

**STREETSCAPE AS AN ASSEMBLAGE OF EXPERIENTIAL GATHERING  
PROCESSES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EXAMINATION OF PLACE**

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This paper draws from an ongoing research study project to discuss and conceptualise ethnographic practice as a symbiotic process of simultaneous sense-breaking and sense-making in the context of space and place. The paper re-examines the concepts of place and culture that underpin this study and engages with a process of methodological and epistemological deconstruction and reconstruction in re-presenting these concepts through the parameters of the study in shaping new knowledge. Through a process of emplacement and reflexivity, the study embraces the notion that the process of meaning should undergo reconstruction from within in order to be presented as new knowledge and that such processes take place simultaneously and symbiotically drawing from each other concurrently.

The study, from which this paper draws, is an exploration of the construct of place and its role in contemporary marketing and consumption scholarship, viewed through the lens of an urban streetscape. The study explores the streetscape as a holistic, multi-contextual consumption setting more enriched and textured than the settings typically studied in consumption literature. The study adopts not only a more expanded view of the notion of a consumption setting but also adopts a broader view of the nature of consumption as a phenomenon. Instead of examining consumption as an agglomeration of activities that involve acquisition and possession of material objects that fall under the domain of the logic of market capitalism (Sherry 2000), the study broadens the view of consumption as sublimated and embodied in a range of everyday practices and attempts to examine the linkages between practices and place. Through this exploration the study hopes to resituate place in contemporary marketing and consumption scholarship through its examination in the light of phenomenological sensitivities (Kant, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty) in contemporary social sciences and philosophical thought.

The methodological approach underpinning this study is ethnographic in spirit, and given the context of the study as being an urban streetscape, is an adaptation of the technique of street ethnography. This method ostensibly investigates 'street culture' through an examination of its people and practices. Traditional ethnographic methods that draw from conventions of cultural anthropology assume notions of spatialised culture where territories are perceived to be containers of culture and that relatively small, homogenous, naturally or artificially bounded groups of people, can be observed

and studied for their cultural specificities. These assumptions are increasingly contested because such sites and homogenous populations do not exist anymore and because they are perceived to smack of Western imperialistic voice and the legacy of colonialism. Instead with the growing realisation that people are not only mobile but also live multiplicities of lives (Lankshear 2002), of place and culture, ethnography can no longer be grounded in real geography. Furthermore there have been recent disruptions in forwarding social-structural reasons as explanations of place and space causing a more epistemological and ontological rethink of these concepts in philosophical and social sciences disciplinary thought. Traditional notions of space being considered an abstract, cartographically coordinated entity and place as being something carved out of space to be particular and local are being contested. A phenomenological sensitivity in rethinking space and place causes the human subject to be re-centred at the heart of the place experience and place to be considered as an event, an ever changing process, an animated eventuation of experience-gathering (Casey 1993, 1997, 2001). Place theories help us understand and analyse the plethora of practices of everyday life and imagination and how they contribute to a sense of place through contestation and lived sensory experiences and realities.

In this context if spatialised and territorialised notions of culture are no longer the norm and place as being a particular consequence of universal space is also no longer a given, then the practice of ethnography needs to be carried out without an ethnos (Appadurai 2000, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Ethnographic practice needs to focus on what people do, what they produce, and how they engage with such processual activities rather than adopt a static view or 'presentism' that represents the place and culture as it is now (Eisenhart and Finkel 2000, Levinson et al 1996). Beyond deterministic ethnographic constraints and limitations of field sites, ethnography provides an opportunity to study individuals as socio-historically situated and places as emplaced individuals. More importantly, an ethnography that is imbued with phenomenological sensitivity, views the researcher as the centre of the meaning making process, through his/her emplaced self. If place can be conceptualised as a universal, constant human activity, an outcome of human practice, then ethnography can be treated as a place making practice, and the ethnographer can be considered a co-presence with the site. Ethnography causes the place to be experienced, deconstructed, and reconstituted simultaneously. The ethnographer is co-implicated in the placemaking processes and therefore its entangled

pathways are not simply representations of ethnographic participants' meanings and senses but also those of the ethnographer (Casey 1996, Ingold 2007, Pink 2008).

Within the context of the streetscape, ethnographic examination studies an assemblage of consumption resources, settings, encounters, and entanglements between marketplace cultures and consumption practices, intertwined with spatial-temporal changes, contestations, and collaborations. An ethnographic examination of such a streetscape requires a deconstruction of some of the materialities and geographies underpinning the field site while at the same time reconstructing the place through gathering experiences, processes, pathways, and animate and inanimate entities. The ethnography here is both a process and a product, a process of archaeological excavation and deconstruction and a re-presentation of the ethnographer's embodied placemaking experience.