this situation is the city of Navarrenx in France. Lefebvre uses Navarrenx to demonstrate his seashell metaphor. He says:

This community has shaped its shell, building and rebuilding it, modifying it again and again according to its needs. Look closely, and within every hour you will see the slow, mucous trace of this animal which transforms the chalk in the soil around it into something delicate and structured: a family. (Lefebvre, 1995, p. 116)

Lefebvre (1995) notes that humans have two distinct and seemingly contradictory ways to build their habitat: with an organic spontaneity, or with planned intent. He's looking for a way to bring these two contradictions together: to build cities with a sort of cultivated spontaneity. Lefebvre argues that the city should be a work of art that its inhabitants collectively create in the process of *inhabiting* it. It should be a place of becoming. Some degree of this cultivated spontaneity may be in evidence in a number of the urban redevelopment projects underway in Helsinki, Finland. In the Jätkäsaari area of the city centre, there is a large redevelopment project underway. This area used to be the location of the city's main cargo port. But the port was moved to the far eastern end of the city, freeing up the area for redevelopment. The plan for the area calls for mixed use development, including mixed income housing, offices, retail, public transit lines, pedestrian and bicycle routes, a park, a church, a school and a community centre. While much of the redevelopment will involve new construction, a number of older structures from the cargo port days will be restored and repurposed. Other redevelopment areas in the city demonstrate similar sorts of planned evolution of the built environment of the city and how its residents inhabit it. These redevelopment projects are thoroughly planned. However, like the Jätkäsaari area, all of the redevelopment areas are designed for mixed use. Thus, the purposes to which the people of Helsinki put these new and reworked spaces are open to constant rethinking, constant becoming. There is, I would suggest, at least the groundwork laid here for Lefebvre's cultivated spontaneity to come to life (Helsingin kaupunki, 2017; Lefebvre, 1995).

1.2.4. Social relations in the urban context

As mentioned earlier, a principal concern for Castells (2002) is how people will co-exist successfully in metropolitan regions without, as he sees it, a common vocabulary and set of values, and without a dominant culture to facilitate some level of assimilation. Within the metropolitan region, he sees growing fragmentation and alienation from one another leading to an entrenchment away from the communal and into the familiar: "I get close to myself, my family, my group, my project, and we split" (p. 555). In this way, he sees communication breaking down altogether within the wider urban environment.

As Tonkiss (2005) notes, this concern is not uncommon within urban theory. Growing alienation and a loss of a sense of community have been common themes in the works of many urban theorists. As Young (1986) notes, this notion of community is typically ill-defined, but she does see some common threads. There is a preference for face-to-face communication among small groups of people in a multitude of situations: work, leisure, family, etc. These groups typically need to be small enough that the members know one another personally. There must be a high degree of commonality.

Tonkiss sees this ‘lament’ (p. 9) for the loss of community as containing an implicit criticism of urban society. She agrees with Young that this desire for a return to community is ‘anti-urban’:

The idea of community is not simply an antidote to the anonymity of the city; it is a rejection of the urban as a space of strangers, a retreat to familiarity and intimacy as the safest place to be. Such a stance narrows the range of one’s concern for others to those who appear familiar or who share similar problems. It stands in difficult relation to the claims of anonymity, to questions of regard between strangers, and to the kind of urban ethics that can bear difference. (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 26)

Young and Tonkiss recognize the value of face-to-face, close relationships in particular contexts: friendship, cohabitation, family, and so on. However, they both suggest that this approach is inappropriate as a means to approach urban social relations overall. This notion of community closes off possibilities of difference. This difference is an essential component of successful urban social relations. For them, urban social relations are relations among strangers. Rather than face-to-face interaction, the urban social relations of strangers is characterized by what Young refers to as ‘side-by-side’ relations. The urban social relations of strangers take place in public spaces such as parks, streets, bars, cultural venues, etc. Young notes that “in such public spaces, the diversity of the city’s residents comes together and dwells side by side, sometimes appreciating one another, entertaining one another, or just chatting, always to go off again as strangers” (Young, 1986, p. 21).

For Tonkiss, a central characteristic of the urban relations among strangers is *indifference*. In successful urban environments, where there is a great degree of difference in terms of

ethnicity, gender, sexuality and so on, there is a lack of interest or concern – an *indifference* – toward this difference. It is not that these urban dwellers do not notice the difference. On the contrary. As Tonkiss says, “alongside an active politics that recognizes differences...there lies an ordinary urban ethics that looks straight past it.” She recognizes that this indifference may be “fragile, grudging, uneven”, but where it exists, it provides a greater possibility for the expression of individual difference (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 10).

Simmel suggests that this indifference (what he calls a blasé attitude) results in social relations among people being brief and scarce (Simmel, 1997). But as Urry (2007) notes, urban spaces afford the possibility for differing bodies to find a space:

Compared with the small-scale community, the modern city gives room to the individual and to the peculiarities of their inner and outer development. It is the spatial form of modern urban life that permits the unique development of individuals who socially interact with an exceptionally wide range of contacts. (p. 23)

These notions of indifference and side-by-side relations are evident in what Jacobs (1969) calls the ‘sidewalk ballet’. The sidewalk ballet consists of myriad inconsequential interactions among strangers – greetings, small talk, etc. – in public spaces such as city streets. When added up, these small interactions recognize the ‘public identity’ (p. 56) of people, and serve to build a web of trust and respect among urban strangers, without demanding more intimate connections that are typically reserved for friends, colleagues and family. The sidewalk ballet, when successfully manoeuvred, fosters Tonkiss’s indifference toward difference. As Jacobs notes, “it is possible to be on excellent sidewalk terms with people who are very different from oneself, and even, as time passes, on familiar public terms with them” (p. 61).

McLaughlin (2001) observes this sidewalk ballet manifesting in an interesting way in Dakar in Senegal. Like other growing metropolitan regions, many people arrive in Dakar every day from various different parts of rural Senegal, where different languages are spoken and different cultural practices observed. These new arrivals must quickly learn to adapt to the fast pace and diversity of urban life. This adaptation is occurring in an interesting way in Dakar, through the development of a distinctive language – Dakar Wolof, or urban Wolof –

and, increasingly, an accompanying Wolof identity within the city. This Dakar Wolof language and identity does not erase their original regional identities. Rather, Dakar residents change easily back and forth between the two – their Dakar identity and their hometown identity – depending upon the circumstance. In this way, the residents of Dakar are providing a literal response to Castell's (2002) concern about a lack of common vocabulary and values. (McLaughlin, 2001; Castells, 2002).

Jacobs (1969) also examines neighbourhoods where the sidewalk ballet is not possible. In such neighbourhoods, she notes, people must share everything or nothing. For a neighbourhood where everything must be shared, Jacobs provides the example of Chatham Village in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Chatham Village is a classic 'garden city' where the various uses – residential, commercial, etc. – are segregated from one another. As such, it lacks the sort of mixed-use public spaces needed for a functioning sidewalk ballet. Instead, Jacobs says, the residents must become intimately familiar with one another for the neighbourhood to function. As a result, little difference can be tolerated. Everyone in the neighbourhood must be sufficiently similar in terms of ethnicity, class, etc. to be able to live together (Jacobs, 1969).

As an example of a neighbourhood where nothing is shared, Jacobs looks at the subsidized housing projects in New York City. Here again, there are no mixed-use public spaces wherein a successful sidewalk ballet can take place. Unlike Chatham Village, however, there are no opportunities for social interaction among the residents, and therefore no trust develops among them. Nothing is shared, either on a public or private basis (Jacobs, 1969).

Lefebvre (1995) identifies similar problems in his observations of the New Towns of France and elsewhere in Europe. These suburbs – following a Garden City model similar to Chatham Village – foreclose the possibility for the symbiotic relationship mentioned earlier between city and citizen that Lefebvre (1996) envisions. In looking at the French New Town of Mournex, Lefebvre identifies a number of problems with the underlying design philosophy of such developments. Unlike the mixed-use spaces that Jacobs describes, Mournex is divided into discreet functions: spaces for living are separated from spaces for

shopping, spaces for working and spaces for playing (Lefebvre, 1995). As Merrifield (2006) notes, for Lefebvre, the design logic of the New Town separates and alienates its inhabitants:

For Lefebvre, every New Town, every new suburb – every Levittown, Middletown, or Our Town emerging out of the rubble – has hacked up space and simplified life, decanted people and flattened experience. At the same time, separation means separation within the self, a partitioning of consciousness, an inability to connect organically with what’s around you, to think the whole, to understand the totality of your life – or to not want to understand it anymore. (p. 61)

The work of both Jacobs and Lefebvre demonstrate the importance of the interplay between citizen and city, between the architectural form of the urban environment and the citizens inhabiting it. Social relations within urban spaces are in part informed by the organization of these spaces.

1.2.5. Urban in the context of this thesis

At the most basic level, it is the density and size of a space that mark it out as urban or not urban. Additionally, however, the nature of the diversity and social relations are critical factors in assessing urban spaces. As Amin and Thrift (2002) assert, an analysis of urban environments must consider the diversity and interactions of not just the inhabitants of these environments, but the “people, things, institutions and architectural form” (p. 3). Jacobs (1969) agrees. She notes that successful urban environments are ones which have both a diversity of people and a diversity of uses to which those people put the space. The density of these urban spaces puts this diversity in constant close quarters. This combination of density and diversity bring about a particular form for urban social relations. Simmel (1997) describes a ‘blasé attitude’ arising from an overload of sensorial stimulation due to the combination of density and diversity. Tonkiss (2005) calls this attitude ‘indifference’. Jacobs (1969) talks about being on ‘excellent sidewalk terms’ with fellow citizens. All of these descriptions of urban social relations describe the importance of a degree of distance that is necessary in urban social relations. They all reject notions of nostalgia for an intense degree of social closeness that may exist in smaller, non-urban communities. In developing a notion

of ‘place’ in an urban context, these ideas of difference and social relations must be considered fully to avoid this notion of nostalgia.

1.3. Mobility

Mobility is a critical component of understanding the urban experience. As Amin and Thrift (2002) note, individuals become familiar with urban spaces as they move through them, and mark them, leaving footprints and creating ‘sensescapes’ (van Duppen & Spierings, 2013).

In this section, I describe the notion of mobility. I discuss the common tendency in the social sciences and humanities to privilege the sedentary over the mobile. I then discuss the ‘mobilities paradigm’ which is gaining attention within social sciences and humanities discourse.

1.3.1. What is mobility?

As Urry (2000b) notes, there are many different meanings for the word ‘mobility’. For example, mobility can refer to the movement between social or economic classes. It can also concern the mass migrations of people from one region to another, such as the movement of refugees and economic migrants. Additionally, it can involve the daily commuting habits of urban dwellers. In short, mobility involves movement of one kind or another. Mobility for Urry involves more than just the movement of people. He is concerned with “the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes, and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, these diverse mobilities” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185). Urry refers to these mobile people and things as ‘actants’. Büscher, Urry and Witchger (2011) identify four mobilities “that produce social life” (p. 5): Physical (either people walking, driving, flying, etc., or objects); imagined (mediated via radio, television, etc.); virtual; and communicative (both face-to-face and technologically mediated). Urry (2007) identifies twelve forms of intertwining mobilities:

Asylum, refugee and homeless travel and migration; business and professional travel; discovery travel of students and other young people...; medial travel to spas, hospitals, dentists, opticians and so on; military mobility of armies, tanks, helicopters, aircraft, rockets, spy planes, satellites and so on which have many spinoffs into

civilian uses; post-employment travel and the forming of transnational lifestyles within retirement; ‘trailing travel’ of children, partners, other relatives and domestic servants; travel and migration across the key nodes within a given diaspora such as that of overseas Chinese; travel of service workers around the world and especially to global cities including the contemporary flows of slaves; tourist travel to visit places and events and in relationship to various senses including especially through the ‘tourist gaze’; visiting friends and relatives but where those friendship networks may also be on the move; work-related travel including commuting. (pp. 10-1)

Urry’s list amply demonstrates the wide-ranging variety of mobility forms at work, from global mass movements such as refugee migrations, to more localized movements such as daily commutes to and from work. As Söderström et al. (2013) point out, while these mobility forms are significantly different in nature and scale, they nevertheless can and do intersect and inter-relate. Tourists visiting a city may follow the same trajectories as commuters; refugees may be waiting in the same airport passport lines as international business travellers and students coming home from their gap year travels. Different mobile bodies with differing intents may – and regularly do – find themselves travelling along the same mobile trajectories and waiting in the same transit points. Their individual experiences of these spaces will vary greatly depending on their intents and their access rights. The business traveller may be waved through the passport line with minimal delay, while the refugee may – and likely will – be stopped, searched, and quite possibly denied entry altogether.

1.3.2. Sedentarism

Urry (Urry, 2007) notes that, overall, there has been a lack of interrogation of mobilities within the social sciences. The social sciences either disregard mobilities issues altogether, or minimize their importance, despite the role that such mobilities as “holidaymaking, walking, car driving, phoning, flying” (p. 19) play within people’s daily lives. There is instead a ‘sedentarist’ approach wherein these mobilities are understood to be ‘neutral’ or irrelevant to whatever social issue is under investigation. Sheller and Urry (2006) note that this sedentarist approach considers stability and stasis to be ‘normal’, and movement and change to be

dysfunctional. This approach is generally consistent with Heidegger's notion of 'dwelling'. Urry notes that "for Heidegger, dwelling means to reside or to stay, to dwell at peace, to be content or at home within a place" (Urry, 2007, p. 42). Cresswell (2006) suggests that this approach is inspired by the physical science notion of 'least net effect': "The basic assumption is that things (including people) don't move if they can help it" (p. 29). Irrespective of the source of this preference for sedentarism, this approach results in an under-appreciation for the role that mobilities play in daily life. Sheller and Urry describe an alternative approach, which is referred to as the 'mobilities paradigm' (Sheller & Urry, 2006).

1.3.3. The 'mobilities paradigm'

The 'mobilities paradigm' is having a profound effect on many disciplines within the social sciences and humanities, including anthropology, cultural studies, geography and sociology. This approach has significant implications for these disciplines. As Büscher, Urry and Witchger (2011) note: "It enables the 'social world' to be theorized as a wide array of economic, social and political practices, infrastructures and ideologies that all involve, entail or curtail various kinds of movements of people, or ideas, or information or objects" (p. 4).

The mobilities paradigm does not, however, displace notions of stability and stasis. As Cresswell and Merriman (2011) point out, 'moorings' are equally important to understand as are mobilities: "Aircraft need airports, cars need places to park... and refuel, ships need ports, and we all need moments and spaces of rest" (p. 7). To ignore these 'moorings' or spaces of rest, they note, would present as incomplete a picture as the sedentarist approach discussed earlier.

Sheller and Urry similarly address another key consideration for the mobilities paradigm: the danger of a "romantic reading of mobility" (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 211). They caution that social scientists must be careful not to privilege notions of mobility lest they risk ignoring the ways in which access to movement can be controlled and restricted. They note that "it is not a question of privileging a 'mobile subjectivity', but rather of tracking the power of discourses and practices of mobility in creating both movement and stasis" (p. 211).

Sheller and Urry (2006) propose six theoretical resources that are essential to the mobilities paradigm. These six resources include: the works of Georg Simmel, particularly his studies of urban life; science and technology studies which expose social interactions as heterogeneous hybrids of human and non-human actants; social science theories that embrace the ‘spatial turn’; theories that focus on embodied experiences; social networking studies that examine the nature of ‘weak ties’; and complexity theory.

They start with Simmel’s (1997) work, particularly his studies of urban life in which he highlights “the pulse of city life which drives not only its social, economic and infrastructural formations, but also the psychic forms of the urban dweller” (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 215). Simmel observes that the multiple and varied forms of mobilities that interact within urban environments result in a fundamental change in the ways in which urban dwellers interact with one another and their environment. As discussed earlier, these interactions become shorter, less frequent and more impersonal than in non-urban situations (Simmel, 1997; Sheller & Urry, 2006).

1.3.4. Mobility in the context of this thesis

Mobility, in the context of this thesis, is the everyday movement through urban spaces. This movement, though, involves more than just the movement of people. It is concerned with “the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes, and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, these diverse mobilities” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185). Büscher, Urry and Witchger (2011) identify four mobilities “that produce social life” (p. 5): Physical (either people walking, driving, flying, etc., or objects); imagined (mediated via radio, television, etc.), virtual; and communicative (both face-to-face and technologically mediated).

There has been within the social sciences and humanities a tendency to privilege the sedentary over the mobile (Urry, *Mobilities*, 2007). Sedentarism is considered normal; mobility is considered deviant or dysfunctional. This approach results in an under-appreciation for the role that mobilities play in daily life.

The ‘mobilities paradigm’ is gaining favour in a number of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities. The mobilities paradigm provides a framework to analyze the effects that different kinds of movements – or restrictions of movement – can have on a wide range of subjects. It does not, though, displace notions of stability and stasis. Spaces of rest are as important to understand as are mobilities (Cresswell, 2006).

1.4. The embodied urban experience

In this section, I present a discussion of key issues of the urban experience at the level of the body. As Degen and Rose (2012) note, studies of urban experiences typically do not consider the experiences of the body in the urban context. They focus instead on the larger patterns of urban experience – what happens in aggregate. While an understanding of these larger patterns is an essential component of an understanding of urban experience, on its own, it is an incomplete understanding. As Fincher and Jacobs (1998) point out, within a given city, there are in fact many cities: “In describing contemporary cities there are many realities and many daily lives to be accounted for. We inhabit different cities even from those inhabited by our most immediate neighbours” (p. 1). Thus, an understanding of the urban experience that restricts itself to larger patterns of urban experience risks excluding the rich variety of realities experienced by urban dwellers. More significantly, it risks not capturing the experiences of marginalized people in the urban context. An examination of the ‘embodied’ urban experience, if done carefully, can capture these marginalized experiences, thereby adding a layer of depth to an understanding of the urban experience.

In this section, I present key components of an analysis of the embodied urban experience that will help capture some of this richer experience. I discuss urban rhythms, starting with Lefebvre’s (1996) notion of rhythmanalysis as a way to understand connections between citizen and city in an urban context. I then look at Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenon of perspective, to examine the ways in which the senses of the body interact with its urban surroundings. Next, I look at the differing experiences of differing bodies.

1.4.1. Urban rhythm

While the main focus of this thesis is spatial, certain temporal issues are never far out of frame. One such temporal issue to consider here is the rhythms of the urban everyday experience. For Lefebvre (1996), the notion of rhythm is where space and time intersect: “every rhythm implies the relation of a time with a space, a localized time, or, if one wishes, a temporalized place” (p. 230). He goes on, though, to emphasize that these rhythms are always connected to specific spaces, “whether it be the heart, the fluttering of the eyelids, the movement of a street, or the tempo of a waltz” (p. 230)

Urban rhythms are the patterns of activities that happen throughout the day and night in a city (Amin & Thrift, 2002). Lefebvre provides many examples of these rhythms, which he views from the balcony of his Paris apartment. They include visible rhythms, such as children going to and coming from school, people on their way to go shopping, employees on their way to work or home. But they also include rhythms that are unseen, such as traffic control systems and the hours of operations of businesses (Lefebvre, 1996). They appear as well in Perec’s observations of the everyday activities in Paris’s Place Saint-Sulpice (Sheringham, 2006). Edensor and Holloway (2008) observe that there are great varieties in the nature of urban rhythms:

Rhythms can be institutionally inscribed (marked by national festivals, religious occasions, hours of commerce or television schedules), locally organized (via hours of work and local folk customs), or form synchronized collective habits (eating, playing, sleeping and working together). These social rhythms are complemented by ‘natural’ seasonal rhythms, with sometimes shifting temporalities of fecundity and decay (p. 484).

Edensor and Holloway’s description here demonstrates the intermingling of the two types of urban rhythms that Lefebvre identifies: cyclical rhythms and linear rhythms. Cyclical rhythms are those that tend to be found in nature, such as the daily cycle from day to night, and the annual cycle through the four seasons. Linear rhythms tend to arise from human actions, and tend to be more mechanical, routine and repetitive in nature. These two types of rhythms are always interacting with one another. They cannot be separated out from one

another. Lefebvre offers as example of this interaction the weekly work days: nine o'clock to five o'clock, Monday to Friday. In the work day, there is a linear rhythm of daily work hours layered overtop of the cyclical rhythm of the days of the week (Lefebvre, 1996).

Bodily rhythms (heartbeats, blood flowing through veins and arteries, etc.) are interconnected with the rhythms of the city. Even limbs and sense organs have their own rhythms. For Lefebvre (1996), the body "is the place of interaction between the biological, the physical and the social" (p. 32). These rhythms connect urban inhabitants with their urban environments. Bodily rhythms interpret urban rhythms, and in turn are informed by them.

1.4.2. Perception

The 'embodied experience' in urban environments is more than the accumulation of what happens physically to a person in urban spaces. The embodied experience involves the interplay between the body's senses and the environment, what Crossley (1995) calls the 'carnal sociology of the body'. Crossley is interested in efforts to inject discussions of the body into sociological discourse. These discussions, he notes, have historically been largely absent from this discourse. In doing this, Crossley wants to make a distinction between the 'sociology of the body' and 'carnal sociology'. Sociology of the body is about 'what is done to the body': "epistemological, ethical and aesthetic technologies which variously discipline, adorn, punish, celebrate, etc. 'the body'" (p. 43). Carnal sociology, by contrast, is about 'what the body does': the active role of the body in social life" (p. 43). He argues that both of these approaches must be examined together – that an examination of the embodied experience necessarily involves examining both 'what is done to the body' and 'what the body does', and how these two approaches interact and inform one another: to "understand them to be twin aspects of a single problematic" (Crossley, 1995, p. 43).

Examining both carnal sociology and the sociology of the body, Crossley contends, provides a more complete picture of the embodied experience because of the ways in which they interplay with one another. Together, they move the discourse away from a dualism which puts the body in opposition to the social. Carnal sociology, he says, demonstrates that the social is brought into being through the actions of the body, while the sociology of the body demonstrates that the body "is always-already engaged in a specific social situation by means

of techniques or rule-governed practices which are historically and geographically contingent” (pp. 43-4). In order to dig more deeply into the interplay between the sociology of the body and carnal sociology – between what is done to the body and what the body does – Crossley presents an overview of Merleau-Ponty’s notions of ‘perception’, which will be of use in this thesis to contextualize the notion of ‘the embodied experience’. As Crossley notes, Merleau-Ponty’s work moves the discourse beyond dualistic notions – “body and self, body and society, body and symbolic order” (p. 43) – that place the body in opposition to the social and vice versa. To achieve this move to a discourse of the carnal sociology of the body, Crossley adopts Merleau-Ponty’s notion of perception. As Crossley notes, Merleau-Ponty’s notion of perception provides a compelling way to understand the inter-relationship of the body as it acts in the world and the body as it is acted upon.

Merleau-Ponty rejects the binary notion of a split between the mind and the body. For him, the human perception of the world is not an “inner representation of an outer world” (Crossley, 1995, p. 46). Rather, the world is experienced actively through the senses, *in the world*. The body is actively engaged with the world in a mutually reinforcing relationship. Objects, events, etc. are perceived because they are seen, felt, smelled, heard and/or touched: they are experienced through the body. What is experienced, though, depends upon the way in which the objects, events, etc. are sensed. The body employs already existing cultural cues and, in turn, these cultural cues are products of the body acting and perceiving in the world (Crossley, 1995).

1.4.3. Differing experiences of differing bodies

As mentioned above, urban rhythms are generated through the interactions of urban systems and urban citizens. General patterns can be discerned in analyzing these rhythms and the interactions that generate them. However, the image that emerges from these analyses is incomplete without also considering the individual bodies and system components that are interacting. Sennett (1994) notes that bodily experiences can vary considerably among individuals. Focusing only on what he calls “master images of ‘the body’” (p. 23), that is, an aggregate representation of the urban bodily experience, risks neglecting or excluding the potentially differing experiences of differing bodies. Bodies can differ from the master

images in many ways including, for example, in terms of sex, gender, sexual practices and/or sexual desire. The picture becomes further complicated when these differences intersect with other bodily differences such as race and ethnicity (Mels, 2004; Butler, 2006). Further, these differences can combine in many different ways. As Butler (2006) notes, sex, gender, sexual desire and sexual practice do not always align into consistent, linear combinations. For example, notions of ‘maleness’ do not necessarily always affix to a male body; sexual desire towards male bodies do not necessarily always manifest in sexual practices with male bodies (Butler, 2006). In considering the intersectionality of these bodily differences, it is important to avoid considering these categories as “separate and essentialist” (Valentine, 2007, p. 12). Rather, an intersectional analysis, as originally proposed by Crenshaw (1991), locates the differing experiences of differing bodies within the points where these differences cross paths, or intersect. No one category of difference is to be understood to be privileged over another (Valentine, 2007; Crenshaw, 1991).

If the master image of the body conforms to normative heterosexuality, to what extent do the experiences of bodies that differ in terms of sex, gender, sexual practice, sexual desire, race and/or ethnicity differ from the master image, particularly given the interactive nature of urban rhythms between urban systems and urban bodies? How do these differences manifest? What difficulties do these differences pose? How do differing bodies respond? What effects, if any, do these differing experiences of differing bodies have upon the general rhythms and the master images of the body?

1.4.4. The body in urban space

Simmel (1997) observes that urban environments provide a significantly amplified sensory experience for urban dwellers. Urban environments involve the concentration of large numbers of people in close quarters, who have differing interests, differing needs, differing perspectives. As Amin and Thrift (2002) note, this situation is further complicated through the differences among not just people, but also “things, institutions and architectural form” (p. 3). As a result of all this, people develop what Simmel refers to as a ‘blasé attitude’ (p. 178), characterized by a level of reserve. In a way, the sensorial awareness is dampened or turned off altogether. Sennett (1994) cites Goffman’s notion of ‘defensive de-stimulation’ as

the strategy that people use to navigate their way through urban streets. Middleton (2010) notes that this situation can manifest itself in moving through urban spaces on ‘autopilot’, as the body “feels its way” (p. 583) along its travels through the city.

As van Duppen and Spierings (2013) note, there is an ‘interactive relationship’ (p. 235) between the embodied citizen and their urban environment. As urban individuals move through urban spaces, their sensory experiences of those spaces change them, and in turn change their experience of the space. They create what van Duppen and Spierings call ‘sensescapes’ – effectively embodied, sensory mappings of their experiences in their urban spaces. Amin and Thrift (2002) observe a similar sort of interaction between urban individual and urban environment. For them, individuals leave ‘footprints’ (p. 18) as they move through urban environments. They note that “these tracks allow the city to be known. We negotiate the city through used tracks and construct imaginaries around them of the known city” (p. 22).

The experience of urban environments, then, is an interactive embodied experience. As individuals move through urban spaces, they leave footprints that build ‘sensescapes’ within those spaces. The experiences of these spaces in turn imprint themselves on the individuals, resulting sometimes in experiences of moving through a space ‘on autopilot’. The body, then, is holding the memory of the space, even if it is not registering in the mind.

Massumi (2002) dissects the mechanisms in play in bodies that result in this experience. He talks about three sources of sensory input that the body receives and processes in space: proprioception, exteroception and interoception. Proprioception is the body’s physiological manoeuvrings involving muscles and ligaments that allow the body to locate and orient itself in space; Exteroception is the sensory input that comes from external stimuli via the five senses, such as the smell of coffee, the hardness of pavement, etc.; and interoception is the sensory input that comes from within the body, such as the information provided to the brain by the enteric nervous system which is responsible for various visceral reactions the body experiences such as a stomach churn resulting from the sight of an unknown shadow in a dark alley. As Massumi notes, interoception can often precede the processing of

exteroceptive stimulus: “it anticipates the translation of the sight or sound or touch perception into something recognizable associated with an identifiable object” (pp. 60-1).

The experience of the body in urban space needs to be considered in multiple ways. At the over-arching level is the inter-relationship between the rhythms of the body and the rhythms of the city. Bodily rhythms (heartbeats, blood flowing through veins and arteries, etc.) are inter-connected with the rhythms of the city. Even limbs and sense organs have their own rhythms. For Lefebvre, the body “is the place of interaction between the biological, the physical and the social” (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 32). These rhythms connect urban inhabitants with their urban environments. Bodily rhythms interpret urban rhythms, and in turn are informed by them.

The experience of the body also needs to be considered at the level of the body. Bodily experiences can vary considerably among individuals. Focusing only on “master images of ‘the body’” (Sennett, 1994, p. 23) risks neglecting or excluding the potentially differing experiences of differing bodies. The human perception of the world is not an “inner representation of an outer world” (Crossley, 1995, p. 46). Rather, the world is experienced actively through the senses, *in the world*. The body is actively engaged with the world in a mutually reinforcing relationship. Objects, events, etc. are perceived because they are seen, felt, smelled, heard and/or touched: they are experienced through the body. What is experienced, though, depends upon the way in which the objects, events, etc. are sensed. The body employs already existing cultural cues and, in turn, these cultural cues are products of the body acting and perceiving in the world (Crossley, 1995).

The experience of urban environments is an interactive embodied experience. As individuals move through urban spaces, they leave footprints that build ‘sensescapes’ (van Duppen & Spierings, 2013) within those spaces. The experiences of these spaces in turn imprint themselves on the individuals. The body is holding the memory of the space, even if it is not registering in the mind.

1.5. The everyday

While the everyday may be a relatively small part of the overall investigations of the social, it has nevertheless garnered some considerable attention. This attention arises in a number of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities: anthropology, cultural studies, geography, sociology, to name a few. But for all this attention, the everyday remains an elusive realm. It is hard to pin down, and harder still to define. Sheringham (2006) offers the guidance that ‘everyday life’ is the general ‘framework’ of this area of interest, while ‘the everyday’ and ‘the quotidian’ refer to “the dimension of lived experience that is involved in everyday life” (pp. 2-3). But even this involves using the word to define itself. In this section, I look at the nature of ‘the everyday’ in the context of urban environments, as discussed in the previous section.

There is no shortage of extraordinary uses of locative media, such as art projects (Hemment, 2006). But their most significant uses involve mundane, everyday tasks. navigational aid (Leshed, Velden, Rieger, Kot, & Sengers, 2008). Examining the everyday activities of urban inhabitants provides a better picture of their interactions with their urban environments. Locative media have a wide range of everyday applications, but before examining them, it will be useful to understand what ‘the everyday’ is.⁷

1.5.1. What is *the everyday*?

The everyday is the domain of the mundane. It is the space where nothing interesting ever happens. Perhaps the most noticeable characteristic of the everyday is the ‘daily grind’: the banal, monotonous routine that repeats over and over, making days blend numbingly into one another. Interesting occurrences, when they happen, pull us out of the realm of the everyday, and into some other realm. But these occurrences do not leave the everyday unchanged.

Given the ‘daily grind’ routine of the everyday, stasis is perhaps an easier condition to associate with it than change. However, once we scratch the surface, we see that there is

⁷ For a more detailed discussion of everyday uses of locative media, see Chapter 3.

more to it than initially meets the eye. While this routine repeats itself over and over, it will be different each time. Lefebvre observes:

In modern life, the repetitive gestures tend to mask and to crush the cycles. The everyday imposes its monotony. It is the invariable constant of the variations it envelops. The days follow one after another and resemble one another, and yet – here lies the contradiction at the heart of everydayness – everything changes (1987, p. 10).

This change-routine dynamic plays out in Sheringham’s description of Perec’s study of the everyday occurrences in Place Saint-Sulpice in the sixth arrondissement of Paris. Perec regularly sat in Place Saint-Sulpice watching the comings and goings of the people and objects passing through it. He watched the buses that repeatedly pass through the square all day, every day. While their patterns are regular, each instance is different from all the others (Sheringham, 2006).

Perec’s study demonstrates the continual change of the urban everyday of Paris: the constant flow of energy and matter that runs through it, in the form of traffic through Place Saint-Sulpice. Despite this continual flow, however, the overall structure of the everyday remains the same. Perec’s buses continue to arrive on schedule every day. There is a rhythm and a repetition, but within that, constant change. To this end, it is not the content of the everyday that is of significance, but rather the relationship among the processes of the everyday (Frow, 2002; Sheringham, 2006).

Sheringham (2006) sees in Perec’s work “a central feature of our everyday life, often unacknowledged... namely, the fact that we are *immersed* in the quotidian, and that the endless stream of perception and utterance is the very stuff out of which the everyday... is made” (p. 268). It is in evidence again in Certeau’s (1984) observations of pedestrians in New York City. From his ‘bird’s eye view’ atop the former World Trade Centre, he sees the mass of people flowing through the city’s arteries. But down below, at the level of the pedestrian, they of course do not have his vantage point. They can only see the space that is immediately around them. They are unaware of the full nature of this flow of which they are a part. Certeau’s vantage point is now regrettably gone, but the streets of New York City remain, and they continue to teem with pedestrians carrying out myriad mundane tasks:

going to work, going shopping, visiting friends, walking the dog, etc. Such is the nature of the urban everyday (Sheringham, 2006; Certeau, 1984).

The everyday is repetitive, comprised of countless small, largely forgettable moments. But for Lefebvre, the everyday has the potential to be the site of revolutionary possibility (Sheringham, 2006). For Certeau, inhabitants of the everyday engage in tactics that enable them to engage in acts of subversion (de Certeau, 1984). In order for this to be true, it seems that some of these small, mundane, forgettable moments will at some point have to have a disproportionately large impact on the larger world (Sheringham, 2006; Certeau, 1984).

1.5.2. Boundaries of the everyday

Boundaries are everywhere in the everyday. Like other boundaries, they serve two main functions. First, they mark out the spaces where the everyday ends and other spaces (the political sphere, for example) begin. But boundaries also serve as an interface. Zerubavel (1991) notes that boundaries play an important role in our everyday lives. They serve a vital function in helping people distinguish one thing, place, person, etc. from another. Boundaries help people order and make sense of the world. This despite the fact that they typically do not even notice these boundaries: they are normally taken as a given.

Zerubavel (1991) uses the example of frames to demonstrate the ways in which boundaries can operate in the everyday. The frame itself is seldom the focus of attention. But it works to shape the perception of both the object that it is framing and the surrounding environment. In the case of a painting or photograph, for example, a frame can create two realities: the reality of the everyday that exists outside of the frame; and the artistic reality inside the frame. As he points out:

Picture frames also make us disregard the wall surrounding the picture. Like them, all frames basically define parts of our perceptual environment as irrelevant, thus separating that which we attend in a focused manner from all the out-of-frame experience that we leave 'in the background' and ignore (p. 12).

Boundaries can have a profound effect on the way people perceive their everyday world – what they consider their ordinary, mundane routines, and what they consider to be outside of

this domain. These boundaries also serve as the interface to everything that lies outside of our everyday world. As Zerubavel notes, people typically do not notice them. But they should take care to avoid considering these boundaries as being too rigidly fixed. They are malleable and subject to change (Zerubavel, 1991).

1.6. The everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience

The everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience comprises four key characteristics:

- Urban social relations characterized by a blasé attitude or indifference
- Mobilities of “peoples, objects, images, information and wastes” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185) through urban spaces, leaving footprints and creating sensescapes
- Interaction of mundane daily rhythms of citizens and city
- Juxtaposition and interaction of the differing experiences of differing bodies

1.6.1. Urban social relations

Key characteristics that mark out urban environments from rural and small town environments are the population size and density of the space. These characteristics contribute to a form of social relations that many scholars observe are indicative of urban social interaction. Simmel (1997) characterizes urban social relations as embodying a ‘blasé attitude’. Tonkiss (2005) characterizes urban social relations as ‘indifference’. Jacobs (1969) talks about being on ‘excellent sidewalk terms’ with fellow citizens. Simmel’s blasé attitude results from an intensity sensory experience that occurs in urban environments. There are simply too many sensory inputs to process, and so urban citizens adopt this blasé attitude to reduce the input to manageable levels. The blasé attitude manifests as a lack of engagement with the many sensory inputs that urban citizens experience (Simmel, 1997). For Jacobs, social interaction in urban contexts involves many small, seemingly inconsequential interactions that, over time, build up a level of cordial familiarity among urban citizens who come across one another in day-to-day life. Jacobs calls these interactions the ‘sidewalk ballet’. For Tonkiss, urban inhabitants approach their experiences in urban spaces with a sense of indifference as a way to deal with the great degree of difference that they encounter on a daily basis. She notes that this indifference is not a result of not noticing the difference.

Quite the contrary, there is, she says, an awareness of the difference, but that urban citizens tend to look past it (Tonkiss, 2005).

Amin and Thrift (2002) and Tonkiss (2005) note that many theorists bemoan the absence of close social interactions in urban environments. But their work, as well as the work of Jacobs (1969) and others amply demonstrate the limiting effects of tight-knit social interactions in urban spaces. The brief, seemingly inconsequential interactions of the sidewalk ballet provide the necessary level of social interaction in urban spaces without stifling difference (Amin and Thrift, 2002; Tonkiss, 2005; Jacobs, 1969).

1.6.2. The mobilities of ‘peoples, objects, images, information and wastes’

Mobility, in the context of this thesis, is the everyday movement through urban spaces. This movement, though, involves more than just the movement of people. It is concerned with “the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes, and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, these diverse mobilities” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185). As people move through urban spaces, they interact with these various actants and with their surroundings, leaving footprints and developing what van Duppen and Spierings (2013) call ‘sensescapes’, sensory mappings of experiences sensed while moving through urban spaces. It is through this process of leaving footprints and developing sensescapes that people come to know their urban environments and to ascribe some sort of meaning to them. What meanings they ascribe to their urban environments will depend upon their individual, embodied experiences in those spaces.

1.6.3. The juxtaposition of differences

Amin and Thrift (2002) identify difference – of “people, things, institutions and architectural form” – as a critical component of urban environments. The close proximity of various manifestations of difference, they argue, provides the potential for unexpected moments of creativity and dynamism. The blasé attitude or indifference that is characteristic of urban environments gives space for differences and individual expression of these differences. The social interactions of the ‘sidewalk ballet’ provide a way for these differences to interact on a

daily basis in a way that minimizes the need for conformities to overcome differences (Amin & Thrift, 2002).

Bodily experiences in urban environments can vary considerably among individuals. Focusing only on what Sennett (1994) calls “master images of ‘the body’” (p. 23) risks leaving out potentially differing experiences of differing bodies. Bodies are actively engaged with the world around them; the world is perceived through the senses, through this process of engagement. What is experienced depends upon the way in which the environment – and the things that make up the environment – are sensed. The body employs already existing cultural cues and, in turn, these cultural cues are products of the body acting and perceiving in the world (Crossley, 1995).

1.6.4. The urban rhythms

The mobile, embodied, everyday, urban experience is a rhythmic experience. It is governed by patterns and repetitions. It is the daily comings and goings of school children, workers, and shoppers that Lefebvre (1996) observes from his balcony. It is the regular comings and goings of buses that Perec observes in Place Saint-Sulpice (Sheringham, 2006). The everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience involves the bodily rhythms – the heartbeats, the blood running through veins, the movements of arms and legs, etc. – connecting with the rhythms of the city – the traffic lights changing colours to regulate cars and pedestrians, water and sewage flowing through underground pipes, the conversations and data flowing through telephone, cable and fibre communications lines, as well as radio and other electromagnetic waves, the cycles of day into night and one season into the next, etc.

1.6.5. What is the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience?

The, everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience is comprised of a complex interweaving of mundane interactions among “peoples, objects, images, information and wastes” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185), as they move through the urban environment. This interweaving of interactions makes up the daily rhythms of the city – the traffic lights changing colours to regulate cars and pedestrians, water and sewage flowing through underground pipes, the conversations and data flowing through telephone, cable and fibre communications lines, as

well as radio and other electromagnetic waves, the cycles of day into night and one season into the next, etc. At the same time, though, the rhythms of the city affect and are affected by the interweaving of the interactions of these actants moving through the city (Urry, 2000a; Lefebvre, 1996).

As people move through urban spaces, they are, of course, a part of the rhythms of the city. But these rhythms also pass through them and around them. They respond to these rhythms in one way or another. They may ‘go with the flow’, stopping when the light is red, going when it’s green. They may slow their pace or stop altogether (forcing other people to adjust accordingly) to respond to a text message that has found its way to them. The text message is also a part of the rhythm of the city.

People experience this moving through urban space as an embodied experience. People’s senses (interoceptive and exteroceptive) as well as their ability to sense their general positioning and orientation in the world (proprioception) combine to create embodied, sensory mappings (sensescapes) of their experiences in urban space. The rhythms of the city meet with the rhythms of the body – the heartbeats, the blood running through veins, the movements of arms and legs – connecting the body and the city. Each body experiences the rhythms of the city differently. Some will find themselves more or less in harmony with the rhythms. Others will find them discordant, and may find themselves fighting against the rhythms to some degree or other. Regardless, everyone contributes to the rhythms of the city, everyone experiences them, and everyone must respond to them in one way or another.

Sensory overload can result from these diverse, divergent, juxtaposed experiences, leading the inhabitants of urban environments to develop a ‘blasé attitude’ (Simmel, 1997) or an indifference to difference (Tonkiss, 2005). These coping mechanisms serve to help people navigate urban environments and, in turn for urban environments to facilitate much difference. The resulting complex of interactions – when successful – can manifest as something of a ‘sidewalk ballet’ (Jacobs, 1969), whereby people – and actants more generally – engage in small, seemingly mundane and meaningless exchanges that, together, weave an urban fabric that is the everyday, embodied mobile urban experience needed for the

successful development of place in Castells' (2002) metropolitan regions of today and the not too distant future.

Chapter 2

2. Place

In this chapter, I explore notions of *place*, to arrive at an understanding of it in the context of the mobile, embodied, everyday, urban experience described in Chapter 1. I start with a discussion of the general components of place. I then look at ideas of place as put forward by two key theorists: Relph (1976) and Tuan (2008; 1974). Included here are discussions of companion notions of space, placelessness and non-place. I follow this with a discussion of some of the key criticisms of Relph and Tuan. Finally, I sketch out a definition of place for the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.

2.1. Defining *place*

What is *place*? Many people writing about place note the prevalence of this word in common parlance, and the number and variety meanings it can have. Even within academic discourse on place, the term is put to use in different ways by different authors.

Gans (2002) proposes the explanation that “natural space becomes a social phenomenon, or social space, once people begin to use it, boundaries are put on it, and meanings (including ownership, price, etc.) are attached to it. Then the air-over-dirt becomes a lot or a plot, and if residential users obtain control over the bounded space, it becomes their place” (p. 329).

Massey (1995; 1994) agrees with the social nature of place. She understands place as “articulations of social relationships” (Massey, 1995, p. 186). However, Massey challenges the idea that place must be bounded. An understanding of place, she argues “does not have to be through simple counterposition to the outside; it can come, in part, precisely through the particularity of linkage *to* that ‘outside’ which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place” (Massey, 1994, p. 155).

Cresswell (2004) makes use of a university dorm room to explore key aspects of the notion of place. He describes a generic, anonymous space: all dorm rooms in a given residence typically have a similar layout and similar furniture. But these rooms may bear evidence of past residents – a coffee stain on the carpet, graffiti on the furniture, and so on. The rooms

have histories. But these histories are likely unknown to their new residents who will, in their turn, make their own marks on the space. These new residents, like the residents before them, will personalize their rooms. They will, during their time there, make these spaces into places.

For Lefebvre (1991), place (what he calls social space) is a space where everything – people and objects as well as signs and symbols – congregates and interacts with one another. Social spaces have histories that result from the cumulative actions undertaken in these spaces. They are “fashioned, shaped and invested by social activities during a finite historical period” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 73). Historical processes such as this are a key marker of social space. From earliest times, Lefebvre tells us, people have been leaving their traces on space through their daily activity. This activity shows up in the form of networks of pathways through nature and “in and around the houses of the village or small town” (p. 118). The travellers, even when not on these pathways, tell stories and build up myths about them. Over time, the pathways become infused with the “values” attributed to them. In this way, histories become emplaced there (Lefebvre, 1991; Cresswell, 2004).

Three key aspects of a notion of place arise from this brief examination of these various understandings of place: it is inhabited, it is ascribed meaning, and it is social. There are many particularities to these various understandings of place (inhabited by whom or what; ascribed meaning in what way; what is the nature of the social relations of place). However, these three aspects provide a useful frame for examining place in more detail, and developing an understanding of place for the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience. To begin with, I examine the notions of place of two key theorists: Relph (1976) and Tuan (2008; 1974). As part of this examination, I include a discussion of the related concepts of space, placelessness and non-place. These additional concepts help fill out Relph’s and Tuan’s thoughts on place.

2.2. Space, place, placelessness and non-place

In this section, I present the key characteristics of the terms *space* and *place* as used by two key authors who write about these concepts: Relph (1976) and Tuan (1974; 2008). I work mainly with these authors in this section because of their prominence in the space/place

discourse, but also because they subscribe to a more or less static understanding of place. I first present the key characteristics of the term space. Next, I present the key characteristics of the term place. I then discuss Relph's notion of placelessness, and finally the notion of non-place. For this last term, I rely upon the work of Augé (1995). I conclude this section with a discussion of the ways in which these terms inter-relate.

2.2.1. Space

Like 'place', the word 'space' is a widely-used term in everyday speech, and is used in a variety of ways to mean a variety of things. Relph (1976) for example, describes the broad range of ways in which people use the word space:

The space we experience of sky or sea or landscape or of a city spread out beneath us when viewed from a tall building, the built space of the street, of buildings, viewed from the outside or experienced from the inside, the reasoned space of maps, plans, cosmographies, and geometries, interstellar space, the space possessed by objects or claimed by countries or devoted to the gods – this is the range of our experiences and understanding of space. (p. 8)

Relph notes that the idea of space is “amorphous and intangible” (p. 8) and difficult to define. Nevertheless, there are a number of key characteristics that surface in both Relph's and Tuan's writings on the subject of space.

For Tuan (2008), space is marked by “undifferentiated” (p. 6) landscapes. These are landscapes that hold no meaning for people and to which they have no attachment. This is not to say that space is a uniform set of landscapes that everyone universally agrees holds no meaning. What may be undifferentiated space to one person may not be to another. Cresswell (2004) demonstrates this difference in point of view through an account of colonists' and aboriginal people's perspectives of the geography of the West Coast of North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the Tlingit, the landscape that held the most meaning and to which they held the deepest attachment were the seas. But for the colonists, the seas were undifferentiated, meaningless, unknown space. For the colonists, the land in the area

was what held value. By contrast, for the Tlingit, it was the land that was the undifferentiated, meaningless and unknown space (Cresswell, 2004).

Tuan further characterizes space as free and open, as the landscape of movement. People pass through space without particularly remarking on or being aware of its contours. As a result, people have a vague, imprecise awareness of the spaces they move through. He says,

people do pick up a sense of the starting point here, the goal out there, and a scattering of intermediate landmarks, but the mental image is sketchy. Precision is not required in the practical business of moving about. A person needs only to have a general sense of direction to the goal, and to know what to do next on each segment of the journey. (Tuan, 2008, pp. 72-3)

As a result of this vagueness and imprecision, people do not develop any sense of attachment to the spaces they pass through, nor do they ascribe any meaning to it. A location within space that acquires meaning and attachment for people, becomes a 'place'. For Relph (1976), places exist inside space; they are the parts of space that hold meaning for people. He notes that "places are differentiated [from space] because they have attracted and concentrated our intentions, and because of this focusing they are set apart from the surrounding space while remaining a part of it" (p. 28).

2.2.2. From space to place

For both Tuan (2008) and Relph (1976), place is in many ways the opposite of space, and both space and place are typically defined in oppositional relation to one another. If space is characterized by undifferentiated landscape devoid of meaning, place is, by contrast, a specific landscape imbued with meaning. Where space is landscape through which people move, place is where people pause. Where space is free, open, and unknown, place is enclosed and secure (Tuan, 2008; Relph, 1976). Tuan asserts that:

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... The ideas of 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that

which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (Tuan, 2008, p. 6)

For Tuan and Relph, place is very much a space where people pause and linger a while. This pause, they argue, is essential for the establishment of place. In order to attach meaning and value to a particular landscape, people must spend a considerable amount of time there. The establishment of a sense of place involves becoming intimately familiar with the landscape. It involves developing a history with the space. Relph notes that this development of history occurs over time through the daily, mundane activities that people carry out there (Tuan, 2008; Relph, 1976).

In addition to this connection to the landscape, place necessarily involves the development of an intimate familiarity among the people who occupy the landscape. Tuan notes: “For most people, possessions and ideas are important, but other human beings remain the focus of value and source of meaning” (Tuan, 2008, pp. 138-9). Relph concurs with the importance of close social relations in establishing a sense of place. But he additionally cautions that these relations are not sufficient in and of themselves; place must also be rooted in the particularities of the landscape in which these relations take place. There must be, he argues, “a familiarity that is part of knowing and being known *here*, in this particular place” (Relph, 1976, p. 37).

Place can be experienced at multiple scales. Tuan (1974) explains that it can be as small as a favourite chair in a corner of a person’s favourite room. By contrast, for an astronaut looking down from space, it can be the entire planet. Relph (1976) agrees. He notes that people can feel a sense of place in their homes, on their street, in their neighbourhood, in their town, and so on. Further, people typically have multiple places in their lives. Relph (1976) notes that people can feel a sense of place toward where they live, where they work, and where they play. All of these places, at multiple scales, overlap and inter-relate with one another (Relph, 1976). Norberg-Schulz (2007) notes that the multiple, overlapping nature of places in people’s lives is essential. Place is established through daily, mundane routines and activities. Different daily activities typically require different locations in which to take place:

“‘Similar’ functions, even the most basic ones such as sleeping and eating take place in very different ways, and demand places with different properties” (Norberg-Schulz, 2007, p. 127).

As Cresswell (2004) notes, Tuan (2008) and Relph (1976) were among the early geographers who took an approach to the study of space and place from the perspective of an embodied experience. Their goal was to move away from studies of space as an abstraction, and examine instead the ways in which spaces and places are inhabited in everyday lived experience. They wanted as well to move away from the study of specific places, toward the role of place overall in human experience (Cresswell, 2004). For Tuan, place comes into being “through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind” (Tuan, 2008, p. 18). The capacity to experience place in this way, Relph says, is learned. This capacity is what helps orient people within the world. The embodied experience is comprised of all senses and actions in space: “sight, hearing, movement, touch, memory, imagination and anticipation” (Relph, 1976, p. 19). Place is distinguished from space through the “spatial concentration of human intentions, experiences, and actions” (Tomaney, 2016, p. 95).

The idea of ‘home’, for many, bears all the markers of this notion of place. Much like the other terms discussed in this chapter, the concept of home is a difficult one to define with any degree of precision. It is seen as an intimately familiar space in which people feel secure and rooted. Tuan (2008) notes that home is typically attached in some way to the house or other building in which people reside, though not to the building as a whole. Rather, home for Tuan is the parts of this building and its contents where people store up memories over time. Quoting explorer Freya Stark, Tuan proposes that “this surely is the meaning of home – a place where every day is multiplied by all the days before it” (Tuan, 2008, p. 144). Relph (1976) concurs. He asserts that home is “an irreplaceable centre of significance” (p. 39) comprised of accumulated everyday experiences. Home is the deepest sort of connection that people make to a place. It is at the centre of people’s understanding of themselves and their place in the world around them (Relph, 1976).

Related to the notion of home is the notion of ‘hometown’. Hometown is typically the larger community in which a person’s home is located. It is the community in which people grow up, and first learn to interact with other people and the world beyond home. For Tuan (2008),

hometown need not be an especially remarkable place, but it is an intimately significant place to its inhabitants. For him, hometown

may be plain, lacking in architectural distinction and historical glamour, yet we resent an outsider's criticism of it. Its ugliness does not matter, it did not matter when we were children, climbed its trees, peddled our bikes on its cracked pavements, and swam in its pond. (Tuan, 2008, pp. 144-5)

Similar to the smaller, more intimate notion of home, hometown is created through an accumulation of experiences that etch themselves in memories, attached to specific locations in the hometown – the trees that its inhabitants climbed as children, the pavements on which they rode their bikes, the ponds in which they swam. Hometown takes on a larger role than home, however, in that it is the place in which people first learn to interact with a larger world and the people in it. Further, Tuan asserts that this notion is a universal one. It is not unique to any particular society, and can exist at all levels of place, from a rural village to a large urban centre (Tuan, 2008).

For both Tuan (2008) and Relph (1976), space is comprised of landscapes that people move through without developing any significant degree of familiarity or attachment. By contrast, place is where people pause. Place provides a sense of stability, security and rootedness in people's lives. People live out their daily lives in place, becoming intimately familiar with its every contour, as well as with its other inhabitants. Tuan and Relph argue that it is only through pausing and spending time in a space that it becomes a place (Tuan, 2008; Relph, 1976).

2.2.3. From place to placelessness

If place is a static space with which people are intimately familiar, and to which people attach meaning through their everyday activities, placelessness is the loss of this intimate familiarity and attachment. Placelessness, according to Relph (1976), is “the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place” (p. ii). Placelessness comes about because of the “forces of modernization”, such as mass media and mass culture more generally,

standardized and impersonal planning that ignores local peculiarities, increased mobility, increased tourism, and a general preference for efficiency over lived experience (Liu & Freestone, 2016).

Relph describes the decline and possible elimination of local diversity. He sees homogeneous landscapes that lack in substance and authenticity replacing this local diversity. One urban environment in one part of the world can easily be replaced by another, similarly homogeneous urban environment in another part of the world. These spaces offer similarly homogeneous, superficial experiences. Relph attributes the rise of placelessness to global media and business practices that disseminate mass trends around the world. Tastes in fashion, design, architecture and so on, become homogenized in no small part through these forces (Relph, 1976).

These placeless spaces arise most notably in suburbs in North America and New Town developments in Europe. However, placeless spaces can be found in urban centres throughout the world (Relph, 1976). Examples of placeless spaces include shopping malls, strip malls, big box stores, fast food chains and theme parks. Suburban and New Town residential developments can also be placeless spaces when the buildings are of similar or identical design and reproduced on a mass scale (Montague, 2016). A key marker that distinguishes a placeless space is that it could be anywhere.

Placelessness compromises people's ability to develop a sense of attachment and meaning to a space. People who inhabit these placeless spaces tend to experience what Relph calls 'existential outsidership', which manifests as a general lack of involvement in the space, and a lack of connection to it and its other inhabitants. Quoting American writer Henry Miller, Relph describes people who live in placeless spaces as lacking a sense of belonging. They are "all at loose ends, all seeking diversion. As though the chief objects of existence were to forget" (p. 51). Where place is about remembering, placelessness is about forgetting (Relph, 1976).

Relph does not dismiss all contemporary urban development as placelessness. He acknowledges that this sort of dismissal out-of-hand is overly simplistic. Instead, he proposes

that placelessness is becoming more and more common, and that it is becoming more and more difficult to develop an authentic sense of place.

2.2.4. Placelessness versus non-place

There are some similarities between Relph's (1976) notion of placelessness and Augé's (1995) notion of non-place. Both arise in opposition to place, both arise in similar landscapes, and both are marked by a lack of some key attribute(s) of place. In the case of placelessness, there is an absence of a sense of attachment and meaning due to the homogeneous nature of placeless spaces. In the case of non-place, there is a lack of social relations, a lack of history and a lack of concern with identity. Where placelessness can be found in any sort of residential, commercial or entertainment space, non-places are typically the spaces of transit: highways, airports, hotel chains. However, Augé notes that nowhere is immune from non-place. He sees signs of non-place appearing in cities – in the housing estates of the suburbs “where people do not live together” (Augé, 1995, p. 107), in supermarkets and large retail outlets, on the subway (Relph, 1976; Augé, 1995).

People in placeless spaces interact with others in the space, but typically only casually and superficially. People who pass through non-places are solitary individuals who interact only with a disembodied authority that governs the place. The interaction is cordial but impersonal. It is comprised of instructions for entering and moving through the space. People in retail spaces, for example, interact with self-checkout machines. People in airports interact with signs informing them when and where to catch their flight. People on highways interact with signs alerting them to traffic conditions and which off-ramp to take to reach their destination (Augé, 1995).

While placeless spaces can have a past and a future, they tend to be superficial, homogeneous and largely forgettable. Non-place has no past and no future. It exists in a state of continuous present. Augé notes that “everything proceeds as if space had been trapped by time, as if there were no history other than the last 48 hours of news, as if each individual history were drawing its motives, its words and images, from the inexhaustible stock of an unending history in the present” (Augé, 1995, p. 104). Non-place ignores whatever history may be around, or turns it into a tourist attraction. Road signs along a highway will indicate that

passengers are passing something of significance in a nearby town or city. Subway stops may be named after a culturally- or historically-significant place nearby, and the station may be decorated accordingly. Augé notes that passengers on the Paris metro experience “a sort of mechanized daily immersion in history that conditions Parisians to think of Alésia, Bastille and Solferino as spatial landmarks rather than historical references” (Augé, 1995, p. 69).

People in non-places are autonomous, anonymous individuals. They are relieved of the baggage of their everyday lives. In non-place, people become the roles that they perform there: driver of a car on a highway, passenger aboard a subway car or waiting in an airport to board a plane, customer of a big box chain store. Augé notes that international travellers who are lost in the diverse, unfamiliar realms of place in foreign countries may only feel ‘at home’ in the bland familiarity and anonymity of these non-places (Augé, 1995).

As mentioned earlier, both placelessness and non-place are marked by a lack of some key attribute(s) of place. In the case of placelessness, there is an absence of a sense of attachment and meaning to the space. In the case of non-place, there is an lack of social relations, a lack of history and a lack of concern with identity. Relph (1976) characterizes the rise of placelessness as a loss of place. Augé (1995) presents the lack of these key attributes of place as an absence. Cresswell (2004) suggests that Augé’s non-place holds fewer “negative moral connotations” (p. 46) than Relph’s placelessness.

2.2.5. Traditional notions of place and space

‘Space’ and ‘place’ are both words used in everyday speech. Both words have a wide variety of meanings. Even within academic discourse on space and place, there are varying definitions for both words. In this section, I have relied predominantly on the work of two key theorists who have studied and written about notions of place and space: Relph (1976) and Tuan (2008). They characterize space as undifferentiated landscape devoid of meaning, a free, open and largely unknown landscape through which people move. Place, by contrast, is a specific landscape where people pause, and develop an intimate relationship with the space and its other inhabitants. Through their daily, mundane interactions in and with the space, people attach meaning and build memories, thereby, over time, turning the space into a place. Place is enclosed, secure and intimately known. Place is essential to human experience: “To

have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular" (Relph, 1976, p. 38).

Both Tuan and Relph are concerned with a loss of place in contemporary society. Relph in particular identifies the condition of placelessness which he sees spreading throughout urban environments. Placelessness is marked by a homogeneity and superficiality, and a lack of (or ignoring of) distinctive, local personality. As a result, people do not develop a relationship with these spaces, and typically engage only in superficial relations with other inhabitants of the space. Augé's (1995) notion of non-place is similar to Relph's notion of placelessness. However, rather than a loss of key attributes of place, Augé's non-place demonstrates an absence of these attributes. As such, there is perhaps less of a "negative moral connotation" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 46).

This characterization of space and place is not without critics. In the next section, I present a number of key criticisms of Relph and Tuan's notions of space and place.

2.3. Rethinking notions of place

Liu and Freestone (2016) point out that many significant changes have come about in the way people live since the publication of Relph's (1976) *Place and Placelessness*. In particular, they highlight "people's increased mobility, technological change and enhanced engagement within diverse communities of association at different scales and in different ways" (Liu & Freestone, 2016, p. 8). As noted in the previous section, Relph identified earlier incarnations of some of these sorts of changes at the time of writing his book. These changes are what prompted him to identify the rise of 'placelessness' in Western society (Relph, 1976).

However, Liu and Freestone, and others, have called into question some aspects of both Relph's characterizations of place and placelessness, as well as Tuan's notions of place. In this section, I will look at key criticisms of Tuan's and Relph's work. It is not my intention in to discard the entirety of Tuan's and Relph's work on space and place. However, if we are to develop a sense of place that can accommodate the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban

experience, we must challenge some key assumptions that they make. I divide these criticisms into three categories, broadly defined as

- the complex and multi-faceted nature of place today
- the characterization of various manifestations of time in place
- the dynamism of place

These three areas of criticism are particularly important ones to examine in developing a working notion of place in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience. As discussed in Chapter 1, this experience is complex and multi-faceted, it is experienced in many differing ways by differing people, and it is always ever-changing.

2.3.1. The multiplicity of place

Liu and Freestone (2016) call out the binary nature of Relph's place and its opposite – whether Relph's placelessness or Augé's non-place. Liu and Freestone agree with Southworth and Ruggeri's (2011) notion that there are degrees of placelessness everywhere. Rather than looking at place and its opposite as binary opposites, Southworth and Ruggeri propose a sort of spectrum between these two polarities in which there can be degrees of both place and placelessness in a given space. Liu and Freestone argue that this approach

Is a more compelling, realistic and nuanced conceptualization of place identity in the modern world than a simple place/non-place dichotomy. These attributes need not be mutually exclusive, and a more effective paradigm responsive to the complexities and contradictions of locality, globality, culture, experience and subjectivity recognizes the possibilities of their simultaneity. (Liu & Freestone, 2016, pp. 8-9)

Liu and Freestone, in accord with Southworth and Ruggeri, propose a 'hybrid' approach to notions of place and placelessness, instead of the polarized approach that Relph presents (Liu & Freestone, 2016; Southworth & Ruggeri, 2011; Relph, 1976).

Tomaney (2016) notes that a sense of belonging in a place is still an important drive for many people. As the perception of instability in the world grows, many look for "a way of 'being at home'" (p. 97). However, this manifests differently. As many people are

increasingly able to choose where they ‘call home’, this notion of home, or a sense of belonging in place, does not come from the notion of tradition and rootedness that Tuan (2008) and Relph (1976) describe in their explorations of place. Instead, this sense of belonging arises from “the practical matter of physical involvement in our environment” (Tomaney, 2016, p. 97). Belonging in a place arises through the daily interactions of lived experience in a space. As Degen and Rose (2012) point out, people’s relationship to a place will vary depending on their sensorial experience of it as they move through it. Different people will have different levels of attachment and/or detachment to a particular location, resulting in the hybridity that Liu and Freestone discuss (Tomaney, 2016; Liu & Freestone, 2016; Degen & Rose, 2012).

This hybridity of place and placelessness is evident in Liu’s (2016) examination of latrinalia. Latrinalia is the graffiti found on the walls of public washrooms. Liu makes use of this form of communication in this venue to demonstrate the notion that a space can be both placeless and place, depending upon the user. Liu notes that, in general, public washrooms are placeless⁸ by nature:

Public toilets are often generically non-distinctive, mundane places with simple layouts that divide the interiors by their intended functions ... Moreover, the same design is often applied en masse if multiple facilities are provided within the same complex ... thus furthering their non-distinctiveness. All these design characteristics are implemented to highlight public toilets as transitory places where users would only remain for short periods and vacate once hygiene is achieved. (p. 209)

Liu highlights the generic, functional design of public washrooms, combined with the temporary, transitory nature of people’s use of them, to demonstrate a *prima facie*

⁸ As discussed earlier in this chapter, the differences between a placeless space and a non-place are subtle. As Cresswell (2004) suggests, a key differentiator lies in the nature of what is missing in a given space. Relph (1976) characterizes placelessness as a loss of place, whereas Augé (1995) characterizes non-place as an absence of place. I would suggest that public washrooms are more characteristic of non-place than of a placeless space; it is more likely that public washrooms are marked by an absence of place rather than a loss of it. However, Liu refers to them as placeless spaces. For the purposes of this discussion of his work, I will follow Liu’s lead.

placelessness. He uses the latrinalia to demonstrate how these same public washrooms can also be places for some people. For his study, he focuses on a particular type of latrinalia: the latrinalia that is “often a clandestine method of communication within marginalized groups such as same-sex-attracted people seeking erotic encounters” (p. 210). Where there once was a space defined predominantly by its function, there is now the markers of social relations among some of those users. A placeless space has the markers of a place. However, what Liu wants to point out is that, for some people who use these public washrooms, the space is placeless: it is non-descript and functional. At the same time, for other people, these public washrooms demonstrate hallmarks of a place. The same space can have multiple meanings and multiple interpretations for different people using that space. When looking more closely at the varied uses people make of a space, Liu notes that the picture of the space becomes more complicated. He proposes that, given the “multiplicitous nature” of spaces, loss of place may be more difficult to achieve than Relph (1976) suggests (Liu, 2016).

A similar situation arises when looking at non-places. As mentioned earlier, non-places are marked by an absence of social relations, of history, and concern for identity. Non-places are typically places of transit. A prime example of a non-place is an airport. However, as Augé (1995) acknowledges, “non-place never exists in its pure form” (p. 78). Botton (2009), in his chronicle of the week he spent at Heathrow Airport’s Terminal Five, captures examples of both place and non-place in evidence there. Communications with travellers here are typically restricted to the passing on of necessary travel information. Botton notes that there are information screens throughout the terminal that list “in deliberately workman [sic] like fonts, the itineraries of aircraft about to take to the skies” (p. 29). The British Airways staff working in the terminal, whom he describes as “unusually personable” (p. 40), tend to avoid “existential issues, seeming to restrict their insights to matters relating to the transit times to adjacent satellites and the location of the nearest toilets” (p. 40). However, while the nature of the relationship between traveller and employee may be characteristic of non-place, this is not necessarily the case for the nature of the relationships among employees. For them, there are social relations with fellow employees, there is a history for them, made through their daily actions and interactions, and the employees’ identity goes beyond their function in the space. They are more than, for example, security staff. They are “Rachel and Simone” who

both have interests in issues of airport security and terrorism that extend beyond the requirements of their jobs (p. 54).

Spaces are more complicated than a binary notion of place and placelessness, or place and non-place. Spaces can be both place and placeless. They can be both place and non-place. Spaces manifest differently for different people depending upon the nature of their lived experiences of the space. Further, as Massey (1994) observes, people inhabit many, diverse places: “as many, really, as the social relations in which we participate” (p. 7). Because of the multi-faceted nature of spaces – the varying degrees of attachment and detachment and the hybridity of place and placelessness, notions of place are neither permanent or rooted. As Massey (1995) notes, place is “temporary, uncertain, and in process” (p. 190).

2.3.2. The histories of place

A key criticism of Tuan’s (2008; 1974) and Relph’s (1976) approach to place is an over-emphasis on the idea of the history and tradition of a place. As Liu and Freestone (2016) point out, such an emphasis tends to lead to a focus on a sense of ‘rootedness’ as a key determinant of a healthy relationship between people and place. Tuan states:

Awareness of the past is an important element in the love of place. Patriotic rhetoric has always stressed the roots of a people. To enhance loyalty, history is made visible by monuments in the landscape and past battles are recounted in the belief that the blood of heroes sanctified the soil. Nonliterate peoples can be strongly attached to their home grounds. They may lack the chronological sense of irreversible events characteristic of the modern Western man [sic], but when they try to explain their loyalty to place they either point at the bonds of nurture (the mother-earth theme), or they reach into history. (Tuan, 1974, p. 99)

In a similar vein, Relph contends that the need for a sense of rootedness to a place “is at least equivalent to the need for order, liberty, responsibility, equality and security” (Relph, 1976, p. 38). Further, Relph suggests that rootedness is an essential condition for these other needs (Tuan, 2008; 1974; Relph, 1976; Liu & Freestone, 2016). But such an approach to understanding the people-place connection closes off place from ‘outside’ influences, and

freezes it in time. In this section, I look at two key critiques of Relph's and Tuan's representation of the role of history in the discussion of place: I first look at the global-local hybrid nature of place, and second I look at the role of memory in the shaping of both the present(s) and the past(s) of place.

Massey (1995) challenges the notion that there is or can be a single, definitive history of a place, and that this history would be inextricably tied to the identity of the place. Any influence from 'outside', is seen as threatening the integrity of the place, of leading to placelessness. She criticizes this approach for being 'essentialist' and 'internalist'. "What such constructions fail to realize, or to admit," Massey argues, "is that places are always already hybrid" (p. 183). The social relations that contribute to the making of place are always a mix of local and global connections, such as trade relations (Massey, 1995).

Massey demonstrates this point through an examination of what has come to be perceived of as 'the essential France'. This articulation of France involves a trip to a Parisian café, perhaps with the smell of Gauloises or Gitanes wafting through the air. By contrast, she notes, a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet is seen as the worst possible kind of invasion, an attack on 'the essential France'. But, she argues, this image of 'the essential France' is itself made up of connections from outside which have, over time, "settled into each other, moulded each other, produced something new... but which we now think of as old, as established" (p. 183). How is it that coffee and tobacco – both products that come from 'outside' – have become a part of what is today considered 'the essential France', but Kentucky Fried Chicken is not? Place, Massey demonstrates, has always been a hybrid of various global and local relations and influences (Massey, 1995).

Massey's point is not to suggest that any and all influences from 'outside' must be embraced by a place. She is not suggesting that Kentucky Fried Chicken become an integral ingredient in 'the essential France'. Rather, she wants to tease out some of the potential implications of such an approach to the relationship between a place and its history. One potential outcome is that the particular history is then used to develop a corresponding particular identity for the place. This is what Massey sees happening in the example of the Parisian café. Intrusions from outside pollute 'the essential France' and must be resisted. While this may (or may not)

be true of a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet, it must not be true of all outside influences. Paris must not become a museum of history trapped in a particular telling of its past (Massey, 1995).

Massey (1994) notes that it is not uncommon to make use of such articulations of a particular past of a place to affix a particular identity to it. She notes that this approach has manifested in a wide variety of instances, from the rise of ‘nationalisms’ to tourism promotion efforts, and to oppose various social encroachments such as ‘yuppification’. The intent, she argues, is “to fix the meaning of places, to enclose and defend them”, thereby attempting to establish these places “as bounded, enclosed spaces defined through counter-position against the Other who is outside” (p. 168).

In addition to closing off influences from ‘outside’, this approach to the relationship between a place and its history has the potential to close out people from ‘outside’. An example of this possibility is illustrated in Tuan’s (2008) discussion of the German term *heimat*. Tuan cites a description of *heimat* from 1953:

Heimat is first of all the mother earth who has given birth to our folk and race, who is the holy soil, and who gulps down God’s clouds, sun, and storms so that together with their own mysterious strength they prepare the bread and wine which rest on our table and give us strength to lead a good life ... Heimat is the landscape we have experienced. That means one that has been fought over, menaced, filled with the history of families, towns, and villages. Our Heimat is the Heimat of knights and heroes, of battles and victories, of legends and fairy tales. But more than all this, our Heimat is the land which has become fruitful through the sweat of our ancestors. For this Heimat our ancestors have fought and suffered, for this Heimat our fathers have died. (Tuan, 2008, p. 156)

Tuan is pleased with this description of heimat as a demonstration of the importance of a sense of history and rootedness in the establishment of place.⁹ But heimat, thus described, leaves no room for outside influences. It clearly does not welcome voices from outside, nor even voices from inside who are not descended from “knights and heroes” and whose fathers perhaps did not die for the landscape. This is not a space where people, as Tomaney (2016) describes, can add their own narratives to a place they have chosen to live in (Tuan, 2008; Tomaney, 2016).

Knopp (2004), in his study of gay men and their conflicted relationship to place, aptly demonstrates this tension between a notion of place rooted in a particular history, and a desire to attach narratives to where they have chosen to live. As Knopp notes, it is “extremely common” for gay men to move away from their families, their home, their hometown, as part of the process of ‘coming out’. This need to move “is about testing, exploring and experimenting with alternative ways of being, in contexts that are unencumbered by the expectations of tight-knit family, kinship or community relationships – no matter how accepting these might be perceived to be” (p. 123). An important part of the process of coming out is the development of a personal narrative, and finding a place to affix it to (Knopp L. , 2004; Tomaney, 2016).

Place as particular past is a space that is heavy with nostalgia (Massey, 1994). It is a space filled with longing for some particular articulation of the place’s past. It ignores or silences other possible pasts. It encloses and entraps the inhabitants of that place. It forestalls progress. But, Massey is not arguing that places cannot or should not have pasts. Rather, she contends that places have multiple pasts that are “open to a multiplicity of readings” (Massey, 1995, p. 185). Further, she wants to distinguish nostalgia, which she sees as a pointless endeavour, with other forms of remembering. Here she borrows from bell hooks

⁹ Interestingly, Relph (1976) makes use of this same notion, but arrives at a completely different conclusion than Tuan. He describes this notion of heimat as embodying “a wealth of kitschy bric-a-brac exploiting the general home-sweet-home theme” (p. 83). Rather than being the ideal articulation of place, Relph contends that such a ‘sentimentalism’ has led to a devaluing of the notion of home. He says, “‘home’ has indeed become a marketable, exchangeable and sentimentalized good” (p. 83).

(1991) who argues for a remembering that serves the present, to inform it and thereby to change it (Massey, 1994; 1995; hooks, 1991).

Massey (1995) points out that traditions are not only formulated in the past. To think otherwise means that traditions are forever frozen in time, and “can now only be maintained or lost” (p. 184). Traditions, she contends, are continually being created and recreated in the present. She argues for an understanding of tradition “which is internally varied, constantly being built, moulded, added to, and which depends for this, and for its strength and vitality, not on an inward-looking self-preservation but precisely on the dynamism which comes from interconnection” (p. 184). The interconnection she is referring to here is one that embraces the global-local hybrid discussed above, but also an interconnection of pasts together with the present (Massey, 1995).

Degen and Rose (2012) make a similar point in their investigation of the importance of memory in the perception and development of place. They note that research into embodied experience of place typically “focuses very much on the moment of experiencing and hence on the unfolding flow of the present” (p. 3278). This research tends to ignore the role of memory in these embodied experiences. Citing Jones (2003), Degen and Rose point out that

Memory is ‘on’ and working all the time, in our bodies, our subconscious, through our emotions. It reconfigures moment by moment who we are and how we function. Memory is not just a retrieval of the past from the past, it is always a fresh, new creation where memories are retrieved into the conscious realm and something new is created in that context. (Jones, 2003, p. 27; Degen & Rose, 2012, p. 3279)

The past, then, is always present, every moment shaping the sensory experiences of place. But this past is not a fixed past. People’s understanding of the past in that place is in turn shaped by their present sensory experiences of the place. At this point, then, people have a choice: They can look back, with nostalgia, at a perceived lost past, and regret. Or, they can let their remembering inform and transform their present, and keep moving through and connecting with the place. Either way, the past, the present and the place are changed (Jones, 2003; Massey, 1995; hooks, 1991; Degen & Rose, 2012).

2.3.3. The dynamism of unbounded place

For Tuan (2008) and Relph (1976), place is mostly a static concept. Tuan states, “if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (Tuan, 2008, p. 6). Without pause, then, place cannot happen. For his part, Relph recognizes that movement in and of itself is not a sufficient barrier to the establishment of place. He acknowledges that nomads, such as the Bororo of Brazil, “may demolish their villages every three years and rebuild them elsewhere but still maintain close ties to the places where they live” (Relph, 1976, p. 30). However, he is less optimistic that North Americans might be capable of the same achievement. He notes that, on average, North Americans, like the Bororo, move home once every three years.¹⁰ This mobility, he contends, reduces North Americans’ attachment to home, and by extension to place (Tuan, 2008; Relph, 1976).

Many scholars criticize this static notion of place. Tomaney (2016) contends that “the notion of stable places is viewed as a kind of modernist fetish reflecting the influence of Cartesian notions of bounded totalities” (p. 96). Massey (1994) sees this approach “as a retreat from the (actually unavoidable) dynamic and change of ‘real life’” (p. 151). Cresswell (2004) notes that “as long as place signifies a tight and relatively immobile connection between groups of people and a site, then it will be constantly implicated in the construction of ‘us’ (people who belong in a place) and ‘them’ (people who do not)” (p. 39). In this section, I advance two key points about the nature of place: people move, and place changes.

As discussed in Chapter 1, mobility in the context of this thesis is the everyday movement through urban spaces. This movement involves more than people: following Urry (2000a), this everyday movement involves “the diverse mobilities of people, objects, images, information and wastes, and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, these diverse mobilities” (p. 185). Büscher, Urry and Witchger (2011)

¹⁰ Relph published this book in 1976. Since then, the rate at which North Americans have moved has declined somewhat due to the aging population. The Pew Research Center notes that the annual rate of migration within the United States in the 1960s was 20 percent. That rate has dropped to under 12 percent in the first decade of the 21st century (Cohn & Morin, 2008).

identify four mobilities “that produce social life” (p. 5): Physical (either people walking, driving, flying, etc., or objects); imagined (mediated via radio, television, etc.); virtual; and communicative (both face-to-face and technologically mediated). It is through these various mobilities that people become familiar with urban spaces (Amin & Thrift, 2002).

As Massumi (2002) explains, the body’s proprioceptive awareness locates and orients the body in the space it inhabits. Its exteroceptive and interoceptive senses combine to inform the body of the nature of its surroundings.¹¹ Degen and Rose (2012) observe this embodied sense awareness at work in their studies of people’s perceptions while walking through UK cities. They notice an interplay between the sensory stimulus and the nature of the bodies’ mobilities. This interplay informs people’s understanding of the spaces they are moving through and help to attach some sort of meaning to the space: to help transform the space into place (Massumi, 2002; Degen & Rose, 2012). Lefebvre (1991) makes the same observation. As Gardiner (2012) points out, Lefebvre sees space as “always embodied” (Gardiner, 2012, p. 352). Like Massumi, Lefebvre sees space as occupied by “a body capable of indicating direction by a gesture, of defining rotation by turning round, of demarcating and orienting space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 170; Gardiner, 2012, p. 352). For Lefebvre, it is through the daily lived experiences in the spaces that people inhabit, “involving a myriad of gestures, traces and marks” (Gardiner, 2012, p. 351), that these spaces are ‘produced’ (Gardiner, 2012; Lefebvre, 1991).

Certeau (1984) arrives at the same observation in his studies of walking through the city. The process – and manner of walking – creates a familiarity with the space people move through. He explains:

¹¹ As discussed in Chapter One, Massumi (2002) describes these three sources of sensory input that the body receives and processes in space: proprioception, exteroception and interoception. Proprioception is the body’s physiological manoeuvrings involving muscles and ligaments that allow the body to locate itself in space. Exteroception is the sensory input that comes from external stimuli via the five senses, such as the smell of coffee, the hardness of pavement, etc. Interoception is the sensory input that comes from within the body, such as the information provided to the brain by the enteric nervous system which is responsible for various visceral reactions the body experiences (Massumi, 2002).

Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. (p. 97)

As important as mobilities are in people's relationships with space and place, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Sheller and Urry (2006) caution against romanticizing notions of mobility, or privileging them in a way that ignores the ways in which access to movement can be controlled and restricted. Further, as Massey (1994) points out, the ways in which people experience and perceive their mobile experiences can differ radically based upon, for example, a person's gender, race, or other identification. By way of example, she explains that women's experiences of mobility are "restricted – in a thousand different ways, from physical violence to being ogled at or made to feel quite simply 'out of place'" (p. 148). Thus, people's mobilities can be permitted or restricted, and they can be experienced in a variety of different ways. All of these experiences, though, whether positive, negative, or somewhere in between, contribute to attaching meaning to the spaces in which the mobilities take place – or don't take place (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Massey, 1994).

Corresponding to this complex nature of mobility is an equally complex nature of the places attached to these mobilities. As Sheller and Urry (2006) caution against the romanticizing of mobility, Cresswell (2004) similarly cautions against romanticizing notions of place. He observes that some people's experiences of a place can be "evil, oppressive and exploitative" (p. 50). Mobility through a space can equally be experienced as "evil, oppressive and exploitative", and those experiences attach themselves to the spaces in which they occur. That, then, becomes the meaning of that space for those experiencing it. That space, then, becomes place for those people, albeit an evil, oppressive and/or exploitative one (Cresswell, 2004; Cresswell, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006).

For Cresswell (2004), place is made through social practices and processes. It is "made and remade on a daily basis" (p. 39). For Massey (1994; 1995), place is comprised of social relations, which are inherently dynamic and ever-changing. Because social relations are

always changing, so too are the places in which these social relations occur. Place, Massey says, “is always, and always has been, in process of formation: it is in a sense forever unachieved” (Massey, 1995, p. 186). Place is itself not static. Place is always in flux.

This flux is in evidence in Certeau’s (1984) description of the relationship between city and citizens as they walk through the urban spaces they inhabit. He demonstrates the interplay between the two that results in different potentialities:

If it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he [sic] makes them exist as well as emerge. (p. 98)

Each of the possible routes is potentially equally likely, equally valid. In the end, though, a choice will be made which will send the walker on a particular path that will be different from the paths of the other options. Each encounter with a place has the potential to be the same and, equally, the potential to be different (Certeau, 1984).

2.3.4. The key criticisms of traditional notions of place

In this section, I have looked at three key areas of criticism of Relph’s and Tuan’s notions of place:

- the complex and multi-faceted nature of place today
- the characterization of various manifestations of time in place
- the dynamism of place

Space is not a binary opposition between place and its absence (whether placelessness or non-place). Rather, as Liu and Freestone (2016) note, a space can be comprised of both place and its absence in varying degrees. Degen and Rose (2012) point out that people’s relationship to a space will vary depending on their sensorial experience of it as they move through it. Different people will have different experiences with a space, resulting in different levels of attachment and/or detachment to a particular location. As Liu’s (2016) study of latrinalia demonstrates, a space can be both place and non-place, depending upon its

use. A sense of belonging to a space – a connection to that space as a place – does not occur only through a sense of tradition and rootedness. Rather, Tomaney (2016) argues that it arises from “the practical matter of physical involvement in our environment”. A sense of place develops through people’s movements through a space, and of interacting with it and those that inhabit it (Liu & Freestone, 2016; Degen & Rose, 2012; Liu, 2016; Tomaney, 2016). These movements through space, combined with the ever-changing nature of social relations in space, mean that place itself is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated, produced and reproduced. Place is itself always in flux (Massey, 1995; 1994).

In the next section, I return to the frame of place I proposed at the beginning – that place is a space that is inhabited, is inscribed with meaning, and is social. Working with this frame, I build upon the critiques of Relph’s (1976) and Tuan’s (2008; 1974) notions of place, to construct a sense of place for the everyday, embodied, mobile urban experience.

2.4. Finding a place for the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience

As discussed in Chapter 1, the everyday, embodied, mobile urban, experience comprises four key characteristics:

- Urban social relations characterized by a blasé attitude or indifference
- Interaction of mundane daily rhythms of citizens and city
- Juxtaposition and interaction of the differing experiences of differing bodies
- Mobilities of “peoples, objects, images, information and wastes” (Urry, 2007, p. 185) through urban spaces, leaving footprints and creating sensescapes

Urban social relations are characterized by a blasé attitude, or an indifference to difference. People experience their urban environments in an embodied way, through their exteroceptive and interoceptive senses. In their sensory experience of their urban environment, they create embodied, sensory mappings (sensescapes) of these experiences. However, sensory overload can result from the diverse, divergent, juxtaposed experiences of the everyday urban experience, leading the inhabitants of urban environments to develop coping mechanisms: a ‘blasé attitude’ (Simmel, 1997) or an indifference to difference (Tonkiss, 2005). These coping mechanisms serve to help people navigate urban environments and, in turn for urban

environments to facilitate much difference. The resulting complex of interactions – when successful – can manifest as something of a ‘sidewalk ballet’ (Jacobs, 1969), whereby people – and actants more generally – engage in small, seemingly mundane and meaningless exchanges that, together, weave an urban fabric that is the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience needed for the successful development of place in Castells’ (2002) metropolitan regions of today and the not too distant future.

In this chapter, I have looked at conventional notions of place as espoused by Relph (1976) and Tuan (2008; 1974). For them, place is a space where people stop or ‘stay in place’. It is a space of close social relations among its inhabitants. It is a space of rootedness, tradition and history. This characterization of place presents a number of challenges to developing a sense of belonging – a sense of being in place – in an increasingly urbanizing world. Indeed, urban environments – particularly the large metropolitan regions that Castells (2002) discusses – tend to be the exact opposite of this characterization of place. Urban spaces are mobile spaces (Urry, 2007; 2000a). Urban social relations are relations, by and large, comprised of many seemingly inconsequential interactions among strangers – greetings, small talk, etc. (Jacobs, 1969; Tonkiss, 2005; Simmel, 1997). The history of place is much more fluid and less rooted. Places have multiple pasts that are “open to a multiplicity of readings” (Massey, 1995, p. 185).

2.4.1. Inhabited, meaningful, social, urban spaces

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed key criticisms of Relph’s and Tuan’s notions of place. In this section, I build on these critiques to develop a sense of place that is suited to the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience. I start with the idea of place that I outlined at the beginning of the chapter – that place is inhabited, it is inscribed with meaning, and it is social.

First, place is inhabited. It may seem somewhat self-evident that a space, in order to be a *place* must be inhabited. Indeed, as Gardiner (2012) notes, Lefebvre insists that place (social space) is “‘always-already’ occupied, always embodied” (Gardiner, 2012, p. 352). After all, without inhabitants, how is meaning ascribed to the space, and what sorts of social relations

can take place? The issue, then, is not whether place is inhabited, but how it is inhabited, and by whom (or what).

Beyond the human inhabitants of urban environments, as Urry (2000a) notes, there are other important actants. Urban space is occupied by “peoples, objects, images, information and wastes” (p. 185). All of these actants co-exist and interact in “complex interdependencies” (p. 185). As Gardiner (2012) points out, Lefebvre sees a similar interplay of multiple different actants in urban environments: “bodies and objects, sense organs and products all cohabit” (Gardiner, 2012, p. 352). This cohabitation is not a static affair. These various actants are engaged in various different mobilities that intersect and interact (Urry, 2007). Through these mobilities, people interact with and through the other actants, and with the city generally. As Jensen (2009) argues, these mobilities “influence the practices, experiences and perceptions of place, subjectivity and identity” (p. 144).

Secondly, place is inscribed with meaning. It is through the interactions of these diverse mobilities that spaces come to be known and that people come to attach meaning to places. As Amin and Thrift (2002) point out, people leave ‘footprints’ (p. 18) as they move through urban environments, and it is through these markings that the city becomes ‘known’. This process of knowing is what turns space into place, that is, how people attribute meaning to a space. As Thrift (1996) states, urban spaces become places through these traces that people leave on them as they pass through. Lefebvre (1991) similarly understands this process of meaning-making as involving the active interplay between person and space, through “a myriad of gestures, traces and marks” (Gardiner, 2012; Lefebvre, 1991).

For Lefebvre (1996), the body “is the place of interaction between the biological, the physical and the social” (p. 32). The rhythms of the body – the heartbeats, the blood running through veins, the movements of arms and legs, and so on – connect with the rhythms of the city – the traffic lights changing colours to regulate cars and pedestrians, water and sewage flowing through underground pipes, the conversations and data flowing through telephone, cable and fibre communications lines, as well as radio and other electromagnetic waves. As van Duppen and Spierings (2013) note, “the interactive relationship between sensory body and urban environment develops and changes when we move through the city, resulting in

different and dynamic sensescapes along the way” (p. 235). These sensescapes are sensory memories left by people in the urban spaces they inhabit. They are produced through the “myriad of gestures, traces and marks”. They form an important part of the memories that people develop of a space. These memories, as Degen and Rose (2012) point out, interact with people’s present experiences of a space. They help to inform experiences in the present, but those experiences in the present also, in turn, shape and inform the memories of the experiences of the past. (Lefebvre, 1996; van Duppen & Spierings, 2013; Degen & Rose, 2012; Gardiner, 2012).

It is not, however, only the past and present that intermingle and reshape one another. Thoughts of the future are equally involved in this process. For Lefebvre (1995), place is always in a state of becoming. Implicit in this state of becoming are thoughts of future potentialities, of utopian possibilities. As Pinder (2015) notes, often times, “utopias are disparaged for their supposed chimerical and fanciful qualities” (p. 30). But he goes on to reject this characterization of utopias, asking “does utopian not designate anyone who wishes for something different, who refuses the inevitability of the existent and who seeks an opening elsewhere?” (p. 32) He draws on Lefebvre’s (1984) investigations into utopias which, as Pinder says, are more concrete and “rooted in everyday life and space” (Pinder, 2015, p. 32). Bloch (1986) makes a similar distinction between fantastical – what he calls ‘abstract’ – utopias and the more everyday, ‘concrete’ utopias. Here, as Levitas (1990) points out, Bloch’s understanding of concrete utopias is firmly situated in the realm of ‘real possibility’:

Although the fact that the future is indeterminate means that not all real possibilities will in fact be realized, these possible futures must be seen as part of reality. Concrete utopia, understood both as content and as function is within the real, but relates to what Bloch describes as *Front*, or *Novum*, that part of reality which is coming into being on the horizon of the real”. (Levitas, 1990, p. 17)

Bloch’s concrete reality, then, is embedded in the present moment, and this presence, as Levitas says, “reaches toward that future and anticipates it” (p. 14). This act of anticipation, opens up the possibility that this future may be actualized (Levitas, 1990).

I would add to this discussion that these utopias of possible futures, much like the memories of remembered pasts, interact with and shape an understanding of the present. By way of a mundane, but concrete example of this interaction, I may be preparing to leave home to head to the university. I remember from similar past journeys that the bus that goes by my home does not run very often. Rather than take a chance and head to the bus stop, I check the transit app on my phone to see when the next bus is scheduled to arrive at the nearest stop, and from that information, gauge when I should head to the stop. In terms of more abstract, fantastical utopias that may cross my mind, I might wish to win the lottery so that I could buy a car and never again have to rely upon my city's mass transit system. Equally fantastically, I could wish that the city would build a subway with a stop near my home and another at the university, so that I can bypass city traffic altogether. However, a more concrete utopia that may come to mind would involve the city building some form of street-level rapid transit. I might imagine this to be within the realm of possibility, and I might in turn write to city council to register my support for such a project, and to get involved in supporting it in other ways. In this small scenario, my memories of past transit experiences are informing my present experience. Embedded within this present is an imagined future which, in turn informs present actions. My present actions, combined with similar actions by others with similar imagined futures may well one day bring this particular concrete utopia to fruition in the form of bus rapid transit.

Meaning, then, is inscribed in space through the "gestures, traces and marks" (Gardiner, 2012, p. 351) that people leave, building sensescapes through the interplay of memories, present experiences and future possibilities. This process of ascribing meaning is how an urban space becomes a place.

Thirdly, place is social. For Massey (1995) and others, the social relations that occur in a space are an essential part of what makes that space a place. Social relations in an urban context take on a decidedly different nature in urban spaces than in rural or small town spaces. Simmel (1997) characterizes the urban personality as the blasé attitude, which arises from the greater intensity of sensory stimulus that urban dwellers are exposed to daily. Part of this intensified sensory stimulus arises because of the great diversity that, as Fincher and Jacobs (1998) point out, has long been a key characteristic of urban environments. This

diversity, they note, arises through “gender, race, ethnicity, age, life course, sexuality, or another other referent” (p. 5). A key characteristic of urban social relations, Tonkiss notes, is a level of indifference to this difference. There is, she says, both an active recognition of this difference, while at the same time an “ordinary urban ethics that looks straight past it”. This indifference can be tenuous but, she contends that where it exists, it provides a greater possibility for expressions of difference. For Lefebvre (1996), such expressions of difference are an essential part of the urban experience. Urban inhabitants, he argues, must struggle against uniformity and homogeneity, and always to live ‘differentially’. Perhaps the best description of the nature of successful social relations is Jacobs’ (1969) ‘sidewalk ballet’, where urban inhabitants engage in small, seemingly mundane and meaningless exchanges that, together, weave an urban fabric that is the everyday, embodied, mobile experience needed for the successful development of place in an urban context (Massey, 1995; Simmel, 1997; Fincher & Jacobs, 1998; Tonkiss, 2005; Lefebvre, 1996; Jacobs, 1969).

2.5. The place of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience

In this chapter, I have worked with a general understanding of place as being a space that is inhabited, ascribed meaning and social in nature. I have identified the ways in which traditional notions of place – as static, rooted in tradition and involving close social relations – are incompatible with the everyday, embodied, mobile urban experience as I describe it in Chapter 1. I have developed instead an understanding of place that can work in the context of this experience, and have filled out the general understanding of place with the details of this reworked understanding of place.

In brief, the place of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience is inhabited by “peoples, objects, images, information and wastes” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185) which all co-exist and interact in “complex interdependencies” (p. 185). They move through urban spaces, creating various rhythms, and counter rhythms, leaving traces as they pass through. The people that inhabit these urban spaces experience them bodily, through all of their senses. In so doing, they create sensescapes of the spaces they pass through. These traces that they leave and sensescapes that they build help them to ascribe meaning to their urban environment. This meaning involves a complex interplay of the memories of past

experiences, present experiences and future possibilities, which can inform and shape each other to some degree. In this way, urban spaces have many pasts with many possible readings. The social relations in urban spaces are informed by a blasé attitude and an indifference to difference that opens up possibilities for these differences to be lived. Urban social relations manifest as a sort of sidewalk ballet of seemingly mundane and meaningless interactions. When the components of an urban space align in this way, it becomes the place of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.

Chapter 3

3.0 Locative media

In this chapter, I define the term locative media, and explain how they differ from other types of mobile media. Next, I investigate locative media from the perspective of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience. Then, I examine the role of locative media in the making of place.

3.1 Defining locative media

In 1991, Mark Weiser (1991) wrote about efforts underway at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Centre “to conceive a new way of thinking about computers, one that takes into account the human world and allows the computers themselves to vanish into the background” (p. 94). He was speaking of ‘ubiquitous computing’. Rather than having to be in a particular location to use a computer, people can access computing capabilities ‘anywhere, anytime’. To highlight his point, Weiser contrasts the notion of ubiquitous computing with virtual reality. Whereas virtual reality creates a world inside a computer, ubiquitous computing enhances the real world, what Weiser and his colleagues call ‘enhanced virtuality’. But, to approach the full potential of ubiquitous computing, the computer needs to know where in the world it is (Weiser, 1991). Enter locative media.

Locative media is a term used to describe a set of mobile technologies – hardware and software – that make use of an individual’s spatial and temporal location to capture and deliver content specific to a particular moment in a particular place. At the device level (e.g., smartphones, tablets, smart watches), specific software applications (‘apps’) make use of the device’s GPS (global positioning system) receiver, accelerometer (the component that tells the device which way is up, down, sideways, etc.) and compass, to identify where the individual is in the world, and then these apps capture and deliver content from the internet that is relevant to that particular place and time. For example, a public transit app that tells a user when the next bus will arrive at the stop where the user is standing is an example of a locative media app. By contrast, an app that provides weather information in an individual’s city is not, strictly speaking, a locative media app. It obtains the weather information from a

nearby weather station, not from the specific location where the individual is located. In short, locative media transform ‘anywhere, anytime’ computing into ‘here and now’ computing.

As Farman (2012) observes, locative media challenge ways that computing is understood. Beyond reversing the notion of ‘virtual reality’, where the user enters into a virtual world through a computer, locative media also upends some understandings of how ubiquitous computing works as well. As he says, “Instead of disappearing into the fabric of our lived experience, [ubiquitous computing] is something that is consciously interacting with our environments and offering a transformative experience of space” (p. 11). Rather than working away, unnoticed in the background, locative media open a sort of access point to the systems working away in the background. In so doing, locative media provide additional layers of information to the spaces people inhabit at the times they are inhabiting them (Farman, 2012).

McCullough (2006) outlines five central shifts in focus that distinguish locative media from other types of computing:

1. “From virtual to embodied” – despite the many claims from Silicon Valley over the years about the “irrelevance of place”, McCullough notes that “the new paradigm of ubiquitous computing brings things back to the messy multiplicity of the street” (p. 26)
2. “From macro to micro” – we are beginning to see the media model moving from one that is ‘fast and far’ to one that is ‘close and slow’. The ‘fast and far’ model is characterized by media production produced far away and pushed at consumers, generally devoid of specific local relevance. By contrast, the ‘close and slow’ model, already gaining steam in Europe and Asia, is based on proximity. It sees people engaging directly with their surroundings. As McCullough notes, “the experience of media and the city is less one of the broadcast push, and more diversely one of pull: messaging, searching, meeting and tagging” (p. 27)

3. “From universal to situated” – there is a move away from the mass production model to a model governed by context relevance. McCullough explains that “the more practical and affordable the engineering performance of a medium becomes, the more appropriateness surpasses performance as the main success factor” (pp. 27-8)
4. “From behaviour to intent” – there is a shift in focus from the ways in which people respond to and use technology (behaviour) to the end goals that they are trying to achieve (intent)
5. “From pushing to posting” – with locative media, we see a move away from “mass spectacle in favour of smaller and more personalized cultural acts” (p. 28). Quoting John Thackara, McCullough asks “what if content is something you do, not something you are given?” (McCullough, 2006, p. 28)

McCullough’s (2006) explanation of the differences of locative media from other forms of computer-mediated communication is a useful starting point to identify the key characteristics of locative media. However, his observations here are more descriptive than critical. In the next section, I analyze locative media from the perspective of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience described in Chapter 1. I then return to McCullough’s explanation to identify some important shortcomings of his descriptions that arise through my analysis.

3.2. Locative media in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience

In this section, I discuss the relevance of locative media in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.¹² Locative media are inherently mobile. They mediate – and complicate – embodied practices in space. Locative media complicate relations in and with urban space. Locative media serve as a point of connection among Urry’s (2000a)

¹² For a detailed explanation of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience, please see Section 1.6.5. “What is the, everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience?” in Chapter 1. For an explanation of the relevance of these terms to locative media, please see Section 1.0 “Background” at the beginning of Chapter 1.

mobilities actants discussed in Chapter 1: “People, objects, images, information” (p. 185). The fourth actant that Urry refers to – wastes – is not involved in locative media use (Urry, 2000a; Farman, 2012; McCullough, 2004).

3.2.1. Locative media and the everyday

Locative media insert themselves into a wide range of mundane daily activities. Here, I consider three types of activities that are representative of everyday locative media uses: wayfinding; accessing and sharing information; and ‘seeing’ and connecting with people nearby.

Wayfinding is perhaps one of more well-known and well-established aspects of locative media. A common focus of study is the use of in-car and on-foot GPS navigation. Recent studies have found that use of this mobile navigation technology hindered participants’ cognitive mapping abilities. For example, a study conducted by Willis, Hoelscher and Wilbertz (2007) found that participants who used paper maps had significantly better knowledge acquisition of the locations tested in the survey than did those who used a GPS navigation system. Their participants did not acquire ‘survey knowledge’, suggesting that they did not engage with the environment the way participants using a paper map would, because their navigation through the space was route-based, rather than using cues from the surrounding environment. A similar study conducted by Leshed, Velden, Rieger et al. (2008) found similar results. However, among their participants they found an increased sense of confidence when travelling that led to a greater willingness to explore. Participants also discovered new landmarks that were marked on the GPS map, but invisible from the road (Willis, Hoelscher, & Wilbertz, 2007; Leshed, Velden, Rieger, Kot, & Sengers, 2008).

This ability to discover new landmarks marked on GPS maps leads to the second type of mundane daily activities to which locative media attach themselves: accessing and sharing information. Here, digital information and location combine to provide enhanced ways of knowing a particular space at a particular time. Digital mapping services such as Google Maps combine with various information services and apps to provide a gateway for crowdsourcing and delivering context-relevant information. Leszczynski (2015) offers a range of examples:

Spatial APIs [application program interfaces] which extend interactive functionality to the client side and allow users to hook into applications such as Google Maps and embed their own content into the service in the form of a map ‘mash-up’; social review sites such as Yelp that let users find and vet services and establishments (such as hair salons, restaurants, etc.) on the basis of location; location-based discovery services, e.g. Foursquare, that push recommendations for nearby shopping, eating, and other activities to users’ mobile devices”. (pp. 729-30)

The public transportation app mentioned earlier is another example of this type intervention into mundane daily activities. Users and institutions (governments, businesses, schools, and so on) can make available geotagged digital content that attaches to a particular location, and becomes available to people in those locations – with the appropriate locative media equipment – to access. In this way, as Farman (2012) notes, the spaces around us turn into “information interfaces” (p. 43). As Leszczynski (2015) says, location becomes a fundamental organizing principle for information (Leszczynski, 2015; Farman, 2012).

A third way in which locative media implicate themselves into everyday activities is through facilitating various types of social interactions. There is a wide array of examples of locative social media apps which are intended to facilitate social interactions. I will briefly discuss two types that provide different approaches: dating apps such as Tinder, Grindr and Scruff, and location-based mobile gaming apps such as Moji.

Tinder is a dating app used predominantly, though not exclusively, by cisgender heterosexuals (Mason, 2016). Grindr is a dating app used predominantly by gay men (Crooks, 2013), and Scruff is a dating app used predominantly by a gay subculture of men who self-identify as ‘bears’ (Roth, 2014). These apps are designed to identify people nearby who may be available and interested in meeting up with one another. All three apps work in relatively similar ways: users see information about other users nearby, such as their photo, height, weight, gender, ethnicity, proximity, and so on. Users can provide as much or as little of this information as they want. All three apps are typically understood to be ‘hook-up’ apps, that is, apps whose sole function is to provide connections for possible sexual encounters. However, the use of all three apps is more complicated than this. Studies of all

three apps have identified other uses beyond ‘hooking up’. For example, some users are looking to find friends, others are looking to find a long-term romantic relationship (Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Ligtenberg, 2017; Mason, 2016; Crooks, 2013; Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2014).

Multiplayer, location-based mobile gaming is another example of locative media that facilitate social interaction. Licoppe and Inada (2006) present the example of *Mogi*, a location-aware mobile game that was popular in Japan. Users played by using their mobile phones to collect nearby ‘virtual objects’. A significant component for many of the players was social interaction with other players. As Licoppe and Inada (2006) note, these players “are not particularly concerned about accumulating objects. For them the main objective is to meet other players and to communicate with them. They are particularly attentive to forms of politeness that develop in communities of players and to the proprieties that onscreen encounters have to observe” (Licoppe & Inada, 2006, p. 44).

3.2.2. Locative media and practices of embodiment in space

Tinder, Grindr, Scruff and even Moji present important complications for practices of embodiment in space. First, they can mediate embodied experiences. Secondly, they can affect who is visible and who is not, and where. Thirdly, they can pose restrictions upon the ways in which their users express their embodiment.

As Roth (2014) asserts, the very use of locative media apps like Tinder, Grindr and Scruff is a particular kind of embodied experience “visually, haptically and interactively” (p. 2120).

He says:

Through touch, users directly incorporate their bodies into the experience of using electronic media. Emphasizing touch interfaces brings to the forefront both meanings of the word ‘digital’: first, of the digits of binary code and the technical infrastructure of these apps; and second, but perhaps more important, of the digits of the hand and of the intimately, essentially human quality of these interfaces. (p. 2021)

Roth (2014) notes that these apps “bridge the gap between tactile and electronic” (p. 2021) as users interact physically with representations (profile images) of other users’ bodies (Roth, 2014).

A key factor of these apps is the physical proximity of the users to one another. But this physical proximity does not necessarily translate every time to communicating in person. Licoppe (2016) offers the example of two Grindr users who recognized one another in a bar, but did not engage in face-to-face conversation. One user, identified as *C*, messaged the second user; the second user saw the message but didn’t respond. *C* reports: “I was almost in front of him and he saw very well, and he did not have the balls to reply, even on Grindr” (p. 109). Licoppe and Inada (2006) report similar findings among *Mogi* users, where it was not uncommon to interact exclusively through the *Mogi* app. *Mogi* users may well recognize one another when they encounter one another in public, but not necessarily communicate face-to-face. However, like the situation with the two Grindr users, there is an apparent etiquette and expectation of acknowledgement of presence at least within the app. Licoppe and Inada (2006) report an instance where one female *Mogi* player regularly noticed the nearby presence of a male *Mogi* player. The male player, however, never acknowledge the mutual presence. This was of some concern to the female player, as she interpreted his behaviour as potentially stalking (Licoppe, 2016; Licoppe & Inada, 2006).

The issue of visibility further complicates practices of embodiment in space when using locative social media. Some bodies that are visible in physical space can be made to disappear in the app. By contrast, some bodies can become visible through the app in physical spaces where they are otherwise potentially invisible. It is not uncommon for dating apps to offer the capability to filter visible profiles based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and so on. As Mason (2016) observes, “racism often functions as ‘preference’ and neoliberalized choice in online dating sites, especially on dating sites and apps targeted to gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men” (p. 826). Mason (2016) also notes a troubling trend on Tinder, documented by the Tumblr *Humanitarians of Tinder* (2017), whereby young, predominantly white, Tinder users will use photos of themselves engaged in volunteer work outside of the Global North. The photos typically include the Tinder user “holding and standing near racialized children in unnamed locations recognized as the ‘Third

World”” (p. 825). Here, race is made visible as “fleshy scenery” as part of what she calls their “do-good-to-get-laid mentality” (p. 825). Expressions of racism as those presented by Mason (2016) are not unique to locative social media, nor to computer-mediated communication more generally. Instead, they reinforce existing racisms. However, these manifestations of racism may be more insidious since, particularly in the case of filtering options, the erasure itself is invisible (Mason, 2016; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001).

Blackwell et al. (2014) describe a case where locative social media can make people visible in spaces where they might otherwise be invisible. Apps like Grindr and Scruff effectively make all spaces ‘gay spaces’. For one of the participants, Jim, of Blackwell et al.’s study of Grindr users, Grindr provided him with “a gay bar in my pocket” (p. 1126). Jim spoke of one time where he was in “a very very straight feeling space”. Grindr identified another gay man at another straight bar down the road, and the two met up (p. 1126). Grindr, Scruff and other such apps have the capacity to make gay men visible to other gay men nearby, while remaining invisible to others who are not using these apps. As both Blackwell et al. (2014) and Roth (2014) point out, it can be inadvisable and even dangerous for queer people to be visible in some spaces at some times. Being aware of other queer people nearby can be reassuring, even if the users of the apps have no particular interest in ‘hooking up’ (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2014; Roth, 2014).

Locative social media apps like Tinder, Grindr and Scruff can impose restrictions – directly or indirectly – upon users’ expressions of embodiment in two main ways. First, the possibility of an imminent face-to-face meeting tends to encourage users to avoid “deceptive or exploratory presentations of self” (Roth, 2014, p. 2124). Licoppe (2016) recounts the experience of a Grindr user who was upset that another user’s presence in physical space did not align with his Grindr profile. The other user had described himself in his Grindr profile as an “open guy, kind and positive” (p. 109), but appeared in person to be quite the opposite (Licoppe, 2016).

The various filters used by these apps have the potential to restrict the ways in which their users express their embodiment. Scruff, for example, asks users to voluntarily assign themselves to various labels that are used to organize and filter Scruff’s users. As Roth

(2014) notes, “users who do not label themselves are automatically excluded from grids that filter users on the basis of those labels” (p. 2123). These labels, along with the other information requested (height, weight, hairiness, etc.), constrain the many possible body expressions that do not conform to these labels. As Roth points out, this is particularly troubling for Scruff’s target audience – ‘bears’ – because this identification arose as a response to the “‘body fascism’ of American gay culture” (p. 2124) from which many gay men were excluded for being too old, too fat, too hairy, and so on. Bear as an identification is, in some ways, purposely ambiguous for this reason (Roth, 2014; Licoppe, 2016).

Such instances of ‘voluntary’ self-categorization are reminiscent of Bucher’s (2012) observations about the way in which Facebook’s news feed algorithm works. Bucher compares the algorithm’s logic to Foucault’s notion of the Panopticon, but in reverse. Foucault’s (1977) Panopticon is a disciplinary system which employs the threat of possible surveillance to internalize their own discipline. Everyone at all times is equally visible to the surveilling power, even though not all will be surveilled at all times. The possibility of being visible in this way causes people to adjust their behaviour under the assumption that they are being watched. In the case of Facebook’s EdgeRank, however, visibility is not a form of punishment but rather a reward. Visibility is not available to everyone, but rather to a select group whose actions EdgeRank determines are worthy of being visible. As Bucher says:

In the Facebook assemblage, a useful individual is the one who participates, communicates and interacts. The participatory subject evidently produced by the algorithmic mechanisms in Facebook follows a similar logic to those techniques of correct training at work in sustaining disciplinary power. First, the very real possibility of becoming obsolete inscribed through the ‘threat of invisibility’ arguably constitutes a desire to participate. (p. 1175)

In the case of Scruff, users must slot themselves into one or more of the app’s pre-established categories in order to be ‘useful’ individuals. If they do not, they run the risk of disappearing. This possibility, then, has the potential to train Scruff’s users to redefine the ways in which they express themselves to other Scruff users. The end result, as Cheney-Lippold (2011) points out, is that people risk “losing control in defining who we are online, or more

specifically we are losing ownership over the meaning of the categories that constitute our identities” (p. 178).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the expression of difference is an essential component of the expression of embodiment.¹³ Bodies can differ considerably from one another in many ways, including in terms of sex, gender, sexual practices and/or sexual desire. This difference becomes further complicated when they intersect with other bodily differences such as race and ethnicity. Further, these differences can combine in many different ways. As Butler (2006) notes, sex, gender, sexual desire and sexual practice do not always align into consistent, linear combinations. For example, notions of ‘maleness’ do not necessarily always affix to a male body; sexual desire towards male bodies do not necessarily always manifest in sexual practices with male bodies (Mels, 2004; Butler, 2006). Locative social media complicate the differing expressions of differing bodies, sometimes in detrimental ways.

3.2.3. Locative media in urban space

Locative media also complicate social interactions in an urban context. First, they can increase the level of sensorial stimulation that urban inhabitants experience. Secondly, they can help to foster a sense of trust in unfamiliar urban spaces. Thirdly, locative media can eliminate the need to approach strangers for assistance.

Locative media – particularly locative social media apps – increase the already overloaded sensorial stimulation by increasing urban inhabitants’ awareness of the people around them. Rather than passing through the city relatively anonymously, exchanging little more than pleasantries with strangers, locative social media can increase the amount of information people know about these strangers. The strangers become what Licoppe (2016) calls ‘pseudonymous strangers’: People “with whom one may never have interacted or talked about before... but who are not complete strangers either for the locative app usually makes available some info about them” (p. 108) through their online profile. Of course, a person

¹³ See Section 1.4.3. “Differing experiences of differing bodies” in Chapter 1.

who does not want this constant stream of information about nearby strangers can turn off these apps. However, the nearby strangers may have the apps turned on still, and may therefore recognize this person, without that person's knowledge. Such a situation may amount to nothing. But it may equally amount to unwanted attention, challenging the much needed distance needed among urban dwellers (Licoppe, 2016).

However, these same apps may well contribute a sense of trust, familiarity and safety amidst the characteristic diversity of an urban environment. As Sutko and de Souza e Silva (2011) note, locative social media apps may make urban inhabitants aware that there are "people like you around". This homophilic awareness may foster a sense of trust and familiarity with an otherwise unfamiliar space full of strangers. Sutko and de Souza e Silva also suggest that this trust may spill over onto the surrounding strangers, thereby facilitating an openness to the surrounding difference. This scenario is in evidence in the situation mentioned earlier where a Grindr user was able to locate nearby gay men in a 'straight' environment in which he felt uncomfortable. This awareness gave him a sense of security in this potentially unwelcoming space (Sutko & de Souza e Silva, 2011; Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2014).

Additionally, locative media apps, such as Yelp, Foursquare or Google Maps, can help preserve urban distance. Such apps provide urban inhabitants with information about the areas they are in, freeing them from having to ask a stranger for directions or other information in a strange space (Licoppe, 2016).

3.2.4. Revisiting McCullough (2006)

As mentioned earlier, McCullough's (2006) explanation of locative media is a good starting point, because he identifies the key characteristics that set locative media apart from other forms of computer-mediated communications. However, his explanation would benefit from more critical analysis. Specifically, he doesn't address the ways in which locative media at present fail to adequately accommodate "the messy multiplicity of the street" (p. 26). Additionally, he doesn't interrogate the implications of two of the key characteristics that he identifies: both the 'close and slow' and 'situated' nature of locative media (McCullough, 2006).

McCullough (2006) is right that locative media bring digital information to “the messy multiplicity of the street” (p. 26). The next step, which he doesn’t take, is to examine what happens when digital information hits the ‘messy’ streets. As discussed above, not all of this messiness is equally embraced. Scruff’s bear categorizations, for example, demonstrate how some of the messiness must be reined in and cleaned up if users want to remain visible (McCullough, 2006; Roth, 2014).

The digital information made available through locative media is, as McCullough (2006) describes it, both close and slow (proximal), and situated (context-relevant). These two aspects are in fact defining features of locative media. Digital information would not be locative if not located where it is needed, and it would not need to be locative if it were not relevant to the particular space and time in which it is located. Two key sets of questions arise here, which are missing from McCullough’s description of locative media. The first set of questions have to do with issues of the quality and quantity of the digital information made available through locative media. The second set of questions involve the nature of the relevancy of the information. In terms of quality and quantity, locative media have the capacity to improve the quality of digital information by making it more immediately relevant to the specific space and time in which it is being accessed. An obvious example of this is a public transit app that tells users when exactly a bus will arrive at the stop where they are standing, as compared to a paper schedule which tells users when a bus is supposed to arrive at main stops. What McCullough doesn’t address is the matter of the quantity of information that can be available. As mentioned above, locative media have the capacity to increase the sensorial overload that is already a characteristic of urban environments. This issue is an important one to consider when discussing locative media, and one that should be considered by designers of locative media. What mechanisms can they put in place to help users cope with the information available to them. Barring these mechanisms, what tactics can users deploy to manage the information themselves? What is the locative media equivalent of Simmel’s (1997) blasé attitude (McCullough, 2006; Simmel, 1997)?

The second set of questions that arise here involve the nature of the context relevance. As McCullough (2006) notes, locative media “move away from one-size-fits-all attitudes” (p. 27) to one where “appropriateness surpasses performance” (p. 28). The question McCullough

fails to ask here is, appropriate for whom? In the example of the Scruff app, the context relevance of the content is not designed to be appropriate for people who do not conform to one of the app's predefined bear categories (Roth, 2014). In the example of Tinder and Grindr, where users can exclude profiles of certain other users based on characteristics such as race or age, context relevance can become racism or ageism (Mason, 2016). Context relevance becomes a tool for making some people invisible to others (McCullough, 2006; Roth, 2014; Mason, 2016).

3.3. Locative media as the nexus of embodied experience in place

To interrogate the role of locative media in the place of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience, I will first explore the nature of the relationship between the 'real' and the 'virtual'. As mentioned earlier, locative media reverse the notion of 'virtual reality', where the user enters into a virtual world through a computer. Instead, locative media overlay the 'virtual' overtop the 'real'. That is, physical location becomes a fundamental organizing principle for digital information through locative media.

It is not uncommon to speak of the relationship between the 'real' and the 'virtual' as a new, hybrid space. Sutko and de Souza e Silva (2011) understand the 'virtual' as a separate space from real, physical space. Farman (2012) similarly sees this distinction, and proposes that people can have embodied experiences in both physical and virtual space. As an example of this, he describes an instance where a student receives a phone call during class. Rather than silencing the phone, the student takes the call, in the class. The student is physically embodied in the class, but also non-physically embodied in the virtual¹⁴ space where the conversation is taking place. Farman sees locative media facilitating a transformation of physical space and virtual space into a 'hybrid space'. In this hybrid space, according to Licoppe (2016), "two different versions of the same 'here-and-now' surroundings are simultaneously available" (p. 114). These two different versions may present conflicting

¹⁴ Farman (2012) uses the term 'virtual' in a very broad sense: "from chatting with a loved one via text or over video conferencing to playing a multiplayer online game" (p. 22).

views of the same ‘here-and-now’, requiring a reconciliation on the part of the user (Sutko & de Souza e Silva, 2011; Farman, 2012; Licoppe, 2016).

Farman (2012) is interested in developing an understanding of the relationship between physical and virtual space that extends beyond the relatively narrow confines of a discussion of locative media. He is interested in developing a theory that encompasses mobile media in the broadest possible sense of the term – from papyrus on through to locative media, and beyond. However, in the case of locative media, at least, this split between ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ is not a useful one. To understand this information as existing in a ‘virtual space’ that can be inhabited does not move the discussion away from notions of ‘virtual reality’. As Leszczynski (2015) points out, the digital information that is accessed through locative media is not a ‘virtual space’ that one can inhabit. As she suggests, a better way to understand the relationship is that digital information is *anchored* to the space where it is most relevant at the time when it is most relevant (Leszczynski, 2015; Farman, 2012).¹⁵

The role of locative media in this understanding of the relationship between physical space and anchored digital information is as an integral part of the interface that reveals the presence of the digital information in a particular space at a particular time, whether that digital information is the time that the next bus will arrive, or the presence of other people nearby. In this context, locative media mediate among the various actants engaged in the production of place: people, objects, images and information (Leszczynski, 2015; Farman, 2012; Urry, *Mobile sociology*, 2000a).

To understand specifically how locative media implicate themselves in the creation of place in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience, we must first revisit our understanding of how place is made. As discussed in Chapter 2, the place of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience is inhabited by “peoples, objects, images, information and wastes” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185) which all co-exist and interact in “complex

¹⁵ In fact, Leszczynski (2015) rejects any split between ‘real’ and ‘virtual’, irrespective of mode of access (whether through locative media or other computer-mediated communications) as “nothing but the continuation and culmination of masculinist fantasies of escaping the flesh, and thereby all of materiality” (p. 745). For the purposes of this thesis, I restrict my criticism of this approach to its application to locative media.

interdependencies” (p. 185). They move through urban spaces, creating various rhythms, and counter rhythms, leaving traces as they pass through. The people who inhabit these urban spaces experience them bodily, through all of their senses. In so doing, they create sensescapes of the spaces they pass through. These traces that they leave and sensescapes that they build help them to ascribe meaning to their urban environment. This meaning involves a complex interplay of the memories of past experiences which can shape to some degree present experiences. Present experiences, in turn, can inform understandings of the memories of the past experiences. In this way, urban spaces have many pasts with many possible readings. The social relations in urban spaces are informed by a blasé attitude and an indifference to difference that opens up possibilities for differing expressions of differing bodies. Urban social relations manifest as a sort of sidewalk ballet of seemingly mundane and meaningless interactions. When the components of an urban space align in this way, it becomes the place of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience (Urry, 2000a; Lefebvre, 1996; Amin & Thrift, 2002; van Duppen & Spierings, 2013; Simmel, 1997; Tonkiss, 2005; Jacobs, 1969).

To begin, locative media situate people in space because, at their core is the proprioceptive capacity to locate a body in a particular space at a particular moment. The mobile device at the centre of locative media (such as a smartphone or tablet) knows its own proprioceptive position in space, and therefore, it knows its user’s proprioceptive position. The device in turn communicates this position outward to the larger mobile network, thereby making itself and its user visible to the network. This process in turn makes the situated digital information visible to the device and, therefore, to the device’s user and connects the user to the other actants in the space: other people, objects, images and information (Farman, 2012; Urry, 2000a).

As users move through the urban spaces they inhabit, locative media facilitate the process of ascribing meaning to the spaces being moved through. They help users leave traces – for example, in the form of geotagged and shared Instagram photos, Facebook or other check-ins, geomapped records of routes travelled, restaurant and other reviews on Yelp, and so on. Over time, locative media help users build up a digital sensescape which, in turn, informs the types of digital information made available to users through various locative media apps.

Locative media present important complications for practices of embodiment in space. They can mediate embodied experiences. The use of the touch interface of smartphones and tablets is, itself, and embodied experience “visually, haptically and interactively” (Roth, 2014, p. 2120). Locative media have the capacity to make previously invisible actants visible to one another in a particular space. They can equally hide previously visible ones. As well, they can limit people’s range of possibilities for expressions of embodiment through filtering and other restrictive practices.

Locative media implicate themselves in users’ relations with urban environments in complicated ways. They can add to the sensorial overload characteristic of urban spaces, and challenge inhabitants’ coping mechanisms. Information available through locative social media apps such as Tinder, Grindr, Scruff and even multiplayer mobile games such as the former *Mogi* provide additional information about formerly anonymous strangers nearby, turning them into ‘pseudonymous strangers’, and compromising the careful balance of the ‘sidewalk ballet’. But these same apps can also foster a sense of trust and familiarity in a strange place by making potentially ‘like-minded people’ visible, such as making gay men visible to one another in an otherwise heteronormative space.

3.4. Framework for interrogating the role of locative media in everyday, embodied, mobile, urban place-making

An interrogation of this role of locative media necessarily comprises the key considerations of each aspect of the everyday, embodied, mobile urban experience of place under examination.

The everyday. Locative media must reveal the daily rhythms of the city to its inhabitants. It must in turn add the inhabitants’ rhythms to those of the city. It must help inhabitants find a harmony between the two. To this end, locative media must help users find their way through unfamiliar spaces, reveal information (bus times, restaurant reviews, etc.) relevant to the particular spaces where users are standing, at the particular times they’re standing there.

Embodiment. Locative media must facilitate the diverse expressions of embodiment that are characteristic of urban environments. They must take particular care not to limit the range of possible expressions of their users' bodies.

Mobility. As a key component of the interface that reveals the presence of the digital information in a particular space at a particular time, locative media must mediate among the actants that inhabit urban space, particularly the people, objects, images and information (Urry, 2000a).

The urban. Locative media must help users navigate urban environments. They must help users to maintain the necessary blasé attitude and indifference to difference.

Ascribe meaning. Locative media must help users leave meaningful traces as they pass through spaces. They must help users negotiate relevant memories of past experiences in those spaces, interpret present experiences, and imagine possible futures.

Social relations. Locative media must users maintain the delicate balance of the sidewalk ballet. They must provide the right amount and depth of information about the pseudonymous strangers around them.

When locative media facilitate the alignment of these components of an urban space, they contribute to the becoming of place in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.

As location awareness gets added to more and more mobile apps, the capacity for locative media to affect people's relations with the urban spaces they inhabit becomes increasingly significant. Licoppe (2016) asks us to imagine "a future in which the use of locative media becomes so commonplace that all urban denizens are digitally connected and location-aware" (p. 113). In such a scenario, the issues examined in this chapter have the capacity to become magnified manifold. What happens, for example, if every store we pass wants to convey information to us? What happens if everyone is sharing their profiles with everyone around them? In this sea of information, who will decide what is relevant to whom? How will these decisions be made? Who will benefit? At what cost, and to whom?

As outlined above, we must interrogate the ways in which locative media insert themselves into everyday, embodied, mobile, urban place-making. We must interrogate the support locative media afford to mundane, everyday activities. We must interrogate how well locative media facilitate diverse expressions of embodiment. We must interrogate the effect of locative media on urban social relations. Finally, we must interrogate the capacity of locative media to facilitate ascriptions of meaning to the urban spaces that people pass through.

Conclusion

Place-making in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience

The everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience is an awkward phrase. However, in the course of my research, I have discovered that each term in this phrase is essential to understanding the role of locative media in urban place-making. The most significant uses of locative media involve mundane, *everyday* tasks, such as finding out when the next bus will arrive, what restaurants are nearby, and so on. Use of locative media is an *embodied* experience. Where people are physically present, and what they are physically doing, affects the way in which locative media work. Locative media are *mobile* media. They accompany people wherever they go, and this mobility – this movement through space – is an essential component of becoming familiar with a space, attaching meaning to it, and making it a place. Finally, while locative media can work anywhere where there is supporting infrastructure, as McCullough (2006) notes, much of the activity in the field of locative media is urban in nature (McCullough, 2006).

In Chapter 1, I explored each of these terms, and outlined the contours of them within the context of this study. I then combined them, to describe the nature of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.¹⁶ In summary, this experience is comprised of a complex interweaving of mundane interactions among “peoples, objects, images, information and wastes” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185), as they move through the urban environment. This interweaving of interactions makes up the daily rhythms of the city. These urban rhythms in turn pass through and around the inhabitants of these urban spaces. People experience this moving through urban space as an embodied experience. Their senses, as well as their ability to sense their general positioning and orientation in the world, combine to create embodied, sensory mappings (sensescapes) of their experiences in urban space. Each body experiences the city differently (Urry, 2000a; Lefebvre, 1996; van Duppen & Spierings, 2013).

¹⁶ See Section 1.6.5. “What is the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience?” in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2, I identified the nature of place in the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban context. I began with a general understanding of place as being a space that is inhabited, ascribed meaning, and social. I then expanded this understanding to accommodate the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience. In summary, this place is inhabited by “peoples, objects, images, information and wastes” (Urry, 2000a, p. 185) which all co-exist and interact in “complex interdependencies” (p. 185) These inhabitants move through urban spaces, creating various rhythms, and counter rhythms, leaving traces as they pass through. The people that inhabit these urban spaces experience these spaces bodily, through all of their senses. In so doing, they create sensescapes of the spaces they pass through. These traces that they leave and sensescapes that they build help them to ascribe meaning to their urban environment. This meaning involves a complex interplay of the memories of past experiences which can shape to some degree present experiences, as well as imaginings of future. Present experiences, in turn, can inform understandings of the memories of the past experiences. In this way, urban spaces have many pasts with many possible readings. The social relations in urban spaces are informed by a blasé attitude and an indifference to difference that opens up possibilities for these differences to be lived. Urban social relations manifest as a sort of sidewalk ballet of seemingly mundane and meaningless interactions. When the components of an urban space align in this way, it becomes the place of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience (Urry, 2000a; van Duppen & Spierings, 2013; Amin & Thrift, 2002; Degen & Rose, 2012; Jacobs, 1969).

In Chapter 3, I examined the nature of locative media and the implications of its use in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience. From there, I developed a theoretical framework for interrogating place-making in the context of this experience. I propose that

1. Locative media must reveal the daily rhythms of the city to its inhabitants. It must in turn add the inhabitants’ rhythms to those of the city. It must help inhabitants find a harmony between the two. To this end, locative media must help users find their way through unfamiliar spaces, reveal information (bus times, restaurant reviews, etc.) relevant to the particular spaces where users are standing, at the particular times they’re standing there.

2. Locative media must facilitate the diverse expressions of embodiment that are characteristic of urban environments. They must take particular care not to limit the range of possible expressions of their users' bodies.
3. As a key component of the interface that reveals the presence of the digital information in a particular space at a particular time, locative media must mediate among the actants that inhabit urban space, particularly the people, objects, images and information (Urry, 2000a).
4. Locative media must help users navigate urban environments. They must help users to maintain the necessary blasé attitude and indifference to difference.
5. Locative media must help users leave meaningful traces as they pass through spaces. They must help users negotiate relevant memories of past experiences in those spaces, interpret present experiences, and imagine possible futures.
6. Locative media must users maintain the delicate balance of the sidewalk ballet. They must provide the right amount and depth of information about the pseudonymous strangers around them.

I conclude with the assertion that, when locative media facilitate the alignment of these components of an urban space, they contribute to the becoming of place in the context of the everyday, embodied, mobile, urban experience.

Proposed future research

On June 12, 2016, a man walked into a popular gay nightclub in Orlando Florida, where he shot and killed 49 people, and wounded another 53. It is to date the worst mass shooting in US history (Alvarez, Pérez-Peña, & Hauseerjune, 2016). Shortly after the attack, I came across a post on Facebook from a man in Texas who found himself having to explain why he was so shaken up by what happened in Orlando. In his post, he explained about the “tiny little mental calculations” that LGBTQ+ people do every day as a matter of course to judge the extent to which it is safe to express themselves in public spaces (Darke, 2016). On reflecting on the incident a year later, Louis Staples from London, UK, remarked, “As well as the devastating loss of life, the shooting brought with it the harrowing realization that our safe spaces are never truly safe” (Staples, 2017). Also looking back a year later, Devyn

Springer commented that “as a Black queer Muslim, the event is still engraved in my mind. I feel like I have no space—as a concept, a location, or a conversational framework—and I know many more who feel the same way” (Springer, 2017). In short, this tragedy was a reminder that, despite the many advances in LGBTQ+ rights over the years, the relationship with space is still a fraught one.

Knopp (2004) contends that notions of mobility and flux are crucial to many queer people: “Being simultaneously in and out of place, and seeking comfort as well as pleasure in movement, displacement, and placelessness, are commonly sought after experiences” (p. 124). He points to the many studies of LGBTQ+ people who uproot themselves from their family, kin, and hometown communities – both unsupportive and supportive ones – in order to, among other things, explore new ways of being.

Given this sense of an absence of ‘safe spaces’ among LGBTQ+ people, combined with a new for “movement, displacement and placelessness”, what are the possibilities, if any, for place-making, and what role might locative media play in it? Is it possible, as in the case of Jim¹⁷ in Blackwell et al.’s (2014) study, for locative media apps like Grindr and Scruff, to create a semblance of ‘safe space’ in otherwise unsafe spaces?

¹⁷ For a discussion of Jim’s experiences, please see Section 3.2.2. “Locative media and practices of embodiment in space”.

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Canadian Communication Association Annual Meeting 2017

“A place for locative media: A theoretical framework for assessing locative media use in urban environments”