MONASH University

Young people making place in the country: place-making under the conditions of globalisation

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Abstract

Young people living in regional Australia negotiate the increasingly complex effects of globalisation on local places. Indeed, young people share a unique position in communities and come to herald the future of these places in many ways. However, globalising processes have altered and redefined how young people in regional areas construct and negotiate the meaning of place. Focusing on the regional town of Shepparton, Australia, this thesis clarifies the place-making projects of its young residents as they occur in the background of everyday lives. In this thesis I highlight the perspectives of young people as a means to ascertain the complexities of place in light of the disruption to place engendered by globalising processes.

In particular, I am concerned with how place is configured, and how it is subjectively considered, experienced, and talked about. I focus on how place is 'made' and how it comes to be something of meaning in everyday lives. Although often neglected, the voices of young people in regional areas represent a vital perspective on the making of late-modern places. An expansive methodological approach is taken in order to capture a rich, detailed interpretation of place in the context of everyday lives. The research examines discursive, experiential and practice-orientated forms of place-making, accounting for how these are shaped by social structures and agencies, and how they are realised in the context of social media technologies.

A focus group study was conducted in the regional Australian town of Shepparton. Across 12 focus groups, 62 respondents took part aged 16-29 years, while a range of social and cultural backgrounds were represented in the participant cohort. Common sense stereotypes, characterisations and assumptions proscribing young people's relationship with regional place are problematised in the thesis and set aside for a more nuanced account in contemporary, globalised times. The findings of this study demonstrate young people's engagement in the locale, their embeddedness in material places, as well as their interaction with globalising flows in the form of social media. Shepparton is a regional town made by its young residents in a range of ways, including discursively, experientially, practically and via digital media. The findings also confirmed that place-making projects are indeed elusive, and difficult to articulate.

Concerns regarding accommodating the needs of a geographically dispersed community and ensuring access to key services, are an issue for the broader national community in Australia. Under this remit, many policy initiatives focus on young people, and their transitional pathways into education and employment. By incorporating youthful perspectives, the thesis facilitates an improved understanding of the diverse, and differentiated experiences of social change in regional places under the conditions of globalisation. Without a nuanced understanding of these places, policies designed to assist in the provision of access, and the alleviation of disadvantage are vulnerable to failure.

Keywords: Young people; regional towns; globalisation; place-making; social media

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Chapter 1: Young regional people's place-making projects

Under the conditions of globalisation and social change, contemporary places have become the focus of a burgeoning literature, collectively referred to as the 'spatial turn'. Within this literature, regional places are understood as particular types of locales, embodying specific characteristics. They are situated as being different to, and dichotomously removed from, city spaces. Where the city is seen as disrupted by globalisation, regional places are regarded as somehow protected from the social changes accompanying globalisation. Positioned at the 'nexus of social change' (Furlong and Cartmel 2007), young people herald the future of these places in many ways, and they negotiate the complexities of globalisation in their everyday lives. Social media technologies constitute a particularly intimate harbinger of globalisation for young people, linking ready, immediate access to virtual information and data flows from across the globe.

In this thesis I am concerned with the question of place in the context of these contemporary developments. In particular, I am interested in how place is configured, and how it is subjectively considered, experienced, and talked about by young people. I am focused on how place is 'made' and how it comes to be something of meaning in everyday lives. The voices of young people in regional areas have been neglected in some quarters (Pini, Morris and Mayes 2016, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016), despite the importance of these perspectives for illustrating the making of late-modern places. As such, this thesis explores the place-making projects of a diverse group of young, regional residents in country Victoria, Australia. An expansive approach is taken in order to capture a rich, detailed interpretation of place in the context of everyday lives. Common sense stereotypes, characterisations and assumptions proscribing young people's construction of regional place are problematized and set aside for a more nuanced account of place in contemporary, globalised times.

This study seeks to improve current understandings of youthful place-making in a regional context. It draws on, and enhances, a diverse range of theoretical and empirical perspectives from across youth studies, rural sociology, human geography and media studies. Place-making is an opaque and complex mechanism that is constantly in process. This requires a nuanced analysis of the complex, interconnected processes that work together to engender socially constructed places. By undertaking such analysis, this thesis aims to improve

knowledge and understandings which can be deployed across different policy, government and academic domains sharing an interest in young people, and Australia's regional towns, to improve the experiences of communities in these areas.

What is place in the context of this study?

The importance of gaining an understanding of place emerges as a central starting point in light of the disrupting influence of globalisation, and the changing relationship between people and place (Gupta and Ferguson 2001, Massey 2005, Appadurai 1996, Nayak 2009). However, the ontological issue of how place is conceived arises. Throughout the thesis, a set of assumptions have been made in this regard. These are situated within a social constructivist paradigm informing the way in which place is understood and made visible for analysis. In light of expansive literature asserting that place extends well beyond the physical plane, a more interpretivist approach is used in this study (Massey 2005, Cresswell 2012, Thrift 2008). According to this perspective, place is constructed collectively by people, and they draw on a range of practices and discourses to share group-based understandings of local place (see Benson and Jackson 2012). In order to ascertain these collective understandings, researchers solicit people's interpretations of local place. These include collective discourses, or ways of talking about, and characterising, particular places (Blokland 2009, Appadurai 1996), as well as more phenomenological accounts of bodily relationships with place (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, Seamon 1979, Tuan 1979, Thrift 2008). These constructions of place are enacted in various ways, including through talk or discussion between groups, use and occupation of particular places, as well as practices and habits that are performed. As such, these serve to form and construct a subjective sense of place that is held as meaningful among those who reside there. In this thesis, I will frame these constructions as the central unit of analysis and use them as a means to explore what place is, and how it is made in the context of change.

It is incumbent at this point to acknowledge that there are different approaches to place and place-making that is best articulated early in the thesis. One form of place-making can be interpreted as a deliberate, self-conscious process. This is more common in architecture, or design literature that looks at the built environment as the primary locus of place-making. In this context, shaping aspects of material surroundings serve to manufacture a sense of place

(Freestone and Liu 2016). Such forms of place-making emerge in the context of regeneration of communities in decline, such as in "community building, sustainable design, public realm planning, public art, rights to the city and place branding" (Freestone and Liu 2016: 8). It is this type of place-making that is perhaps more commonly referred to. The primary concern of this thesis is another form of place-making. This emerges as a more un-self-conscious, in-the-background, process (Freestone and Liu 2016, Massey 2005). Here, place emerges as a mutual construction, simultaneously made by people residing in and moving through it. Further, it is thoroughly a social construction, and given meaning through social action (Massey 2005). In this thesis, I draw on an interdisciplinary suite of theoretical approaches, from among human geography, sociology, youth studies, rural sociology and media studies. This reflects a need to adequately analyse the complex, messy and obscured phenomenon of place-making in contemporary, late-modern times.

The importance of diverse understandings of place

The changes associated with globalisation, including the increased movement of people, perceived impacts on regional places specifically, and the potential dis-embedding role of digital technologies. All of these have significant and diverse impacts on local place. Those who reside in regional towns have a crucial role in constructing and making local place, and young people in particular share a vital part in this. Attempts to understand these influences and changes impacting place involve assumptions about youthful, regional places that require further interrogation. For instance, these often convey expectations of a universal, youthful experience in the regions, whilst portraying young people's lives in non-urban places as removed from the effects of globalisation (see Hogan 2004, Rye 2006). Dualistic divisions separating the 'rural' from the 'urban' are borne out in clear ways within these discourses (see Hogan 2004). The potential of newer post-industrial developments and technologies, including digital technologies, serves as a panacea for many of these ill-effects in discourses concerning young people in the countryside. Such approaches rely on deterministic understandings of the transcendent potential of digital technologies (see for example Gross 2007, Blanchard et al. 2008, Ei Chew et al. 2011) for helping young people to overcome information and knowledge deficits during key transitional phases (see Valentine and Holloway 2001, Vogl et al. 2016).

One example that neatly encapsulates the deterministic thinking in regards to young rural and regional people is demonstrated in the policy initiative known as the 'Digital education revolution' (DER) (Department of Education and Training 2013). The initiative characterises young, non-urban people as disadvantaged and for whom issues of access can be alleviated through the provision of digital technologies. The DER is "an intervention designed to generate an immediate, large-scale boost to enhance the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into teaching and learning in Australian schools" (DEEWR 2013). In 2008, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace relations committed more than $2.1 billion to the program. Continuing into 2016, the project included investment in digital resources, and hardware for schools, infrastructure, as well as professional development for teachers.

Speaking to the impacts of the Government sponsored 'Digital Education Revolution', a report conducted by the Digital Education Advisory Group states that:

> The walls of the classroom and the home have been expanded by social media, the cloud, wikis, podcasts, video-conferencing etc. These are new learning environments and they are local, national and global and populated by whole communities in addition to family, teachers and friends…We need to harness the transformative potential of digital technology to support new approaches to innovative learning centred around the development of 21st Century (Digital Education Advisory Group 2013: 2)

Here, geographic borders are dissolved, while the global, the national and the local are collapsed. Digital media is cast as an educative panacea capable of 'transforming' young people and their apparently unrealised learning potential. While the DER initiative concerns all young people irrespective of geographic location, the deterministic assumptions certainly permeate into non-urban areas. Indeed, a recent injection of funds from the Victorian government sought to improve the DER in rural and regional areas specifically. A press release issued by the Victorian Premier's department stated that this was to "level the playing field so that students and teachers outside of our cities aren't left behind" (Premier of Victoria 2017). This thesis problematises a set of assumptions conceiving uncritical, deterministic

impacts of technologies on youthful lives. Informed by those who live there, this thesis has a remit to facilitate a nuanced understanding of the relationship between people and place.

Australia is a country with a relatively small, although geographically dispersed non-urban community. Accommodating the diverse needs of a population spread across remote, rural, regional and peri-urban contexts becomes complex. Concerns in regards to accessing key services, including health, education or employment, are an issue for the broader national community. Indeed, key questions related to Australia's economy, and food security, are often linked with the sustainability, and the enduring success of its rural towns (Davie 2015). Maintaining robust rural and agricultural sectors obliges strong government support to safeguard the future of non-urban communities. Under this remit, many policy initiatives focus on young people, and their transitional pathways into education and employment (Davie 2015).

Therefore, with policies and initiatives aiming to alleviate some of the negative impacts of living 'beyond the metropole' for young people (Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006, see for example, DEEWR 2013), it is ever important to gain a faithful rendering of regional places. Without a nuanced understanding of these places, including a focus on their construction according to the perspectives of young people who live there, policies designed to assist in the provision of access, and the alleviation of disadvantage are vulnerable to failure (see for example Alston and Kent 2003 on educational disadvantage, Halsey 2009 on rural education and sustainability, Quine et al. 2003 on health care access). Owing to the funding that invariably is directed towards the realisation of such initiatives (see for example in relation to health AIHW 2016, education Budget.gov 2009-10, telecommunications infrastructure Budget.gov 2010-11), a more informed, judicious approach is vital. Although this thesis does not consider policy or policy-making in depth, the findings of this research could nonetheless be used to inform the development of policy and clarify understandings of key areas of concern, such as young people, regional places, and social media technologies.

Clarifying regional places

Given my focus in this thesis on a particular form of place, that is, regional place, it is crucial to clarify what is referred to by this terminology. In rural studies literature, there is extensive debate as to how rural, or non-urban places should be conceptualised. In spite of this, spatial concepts such as ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ persist in strong ways (Amin and Thirft 2002, Bell and Osti 2010). These spaces emerge not so much as absolute, discrete geographic territories, but rather as heterogeneous, pluralistic spaces, problematic to define according to dichotomous conceptions opposing rural from urban. The rural is thus “never the same everywhere and at every time” (Bell and Osti 2010: 201).

The debate often begins by highlighting and critiquing tendencies to ascribe a rarefied version of rural or regional space (Heley and Jones 2012, Halfacree 1993). Definitions based on descriptive or structural parameters, for example, by population or industry, have been criticised, as have traditional signifiers such as distance from urban places. Any ‘scalar’ or ‘linear models’ used to classify place are also deemed inadequate (see Heley and Jones 2012). This is because these definitions ultimately do not provide a thorough account of what these places are and what they are not (see Amin and Thrift 2002). Still, the descriptive concepts are relied upon in modernist, structural accounts of place (see government indicators ARIA 2014, AIHW 2004).

In response to these conceptual and definitional problems, this thesis adopts broad terms including ‘regional’, and ‘non-urban’ to encompass a range of loosely defined spaces, including rural and outer-suburban. Accordingly, I draw on a significant body of work focussing on, and conducted in, settings specified as ‘rural’. In a similar fashion, there is a considerable body of work that defines itself as ‘urban’ centric that is also useful in the context of my analysis. There is some work that fits between these two categories, including a focus on the suburban (see for example Wise 2005, Wise and Velayutham 2013, Nobel 2009), smaller cities (see for example deFinney 2010), and regional (see for example Harris and Wyn 2009). Such a spread of scholarship across a range of place-categories is hardly surprising given the extensive research dedicated to achieving an understanding of what these places are. Within this body of literature there is a host of locales that could variously be defined as rural, regional or suburban depending on the disciplinary orientation of the author and the parameters that are applied. Nonetheless, some type of descriptive term remains

necessary (see Amin and Thrift 2002). For this reason, while this inquiry is ostensibly concerned with regional towns, a broader understanding of these spaces is employed in this thesis to gain a thorough accounting of the dynamics of these places.

Place in the context of change

Underscoring debates about the nature of place are questions concerning how it might be changing over time. Looming large over such discussions is the increasingly prominent and visible impact of globalisation on everyday lives. Some conceive positive changes (see for example Besley 2010), or conversely, see globalisation as representative of increased social exclusion and inequality (see for example, Room 1999), while others caution for a more circumspect consideration of the role of globalisation (see for example, Massey 2005). In terms of the relationship between globalisation and place, Relph (1993:25) heralds the 'death' of local place and conceives the impacts of globalisation as rendering "place …(as) just another form of nostalgia…" Here, locally specific, and meaningful places become a mere memory in light of the homogenising sway of globalisation. Responses to such an extreme position vary, although concerns arise from communities decrying the impacts of changes to regional places specifically (see for example Mann 2010). Indeed, responses based on a sense 'loss' in terms of local place are reflected in different domains (see in Osbaldiston 2010 on amenity migrants, or Duxbury and Campbell 2011 on community regeneration projects). Such anxiety is demonstrated in attempts to capture, and hold on to a nostalgic sense of place (see Osbaldiston 2010). In many ways, the existential anxiety that emerges when relationships with place are seen to be threatened speaks to the core importance of place in everyday lives.

One clear example of this in Australia is the rising phenomenon of amenity migration, otherwise known as 'tree-change', or 'sea-change' (Osbaldiston 2010, Burnley and Murphy 2004). These terms refer to the recent trend of people moving out of metropoles like Melbourne and Sydney to the countryside. Motivated by an existential search for "the seeds of the past" (Osbaldiston 2010: 246), amenity migrants seek a 'simpler' way of life closer to perceived traditional values and the aesthetically pleasing surrounds of places outside of the city. Financial concerns can also play a role, with costs of living lessened outside of the city. Popularly conceived in dichotomous terms, the 'city' comes to be associated with modern,

globalised, fast-paced lives, while non-urban places conversely represent a slower pace of life, un-disturbed by globalisation (see also Hogan 2004). In many ways, this trend represents the search for a sense of meaning seen to have been lost in the busy, "inauthentic, stressful" and unforgiving global city (Osbaldiston 2010: 248). This search takes people to country areas beyond the city limits where the impacts of a global, modern life are presumably lessened.

The amenity migration trend in Australia is salient as a reflection of the role of place, specifically regional or rural place, in people's lives. However, rural-urban migration patterns are much more complex than implied in the migration pattern associated with amenity migrants, and encompass a range of motivations (see Woods 2016). In many ways, the complexity of these migration trends serves to counter many of the nostalgic imaginaries of rural places untouched by the vagaries of globalisation. For example, the narrative of stasis and isolation associated with rural and regional places is contradicted by the international migration flows that intersect non-urban places. While migrant communities have traditionally been concentrated in urban centers (see Schiller and Simsek-Caglar 2011) settlement patterns in the global countryside are increasingly diverse (Woods 2007, Woods 2016). Secondly, the out-migration of young people from regional towns, and others seeking educative, and employment opportunities in urban places, is another dynamic of rural-urban migration (Alston 2004, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016).

In addition to migration trends, globalisation is epitomised by social media technologies. With high utilisation rates across Australia[1], digital technologies serve as a reminder of the shrinking world, in their ability to deliver ready access to information flows from a range of cultural and national contexts (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Nayak 2009). Indeed, in many ways, globalising flows serve to collapse geographic boundaries, and thus shrink a subjective sense of distance and geographic discreteness (Nayak 2009). As a result, under the contemporary conditions of globalisation, place is seen to have changed irrevocably. In the context of disturbance and change such as this Moores (2012) argues that place-making processes can be more clearly demonstrated and articulated. This is because making places is one of many "typically unnoticed feature(s) of being-in-the-world" (Moores and Metykova 2010:185) that becomes more readily visible when disrupted.

[1] Usage rates are higher in urban places, 88% of households compared to 79% in remote or very remote households, ABS 2014-15

In spite of challenges concerning geographic isolation, or rising opportunities associated with access to the internet, romanticised characteristics associated with country and regional place (see Matthews et al. 2000) continues to attract city to rural amenity migration (Osbaldiston 2010). This phenomenon speaks to the complex shifting nature of regional place, and subjective interpretations that differ across a range of structural parameters, alongside more individualised, or intimate experiences of place. As such, it is problematic to quantify the impacts of globalisation on place, nor the differential distribution of such impacts, or people's subjective sense of their relationships with place (Massey 2005). Indeed, constructions of place change significantly over time, and vary across demographic populations, including younger and older people, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, as well as according to gender and socio-economic positioning (see Massey 2005).

Focusing on young people

This thesis narrows the remit of regional residents' place-making practices to those enacted by young people in particular. Young people consistently emerge in scholarly literature, policy discourse and mass media representations considering rural and regional places, particularly in discussions of problems, disadvantage and the sustainability of these places (see for example, Alston 2004, Geldens 2007, O'Connor 2015). In some ways, young people come to represent opportunities to alleviate disadvantage and resolve problems associated with rural towns. In this thesis, I aim to problematise universalising characterisations of young people that pervade much of this discourse, whilst applying a nuanced approach to many of the tropes associated with non-urban places.

To this end, a relatively expansive interpretation of youth (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Cieslik 2003) including those in late secondary school, as well as in the succeeding years (16-29 years) was applied in this study. This extended age range encompasses many of the transitional phases that characterise youth in late-modern times, including finishing compulsory secondary school, efforts at securing casual or full-time employment, moving to independent living arrangements, or sourcing tertiary education opportunities (Tyyska 2005, see Roberts 2003). The perspectives of a diverse range of young people living in regional communities are featured centrally in this thesis.

Situated at the nexus of social change, young people's voices and opinions provide an opportunity to forecast the impacts of broader social change (Furlong and Cartmel 2007, Aitken 2001, Holm 2005). Those born in the last 30 years have experienced a unique milieu of cultural, economic and global transformation that cannot be easily compared with earlier generations' pathways to adulthood (White and Wyn 2004). Impacts of these transformations have been linked to a deregulated youth labour market, greater emphasis on skill development and post-secondary education, as well as increasingly indirect pathways from education to employment (White and Wyn 2004). These are changes which scholars associate with growing levels of uncertainty, unpredictability and risk in early life pathway formation (Dwyer and Wyn 2001, see also Beck 1986). Young people's perspectives and experiences provide insights into processes of contemporary social change of which they are a part. Indeed, "in both industrial and late industrial societies…the young generation is seen as an important actor taking part in the transformation of the present and heralding the future" (Bendit 2008: 36).

It is incumbent to note that understandings of 'youth', and what is entailed in the category are variable, and not universal. Post-modernist approaches in youth studies are increasingly doubtful of chronological age as an adequate indicator of youth status. Instead, young people are increasingly considered in heterogeneous terms, in which power structures are acknowledged and individual choices and struggles are accounted for (White and Wyn 1998). As such, there has been a broadening of what is commonly referred to as 'youth' (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Cieslik 2003). The category of 'youth' is applied to a wider range of ages than ever before. This is related to changes in the labour market, in public policy, welfare as well as a broader cultural change (Cieslik and Simpson 2013). Further, colloquial references to 'youth' testify to the contested nature and flexibility of age categories as key indicators of youth status (Tyyska 2005, Aitken 2001). For the industrialised west, 'youth' encompasses individuals in their 'teens' such as 13-19 years, as well as into their 20s and older. Understandings and definitions of the term 'youth' that fail to account for complex nuances inherent in the experience have been accused of being unnecessarily homogenising. In the manner of White and Wyn's 'contextual' approach framed within societal structures and individual agency (1998, see also White and Wyn 2004), Aitken (2001) conceptualises being young in more relational terms. Here, young lives are 'positioned' according to the places in which they reside (Hall and Lashua 2009).

Like others within youth studies (see for example Harris and Wyn 2009), I use the concept 'late-modernity' to refer to the post-1980s period that is characterised by a growing emphasis on young people's voices and youthful agencies. The rising position of digital technologies, and new modes of consumption are central features of late-modernity. Ultimately, the period is underscored by a post-structuralist world-view in which previous theories used to understand young people and social change are increasingly irrelevant (France 2009). Therefore, in late modern times, digital technologies and migration patterns problematise youthful engagement with local places by seemingly removing them from such places, both physically and virtually (see Wellman, Boase and Chen 2002). These processes, linked with broader globalising trends, complicate young regional residents' relationship with local place, and shapes their place-making projects. In this murky, opaque context, a need arises to clarify regional places under contemporary conditions of globalisation, and to articulate the ways in which they become meaningful and important among young people in particular.

Therefore, this thesis explores constructions of place beyond the city in a regional town, and challenges dichotomised assumptions about the differential impacts of globalisation outside of the metropole (see Gorman-Murray, Waitt and Gibson 2012, Hogan 2004). The subjective sense of change and flux in relation to place constitutes a backdrop for the current study, forming a framing mechanism for discussing the construction of a regional Australian town. The voices and perspectives of young residents in this place are propelled to the forefront of analysis as a means to reveal the place-making mechanisms deployed to construct *their* regional place. This is necessary because young people's perspectives in the country are marginalised and oft-times neglected, but their lives are heterogeneous and not necessarily lived according to traditional conceptual binaries (see Pini, Morris and Mayes 2016). Further, the findings of my study constitute a valuable extension of the diverse literature in this area by incorporating a range of theoretical and empirical perspectives from across youth studies, rural sociology, human geography and media studies. The insights gained will engender novel understandings of an opaque, and complex process that is invariably constantly under construction. And these can be usefully deployed across a range of domains sharing an interest in young people, and Australia's regional towns, including researchers, or policy-makers.

Chapter Outline

The following chapters outline this study of how place in a regional Australian town is constructed by its youthful residents. Following the introduction chapter, the first two chapters of the thesis review literature and theory that informs, and guides the analysis. The aim of chapter two is to review theoretical literature on the relationship between globalisation and place, and to position the tension arising from this as the cornerstone of change and flux on which the thesis is based. Theoretical approaches to place that inform the thesis are reviewed, including more experiential relationships between people and place. The second half of the chapter departs from constructions of place 'beneath' representation, towards a more immediately visible means of making place. This includes discursive constructions, and talking about places by drawing on dominant discourses about non-urban and rural place, as well as more practice-based dimensions of making place.

Chapter 3 situates the thesis within research interrogating sociological constructions of youth and social media technologies. The literature reviewed focuses on youthful constructions of place and localities. A key concept in this thesis, 'micro-territories of the local', emerges from youth studies literature debating the dual impacts of structure and agency (Harris and Wyn 2009). The second half of the chapter aims to position the thesis in the context of social media technologies young people and place. This literature applies a phenomenological lens to highlight the intersecting relationship between bodies, materiality and digitally mediated lives. This chapter establishes the context of youthful place-making under conditions of disruption, with a special focus on social media technology usage.

Chapter 4 presents an overview of the design of the research project. This chapter reviews the constructivist and interpretivist assumptions underpinning the project's methodological framework. Details related to conducting the study are outlined, including recruitment procedures, ethical considerations, data analysis and consent processes. The key methods deployed are reviewed, including justification for, and use of focus groups and questionnaires. The chapter concludes with a summary of the challenges encountered during fieldwork, including research methods that were attempted, but ultimately abandoned.

The first of three analysis chapters, chapter 5 considers how the regional town of Shepparton is made by its young residents. Here, young people's discursive constructions of their town,

responding to stigmatised place-reputations, and their narratives weaving personal experiences with broader place-stereotypes to form a faithful construction of regional place, are analysed. Practice-orientated forms of place-making are also analysed in this chapter. Further, more emotive expressions of place are investigated under a framework that takes into account experiential and embodied relationships with place.

Chapter 6 moves from whole-town constructions of place to place-making focused on more discrete localities throughout Shepparton. It considers young people's constructions of specific places in the community, including neighbourhoods as well as certain public places. Applying and extending the concept of 'micro-territories of the local' (Harris and Wyn 2009), the young respondents structural and agentic traversals are considered as a dimension of their place-making practice. In the final analysis chapter, youthful place-making through the lens of social media technologies is considered.

Chapter 7 explores the making of Shepparton through the lens of social media technologies in both the general, town-level context, and the particular, locality-specific context. The chapter explores place-making as an everyday process as the respondents talk about it in digitally mediated contexts. Intimate, everyday mediating technologies emerged as a key way to negotiate materially embedded social action, and hence, to mediate youthful relationships with regional place.

Finally, the discussion in chapter 8 weaves together the key threads of the thesis established in the backgrounding chapters, and continued in the project's findings. The chapter reviews the findings of the previous three chapters, and considers what they mean in the context of place and place-making. I reflect on the implications of the study in regards to Shepparton, its constituent localities, and the mechanisms through which it comes into being according to the young people who live there.

Conclusion

Given the evolving nature of people's relationships with place under the disruptive conditions of globalisation, it is imperative that nuanced explorations of place, and its construction within sections of the community are conducted. Regional places in particular emerge as

areas for concern among policy-makers and successive Australian governments concerned with protecting strategic areas of the national economy, including resource links and food-security. In many ways, the youthful demographic of regional Australia is positioned to speak to many areas of concern in respect of anticipating the direction of social change. Accounting for, and incorporating their perspectives facilitates an improved understanding of the diverse, and differentiated experiences of social change under the conditions of globalisation. Therefore, this project will provide a detailed exploration of the making of a regional town in south-east Australia. Those among the town's youth cohort who negotiate the intersecting flows of globalisation, while mediating their material and virtual relationships with their town, will be the primary focus of analysis.

Chapter 2: Conceptualising space, place and place-making

A core concern of this thesis on young people's place-making in a regional town is the conceptualisation of place and people's relationship to it. More than the physical surrounds of the built environment or structural interpretations of place (Cresswell 2015), I am focused on the social construction of place. I therefore review a range of theoretical approaches conceptualising the nature of place, people's relationship to it, and how it is made by them. The chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part concerns the relationship between globalisation and place. Assessing the impacts of globalising flows on place over time leads into a discussion of theoretical approaches to space and place across the social sciences. Such approaches frame this thesis and are used to demonstrate place as a socially constructed, complex, and obscured facet of everyday life.

The second part of the chapter reviews non-representational approaches to place-making within human geography literature. These accounts of place highlight socially constructed, heterogeneous dynamics of place and space that will be analysed in this thesis. Experiential, and embodied relationships with place are an extension of humanist accounts of space developed among non-representational theory proponents (Thrift 2007). An additional dynamic in the construction of place involves the ways in which places are made through practice, therefore the role of practical aspects of place-making are highlighted.

The third part of this chapter reviews key discourses that are deployed to narrate experiences of place (see Halfacree and Rivera 2011, Torkington 2012). Appropriating dominant discourses in this way constitutes another important mechanism for making place. This section also traces the dynamics and nature of discourses characterising non-urban and rural places specifically. Finally, an outline of place-making in the context of the preceding discussion is provided. Research focusing on the experiences of young people in particular are privileged in this review (see the work of Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2014ab, 2016, Farrugia 2014, Harris and Wyn 2009, Nayak 2009), although the insights of place and space scholars with broader remits are included to inform the analytical framework.

Part 1: Globalisation and place

Globalisation has had, and continues to have an important impact on place, particularly in regards to people's relationship with place, and hence on place-making. Globalisation is widely understood as the movement of people, products and ideas flowing at global level but impacting places and communities at a local level. Globalisation represents a shrinking world in which time and space do not act as barriers in the same way as previously. In many ways, "globalisation comes to represent the crystallization of the entire world into a single space" (Nayak 2009: 4). This process occurs through the linking of the world via 'thin networks' which connect diverse places because under the conditions of globalisation "nowhere can be an 'island'" (Sheller and Urry 2006: 209). Appadurai (1996) conceptualises the movement of various material and intangible flows on a global level as a series of –scapes. These are loosely grouped around the transnational flow of people, media images, technologies, economic resources and ideas. My thesis adopts this broad conception of globalisation whereby the movement of various types of flows traverse transnational boundaries to have a tangible impact on local and individual levels.

While the speed at which global flows occur is faster, greater and more wide-reaching than ever, movement of people, materials and ideas between places is not a recent, nor a linear phenomenon (Woods 2007, Massey 2005). However, the conditions of globalisation associated with the 20th and early 21st centuries is worthy of note and attracts significant scholarly attention because of its unprecedented scale and impact (Woods 2007). In the "massively globalized" contemporary world, the distance between people is re-negotiated across expansive, irregular territories (Appadurai 1996: 9). Due to the relatively intense concentration and saturation of global flows, the contemporary context shares little historical comparison (Appadurai 1996). Significant technological developments and the distribution of electronic mass media constitute a major impact (Appadurai 1996). For this reason, the widespread presence of social media technologies in youthful lives both within, and outside of the city, is considered an intimate form of access to global information flows. The effect of intense human mobilities has implications for connections between people, place and culture at all levels, including rural, regional and urban (Massey and Jess 1995). While global flows have intersected local place for some time, spatial categories such as 'rural' or

'urban' become disrupted under the corrupting influence of more recent globalisation processes. Much research has been produced to make sense of the impact of such disruptions.

Traditionally, bounded, geographic locales have been seen as indelibly linked to a homogenous cultural and ethnic group of people (Crang 1998). This is especially the case in non-urban and regional places thought to be less touched by the disruptive flows of globalisation (Hogan 2004). Previous work not taking into account changes associated with globalisation has assumed an inherent, inalienable rootedness of particular peoples within particular places, ethnicities and cultures (Gupta and Ferguson 2001, Massey 2005). Globalisation contests and challenges such relationships between place, people, identity and difference. Massey (2005: 81) describes disruptive impacts as amounting to the "total unfettered mobility of free unbounded space" (see also Appadurai 1996). These interpretations conceive a wholesale disconnection of people and place, where movement across territories previously understood as bounded, and interconnected, is now totally uninhibited (Relph 1993, 1976): "Indeed, in a world of multi-national corporations, universal planning practices and instantaneous global communications, we have to take seriously that argument that sense of place is just another form of nostalgia and that places are obsolete" (Relph 1993: 25).

The impacts of globalising flows are conceptualised by some in dichotomous terms, and seen to be mutually excluded from the retainment of unique local place at one end, and free, unbounded homogenised space at the other. In this sense, there is one or the other, but not both together (Southworth and Ruggeri 2010). Conceptions of 'unfettered mobility', consistent with notions of 'free unbounded space', also point to global flows and speculate on the potential 'damage' which can occur as a result of these. The presence of such flows, it is feared, serves to homogenise previously distinct, unique local places and people (Hannerz 1996).

Despite early fears that increasing rates of globalisation might result in a homogenisation of cultural and ethnic difference, the reality is more complex. Global flows do permeate local places (Woods 2007). Examples from non-urban contexts include flows in the form of human migration across rural Australia (Hugo 2008), greater access to information flows via digital media (Valentine and Holloway 2001), or the movement of jobs and industries into, or

out of, particular regions (Lashua and Kelly 2008). However, rather than engendering radical cultural modification, flows from across the globe have been moulded according to local cultural parameters. Therefore, while changes have occurred, these have not necessarily been consistent with those fears of wholesale cultural and ethnic homogenisation (Nayak 2009). For example, access to global information flows in the form of social media technologies among young people in rural England were interpreted and utilised within the embedded, culturally and socially specific context of their everyday lives (Valentine and Holloway 2001). With others, Massey (2005) cautions against deterministic assumptions and advocates for a relational understanding of globalised spaces and the role people have in their construction.

Globalisation has also been conceived as reconfiguring, rather than dismantling, relationships between places and the people who inhabit them. Cultural, ethnic and spatial differences persist in spite of increased movements of people and other flows between places: “every similarity hides more than one difference...similarities and differences conceal one another indefinitely” (Appadurai 1996: 11). Global resources are appropriated by different groups, but in ways that are highly culturally, linguistically and historically distinct (Appadurai 1996). Such responses to globalisation, and reconfigurations between people and place have been demonstrated in non-urban places and the young people who live there (Woods 2007).

Theories of globalisation and its impacts have been critiqued for an abundance of “flow-speak”, with references to media ‘flows’ or economic ‘flows’, and “…the abstracted, placeless analysis that this (approach) engenders” (Bude and Durrschmidt 2010: 482). Bude and Durrschmidt (2010: 482) argue that this produces the “technological annulment of spatial distance”. Such approaches to globalisation neglect rich layers of everyday, place-based experiences in which both global and local concerns feature (Bude and Durrschmidt 2010: 482). This synthesis is what makes the impact of globalisation among young people in regional Australian towns diverse and uneven. Indeed “closer inspection (of its impact) reveals a glass that is patchy and spread unevenly by the surfaces, ridges and contours of locality and identity” (Nayak 2009: 4).

Under the disruptive conditions of globalisation, localities provide a source of meaning, authenticity or identity for those that occupy and move within spaces (Massey 2005). One example lies in identifying with the hybridised, global neighbourhoods homes of migrants,

and diversity. Indeed, Williamson (2016) found a robust demonstration of everyday rhythms in a multicultural Sydney suburb. In her regular participant observation, she identified a series of diverse micro-processes and pluralised expressions of "spatial legitimation" within the suburb (Williamson 2016: 38, see also Wise 2013). Drawing on a phenomenological approach informed by Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis, Williamson identifies several "alternating rhythms" in people's everyday movements through a Sydney suburb. This included what she terms "rhythms of appropriation" which referred to the making of place through an acknowledgement of the ethnic and cultural diversity in the suburb. However, there was some uncertainty and a lack of clarity in conceiving of space and place in a consistent way among the study respondents. This uncertainty was linked to those migratory flows, and diaspora communities that characterised the locality, and alluded to the culturally embedded ways that place is made in globalised spaces.

Williamson's (2016) findings illustrate the messiness and complexity associated with investigating place under the conditions of globalisation. Processes of globalisation clearly intersect place, and have profound impacts on how people relate to place. However, despite much theorising and research into the nature of these changes and impacts, it is not always clear how people's relationship with place is altered under the conditions of globalisation. This is especially the case for young people in regional places. This is a segment of the regional population whose relationships with local place, and involvement with global flows intersecting place, evoke many of the problematic assumptions about globalisation and its impacts. This will be explored in the next chapter. Moving from the topic of globalisation, the following section addresses research dealing with the challenge of conceiving of places and spaces in contemporary, globalised times.

Part 2: Conceiving space and place

In this section, I clarify how place is conceptualised in this thesis, how it differs from the similar concept of 'space', and how it is understood in in relational terms more broadly. More phenomenological approaches to place, and place-making are reviewed, followed by practice-based, and discursive constructions of place. These diverse approaches to conceiving place directly inform how this thesis frames place-making as a practice, and ultimately how it will be operationalised in my analysis.

Firstly, place differs somewhat from the similar, sometimes synonymous concept of space. Where space tends to be conceptualised in more abstract terms, place is given meaning and value over time as it becomes more familiar to those who reside within it (Tuan 1979, Cresswell 2015). Links to individual people or particular communities, practices, objects or representations, are more commonly thought of as being ascribed to places than they are to more abstract spaces (Gieryn 2000). Adopting an alternative perspective, Appadurai (1996) distinguishes between space and place using different terms. 'Locality' roughly equates to the abstractness of space described by Gieryn (2000, see also Cresswell 2015), while also taking on the relationality, and fluid fragility of Massey's (2005) understanding of space. For Appadurai (1996) localities are contextual, and constructed via a series of complex interlinking rather than discrete, bounded 'field sites'. Localities are understood more as "figures" characterised by fragility and historical context (Appadurai 1996: 181). Equated more with place are 'neighbourhoods', which refer to those "actually existing social forms" or communities of people who reside in localities (Appadurai 1996: 179). Space has also been conceived in terms of freedom of movement and openness: "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 1979: 6).

A variety of scholars similarly conceive of place as the material manifestation of locations, variously understood cultural spaces occupied and reproduced by particular groups (see Clayton 2009, Butcher and Thomas 2003). However, conceptual divisions separating 'place' from 'space' have been critiqued (Merrifield 1993). Indeed, boundaries separating space and place are blurred, and so they can be usefully defined in relational terms (as in Appadurai 1996).

In terms of the twin concepts of space and place, this thesis resists any strict categorical divisions. Rather, after Appadurai (1996), and others (including Massey 2005), this thesis adopts a more relational approach to place. This is an approach that does not necessarily eschew the abstractness, and openness more closely associated with the concept of space. Rather, it is firmly rooted in examining the "social forms" reproduced by people through their material practices.

As well as the term 'space', the concepts 'place' and 'community' share many aspects. While the concept of 'community' has a long history within sociology, it has fallen out of favour more recently. Nonetheless, the word has an enduringly "powerful position as a term denoting social connection and shared experience" (Panelli, Nairn and McCormack 2002: 111). Critiques relate to the implied homogenisation of difference within social groups, and the static, ahistorical implications in the use of 'community' (Panelli, Nairn and McCormack 2002). Still, its revival under the analytically rigorous work of Liepins (2000a,b) have made for a nuanced, sophisticated term that eschews many of the criticisms and challenges that lead to its fall from use. Liepins (2000a,b) calls for a re-focus on the concept of community, and outlines a framework describing key themes.

Deployment of Liepins (2000a,b) newly developed concept of community reveals similarities with the concept of place as it has been developed in this thesis. Parallels are present insofar as "spaces and structures of 'community'" direct attention to "spaces and structures (that) are mediums through which material and metaphorical embodiment of 'community' can be read and traced for the meanings, activities and social relations displayed" (Liepins 2000a: 32). Though just one of the pillars outlined by Liepins, this refers to those physical locales, like schools, parks, commercial precincts, where people get together to engage in community forms of practice. Crucially however, community is not necessarily geographically based, even if it often is. Indeed, it can refer to "imagined communities of nations, and alternative or counter-culture communities…" (Liepins 2000a: 32) in which geography plays a minor role.

Given the social construction of place approach adopted in my analysis, the concepts of 'place' and 'community' both highlight social relationships as a key constituent component. However, crucial differences mean that the terms are by no means analogous. Most importantly, place situates the analytical attention on material locality first and foremost. This is the anchor guiding the analytical gaze. On the other hand, the concept of community is primarily concerned with groups of people. While material locations often embed such groups, they are not the defining feature. Indeed, communities can expand beyond physical locality and encompass material sites beyond immediate locales to include symbolically defined spaces (Liepins 2000a)

Therefore, given the focus of this thesis on material localities, and the richness of the concept of ‘place’ and ‘place-making’ as a means to illuminate the intersection between people and physical locales, I will focus on ‘place’ rather than ‘community. While the term ‘community’ is deployed, it will be under a more “minimalist” paradigm. This refers to a form of use whereby the social field is understood contextually, and in a broad sense without taking into account the extensive theoretical and critical history of the concept (see explanation in Liepins 2000a).

Relational, everyday places

Everyday life approaches to place and place-making are important in this thesis. This is because these approaches enable a rich, nuanced analysis that reveals some of the difficult to scrutinise aspects of the place-making process. Everyday life is not merely the “transparent realm” (Highmore 2002: 1) consisting of pedestrian, seemingly unimportant detail. For some, everyday life is constituted by the “the performance of banal routines” (Kalekin-Fishman 2013: 724). It has been described as consisting of “what is left over…(after the) superior, specialised, structured activities have been singled out for analysis” (Lefebvre paraphrased in Highmore 2002: 3). Although reminiscent of post-structuralist approaches which seek to dismantle and put aside grand narrative and identify overlooked aspects of social life, everyday life approaches diverge from these theoretical orientations. An everyday life approach deliberately focuses on a broad range of social phenomena, enabling researchers to ‘make visible’ some of the ‘invisible’ aspects of the everyday (Highmore 2002: 1, see also Madriz 2011). These constitute something in need of exploration (Elden 2004).

Place-making is one such mundane, everyday process that is relatively difficult to pin down for analysis (see Moores 2012). Explorations of those pedestrian, seemingly unimportant aspects of place, and its construction among those who live there, constitutes an opportunity to move beyond common research pathways focusing on more ‘spectacular’ youthful lives, in marginal rural locales (see Cieslik 2003, Roberts 2011). Instead, the ‘unspectacular’ lives of young people getting on with their lives, making place in seemingly unremarkable ways, can be explored through the everyday life, place-making lens.

Alongside everyday life perspectives on studies of society, are relational approaches to understanding space, as advocated by Massey (2005), Lefebvre (1991) and Amin and Thrift (2002) (see also Appadurai 1996, Heley and Jones 2012, Halfacree 1993, Woods 2007). This type of approach has been deployed in a range of research agendas (Rye 2006, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2014a, Amin and Thrift 2002, Goodwin-Hawkins 2014, Walsh 2012). Collectively referred to as the 'relational turn' within rural sociology and social geography, it relates to a movement from structuralist descriptive understandings of particular places towards a growing recognition of their increasingly connected, socially and culturally constructed nature (Heley and Jones 2012). As in everyday life perspectives, the increasing influence of post-modern and post-structuralist stances are clear in the relational approach (see for example Massey 2005, Heley and Jones 2012, Woods 2007).

In plain terms, relational places are understood according to what they are, while being defined by what they apparently are not. This is because such places are "opposed to something else and derive from other, already produced" places (Appadurai 1996: 183). The term 'relational' has become a shorthand means to refer to this approach. Relationality is demonstrated in understandings of place based less on absolute criteria, such as pre-defined population or structural parameters, or specific distances from other places, and more on perceived similarities with other familiar places. That is, a town might be understood as 'rural' because it is relatively smaller, and more distant from larger cities, but not as 'remote' because there are other even more distant localities that residents are familiar with. Relational understandings of places will be utilised throughout this thesis as a means to conceptualise common place-categories such as regional and non-urban locales among those who live and participate in the making of regional places.

Making experiential place

Experiential, felt sensations implicated through being in, and constructing place constitute another key form of place-making. This perspective is introduced here as a means to expose, and theorise some of the more difficult to articulate aspects of young people's place-making project in regional areas. Within the disciplinary perspective of human geography, Thrift (2007), Tuan (1979) and Seamon (1979) have drawn out those embodied dynamics of being in place. Here, material worlds are not created independently from those who occupy them

(Anderson and Harrison 2010), rather they are formed when they are occupied by people (Massey 2005, Indold 2000). There is a "person-place bond" that links humans and the environment that they occupy in impactful ways (Seamon 1979: 9). According to Tuan (1979: 8), 'experience' encompasses "the various modes through which a person knows and constructs reality", of which place constitutes a key component. Indeed, experiential data in the form of interpretations gathered from the physical senses and emergent 'feelings' associated with being 'in place' play an important role: "how people feel about space and place, to take into account the different modes of experience (sensorimotor, tactile, visual, conceptual), and to interpret space and place as images of complex – often ambivalent – feelings" (Tuan 1979: 6). The full spectrum of the body's senses, including taste, touch, smell, visual as well as more mediated perceptions via the interpretation of symbols in the environment, constitutes the experience of being in, and making place (Tuan 1979).
The role of movement, or specifically walking, also emerges in the experience of being in, and in the making of place. For instance, in the construction of city spaces:

> Their (the city's) 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 kinaesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together (de Certeau 1984: 97).

In a similar vein to Massey's (2005) trajectories through the city, movement within and between places comes to constitute and make territory. Walking is a practice combining movement, embodiment and place that has been analysed by a range of researchers and theorists concerned with the intersection between these components (see de Certeau 1984, Ingold and Vergunst 2008, Williamson 2016). Williamson (2016) applies an explicitly Lefebvrian analysis on walking as a means of making place in her use of rhythmanalysis. As a tool, walking in the city is important because it "both produces, and is produced by urban rhythms" (Williamson 2016: 27). Thick, detailed and visceral descriptions of the interaction, movement and encounter of those around her, illustrate how place is produced by those who occupy it. Respondents engaged in spontaneous interactions in the 'in-between' spaces, and visceral sensations that underscored their place-making included emotions, encounters,

practices or activities such as shopping in commercial precincts (Williamson 2016). It is the embodied experience of moving through space that is of concern here. This is because it is through the body that the sensations described by Williamson (2016, see also NRT approaches such as Thrift 2008, and humanist geographers including Tuan 1979) are experienced and interpreted.

Further, like so many aspects of this inquiry into place-making, walking is another example of a place-making practice that occurs in the background, and is less often noticed or held up as a unit of analysis in social research (Ingold and Vergunst 2008). Indeed, Ingold (2007) conceptualises a wayfarer, who traverses material environments, constructing place as they go. Still, more than a means to move from one point to another, it is the social, or collective experience of walking that is propelled to the fore for Ingold and Vergunst: "Social relations…are not enacted *in situ* but are paced out along the ground" (Ingold and Vergunst 2008: 1). In this case, it is the sociality of the experience that brings meaning, more so than the physical experience of walking itself: "walking … is grounded in an inherently sociable engagement between self and environment" (Lee and Ingold 2006: 68). Deploying such approaches to walking in research contexts, Pink (2008) reflexively analysed her own embodied relationship to the material, social and sensory environment of her research. She reflected on her participation in the making of place by walking throughout the town with others, sharing stories, experiences, and food along the way (Pink 2008).

Seamon (1979) describes how constructions of places by those moving within and between them over time transform into meaningful, important localities forming a 'place-ballet'. A place-ballet is made up of habitual or routine practices and movement. In a similar vein to the approaches to walking described above, Seamon's (1979) perspective accounts for the physical and spatial dimensions of places that are constructed via the "prereflective bodily regularity of routine users" (Seamon 1979: 143). Unlike the walking and movement described by Pink (2008), and Williamson (2016) however, Seamon (1979) conceives a temporally bounded routine honed over time. Place-ballets form, for example, form physically small localities like a room, park, neighbourhood, or a whole town or region. Furthermore, "place ballets can be a bastion of activity in an empty and dull larger landscape, or they may interpenetrate in interlocking, wider wholes to create an environment of vitality, motion and sense of community" (Seamon 1979: 143). For Seamon (1979), the concept of the place-ballet captures how feelings of 'at-homeness' and familiarity within spaces that are

"intimately" known and understood can develop. This idea has been used to conceptualise intersections between material places and those who construct them. For example, older people's formed attachment to their rural homes developed via a process of "social memory practices…via embodied, sensorial registers" (Degnen 2015: 1646). Degnen (2015) draws on the concept of place-ballet to highlight her respondents' "embodied knowing" built up over many years through people's habitual movement within familiar localities. Illustrating respondent's place-ballets, Degen (2015:1655) describes her participant's experiences taking a particular shortcut over time, and the "sensual inhabiting of place" that develops to construct places of meaning and value.

The diverse work examined in this section illustrates how mundane, relational places are experienced through the body, and through the senses. This includes the embodied practice of moving through place, by walking, walking with others or by enacting habitual routines developed and maintained over time. Approaches accounting for the nuanced, and complex intersections of embodiment, materiality and sociality are valuable to my analysis of place-making because they illuminate a key dynamic mediating the relationship between people and place. That is, the emotive, sensory experience of place that constitutes a 'behind-the-scenes', although crucially important means of thinking about, talking about, and ultimately making place.

The theoretical insights that informed these studies can clarify the subtle and nuanced place-making mechanisms deployed by young people in a regional locale, who are the focus of this study. This is the case although the deep sense of history recounted by Degnen's (2015) participants will be less visible in a study focussing on young people. Further, Pink's (2008) reflexive place-making is necessarily informed by her own detail-centric, theoretical awareness of place and therefore will be much less pronounced among a group of non-experts. Nonetheless, the useful application of experiential place-making achieved through the embodied movement through material places examined in these, and others' research (see Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, Tuan 1979, Seamon 1979), is valuable to this thesis. Still, while the context of mobilities, and global processes are perhaps implicitly present in these studies, the setting of flux and change in this thesis represents an additional pathway through which to explore young people's relationship with place, and their construction of regional locales.

Non-representational places

Experiential place-making can also be investigated via an approach loosely termed 'non-representational theory' (NRT). The NRT approach is situated within Deleuze and Guattari's, as well as Spinoza's scholarship (Anderson and Harrison 2010, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, Duffy 2013). NRT is a means of identifying those connections between people and place beyond 'representation', and within more pre-cognitive, pre-discursive affective sensory states. Such perspectives seek to look beneath cognitive articulations associated with 'representation', and to assume a constantly evolving, unstable, 'lively' world mutually shaped by bodies and places.

NRT, like Seamon (1979) and Tuan's (1979) approaches, makes sense of embodied and felt sensations, and ascertains how bodies entangle with material localities in order to make place. Representation, so heavily criticised within this framework, refers to those discursive, aspects of social life (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, Carolan 2008). Representation centric frameworks have been accused of constituting "a conservative, categorical politics of identity and textual meaning" associated with the 'deadening' apparent in more traditional cultural analyses (Lorimer 2005: 83). Focussing on representation is seen to come at the expense of those more embodied, "sensuous processes through which bodies and places come into mutual co-existence" (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016: 2, see also Harrison 2000). Non-representational perspectives seek to look beneath these cognitive processes.

Similar to phenomenological approaches (Seamon 1979, Tuan 1979, Williamson 2016, Pink 2008), physical bodies and their interactions with other human, and non-human bodies, feature centrally in NRT and in place-making processes. As such, "the requirement of having a body, of the ways that the physicality of the body and its actions with (and within) affective states constitute place through dynamic human and non-human relations" (Duffy 2013: 130). Looking at these "embodied knowledges that are imbued in place" makes clear those "non-cognitive processes" in the construction of place (Duffy 2013: 130). Non-representational approaches explore the everyday and mundane practices as well as the affective connections, bodily movement and sensation (Lorimer 2005, see also Anderson and Harrison 2010, Tuan 1979, Seamon 1979). Therefore, it is argued, approaches seeking to eschew representation

provide a means to "better to cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds" (Lorimer 2005: 83). While often held separately (Cresswell 2012) this thesis positions NRT approaches alongside the complementary insights and conceptualisations made by experiential approaches (see Tuan 1979, Seamon 1979).

Exploring rural young people's place-making practices, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison (2016, see also Woods 2010) apply an experiential, NRT focussed approach. This thesis draws on Farrugia and colleagues' (2016) adaption of the NRT approach to analyse the affective, embodied, sensory experiences of bodies in place. Arguing that such experiences inform young people's place-making, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison's work represents an important precedent for the effective use of this theoretical paradigm. The physical bodies of their young respondents do not just 'feel' physical spaces, but they "become spatialised" via the process of producing a sensuous, emotive connection with place. The young participants in Farrugia Smyth and Harrison's (2016) study talked about their rural homes in emotive terms, how they felt when they were there and the sense of 'freedom' and 'pleasure' they experienced. For those same participants, by contrast, being in 'the city' was sensuously experienced and described as a different and 'weird' locale. Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison (2016) analysed these understandings as collectively constructed imaginations of spaces underscored by an affective, sensuous, embodied co-constitution of place. Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison's (2016) young participants' emotive descriptions of place are similar to Soja's (1996) process of 'secondspace' and Lefebvre's 'conceived space' where social space is constructed via the 'imagination', even if Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison's (2016) analysis alludes to a more 'pre-cognitive', rather than 'cognitive', conceptualisation.

An NRT approach can be difficult to operationalise in research contexts. Once articulated and verbally discussed, the process being researched can be said to become representational. This means it is problematic to adequately capture purely non-representational data for analysis (Carolan 2008). However, unlike proponents of NRT, this thesis does not fully eschew representation or discursive modes of knowing. While Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison (2016, see also Woods 2010, Carolan 2008) acknowledge this in their use of talk-based methodology, they nonetheless deploy an explicit NRT-based approach in their analyses. The valuable insights made by NRT proponents like Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison (2016), along with humanist geographers like Tuan (1979), Seamon (1979), and urban theorists such as Soja (1996) are incorporated into a broader, more comprehensive analysis in this thesis.

The approach of this thesis spans experiential, felt sensations of being in, and making place, alongside discursive constructions and other means of talking places into being.

Tuan (1979) develops a similar framework that includes experiential, embodied dimensions of place construction, alongside more discursive modes developed via the interpretation of symbols in the environment. Discursive, structural, and experiential dynamics each constitute key "ways of knowing" (Tuan 1979: 9) in the context of place. The overlap between "… mythical, the pragmatic, and the abstract or the theoretical" occurs because although space or place might be conceived in more abstract terms, the framework of meaning applied to physical aspects of the environment serves to organise practical activities and mediate place-making activities. Tuan (1979) illustrates his discussion using an example from agriculture. He describes relationships of meaning based on pragmatic aspects associated with tilling the soil or engaging in practical agricultural work, and more abstract dynamics associated with conceptual, symbolic-based understanding of places such as via maps used to represent vast places. Following from Tuan (1979) and Soja's (1996) melding of more 'representational', or discursive constructions in the place-making project, the next section will discuss practice-based place-making.

Practicing place

A clear and visible way in which places are made is through a more active form of 'doing place' (Benson and Jackson 2012, Gregson and Rose 2000, Buizer and Turnhout 2011, Hörschelmann and Schäfer 2005, Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015). Introducing the notion of 'performance' provides another in-road into analyses seeking to circumvent those 'taken-for-granted' aspects of making places (Gregson and Rose 2000). In their study on the intersection of class and place-making, Benson and Jackson (2012: 794) argue that "…places are made through repeated everyday actions and interventions that work on both the neighbourhood and the individual." (Benson and Jackson 2012: 794). Drawing on Butler's concept of performativity (see also Gregson and Rose 2000), they demonstrate that the practice of place constitutes a key component of place-making projects. Here, places and subjectivities do not emerge as a pre-existing form, but instead are both shaped and made through the 'doing' of place while drawing on previously established knowledges (Butler paraphrased in Gregson and Rose 2000). During this fragile, complex process, 'slippage'

occurs facilitating movement and change in the reproduction of particular place-based discourses (Gregson and Rose 2000). That is, some elements of place-discourses narrating characteristics associated with different localities can be partially or differentially adopted over time (Gregson and Rose 2000). In this case, the intersections between people and place and the mutual shaping process that emerges can be understood as "…a discursive practice in action" (Benson and Jackson 2012: 796, see also Gregson and Rose 2000, Buizer and Turnhout 2011).

Discursive constructions are present in the form of "circulating representations of place" (Benson and Jackson 2012: 806, see also Gregson and Rose's 'citation practices' in the reproduction of place), and these emerge in the 'doing' of familiar localities. Benson and Jackson (2012) outline the case study of a gentrifying outer London suburb with a working-class history, often associated with disadvantage and crime. Residents drew on pre-existing representations of the suburb to either challenge or further promote such discourses through their place-making practices. For example, middle-class residents new to the suburb orientated themselves in relation to existing discourses regarding disadvantage. They did this by challenging "circulating representations of place" directly, stating that the suburb was not quite as 'bad' as commonly understood (Benson and Jackson 2012: 806). Respondents also established boundaries around certain 'classed' neighbourhood areas. In this way, particular localities could be identified and avoided as a means to ameliorate issues with safety and violence. Ultimately, places were reinscribed, and constructed via "everyday practices, regulatory processes and imaginings" (Benson and Jackson 2012: 798). The 'slippage' referred to by Gregson and Rose (2000, see also Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015) was present among Benson and Jackson's (2012) participants in the place-making process that reflected the gentrification taking place in the neighbourhoods of the suburb. The previously working-class area characterised by social disadvantage had, over time, eschewed this reputation to a certain extent and became a place that middle-class people actively sought out as a desirable location to live.

Therefore, place-making is a discursive, spatial and cultural process, made up of material practices that serve to maintain and reproduce place. These processes are observable in the everyday acts of people and groups seeking to either consciously, or unconsciously make and engender a sense of place (Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015, Buizer and Turnhout 2011). Practices performed as part of place-making processes can include a range of everyday

activities, such as shopping in the local commercial precinct, renovating a property, supporting ‘local’ business, spending time in recreational spaces, or interacting within neighbourhood contexts (Benson and Jackson 2012, Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015). Using performativity as a means to identify and analyse place-making practices in this way allows a conceptualisation of place as not just an identity position as demonstrated in the common statement “I’m a country person”. Instead, the ways in which being from a particular place can be “actualized in place and on the person through mundane processes” (Benson and Jackson 2012: 798) can be revealed, illustrating an additional layer of the place-making process.

Places are made by people both in the ways that they practice or perform them, and in the ways they experience or sense them in their bodies. Crucially, both these forms of place-making occur in the background of everyday experiences and activities. The mundane experiences of being in the material world, of moving within it, and enacting key place-based practices, mould together to illuminate the multiple, complex mechanisms involved in the place-making project. For example, walking to the local shopping strip every Wednesday to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables represents a quintessential place-making process. Firstly, such an activity is a mundane aspect of everyday life (see Ingold and Vergunst 2008). It involves the embodied experience of the material through walking, the sensory inhabitation of the shop full of fruit and vegetables (Williamson 2016, Pink 2008, Tuan 1979), and the enactment of a familiar routine honed over time (Seamon 1979). Further, frequenting the nearby, local shop constitutes a means to participate in local place, and perform a particular vision of it, be it one in which commercial activity occurs close to home, or perhaps the regeneration of a particular precinct (Benson and Jackson 2012, Gregson and Rose 2000). As this brief example demonstrates, the experiential, and non-representational dynamics that mediate people’s relationship with place play a concurrent role alongside more practice-based aspects in place-making projects. The following section discusses discursive constructions of place, one final component in the place-making process considered by this thesis.

Part 3: Discursive places

Discursive understandings of place are another common means to talk about, understand and construct place (Halfacree and Rivera 2011). By discourses I refer to forms of shared narratives about places that convey and reproduce certain knowledge and meanings that ultimately serve to construct places of meaning by those who live and reside there. Social processes are reproduced as cognitive, conscious, rational articulations based on individuals' own backgrounds, or experiences coloured by pre-existing understandings of place (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016). Focussing on the ways in which people talk about place in this way allows an opportunity to examine "the production of meaning in social life" (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates 2001: 3). The study of discourse facilitates an examination of 'stories' that are recounted by people about themselves (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates 2001) and about the places in which they live and move. Discourses amount to more than just descriptions of the environment. Rather, they are key 'social practices' that serve to construct place insofar as it "(re)produces and shapes objects of knowledge…as well as being (re)produced and shaped by them" (Torkington 2012: 75). Discursive constructions of place, and the meaning-making that emerges, are demonstrated by those who reside within localities. Place-making through talk is an approach that has been deployed in a range of research agendas (Trudeau 2006). In relation to ascertaining more felt, experiential or emotive information through talk, Edwards (2001) argues that while verbal articulations of internal emotive states might seem counter-intuitive, emotive talk can actually engender significant insights into experiences, and constructions of the world. Further, the 'enactment' of discursive constructions can be further demonstrated within material contexts, including the built environment or architectural structures (Wodak and Meyer 2016).

Appadurai (1996) agrees that localities are understood through their capacity to be reproduced by those who live and reside in a given locale via the construction and legitimation of 'local knowledge'. Shared knowledge is circulated concerning the construction of localities so that neighbourhoods can be maintained on a long-term basis (Appadurai 1996). According to Appadurai (1996: 181). The long-term nature of this process points to the historical component, the "known, named, and negotiable terrain already available" for the production of localities via shared knowledge (Appadurai 1996: 181). The making of regional towns via the circulation of dominant discourses, and 'shared knowledge' will be the focus of the following paragraphs. Here, common narratives characterising

certain place-specific features reproduced not just by those who live there, but also more broadly will be outlined. Such narratives emerge as strong and visible ways for people to develop their own construction of place under conditions of flux and change in a reflexive way.

Dominant discourses underscoring regional places

Several discourses loosely collate key ways in which the place-category of 'regional' is understood both from the perspective of those who live there and more broadly. These are discourses that emerge among the broader population and also subtly inform academic pursuit (Amin and Thrift 2002, Benson and Jackson 2012). While heterogeneous accounts are generally reported by those who live in regional places (see for example Farrugia 2014, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, 2014a), discourses which construct an 'idyll' or narrate disadvantage still emerge in significant ways (see Hogan 2004, Rye 2006, O'Connor 2005, Benson and Jackson 2012). This is because such discursive constructs share a "discursive dominance" (Blokland 2009: 1594) within these places. Coloured and influenced by the people who interpret such discourses, through the lens of ethnicity, culture or social-economic status for example, residents' (re)production of place narratives constitute key place-making mechanisms. They do this insofar as they help to define what are, and what are not, places of meaning (Blokland 2009). As such, these discursive narratives subtly intertwine and mutually inform how places are understood and how they are actualised by those who live there (Benson and Jackson 2012). In this section I review and critique the assumptions and stereotypes underscoring key discourses of non-urban place.

One broadly reproduced discourse and widespread way to conceive of non-urban or regional towns is in terms of an 'idyll'. Places are perceived as being closer to 'nature', and as safer and more inclusive communities. Positive aspects are expounded including a stronger sense of community, perceived tranquillity, the aesthetic appeal of the natural environment and greater security (Rye 2006, O'Connor 2005, Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009, Haukanes 2013, Benson and Jackson 2012). It is the rural idyll that is envisioned by amenity migrants and these are key participants in this form of discursive place-making.

In addition to being seen as an 'idyll', regional, or rural places have also been represented as conservative, racist, as well as more static, isolated and removed from the impacts of globalisation (Goodwin-Hawkins 2014, see for example Jordan, Krivokapic-Skoko and Collins 2009, Hogan 2004). A comparative study canvassing rural residents' perceptions reported generally traditional, socially conservative perspectives (Hogan 2004). Responses constructed rural places as geographically and economically marginal. This spatial context has been termed the 'rural dull' where non-urban places are seen as backwards, less progressive, more traditional and people are subject to greater social control (Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009).

Discourses which paint rural, non-urban places as idyllic, static, places have however been challenged by a suite of research. This work has highlighted a range of subtle and complex processes in the construction of non-urban places. These researchers have found that rural and regional places are indeed locales comprised of mobilites, as well as inward/outward flows on local, national and global levels (Goodwin-Hawkins 2014, Walsh 2012, Bell and Osti 2010, Woods 2016). Indeed, while studies canvassing 'lay' understandings found that rural towns were conceived in these idealised terms (Hogan 2004, O'Connor 2005), other research has exposed a more complex, heterogeneous reality where such places cannot be understood in such simplistic terms reducible to a rural 'idyll' or a rural 'dull'. For instance, international migrant flows linking urban and rural places are complex and dynamic, although impacts vary from town to town (Woods 2016). By taking a more delicate, complex approach, Woods' accounts for the specificity of places, while also privileging the flexible interconnections of movement that intersect rural locales (Goodwin-Hawkins 2014). The movement of people as labour migrants was also found to exist alongside a palpable sense of household stability (Walsh 2012). These studies argue that 'traditional' means of conceptualising rural space and mobilities within and between ruralities are inadequate. Rather than smoothing over this detail, researchers increasingly privilege the relational and mobile nature of rural and regional spaces (Goodwin-Hawkins 2014, Walsh 2012, Hogan 2004).

A second discourse concerns a set of assumed negative impacts of living in rural and regional areas for those that live there. Primarily, residents are seen as being significantly disadvantaged as a result of geographic isolation (Geldens 2007, Pritchard and McManus 2000, Bourke et al. 2001). Somewhat reminiscent of the isolation and stasis of the 'rural

dull' (Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009), here disadvantage is measured in more structural terms. Negative impacts are rated against a range of indicators, including education (Cashmore and Townsend 2006), lower incomes (Kenyon et al. 2001), fewer employment opportunities (Alston and Kent 2001), limited public transport (Currie et al. 2005) and reduced access to health services (Wyn et al. 2005). Popular understandings underscore this further (Rye 2006, Hogan 2005). Assumptions made as part of this discourse of disadvantage pervades much work on rural communities (see for example in McManus and Pritchard 2000). The impact for young people living in rural communities is seen to be even greater, with key transitional pathways in the form of employment and education, sometimes not readily available obliging migration towards urban places (see Gabriel 2002, 2006). The discourse however, has been interrogated and criticised for not taking account of the complexities of disparate rural communities (Bourke et al. 2001, see also Hogan 2004). Conceiving of rural places wholly in terms of disadvantage neglects and simplifies the dynamics of social disadvantage that are not always related to geography, but rather to broader dynamics such as socio-economic status.

In spite of critique, those very assumptions criticised as unduly permeating rural scholarship are very much present among local communities. While heterogeneous accounts are generally reported by those who live there (see for example Farrugia 2014, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, 2014a), discourses which construct an 'idyll' or disadvantage still emerge in significant ways (see Hogan 2004, Rye 2006, O'Connor 2005, Benson and Jackson 2012). The reproduction of such implicit, uncritical references to rural place characteristics reinforces Amin and Thrift's (2002) assertion that popular discourse informs academic inquiry. Gieryn (2000: 473) has also shrewdly noted that "…culturally reproduced images of places are thus arbitrary but real in their consequences". It is therefore important to consider not just reflexive conceptions of rural or non-urban places generated through theoretical debate, but also more popular understandings. These approaches subtly intertwine and mutually inform how places are understood as well as how they are actualised by those who live there (Benson and Jackson 2012). A fully rounded review of both perspectives lays the groundwork for this review of young people's place-making practices in a regional town.

The final rural discourse outlined in this review concerns the role and impact of globalisation. For the young respondents of Farrugia et al.'s (2014a,b) study, local places were not exclusively lived within confined physical parameters, but were interspersed with a variety of

global and more proximate flows. For the young respondents living in a rural town, "subjectivities and imaginaries…(were) 'stretched' over multiple locales and transnational spaces" (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2014b: 1041, see also Dowling 2005). This included, for example, using communication technologies to extend connections beyond immediate physical surroundings to draw on additional sources of meaning and resources while still being meaningfully embedded in local place. The capacity of social media technologies to transcend geography and connect young people with globalising flows is clearly demonstrated in this work.

Understanding rurality in the context of globalisation has been articulated by some in a comparative way. Conceptions of rural places are often constructed by those who live there in dichotomous terms in relation to 'the city'. Similarly, the notion of 'home' is positioned in contrast with 'out there' (Hogan 2004). In Hogan's study on globalisation and rural places,, positive aspects of globalisation were perceived as associated with the city, such as culture and economy, and negative aspects were conversely seen to be concentrated in rural places (Hogan 2004). Woods (2007) accounts for this dynamic linking of contrasting, apparently incompatible opposites, 'rural' and 'global', and resolves the dualism with his concept of 'global countryside'. According to him, this concept constitutes an attempt to interrupt the traditional position of rural as a counterpoint to the 'global city' (Woods 2007). Woods (2012: 126) calls for a consideration of economic concerns, human mobilities as well as processes such as climate change and food security that are ultimately "grounded, reproduced and contested in rural localities".

Connections between urban and non-urban places, people who live and reside in those places, and the global flows with which they regularly interact, have been further problematised by Harris and Wyn (2009). Like others before them (Massey 2005, see also Hannerz 1996, Appadurai 1996, Gibian 2003), they begin by challenging assertions that the globalised world has engendered a homogenisation of local places. Negotiations between place, people and inward flows are much more complex than dichotomous, linear conceptions assume. Particular places remained important for the young respondents and reflected the uniquely embedded relationship they shared with their locale (Harris and Wyn 2009). The local places of meaning and importance identified by their respondents were "forged within the mundane spaces of household, family, school, peer group and neighbourhood" (Harris and Wyn 2009: 335). These spaces are conceptualised as "micro-territories of the local" to

articulate the importance of local place within a broader context of globalising flows and influences (Harris and Wyn 2009: 335). The nuance captured in the concept of 'micro-territories of the local' will be retained in this inquiry on young people's place-making projects in a regional town (and explained more fully in the next chapter).

The body of literature reviewed here brings together the different themes of concern in this inquiry. Non-urban, regional places experience the disruptive impacts of globalisation. As such, researchers are suffused with a collective need to produce more spatialised, embedded and locally specific research which takes into account the impacts of macro, global processes (Farrugia 2014, Gieryn 2000, Hogan 2004, Gupta and Ferguson 2001). At the same time, researchers are shrugging off entrenched assumptions about non-urban places, and those who reside there as well as their relationship with broader, globalising flows. This thesis will continue in the vein of research that propels complex, globalised regional places to the fore, and which eschews dichotomous, stereotypical categorisations of place.

What is place-making in the context of this thesis?

The myriad and complex ways people make place is an everyday process that epitomises a set of practices operating in the background of everyday social lives. In spite of the key role place-making plays, it is a process problematic to isolate for scrutiny owing to its intangibility and opaque nature (Moores 2012, see also Tuan 1979). Following this, many experience difficulty expressing their connection and understanding with regards to place (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, Moores 2012). However, in the context of changes associated with globalisation, place-making processes can be exposed for analysis in clear and tangible ways (Moores 2012). As such, the thesis considers young people and their positioning as more mobile, cosmopolitan social actors than ever before, residing as they do at the forefront of the everyday impacts of globalisation (Harris and Wyn 2009).

To this end, place-making is understood for the purposes of this study as a *combination of discursive constructions reproduced by young people, a range of practices, and a suite of experiential sensations experienced by them* (see Waite 2017). As such, place-making concerns a set of practices or activities closely associated with a given locale enacted by those who live there (see Sampson and Goodrich 2009). This involves attachment to place

and sense of belonging expressed via a language of feeling and emotion. Physical environment also plays a role as a repository of symbols and meanings utilised by residents to construct and make places of meaning (see Sampson and Goodrich 2009, Benson and Jackson 2012). Dominant understandings of particular places and attendant characteristics attributed to these places, for example cities, suburbs, regional towns and rural villages are reinforced and actualised in tangible terms through various mundane, daily practices (Benson and Jackson 2012). Therefore, place-making is made up of both a material, practical component where individuals actively engage in activities which serve to re-produce place, and a more intangible, subjective process where places are constructed discursively and experientially in a range of ways by those who live within particular places.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed some approaches by which place-making processes have been understood and explored in prior research. In so doing, I have outlined a theoretical orientation for this thesis that builds on such work. Globalisation, and the attendant suite of globalising flows traversing and intersecting local places, highlights the changing nature of place. Conceiving places in relational terms (see Appadurai 1996, Massey 2005) is a common strategy among researchers of place, and a useful means to circumvent problems that arise through more descriptive, and structural accountings of place. Following this, the work of humanist geographers Tuan (1979), Seamon (1979) and NRT scholars who emphasise more sensory, experiential relationships with material places, also inform my approach to conceptualising young people's place-making. In the interests of developing a rounded interpretation of place-making processes, and in addition to experiential relations with place, the making of places via practice is considered. Discursive constructions of place, with a special focus on the particular discourses that narrate regional places conclude this chapter and are also important to consider in light of young people's everyday realities living in non-urban places.

Researchers in a range of disciplines are increasingly trying to understand place, the relationship between people and place, and the ways in which place is made. In some ways, this reflects the changing, and subjective nature of the place-making project, and also the

socio-cultural dynamics inherent in the process. For this reason, it remains important to gain a faithful understanding of place-making mechanisms, in particular, within those places, and among those people who are less likely to be the focus of social scientists' research agendas. Marginalised localities, such as those 'beyond the metropole' in regional spaces, and populations that tend to be sidelined, such as young people, provide an opportunity to explore place-making processes in a distinctive space and thus, facilitate novel insights into place-making more broadly. Moving on from the discussion above detailing the theoretical orientation of this thesis, the following chapter introduces the key research topics of concern in this thesis. Sociological approaches to youth and young people inform and situate the following sections on youthful place-making, social media technologies and digital material intersections. The phenomenological, interpretivist and social constructivist orientation of the thesis established in this chapter are carried through into the literature review of the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Young people, information technologies and place

Focusing on the ways in which place is socially constructed, this chapter considers literature investigating young people's place-making endeavours before presenting an examination of young people's construction of place through the lens of social media technologies. The chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part examines research interrogating young people's participation in the place-making project. It considers how such processes are shaped by structural and agentic dynamics within the context of globalisation. Several critical approaches to work in this area are identified. In particular, I argue that Harris and Wyn's (2009) 'micro-territories of the local' concept can be adapted as a useful approach for understanding young people's construction of discrete localities under the conditions of globalisation.

Part 2 of this chapter considers the role and impact of social media technologies in young people's place-making projects. Much debate in this area critiques assumptions about the de-territorialising, dis-embeddeding, and spectacularised impacts of social technologies. The complex relationship between place-making, social media technologies and the users who link them is presented in the third part of the chapter. Here, a 'spatial turn' within media studies has produced a flourishing body of work. A small group of media studies researchers examining place, and the construction of localities in which different social media technologies play a role, have been impacted by humanist geography and phenomenological inspired interpretations of the construction of place.

Part 1: Responding to social change within youth studies

One way that youth sociologists have responded to the social change engendered by contemporary conditions of globalisation is through extensive research into the combined, and complex impacts of structure and agency on young lives (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Bendit 2008, see for example Evans 2002, Roberts 2003, Cote and Bynner 2008, Coffey and Farrugia 2014). Indeed, the "spectre of globalisation" constitutes an undercurrent in much youth-centric research considering the shaping roles of structures such as class and gender as well as agentic choice-making in youthful lives (Cieslik and Simpson 2013: xii). The undercurrent of globalisation is demonstrated economically in the de-industrialisation of the

West from the 1970s onwards, and the associated decrease in manufacturing jobs (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). The impact on young people's transitions towards secure, full-time employment has been significant, and an elongated transitional phase is one outcome (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Bendit 2008). Arnett (2004) distinguishes this extended period from the from the youth phase, terming it 'emerging adulthood'. Intersecting with work and study transitions, staying in the home longer also contributes to prolonged pathways (Bendit 2008). Indeed, there are extensive debates considering the complex, variable impacts of social changes on youthful transitions (see for example Woodman 2009, Roberts 2010).

Communication technologies, which enable the flow of information across cultural, geographic and social boundaries, constitute another dimension of the social change examined in youth studies research. The effects of such information flows on areas such as music consumption, fashion, film, or political participation, are seen to be significant in their ability "transforming perspectives, ambitions and behaviours of young people" (Cieslik and Simpson 2013: xiii). From youth-subculture perspectives, global information flows contribute to more creative, independent, fluctuating identities, and life pathways less constrained by traditional structural forms such as class (Cieslik and Simpson 2013).

Theories accounting for social change in late modernity, and broadly linked with globalisation (see for example Beck's risk society (1992), and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's individualisation 2001), have been extensively deployed in youth studies (Cieslik and Simpson 2013). These consider the changing influence and relevance of social institutions, including families, employment markets, welfare systems, for youthful transitions and identities. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) work developing the theory of 'individualisation' has had a significant impact on youth studies, and the theorisation of youthful agencies (see Cote and Bynner 2008, Coffey and Farrugia 2014, Evans 2002). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) work emphasises the expansion of individuals' agency within reflexively created 'choice biographies' in late modern times. This increase of agency, they argue, has occurred as a response to a concurrent decrease, and weakening of social structures traditionally governing young people's transitions to adulthood (Coffey and Farrugia 2014, Furlong and Cartmel 2007). While structures like gender, class, or the family are seen to have an ever-diminishing influence in light of young people's increased control over the course of future biographies (Beck 1986: 1992), changes to these structures also serve to somewhat counter-intuitively bolster their presence in young lives (Nayak 2006). Therefore,

rather than the influence of social structures being erased entirely, structures like class endure in modified forms even as “traditional ways of life fade away” (Beck 1998 cited in Nayak 2006: 814).

This has particular relevance for research on young people’s place-making practice due to the dual shaping structural and agentic mechanisms that embed young people in, and influence their construction of, place. Debates among youth scholars consider the relative explanatory merit of both social structures and agentic behaviour. Structure and agency are social forces often considered in dichotomous, opposing terms. In this way, social structure is conceived as an external force, and responsible for the reproduction of social forms while agency is understood as internal and implied as a key descriptor in social change or resistance to social forces (Coffey and Farrugia 2014).

Explaining enduring socio-structural influences on everyday lives has occupied many youth sociologists (see for example Woodman 2009, Roberts 2010). Some have concluded that changes in the relationship between young people and social structures are consistent with broader changes associated with late modernity:

> Individuals living in late modernity no longer have their lives shaped in the *same* way they once did…this does not mean that people's lives are not shaped by social structures; it simply means that they are shaped differently as social structures change and as people respond to these structural changes (O’Connor 2015: 868).

Still, an emphasis on youthful agencies has been adopted within youth studies in which the application of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (2001) concept of ‘individualisation’ is popular (Coffey and Farrugia 2014, Farthing 2016, see Evans 2002). In many ways, this is consistent with an attendant rise in popular discourses emphasising the role of individual agency and personal choice for young people (Cieslik and Simpson 2013). In spite of this, the role of social structures shaping young lives, although increasingly obscured and difficult to identify, has been readily acknowledged by youth sociologists (Furlong and Cartmel 2007, Cieslik and Simpson 2013). Some have taken a middle-ground approach in relation to this debate, for example ‘bounded agency’, in which the implied separation of structures from agencies has been criticised (Coffey and Farrugia 2014, Evans 2002). Dualistic assumptions casting

structure and agency as opposing forces neglect greater complexities permeating social life (Harris and Dobson 2015, O'Connor 2015). Others, such as Woodman (2009) argue that the interpretation of Beck's concept of choice biographies to support agency-centric arguments is misguided and oversimplified. Woodman maintains that the dynamic and changing nature of social inequalities that intersect everyday lives are underemphasised in such accounts. Woodman's (2009, 2010) position has in turn been critiqued and the complex reproduction of social structures, such as class, continues to be demonstrated in youth research (Roberts 2010).

The structure-agency issue is undoubtedly complex and difficult to resolve. However, one pragmatic approach to considering this relationship is to focus on the patterning of young lives across both individual and structural levels (Roberts 2003). Post-structuralist perspectives have sought to move beyond the structure-agency dualism and towards a deft, thorough accounting of social life (Coffey and Farrugia 2014, see Crossley 1996). These more pragmatic, post-structuralist approaches inform the position of this thesis and foreground its use of some of these analytical concepts. Moreover, the structure and agency debate has arisen in part as a response to social changes accompanying globalisation and the need to conceptualise their impacts on youth transitions. Young people's structural and agentic positioning play a significant role in their place-making projects, and as such need to be considered alongside more interpretive, phenomenological perspectives on young people's place-making examined later in this chapter.

Micro-territories of the local

Harris and Wyn's (2009) concept of 'micro-territories of the local' accounts both for structural constraints associated with age, and for the youthful agencies that emerge in young people's traversal of public space. In their research on young people's civic participation in urban and regional Victoria, Harris and Wyn (2009) deploy this concept to explain their young, 15-17-year-old, respondents' unique embeddedness in local places and the centrality of place to their everyday lives. Drawing on Nava's (2007) cultural history approach to cosmopolitanism for the development of the concept, Harris and Wyn (2009) conceptualized a late modern young person constrained and limited in their movements and access to resources in relation to a range of structural and age-based restrictions. While sharing

unprecedented levels of access to globally sourced information communities via social technologies, and entrance to subcultures and consumer markets seemingly uninhibited by geographic borders, Harris and Wyn (2009) found that local place retained a central position in their respondent's lives. In spite of contemporary young people living in a world saturated by complex global flows and conceived as more mobile, cosmopolitan social agents than ever before (Harris and Wyn 2009, see Beck 2006, Shildrick, Blackman and MacDonald 2009, Matthews et al. 2000), young people continue to be uniquely embedded in place and local territories endure as key sites in everyday lives (Harris and Wyn 2009, see also Massey 2005).

Harris and Wyn (2009) consider opposing structural and agentic forces and explore the outcome in the context of young people's place-making enterprise. Social structures, such as age-based legal parameters or legitimised access to public spaces, represent a restriction on young people's expressed desire to operate autonomously within their localities. For example, parental regulation or directives imposed by school authorities represent common realities for young people. Indeed, young people's experiences and frustrations in regards to constraints on physical mobility, spatial autonomy and punitive experiences when in public spaces, is a significant trend within youth studies literature (Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Gough and Franch 2005, Matthews et al. 2000, Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000, Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 1998, Joelsson 2015, Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011, Green and Singleton 2006, Dunkley 2004, Hil and Bessant 1999). Economic and labour-market changes linked with globalisation have engendered “gloomy realities” for young people in public spaces due to increasing unemployment and social marginalisation (Hil and Bessant 1999: 41). As such, young people's presence in public spaces comes to represent the significant tension between adults and young people (Matthews et al. 2000). Nonetheless, young people assert themselves and embrace youthful agencies by making choices and everyday decisions to circumvent some of these constraints. In so doing, they construct, and embed themselves within discrete, demarcated ‘micro-territories’ uniquely reflective of youthful movements within and across place (Harris and Wyn 2009).

Harris and Wyn (2009) do not explicitly position their research within the structure versus agency debate critically examined by Coffey and Farrugia (2014). Indeed, this terminology is not even adopted in their analysis. In so doing, Harris and Wyn are able to subvert some of the criticism related to the dichotomy between ‘structures’ and ‘agencies’ in youth-centric

research. Instead, 'micro-territories of the local' incorporate a range of complicating influences on the production of discrete localities, seamlessly considering structural and agentic mechanisms without artificially separating the two. In its consideration of a range of structural and agentic impacts on young people's place-making in regional places, this thesis will adopt a similar approach. That is, no artificial dichotomy will be imposed, rather different social structures, and youthful agencies will be identified where they arise using a nuanced approach eschewing any simulated categorisations. Indeed, by taking into account the concurrent processes of globalisation, late-modern youthful experience and their construction of discrete localities, 'micro-territories of the local' has robust analytical value in this investigation into young regional people's place-making.

Young people in public places

Like others researching similar themes, Harris and Wyn (2009: 328) argue that age-based limitations mean that young people became "uniquely embedded within their residential location" and as such, distinctively connected with place. The young people in their study enjoyed greater freedoms to establish "their well-mapped safe paths through their neighbourhoods…" (Harris and Wyn 2009: 328). However, they were not as able to move past those discrete zones in the ways that older people could because they were able to draw on greater legal, resource and age-based flexibility. This is because young people share a unique, age-based relationship with spaces more commonly conceived as 'adult spaces' (Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998). Age is by no means the only criteria on which such processes are contingent. Indeed, owing to the elongated youth phase associated with late modernity, as well as more diverse and complex transitions (Cieslik and Simpson 2013), the role of age in young people's relationship with place needs to be carefully considered in relation with other influences. This review therefore considers several intersectional dimensions that further complicate young people's positioning in public space. Gender, SES and cultural background affect young people's place-making practices by embedding them in local places.

Gender is a significant structural influence on young people's experience of place and spatial embeddedness. For example, young women are said to experience "affective geographies" where public places can come to be associated with male domination (Bondi and Rose 2003:

233). Embodied risk, including harassment or violence perpetrated by an unknown other, becomes a feature of being in public spaces (Green and Singleton 2006). In some cases this has effectively precluded young women's presence in public spaces (Dunkley 2004, Gough and Franch 2005). Dunkley (2004) contrasted the experiences of a male participant to those of a female participant in her study. First, the young man reported being able to frequently move from his workplace, his home, and a local dining establishment. In control of his mobility, he drove his car and returned home late at night. By comparison, the young woman reported travelling to an out-of-town sporting match with her team-mates using public transport. When she returned, while she indicated wanting to go out with her teammates, her parents insisted on picking her up and driving her home. Representing a broader theme in the research, parental anxieties and fears related to young daughters' autonomous presence outside of the private sphere were identified by Dunkley (2004) as a cause for concern and a motivation to impose rigid controls. Young men, on the other hand, were found to experience greater freedom to move through public street geographies in neighbourhoods characterised by social disadvantage and violence (Gough and Franch 2005).

Gender further shapes young men's place-making practices. Another example of this is young people's spatial embeddedness in relation to car cultures (Joelsson 2015, Walker 1998, Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006). Maintaining cars can be a source of intergenerational male bonding (Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006), as well as peer bonding (Joelsson 2015). Joelsson's (2015) research on young men in regional Sweden identified a highly gendered zone constructed by the local 'greaser' clique. The young men would regularly converge in a public car-park to spend time, and work on their cars (Joelsson 2015), thereby forming a gender- and youth-specific 'micro-territory' (Harris and Wyn 2009). While strongly associated with masculine participation in sub-cultures, and constructions of place, young women were occasionally active participants (Lumsden 2010). Further, Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody's (2006) work delves into the risk behaviours associated with young men's engagement in car cultures (see also Walker 1998). Here, the performance of hyper-masculinities demonstrated in racing cars is a key component of the analysis.

Young people's cultural background, as well as their gender is a further shaping factor in their place-making practice. This is particularly salient for cultures in which young women are expected to moderate their behaviour in public spaces (Green and Singleton 2006, see

also Wattis, Green and Radford 2011), although the gendering of public spaces emerges in a range of cultural contexts (see for example Jin and Whitson 2014, Dunkley 2004). For example, among the South Asian community in a UK town, young women were expected to protect their 'honour' by behaving in particular ways. This resulted in heavy self-policing in response to young women's visibility within their community while in public areas of the town. Still, the young South Asian women were able to negotiate public spaces to manipulate and reduce the likelihood of being seen by other community members. In this way, they could protect their reputations, adhere to behavioural expectations and still engage in activities, such as spending time with friends, or meeting young men, that might involve spending time unaccompanied in public (Green and Singleton 2006). Others have similarly considered the intersectional impacts of gender and class for young women's relationship with place, and the shaping influence of fear (Wattis, Green and Radford 2011). Here, representations of place were strongly associated with criminality, economic decline and the working class. However, experiences of material places were found to be shaped by more than respondents' structural positioning and incorporated broader discursive constructions of place that conveyed concerns with risk and security (Jefferson and Holloway 1997). Although constrained by behavioural expectations related to their cultural background, young women in a range of research projects have been found to be embedded in local places and active participants in various micro-territorialising processes.

An added dimension in the extensive literature on the gendering of public places, are the experiences of those with diverse gender and sexual identities (Skeggs 1999). Perhaps more visible in urban cities, gender and sexual diversity is a feature in non-urban and rural spaces as well (Gray, Johnson and Gilley 2016, Kazyak 2011). Gray (2007) describes her young rural respondents engaging in the formation of "boundary publics" to encompass a form of place-making online, as well as in certain, discrete material spaces. The young people in Gray's study displayed non-normative genders and sexualities in their rural towns, countering notions that such visibility is only present in more accepting city spaces. While Gray's (2007) young respondents seemed to enjoy relative freedom in their traversal of rural geographies, their experiences were not without tension with some experiencing verbal abuse. Indeed, young LBGTI people's embeddedness in regional terrains is often one fraught with anxiety, and the fear of encountering violence shapes and bookends their place-making projects (see Hubbard, Gorman-Murray and Nash 2015). Familial and social embeddedness, alongside implicit acknowledgement of diverse sexual identities, underscored the accounts of

rural young people in Kazyak's (2011) study. Rurality was found to support the production of non-normative sexual identities rather than confine it. The relatively affirming experiences of these participants could also reflect their comparatively powerful positions as white adults with various social and cultural resources on which to draw on (Kazyak 2011). As such, it is necessary to consider a suite of shaping influences, along with their intersecting relationships, to gain a comprehensive view of young people's place-making mechanisms and their ability to traverse local, neighbourhood geographies.

Socio-economic status (SES) also affects young people's place-making and their ability to easily traverse public space (Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Gough and Franch 2005, Matthews et al. 2000, Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011). Those with higher SES, or middle-class youth, have greater access to social and economic resources that allow them to participate in place-making, and are more able to 'carve out' youthful spaces within the private domain (Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011, Gough and Franch 2005). Working class youth however, have been found to be relatively embedded in local neighbourhoods and other public places (Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011). Parental social capital has a bearing on young people's participation in schooling as well, with higher levels of social capital associated with greater involvement in education (Lareau 1987 drawing on Bourdieu's concept of capital). Young people from working-class backgrounds are therefore more likely to be at the forefront of the micro-territorialising process, are more likely to be present at various times of the day, experience more spatial freedom and are more lacking in resources that would allow them this type of freedom within the private sphere (Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011, Gough and Franch 2005).

A key dynamic in the place-making process is the lines of power that intersect experiences, and constructions of place. Invariably, it is those groups in a given community who retain the greatest degree of power, in the form of cultural, social or economic capital, who are in a position to legitimately shape and occupy public places with the most freedom (Benson and Jackson 2013). Benson and Jackson's (2013) analysis of middle-class place-making demonstrated that the symbolic power wielded by those sharing a relatively powerful class position. This enabled them to consciously, and deliberately construct local place in the ways that reflected "middle-class visions of neighbourhood", allowing them freedom of movement and expression (Benson and Jackson 2013: 800). It is this form of power that is mostly denied young people as a whole, irrespective of their class positioning. Indeed, groups

experiencing social marginalisation, such as young people, those from cultural minority backgrounds, lower SES people, or those with diverse sexual or gender orientations, do not routinely share such positions of power. This translates to the constrained and limited movement when in public places, informs the perceptions of others sharing public spaces, and impacts autonomy of young people. The processes of micro-territorialising are an exception to the relationship between power and place. Indeed, this is an opportunity to make place available to precisely those without the power normally accorded to those in more privileged positions. For example, in relation to city spaces, "the coding of the city as belonging to certain groups who have a greater claim on the spaces is historically produced through struggles for legitimation, struggles that become institutionalized in the control of space" (Skeggs 1999: 20). The differential distribution of power within a community has strong, pervasive impacts on this discussion of young people's place-making projects in a regional town.

Nonetheless, despite the lines of power coalescing away from young people, features such as gender, SES or cultural background may not necessarily have the same impact on people's embeddedness on local place as age and 'youth' status. That is, these dimensions in and of themselves may not sufficiently lead to individuals finding themselves excluded from those structures facilitating spatial autonomy to the same degree, or in the same ways, that would enable them to engage in micro-territorialisng as Harris and Wyn (2009) conceptualise it. However, an intersectional approach (see Davis 2008) facilitates a more complex, detailed understanding of the range of shaping influences, constraints and enablers young people experience related to their age, but also their relative positioning according to different structural parameters. While Harris and Wyn (2009) conceptualised the role of age in the construction of these demarcated zones termed 'micro-territories of the local', I argue that a suite of shaping factors play similarly important roles in the making of micro-territories as key sites for young people's "self-making in late modern, globalized times" (Harris and Wyn 2009: 329). By expanding this framework to account for other structural factors in addition to youth status, I am able to more comprehensively illustrate the factors shaping young people's place-making practice.

Young people's construction of discrete territories

An extensive body of literature examines young people's participation in, and construction of public place (Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Gough and Franch 2005, Green and Singleton 2006, Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 1998, Matthews et al. 2000, Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000, Spilková and Radová 2011, Panelli, Nairn and McCormack 2002). Within the literature investigating young people's appropriation of public spaces, there has been a tendency to focus on more spectacular groups and behaviours, including gangs (Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011), drug-taking and homelessness (Fast et al. 2010), delinquency and low-level violence (Landolt 2013), as well as dangerous driving (Kraack and Kenway 2002) to name a few. Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister (2011) were concerned with the different ways young people occupy and construct urban public spaces with a particular emphasis on groups, or 'gangs', and their strong sense of place attachment as well as their active bordering practices. The territoriality (drawing on Sack's 1986 concept) that emerged among the young people was strong enough to limit young people's movement patterns through the city and control their access to services, employment and social opportunities (Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011). In a similar vein, Kraack and Kenway (2002) trace the moral panic that emerged in a rural town around young people's perceived dangerous driving practices, and their ominous 'loitering' in public spaces.

Tendencies to focus on those 'spectacular lives' while neglecting the more mundane, everyday dynamics that constitute the majority of experiences emerge again throughout the literature on young people and place (Cieslik 2003, see also Roberts 2011). This is perhaps owing to the influence of dominant and popular discourses whose tendency is to propel more unique, noteworthy cases to the fore (Roberts 2003). Within youth studies, there is a documentable inclination to highlight the lives of small groups of the 'spectacular few', for example young offenders, the socially marginalised, or young mothers (Roberts 2011). This proclivity contributes to a broader discourse casting young people as inherently problematic, or as being constantly 'in trouble' (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, for a further critique of 'problem-based' youth research see Holm and Helve 2005, Aitken 2001, Wyn 2005, White and Wyn 2004). While this approach has been critiqued on the basis of its neglect of the vast majority who do not subscribe to these 'spectacular' lives, the power of these representations is pervasive (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, see also Roberts 2003). Utilising an intersectional approach, Davis (2008) reveals that the overlapping influences of a range of social structures

mean that young people's relationship to, and construction of local place is rarely so straight-forward. Indeed, gender, socio-economic status and cultural background all converge to differentiate young people's positioning in regards to place.

Moving away from frameworks conceptualising spectacular youthful experience as a means to theorise connections to place, Matthews et al. (2000) adopt the model of 'thirdspace' to analyse young people constructing their own space and asserting themselves within the adult-dominated, everyday environment of the shopping mall. Further, Issifova (2015) proposes the city-centric concept of 'enclave urbanism' to refer to those seemingly "disjointed urban enclaves (that) are surrounded by borders and boundaries which not only divide, but also join together" (Issifova 2015: 91). Enclaves are demarcated territories that are "claimed, appropriated, inhabited, shared, continuously negotiated, maintained and often even nurtured spaces of co-presence and co-existence" (Issifova 2015: 91). There are socio-spatial characteristics to these territories, although sites are heterogeneous, relational and in flux situated as they are "in-between the different" (Issifova 2015: 104). In the rural context, Panelli, Nairn and McCormack (2002) investigate a similar phenomenon and find that young people discuss experiencing exclusion from the public spaces of their town, and respond by reappropriating places designed for other uses.

In many respects, residential neighbourhoods are the locus of youthful place-making practice. An extensive body of literature interrogates the intersections between neighbourhoods as bounded localities and the people who construct them. This work shows the practice of making neighbourhoods to be subjective, flexible, and constantly under negotiation (Chaskin 1997, Coulton et al. 2001, Landolt 2013, Campbell et al. 2009). Chaskin (1997) characterises neighbourhoods as 'spatial units' existing within the permeable confines of constructed boundaries. They are comprised of a collection of formal and informal relations, services and practices. However, consistency among residents in regards to the construction of the neighbourhood varies. People may live various distances from the geographic 'loci' of activity and nonetheless identify as living in the same neighbourhood. As such, boundaries do not always neatly align (see also Coulton et al. 2001, Landolt 2013, Campbell et al. 2009). Still, neighbourhood places are observable in the high level of relations and connections within a bounded area. Such places are spatially and geographically bounded in which a "specific context of relationships, opportunities, and constraints" are embedded (Chaskin

1997: 522). Nonetheless, the process of forming boundaries and creating action is continuous, and always under negotiation (Chaskin 1997).

There is a range of features and dynamics that emerge across different contexts in the construction of residential neighbourhoods. Physical features in the built environment can act as spatial delineators separating neighbourhoods, for example streets, particular buildings, rail infrastructure or parks (Campbell et al. 2009). Further, dynamics related to a neighbourhood such as demographics, perceptions of safety, and logistical opportunities in a given place, such as transport availability, also play a part. In particular, a sense of commonality among residents, for example, along ethnic or cultural lines can be a key identifying feature: "ethnic solidarity and identification" forms a patchwork of homogeneous neighbourhoods in the 'urban landscape' (Chaskin 1997: 525). Activities such as spending time 'hanging out' in the neighbourhood can further constitute a 'resource' for identity construction outside of other group identities.

How individuals perceive certain characteristics of neighbourhoods can vary depending on how they see the neighbourhood's role in their lives (Chaskin 1997). For instance, if the neighbourhood is understood more in terms of social relationships, it will be interpreted as smaller physically. Fear of crime and violence is an added dynamic in this process, and serves to bring boundaries in closer as well (Campbell et al. 2009, see also Chaskin 1997). However, if neighbourhood is understood in terms of social institutions or symbolic definitions in which it is seen to represent a "way of life and a unique set of values…", and less in regards to relations with those who live there, the place will tend to be interpreted as larger geographically (Campbell et al. 2009: 480). The degree of social capital, or the range of social connections and networks with attendant advantages that emerge from this, accumulated among those in a given neighbourhood also has a bearing on the resilience of a community in the face of natural disaster (Wickes et al. 2015).

Neighbourhoods can also be understood as the product of social processes that shape people's relationships with place. Wise (2005) frames her research on older people living in an ethnically diverse suburb in Sydney by highlighting their embeddedness in local neighbourhood places. Respondents rarely moved beyond their suburb, and many had lived in the same locality for at least 50 years. Experiences of place were solicited for the research, and many expressed dismay and fear at changes associated with an influx of Chinese

migrants. This reaction is framed in terms of residents' "slowly but surely beginning to explore and discover ways of connecting across difference" (Wise 2005: 177). Drawing on Hage's theorisation of hope (2002), Wise terms these "moments of micro-hope" that "signal some of the preconditions for forms of open, intercultural belonging at the neighbourhood level" (Wise 2005: 177). Rather than the formation of boundaries, fear of the other, and anxiety related to unknown, unfamiliar spaces and people, Wise instead conceives a gradual "opening to the world, to the other, to the stranger" (Wise 2005: 178). Wise's (2005) approach is noteworthy given the preponderance of research highlighting place-making practices based on fear of the other, boundary formation to separate 'us' from 'them', or panics about crime and violence.

Nonetheless, a strong feature of young people's place-making and construction of discrete territories is the process of othering. Othering is implicated in the formation of social identities related to a territorialising practice whereby a spatial border denotes a clear 'insider' and 'outsider' (Issifova 2015, Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011). In Issifova's (2015) study of 'urban enclaves' in Shanghai, respondents displayed spatial identity formation and strong othering practices based on perceived 'backwardness' of the residents in nearby neighbourhoods. However Issifova (2015:104) was optimistic about the permeability and flexibility of borders: "they are not just the fixed borders or boundaries around homogeneous territories they are the negotiated, maintained and, occasionally, celebrated spaces in-between the different. These are spaces that allow for the emergence of alternatives". Similarly, Joelsson's (2015) participants bolster their identity as 'Volvo greasers' by defining themselves in reference to other youth subcultures in the town identified by them (Joelsson 2015). The 'greasers' were keen to distance themselves from the 'nerds' and 'hockey fags' by denigrating stereotypical practices based on a perceived lack of 'fun' (Joelsson 2015).

While there are several similar, useful approaches to theorising the relationships between young people and place, Harris and Wyn's (2009) 'micro-territories of the local' concept is the most ideally suited for the purposes of this thesis. Their concept incorporates a flexible schemata, eschewing the spectacularisation and criminality associated with youth 'gangs' (see Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011), side-lining city-centric assumptions in regards to place (Hil and Bessant 1999, Issifova 2015, Venderbeck and Johnson 2000, Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Pickering, Kintrea

and Bannister 2011, Green and Singleton 2006) and accounting for the more fluid concerns of young people's everyday lives than is implied in the 'territory' (Pickering, Kintre and Bannister 2011) or 'thirdspace' (Matthews et al. 2000). The actual processes that serve to embed young people in place, along with the various ways in which they actively construct proximate, local places are unambiguously addressed in Harris and Wyn's (2009) approach. The next section will review the literature on how young people's place-making projects are impacted by globalisation.

Place-making under disruptive conditions

Analyses of young people in regional places, and the place-making mechanisms employed by them, must consider how globalisation disrupts or alters the relationship between people and place more generally. Indeed, impacts of globalisation have been considered by several of the researchers cited above (e.g Harris and Wyn 2009, Kraack and Kenway 2002, Farrugia 2016, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2014a,b, Hall, Coffey and Lashua 2009). While globalisation and its impacts on place were considered in chapter two, here I focus on young people specifically which represents a distinct body of literature within youth and rural studies. As explored in the previous chapter, these globalising processes include economic and industrial change, increased mobility such as age-based migration, or international migration, and finally, the role of increased information flows mediated by communication technologies. Viewing place-making as potentially disrupted by these processes throws into relief some of those mundane, everyday mechanisms that young people employ to make place.

It is through this lens of disruption that a body of researchers has sought to identify and analyse young people's place-making outside of those urban places that tend to be uncritically, and exclusively associated with globalisation (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, 2014a,b, see also Moores 2012). This visibly occurs for example, under the conditions of migration (Moores 2012, see also Kraack and Kenway 2002) or economic restructure (Hall, Coffey and Lashua 2009, Kraack and Kenway 2002, White and Wyn 2004). Economic restructuring, particularly contemporary deindustrialisation can be both catalysts for, and disruptive to, place-making. Such processes affect entire communities, influencing a broad variety of interconnected social and economic processes underpinning place as well as those

who reside there. One place-based impact of economic restructuring is that employment opportunities for young people are changed. In the context of rural lives, job opportunities in the youth labour market tend to be increasingly concentrated in urban areas (Farrugia 2014, 2016 see also Alston 2004). This has resulted in age-based migrations whereby young people relocate to metropolitan localities. Others (Alston 2004, Gabriel 2002, 2006) link the 'loss' of young people from rural towns to employment restructuring and changes in the agricultural sector. Young people also leave in search of tertiary education opportunities (Alston 2004). Young people's out-migration towards the city potentially disrupts their participation in the place-making project, and has been seen as a factor in the 'decline' of Australia's rural town (Gabriel 2006). This is because globalisation and associated economic processes are "fundamentally spatial processes" impacting locales, including rural and urban places, in different ways (Farrugia 2014: 297).

While globalisation is increasingly conceived in terms of disruption, Hall, Coffey and Lashua (2009) found a contrary narrative in their research on young people negotiating change. For the young people of their study, a "mundane register through which (young) people make and tell their (changing) lives, worlds and places" emerged (Hall, Coffey and Lashua, 2009: 548). Economic restructuring resulting from industrial change and globalisation also underscored Kraack and Kenway's (2002) research on young people's construction of place. Here temporal understandings, and conflicts between different generations' construction of place "resulted in contested readings of the landscape and its use" (Kraack and Kenway 2002: 151). Changes to people's understanding of place may not have been erased under the conditions of globalisation, but attachments have arguably become more flexible, and more likely explained in terms of 'negotiation' and 'reflexivity'. Indeed, places, like people and global conditions, can be better understood in terms of flux and change (Wiborg 2004).

While place-making in the context of mobility might seem counter-intuitive, movement from place to place, whether relatively proximate, distant, or frequent travel versus irregular mobilities, are thoroughly implicated in place-making projects (as established in chapter two). The case of transnational diaspora communities making place in newly adopted homes explicates this in clear ways (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2009). Another study focusing on young people in particular, movement from hometowns to larger places demonstrated a range of complex and reflexively shifting perceptions concerning place (Wiborg 2004). This included affective attachments to both home, and newer places of residence, as well as

ambivalence and a re-discovered sense of attachment established. Importantly, it was not just those currently residing in a given place which contributed to their ultimate construction. Rather, the young people framed their attachments and constructions within the context of distance and absence (Wiborg 2002). One impact of this, however, was that places were understood in more fragile terms and as under negotiation (Wiborg 2002). Others have also complicated the somewhat un-interrogated assumption that mobilities hinder the construction of, and attachment to, place (Fallov, Jorgensen and Knudsen 2013, see also Kraack and Kenway 2002). While these mobile lives complicated the respondents' conceptions of place, such regular activities by no means precluded attachment nor regular place-making practices.

Young people are "managing the effects of globalisation every day" (Harris 2014: 573), in the form of immigration flows, global media and consumption, employment and education (Harris 2014). The potentially complicating dynamic of social technologies is implicated in discussions of young people uniquely embedded in place, at the forefront of globalisation (Harris 2014, Harris and Wyn 2009). The literature reviewed in this section suggests a lack of consensus as to the overall nature of globalisation's impact on young people's place-making projects. In the context of mobilities, some conceive a detrimental impact for rural communities (Alston 2004), while others identify a more cyclical process (Wiborg 2002) acknowledging a variety of complex, nuanced processes underscoring people's relationships with non-urban place (Fallov, Jorgensen and Knudsen 2013, Kraack and Kenway 2002, Harris and Wyn 2009, Hall, Coffey and Lashua 2009, Farrugia 2016). Therefore, it is incumbent to account for the complex intersection of globalising flows that underscore people's relationship with place, and more specifically young people's relationship with non-urban place. The second part of this chapter delves into more detail on the role of social media technologies in young lives, as one aspect of this process. This constitutes a key dynamic within broader discussions of globalisation and place, and has special relevance for young people living in the geographic margins.

Part 2: Young people and social technologies

Research on young people living in the globalised conditions of late-modernity, and on the geographic margins, often highlights the intimate presence of social media technologies in youthful lives. From within media studies, there have been calls to critically engage with

geography and spatiality in the context of media technologies (Ek 2006, Moores 2012). This is because material spatiality, technologically mediated relations and physical bodies are inextricably linked and mutually co-constitutive (Hjorth and Pink 2014, Pink et al. 2016). In this part of the chapter I explore several themes within this literature that inform my research. First I provide an overview of dominant responses to young people's engagement and uptake of social technologies, including deterministic approaches. Finally, I review research on the intersection between social media technologies and material place, much of which is informed by the experiential, phenomenological approach discussed in the previous chapter.

Young people have been closely associated with the frequent use of social technologies, including communication devices such as computers, laptops and smartphones, and infrastructure such as the internet. Within the youth and media studies literatures, they are often cast as enthusiastic, naturally familiar users (boyd 2014, Livingstone 2009, Palfrey and Gasser 2008). Young people are seen in such literatures as the "youthful experts or pioneers leading the way" with regards to their apparently eager adoption of new technologies (Livingstone 2009: 2, see also Palfrey and Gasser 2008). In spite of extensive critique focusing on the homogenising implications in 'digital native', younger people have had more opportunities to adopt new technologies because they have grown up in a world with high levels of media saturation. As such, they are more likely to take the variety of devices and affordances for granted and to appropriate tools on a need, rather than novelty, basis (boyd 2014). For this reason, a discernible trend exists linking young people with social technologies (see Livingstone 2009, Ito, Okabe, and Matsuda 2005, Palfrey and Gasser 2008, boyd 2014, Smith, Skrbis and Western 2013).

Research has documented that a key motivation for young Australians going online is the opportunity to socialise and maintain networks (ACMA 2009). Social media technologies have increasingly become a normative form of peer group interaction, and have become so entrenched in everyday lives to the point that those not utilising social media may experience social exclusion. One particular advantage for young people in regards social media technologies are opportunities to perform self and identity online outside of adult scrutiny in an arena with fewer, and altered regulations (boyd 2014, Livingstone 2009). Indeed, virtual spaces offer young people the "raw materials for a flexible, creative exploration of oneself and others" (Livingstone 2009: 10). Above all, online and mediated environments enable a certain amount of control and discretionary power for young people to choose for themselves

how, when and in what way they connect with others (Green 2007, boyd 2014). Of course, the nature of online audiences, and the blurred boundaries between private and public in virtual locales is a complicating feature (Livingstone 2009, boyd 2014, ref). Nonetheless, this opportunity available within online spaces is one of the reasons why young people have been attracted to this medium (boyd 2014).

Responses to young people going online: moral panics and technological determinism

Claims about the transcendent, utopian potential for online spaces heavily influence understandings of young people and their uses of social technologies under the conditions of globalisation. The potential associated with this is seen to have specific resonance for young people on the geographical margins, and is evident within academia (Gross 2007, Takahashi 2010, Zhao 2006, Vogl et al. 2016, Gray 2007, Relph 2007), policymaking (DEEWR 2013, Digital Education Advisory Group 2013) and the mainstream media (Internet.org 2015, Mann 2010). For example, in their research on young people living in rural UK, Valentine and Holloway (2001) anticipated that their research participants would benefit from accessing online spaces, and take advantage of knowledge communities and educative opportunities to source global contacts, hypothesising that internet access would tangibly improve young rural lives. The findings of the research indicated that this was not how the young rural participants used online spaces. They reported preferring to spend time online pursuing their own, much more materially embedded interests (Valentine and Holloway 2001). Gross (2007) also conceived a utopian and transcendent internet in his study on young gay men and their experiences of coming out. Of the range of methods and environments in which this interaction can occur, online contexts were considered by Gross (2007) as a “godsend”. Several case studies relate young people’s experiences of homophobia, discrimination and isolation. The young participants reported feeling alone, scared and cut-off from any sources of support, both geographically, and socially. Seeking supportive communities online were attributed with assuaging, and negating this negative experience. On the internet, these young teens reported that they could be themselves and that this was a great relief (Gross 2007, see also Gray 2007).

The discourse of transcendence is clear in Gross (2007), and Valentine and Holloway’s (2001) approaches in which young people’s lives become tangibly impacted, and in these

cases, improved, by virtual of their access to social media technologies. This is not to imply that Gross' (2007) young respondents did not experience the benefits of connecting with like-minded communities online, or that other young people experiencing isolation can find solace in de-territorialised online groups, but to highlight the narrative of technological determinism that intersects these, and other examples of rural youth research. However, narratives of impact neglect a more spatially embedded form of use by focusing instead on spectacular stories of transcendence. While such utopian imaginings of online spaces have been present in internet scholarship (see for example Plant 1998), this approach has been roundly criticized (see Miller and Slater 2000, Wajcman 2004) and ultimately put aside by many. Nonetheless, the transcendent potential of the internet lives on in the popular imagination. Indeed, strong threads of technological determinism endure both in academic research and policymaking regarding youth media use (see for example Takahashi 2010, Zhao 2006, Gross 2007, Vogl et al. 2016, DEEWR 2013, Digital Education Advisory Group 2013). In much of this work, the language of 'disembedding' underscores analyses where the seemingly 'new' condition of widespread technologically mediated sociality equates to "the complete disembodiment of electronic text chat…" resulting in anonymous encounters with unknown others (Zhao 2006: 462).

Many researchers are investigating those on the geographical margins (Sreekumar 2007, Stillman et al. 2010, Awan and Gauntlett 2012, Kehily and Nayak 2008, Valentine and Holloway 2001) and they ultimately find that the transcendent potential of online spaces is not realised by the young participants themselves. The young people in Valentine and Holloway's (2001) research reported being enthusiastic and regular users of social technologies, but the nature of their online experiences was much more embedded in everyday lives and therefore more strongly mediated by physical and material place. Respondents did not talk about engaging in online knowledge communities or forging contact with global others to improve their educative potential, rather they linked with their friends and family, shopped and sourced entertainment options (Valentine and Holloway 2001, see also Rye 2013, Kehily and Nayak 2008). While these activities no doubt take advantage of the more malleable spatio/temporal constraints found online, they did not serve to alleviate disadvantage or isolation nor negate physical and temporal limitations for the young participants.

On the other end of the technological determinism spectrum is an assumption that access to online spaces is necessarily 'bad' and 'damaging' for young people. Underscored by an "ambient fear", there is vague anxiety relating to the increasing speed within which technologies are uncritically and intimately nestled in everyday lives (Bell 2007). There are fears that time spent socialising online is at the expense of time spent in the 'real world' and necessarily leads to the neglect of face-to-face contact (see Nie, Hillygus and Erbring 2002). Here, communities are in danger of being weakened because "the immersive nature of the internet may be so compelling that internet users neglect their family, friends…" (Wellman, Boase and Chen 2002: 152).

The unfocused anxiety is certainly given clear expression in the context of young people. While such clear deterministic assumptions linking decreased sociality with online use has been mostly set aside within the academic literature, harmful impacts attributed to young people's uses of social media technologies are still present. Moral panic discourse characterises online, mediated locales as dangerous spaces, exposing users to unmitigated and unregulated risk. Examples relating to young people in particular include cyberbullying (Price and Dalgleish 2010), internet addiction (Walsh, White and Young 2008), sexting (Gordon-Messer et al. 2013) or viewing pornography online (Sabina, Wolak and Findelhor 2008). Underscoring these accounts is a narrative that excessive amounts of time spent online for young people is bad (Gross, Juvonen and Gable 2002). Problems associated with communication, including credibility, expertise and trust are seen to be intensified within online contexts. A reconfiguration of the division separating public and private underscore much anxiety among the broader community regarding young people's social media use (Livingstone 2009, Boyd 2014). This is consistent with trends present in youth-centric research focusing on other 'spectacular' elements of youthful experience (Cieslik and Simpson 2013). Clearly, the inclination to focus on the spectacular, at the expense of the mundane, everyday is present in many facets of youth studies.

Another thread of more recent media scholarship distances itself from technological determinism by seeking to identify a more spatially embedded relationship between media users and their material contexts. As Livingstone (2009) notes in her work on media use by children and young people, a complex relationship is posited contextualising use in place-based, everyday lives:

> The media are with them all the time – on their person, in their pockets and their ears, embedded – or part of the wallpaper – in most spaces they enter, whether public or private…they could not imagine life without the media…for the 'always on', 'constantly connected', 'digital' generation, it seems that few experiences now go unmediated… (Livingstone 2009: vii).

By this reckoning, digital technologies are conceived in an everyday way, thoroughly incorporated into daily activities and not critically held apart. Digital platforms, such as the internet, are conceived "not so much (as) people's use of 'the internet' but rather how they assembled various technical possibilities that add up to *their* internet" (Miller and Slater 2000:14, author's emphasis). Social technologies are situated in particular social, cultural and historical contexts that are consequently produced by the sociocultural milieu in which they emerge (Ito, Okabe and Matsuda 2005). To analyse the complex and culturally determined environment of different media, technologies and platforms that proliferate in modern society, Madianou and Miller (2012) developed a theory termed 'polymedia'. They advocate moving away from analyses devoted to particular types of media towards an acknowledgement that users assemble a range of devices and platforms in order to suit their own individual communicative and social needs. Rather than focusing on the usage of particular devices, this framework treats affordances, or the range of properties associated with a device or platform that enable social interaction, as the base unit for adoption and incorporation into everyday life. Affordances are not necessarily tied to particular devices however, instead they are developed by users in tandem with the capabilities of particular devices, platforms or technologies (Hutchby 2001).

The idea that young people incorporate social technologies into everyday, place-based lives has special relevance in this study on place-making. In 2009, ACMA found place-based socialities such as 'chat to friends from school', followed by 'to find out what my friends are doing' and to 'chat to friends I know but who don't go to my school' (ACMA 2009: 26-31) were common motivations to go online for young people. These findings complement more recent research that concluded young people's use of social technologies is motivated by a more place-based sociality (see boyd 2014).

A crucial point here is that young people appropriate a series of devices and platforms based on a particular 'ecology' of affordances. t is individuals' materially embedded environment that informs their adoption and appropriation of this 'ecology' of affordances, thus demonstrating the potential role social media technologies can play in place-making practice. Features of young people's material environments that shape the ecology of affordances assembled by them, in addition to sociality, include family context, individuals own motivation and skill level (Hargittai and Hinnant 2008) and ready access to the devices themselves (see Malecki 2003).

This review of common approaches to conceptualising youth media usage illustrates a need to account for the materially embedded nature of such practices in this thesis. While virtual environments are considered in many ways antithetical to everyday materiality, this dichotomous framing has also been challenged by research emphasising the thorough embeddedness of online and offline places for interaction. The next section explores how social technologies are embedded in place and the implications for place-making.

Social technologies use embedded in place

The conceptual links between digital spaces and material place are clear in the terminology used to refer to the former. For example, online '*space*', 'web*site*', online '*community*', virtual '*environment*' or 'cyber*space*' (Bell 2007). Physical place has clearly provided a range of explanatory values and speaks to the ways that online and networked interaction are imagined by users as just another physical space. Online and material contexts clearly differ in many ways however. One is a physical, tangible environment, the other is an insubstantial, intangible network of nodes and interactions. While conceptual divisions between online and offline 'spheres' have been thoroughly critiqued and put aside by media and social researchers (see boyd 2014, Hargittai 2007, Miller and Slater 2000, Waite 2011, Waite and Bourke 2015a), metaphorical descriptors drawn from conceptions of material place endure in strong ways. Such descriptors allow users to make sense of a mediated mode of interaction utilised by a diverse number of people for equally diverse ends (see Miller and Slater 2000, Madianou and Miller 2012). Here, it is a small or large number of people, either familiar or unknown to one another, either traversing vast geographies or merely crossing the local neighbourhood, engaging in mediated interaction in some form within the defined parameters

of a given online platform (Waite and Bourke 2015b). As such, the platform becomes a 'place' made not just by the algorithmic framework, but by those 'real' people who 'visit' and interact via their mediated presence thus forming a 'community', or a 'social network'. The metaphor of a material place is certainly a strong one, and this speaks to one of the key constructive values in the making of place, that is the presence of, and interaction between people.

Both virtual and material locales are ultimately made by those who occupy them. People interact, embody, socialise, perform and discursively construct places, both material and virtual. Crucially the relationship between social technologies, young people and place-making is a complex one. Material places and online locales are not irrevocably separated as was supposed by some early media theorists (see Turkle 1996, Plant 1998). Social technologies also do not serve to thoroughly de-territorialise, nor disembody users through a wholesale collapse of physical boundaries and constraints, although this discourse endures in the public imagination (for example, Internet.org 2015, Mann 2010). Instead material places are thoroughly implicated in online places (Ek 2006, Hess 2015, Pink et al. 2016, Hjorth and Pink 2014, Frosh 2015, Waite and Bourke 2015b). The discourses, practices and activities through which young people construct places of meaning similarly exist in mediated contexts. Insofar as material locales are constructed and imbued with meaning via a series of social, discursive and symbolic meanings, online and other mediated spaces are constructed along similar parameters. Young people move within and between these with varying ease and familiarity, reflecting their material and mediated everyday lives, similarly making material and mediated places as they go.

Part 3: Relationship between young people, place-making and social technologies

There is an increasing body of literature explicitly interrogating the complex relationship between place-making, social technologies and the people linking them (for example, Ek 2006, Hess 2015, Pink et al. 2016, Hjorth and Pink 2014, Frosh 2015, Carah 2014, Hjorth 2013, Lee 2010). Some of this literature focuses on the experiences of young people (see for example Martin and Rizvi 2014, Gibian 2003) while others examine social media technology users more broadly (Ek 2006, Hess 2015, Pink et al. 2016, Hjorth and Pink 2014, Frosh 2015, Carah 2014, Hjorth 2013). In much of this work, questions of de-territorialising and

disembodying are put aside and discourses assuming deterministic impacts enacted on place, and on people, are discounted. Instead, there is an acknowledgement that young people are thoroughly embedded in everyday material environments, and this informs the intimate incorporation of social technologies into everyday lives as well as their place-making practice.

Media and social researchers have increasingly explored the evolving assemblage of affordances presented by smartphones. This is an "intimate" tethered technology residing in the pockets of users, enabling constant connectivity (Ito, Okabe and Matsuda 2005). Hjorth (2012: 1, Hjorth and Pink 2014) term the geo-locating potential of these devices "locative media". This refers to those applications using a smartphone's inbuilt GPS tracker to tag a user's specific geographic location for a variety of purposes. This might occur, for example, in the context of a game, identifying a photo location on Instagram or 'checking-in' on Facebook. This type of functionality has become popular with users, and has special resonance for place-making by forming new connections between people, devices, materiality and online interactions (Hjorth and Pink 2014, Hjorth 2013). The phenomenon of 'locative medias' highlights how "mobility, like intimacy, has taken on new geoimaginaries…" (Hjorth 2013: 9). The affective connections to place that are privileged in Hjorth's (2013) analysis, and which map alternative spatial geographies reflecting people's mobilities within them, inform this perspective:

> Urban mobile games highlight the local, tacit and intimate knowledge that see community overlaid onto place…LBS extend this by allow for multiple cartographies of space that further map place – as both imagined and experienced, geographic and psychological – by overlaying the emotional with the social (Hjorth 2013: 246)

As a key affordance of smartphones, taking, uploading and sharing of images online, is analysed by researchers as key means for making place (Hjorth and Pink 2014, Frosh 2015, Carah 2014, Hjorth 2013, Lee 2010). This is a practice inextricably associated with mobility. To theorise the intersection of movement through place, and sharing photos online, Lee (2010) conceives an urban 'flaneur' walking through city streets recording mundane, everyday objects present in their pathways, constructing these locales and melding them

within the context of virtual environments (Lee 2010). Hjorth and Pink (2014) similarly apply Ingold's concept of 'wayfarer' (see also Moores 2012) to make sense of the digital-material interface. These ideas build on the phenomenological understanding of the relationship between material place and people outlined in Chapter two. They imply that sensory embodiment within the material environment, and the experience of place, is re-imagined through the lens of digital technologies. By this reckoning, the technologically mediated nature of the interaction does not preclude physical embodiment in place, but rather it extends and augments the body's role in the experience of place. In the context of digitally mediated place-making, the form and delivery of the information differs from the more immediate sensory experience of place conceived by earlier scholars of place such as Tuan (1979).

According to Lee (2010), and Hjorth and Pink (2014), those who take, edit and post photographs record their place-embedded perceptions to tell narratives about themselves, their locales and sites of meaning for the consumption of others in their online community. This broader community then compares these images to their own experience and incorporates them into their own place-making practice (Lee 2010). According to Lee (2010), those who photograph and share photos online, in order to interact and build online reputations post "experiential, personal, emotional and aesthetic interpretations of a place" (Lee 2010: 274). Lee's (2010) respondents discussed a particularly tangible place-making practice in their use of digital photography to transpose material locales to virtual environments accessible to larger groups of people. Further, the mobility implied in the concept of the wayfarer points to the range of paths going "hither and thither", stopping starting, never-ending, yet always moving to some destination, or another (Ingold paraphrased in Hjorth and Pink 2014: 45). The 'digital wayfarer' is observable in the physical movement that occurs in everyday contexts: "by movement we refer to the idea that we inhabit and at the same time are creating a world in movement, an ongoingness that we contribute to through our own mobility and that of which mobile media play an increasingly inevitable part" (Hjorth and Pink 2014: 9). In the emergence of mobile media, and accompanying research, mobility becomes more visible thus impelling a reflection on the role of mobilities and movement in the development of online/offline everyday environments (Hjorth and Pink 2014). In so doing, places are constructed online and offline simultaneously -serving to link, and mutually co-construct material lives, sensory experiences of the material world, and virtual experiences (see also Frosh 2014, Favero 2014).

The types of localities constructed include a range of spaces. In many respects, these are spaces of leisure where the pleasure of capturing photos on a camera phone to capture mundane, and amusing experiences, is possible. Carah (2014) documented the construction of place via the routine and continual flow of place-based photos shared online linked to the temporally bounded locality of an outdoor, three-day music festival. Generated by attendees, photographs were 'tagged' to dedicated spatially-based categories on digital platforms like Instagram. Images produced by those at the festival could become linked, not just to the embedded social networks of individuals, but instead by the spatial-temporal locality of the festival. In another example of place-making through sharing of images using smartphones, Hjorth and Pink's (2014) respondents focused on those 'in-between' localities punctuated by mobility. These were places of transit including the train, the bus or while walking from one destination to another. Spaces of "routine and rhythm" were deemed important in participants' locative media practices encompassing affective, material, social and temporal dimensions. Within these "nodes and entanglements" respondents reported feeling free to relax and to 'kill time' without expectations that they might be under in the workplace, or at home with caring responsibilities, for example (Hjorth and Pink 2014: 24). While on the move, for one participant: "Her camera phone locates her within the tapestry of everyday life as well as providing a co-present vehicle for her friends to accompany her" (Hjorth and Pink 2014: 24). Place is clearly a crucial ingredient in this process. What is neglected in this research is a more dedicated exploration of the role of place. In many instances urban places are the assumed norm, while age or youth status tend not to form a key part of the analysis. Non-urban places, where geographic malleability is perhaps more pronounced, have not been explored to the same degree. The interaction of digital medias, young people and regional place is therefore unclear.

One sub-literature interrogating the relationship between images shared online, users and materiality, is research focussing on 'selfies'. These are self-portrait images representing 'the self' that are often taken by the user, and shared online. The 'selfie' is a type of online practice that has particular relevance in a discussion on place and social media technologies among young people. This is due to the embodiment of users' physicality embedded in material contexts represented in the image, and the consequent process of appropriation in online spheres when it is uploaded online. Selfies enable users to "materialize the self via their immediate photographic composition in everyday existence, giving credence to our emplacement in the here and now" (Hess 2015: 1631). Recent research challenges popular

explanations for the popularity of 'selfies' as a 'spectacular' reflection of narcissistic, ego-centric modern culture. This is a particularly common feature of the discourse surrounding young people and social media (see Gabriel 2014). Yet, this common social media practice is one which exists at the nexus of the self, physical contexts and online (Hess 2015).

The 'selfie' is reflective of the positioning of physical bodies in material places at a given time, and people's navigation of public space as well as their 'everydayness' filtered through devices and online norms of interaction. For Hess (2015), taking a selfie while in public space engenders another form of co-presence, a "digital overlay for understanding physicality" whereby physical spaces themselves become "filtered" through the photograph and an alternate interpretation of place can be offered (Hess 2015: 1642). Selfies, and in particular anxieties related to the re-appropriation of personal images shared online, are particularly associated with young people (for example, in the context of sexting see Lee and Crofts 2015). Ultimately, they constitute an important avenue by which social technologies are incorporated into young people's place-making practices.

In other research, the connection linking place-making, social technologies and young people is conceived emphasising face-to-face co-presence, rather than digitally mediated interaction. The materially embedded, place-based nature of social technology use was clearly demonstrated in Gibian's (2003) early study on young women in Western Sydney. The young participants talked about enthusiastically logging onto chat websites to interact and socialise. Their eager use of the chat-functionality in certain websites conforms to boyd (2014) and Livingstone's (2009) conceptualisation of a virtual sphere for experimentation away from an oppressive parental, and adult community, gaze. Interestingly, the respondents were drawn to the medium as a means to connect with unknown others, rather than those encountered in everyday, face-to-face life. Chat-interlocutors were generally local however, residing within one or two suburbs, and invariably within Western Sydney. It was with these individuals the young women felt most comfortable chatting with, and with whom they had the most in common. In short, whom they were able to connect with as residents of Western Sydney, a place constructed by consistent social, discursive, cultural and symbolic markers. Gibian (2003) expressed surprise at this finding after anticipating a more de-territorialised, global level interaction: "Instead of a limitless virtual neighbourhood, their virtual neighbourhood is closely linked to aspects of a 'real' neighbourhood" (Gibian 2003: 55).

In this chapter, I have argued that social technologies complement, as well as complicate, young people's place-making practices. In light of this, Gibian's (2003) finding is not surprising. Her young participants went online to fold the proximate physical boundaries between their suburbs, to move just past the materiality of their immediate localities to construct broader, although nonetheless embedded, online interactions. The complex, intimate intersection between embedded materialities and social media technologies uses has been demonstrated across a range of online practices popular amongst young people. Utilising the locative functions available through smartphones, tracing movement throughout spaces through taking and uploading photos and mediating cultural and social expressions embedded in local place emerge as key practices informing mediated place-making.

Constructing material places

Another small group of researchers interested in the relationship between place, physical users and mediated virtuality, shift focus from people's representations and interactions online, towards a greater consideration of those material localities that emerge at the intersection of these dynamics. Rather than locating fields of research within users' online interactions, these researchers situate their research squarely within the material localities that emerge facilitated by social connections online. For Hepp's (2009) migrant participants, while social technologies provided a means for them to connect with geographically distant others, digital devices were also constituent in their construction of more physically immediate environs. Hepp (2009) conceptualises a range of localities uniquely constructed by users' appropriation of social technologies across the private and public sphere. Interestingly, it is in more public spaces, like the internet café, that Hepp's (2009) research participants reported actively seeking out social technologies to use even while they had access in their homes. The respondents would venture from their homes so that they could utilise devices and access mediated environments while in a particular material, face-to-face social situation themselves. The study participants were able to simultaneously engage in mediated interaction, while purposefully doing so in a situation in which they could also traverse nearby locality and interact with materially proximate others. Unfortunately, Hepp's study did not provide a detailed accounting of the types of online practices participants engaged in, nor considered the nuanced implications of melding material and virtual

socialites in this way. Beyond the internet café, material locations did not form a key part of the analysis either.

In their study of young international students constructing place in the city, Martin and Rizvi (2014) provide such detail. They interrogate particular types of media use and report on their young participants' simultaneous embeddedness in place, and their rootedness in geographically distant home locales. For these often home-sick participants, maintaining connections with distant loved ones, and preserving a sense of home through the consumption of country-of-origin media, were vital affordances of social technologies. While these international students' media uses were not as closely reflected in place as has been the case for other, less internationally mobile groups (see for example Gibian 2003), place-making still occurred within the context of social technologies. Indeed, "media use always happens *in place* and itself always constitutes one of the embodied practices of habitation through which the meaning of place is accomplished" (Martin and Rizvi 2014: 2, authors' emphasis).

Martin and Rizvi (2014) draw on Moores' (2012) phenomenological, and humanist geography inspired approach to media studies. They focus on the embodied, physical habitation of individuals and their inevitable occupation of material locales while they conduct everyday place-making practices, including logging onto online media websites. Place is conceived as a complex construction interweaving elements from young people's geographically distant homes with more proximate dynamics drawn from everyday, lived realities. Social technologies serve to simultaneously de-territorialise and re-territorialise to engender an intricate place-making process:

> …Bits and pieces of 'back home' materialise through laptops and smartphones within the wider geographic and experiential space of 'out here' in Australia, *and contribute to the constitution of 'here'*. Both 'out here' and 'back home' become fragmented and deterritorialised woven in and through each other (Martin and Rizvi 2014: 3, authors' emphasis)

Here, the city of Melbourne is a "material translocality", routinely constructed by these international students via their everyday, place-making activities which occur both in material localities, as well as in virtual spaces reflective of both 'home' and 'here' territorialities

(Martin and Rizvi 2014: 13). Engaging in sociality both online and face-to-face, the young participants played a key role in constructing local places and community relations (Martin and Rizvi 2014, Polson 2013, Hepp 2009). Unlike other similar approaches, Martin and Rizvi focus on the construction of city spaces and note the specificity of urban localities in Melbourne. The nature of places outside the city is less clear.

Borrowing from phenomenologist philosophy, a small group of researchers have theorised the relationship between materiality and social media devices as one characterised by embodiment and physical bodily movement (Pink et al. 2016, Sutherland 2012, Moores 2014). Moores (2014), Hjorth and Pink (2014) draw on Ingold's development of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology inspired work, while Sutherland (2012) draws on Seamon's (1979) interpretation of Merleau-Ponty. These researchers focus on the physical operation, and embodied movement associated with utilising social media devices like mobile and smartphones. In particular, the hand is a locus of analysis. Such a focus implies a "practical knowing" related to the visual element of mobile media practice, as well as the physical movement of hands and fingers familiar with using the screen and the keyboard (Moores 2012). The body, and the hand as the key point of contact with media devices, form habits and routines based on regular familiarity over time. In using a mobile smartphone, taken-for-granted practices are acquired, and in forming a habit, 'distance' is achieved in which hands can almost act on their own (Moores 2014). Here, the hand functions "as repositories of memory, as articulated in the present, and as having an orientation towards what will happen next." (Pink et al. 2016: 240).

In addition to touch, other sensory elements such as vision and sound are considered in a more 'non-representational' approach which accounts for the role of embodied knowledge (Pink et al 2016, Moores 2012). The "affective and emotional ways of feeling and being" emerge out of the "the stories we narrate with visual and audio content or through social relationships to others and forms of empathy, intimacy and presence that we 'feel' through the tactile screen" (Pink et al. 2016: 241). Acknowledging the contributions of humanist geographers drawing on the phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty (see Tuan 1979, Seamon 1979), Sutherland (2012) applies Seamon's (1979) concept of a 'place-ballet' to conceptualise his participants' embodied movement within and across material and virtual domains. The two male participants of the study explained their relationship to local place in the city, and the key role their mobile devices played as a means to mediate frequent micro-

social organisation, and as a means to maintain intimate, sensuous relationships through the sharing of photographs. Here the participants' relationship to place, and to their daily interaction with the city are "…in part articulated by the technological rhythms of their mobile devices" in an habitual, 'automatic', 'mechanical' fashion in the vein of Seamon's place-ballet, whereby the "pre-conscious regimes of interaction" mediated via mobile communication devices are part of their everyday experience of place (Sutherland 2012: 169). Seamon's 'place-ballet' (1979) aligns with participants' explanation of mobile phone use and its incorporation into everyday, material lives: "it is a conception which connects explicitly with the spectre of bodies moving through public space as if attuned to complex rhythms…" (Sutherland 2012: 169). Ultimately, social technologies and place-making are interwoven by people thoroughly embedded in local places, and negotiating globalising currents.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on young people's place-making amid the context of globalisation and social change, and through the lens of social media technologies. The first part of this chapter considered the elongated, insecure and precarious of youth transitions under the contemporary conditions of globalisation and how they have been theorised in terms of the relative role of social structures and agentic decision-making (see Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Bendit 2008, see for example Evans 2002, Roberts 2003, Cote and Bynner 2008, Coffey and Farrugia 2014, MacDonald et al. 2005). Social media technologies are implied in this discussion as well, particularly when considering the role of globalising flows on youthful lives in the regions. Young people's relationship with place under the disruptive conditions of globalisation is captured in Harris and Wyn's (2009) concept 'micro-territories of the local'. Their concept is deployed in the analysis chapters as a means to link young people's construction of discrete localities, while responding to youth-based structural constraints, alongside youthful agencies. The second part of this chapter considers the role of social media technologies and critically interrogates young people's assumed natural affiliation with social media technologies. The final sections of this chapter consider the complex relationship between young people, place-making and social media technologies. Indeed, social technologies and material place intersect in a range of ways. Using social media technologies in material places emerges as a particular place-making practice in and of

itself. Therefore, the complexity lies in not dismissing the changes, and realities of late modern young lives in regional places, but in not assuming a deterministic impact and a significant role of the 'global'. Rather a more local, spatially embedded relationship emerges in which the 'global' arises in a range of forms, via news websites, broadcast media, commercial consumption, alongside interacting and socialising with close friends, peers, family members and others in the nearby community.

So far, I have outlined the theoretical orientation of this thesis in chapter two, and considered its positioning within the literature privileging the social construction, and phenomenological interpretation of place. I have reviewed literature interrogating young people's relationship with place, and non-urban place in particular. Under the disruptive conditions of globalisation, distilled in many research agendas by the intimate presence of digitally mediated interaction and globalising information flows, young people's place-making projects in the regions emerges as a fruitful analytical pathway to explore the intersection of these topics. The next chapter outlines the research project on which this thesis is based.

Chapter 4: Ascertaining the place-making project

The aim of this project is to explore place-making among young regional people. The inter-subjective, interpretivist, phenomenological dimension of this topic necessitates a carefully devised method of inquiry. Further, given well-established problems engaging marginalised populations such as young people or those from culturally diverse backgrounds in social research, methods that are sensitive to the inclusion of minority voices are also important for successful data collection. To this end, the following chapter outlines the methodological philosophy that underscores not just the methods utilised, but also the aims of the project more broadly. This is followed by an outline of the field site, and a consideration of the particularities of the town as key dynamics in respondent's discussions of place-making. A detailed explanation of the research project is then provided, including the recruitment procedure, ethical considerations that emerged, as well as the consent process. The final sections consider the main data collection method utilised. A short demographic questionnaire was utilised, and this is also detailed here. Justification for choosing this method, and its appropriateness in the context of the philosophical framework and the types of information sought, is outlined. Concluding this section is a discussion of the data analysis utilised to interrogate the data collected.

Aims and goals of the research

The aims of this study concern place-making processes and mechanisms employed among young regional residents in Australia. Seeking to address this aim in a relatively expansive manner, a range of concerns emerged from the research literature reviewed in the preceding chapters. Within this focus on the place-making mechanisms of young regional people are a series of sub-questions seeking to specify three key areas of concern. These represent a triad-approach designed to inform the place-making projects of young people in Shepparton by relying on the intersubjective voices of young people themselves, broader social shaping mechanisms, as well as the making of place via the mediating lens of digital technologies. The research questions include:

a) **What are the discourses deployed by young people characterising their town and how do these serve to construct local place?**

a. What do these discourses demonstrate about a more experiential, embodied construction of place?

b) **What are the 'micro-territories of the local' (Harris and Wyn 2009) made by the young people?**

a. What are the roles of personal agencies alongside structural mechanisms in the construction of 'micro-territories'?

c) **How is local place made in the context of social media technologies utilised by young residents?**

a. What are the practices, and modes of interaction the young people regularly engage in online in relation to local place?

Owing to the subjective, and obscured nature of the processes under study it becomes necessary to apply a multifaceted approach. Since place-making is a process which occurs in increments, on an everyday basis, taking place mostly in the background as part of an unremarkable, unreflexive process of being in the world, it can be difficult to identify for scrutiny. For this reason, approaching the topic from a range of angles constitutes a means to gain a more comprehensive understanding of young people's place-making projects.

Methodological framework and philosophy

An ontological approach informed by social constructivism anchors the study and underpins many of the expectations made regarding the social phenomena under investigation. This philosophical perspective informs the "assumptions about reality" (Crotty 1998: 2) and directs what is considered meaningful in the context of youthful place-making. This has guided the types of literature consulted, the nature and approach of the inquiry, as well as the methodological approach developed. The conceptions and perspectives related to place are held as representations of socially constructed understandings that ultimately serve to make local place. Interpretivism is the epistemological dimension of the philosophical paradigm that informs the research study design (Crotty 1998, Schwandt 2000, Pascale 2011).

A key assumption arising from the interpretivist underpinning of this study relates to the emergence of language as a framework for understanding the world. Language is not merely a passive description of the daily life-world (Pascale 2011). Discourse is understood as a repository of pre-formed conceptual representations passed from one person to another within a society. Categories developed to represent the world are used by people when they use language, and these categories are reproduced by them (Burr 2015, Pascale 2011). In this research project, place is constructed through talk that is employed to refer to and interpret it. Discourses utilised to describe place, and articulate relationships to place, are taken as a key constituent dimension in how place itself is constructed by those who live there. The interpretivist approach has a range of iterations reproduced in different research paradigms, including phenomenology (Schwandt 2000). Phenomenology serves as a means to put aside pre-conceived assumptions to consider ‘actual’ experience of phenomena to engender novel meanings. It is concerned with the “things themselves” and calls for a need to capture the “immediate experience” of ‘things’ (Crotty 1998: 78), in this case, place. There is a necessary gap separating conceptual representation (or language) and reality. As such, there are inherent difficulties establishing ‘authentic’ understanding within the phenomenologist tradition. An important tenet of phenomenology is to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions to generate novel understandings about the world even while these might nonetheless still be mediated through a cultural lens (Crotty 1998).

Humanist geography perspectives and phenomenological approaches are underpinned by similar ontological assumptions concerning the production of place. This research project is squarely situated within the robust sociological tradition that propels intersubjective, interpretivist meanings to the fore and heralds these as key in forming understandings about the social world. One facet of the social world is place, and this research project bases its conclusions on a study of one particular place, the regional town of Shepparton.

Description of field site

Shepparton is a regional town with a population of 60, 223 (ABS 2011a), approximately 180km north of the southerly Australian state capital of Melbourne. This site was chosen for a range of reasons. Principally it was chosen for its suitability in terms of addressing the research problem. Widely understood in the community as a 'regional', more than a 'rural' town, Shepparton is a site that fulfils the research parameters of place-making in a regional community. Further, the town is nearly three hours' drive from the state capital precluding only the most dedicated daily commuters. Unlike other regional centres in Victoria, including Ballarat, Geelong, and Bendigo, Shepparton is further away from Melbourne. The distance, compounded by relatively infrequent public transport, makes for fewer opportunities for urban interconnection. Although, with a relatively large population, and as a service centre for surrounding rural towns, the town has a lively feel. Shepparton has a busy local service sector, with the health and manufacturing sectors constituting key industries of employment (Economy.id 2016). Seven secondary schools (four private and three state schools), a TAFE college, and a LaTrobe University campus also indicate a vibrant youth culture. These dynamics make Shepparton a novel site in which to explore youthful place-making in the country.

Shepparton constitutes an example of what Woods (2007) terms the 'global countryside'. Woods' (2007) concept serves to interrupt stereotypes of non-urban localities diametrically opposed to the transnational flows of people, goods and information associated with the 'global city'. Here, the 'global countryside' represents regional or rural places sharing strong interconnections across the globe in the form of commodity networks, commercialised natural resources as well as in/outward flows of migrants (Woods 2007). Key aspects of the 'global countryside' are counterurbanisation and migration (Woods 2016), as well as the multi-dimensionality of local and global economic system integration (Woods 2013) . As part of the 'global countryside' landscape, Shepparton has had a traditionally strong agricultural and manufacturing sector. Part of a larger fruit-growing region, fruit processing and preserving takes place in manufacturing plants in and around the town. These companies maintain diverse and extensive distribution networks across the country and globally. The weakening of the industrial and manufacturing sector in Australia as a whole, and centralisation away from rural and regional areas has, of course, had a significant impact

(Lockie and Bourke 2001, Hall, Coffey and Lashua 2009, Kraack and Kenway 2002, White and Wyn 2004, Darian-Smith 2002).

In terms of human flows, Shepparton has been the site of population increase, as well as successive flows of migration from across the globe (ABS 2011b, Taylor and Stanovic 2005, Darian-Smith 2002). The town has also been the site of policy drives seeking to settle new migrants outside of urban areas into regional areas (Piper and Associates 2007, Taylor and Stanovic 2005). Table 1 describes the basic composition of the town according to the country of birth, whether parents were born overseas and what languages other than English are spoken at home. Interestingly, one in five residents reported that both parents were born overseas, and just over one in ten indicated that two languages were spoken at home, mostly Italian and Arabic. Further, while the majority reported that Australia was their country of birth, Italy was notably the next highest, above England and India.

Compared with other regional Victorian towns, for example Warrnambool or Colac, and as the data in Table 1 alludes to, Shepparton has a relatively long history of migration (Taylor and Stanovic 2005, ABS 2011b). Smaller towns close to Shepparton, including Kyabram and Cobram, have also experienced periods of international migration (Taylor and Stanovic 2005), but have perhaps also been part of the broader trend of economic decline across rural Victoria (Darian-Smith 2002). Shepparton, conversely, has demonstrated a relatively robust, and enduring regional economy (Economy.id 2016). In addition to having experienced these influxes of population, regional and rural areas have also experienced significant 'outmigration' (Alston 2004). Inward and outward mobility is common in rural and regional areas, and Shepparton has emerged as a particularly diverse community in regional Victoria with a variety of economic opportunities.

The population count reported in the census data for 2011 represents not merely those living within Shepparton itself, but also in surrounding satellite towns. According to population statistics collated on the local council webpage, just over half live in either Shepparton or Mooroopna (53%) and a significant number live in the surrounding rural areas, including Tatura, Murchison, Dookie, Merrigum, Congupna, Toolamba, Undera, Katandra and Tallygaroopna (47%) (Greater Shepparton City Council, 2011).

In terms of the age dynamics of younger people in Shepparton, there is a fairly consistent range of the relevant age groups (ABS 2011b). Notably, the percentage of young people in the 15-19 age group is slightly larger than those in the older 20-24, and 25-29 age groups. The out-migration of young people once they finish secondary school could account for this variation (see Alston and Kent 2001), however it is also noteworthy that the difference is only 1.4% and 1.3% respectively across the older age categories. Clearly while some young people choose to move away, many decide to remain in Shepparton.

Table 1: Shepparton: Demographics

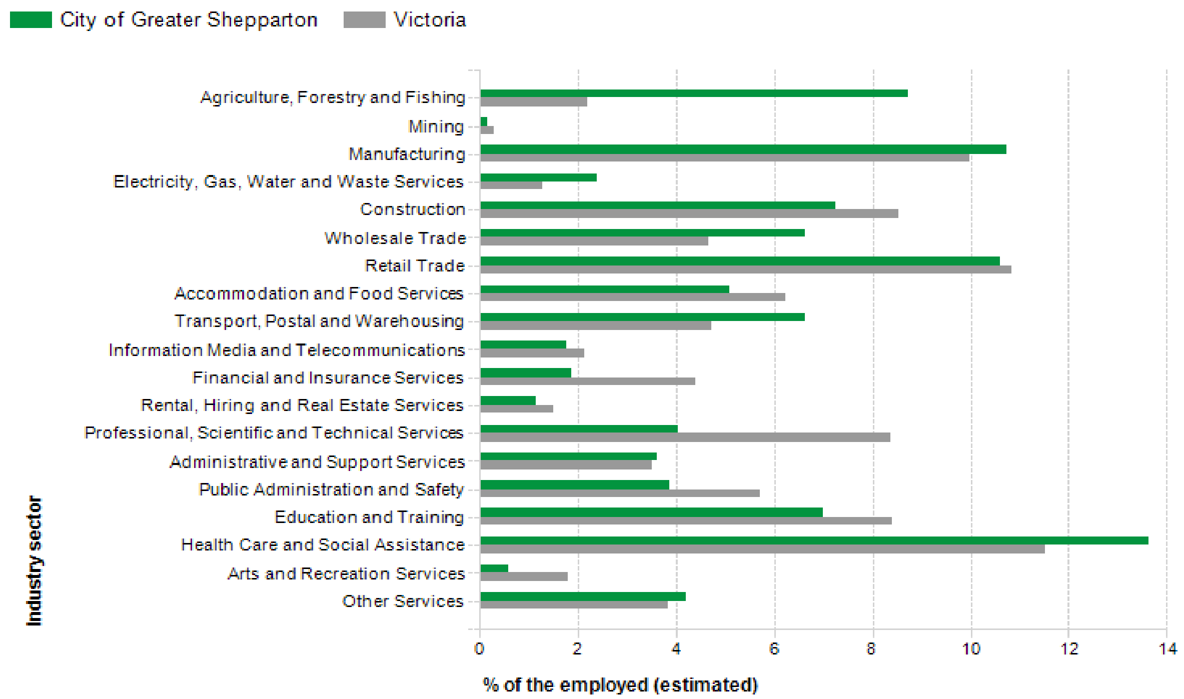
Shepparton[2]	
Population	60,223
Median age	38
Aged 15-19	7.2%
Aged 20-24	5.8%
Aged 25-29	5.9%
Number of families	15,641
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	3.5 %
Country of birth (%)	
Australia	80.8
Italy	1.6
England	1.4
India	1.3
New Zealand	1.0
Afghanistan	0.9

[2] Consistent with participant interpretations of Shepparton, the table refers to 'statistical area level 3', an ABS 2011a category encompassing outlying satellite towns close to Shepparton, see Figure 2

Parents born overseas (%)	
Both parents born overseas	20.0
Father born overseas	8.3
Mother born overseas	3.2
Both parents born in Australia	71.6
Languages spoken at home other than English (%)	
Italian	2.7
Arabic	1.7
Turkish	1.0
Albanian	0.8
Punjabi	0.8
Households where two or more languages are spoken	13.5

In terms of industries of employment, for 2014/2015, the key domains in Shepparton were "health care and social assistance" representing 13.6%, just over half of whom worked in "Hospitals" (5.2%) (Economy.id, 2016). The next most common industry was recorded as "manufacturing" with 10.7% employed, two-thirds of whom worked in "food product manufacturing" (6.5%). The third most dominant industry of employment was "Retail trade" representing 10.6% of the workforce, nearly two-thirds of whom worked in "other store-based retailing" (6%). These top three industry categories accounted for 35% of the broader workforce in Shepparton (Economy.id, 2016). Further, in comparison with the state of Victoria, the Shepparton workforce comprises a larger proportion of individuals employed in the "Agriculture, forestry and fishing", "Health care and social assistance", and a smaller proportion in "professional, scientific and technical services", and "Financial and insurance services" than other parts of the state (Economy.id, 2016). The agricultural profile of the town is demonstrated in this economic representation, with the health and service sectors also clearly present.

Figure 1 - Shepparton industries of employment



(Economy.id 2016)

Figure 2 - Image showing Shepparton, 'statistical area 3' (ABS 2011b)

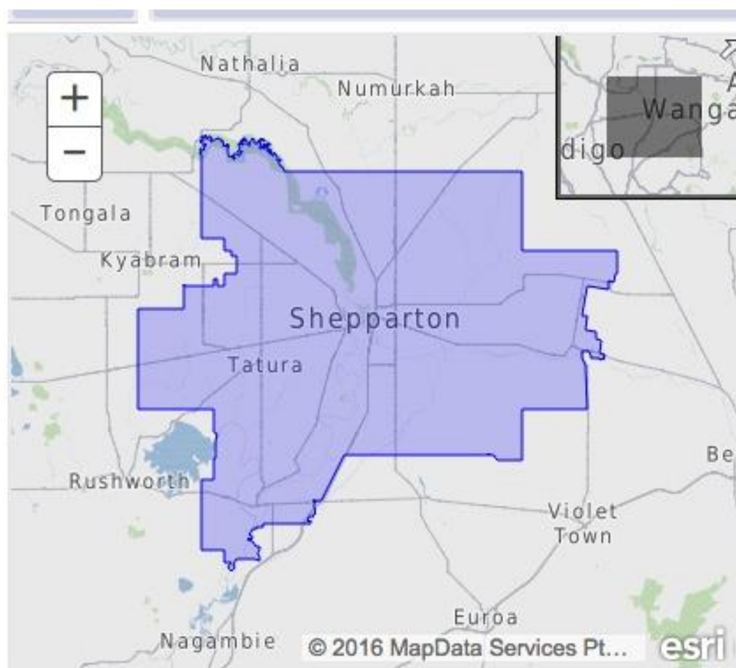


Figure 3 - Map of central Victoria

Source: http://members.westnet.com.au/jimgibney/

Recruitment methods

Consistent with a purposive sampling approach, participant recruitment was undertaken with a view to including those individuals who were in the optimal position to address the aims of the project on youthful place-making in the country (Choak 2013). Specifically, this involved a relatively expansive definition of young people, including those aged 16-29 years. Within this parameter, an additional requirement for participation was continuous residence in Shepparton for at least three years. This fairly broad requirement for participation was designed to encompass the widest range possible of young, secondary and post-secondary aged people living in Shepparton. Relatively recent (less than three years) incomers were excluded. An assumption was made at the beginning of the fieldwork period that the opinions and perspectives developed by long-term residents need to have had a reasonable opportunity develop and for place-making strategies to form. Shorter-term residents, or those moving between different locales were omitted to maintain consistency in this regard.

While these parameters for participation were made clear at the time of recruitment, it emerged that such directives were interpreted among participants in different ways. Specifically, understandings of 'Shepparton resident' varied. Those living in satellite towns abutting Shepparton tended to uncritically include themselves within the 'Shepparton resident' parameter. Therefore, consistent with the interpretative, social constructivist lens adopted in this study (Crotty 1998, Pascale 2011), participants' own self-identification as 'Shepparton residents' living beyond the town limits were included within the study. During the fieldwork phase, the simplistic interpretation of 'Shepparton' and assumptions that residents must be living within the town limits more consistent with positivist accountings of place, was broadened to include a more expansive interpretation broadly similar to the ABS statistical area 3 definition of 'Shepparton' (see figure 2). My decision to respect people's own interpretation of Shepparton irrespective of their specific residential location was guided by the interpretivist framework steering the broader study (Schwandt 2000, Crotty 1998).

Within the age and residential parameters, participant recruitment was conducted with a view to gaining a diverse sample (Choak 2013, Barbour 2001, Ritchie et al. 3013). Given the multicultural profile of Shepparton's broader population, this meant gaining access to different migrant communities. Accessing equal numbers of men and women from across the specified age range was also important. Further, purposively including individuals from a range of socio-economic, education and employment backgrounds was a consideration. There is a trend of marginalising various minority voices from research, including women (Madiz 2000), young people (Schäfer and Yarwood 2008), and those from migrant communities (Finney and Rishbeth 2006), or any intersectional combination of these. In some cases, this relates to pervasive difficulties engaging such individuals in research projects. Therefore, effort was expended to purposively access these groups to deliberately and carefully invite them to take part in the research on their own terms (Barbour 2001, Ritchie et al. 3013). While this did not yield a perfect representation of the diversity of young people residing in Shepparton, the purposive approach was sufficient for gaining a "symbolic representation (rather) than diversity" (Ritchie et al. 2013: 102).

A further challenge recruiting young people to research includes gaining access to eligible participants (Fontana and Frey 2000). There is a need for researchers to convince gatekeepers, such as teachers, parents or other adult guardians, of the minimal risk of adverse

outcomes to them and the young people in their care (Dentith, Measor and O'Malley 2012). Nonetheless, there are strategies for accessing spaces that seek to "transgress relations of power" (Dentith, Measor and O'Malley 2012). For example, insiders or researchers who are already part of the structures can provide access to young people in the initial instance (Dentith, Measor and O'Malley 2012). These researchers share a double role incorporating their investigator status alongside their roles as insiders. Individuals such as these are able to subvert those relations of power to gain access to young people more readily while maintaining the trust and confidence of gatekeepers. Still, adult gatekeepers were present in at least seven separate recruitment scenarios, meaning that concerns around accessing participants through an intermediary remained. In the remaining recruitment scenarios, individuals were approached and a focus group developed through snowballing methods (Ritche et al. 2013). Snowballing provided an additional opportunity to access those difficult to reach sections of the community otherwise unrepresented in the groups targeted for recruitment (Ritchie et al. 2013). Decisions concerning accessing the greatest diversity of young people also informed the types of spaces in which recruitment took place.

My own insider status, as a long-time resident of Shepparton, assisted in gaining access to some spaces. The details of my relationship to various scenarios of recruitment are outlined in table 2. However, insider status commonly impacts researchers across many phases of a study's development and implementation (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). Understanding challenges and time required to gain access to recruitment spaces was a factor in the decision to conduct the research in a community in which I had pre-existing connections that would facilitate the research process. Further, while in the field, personal recollections and pre-formed meanings associated with different localities, and constructions of place informed my traversal of public spaces. My own relationship to local place underpinned the development of the focus group protocol of questions, while informing my facilitation of discussion during focus group conversations. Ultimately, the interpretation and analysis of responses were also impacted by my own personal history in the town. While the researcher is always impacted at every stage of the research process by their own cultural and social situatedness (Schwandt 2000, Crotty 1998), having lived in, and spent many years in the town, my insider status was pronounced. In spite of maintaining a reflexive approach throughout the data collection phase, it is difficult to determine exactly how my status impacts the research, and findings (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). That is, I may have been an insider insofar as being personally, and intimately familiar with the place, however, I was an outsider in the context of the young

respondents who took part in the study. I did not have personal relationships with any participants. Further, younger than me, they shared a different epoch in relation to digital media saturation. The insider/outsider binary is problematic and my relationship to the field can be better conceptualised in terms of occupying the "space between" not fully an outsider, nor an insider (Dwyer and Buckle 2009).

Table 2 - Recruitment sites, location and insider status

Focus group #	**Site of recruitment**	**Focus group location**	**Insider status**
1-2	Recruited from *Partners In Training* (private training organisation), students in Certificate/Diploma of aged care and Certificate/Diploma of nursing	Boardroom at PTO	Personal connection with managing director of PTO. I was allowed relative freedom to visit the site and talk to students and teachers
3	Recruited from Shepparton young professional group. Initially recruited one individual, snowballed from her network in the community group. Additional members recruited via the groups' Facebook page	Local pub, pre-existing meeting point for the group	Personal connection with one member of the group. This member introduced me to an organizer who posted my recruitment notice on the closed Facebook group, and also helped snowball additional participants
4	Recruited individual from local government workplace, additional participants snowballed from the individuals' social group	Local pub, pre-existing point for the group	Personal connection with another member of the workplace who introduced me to the participant
5, 8	Recruited from local youth run, orientated volunteer group	Regular meeting room of the volunteer group	The group was sponsored by the local council and meetings were facilitated by a council employee. A personal connection was an ex-member of

			the group who introduced me via email to the council employee
6	Recruited members of a local soccer team	Soccer club rooms	No direct connection, however a serendipitous encounter provided me with the information on an important gatekeeper
7, 9	Members of a local youth organisation aimed at engaging Muslim youth in particular. The organisation was run by a small group of young men from the Iraqi community. I recruited a member of the group committee and he snowballed other members for a focus group	Meeting/hang-out space in the commercial CBD maintained by the group for members.	Personal connection with an adult educator working with young members of the Shepparton migrant community who gave me the details of the youth organization and contact details of organisers.
10	Members of a local LGBTI support/social group. I attended one of the group's bi-monthly get-togethers where the group members generally hang-out, make dinner for themselves, and occasionally attend or host events	Regular meeting space for the group which was a church hall	No connection
11	Recruited from the local TAFE campus. Participants were students in the VCAL course (secondary school level qualification, equivalent to VCE)	TAFE classroom	No connection.
12	Recruited member of a local Afghani association. Snowballed from their network/contacts for focus group	Community space for members of the migrant community in Shepparton	The same personal contact who provided details utilised for focus groups 7 and 9 also provided the contact details for the individual in focus group 12

who sourced participants for a group.

*Unsuccessful recruitment initiatives included phone and email inquiries to the local African church; teacher of multicultural students at the local TAFE; a general project manager at the local migrant community organisation; facilitators at two local sports teams; youth development officer at the local council; youth leadership project officer at migrant community organisation. Further, I was granted access to recruit students at a local university campus. However, because the bulk of fieldwork took place during the semester break, by the time students returned to classes I had sufficient numbers and did not need to utilise this opportunity.

Determining the appropriate sample size for the project was a further consideration. Using a purposive framework to gain adequate diversity, six to seven focus groups were planned to represent a number of different groups within the community. This number was determined before fieldwork began and was anticipated as a flexible projection. Because the goals of the research focused on young respondents' intersubjective accounts of their place-making practice, assessing the prevalence of a particular behaviour or experience was not the primary concern. Rather, gaining rich, nuanced detail with suitable potential to address the research question was the aim (Ritchie et al. 2013). Once in the field however, after approximately three months identifying potential avenues for recruitment, initiating meetings with gate-keepers, I established fruitful relationships with several members of the community. In some instances, there was a significant delay between first contacting a potential group or organisation, and the formation of a focus group. Further, several inquiries were not fruitful (see note in table 2 above).

After having conducted 10 focus groups, three more than planned (one group was split into two according to gender lines, another group was split when two members could not make the originally scheduled focus group), I was preparing to conclude the data collection phase. At this point, two individuals I had previously contacted for the purposes of forming focus groups, contacted me after a period of non-contact. I had assumed that the focus groups would not occur, however felt obliged to follow through when the two contacts seemed interested. These were focus groups 11 (VCAL[3] students at TAFE[4]) and 12 (members of the Afghani community). Purposive attempts to encompass adequate representation of the local migrant community resulted in the disproportionately large participation of this section of the community in this case.

[3] Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, a vocational alternative to the final two years of secondary education
[4] Technical and Further Education, a tertiary learning institution

Ethical considerations

There are several ethical considerations that emerged during this project that will be addressed here. Firstly, the decision was made to provide a one-off $15 gift voucher for those who participated in the research. Early during the recruitment phase no reimbursement was offered. However, poor response rates and attendance at focus groups precipitated the decision to offer reimbursement. There are arguments contending that financial 'incentives' are coercive and essentially result in involuntary participation (Fry and Dwyer 2001: 1320). However, the National Health and Medical Research Council states that 'reimbursements' for the costs, such as travel or parking, as well as for time involved can be appropriate (NHMRC 2007). Others have argued that compensation constitutes an important acknowledgement of participants' role in the research process.

Further ethical considerations concern maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring the privacy of respondents within a focus group study conducted in regional town (Choak 2013). While the topic of this research was not particularly sensitive, nor controversial, there was potential for respondents to interpret invitations to discuss place and social media technologies in a personal way. Therefore, given the personal nature of potential responses, participation in, and information given, was confidential. Participants were assured at the time of recruitment, and then again at the beginning of the focus group, that their involvement, as well as the things that they said, would be confidential (Morrow 2008). All data reported in this project was anonymised, including the provision of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying anecdotes or references. Further, respondent's personal details, including their full names, were only collected as a means to contact them for the purposes of organising focus group meet-ups. During data collection, this was held in a secure location, and once the data collection phase had ended, this information was destroyed.

Consent procedure

Gaining informed consent from participants is a vital consideration in any research involving human participants (NHMRC 2007). Once a young person indicated interest in taking part in the research after initial recruitment, they were approached and asked what the most suitable

time and place would be to conduct a focus group. If they indicated immediately, then the focus group would take place at that time. However, more commonly, I would visit another, already organised get-together and conduct the focus group then.

Once the participants had arrived for the focus group, the aims and nature of the research were reiterated. This conversation was conducted using everyday, easy to understand language in order to optimise comprehension and increase respondents' sense of comfort in the research setting (Kitzinger 1995). The project was described as an investigation into young people's understandings and thoughts about Shepparton, and different places within the town. Respondents were invited to take part in a one-hour focus group, in which they would be asked to discuss several items about living in Shepparton and their thoughts on it as a place. The ways in which they used and thought about social technologies in the context of Shepparton specifically was also reiterated. A printed Information Statement (see appendix 5) was distributed at this point that provided this content in written format, as well as information on the confidentiality policy, grievance procedure, contact details of project members, ethics approval confirmation and expectations for participants. Further, the voluntary nature of participation was re-visited. If they indicated being content to proceed, Consent Forms (see appendix 6) were distributed and respondents were asked to sign and date the forms to acknowledge their consent to take part in the research more formally (see Choak 2013).

Methods framework

Owing to the complex, obscured intersubjective data that was sought as part of the aims of this project, a multi-faceted framework of methods was designed. This framework was intended to encompass talk-based methods across mediated and face-to-face contexts, a brief accounting of demographic and structural position, pictorial renditions of social media networks, as well as more experiential encounters 'in place'. Qualitative approaches were the dominant method deployed as part of the epistemological paradigm guiding this study. Due to the type of information required in this project on subjective experiences of place-making, qualitative methods within a social constructivist ontology, and an interpretivist epistemological approach, emerged as the most appropriate.

To this end, the methods devised for this research project included face-to-face focus groups, online focus groups, demographic questionnaire, research walks and mind-mapping. However, due to the realities of being in the field, and challenges encountered throughout the research process, the framework was modified (see McCormack, Adams and Anderson 2013). In short, several methods were discarded and the data that was yielded was not included in the analysis. The following sections outline the key methods deployed and explain why they were included, how they were used, the challenges that emerged and the decision-making processes leading to the modification of the methods framework.

Focus groups

Focus groups were the primary means of data collection in this study. Focus groups are a common method within the social sciences (Kavern and Webb 2001, Franz 2011), but this particular method was selected here for a number of reasons. These included the method's appropriateness for gaining rich, interpretivist data, as well as its usefulness for mitigating unequal power dynamics and accessing difficult-to-reach populations. Focus groups are a qualitative research method in which small groups of people, guided by a moderator, meet to discuss and provide talk-based data. One key feature of focus groups is the capacity to solicit and explore respondents' perceptions, experiences, values or attitudes about a range of phenomena (Kavern and Webb 2001, Franz 2011).

Focus groups are a method that allows researchers to remain in close proximity to participants and their descriptions of daily life (Madriz 2000). This relative closeness, and naturalistic context of the group provides a window into the ways in which knowledge, experience and subjectivities are constructed within the situational framework that participants themselves discuss and explain. A range of culturally interpreted ideologies, symbols and signs that emerge can form representations and infer ideologies that underscore participants' interactions with the world around them (Madriz 2000).

In contrast to other qualitative methods like interviews, focus group facilitators can not only listen and record discussion, but they can also observe interactions between participant members. With limited intervention on the part of the facilitator, and more spontaneously shared information, the prescriptive influence of the facilitator can be minimized thus giving

greater emphasis to participants' opinions and perspectives (Madriz 2000). Allowing a degree of group-driven discussion in this way is also revealing of the culture that exists within the group, and can help demonstrate respondents' complicated and messy everyday lives (Franz 2011). There is, however, a need to weigh the balance here to ensure that the aims of the project can still be met and that group discussion does not stray too far from the original intent.

Focus groups can be formed based on common characteristics between individuals (Ritchie et al. 2013). For example, groups made up of individuals sharing similar occupations, education level, or cultural background. If the group is too heterogeneous it can be difficult to foster free exchange between group members (Franz 2011, Ritchie et al. 2013). While groups are also said to be improved if they are made up of individuals otherwise unknown to each other (Franz 2011), some findings suggest that social and peer groups engaging in everyday conversations form opportune focus groups with useful, constructivist data (Madriz 2000, Ritchie et al. 2013). Natural cohesion existing in the group can be maintained, relatively free-flowing discussion "can trigger memories of shared situations…valuable for exploring shared meanings and contexts" (Ritchie et al. 2013: 192). However, familiarity may mean that shared assumptions remain unspoken. The focus group facilitator's job identifying and drawing out these assumptions becomes important (Ritchie et al. 2013). Further, more homogenous focus groups can function as a means to gain comparative insights (Ritchie et al. 2013).

This study adopted a sampling approach sensitive to contexts in which young people naturally came together in the community. Groups were invariably made up of individuals known to each other to varying extents. This meant that already developed and natural cohesion could be maintained, although no doubt pre-formed hierarchies and power structure also remained (Schäfer and Yarwood 2008). Each focus group was sampled within a particular context, from training institutions, volunteer groups, community groups and peer groups. This constituted a more naturalistic approach by utilising everyday get-togethers and emphasising pre-existing social relationships in the data collection process. While this approach to forming focus groups contrasts with more structured approaches (Franz 2011) it was a necessary approach for accessing eligible young people in Shepparton, forming a rapport, and for an ultimately successful data collection endeavour.

These strategies lead to many within the different focus groups being formed by young people sharing similar backgrounds and structural positions. The degree of collectively shared experience present in many of the focus groups meant that the insights, perspectives and discussion that were shared by them were somewhat anchored in a common background. This has implications for the reporting and analysis of the focus group discussions, and in the comparisons that will be made between them. That is, while the groups were made up of diverse individuals, in many instances, similarities within groups were greater than similarities between different groups. However it was difficult to quantitatively separate the groups for the purposes of analysis, similarly the focus group method does not allow for differences between individuals to be easily ascertained. This is a key limitation of the focus group method.

In terms of the optimal number of participants, the size of a focus group should facilitate comfort and ease of interaction for participants (Franz 2011). Flexibility is important (Ritchie et al. 2013), however, groups that are too large can impede the participation of all members of the group, and groups that are too small can be skewed towards the facilitator who has to take a more active role guiding the discussion. Still, smaller groups can be useful sources of data, representing an opportunity to visit topics in more depth than might be possible in a large-group context (Ritchie et al. 2013). The groups formed in this study reflected the research realities alluded to above, and flexibility emerged as paramount. Scheduled focus groups with an anticipated number of participants often did not proceed with the invited individuals present. That is, oftentimes, expected individuals did not arrive, or wanted to re-schedule the focus group, while others not initially recruited would arrive with their friends. While this did not necessarily adversely impact the data collection process, it was challenging to control focus group size. If eligible young people arrived for a focus group and were keen to be involved in the project, I was loath to cancel the group and waste their time. For this reason, some focus groups were larger, while others were relatively small. No doubt this impacted group dynamics, propelling some voices to the fore (in smaller groups), while subsuming others (in larger groups). But these varying dynamics of balance are present in groups of all sizes, and I observed a quality degree of data throughout the focus group data collection phase.

Focus groups mitigate some elements of the power imbalance between researchers and participants to make a smoother, more organic information gathering process. This is

because focus groups can alleviate some of the ‘intimidation’ or ‘scary’ aspects of a one-on-one interview (Madriz 2000, Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009, Ritchie et al. 2013). Rather, a group can provide the sense of a ‘safe environment’, and thus facilitate the sharing of ideas, beliefs, and attitudes (Madriz 2000). This is because, as well as mitigating power inequalities, peer support can also decrease potential discomfort (Kavern and Webb 2001, Madriz 2000) although, this is certainly not always the case. Ultimately however, the group context means that automatic preference is more likely ceded to the respondents rather than the facilitator in regards to their “hierarchies of importance” (Madriz 2000: 840, Kitzinger 1994). However, it is misleading to assume that power structures do not arise in focus group contexts, power structures can also be those imposed by the participants themselves who bring in their “own hierarchies” (Madriz 2000: 841, Schäfer and Yarwood 2008). The facilitator needs to be sensitive to these power structures and use this insight during the analysis of the focus groups.

Several key limitations emerge in research projects relying on focus groups as the main method. These concern the practical logistics of organising and running groups, as well as the theoretical underpinning that guides facilitators and inform the analysis of transcripts. Smithson (2000) distils three challenges associated with focus group methods. These include firstly the danger of a minority of group members dominating the focus group discussion. A study participant who has consented to take part in the research project that contributes minimally due to the particular nature of the group based data-collection method worries researchers. Similarly, it is problematic to represent a focus group as having a single position on a given question especially if one or two individuals have dominated with their own personal perspectives. Rather, there is a need to acknowledge the form of the interaction that takes place in focus groups. For instance, the balance of participation among different group members, the proportion who agree on any given point, noting those who dominate more than others, and those who are more submissive. This emerges more strongly when there are greater differences in terms of background and characteristics among focus group participants (Parker and Tritter 2006).

Secondly, Smithson (2000) cites the construction of the ‘other’ or moderator bias as another key limitation of focus groups methods. Several accounts on focus group limitations attribute biases introduced by the facilitator as a key challenge. In these instances, the language or

behaviour introduced by the facilitator can imply certain assumptions that might implicitly shape, and impact participant responses. For instance, young respondents may be uncomfortable disclosing sensitive information about intimate partners to facilitators of the opposite gender. These reflect more essentialist paradigms seeking the "purest form of data" (Wilkinson 1998: 112) unsullied by uncontrolled interaction. But focus groups approximate the socially interactive nature in which opinions and perspectives are formed in more natural circumstances. It is possible that focus group methods are not appropriate for collecting information on sensitive information such as intimate relationships, and in some cases, it is difficult to anticipate what might encourage a respondent to divulge such information. Indeed, what is said versus what is not said in a focus group context is both revealing and illustrative of interactions and social meanings. For this reason, focus groups are more suited to social constructivist paradigms such as in this study (Wilkinson 1998) than more essentialist approaches in which such limitations emerge as a problem.

Thirdly, tendencies for focus group members to reproduce normative discourses is another limitation (Smithson 2000). Indeed, "during a session, focus group members may modify their opinions…based on the give and take of discussion as the group progresses" (Krueger, 1997). There is a tendency for participants to conform according to the consensus of the group rather than insert their own, potentially contrasting opinion (Kidd and Parshall 2000, Parker and Tritter 2006). However, this emerges as a problem only if the research question requires such individualised, or private information. Indeed, if the type of data sought is public, and popular discourses about a given topic, rather than an "uncovering participants' 'real' views" (Smithson 2000: 114) this problem disappears. Instead, in analysing the data there needs to be a recognition of the backgrounds and structures of people's lives, and an "acknowledgement of the things which are left unsaid" (Smithson 2000: 114). Invariably there will be some types of information on people's inner thoughts and perspectives that might run counter to dominant norms which are not likely to emerge in a focus group context. However, on the whole, there might be several different perspectives that encompass the views of most focus group members. While there may not be consensus, there can agreement on some points (Parker and Tritter 2006).

Further challenges associated with focus group methods relate to the analysis of data. For instance, there is a tendency for group-based data to be analysed as interview data in which a

series of individual quotations are interpreted out of the context of the group. In such cases, the group which collectively produces discursive meanings for the purposes of data collection is no longer the unit of analysis (Wilkinson 1998). The unique aspects of the group and the interaction are not taken into account (Smithson 2000, see also Kidd and Parshall 2000). But the group interaction that inevitably occurs is a key part of the findings. There is a "co-construction of meaning in social interaction" (Wilkinson 1998: 122) which needs to be captured in the analysis and interpretation. This can be achieved by situating individual responses within the broader context of the focus group, reflecting on group dynamics and broader structural contexts shaping groups and individuals (Parker and Tritter 2006). Opinions of the group and its members can be seen as being produced as a "collective voice" (Smithson 2000: 109) of the group. The focus is less on what anyone participant says in the group, but rather the "discourses which are constructed within the group context" (Smithson 2000: 109).

In light of the limitations associated with focus group methods, this is a method that is appropriate for this project. The social constructivist paradigm of the project, a research aim requiring public, collectively held discursive constructions about local place (rather than inner truths) and a sensitivity to the group-based nature of the findings means that this is a method well-suited to the project. The following section outlines how the focus groups were conducted in light of this discussion, and the decision making that was made throughout.

Conducting the focus groups

The focus groups conducted in this study were facilitated and organised according to the considerations described above. The following subsection considers some of the practicalities that emerged during the data collection phase in regards to conducting focus groups. These included decisions regarding locations of focus groups, the types of questions posed, as well as establishing rapport with respondents. Decisions were made to optimise the success of the data gathering exercise while ensuring rich, detailed information could be provided by respondents.

Focus groups were conducted according to a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix 3). A topic was introduced and respondents could respond according to their own perspectives, and

the facilitator was able to seek clarification. Using this method, comparable content can be collected between respondents so that themes can be identified, but differences and contradictions between and within interviews can still be captured (Choak 2013). Further, questions are always open-ended (Choak 2013). Semi-structured questioning also re-aligns power dynamics away from the moderator (Madriz 2000). Therefore, semi-structured protocols emerge as a useful tool in projects seeking rich, complex understandings and perspectives from participants potentially intimidated into curtailing their responses by the formality of the research setting.

Establishing a robust rapport with respondents is vital because the successful collection of data is contingent on the responses of participants and their readiness to open up to talk about their perspectives and experiences. However, the reliance on verbal articulation is a weakness of the focus group method (Chiu and Knight 1999). There is an assumption that respondents are able and willing to adequately interpret the researcher's questions and describe their responses sufficiently to convey their understanding of the topic in detail. Unfortunately, not all are able, nor prepared to do this. Respondents have a range of skills in verbal articulation impacting talk-based data collection methods. This limitation emerged during the focus group phase of the research, with some focus groups, and a small number of individuals unwilling, or less able to express themselves in relation to the questions posed. While general understandings could be conveyed in this way, tracts of text emerging from these transcripts did not lend themselves to extensive quotes in the analysis sections of this thesis. This is not to imply however that these focus groups did not contribute to the development of themes, codes, and ultimately the conclusions of the study. Certain focus groups' transcripts were nonetheless visited more frequently than others for the purposes of identifying descriptive, and representative quotations.

As such, the weakness remains that certain voices and perspectives are in danger of being excluded in a talk-centric method. The convenience and epistemological appropriateness of the method meant that it was broadly deployed here, but these limitations need to be acknowledged. It is possible that a more targeted focus group protocol, with narrow questions clearly soliciting specific information could have mitigated this limitation. A more structured approach, reminiscent of post-positivist interview protocols (Denzin and Lincoln 2000) might have allowed a more balanced contribution across the participant pool. However, this would have had a considerable impact on the type of data collected, and its

suitability for addressing the research aims would have been reduced. Instead, the open-ended protocol was maintained and significant effort was expended during the recruitment phase, and while conducting the focus groups themselves, to solicit data equally from as broad a range of individuals as possible. During the data analysis phase, all 12 focus groups were incorporated, and each contributed to the development of themes and codes even if all voices are not equally represented in the selection of quotations (see Appendix 1).

In terms of mitigating the problem of some focus group members dominating discussion at the expense of other members, I enacted several strategies. This included actively encouraging those not contributing to the group when it was clear some individuals were dominating the discussion. For instance, I directed follow-up prompts to those individuals, invited those not talking to respond to a given prompt, and in general provided a space in the focus group for those unwilling to interrupt or talk over others. Regarding my analysis of these interactions, where relevant I noted when one individual dominated a particular discussion and speculated on reasons for this. I also observed how the group dynamic emerged by including quotes which demonstrate the back-and-forth interactions of the focus group participants. In these instances, it is clear when participants hurriedly talked over each other, and conversely, when participants patiently took turns. Further, I reflected on the context of certain groups, and particular individuals when their position seemed to inform interaction, and their contribution to the group. For instance, gender, youth status, socio-economic background and cultural background all came to shape respondents' participation in the focus groups. In this way the "co-construction of meaning" (Wilkinson 1998: 122) could be derived through a reflection on the "collective voice" (Smithson 2000: 109) that situationally emerged in each of the different focus groups.

Questionnaire

In order to supplement the information provided in the focus groups, a short demographic questionnaire was used to triangulate the findings (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). This method serves as an appropriate means to establish the distribution of a series of demographic variables within the sample group (Ritchie et al. 2013). While questionnaires are less useful for measuring complex social insights, nor do they provide opportunities to extrapolate on the topic under study (Harris and Brown 2010), they are a useful means to gain standardised,

comparable information (Axinn and Pearce 2006). The questionnaire covered items that aimed to establish respondents' gender, age, birthplace, family background, number of years spent in Shepparton, previous places of residence, occupation, education and self-identified cultural background (see appendix 2). Items consisted mostly of closed questions, beginning with relatively straight-forward questions, and finishing with more complex, open-ended items like those on cultural background (Patel and Joseph 2016). The single-page questionnaire took approximately five minutes to complete. The information provided was intended to give a clear, standardised demographic profile of the participant pool (Ritchie et al. 2013, Axinn and Pearce 2006). The questionnaire represented only a small portion of the overall data set. The data was incorporated into the larger qualitative framework and no quantitative analysis took place. This was because the data were too few to warrant such an analysis, and this would not have been consistent with the intersubjective information that was sought.

The questionnaire was required because demographic information was somewhat more difficult to establish in a focus group setting. Individually addressing each respondent in a group to determine their age, current occupation or student status, parents' background, and their own cultural background would have been cumbersome and time-consuming. It was not necessary in the context of this study on place-making, to problematize these categories by introducing them to the more interpetivist discussion taking place during the focus group. However, this type of data is an important complement to the more interpretivist focus group data. A clear, unequivocal view of the respondents in this way helps inform the analysis of the focus group data (see Appendix 2). Here, group responses can be situated within broader social structures linked with gender, cultural background, educational or employment status. Using these, comparisons can also be made between different groups, each relatively homogenous in nature. Groups were not strictly homogeneous, however, with age, occupation, and gender, a certain degree of variation was common. This precludes a more systematic analysis based on demographic data. Further, comparative analysis such as this is outside the scope of this project focused on subjective experiences of place-making rather than a more structural analysis of the phenomena. Analysis of the focus group findings in the following chapters draws on demographic data on a case-by-case basis to contextualise and situate the discussion that emerges.

Research realities

The following section will outline some of the realities encountered collecting data during the fieldwork phase of the project. During the planning stages for this research project, a more complex triangulated, multi-method approach was conceived. Additional methods were chosen and designed based on their anticipated ability to add depth and nuance to the topic of place-making among young regional people. To this end, 'research walks' on a one-on-one basis were planned, as were mind-mapping exercises with participants, and an online focus group. This was in addition to the already reported face-to-face focus group and questionnaire. Each of these methods was trialled to some extent in the early parts of the fieldwork. However, these methods were ultimately not pursued, nor were they included in the analyses of chapters 5-7. This was because these methods did not solicit the type of information that would adequately address the research aims, nor did they contribute valuable addition to the main dataset drawn from focus groups.

A planned online focus group was plagued with problems related to the lack of functionality available on the chosen platform, as well as disinterest from participants. Like face-to-face focus groups, online focus groups target a group of individuals invited to participate in a group discussion in a digitally mediated context. The online methods research literature expounds an extensive suite of potential challenges associated with online data collection (Oringderff 2004). These include problems establishing trust and authenticity in the context of gaining informed consent and identifying eligible participants (Baym and Markham 2009, Hine 2008, Oringderff 2004), having the appropriate skills to conduct online focus groups (Hine 2008) and dealing with technical challenges that arise (Gaiser 2008). Still, given the focus of this study on young people's social technology use in the context of place-making, it was anticipated that some form of digitally mediated methods would help demonstrate some of the ways young people interacted online. With young people's ready and familiar occupation of online spaces (Hesse-Biber and Griffin 2013), problems establishing trust and authenticity mitigated by face-to-face recruitment and consenting, this seemed like an appropriate method. Further, consistent with Hine's (2009) suggestion that studies of modern society should include internet methodologies, an online focus group was planned for this study.

I decided to use Facebook as the platform to host the focus group due to its ubiquity among the participant pool, and the ease and convenience of access for them. It was reasoned that a dedicated online focus group platform would not be appropriate due to the requirement for participants to download separate software that they might be unfamiliar with (Oringderff 2004). It was expected that conducting the group as a 'closed group' on Facebook would make participation in the online group more likely. Further, the group was planned to be asynchronous so that participants could respond to others in the group, and introduce items in their own time within a one week time frame (Oringderff 2004). In spite of these measures, once approximately 6-8 respondents joined the 'closed group' that would host the online discussion, very few actually posted responses to questions and items posted by me. This could be because the participants were not wholly known to each other and were too heterogeneous (Franz 2011). This would have made disclosures problematic and reduced comfort and familiarity required for frank and free exchange. Further, technical problems emerged in inviting respondents to the group, and the host profile was shut-down for a short period preceding the group. Another possible impediment lies in reappropriating a platform associated with entertainment, leisure and peer sociality among the young respondents for the purposes of research. Re-directing use in this way may have been interpreted by the young respondents as inauthentic and unattractive. Yielding little valuable data, the online focus group method was abandoned and not used in the analysis.

Online research methods were originally planned to be a significant proportion of the data, and anticipated to provide a significant contribution to informing the project aims. However, it is worthwhile to consider the main forms of data in other research reporting similar insights on young people's social media use. Indeed, qualitative methods drawing on face-to-face interactions are the main form of data in a suite of research (Green and Singleton 2007, Green 2007, Gibian 2003, boyd 2014, Martin and Rizvi 2014, Lee 2010, Hjorth 2013, Pink et al. 2016, Hjorth and Pink 2014, Madianou and Miller 2012). Most of these report on talk based interview data, however Green and Singleton (2007, Green 2007) utilised a focus group approach, Hjorth (2012) drew on mixed survey and interview methods, while Hjorth and Pink (2014) reported a more ethnographic approach that involved talking to respondents, 'hanging out' and viewing images that they decided to share. The customary use of such talk-based methods in this body of research examining intersections of digital media use, young people and everyday lives is a telling justification for their value in providing intersubjective accounts contextualised within respondents' place-making projects. For this reason, alternate

digital methods were not pursued because in spite of limitation outlined above, focus group transcripts, complemented by questionnaire data, were sufficient as the main dataset for this project.

Another method, although planned to have a smaller contribution to the overall data set, was mind-mapping. Drawn from the education sector where it used as a learning tool, this method was planned as a means to assist respondents to conceptualise their virtual networks and articulate the ways in which they traversed geographies and affective connections. Mind-mapping is a method that requires respondents to conceptualise the topic of concern via a series of relationships linking different entities or concepts in the form of a diagram (Davies 2011). The method is more abstract, 'free-form' and creative than other qualitative methods. The process can also help respondents articulate and relate their experiences and perspectives if they are having trouble explaining (Davies 2011). Further, this is a method that circumvents requirements for verbal articulation, and useful for populations who may have difficulties conceptualising their thoughts (for example young people Awan and Gauntlett 2013).

In the current study, mind-mapping was trialled with approximately four participants before it was discontinued. This was because those participants who did complete the map had trouble thinking about their social media use in terms of a concept map, and needed a significant amount of explanation and direction to finish. These participants did not seem to enjoy the activity and resented being asked to do something that seemed to utterly confuse them. It is possible that the mind-mapping exercise was not appropriate for this age group and could be suited to a younger age group. It emerged that the population under study, 16-29-year-olds, even those speaking English as a second language, did not seem to require the assistance of this type in conceptualising their social media use. In the context of this project, mind-mapping was deemed inappropriate because it did not solicit useful data. As such, it was abandoned early during the data collection phase.

A third research method that was discontinued during the data collection phase and not included in the final analysis was 'research walks', otherwise known as 'go-alongs'. These were planned to take place on a one-on-one basis with a smaller number of participants recruited from focus groups. A popular method in research examining constructions of place, 'research walks' incorporate physical movement such as walking, as well as an opportunity

for respondents to be visually prompted by aspects of the environment, in order to propel their discussion (Hall, Coffey and Lashua 2009, Kusenbach 2003). Hall (2009: 576) conceptualises a:

> Three-way conversation, with interviewee, interviewer, and locality engaged in an exchange of ideas, but, more than this, and crucially, underfoot and all around, and, as such, that much more of an active present participant in the conversation, able to prompt and interject.

Moving away from the talk-centric methods of focus groups or interviews, 'research walks' are a method that allows for a more experiential, embodied experience of being 'in place'. In many ways, this method represents a combination of interview and participant observation, merging the explanatory commentary of interview methods, with the contextual prompting and observation available in the later methodology (Kusenbach 2003). These are an attractive method in research with young people in particular. This relates to 'research walks' being able to approximate everyday, more commonplace practices that locate greater control with the respondents as well as their ability to engender freer, more comfortable talk between participant and interviewer (Hall, Coffey and Lashua 2009). However, problems can arise through the contrived nature of the 'research walk', and the need for the researcher to impose on the respondents' daily interactions by following them throughout their daily activities (Kusenbach 2003).

Three research walks were conducted with participants who took part in focus groups. Problems emerged when it became difficult recruiting focus group participants and engaging them to be involved in a second stage of the research. Of the small number who were interested, the nature and aim of 'research walks' were difficult to communicate to participants. At least one found this lack of direction problematic impacting their willingness to elucidate during the walk. After reviewing the data collected in these one-on-one interactions, it was decided that these did not add any substantially new, or novel triangulated data to the already extensive and robust pool of focus group data. Rather, the data provided as part of the focus groups and questionnaire was found to be sufficient to address the aims of the research questions. Because of this, the 'research walk' method was abandoned early during the data collection phase.

In spite of these three additional methods being abandoned for various reasons during the fieldwork phase, the focus group portion of the research design emerged as a strong technique facilitating the collection of robust intersubjective meanings by the young people of the study. The interactive, group-based nature of the method meant that respondents could be prompted and invited to reflect and critically analyse their perspectives and views on place-making. Further, the social, informal and laid-back nature of the groups meant that they could be an enjoyable experience. This meant that respondents were comfortable, in familiar locations and freer to opine and share their thoughts. They were also more interested, and motivated to take part if they could do so with their friends, and could be reimbursed with a gift voucher for their efforts. After spending time identifying likely avenues for recruitment, establishing rapport with a range of potential gate-keepers and attending events and meetings attended by potential participants, I was able to organise 12 focus groups with 62 individual participants. This yielded a detailed, and rich data set facilitating a nuanced, and in-depth exploration of the topics under study. And this was complemented by the demographic information provided via the short questionnaire distributed to all participants. The success of the focus group component of the research design has mitigated any potential gaps left by the unsuccessful methods summarised above. The focus group and questionnaire data had proved sufficient to address the project aims as outlined in the first sections of this chapter.

Data analysis

The final section of this chapter considers the data analysis approach deployed in this thesis. Firstly, focus groups were audio recorded and I transcribed participant discussion verbatim into written accounts. This process comprised an initial familiarisation with the data, and represented an ongoing closeness to the raw data so that the "social worlds" of those in the study could be adequately depicted (Ritchie et al. 2013). Transcripts were uploaded to "code and retrieve" software program NVivo to assist in the organisation of codes and identification of thematic divisions within the data (Ritchie et al. 2013). On close reading of each focus group transcript, a loose coding structure was devised encompassing the range of topics covered in focus groups (see Ryan and Bernard 2000, Ritchie et al. 2013) (see Appendix 4).

At this stage, short-cut identifiers for the focus groups were developed. These descriptors were designed as a quick sketch based on the common characteristics of the group. Although groups were heterogeneous, such a naming convention can serve to smooth out some of this difference for the purposes of identification during the data analysis. Therefore, the process of deciding on a name and applying it to a focus group was a difficult one. As such, the descriptors were generally quite broad. In most cases, the focus group name was derived from the context in which they were recruited. My justification was that this the one commonality the young people in a given focus group would have that I could independently verify. For instance, two focus groups were constituted from among members of a Muslim youth group. One group was made up of young women, the other young men. I decided to term the groups ‘religious youth group, young men’ and ‘religious youth group, young women’ respectively. Given that religious-based youth groups are a familiar meeting point for young people, I reasoned that this was an appropriately broad descriptor that described their collective participation in a youth group. Another predominantly Muslim focus group also took part so I was reticent to term one group ‘Muslim’, and not the other. This latter group was termed ‘Migrant group’ because the context of recruitment was the local association for a particular migrant community. Similarly, ‘vocational students’ were recruited from a vocational college, ‘tertiary students’ from a training organisation. A full list of focus group descriptors is detailed in the table in appendix 1.

Analysis of focus group transcripts followed a deductive approach that first sought to identify broad, common themes that emerged in the young people’s discussion. Codes were used to represented emergent themes present in the dataset, and these in turn, were informed by themes present in the relevant research literature (Ryan and Bernard 2000, Ritchie et al. 2013). Several sub-themes were assigned at this point to capture greater detail in the representation of the young people’s talk (Braun and Clarke 2006). The process of forming and attaching codes serves as a key means to identify broader trends present in the dataset. At the raw data stage of analysis, participant responses seem chaotic and confused, and the practice of assigning codes enabled broader patterns to be identified (Ritchie et al. 2013). Between the initially close reading of the raw data and assignment of codes and sub-codes, several layers of abstraction took place. However, the ability to move backwards, forwards and sideways in the context of this hierarchy of abstraction was maintained throughout. This was to ensure that the analysis and the raw data were closely aligned (Ritchie et al. 2013).

As much as possible, the process of analysis constituted an attempt to reflect the responses of the participants as accurately as possible while addressing the research aim by identifying trends and themes (Ritchie et al. 2013). There was a danger of assuming that interviewee's spoken responses were revealing of authentic inner meanings, analysed as "external realities" by the researcher (Silverman 2000: 823). So, maintaining the context of respondents' talk during analysis is important so that broader meanings can be distilled (Ritchie et al. 2013). During the coding process, and the identification of common themes, differences and outliers naturally emerged. Responses that seemingly did not naturally fit in one theme or another were not necessarily left out of the analysis. Rather, these were woven into the discussion and elicited an important acknowledgement of the messy, complex nature of the social phenomena under study.

Demographic information collected via questionnaires was used to form a picture of the respondent group in terms of age and gender profile, participation in education and employment, as well as number of years spent living in Shepparton. This relatively basic data was entered into an excel spreadsheet. Frequencies were calculated and proportions of different groups ascertained (see Appendix 2). This data was also used to gain a general picture of the demographic composition of each separate focus group, so as to contextualise the focus group findings, and to depict the sample groups according to key demographic indicators. Analysis of focus group data was supported on a case by case basis using demographic information via the questionnaire indicating respondents' structural positioning.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed accounting of the methodological framework underpinning this study. That includes a brief outline of the ontological assumptions that directed much of the decision-making throughout the study. I have outlined the social constructivist paradigm that informed the types of social phenomena under study, and the ways in which meaningful information was identified and ascertained. An interpretivist, and in small part, a phenomenological epistemological approach that guided the study design. The remaining sections of the chapter explained the methods utilised, and provided justification for their inclusion in the project. Principally, the methods framework was closely linked to the interpretivist approach that was in turn informed by social constructivist perspectives. This project on young, regional people's place-making practices sought intersubjective meanings articulated by young people themselves. Therefore, a multi-faceted, triangulated suite of methods were devised in order to provide the best opportunity for soliciting the complex, nuanced data that was needed to address the project aims. Owing to the realities of being in the field however, and challenges encountered throughout the project, the methods framework was revised and became more focused on a single method, that is, focus groups, supported by questionnaire data. In spite of the limitations of relying on focus groups as the main method, this approach was found to be sufficient for addressing the project aims. The following chapters report the findings emerging from the fieldwork.

Chapter 5: Making Shepparton, and its surrounds

In this chapter, I explore how place, as a collectively constructed 'object of knowledge' (Torkington 2012) comes to be understood and made meaningful in regional young people's everyday lives. I will investigate how Shepparton as a place is made by its young residents discursively, in terms of practice, as well as how it is made via sensory experience and the articulation of emotional relationships with various localities. Place emerges in myriad ways, some clearer than others, some through active participation, and also in ways that operate in the background. This chapter demonstrates the nature of these place-making processes so that they can be revealed for analysis. Specifically, place-making is conceived as a suite of spatial, cultural and material processes deployed to maintain and reproduce place (Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015). These processes are present in the discursive constructions used to characterize place, as well as via everyday acts of people and groups seeking to make places such as neighbourhoods, retail spaces, recreational spaces, or housing for example (Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015). Material practices can be conceptualized as a mode of 'performing', or 'doing' place in the form of regular daily practices (Benson and Jackson 2012, Gregson and Rose 2000).

The thematically ordered data is presented here in three main sections. First, the ways in which participants talked about and discursively constructed their town is presented, including pervasive, and stigmatizing 'circulating reputations' about the town (Benson and Jackson 2012, Matthews 2015). These discourses are reflected in the literature that conceives of non-urban places in terms of disadvantage. Participants reproduced, and adopted parts of these discourses, but complicated simplistic categorizations by drawing on their own lived experiences in and around Shepparton. The dynamism and changing nature of place (Benson and Jackson 2012), as constructed by the young people of the study, is demonstrated here. The second main theme details respondents' interpretation of place as a collection of 'things to do', or conversely a 'lack of things to do'. This type of discussion often segued into deeper, more personal explorations of place-making, albeit still reflecting shared social realities. It also illustrated place-making processes as a series of material practices and activities enacted in physical localities, indelibly embedding people in place (Benson and Jackson 2012, Gregson and Rose 2000, Buizer and Turnhour 2011, Hörschelmann and Schäfer 2005).

A third theme concerned how respondents articulated the nature of place using a comparative, relational lens. To illustrate this, the third sub-section maps focus group discussion of proximate places, larger towns, cities and smaller rural towns. Analysing what Shepparton was not, in this way, threw into relief how the locality was subjectively experienced in more detailed terms. These discussions showed how understandings of place were contextualised by a respondent's relative sense of 'quietness', and 'busyness' (see Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016). This constituted a more visceral, spatially emplaced construction of place. The section also includes respondents' discussions of their felt sensations in regards to material localities analysed using an approach emphasising the experiential, affective dynamics of place-making (Thrift 2007, Anderson and Harrison 2010). Across these themes, the variety of ways young people in Shepparton talk about and experience place can be explored. The notoriously opaque (Moores 2012) ways in which young people construct places of meaning in everyday lives is demonstrated through affective connections as well as relational and discursive constructions.

Conceiving rurality

Consistent with some rural studies literature, government classifications (see Heley and Jones 2012, Halfacree 1993, ARIA 2014, AIHW 2004) and popular discourse seeking to categorise and define place according to pre-conceived notions of rurality, participants reproduced a series of dominant discourses to conceptualise place. Further, interpretations were situated in relativized terms (see Appadurai 1996). But Shepparton, perhaps the most intimate, familiar place for many participants, was complicated and problematized to the degree that it could not easily be defined in simplistic, or binary terms. Conceptualizing a place like Shepparton in categorical terms such as 'the country' or 'rural' was problematic, as the young women in the 'Community volunteers (young women)' focus group (FG8) identified. They understood Shepparton in more relative terms, not just in comparison to larger places like Melbourne, but also to smaller places. For them, Shepparton was imagined less as 'rural' or 'small' and more as a relatively large town: Zoe "… but I wouldn't say that we're really 'country'. I mean there's more country towns out there, Tatura, that's pretty...like, Numurkah, yeah..." (Zoe, FG8 - young women community volunteers).

Shepparton was more often described as a large town by those who lived there and, in many discussions, this was an assumption that emerged as implicit. Similarly, when asked about living in the country, some participants interpreted this as outside of Shepparton, as Dom noted, “I prefer to live in the country than here” (‘Vocational students’, FG11). For Dom, referring to Shepparton as ‘here’, the town was not classified as ‘rural’ or ‘country’ for him, rather as something else. This blurring of what is and is not ‘rural’, ‘regional’, ‘city’ or ‘country’ runs counter to place-categories based on structural parameters more common among those externally imposed by government or the state (Halfacree 1993, Heley and Jones 2012, see for example, ARIA 2014, AIHW 2004). According to these categorisations, place is conceptualised in simple, definable terms such as population, or distance from other places. The kind of subjectivity expressed by the respondents has no status according to these definitions. The trend for respondents to position themselves in the ‘middle’, irrespective of what this might specifically refer to, emerged in a range of ways (see in relation to social status, Evans and Kelley 2004). Conceptions of ‘rural’, ‘regional’ or ‘city’ were highly variable and shaped by a participant’s own subjective experiences of place (Heley and Jones 2012, Bell and Osti 2010). Amin and Thrift’s (2002) assertion of the enduring meaning of place-categories like ‘city’ in lay discourse in spite of the heavy critique is echoed in the variable conceptions of place that emerged in the study.

Not all participants agreed that Shepparton lacked the ‘country’ feel described by the community volunteers, young women focus group (FG 8) and the vocational students focus group (FG11). While few talked about aesthetic qualities of place, these themes did emerge among some participants, for example in the ‘Religious youth group (young women)’ focus group:

> Sara: I like the farm life…(all laughs) I actually do, like, I really love waking up to like, cos' where I live there’s an orchard at the back, like houses aren't built there and it’s just beautiful waking up to like, you know, seeing that instead of like, like, in the city how its polluted all the time, I just don’t like that…(Sara, FG 8 - community volunteers, young women).

Sara's peers in the focus group did not necessarily agree nor elaborate specifically on these aesthetic qualities associated with rural places. This type of exaltation of rural environments as a repository of visually appealing, typically 'country' or agrarian landscapes is perhaps a stronger component of research exploring 'incomer' migration, or 'tree-changers' (see Sampson and Goodrich 2009, Benson and Jackson 2012) rather than young rural residents constructing local places. Although by no means 'recent incomers' as understood by Benson and Jackson (2012), these young participants were members of the local migrant community, which may explain their use of place-making mechanisms reported in research on mobile populations. Nonetheless, Sara's clear, positive connection with the quintessential rural landscape was echoed in others' accounts of place. Respondents' expressed preferences for the more 'laid back', 'quiet' environment of regional places like Shepparton demonstrated a more subdued, but clear appreciation of rural landscapes. Similarly emotive, sensory relationships with place, exemplified above, were expressed by participants in focus group 1:

> Emily: it's like a big country town, like it's got everything but it's still country
> Mason: yeah, still a country feel
> Cathy (facilitator): ok, so what do you mean by country
> Emily: like, there's the farms, it's still got that community feel to it
> Emily: hmmm
> Mason: it's not so fast paced, it's relaxed
> Harper: like you can't get lost here
> Emily: yeah
> Harper: you can never get lost here, you can get lost in Melbourne that's for sure, but... (FG 1 - local tertiary students A).

The members of focus group 1 were not members of the migrant community, but some had moved around the state before arriving in Shepparton to live. Two members were Aboriginal and connection with place was intimately related to the natural environment, or 'country' (see Trigger and Martin 2016)

> Emily:… the river is 45 minutes away, like my river is any way…
> Harper: culturally for us as well
> Cathy (facilitator): what do you mean?
> Emily: we're from Yorta Yorta[5], so that's, yeah, our tribe, yeah, culturally. (FG 1 - local tertiary students A).

Like Sara, the members of focus group 1 also described a positive construction of place orientated around the 'country feel' they experienced in Shepparton and its rural surrounds. However, the central position that 'country' occupies in Aboriginal culture is distinct from the place-making projects of the non-Aboriginal participants. For instance, connections to the material environment have particular significance within Aboriginal culture. While exploring these relationships with place among the Aboriginal community is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the voices of these young women who took part in the research.

Place reputation and discursive representations

References among focus group participants to the reputation of the town were ubiquitous, and came both prompted and unprompted. This discursive construction of the town alluded to a type of 'shared knowledge' (Appadurai 1996) collectively reproduced by most participants in various forms across the focus groups. This 'shared knowledge' constituted a means to relate to and talk about place and as a way to orientate the self-relative to dominant discourses concerning regional and rural places (see for example Amin and Thirft 2002, Bell and Osti 2010).

Discussion of Shepparton's general 'reputation' was encapsulated in responses to a recent episode of SBS's *Insight* (Potaka 2015). *Insight* is a national current affairs television program, and in this case, was dedicated entirely to discussing and analysing Shepparton. The program focused on serious social problems, and issues relating to young people such as youth unemployment, teen pregnancy and school drop-out rates. The broader remit of the

[5] Yorta Yorta refers to the local Aboriginal community traditionally residing in the area surrounding the junction of the Goulburn and Murray Rivers in north-eastern Victoria and southern New South Wales. Shepparton is encompassed in this region.

program was to canvas key questions and debates within the Australian community. Somewhat unusually, this particular episode was filmed on location and focused entirely on Shepparton. Here Shepparton became emblematic of 'rural issues', that is, social problems seen to coalesce in non-urban locales like the outmigration of young people, lack of opportunities and social disadvantage (Gabriel 2002, 2006, Pritchard and McManus 2000). Emblematic of the rural deficit discourses (Bourke et al. 2001), the tone of this program represented a clear demonstration of the highly visible, omnipresence discourse conceiving of regional places like Shepparton in terms of disadvantage.

The discourses reproduced in the current affairs television program emphasised experiences of disadvantage that the participants of the study acknowledged and confirmed. However, respondents conceived such narratives in more abstract terms emanating from somewhere, or someone 'outside' and foreign to the town (Matthews 2015). Captured in the program, and nonetheless reproduced by many of the young participants, this discourse was overwhelmingly negative and focused on drug problems, socio-economic disadvantage, as well as a general lack of opportunities. Participants positioned their own discursive narratives of place relative to this visible, and dominant 'reputation' (Matthews 2015). Negotiating the stigma of living in a town punctuated by social disadvantage and deprivation pervaded discussion in focus groups (Matthews 2015). Some were keen to counter what they saw as an erroneous representation and advocate a more hopeful, positive representation (see also Matthews 2015, Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015), but many acknowledged personal experiences supporting different aspects of the rural deficit model echoed in other rural research findings (Bourke et al. 2001) including lack of employment opportunities (Alston 2004), and limited public transport (Currie et al. 2005).

Indeed, 39% of participants indicated that they were not in employment, or did not complete the survey question on employment. Further, nearly one third (32.3%) reported being in full-time employment, while just under a quarter (23%) were in casual jobs. These percentages are difficult to interpret as an indicator of respondents' employment disadvantage given the varying age-range and education levels of respondents encompassing secondary, and post-secondary school years. Although half of all respondents were still engaged in education (tertiary: 30.6%, secondary 19.4%), with a mean age of 21.5 years, a higher rate of employment might be expected (see Appendix 2). Additionally, few respondents indicated having their own car with which to freely drive around, curtailing activities such as

employment and socialising. Finding alternative transport routes through the town (walking, public transport, sourcing rides from parents and friends) punctuated discussion during focus groups. In many ways, this was reflective of elongated youth transitions (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Bendit 2008), and the broader impacts of globalisation weakening the youth labour market, particularly in non-urban areas (Farrugia 2016, 2014). Like Shildrick and MacDonald's (2013) participants however, the respondents did not identify themselves as particularly disadvantaged. Rather, according to them, it was others in the community who bore the burden of rural living and social disadvantage. In many respects, there was a narrative of distancing that located many of the social problems cited in the television program extraneously, but these were still acknowledged as linked with Shepparton and an ill-defined 'other' (see Shildrick and MacDonald 2013).

Going to air directly before fieldwork began, the representation of Shepparton on this television program galvanized some participants' (including FG 8,9 and 10) desire to portray an alternative vision of the town. For example, the religious youth group, young women focus group discussed the impact of the television program on them:

> Dleen: did you see that thing on TV they had on the other day about how bad Shepparton is?
> Sara: yeah, the SBS show, 'Insight'.
> Dleen: the 'Insight', that was horrible.
> Sara: they were saying stuff that wasn't....
> Noora: apparently most of the stuff they said, was all like, not even true…
> Dleen: it was three hours of shooting and they compressed it down to one hour. And they only took the bad things out of it. Like there's so much positives! So much!
> Cathy (Facilitator): did that annoy you?
> Dleen: that really annoyed me, it did! And that made it worse!! All they focused on was drugs and teenage pregnancy which was really like, like I don't see teenage pregnancy... (FG 9 - religious youth group, young women).

The young people were keen to shift away from overly negative depictions, although they certainly understood that this was a common perception. Instead, they located this generic characterisation as external, and originating from those who had not lived, nor visited the place (Matthews 2015). For example, the young community volunteers focus group discussed the town's reputation:

> Claire: I don't think it's as bad as everyone says...
> Ave: hmm, yeah
> Kylie: yeah
> Cathy (facilitator): do people say it's bad?
> Connor: it has a very bad reputation...
> Kylie: yeah, it does
> Claire: I mean I personally have thought, no offence anyone, but before I moved here, you know, you always hear these bad rumours about Shepparton and that it's kind of like, I don't want to put it in bad terms, but you know, like the grunge and ...(Ava: yeah..) it's got a bad, a bad reputation, but then you move here and its nothing like what you expected and you actually really enjoy and there's just as many opportunities as you'd have elsewhere. Um, I was pleasantly surprised I think at how... yeah, it's not as bad as what people think. I just think it's got a bad reputation and... (FG 5 - young community volunteers).

Those "circulating reputations of place" were appropriated by the young respondents and used by them as a launching point for their own discursive construction of place (Benson and Jackson 2012: 797). In this case, place reputation is seen to pre-date their own formation of local place, and, as originating in external spheres, represents a significant stigma that needs to be resisted (Matthews 2015). However, while participants like Claire, Dleen and Noora may dispute the veracity of rumoured phenomena such as teen pregnancy, it is pertinent to note that this does not necessarily mean that these do not occur in Shepparton. Others, including those in focus groups 10 and 11, were less likely to outright dispute the negative

discourses narrating the town, and perhaps had more personal experiences confirming instances of teen pregnancy, or drug addiction for example. The members of the 'Young community volunteers' occupied a more privileged social position in Shepparton as community engaged volunteers than those in other focus groups (for instance focus groups 10 and 11 who shared a more marginal position as early school-leavers and non-normative sexualities). As such, they may have been sheltered from some of these more negative aspects (for example focus groups 3,6,7,8,9).

Lucas from the 'Support group' focus group (FG10) contrasted rural deficit understandings of non-urban places rife with disadvantage and lacking opportunities, with the more positive conception of the 'rural idyll' (Rye 2006, O'Connor 2005, Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009, Haukanes 2013, Benson and Jackson 2012). Both are referred to, but Lucas ultimately concludes with a more pessimistic tone:

> Lucas:…you think of small country towns of being nice and innocent, well I feel like Shepparton is a small town with like, a city culture, a city cultures in the sense that you have the drugs problems, you have the violence problems all of that kind of stuff and the multicultural issues that comes with that. In the city, but we're a small country town so there's nothing better for anyone to do. (Lucas, FG 10 - support group).

This negative assessment equated social problems related to drugs, violence, 'multicultural issues' and a lack of things to do, with a 'city culture', thus perpetuating the city-rural conceptual binary (Heley and Jones 2012, Halfacree 1993). Despite critique, the idealized image of the rural places as 'nice and innocent' and hence dichotomously opposed from problems like 'drugs', and 'violence' can still be maintained in this discursive construction of Shepparton (see Rye 2006, O'Connor 2005, Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009, Haukanes 2013, Benson and Jackson 2012).

Several members of focus group 10 talked about their collective experiences of the negative aspects of place echoed in the narrative that underscored the current affairs program discussed above. The focus group was a collection of young people who primarily came

together to spend time, and support one and other as members of the LBGTI community in Shepparton. The group was supported by a local youth-centric NGO that hosted other out-reach services, and some of the young people in the LBGTI support group had probably been referred from other support services. While experiences and stories of marginal gender and sexual orientations were not the focus of this study, the perspective of being on the margin came through in a strong way during the focus group. Discussions referring to drug-taking (not necessarily the participants themselves, but others with whom they had contact), violence and bullying punctuated talk about place. Within the groups however, there was diversity in terms of age and gender orientation which underscored individual experiences and perspectives.

Indeed, characterisations of the town focused on negative aspects, for example drug culture, underscored several respondents' conceptions of Shepparton as a place. But these were often quickly countered by others looking to emphasise aspects of the town they perceived to be neglected by such a negative reckoning. In response to Lucas' rather negative depiction above, Michael was keen to offer another perspective:

> Michael:…but like we still have good stuff (laughs), like we have some pretty impressive kids in schools come through, and then some people are just, and some people do really well, like we have doctors and things that come through. People that come here and they love it cos' they're just in certain areas, where they're just like, ahhh, my god, community vibe, awesome. (Michael, FG 10 - support group).

Here, Michael was keen to shift attention from social problems to the relative success of secondary school students while making a more general comment about the sense of community experienced by outsiders. He actively challenged negative place stigma, and reflected Allen's (2008) concept of 'we-being' to narrativize his sense of belonging in terms of safety, familiarity and subtle optimism (Matthews 2015). 'We-being' refers to a sense of group belonging linked to particular places, for example council neighbourhoods. A working-class disposition is implied in the relationship to place according to Allen (2008), and 'home' becomes a locality that is comfortable and hospitable in the manner described by Michael.

Respondents' discussion of social problems in everyday lives was in many ways reflective of their own structural positioning rather than the actual normalization of disadvantage more broadly. Those situated in typically working-class orientations, or more socially marginal locations were more likely to dwell on negative place characteristics in this fashion (for example those in FGs 1,2, 4, 10 and 11), while others were more likely to either deny the presence of such problems, or disregard them completely (Jeffrey 2016). However, such class-based categorisations were invariably vulnerable to "slippage" and could alter over time, or change even within the same discussion (Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015). In some ways, this reflects the range of experiences of those occupying different structural orientations in Shepparton.

Participants responded to rural deficit discourses (Bourke et al. 2001) and the "discursive dominance" (Blokland 2009: 1594) of stigmatizing place 'reputations' in many different ways. The current affairs program (Potaka 2015) referred to earlier distilled many elements of the discourse, including its focus on young people as the inheritors and perpetuators of rural disadvantage. Many participants who acknowledged such disadvantages also argued that these obstacles could be mitigated or overcome if an individual behaves in the 'right' way. The problems of the town were thus seen as contingent on the actions and traits of individuals: Johnno: "if you keep out of trouble, no joke actually, it is alright. As a genuine person, it's actually ok, and you've worked hard, and you wanna work hard" ('Car hobbyist friends', FG4). For Johnno, and similarly for Michael, hard work was the pathway to 'success' in Shepparton. Generalised 'problems' were associated with an undefined 'other' inferred as "work-shy", and any difficulties they may experience were attributed to a lack of 'hard work' (echoing the work of Shildrick and MacDonald 2013). A neo-liberal outlook among participants, particular older respondents in more secure employment, is a theme that is explored further in the following section. On the whole however, participants across all focus groups responded unprompted to the pervasive discourse characterizing non-urban places, Shepparton in particular, as suffused with irreparable social problems.

Moving away from discourses of social disadvantage, respondents went on to talk about rurality and place in terms of access to opportunities. The religious youth group, young men focus group (FG7) discussed the convenience of attending local university campuses. This was introduced early on in the group discussion and was attributed to the broader suite of

'offerings' available in the town, and hence, a proxy for its success and opportunities for young people. Positivity in regards to opportunities, particularly educational and employment was a theme among other focus groups as well:

> Lily:… and the new LaTrobe (University) building. They're offering more courses which is keeping people here for longer and giving them the opportunity, like with the health sciences you can do your first year here and then branch off to other universities.
> Caleb: Shepparton is good for that, the health sector is very, very strong here, other industries not so much, but that one is definitely big. (FG 3 - older professionals).

Few respondents personally indicated their intention to utilize these local opportunities (except focus groups 1 and 2 who were all current tertiary students) and several talked about wanting to go to Melbourne to pursue opportunities (for example in focus groups 5, 9,7) in spite of the availability of tertiary education locally. So while these educational options were heralded as the 'offerings' available in Shepparton among the 'Older professionals' focus group (FG3), it is clear that they were not suited or applicable in some ways. Nonetheless, talk about 'opportunities' is a common way to conceptualise rural place in the context of disadvantage or deficit. The notion of 'access' to services such as tertiary education (Alston and Kent 2003) or health care (Bourke et al. 2010) is seen as the key missing piece across different domains required to alleviate regional disadvantage and isolation. Indeed, this is certainly one of several 'discursive dominance' narratives (Blokland 2009) appropriated by the young people. The notion of emerging options to 'access' certain opportunities, even if respondents indicated that these were not applicable to them, was a discursive form of 'shared knowledge' (Appadurai 1996) collectively held and deployed to narrate a particular version of place. Underneath the rhetoric of 'opportunity', implicitly reflecting discourses of access and isolation, is an assumption that these are available to all. However, for various reasons, this was often not the case. For instance, lack of choice in regards to tertiary courses, perceptions of institutional prestige, as well as parental support for engaging in tertiary education, all contributed to the exclusion of some young people from such 'opportunities'. These exceptions notwithstanding, this was a more 'hopeful' (Wise 2005)

narrative which framed understandings of disadvantage and isolation in a way that was less about fear or anxiety, and more optimistic about future possibilities.

These more hopeful discourses portrayed opportunities for young people in Shepparton and were consistently articulated in terms of how 'you' make such opportunities yourself:

> Liz:…I love living in Shepparton, my family's from Shepp, I grew up in Shepp, you know. I moved away for 10 years, then came back, um...and it's got everything that I want. And there's a lot of opportunities here for young people too, I think you can go out and find as there is with anywhere...(Liz, FG 3 - older professionals).

This sentiment was particularly strong among the older (on average) members of focus group 3, most of whom had completed tertiary education and were in professional employment. According to this group, their educational and employment successes were tied to individual characteristics. The notion that 'life in Shepparton is what you make it' was explicitly present for some (similar discussion in focus group 4), or more implicitly present for others (similar discussion in focus group 10). Reflexively formed choice-biographies emphasise notions that young people are wholly in control of their pathways to adulthood (see Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), and this is illustrated in focus group discussions locating the onus on individuals themselves to navigate successful youthful transitions. The role of other structural limitations across different members of the focus group were less clear.

Not all respondents reproduced these discourses of contingent hope (Wise 2005). A much more negative discourse emerged in the discussion among the members of the vocational students focus group (FG11). Initial responses to general invitations to discuss Shepparton included "boring!" and "…there's not much to do in Shepparton to be honest" (FG 10 - support group). Those in the 'Vocational students' focus group extended this sentiment with a series of short descriptors speaking to a negative experience, for them, life in the town was:

> Ryan: horrible…
> Austin: pretty shit.
> Ryan: nothin' to do.

> Dom: to me, ice addicts…
>
> Austin: stuffed up, stuffed up area.
>
> Ryan: pretty derro[6]…

And a little later in the discussion:

> Clara: get out while you still have a chance.
>
> Ryan: there's nothing in this town. (FG 11 – vocational students).

The ‘Vocational students’ focus group discussion and understanding of place was consistently negative, although in the context of the group discussion, participants were unwilling to detail nor, to explore some of these sentiments. While this discussion was framed around a lack of things to do, a lack of occupation or opportunities to forge something better, according to this group of six vocational students, place was articulated and constructed in highly negative terms. The sense of hope and optimism (Wise 2005) related to opportunities to access tertiary education mentioned in other focus groups (FG 3, 5, 7) did not arise. In spite of gender, cultural background and age diversity in the group, there was an overwhelming agreement on this point. More consistent with spectacularised understandings of youth and place (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Roberts 2003), these participants reproduced a dominant discourse (Blokland 2009) in which rural places are defined by disadvantage, social problems and a lack of things to do. Those living outside metropolitan locations are conceived as living in significant disadvantage related to geographic isolation. In rural research literature focussing on access issues, disadvantage is measured against a range of indicators, including education (Cashmore and Townsend 2006), lower incomes (Kenyon et al. 2001), fewer employment opportunities (Alston and Kent 2001), limited public transport (Currie et al. 2005) and reduced access to health services (Wyn et al. 2005). Popular understandings underscore this further (Rye 2006, Hogan 2005). However, it is necessary to consider young people’s social positioning and their situatedness in terms of social disadvantage, and likely everyday experiences which give them little opportunity for hope (see for example Ross, Mirowsky and Pribesh 2001, Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman 2002).

[6] Slang term stemming from the word ‘derelict’ referring to an individual or place characterised as having no-hope or with a poor appearance

Discourses narrating rural deficit have been interrogated and criticised for not taking account of the complexities of disparate rural communities (Bourke et al. 2001, see also Hogan 2004). It is clear, however, that some participants (in focus groups, 9, 10, and 11 in particular), experience very real disadvantage in their daily lives. Being young, and experiencing social marginalisation across a range of parameters, combined with the realities of having to move away or travel to access tertiary education opportunities (as was discussed in FG9), or viable employment prospects (discussed in FG10 and 11) had pervasive impact on daily lives, as well as imagining potential futures (Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman 2002).

How participants responded to pre-formed characterisations of their town, and the different ways their talk perpetuated, complicated and reproduced those discourses (Torkington 2012, Blokland 2009) were important aspects of place-making (Benson and Jackson 2012, see Sampson and Goodrich 2009). Understandings of place were simultaneously informed by, and a rejection of, these omnipresent discourses narrating disadvantage, lack of access, and more hopeful responses, alongside the rural idyll. In the process of responding to those "circulating reputations" narrating particular places (Benson and Jackson 2012), respondents were able to incorporate their own experience to both disrupt "discursive dominance" (Blokland 2009) and reproduce more embedded imaginaries of place (Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015). Personal experiences were situated within broader structural dynamics which emerged in the collective experiences of focus groups along the lines of gender, religious participation, age or transitional pathway, or social class. A key place-making process, incorporating broader discursive understandings with personal and collective experience, was demonstrated among the respondents (see Sampson and Goodrich 2009).

While collectively held 'circulating reputations' (Benson and Jackson 2012) narrating stigmatized versions of place were evident, an emerging sense of 'hope' was also present. Several "micro moments of hope, on the side of life" (Wise 2005:183) were demonstrated in respondents' deliberate assertions that Shepparton is 'not all bad'. Respondents methodically detailed how prevailing reputations of disadvantage and isolation were counter to their own narratives of place. Underscored by a sense of 'we-being' (Allen 2008), images of community, trust, relative security and familiarity emphasised this sense of hope in the face of a range of daily challenges (Wise 2005).

Place as a collection of 'things to do'

Continuing the theme of participants responding to dominant discourses, focus group members were invited to consider the portrayal of rural places as static locales where there is 'not much going on' (see Hogan 2004, Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009). In countering this pervasive stereotype, participants typically framed local place as a collection of practical 'things to do'. This is consistent with a range of research positioning young people's place-making practices within everyday, material activities as "…a discursive practice in action" (Benson and Jackson 2012: 796, Sampson and Goodrich 2009). How respondents behave and "act-out" their 'performance' of place enables them to "bring place into being" (Gregson and Rose 2000: 434). Performances of place consist of everyday practices and actions which are often mundane and 'taken-for-granted', but which also serve to shape place and imbue it with meaning (Benson and Jackson 2012). For instance, the respondents discussed engaging in practices including sports, school, shopping, hanging-out, working, entertainment activities as well as volunteering. These practices were uniquely tied to everyday places by the young participants who regularly engaged in them. In talking about, or imagining 'things to do' in relation to place, participants were able to analyse their own place-making practices in more detail.

Ultimately, place-based practices reflected the interests, concerns and identities of participants. For example, in focus group 1, Emily states that 'it depends who you are':

> Emily: it depends who like, you are, like if you're a party person, then you'll go to that sort of area, and if you're a family person, there's giggle and wriggle and go-jump and that sort of stuff, like there's stuff available for all sorts of age groups. (Emily, FG 1 - local tertiary students A).

Crucially, according to Emily, practices were contingent on youth status. The age range of Emily's focus group represented the mid-range of the broader participant cohort (20-25 years). Diverging from Benson and Jackson's (2012), focus on the middle class, youth status emerges as a complicating dynamic. The discussion around 'things to do' encompassed what the respondents interpreted as 'youthful' activities, such as 'partying', and 'family' activities for older people, specifically parents with young children. Respondents in other focus groups

went on to discuss the types of practices and activities they engaged in as a means to perform place in Shepparton, and these discussions were revealing of the young people's structural positioning.

A list of activities available within Shepparton, many associated with country areas, for example agricultural shows, or sports, were routinely listed in defence of the perception that 'nothing is going on in country towns':

> Hayley: it's not true (that there's nothing going on in country towns), cos' like there's, what the agricultural show in Shepp, there's all these other…
> Sophie: basketball tournaments.
> Hayley: yeah, netball tournaments, football tournaments, there's always something going on in Shepp. And um, like on the school holidays, there's like stuff, like little kids out in like the Market Place (shopping centre) and all that…
> Grace: we had (reality television star) Taylor Henderson come here, and performed… (FG 2 - local tertiary students B).

In many respects, the listing of activities reflected a form of practical place-making representative of more directed attempts to construct a meaningful sense of place by participating in seemingly 'important' local events. Like Benson and Jackson's (2012) respondents actively shaping, and constructing a particular, desired form of local place, some respondents described how Shepparton was made through practice.

More broadly, cultural events occurring in the town were referred to by focus group members, particularly among focus group 3. They noted that there seemed to be an improvement, or an increase in the staging of such events in the last five years:

> Hannah:…I think in like the last five years its really improved, like the Word and Mouth Committee[7] is always doing things, and like the theatre productions that are going on, STAG[8], and SAM[9] the art centre, like I think that they're really pushing to get bigger names to the regional areas
> Cathy (facilitator): So five years ago...?
> Hannah: I'm not…I just wasn't into Shepp as much, like I wasn't…
> Ellie: maybe as an adult...
> Hannah: yeah
> Penny: I guess I feel that way...living here before, and now…
> Ellie: I guess that was before social media too, like I think social media helped us work out what's on...
> Penny: create events...
> Hannah: …create events, see what other people are going to, being invited to, so I think may be five years ago, it was probably there, I don't know...it would be interesting to see if things had actually changed, or if it was just our awareness. (FG 3 - older professionals).

The less mundane activities described by members of focus group 3 and 2 reflected a more explicit "discursive practice in action" – one that mutually shaped Shepparton as a place and the respondents who lived there (Benson and Jackson 2012: 796).

The above excerpts also demonstrate that respondent groups occupy different structural positions, which in turn shaped their participation in, and awareness of place-based activities such as those described above. The 'older professional' focus group attributed what they saw as improved cultural events in the area to the emergence of social technologies, but also somewhat reflexively, to their own emerging adulthoods. Indeed, the role of social

[7] 'Word and Mouth' is a youth steering committee supported by the local council
[8] STAG – Shepparton Theatre Arts Group
[9] SAM – Shepparton Art Gallery

technologies is key in place-making projects and the focus group discussion notes the emergence of this trend. Here, it is place-based events tangibly linked and networked with known others that overlap with practice-based place-making, and which consequently illustrates digital technologies in the place-making process (explored in chapter 7). This was one of few unprompted, and explicit references to respondents' own youth status in the community. Reflecting on their own movement through the youth phase provided a timeline of changes in Shepparton for the participants to situate themselves within (see Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Roberts 2003). As older members of the broader community, and no longer high schoolers, or in that immediate post-secondary school period, they reasoned that they were aware of these happenings in a different, more immediate way.

Having internalized negative discourses portraying Shepparton as a boring, country location devoid of 'things to do' (Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009), the members of the 'Soccer team' focus group 6 gained some perspective when they moved to a larger regional town, Bendigo, for tertiary study:

> Matt: we're all in the same boat aren't we?...We went to Bendigo...we went to Uni in Bendigo
> Marco: I grew up here (in Shepparton), and went to Uni in Bendigo, and I sort of, well, I like despised living here at the start. But since leaving and then coming back, I've realised that it's not actually that bad…
> Cathy (facilitator): can you tell me a bit more about that?
> Marco: I just thought it was boring living here, and, once you actually get out you realise that most places are pretty much the same. (FG 6 - soccer team).

The members of the older professional (FG3), and the soccer team focus groups (FG6) were two groups somewhat older on average than the other focus groups. These participants were also more likely employed in full-time jobs within the professional sector. As such, they were in a slightly different position in terms of reflecting on having grown to young adulthood, undergone tertiary education and negotiated the employment market. Their characterisations of place were somewhat tempered by these experiences. For example, Marco from focus group 6 drew on his experience having moved from Shepparton where he

grew up, to Bendigo for University, then back to Shepparton. Several in the focus group indicated having made a similar migration over the previous 4-5 years. Having made the transition from living with his family in Shepparton, to living more independently in Bendigo, the comparative lens (explored in the following section) gave him a unique insight. Like some of the members of focus group 3 who described similar experiences, this ultimately clarified Shepparton as place that was ‘not actually that bad’.

Another explanatory dynamic emerged in the gender dimensions of focus groups 3 and 6. Specifically, focus group 6 was comprised mostly of young men, while focus group 3 was mostly women. While both groups had similar average age and occupational profiles, gender differences appeared in their construction of place and the types of place-based practices that they engaged in. Most visible is participation in organised sport. Of course, the focus group was recruited from the members of a soccer team, but the members of focus group 3 did not mention sporting activities at all. In their discussion of place practices focus group 3 chose to focus more on cultural events, while focus group 6 seemed particularly focused on not just soccer, but several forms of sport in Shepparton. Consistent with the intimate linkages between masculinities and sporting prowess (see Næss 2001) the young men of focus group 6 enthusiastically engaged in performances of not just gender identities, but also place. This occurred via their embodied performances bounded within particular localities such as the soccer pitch, the change rooms and training grounds. The one young woman in focus group 6 contributed minimally to the discussion. Consistent with limitations of the focus group method, her perspective was subsumed within the broader, male-dominated discussion.

Another focus group compiled entirely of women discussed a form of place-based practice that illustrates the role of gender in place-making. Shopping emerged as a recreational activity that young women valued and enjoyed, and which provided culturally appropriate opportunities to move within the spaces of the town with relative independence (see Green and Singleton 2006, Dunkley 2004). More than a means to consume goods and culture, shopping trips (Pyyry 2016, Thomas 2005) were discussed as primarily social gatherings and opportunities to hang-out that were enacted, and practised in place.

> Dleen: no but like, we still like, instead of like going out, which is like what they would do, we, us girls would like meet up...
> Sara: we're down to earth and just like...chill out together
> Tota: yeah, we are…
> Noora: like we chat at like houses, like you know, just have...
> Sara: we try to make the most out of it here (in Shepparton)...and like, I realise there's big differences here because everyone tries to come together
> Noora: yeah, yeah
> Sara: yeah, it's more about the people than the places
> Noora: yeah
> Dleen: yeah, a while ago we organized an outing to the mall, (laughs) and this lady got scared, she's like, 'oh my god, why are 20 girls going out, why are they going!' (Laughs). Yeah, and we like stood there in the middle of the mall, we got this random to take us a photo, a group photo. You know, it's just things like that matter to us. And they mean so much, yeah. (FG 9 - religious youth group, young women).

The young women of focus group 9 demonstrated the interaction between sociality, locality and place in their discussion about shopping together at the mall. The outing was a means to socialise with other young women, and the mall was one of the few places that they were able to come together in this way. In their explanation about wayfaring (Ingold 2007) through Shepparton's commercial precinct with a large group of girlfriends, Dleen, Sara, Noora and Tota exemplified the "inherently sociable engagement between self and environment" (Lee and Ingold 2006: 68). A protected pedestrian zone, shoppers traverse the space from one to end to the other, pausing intermittently to browse the consumer goods on display and to share an interesting find with shopping companions. The sociality, and embodied, experiential dimensions of this place-making process is clearly demonstrated in focus group 9's discussion. Discussions about the embodied experience of walking as a means for making place are analysed below in greater detail. Crucially, the young women

of focus group 9 also revealed the practical dimension of place (Gregson and Rose 2000) in their patronage of a local shopping district (Benson and Jackson 2012), explicitly captured in the group photo to be shared on social media.

Shepparton as a place was practised by the young people of the study in a range of ways, with factors such as gender, cultural background, youth status, and socio-economic status shaping individual experiences as well as the collective experiences recounted by the focus groups. The 'discursive practice in action' (Benson and Jackson 2012) that emerged in the young people's responses to the assertion 'there is nothing to do in rural towns' revealed the common, practical ways that place was made by them. Patronising cultural events, engaging in sports, going out at night, participating in family activities, or spending time shopping in the local commercial precinct were examples of everyday mechanisms through which place was consciously or unconsciously made. The following section considers another common discursive construction of the town in which it is imagined by respondents using a comparative lens.

In comparison to other places

Places were conceived and constructed by the respondents in relative terms, reflecting Appadurai's contextually defined concept of 'localities' (Appadurai 1996). Nearby places were positioned by participants in a broader field of locales including larger cities like Melbourne and neighbouring regional towns like Bendigo. Smaller satellite towns surrounding Shepparton also featured heavily among participants' discussion. There was a clear tendency among participants to contextualize Shepparton mostly within the geographically proximate surrounds of the state of Victoria. This mostly included towns and cities within approximately three hours' drive. Interstate places, including regional, rural or metropolitan locales, were mentioned much less frequently (except Sydney, mostly among more the mobile migrant community). These more distant places did not seem to figure in participants' comparative accounts of their hometown, suggesting geographical limits to the context in which they defined their immediate, affective conceptions of place. Travel to these nearby places, whether it was in the form of regular commuting or infrequent visits, helped shape more abstract understandings of these areas and connected respondents with broader networks of places spanning across north-south/central Victoria.

These relatively proximate mobilities, although fluid and varied in frequency, countered the 'rural static' discourse that emerged within the research focusing on change and disruption in the context of rural places (Hall, Coffey and Lashua 2009, Kraack and Kenway 2002, Wiborg 2004). Place categorisations typifying passive, static localities with limited inward and outward flows, effectively 'cut off' from other places were not necessarily borne out in focus group discussions (see discussion among FGs 3,5,6,8,9 on travelling to Melbourne, Bendigo, and among migrant focus groups, to Sydney). Rather, conceptions of place as complex, specific localities intersected by movement were more common (Goodwin-Hawkins 2014).

Consistent with the findings of others (see Harris and Wyn 2009), respondents' connections with other proximate localities did not appear to detract from their generally strong sense of local emplacement within Shepparton. Nonetheless, the difficulties of sourcing car rides and commuting to and from everyday commitments and activities meant that respondents did not enjoy the ease of movement accessible to older people and those with more resources (see Harris and Wyn 2009). Even with these limitations, participants' proximate mobilities within regional Victoria enabled them to develop a relational understanding of place that has been elaborated on in other research (see Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015, Fallov, Jorgensen and Knudsen 2013, Andersson 2012, Conradson and Mckay 2007). Proximate mobilities served to meld and simultaneously separate discrete localities for the young participants by facilitating a relational understanding. Places were constructed and understood in terms of what they were seen to be, and what they were not, within a broader frame of context (see Appadurai 1996, Heley and Jones 2012).

Shepparton was regularly described in comparison to not only smaller places, but larger regional centers, such as nearby Bendigo (see map, Figure 3). Shepparton and Bendigo are two regional centers approximately 124km apart, or one and half hours' drive. However, these two towns were conceived in very different terms by participants: Johnno: "(Bendigo has a) different gist... it's kind of half in-between Melbourne and half in-between Shepp...a lot more high rise buildings, more old architecture and stuff, it's more of a..." ('Car hobbyist friends' FG4). Johnno talked about being familiar with larger towns as a visitor, but not as a resident. As Johnno trailed off in his explanation of the difference between these two places, he demonstrated how conceptions of place and place-making processes could be difficult to

identify and articulate (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, see also Moores 2012). Respondents approached this difficulty by conceiving, and describing places in terms of what they believed they were *not*. Responding to the question 'what are your thoughts on Shepparton', participants employed this strategy drawing on a comparative lens.

Accessing a suite of opportunities in larger places such as Bendigo, for example employment, entertainment, shopping or education, was another medium through which to experience and to understand these places in comparative terms. This was a further example of Appadurai's (1996) interlinkages between places, serving to locate them within a broader contextually defined understanding of place. For example, the members of the 'Car hobbyist friends' focus group, several of whom had easy access to cars, discussed travelling to other regional or rural places, including Bendigo and Echuca for leisure and entertainment: Johnno:..."(Shepparton is) centralised, you can do a lot of things and you don't have to be living there to experience it." (FG4). These types of interconnective mobilities emerged in many discourses reproduced among the respondents concerning Shepparton as place, corresponding with other rural mobilities scholarship (Goodwin-Hawkins 2014, Walsh 2012, Bell and Osti 2010). These scholars argue that rural mobilities are not the exception, but are a pervasive presence in rural and regional lives.

The departure of mobile young people, who are a key element in youthful place-making, from a place itself, may seem to subvert conditions for a robust place-making process. However, constructing place is more complex than the physical occupation of material spaces over a prolonged period of time (Walsh 2012), and this was reflected in respondents' discussions about engaging in proximate mobilities within regional and metropolitan Victoria. The relational knowledge gained from these mobilities equipped respondents with more nuanced, complicated meanings with which to understand and articulate Shepparton as a place. Differences according to young people's transitional pathways (Cieslik and Simpson 2013), ages, cultural background (Green and Singleton 2007), and backgrounds of disadvantage (Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Gough and Franch 2005, Matthews et al. 2000, Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011), shaped these mobilities and their influences on relational place-making processes.

Smaller places

From the initial recruitment stages where participants 'living in Shepparton' were sought, it became clear that Shepparton was conceived by many as broader geographically than what fell within conventionally defined city limits (ABS 2011, see map, Figure 2). Subjective imaginaries of place were demonstrated by these varied interpretations of the boundaries of Shepparton itself. While there was a certain degree of consistency among participants, who each clearly identified as 'Shepp' residents, this was by no means an exclusive identifier. For many, Shepparton stretched from the main town area, fringe housing developments, and outlying satellite towns up 30 km away (see Figure 2). During data collection it emerged that participants lived in a range of towns, including Mooroopna, Murchison, Lemnos or Tatura, whilst fully identifying as 'Shepparton residents'. It became apparent that 'Shepparton' did not just refer to the collection of streets, buildings and addresses located within a predetermined, bordered territory, but rather, it was defined through the regular, everyday commutes from smaller, rural satellite towns to Shepparton by those who lived there.

Respondents were obliged to engage in these more proximate mobilities for work, study, school, shopping, after-school activities, or socializing: Kylie: "I come to Shepparton for everything" (Kylie, FG 5 - young community volunteers, see similar discussion in FG4). Rather, it was daily lives lived across a range of localities, centered on Shepparton, which constituted respondents' self-identification as 'Shepp residents'. This identification across a range of localities reflected the blurring of boundaries, and subjective nature of individuals' own construction of places of meaning (see Halfacree 1993, Heley and Jones 2012). Respondents' trajectories within and across the geographic area of Shepparton and its satellite communities, emerged as a place-making mechanism.

Satellite towns around Shepparton essentially formed a commuter belt surrounding the town. The members of the 'Support group' focus group, several of whom reported living in these satellite towns themselves (including Mooroopna and Tallygaroopna), described these smaller rural towns as part of Shepparton as a place:

> Ruby: yeah, like, ah, Shepparton just doesn't stop at just, north, south, like you've got like Mooroopna, Ardmona, Nagambie, um...

> Lucas:...Tatura..
> Ruby:...Tatura, Kyabram...
> Emma:...Murchison...
> Lucas: yeah, Kyabram
> Ruby:...Kyabram, Toolamba, like you've got all these places, like Numurkah, Congupna
> Emma:...Dookie
> Ruby: Dookie, all these places, they all come, like they're all part of Shepp. (FG 10 - support group).

Among several focus groups, Shepparton was conceived as an expansive geographical region, including the town itself and a ring of satellite rural towns. For example, when describing where they were from to those not familiar with regional Victoria, members of focus group 5 stated that they were from Shepparton despite being from different towns in the commuter belt (Tatura, Murchison and Mooroopna): Connor:..."I don't know, it's just kind of like my default...." (Connor, FG 5 - young community volunteers). While this might have been to improve the odds of recognition among those unfamiliar with the area, the participants indicated it was more than this. For instance, members of the 'Young community volunteer' focus group saw themselves as Shepparton locals. The group's discussion reflected other participants' perceptions regarding what is, and what is not 'Shepparton', ultimately arriving at an understanding of the place that was framed in relatively broad, inclusive terms. Participants expressed a sense of belonging and attachment to a range of localities variously conceived as constituents of one regional town. Though group members were from a range of places within and around Shepparton, discussion indicated that they constructed an expansive and meaningful concept of place, with blurry, undefined boundaries but a collectively held and mutually recognisable interpretation of Shepparton.

In discussions about satellite rural towns surrounding Shepparton, freedom of movement emerged as an issue for some participants. The tension around participants' independent movement arose from their simultaneous emplacement (Harris and Wyn 2009) not just within Shepparton, but also in various outlying satellite towns. Mobilities discussed in earlier sections seem to contradict the tension discussed here (see for example discussion on constrained mobilites experienced by FG 9, and relative freedom expressed by FG 8). But it is important to distinguish between the everyday, mundane mobilities associated with getting

around and commuting to school, University, casual jobs, meeting friends or less frequent movement such as travelling to Melbourne for shopping or visiting friends or family.

Everyday mobility (e.g. commuting for work or study, meeting up with friends or family) engendered greater levels of tension and frustration for respondents than those more infrequent trips associated with travelling to Melbourne or Bendigo. While some participants were older and some had improved means and economic resources to move between places independently according to their own preferences, for many, access to such resources was either out of reach, or a newly acquired novelty. For many, being physically ‘emplaced’ or embedded in physical locales as a result of restrictions on mobility was a consuming, everyday reality, or at least a very recent memory. The place-making described by participants was thus reminiscent of Harris and Wyn’s (2009) ‘micro-territories of the local’. The following chapter applies this concept in greater detail to analyse a series of demarcated zones constructed by the young participants.

Mobilities between outlying rural nodes and Shepparton were involved in an important place-making process. Respondents talked about various localities woven together through their habitual, routine movements day after day in what resembled the performance of a complex ‘place-ballet’ (Seamon 1979). This is demonstrated in focus group 10, a group with a range of ages encompassing those old enough to drive, and those still reliant on others, and their responses when asked if they liked living out of Shepparton. Having recently got his drivers’ licence and a car and in his final year of high school, below, Michael alludes to the need to spend time driving between his home, and Shepparton, or to other localities. The freedom to come and go as he pleased was relished, and the frequency of his movements was implied:

> Michael: no...ohhhh (laughs) I do but I don't, I like my place cos' I have a car now I can just, like, I have my P's (probationary driving licence) but if, my sister and brother absolutely hate it cos’ they are not of age yet, they can't do anything. and like, they just sit at home and they're begging always to leave, and like do everything they can, but mum and dad will be like, nahhh, we're in town already, too busy doing this and this, and they're stuck at home, like, it’s just hard. (Michael, FG 10 - support group).

While Seamon (1979) originally conceptualized a material relationship with place mediated via people's physical movement, often in the form of walking, the daily realities of youthful regional lives involved heavy reliance on driving from place to place. Nonetheless, the "bodily regularity" incumbent in the formation of 'place-ballet' was demonstrated in respondents' frequent trips between localities and their "attune(ment) to (the) complex rhythms" of the greater Shepparton region (Sutherland 2012: 169). The requirement to walk between places emerged in the same discussion from a participant too young to have drivers licence:

> Jake: I live in Mooroopna and the amount of times a person has said, oh come over, I'm like, oh do you want me to walk 11 k(ilometres) to your house? Yeah, I get there and it's for some tedious something that we could have settled on Facebook or something…(Jake, FG 10 - support group).

Darkly sarcastic throughout the focus group, it is possible that Jake was exaggerating when he talked about walking 11 kilometres. However, the vagaries of rural public transport, and not having ready access to a car, either through being too young to drive, or not being able to access, or afford, a car meant that walking between places was a key means of going from place to place. Regular, and constant movement within and between the localities of Shepparton, and its commuter belt by car, or on foot, was a place-making mechanism demonstrated in discussion about getting from one place to another. The habitual intersecting traces described here by Jake and Michael, but also emergent in other focus groups discussions, served to mediate respondents' relationship with familiar places in the form of a place-ballet (Seamon 1979).

In a similar vein, during a discussion of the relative merits of living in or near the center of town versus the rural fringe, one young man from the 'soccer team' focus group advocated for living out of town. While Daniel was frustrated (as with Michael and Jake in FG10) with the constrained freedom of movement in regards to visiting friends or attending activities, and having to rely on others for lifts to do this, other freedoms of semi-rural life outweighed these:

> Daniel: yeah, that's one of the benefits of town, you walk anywhere, but, I reckon, like, I get annoyed cos' I have to ask my parents to take me everywhere cos' I live out of town. I can't just walk to a friend's house or walk down the street, I have to ask my parents. But then, living out of town is kinda good, you can do what you want. There's no neighbours or anything to stop ya. (Daniel, FG 6 - soccer team).

Social contact was not nearby, and could only be organized with advance planning and relying on his parents for a lift. However, Daniel expressed an affective sense of freedom associated with living on the rural fringe, where the lower housing density and relative lack of people engendered a sensation of uninhibitedness (see Farrugia et al 2016). Daniel went on to describe how he would spend spare time between finishing school for the day, and soccer training later on in the evening. Lacking transport options allowing him to go directly home after school and then return for soccer training, he instead spent the intervening hours 'down the street' in the central commercial precinct of Shepparton:

> Daniel: Like, I'm not home a lot, like after school, cos' I go down the street and do stuff and then I've got soccer Tuesdays, Thursday and I can't go home. Cos then I don't know how I'd get to soccer… (Daniel, FG 6 - soccer team).

The seemingly aimless strolling (also discussed in FG1, FG8) of young people in public places was another important facet of young people's place-making via material practices such as moving within and throughout particular territories (Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009, Harris 2014, McGrellis 2005, Nairn, Panelli and McCormack 2003). Though the focus group 6 participants were mostly male, and potentially more comfortable traversing public places than others, there were greater degrees of diversity according to other parameters such as SES. Daniel's movement through the town can be characterised as a 'place-ballet' (Seamon 1979). His progress through habitual, routine movements, enacted week after week over time serves as a "prereflective", material dimension of his interaction with, and construction of, place. The embodied experience of moving through space, and his sensory

interpretation of material place marks him out as a wayfarer (Ingold 2007). In addition, Daniel’s almost involuntary stranding in Shepparton’s public places, forcing him to fill time between commitments, is also consistent with processes of micro-territorialising (Harris and Wyn 2009, Harris 2014). Michael, Jake and Daniel’s descriptions of their everyday lives in Shepparton speak to the unique phenomena of living between a regional center and a nearby fringe rural town, and negotiating daily mobilities across everyday geographies.

In contrast with focus group 6 and 10’s relatively expansive construction of place, some participants reported a more constrained experience of Shepparton as a locality. Satellite towns formed a smaller part of what made ‘Shepparton’ for these respondents. Rather, a ‘simultaneity of stories’ (Massey 2005), conditioned by respondents’ different socio-cultural backgrounds, as well as experiences and material needs in relation to place, informed their place-making projects (see for example in regards to social class Benson and Jackson 2012, and in relation to cultural background Nayak 2009, Kehily and Nayak 2008). The young men of Iraqi background in FG 7 - religious youth group, young men indicated that they lived in close proximity to central/south Shepparton. A discussion weighing the merits of surrounding towns illustrated the cultural dynamics of these places. Nagambie and Benalla were considered good places to visit, even while one participant recounted experiencing a racist incident in one of these places. But Mooroopna, the closest and largest of these towns to Shepparton, was referred to:

> Ahmed:…we don't go to Mooroopna much, but when we do, it’s not always enjoyable…
> Kiaan: (In Mooroopna) there's nothing there.
> Ahmed: we by-pass Mooroopna every time we want to go somewhere. (FG 7 - religious youth group, young men).

After some references to the fact there is little to do in Mooroopna, it emerged that the young men saw little to no representation of the Iraqi community or the multicultural diversity they were used to in Shepparton neighbourhoods:

> Ahmed:...any families over there? Any Middle Eastern families?
> Omar: nup, not that I know...maybe Turkish community....

> Jamir: yeah, Turkish, there is...
> Ahmed: not much, like, Iraqi's move there, because of the distance...too far. (FG 7 - religious youth group, young men).

Regional place is multicultural and diverse (Hugo 2008), and as in many urban contexts, ethnic neighbourhoods emerge, with some places in Shepparton being more diverse than others (Grief 2009, Chaskin 1997). The collection of neighbourhoods in ‘south Shepp’ are an area in which many Muslim families live, while Mooroopna was seen to be more homogenous.

For young men of FG 7 - religious youth group, young men, there was little for them over the river in Mooroopna (see map, Figure 2). There were no familiar members of the Iraqi community living in the area and they saw no opportunities to purchase halal food. However, the problematic distance they refer to is more perception than geographic reality. Mooroopna is approximately 6-7km from Shepparton, making it the nearest of all those satellite towns referred to by participants, but it also lacked in the cultural and religious familiarity that could provide comfort and a sense of security associated with place (Chaskin 1997). More so than among other focus groups, the participants from Shepparton’s migrant community (FG7, FG9 and FG12) talked about the dense, locally embedded relations and connections within a particular, bounded, neighbourhood area. Within these three focus groups diversity existed in terms of gender, age, culture, and SES. However, the closeness of the more recent migrant communities in which they lived was a strong uniting feature. The cultural background of others living in the area, perceptions of safety, and the sense of commonality among other residents engendered “ethnic solidarity and identification” (Chaskin 1997: 525). Among focus group 7, a spatially embedded sense of belonging infused their place-making projects. This was reinforced by a process of othering, separating areas deemed ‘not always enjoyable’ from the familiar comforts of home neighbourhoods (Issifova 2015, Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011).

What the members of focus group 7 valued most in terms of place was not present in all localities within broader Shepparton. In nearby towns like Mooroopna, perceived as ethnically homogenous, these participants’ concept of place became dislocated, and their place-making practices disrupted. Reflecting on interrupted place-making casts a much more

successful place-making project into relief for these young men (see also Moores 2012, Wiborg 2004, Hall, Coffey and Lashua 2009). The making of their home, residential neighbourhood was suffused with comfort and familiarity. This was a place that they constructed in which their cultural and religious needs could be easily met, where they had a strong peer and familial networks, and all within a discrete, demarcated territory within 'south' Shepparton (Chaskin 1997, Campbell et al. 2009).

Comparing the expansive notions of place explored earlier in this section, with the more physically immediate place-making analysed above, illustrates the differing role of social relations embedded in neighbourhood among these groups. According to Chaskin's (1997, see also Campbell et al. 2009) work on the construction of neighbourhood places, when neighbourhoods are understood more in terms of social relationships than in terms of social institutions or symbolic definitions, they are subjectively understood in smaller geographic terms. For the members of focus group 7 (and also FG9, and FG12), the closeness of the migrant communities emerged throughout discussion on various topics. The meaning drawn from this seemed to be greatly valued and cherished. While other focus groups referenced the 'community' and the importance of social ties in more abstract terms, spatially embedded social relationships at the neighbourhood level did not emerge in any significant way in these discussions. Therefore, it is somewhat unsurprising that those focus group members from the migrant community discussed making place in more spatially immediate terms, while other focus group members interpreted place in a broader sense intersected by proximate mobilities.

On the whole, respondents discussed engaging in a range of proximate mobilities as part of their daily life worlds in living in a regional place. More distal mobilities emerged differentially across the participant pool, with some expressing a relatively mundane attitude towards this type of travel, while for others, it represented more an exception that a norm. Travelling across the regional geographies of their homes enabled respondents to draw on relational understandings to frame their own portrayals of Shepparton. Moreover, it exposed a more phenomenological relationship with place - one that was demonstrated in respondents' habitual, regular and intersecting journeys within the town, and throughout its commuter belt of satellite towns. Mobilities, both proximate, and more distal, emerged as a clear trend during focus groups during discussion about Shepparton. Delving into how this mediates and

shapes the young people's relationship with the town reveals the place-making processes inherent within everyday lives punctuated by movement throughout the area.

Affective ruralities

Following on from the previous section on relational understandings of Shepparton, the next sections explore participants' more emotive and affective relationships with place. Rather than embodied movement intersecting nearby places, or of the articulation of regional place drawing on comparisons with other regional and urban places, this section focuses on the expression of more sensory components of place as it is sensed in the body.

On the whole, the young participants did not fully subscribe to the discursive dominance that tended to underscore understandings of Shepparton as a regional town according to a limited range of structural and material concerns. They did not wholly reproduce the 'rural idyll' discourse (Rye 2006, O'Connor 2005, Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009, Haukanes 2013, Benson and Jackson 2012), nor the antonymous 'rural dull' (Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009) although there were exceptions. However, one aspect of this discourse that was regularly reproduced was demonstrated in participants' initial descriptions of the town as 'quite', 'peaceful' and 'relaxed' expressed in a mostly positive tone. Upon delving into their accounts of Shepparton as a place in more detail, an increasingly visceral, embodied component emerged in relation to descriptions and depictions of relationships to place (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016).

The construction of place can occur via the embodied physicality of relationships between bodies and material environments. This is expressed by respondents 'felt' sensations in relation to the physical world as they move through it. The relationship between bodies and material places has been theorized using the conceptual lens broadly referred to as non-representational theory (NRT) (Thrift 2008). Building on phenomenological approaches (Seamon 1979, Tuan 1979), NRT proponents seek to look beneath conscious, cognitive or 'representational' processes, and to assume a constantly evolving, unstable, 'lively' world mutually shaped by bodies and places (Lorimer 2005).

Respondents articulated these affective states, and their embodied entanglements within local place most clearly when they compared the ‘quietness’ of Shepparton with the anxiety-inducing city spaces they encountered when they drove to Melbourne. Unsurprisingly given the affective, pre-cognitive, ‘felt’ quality of these relationships with different places, respondents often struggled to describe and express such relationships (see Moores 2012). One form in which more experiential, sensory connections with place emerged however, was in terms of encountering busy, heavy unfamiliar traffic conditions. In many instances, negotiating these physically intimate, and unfamiliar city-scapes were recollected with a visceral distaste and keenly avoided.

Being in the ‘city’ was described as an intense experience and one that contrasted with the ease and familiarity of regional, and local home spaces. More than an understanding of place based on the built environment or material practices, it was a sensory experience that yielded a more emotive and embodied construction of place. In this context, place can be understood as a physical ‘feeling’, whereby participants become “spatialised” in place by themselves forging sensuous, emotive connections with local, known places (Farrugia et al 2016). Participants’ descriptors of relative ‘peacefulness’ or ‘relaxedness’ demonstrates Farrugia’s (et al. 2016) explanation of sensory emplacement. Like Farrugia (et al. 2016, and others for example Carolan 2008), non-representational information is inferred through other ‘representation’ parameters. While ‘talk’, or representation based methods have been seen as inadequate for developing non-representational insights (Carolan 2008), more emotive expressions deployed to articulate more affective relationships with place are useful in this circumstance (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016).

Quietness versus busyness

Common descriptors among participants discussing felt sensations in relation to their regional homes were 'quiet', 'chilled', while the metropolitan 'other' was experienced as 'busy', and 'stressful'. These embodied sensations evoked affective states and alluded to non-representational processes entangling physical bodies with material locales. Indeed, these were 'felt in the body' (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016) conceptions of local and regional place understood in terms of a sense of auditory ('quietness'), and visceral ('busy') sensations. Here, physical environments, or places, were felt by participants via their bodies and experienced through the senses.

A relative sense of 'quietness' linked with regional and rural places was expressed by numerous participants in several focus groups: Sophie: "it's much more, a quiet and relaxed, um...from where I grew up, (suburban Melbourne), um...like where I grew up, it's like more loud, and like more, really... here in Shepp…yeah, I do, I prefer the quietness, I think" ('Local tertiary student A', FG2). And in discussion among the 'Car hobbyist friends' focus group:

> Johnno: it's quiet and laid back sort of town to live in.
> Travis: .... (Pause) well I don't know.
> Johnno: it's pretty chilled. (FG 4 - car hobbyist friends,
> similar discussion among FG 9 and FG 12).

Respondents' discussion of place using emotive, more visceral descriptors emerged in different groups and among individuals from varying backgrounds. Experiences of place were clearly mediated by socio-demographic factors, including gender (Dunkley 2004), cultural background (Green and Singleton 2007) or social class (see Benson and Jackson 2012, Jackson and Benson 2014, Gregson and Rose 2000, Matthews 2015, Jeffrey 2016, Elwood, Lawson and Nowak 2015). Interestingly, strong trends in regards to respondents' structural positioning and their more emotive, sensory descriptions in relation to place did not emerge. While this could be due to the relatively small group of respondents, it is noteworthy that affective connections of local places seemed to transcend some of those starker structural realities underscoring respondents' everyday lives.

In addition to local places being sensed as ‘peaceful’ and ‘quiet’ was the related perception of security in public areas:

> Dleen: Like my friend recently just came, also from Sydney, just for a holiday here. And she's l like, I really like it, like it’s so quiet, it’s so peaceful, I just like it when I go out and there’s no one around that you know, like, she feels safe, I don't know. And then, she's like, in Sydney if I go out, it’s just everywhere, people are everywhere, there's traffic and, you know, she, it’s like, really loud. She likes it here. She wouldn't mind living here. (FG 9 - religious youth group, young women).

This relatively mobile group of migrant young women was also perhaps more focused on personal security in public areas (see Green and Singleton 2006). However, such visceral descriptions emerged in other groups, including among young men and women. The sense of busyness, of noise, and security was also felt strongly, precipitated by the close, intimate presence of car traffic and higher levels of human density.

A visceral sense of size and proportion was also described in the context of security among the car hobbyist friends focus group. Johnno: “oh, well, it’s (Shepparton is) not too big that you feel, I don't know, down the street you don't feel insecure or unsafe, but there's enough of a population to kind of keep you going” (Johnno, FG 4 - car hobbyist friends). Perceptions of security and place generally differed according to specific locales and across different focus groups (explored in greater detail in chapter 6). The physicality of moving through and within city-scapes, epitomized in expressions about negotiating traffic, and busyness, was a common theme identified by participants:

> Marco:…if you're going to the city, if you live in the city in Melbourne, or going to Uni, there's a fair bit of traffic and people running around and all that sort of stuff going around you. Whereas here it’s not, not as busy. (Marco, FG 6 - soccer team).

Several young men from the FG 6 - soccer team had returned from the neighbouring regional center of Bendigo after having moved there to complete tertiary studies. In this group, there was an opportunity for reflection in detail on ‘quiet’ regional spaces versus the more ‘busy’ larger regional town.

> Luca: I wouldn't go to (move to) say, Bendigo…just because I’m not into the hustle and bustle and the takes you 45 minutes to get to work. There might be more things to do, but we're not that far from Melbourne. If we really want to go and do something in Melbourne for a weekend we can. (Luca, FG 6 - soccer team).

Luca articulated in clear terms the basis for his aversion to larger places. Similar to others, it was based on an emotive dislike of bigger, unfamiliar, busy places. Even weighed up against the argument that there is ‘more to do’ in these places, it was preferable to limit the ‘hustle bustle’ of city visits to short-term forays. For Luca, circumventing the viscerally intimate nearness of other human and non-human objects enabled him to affirm more positive affective relationship to places associated with comfort and familiarity (see Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, Thrift 2008).

Some of the young women in the migrant community group focus group also shared a physical aversion for busy city-scapes:

> Aisha:…I don't kind of like going to the cities…ahh, I don't know, for some reason, if you go to Melbourne and then, even for one day, I get tired of there. I just wish I could come back any minute to Shepparton…
> Mariam: …But when we go to city, we don't like it…
> Aisha: especially how busy it is, the streets and everything. (FG 12 - migrant community group).

It is perhaps unsurprising that members of this migrant community focus group reproduced a similar stance to the more intimate, neighbourhood-based place-making explored in the preceding section. Visceral, experiential relationships with place were by no means confined

to certain focus groups and emerged in many different discussions across the respondent pool. There was a similar sentiment among the 'Vocational students' focus group: Ryan: "busy bro, it's just busy in the city" (Ryan, FG 11 – vocational students). Members of focus groups 11 and 12 spoke about Shepparton as their hometown, and comparing it to larger cities, concluded that the latter was busy, unfamiliar, unknown and difficult to negotiate or move through. Participants described a distinctive sense of dislocation, where familiar, comfortable "felt in the body" constructions of non-urban places were altered and interrupted (see Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016).

Discussions articulating a sensuous, embodied sense of quietness and security also elucidated feelings of familiarity in regards to place. Experiencing a sense of control and familiar knowledge regarding a place was a valued and desired sensation. For example, some participants identified an abstract sense of familiarity and attributed this as a motivation for a hypothetical return: Noora: "yeah, I reckon we've just grown up in it so we don't know any better. Like, if we go to Melbourne or something, yeah, it's new to us and everything, but we still wanna go back" (Noora, FG 12 - migrant community group).

Still, a small minority expressed a clear preference for that 'busyness' associated with the city identified as a negative by some: Jamir: "...yeah, (Shepparton is) too quiet! Yeah, I'm more used to the busy traffic and everything" (Jamir, FG 12 - migrant community group). It is important to note that few participants shared Jamir's preference for the 'busy busy' of the city, at least not as explicitly (see FG7 and 8). This relatively older participant from a migrant background spoke about having lived a mobile life, spending time in Melbourne and Shepparton. For him, the city represented a desire to return to what he had previously known and experienced. The sense of unfamiliarity was much less present for Jamir, unlike others who professed an aversion to city-places, which meant that he did not view the busyness and intimate viscerality of urban localities in a negative light.

Participants in focus group 11 referenced similar place dynamics to those quoted in the above paragraphs (see FG9), but positioned that sense of idyllic rurality, and affective 'quietness' outside of the town. For example, the members of the 'Vocational students' focus group were somewhat divided in regards to their preferences concerning outlying agricultural areas. Some expressed a distinct preference for living out of town:

> Austin:...its way better.
> Ryan: a lot better, quieter.
> Austin: I fucking love farms. (FG 11 – vocational students).

For others in the discussion, living out of town was boring and equated to unnecessarily long commutes between places:

> Bree: there's nothing to do…
> Clara: … it's boring, and there's like no one out there.
> Austin: that's the whole point, you get away from people.
> (FG 11 – vocational students).

The locus of comfort and familiarity associated with place, in addition to the auditory experience of 'quietness' associated with a lack of people, was in the agricultural surrounds separating Shepparton from the nearby satellite towns (see Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 201). 'Quietness' certainly emerged as a common means to describe the bodily felt, and sensed environment (Tuan 1979). It was through auditory perception, as well as other symbols in the environment, that respondents were able to talk about experiencing being in, and making place (Tuan 1979).

The members of the 'Car hobbyist friends' focus group who lived in one of these satellite towns, Mooroopna, talked about enjoying living in a smaller community adjacent to the larger Shepparton: Johnno: "it's quiet, it is convenient. In the sense that there is a lot more (in Shepparton) than what Mooroopna has, but it's not far away...That's what I really like about it" (Johnno, FG 4 - car hobbyist friends). Like others (for example FG6), they weighed up competing dimensions of place, which meant that the affective dimension of 'quietness' came at the expense of opportunities and 'things to do'. Crucially, however, the sense of quietness

expressed by the focus group participants alluded to more than merely an absence of auditory stimulation. The descriptor spoke to those non-representational dynamics (Thrift 2007) associated with feelings of calm and tranquillity connected with the open, peopleless spaces of Shepparton's rural surrounds (see Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016).

Respondents' expressions of their felt sensations in relation to Shepparton, and its rural surrounds were revealing of their more pre-cognitive, non-representational relations with place (Anderson and Harrison 2010, Thrift 2008). Contrasting with previous sections of this chapter which focused on discursive constructions, the latter sections explored affective expressions so as to expose that which lies beyond representation (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016, Lorimer 2005). This enables respondents' place-making projects to be understood from an additional viewpoint. That is, the construction of place through talk-as-representation, as well as making sense of place 'beneath' rational articulations among those more affective connections with place. Place-making is a process that operates in the background, although it also lies in people's everyday, and mundane experiences, practices and interactions. Therefore, it is incumbent on researchers of place-making to interrogate the phenomena from a range of perspectives.

Conclusion

This findings chapter has outlined several key themes that emerged from young people's focus group discussions. Respondents were invited to share their thoughts and opinions in regards to place as well as what meanings and attachments they had developed. The mechanisms and practices they engaged in to construct their own, and their collective constructions of place were explored in detail. Common themes and discourses contributed to a 'shared knowledge' about the 'reputation' of Shepparton, as well as particular locales within and around it. These themes and discourses emerged during initial discussion and throughout talk comparing different, although familiar places in regional and metropolitan Victoria. Place was also conceived as a collection of 'things to do', and actively practised through regular and often mundane everyday activities which situated respondents within place. Proximate and distal mobilities further mediated respondents' construction of place. Whether it was by car, walking, or by other means, traversing to and from the outlying rural nodes surrounding Shepparton served to create expansive, or more intimate places for the

respondents. Finally, affective connections emerged as a much more personal way to articulate place-attachment and to fashion places of meaning.

The focus of my thesis now turns to particular places within and around Shepparton that respondents spoke about. This segues from discussions focusing on affective and sensory spatial emplacement towards smaller, more personal bordering practices segregating and constructing different neighbourhoods, public spaces and hang-out zones which emerged as distinct 'micro-territories of the local' (Harris 2014, Harris and Wyn 2009). These micro-territorialising practices will form the basis of analysis in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Making 'micro-territories' - constructing the discrete localities of Shepparton

The previous chapter considered the making of Shepparton in expansive, town-based contexts through the analysis of discursive constructions, intersecting mobilities, and affective experiences of living in regional or rural areas. This next chapter moves away from this general focus on Shepparton and its rural surrounds to more specifically examine a suite of places within the town. Chapter six explores a series of demarcated, discrete localities constituting the building blocks of young people's place-making in Shepparton. The breakdown of the town into localities such as these emerged as a strong theme throughout focus group discussion. Concentrating on a smaller-scale expression of respondents' place-making projects, this chapter analyses public spaces in the town, including particular neighbourhoods, the lake, the mall and the car wash that emerged in several focus group discussions as locales to hang out in, socialise, or conversely, to avoid for a range of reasons.

The main theoretical lens guiding analysis in chapter 6 draws on Harris and Wyn's (2009) 'micro-territories of the local' concept. 'Micro-territories' is an approach which focuses on people's spatial embeddedness and movement within particular localities. Rather than a particular focus on the discursive construction of place, or the embodied relationship with the material environment, the following chapter examines young people's structural positioning in Shepparton, and how they operate within these forms to construct localities throughout the town. My analysis of young people's place-making broadens Harris and Wyn's (2009) original focus on youth status, to encompass a range of structural positions that emerged during focus group discussion. This expanded conceptualisation of 'micro-territories of the local' is applied as a means to demonstrate the young respondents' place-making processes under the "spectre of globalisation" (Cieslik and Simpson 2013). During the course of analysis, it became necessary to build on the original concept in this way as a means to better reflect the realities of young regional lives as they were discussed in focus groups. The diversity of the participant cohort, encompassing an intersectional range of structural positionings, as well as a greater age-range than what was considered in the original conceptualisation (15-17 years, versus 16-28 years), made it necessary to expand the remit of the concept. Therefore, the shaping influences of gender, cultural background and SES, with

a consideration of some of the power dynamics inherent in these processes, will be considered in chapter 6.

Building on the brief discussion of residential neighbourhoods in chapter five, the first section elaborates on respondent's constructions of residential neighbourhoods and applies 'micro-territories of the local' as an analytical frame. These localities were conceptualized as discrete, demarcated territories variously imagined and experienced as familiar, comfortable and affirming spaces. Conversely, there was much talk concerning those neighbourhood areas considered 'unsafe' or undesirable. Respondents' talk in regards to public places in Shepparton, including how these were used and understood by them, are discussed in the second section of the chapter. Key sites of meaning are singled out for analysis, including the lake, the mall and the car wash. Age-based experiences, including restrictions and freedoms, are considered in young people's micro-territorialising practices. The shaping impacts of gender, cultural background and socio-economic status are also considered in the analysis of these micro-territories of the local.

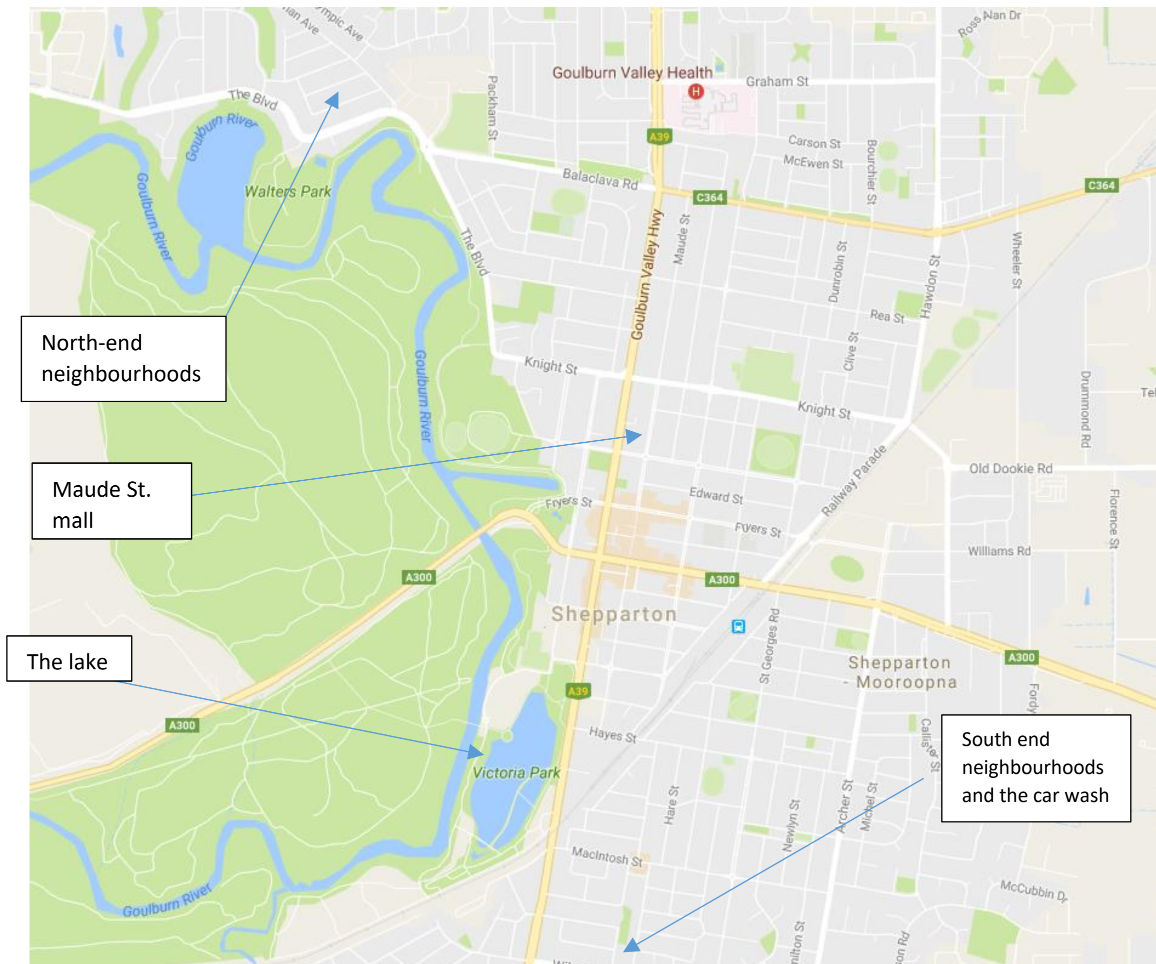
Neighbourhoods

Certain sections of Shepparton were conceived by respondents as a series of physically discrete, demarcated neighbourhoods (consistent with Chaskin 1997, Coulton et al. 2001, Landolt 2013, Campbell et al. 2009). The divisions between these loose zones reflected processes of micro-territorialising among the young respondents (Harris and Wyn 2009). As such, respondents discussed their embeddedness in defined local places (Harris 2014, Harris and Wyn 2009). These locales were conceptualized, and consequently made by the respondents via their own relative familiarity and comfort in particular territories (Issifova 2015, Pickering, Kintrea and Banniester 2011). In the case of those neighbourhoods deemed most familiar and comfortable, 'micro-territories of the local' were made in positive, affirming terms. For neighbourhoods seen to be more unfamiliar, which respondents did not actively traverse and only understood in removed, abstract terms, micro-territories tended to be conceived in more negative terms. Neighbourhood spaces were considered more inclusive if other co-occupants were perceived to be similar, thus making the space appear more familiar (Watt and Stenson 1998, Chaskin 1997). Familiarities in terms of neighbourhoods reflected the cultural backgrounds of respondents (as discussed in earlier sections), but also

operated along classed lines (consistent with Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Gough and Franch 2005, Matthews et al. 2000, Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister 2011).

References to particular locales popularly associated with social privilege, or conversely, with disadvantage, underscored much of the discussion. The idea that there are some places and neighbourhoods where 'you just don't go' due to associations with drugs, violence, petty crime or unkempt housing and public spaces permeated the young people's talk (see Green and Singleton 2006, Robinson 2009). However, there was little agreement between the focus groups on where these places were located. On the whole, the diversity of young people's conceptions of place reflected the subjective nature of meaning-making in the context of home neighbourhoods (see Gough and Franch 2005). Participants demonstrated little consistency across the focus groups in this respect: Ruby: "I find it really funny cos' people in Shepp south, like think that Shepp north is bad, and people in Shepp south think that Shepp north is bad." (Ruby, FG 10 - support group).

Figure 4 – Map of Shepparton showing 'micro-territories of the local'



Source: www.google.com.au/maps

In their discussion of particular neighbourhoods, the members of the 'Older professionals' focus group (FG3) went beyond general depictions of neighbourhood to pin down specific streets and attribute negative reputations based on perceptions of social disadvantage (see Matthews 2015):

> Ellie: I think pockets was exactly the right way to describe it, because there's pockets within, well not every neighbourhood, um, you know in north Shepp and south Shepp, everywhere that's

> had the connotation of being slightly dodgier[10] than anywhere else
> Cathy (facilitator): so what makes it dodgy?
> Liz: um, certainly wouldn't walk around St Georges Rd by myself in the evening or um....
> Ellie: it's probably the demographics, it's the demographics I think, probably not the actual people there, but the association of the demographic, the low socio-economic people, so you'll look at the front yards and they're not tidy and they've got graffiti
> Liz: yeah, it's that lower socio-economic...yeah
> Hannah: we have a very large population who are kind of welfare families who are at the very least, very very low income…
> Ellie: and they're concentrated in that south Shepp, St Georges Rd, Wilmot Rd area, north Shepp too
> Liz: I wouldn't say just the south, there's a lot of those problems up the north, like near Wanganui (Secondary school) it really is spread everywhere, north, east, south and west. There are pockets of those areas amongst everything
> Hannah: for me, my experience is, if I was to think about the rougher neighbourhoods, I'd think of that area around Wanganui (secondary school, north end) and that area near, in south Shepp, near Wilmot Rd, and St Georges Rd. That's my experience…
> (FG, older professionals).

These are places that participants were familiar with, although they were not talking about those neighbourhoods in which they lived. They detailed particular streets and defined discrete 'pockets' that they associated with negative characteristics (Matthews 2015). Sharing a relatively high degree of social privilege as professionals with greater access to economic capital, focus group 3's discussion above reveals the robust, and thoroughly classed bordering practices enacted by the young people (see Benson and Jackson 2012). Boundaries were clearly drawn along social class lines, and there was a collective agreement within the group on where these borders lay and what they meant. It is in these places that Hannah and Liz in focus group 3 believed they could not walk around during the evening

[10] Colloquialism referring to a place or person seen to be potentially dangerous, low-quality, dishonest or unreliable

without endangering their personal safety and where they were not in culturally or socially familiar territory. In terms of traversing local geographies within and between discrete zones (see Harris and Wyn 2009), these were areas to be avoided according to the members of the older professionals focus group (FG3).

Elaborating on why neighbourhoods were constructed in this way, the participants engaged in a process of 'othering' by highlighting the visual appearance of some dwellings and perceived socio-economic circumstances of families living in particular streets. Unlike other participants, including the members of the 'Migrant community group' focus group (FG12) who discussed walking the streets of these neigbourhoods in the evenings at length, physically walking through those residential streets, at certain times of the day was restricted. For these participants, place-making with respect to these 'no-go' neighbourhoods was thoroughly embedded in their own socio-economic position. They constructed these places in accordance to their perceptions of where one 'can' and 'cannot' walk at different times of the day and the physical constraints on their movement resulting from this (see Harris and Wyn 2009, Harris 2014). As Issifova (2015) notes in their work on urban enclaves and borderlands, while cities might be cast as open places where people can move about freely, divisions and segregation still play a central role. A part of this is a robust process of 'othering' in relation to space, a constituent in identity formation and links to particular places. Boundary making, and place-making are mutually implied, and occur simultaneously in young people's construction of localities in Shepparton. Further, bordering practices often follow the lines of socio-economic status (as in Issifova 2015, Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998). Gender also plays a significant role in the traversal of different micro-geographies at various times of the day, as demonstrated in the dominance of young women's perspectives in the excerpt above (see Green and Singleton 2006, Bondi and Rose 2003, Dunkley 2004). The gendered dimensions of place-making will be explored in greater detail below.

The older age range of focus group 3 (23-28 years) seemingly distanced them from the micro-territorialising practised in clearer ways by others in the research. Focus group 3 participants were older than Harris and Wyn's original 15-17-year age group, and thus did not meet the key parameter within which the concept of micro-territorialising was originally applied. However, this does not account for the fact that other focus groups with older (on average) members, including focus group 12, and focus group 1 (and focus group 6 to a lesser

extent), did report engaging in micro-territorialising practices to make the public spaces of Shepparton. More than youth status, other dimensions associated with young people's levels of agency appear to play into their micro-territorialising practice. The discussion held among the members of focus group 3 suggests that it was their relatively powerful position in the community that determined their participation in constructing 'micro-territories of the local'. This concerned not only their average age, but also their socio-economic status as young middle-class professionals, and their predominantly white-Anglo backgrounds.

The combination of these structural positions served to remove the members of focus group 3 almost entirely from micro-territorialising as a means to make place. Instead, these participants were much more likely to engage in the form of place-making outlined in Benson and Jackson's (2012) research. Here, it was those sharing middle-class forms of power in the community who were able to engage in a legitimised, recognised forms of place-making that enabled them to construct a particular, classed and desirable place in which to live. For the members of focus group 3, place-making practices were perhaps a little less directed, although the forms of powerlessness that underscore much literature on youthful place-making (see for example Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 1998, Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000, Matthews et al. 2000) were certainly not present. The mall was not a place to 'hang-out' in as it was for others (for example among the members of FG8), but rather a locality in which to shop and engage in the sanctioned commercial activity legimitised by those in control of the space.

It is interesting to question at this point the inclusion of the members of focus group 3 in this study ostensibly on 'young people'. As noted in the introduction, the youth phase is increasingly elongated under the contemporary conditions of globalisation (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Roberts 2003). The ever diminishing influence of traditional social structures like gender and social class on young people's transitional pathways (Furlong and Cartmel 2007) and the rise of choice-biographies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001) is reflected in popular rhetoric reproduced in many focus groups, including focus group 3, who indicated that 'success is what you make it' (Cieslik and Simpson 2013). The conditions of late modernity combine to push the youth-phase into the 20s (see Tyyska 2005, Roberts 2003). However, the experiences discussed in focus group 3's discussion on making place, and their enjoyment of a more privileged social position in the town, demonstrated in their participation in cultural events, as well as their engagement in legitimised, officially

sanctioned place-based activity (rather than micro-territorialising demonstrated among other participants) ostensibly removes them from the youth phase. Their position as (mostly) securely employed young professionals, occupying a middle-class position in Shepparton, reflects O'Connor's (2015, see also White and Wyn 2004, Roberts 2003, France and Roberts 2014) assertion that social structures retain a significant shaping influence in young lives. Rather than a wholesale dismantling, or significant weakening of social structures, it is the manner of this shaping relationship between agencies and structures that are altered. According to O'Connor (2015), the nature of this change is reflective of the changing dynamics associated with late modernity (O'Connor 2015).

Boundary making in the context of neighbourhoods emerged in many focus group discussions about place in Shepparton. For example, Zoe, from FG 8 - community volunteers, young women was able to clearly articulate her own residential neighbourhood (see figure 4), define its borders and self-reflexively position herself as living within the reputed 'ghetto', (referred to among focus group 3, among others):

> Zoe: I've lived in the ghetto...
> Cathy (facilitator): where's that?
> Zoe: ah, like up north end, so you've got south end, usually considered feral, and then north ends considered feral[11]. And I've lived, you know, it's just considered that way. But I've lived in the feral my whole life...my friends describe it as, I live in the posh area of the ghetto (laughs) that's like, you know, if I walk the next street over its considered the ghetto. But my street, and from my street back its considered like, the poshy posh, the boulevard. But I live more Olympic Av, than the boulevard, so you know, Batman Av runs off where I live, so, um, you know, my friends are like, when I told I'm moving to that spot, they're like, ahhh, you know, oh my god. And then they drove down the street and they're like this is really nice! (FG 8 - community volunteers, young women).

[11] Colloquialism referring to a person or place seen to be antisocial or undisciplined.

Zoe was quite specific in her spatial definition of the dichotomously opposed ‘ghetto’ and ‘poshy posh’ neighbourhoods within her own region of the town. The locales she mentioned are broadly consistent with those reproduced in other focus groups (including the street ‘Olympic avenue’ mentioned by the members of focus group 3), but she attempts to shift the barriers by stating that while where her home was positioned was broadly understood to be the ‘ghetto’, in fact the actual ‘ghetto’ lay one street over. Being more intimately familiar with the area, Zoe was able to elucidate a richly detailed account owing to her “deep embeddedness” in this series of neighbourhood micro-territories (Harris and Wyn 2009). Still older (20 years old) than Harris and Wyn’s (2009) participants, Zoe’s micro-territorialising practice was clear. Zoe indicated not having a car earlier in the focus group, and with a part-time retail job, she lived with her mother whom she helped support financially. Even while she did not quite live in the self-described ‘ghetto’, opportunities and resources available to other more socially privileged respondents were not afforded to Zoe, and this contributed to her spatial embeddedness (consistent with Harris and Wyn’s 2009 conceptualisation).

The collection of streets making up her neighbourhood was a locality that she had regularly traversed by foot, hanging-out with friends, walking to school and ultimately participating in the construction of a discrete locality, while simultaneously being shaped by the materiality of the neighbourhood (see Williamson 2016). While Zoe prevaricated between identifying as living in ‘the feral’, but not in the ‘ghetto’, she was proud to claim this neighbourhood as her own. This was consistent with other studies that have found young people living in socially deprived areas, while aware of the social problems in their neighbourhoods, remain loyal and positive about the value and meaning of living in those home neighbourhoods (see Matthew, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998). Indeed, like Shildrick and MacDonald’s (2013) participants, there was certain value to drawing on physically nearby points of comparison as a means to differentiate a relative sense of poverty and disassociation from an undesirable ‘other’.

Residential neighbourhoods were formed as micro-territories of the local which shaped perceptions of safety, familiarity and belonging. For instance, the members of the ‘Migrant community’ focus group (FG12), all sharing the same Afghani cultural background though with a mix of men and women of different ages, were invited to reflect on living in close physical proximity within the same ‘south end’ neighbourhood. One participant had previously lived in a different neighbourhood (nearby to Zoe’s neighbourhood in the so-

called ‘feral’, see figure 4) and was able to compare living among the local Afghani community with living in a different area of the town:

> Cathy (facilitator): so what's it like living close to each other like that?
> Aisha: oh god!
> Farah: actually, very good
> Mariam: everyday get out of, I mean, do gathering, have tea, have fun, dance, cry (laughs)
> Aisha: from, what I remember, before when we used to live far away from like people, our house was very very far. Like people didn't come to visit us, because they thought that we live at the end of the Shepparton. So that’s what they described our house as, like you live at the end of Shepparton. But then when we come to this street, it’s actually very good. Like, you get to see people, like when I’m bored at home, if I don't have anything to do, I just get out the house and then just go to her house (gestures to fellow participants), and if she's not home I can go to her house, if she's not home, I can go to another house! (Laughs) I just make my day like that. But if I was to live somewhere else, I can't just go and knock on an Aussie neighbour’s door, like I can I come to your house? (FG 12 - migrant community group).

Perceptions of the distance between these places were clearly subjectively interpreted (the actual distance through the middle of town is less than 10km) and the deeply felt cultural, neighbourhood barriers of these micro-territories seemed to be challenging to move beyond.

For Aisha, her experience of the distance between the migrant neighbourhood in which she resided at the time of the focus group contrasted to her home in another neighbourhood ‘very very far’ way. She conflated physical distance with the different degrees of cultural and familiarity associated with the two neighbourhoods. Living within the migrant community neighbourhood where she was able to comfortably stroll to friends nearby on a regular basis, of her own volition and independently, was valued given constrains in other spheres. The making of comfortable places populated with culturally, ethnically and religiously familiar

others in close proximity was a vital process for the participants of the focus group (FG12) (see Watt and Stenson 1998, Chaskin 1997). Local neighbourhood constituted a key micro-territory made by these participants in focus group 8 and 12 (see Harris and Wyn 2009). It was a space produced through the process of walking from house to house to socialise and share culture, which ultimately formed a robust ‘person-place bond’ (Seamon 1979). It was a demarcated zone through which they traversed and negotiated pathways to encounter other young people while avoiding unsafe areas (see Issifova 2015, Gough and Franch 2005). This served to mutually reinforce the neighbourhood as locality, which was both the product of, and produced by the rhythms of the micro-territory (see for example Williamson 2016, Seamon 1979).

The members of the migrant community focus group (FG12) were older on average (20-23 years) than those originally conceptualized by Harris and Wyn (2009) as constructing micro-territories of the local. However, they were nonetheless limited in their access to resources like employment or independent means of movement which in turn constrained their occupation of local spaces. Although this was not necessarily the case for the two relatively older men in the group who reported owning cars and engaging in transport mobilities. The discussion however was mostly dominated by the young women in the group who were vocal in their opinions of freedom of movement. This partially reflects their life stage and how they are situated within their particular transitional pathways (see Cieslik and Simpson 2013, White and Wyn 1998). In the case of focus group 12 (see also FG 7, 9), however, restrictions were less age-based and more related to cultural norms governing women’s participation in public life, independence of movement and the availability of employment opportunities (echoed in the research of Green and Singleton 2006). In addition to age as a structural limitation, gender and cultural background shape the presence of these respondents in public, outside places like local neighbourhoods (see Green and Singleton 2006, Bondi and Rose 2003, Dunkley 2004), and hence, their micro-territorialising practice. Consistent with research analysing young women’s traversals of public space, vulnerable femininities seen to be at a heightened risk while in the masculine domain of public space are subject to greater control (see Green and Singleton 2006, Dunkley 2004, Bondi and Rose 2003). This dynamic is especially pronounced for those from conservative cultural backgrounds valuing feminine ‘honour’ and placing the onus on young women themselves to ensure it is maintained (Green and Singleton 2006). The difference for young women in regards to cultural background was clearly present in Zoe’s more laid-back traversals of public space including hanging out with

friends outside during the darkness of evening. Yet both Zoe and Aisha were still acutely aware of personal danger associated with their movement through the public spaces of their neighbourhoods and both were able to exercise personal agencies to make micro-territories of the local in their bounded neighbourhoods.

The following sections will move from respondents' micro-territorialising of neighbourhood places, and focus more specifically on their micro-territorialising practices constructing a range of public places in Shepparton. In some ways, the discrete public localities constructed by the young residents discussed in the following sections were a different form of place than respondents' residential neighbourhoods. Notions of home were realised in different ways, or weakened significantly. This is because the common locus of 'home' is more likely situated within residential neighborhoods (Cuba and Hummon 1993). However, Shepparton was a place constituted by a series of discrete micro-territories variously occupied, policed and traversed by young regional people who were in turn shaped by the social structures that embedded and positioned them in their everyday lives.

Public places

During focus group discussions respondents were prompted to reflect on places of meaning for them in the town. Some referred to a range of different public streetscapes reminiscent of other studies of young people constructing public places (see Gough and Franch 2005, Green and Singleton 2006). There were a series of discrete places, or 'micro-territories', in the town that emerged specifically as places to meet others, to hang-out, or to avoid. Themes emerging during discussion of these localities are presented in the following sub-sections in which respondents' talk concerning non-sanctioned places, the car wash, the mall and the lake are analysed.

Seeking out and occupying appropriate leisure spaces for the young people of this study was sometimes problematic. This is consistent with a suite of research within youth studies documenting young people's tension ridden search for their own space in the towns and cities in which they live (Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 1998, Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000, Matthews et al. 2000). The tension in young people's place-making projects arises from the inherently adult-centric nature of public space. In turn, the presence of young people in such

places can be seen as an infringement (Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 1998), or a 'polluting' defiance of adult authority and control (Matthews et al. 2000). Nonetheless, with a burgeoning sense of independence, young people express a need for 'spatial freedom' and autonomy outside of adult-sanctioned, and private spaces such as the school (Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998). There was a commonly expressed desire among many of the young people of this study to 'carve out' their own place from the range of public spaces available in the town. Yet young people's micro-territories drawn from public places in Shepparton were suffused with controls and surveillance designed to regulate seemingly problematic youthful behaviours (Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Dunkely 2004, Hil and Bessant 1999).

Non-sanctioned public places

As part of the process of 'carving out', and micro-territorialising public spaces as traversable localities for social interaction, a small number of respondents discussed appropriating non-sanctioned public spaces as a means to deliberately subvert the adult gaze. Managing parental surveillance in this way meant avoiding those spaces with potential to afford opportunities to meet and hang out with other young people that were characterized by high degrees of visibility and potential for scrutiny. This ultimately negated the attractiveness of localities such as the skate park, for example, as places to gather (see Matthews et al. 2000). The respondents in the 'Community volunteers, young women' focus group (FG8) negotiated adult surveillance by visiting public spaces to socialize with others in the evening or at night when visibility could be reduced:

> Zoe: my friends and I just hang out at night-time, like we will, we'll usually just go driving, and we'll just go and sit at the lake. You know, my friends work during the day, all have full-time jobs, so, the only time we really can hang out is after dinner…
> Jade: in the town, like, usually, we will, um, we'll drive to the lake, so just drive down like the main drag of the town, and then sit at the lake. Or we'll sit at the netball courts, like up that....
> Cathy (facilitator): McEwan reserve (sporting grounds), around there?

> Zoe: Um, like near Wanganui (secondary school), like near, up there, and we'll just sit down there.
> Cathy (facilitator): so why those places?
> Jade: I don't know, I don't know...(laughs)
> Zoe:...just like cool spots… yeah, I don't know the lake is just a good atmosphere, I don't know why, it's just, its bright, it's not dark...you know, 9 out of 10 times you'll see someone there you know…the netball courts, are like, the only reasons we go to the netball courts is because, like I smoke, my parents know that I smoke, but their families don't know that they do. So we go like, away from their house and sit there, and just, you know, just smoke and chat and catch up... (FG 8 - community volunteers, young women).

Zoe and Jade's discussion was contrary to others who found darkness as a deterrent to being in public places, particularly among women (see Green and Singleton 2006, Sreetheran and Van Den Bosch 2014). Instead, the darkness of the non-sanctioned night-time social space provided a sense of privacy and discretion (see Robinson 2009) that enabled opportunities to socialise, hang-out, or serendipitously encounter other friends. Moving away from the visibility of more mainstream, 'bright', public spaces found at the lake, the netball courts also enabled the members of FG 8 - community volunteers, young women to engage in particular behaviours safe from adult and parental surveillance (see Robinson 2009).

The participants reappropriated certain places in novel, unanticipated ways to engage in precarious, unsanctioned activities (see Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998). It seemed that the attractiveness of clandestine spaces for what might be construed as risky endeavours in the company of others outweighed potential security issues (see for example Dunkley 2004, Robinson 2009) mentioned in the above sections in relation to particular neighbourhoods. The darkness afforded them an opportunity to 'carve out' a space for themselves from within adult-dominated public space (echoed in the research of Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998, Dunkely 2004, Hil and Bessant 1999). Another micro-territory reappropriated from its original form for the purposes of social meetings and 'hanging-out' in a similar manner to the netball courts described above, was the car wash. While visibility,

bright lights, and being under the adult gaze were certainly less of a concern, this territory emerged in several discussions with both men and women.

The car wash

Owning or having access to a car, and being an independent driver, enabled significant opportunities for respondents in this study. As echoed in other research, the importance of this particular resource reflected the regional geographies of the young people in which moving between localities were often defined by distance that could only be traversed by a car (see also Dunkley 2004, Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006). Autonomy and 'spatial freedom' was therefore significantly valued among the respondents (as in Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998). This sentiment certainly emerged among those respondents heavily involved in car culture (specifically focus group 4, although others more peripherally) (see Kenway and Kraack 2006). For this group of participants, driving and maintaining vehicles was important. However, cars for them transcended utilitarian purposes of moving between locales. The members of the 'Car hobbyist friends' focus group (FG4) responded to enquiries on how they liked to spend their free time with explanations of driving around town: Johnno: "…have a bit of a drive, hang out" (FG4). They relished the freedom to move independently within and around the town, traversing local geographies, and embodying materialities through physical movement (see Seamon 1979).

Figure 5 – Image of the car wash, Shepparton

Source: www.googlemaps.com (Streetview)

The appearance of their cars, including cleanliness, as well as various technical or mechanical modifications, were key aspects of focus group 4's hobby. Further, meticulously maintaining their cars provided a means for meeting others and socializing in particular localities. This occurred at the local car wash (see Figure 5) where their socially enacted car-related practices constituted a micro-territorialising practice in which they participated in the making of a discrete locality (Harris and Wyn 2009). While they were not traversing localities by foot (as originally conceptualised by Harris and Wyn 2009), their relationships with local places mediated by carefully maintained cars, served a similar function:

> Cathy (facilitator): so when you socialise, go out, do whatever...?
> Johnno: we're actually a bit more inclined to hang out than, muck around with our cars...
> Travis: ...so we tend to, um... (Inaudible) we normally meet up at the car wash, we'll clean our cars, um, have a bit of a drive, hang out, and go get something to eat. And just relax on a Friday night. As opposed to going clubbing, or something else like that...
> Cathy (facilitator): so the car wash...
> Johnno: yeah, we're just, not really that way inclined...
> Lucy: it's a good meeting point, [Johnno] washes his car for an hour and a half (laughs)…eight times a week…

> Cathy (facilitator): Where do you drive, like in town or...the lake?
> Tom: yeah
> Johnno: Wyndham street (main street in Shepparton CBD)
> Travis: yeah, Wyndham street. (FG 4 - car hobbyist friends, similar discussion in FG8).

While many of the members of focus group 4 had ready access to the relative spatial freedom afforded by car ownership, and were mostly employed full-time in junior positions (as trade apprentices, in a local government workplace, and a young women who did not participate in much of the car related discussion was in secondary school), they did not share the same socially privileged position as the young professionals in focus group 3. With a comparable age range to the young women of focus group 8 (19-20 years), focus group 4's discussions about spending time at the car wash, about driving around town, and spending time in Shepparton's public places to meet others, and socialise, indicated that they were embedded in place, and active micro-territorialisors.

Continuing their discussion about their engagement in car culture in Shepparton, the young men of the 'Car hobbyist friends' focus group (FG4) discussed actively seeking out the quiet, broad streets of the local industrial estate at night to drive their cars unhindered by the public, or the adult gaze. Like the young women in focus group 8, micro-territorialising non-sanctioned places veiled and protected by the low visibility of night-time to engage in risky socialites (see Robinson 2009), the young men of focus group 4 took part in a similar practice. However, alluding to their engagement in illegal, dangerous driving, the participants were uncomfortable elucidating at length. No doubt this reluctance was related to the adult gaze imposed by my presence as the facilitator:

> Travis: Industrial estate is alright at night-time, no people around, get away with some stuff back there…
> Johnno: Shut up [Travis] Jesus! (laughs).
> Cathy (facilitator): Ok, so there are some parts of town that are quiet enough so that you can…?
> Tom: let loose, let loose as you say … (FG 4 - car hobbyist friends).

This driving practice was a component of their place-making activities, as well as broader performances of masculinities, in particular, risk-taking masculinities (echoed in the research of Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006, Joelsson 2015, Walker 1998). In addition to the greater visibility of the car wash in which more conventional, albeit valued, practices could take place such as socialising and car maintenance, these more risky, non-sanctioned practices could only be enacted in more obscured, unpopulated localities in the dark of night. Risky driving practices as described above constitute a clear example of spectacularised youthful practice (see Kraack and Kenway 2002), but they also comprise part of a broader, embedded car culture that includes more mundane, everyday practices such as car maintenance (see White and Wyn 2004, Roberts 2011), as well as the performance of rural, working-class masculinities (see Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006).

It is worth noting that Travis and Johnno's reference to the peopleless, quiet, night-time spaces of Shepparton's streets was not tinged with fear or anxiety as so often underscored young women's discussions about darkness and place. This comfort and confidence reflected the gendered division that occurred in respondents' micro-territorialising practice. That is, young women were more likely to express fear and anxiety (although not always) and curtail their movements accordingly. By contrast, Travis and Johnno clearly felt at home, untouched by dangers associated with the night, and in control driving their cars in these night-time spaces (consistent with Gough and Franch 2005 who found working-class young men have greater spatial freedom than other groups). In addition to the gendering of night-time spaces, like Zoe and Jade in focus group 8, anxieties related to darkness seemed to be mitigated when engaging in risk-taking behaviour, or potentially illicit activities such as smoking or dangerous driving. These dimensions are implied in focus group 4's micro-territorialising place-making projects in Shepparton. Therefore, while the members of focus group 4 engaged in the legitimised, officially-sanctioned practices associated with localities like the car wash, their micro-territorialising practice emerged in their use of the space as an opportunity to meet others, to socialise, and engage in their hobby with others.

The young women in focus group 8 also discussed car culture in the town, noting young men that they knew visited the car-wash as a social experience. They also defended against perceptions that the young men engage in dangerous, posturing driving behaviour:

> Zoe: a lot of boys drive, if they're not driving they'll be at the skate park...
> Jade: or the car wash, you get a lot of guys like...
> Zoe: yeah, either that, or they drive out to Bunnings when it's closed, and just sit in...
> Jade: yeah...and Riverside (Plaza, Shopping center), they'll go sit there in those places and just take photos of their cars, or they'll sit at the car wash, they won't wash their car, but they'll just...
> Zoe: Oh yeah...but they don't even hoon[12] or anything, and they have that reputation of hooning, like, I have a few friends that go to it. They just sit around and talk about each other's cars, and make fun of each other, like they're boys...
> Jade: yeah, that's all they do! They'll just like, they'll sit there
> Zoe:...like they might rev it up once but they don't skid, they don't do dumb shit when there's people around, like, they're just hanging out, they just want somewhere to hang out and talk and socialize. (FG 8 - community volunteers, young women).

Given that the young men of focus group 4 did allude to engaging in risky, 'hoon' driving behaviour referred to above, it is interesting to note Zoe's choice of expression. While she defends her male friends participating in the local car culture, Zoe does specify that "they don't do dumb shit when there's people around". Therefore, the need to 'carve out' their own local place while subverting the surveilling gaze of adults and parents emerged as a key dynamic in these respondents' micro-territorialising

The gendering of the place-making project was also clear in this instance. While women took part in these discussions, it was young men who reported being active participants as drivers and as car owners. This was consistent with other studies of young working-class men's car cultures (see similar findings in Joelsson 2015, Walker 1998, Kraack and Kenway 2002) in Australia (see Walker 1998, Kraack and Kenway 2002) and in rural places (see Kraack and Kenway 2002, Joelsson 2015). Allusions to risky and illegal behaviour were part of the respondents' performances of masculinities. Working-class masculinities are indelibly linked

[12] 'Hoon' colloquialism referring to dangerous driving behaviour characterized by speeding or street racing and commonly associated with young men

with the operation and maintenance of machines and technologies conceived in terms of power and prowess (see Walker 1998, Joelsson 2015). In turn, public places of operation, for example a public car-park, became important sites for these performances, in addition to more mundane, although no less important activities like meeting others and socialising at the car wash (see Joelsson 2015). The car cultures engaged in by participants of this study were referred to by both male-centric and female-centric focus groups. Both were quick to defend their involvement in what they wanted to assure was a wholesome and mundane hobby. The respondents were keen to distance themselves from a more spectacularised youth subcultures (see Cieslik and Simpson 2013, Roberts 2003, Lumsden 2015) in which young men are demonised as hyper-masculine 'hoons' risking their lives in pursuit of social capital. However, while this particular identity was eschewed, it was clear that some were nonetheless engaging in such practices and demonstrated a more complex, multi-faceted identity which reconciled these different values and behaviours.

For some of the young men of this study, the car wash, as well the lake, the mall and other parts of town during the evening were all constructed and experienced as micro-territories (see Harris and Wyn 2009, see also Harris 2014). These were discrete, demarcated zones carved out of a broader space valued by young people as spaces to socialize, engage in hobbies or meaningful practices in an independent context. Harris and Wyn (2009) argue that needing to walk, by virtue of their youth status and lack of mobility resources, is one dynamic through which young people become uniquely embedded in local place. Yet when moving within and between micro-territories by car, rather than by walking, respondents still engaged in embodied materialities intersecting the localities of the town (see Seamon 1979, Williamson 2016).

Moreover, the lack of ready mobilities imposed by the absence of a personal car did not seem as prominent as conceived in Harris and Wyn's (2009) original conceptualisation. Of course, this was an option entirely denied to the young 15-17 years old's of Harris and Wyn's (2009) study who, irrespective of their access to economic resources, could not independently move by car consistent with age-based laws in Australia. Some respondents owned cars which afforded them greater freedom of movement (for example, the generally older respondents in focus groups 6 and 3). Nonetheless, this freedom of movement within Shepparton, and its satellite commuter belt, did not seem to significantly impact their embeddedness in local place. The need to move about the town by foot, or to rely on others for a ride, was a recent

memory for many young drivers, in particular for the members of focus group 4, 5 and 8. Having recently left secondary school, or in the first few years after compulsory education, those respondents with cars had only recently acquired them. Restrictions associated with driving were still very much present, including ongoing expenses for petrol, insurance, and registration, as well as parental restrictions about when and under what conditions a car could be used (e.g. not too late at night).

The experiential and embodied familiarity (see Tuan 1979, Seamon 1979, Williamson 2016) of physically moving through micro-territories was still present, albeit in a combination of forms. ‘Driving around’ was often less concerned with a need for transportation and more of a spatial practice in and of itself. Such mobilities still served to embed respondents in local place (see Goodwin-Hawkins 2014, Walsh 2012, Bell and Osti 2010). Even if the boundedness of such localities could be extended somewhat, the micro-territories of the car wash, the industrial estate, as well as other non-sanctioned spaces, respondents still made these places when they traversed and occupied them on foot or by car to engage in social action. In a similar fashion, a series of micro-territories emerged as key sites of meaning. Beginning with ‘the lake’, these will be investigated in more depth in the following sections.

The lake

The lake is a highly visible public space comprising an extensive park and lake that is located on a major motor thoroughfare in Shepparton (see Figure 6, and Figure 4). It is utilized by a cross-section of the community; as a day-time spot for families and groups, and at night-time for young men and women to meet, park cars and socialize. The surrounding parkland has recently been redeveloped as a multi-purpose recreation space including green park space, a site for watersports, walking tracks, BBQ and picnic amenities, skate park, sporting and playground facilities. During discussion soliciting opinions and experiences of different places to ‘hang-out’, ‘the lake’ emerged as a prominent and visible public space during focus groups. However, perspectives differed substantially from positive, to highly negative. The visibility of the lake, in its central position by the main highway through town, was a source of positive place attachment for many. This was related to aesthetic qualities, as well as the presence of others engaging in social activity.

When asked about public spaces that they enjoyed, or shared positive associations with, the members of the older professionals focus group (FG3) were quick to respond with descriptions of the natural environment at the lake and the nearby river (see Rye 2006). This was consistent with literature exploring rural residents' place attachment, in which aesthetically pleasing environmental surrounds constitute key symbolic meanings (Benson and Jackson 2012). However, studies focusing more specifically on youth in the context of regional place tend to report complex dimensions extending beyond aesthetic appreciation. The need to 'carve out' (as in Matthews, Limb and Percy-Smith 1998) and micro-terriorialise (Harris and Wyn 2009) local place in rural and regional towns emerges as a stronger dynamic in place-making projects among young regional people.

Figure 6 – Image of the lake and surrounds, Shepparton

Source: http://www.courtyardmotorinn.com.au/shepparton-local-area/

While Rye (2006) found that new comers, or more recent arrivals were more likely to extol the aesthetic components of place, and longer-term residents were less inclined to cite this, such a trend was less pronounced in this study. Discussion in focus groups were between long-term residents focusing on aesthetic features, and the recent improvement works completed at the lake.

> Hannah: I think we have beautiful walking tracks
> Ellie: yeah
> Hannah: like around the lake and the rivers. And they've spent a lot of money doing the lake up great, and I think initially everyone was like no, don't spend the money on that, how can you improve it. But it does get a lot more tourists coming through and actually stopping there and having bbq's and, so I think it’s a good improvement
> Ellie: and in summer the lake thrives, there are so many people there…
> Penny: um I love driving past the lake, maybe not in this (cold) weather, but in summer and spring, you drive past the lake between like 5(pm) and like dusk or sometime, and you've got different types of cultures and ethnic groups playing soccer over here, and playing with their children over there and doing their thing. And I drive past that and it always brings a smile to my face seeing it, different cultures playing, people set up volleyball nets and its massive there... (FG 3 - older professionals, see also FG4 and 5 for a similar discussion).

Penny indicated experiencing the park and lake precinct by observing from afar without participating more personally in the activities she described witnessing from her car. The high degree of visibility that characterised the lake was demonstrated here. Penny enjoyed an abstract idea of the lake as a harmonious, multicultural and family-orientated place, but did not necessarily take part herself. Penny’s explanation was also indicative of older respondents (the age range of FG3 was 23-28 years) who seemed less engaged in micro-territorialising of spaces like the lake, insofar as they tended to report spending less time actually ‘hanging out’ in the public places of Shepparton. In this sense, the lake did not clearly constitute a micro-territory for the members of the older professionals focus group (FG3), but was more an idealized locale held apart. This was consistent with their age-based non-participation in micro-territorialising more generally, as outlined earlier.

Members of other focus groups did experience spatial embeddedness within micro-territories, and were more likely to be actively engaged place-makers in the lake area. This process was demonstrated during a discussion in the 'Migrant community' focus group (FG12). For members of this group, age-based social structures seemed to have less of an impact on their micro-territorialising practices than other factors such as cultural background and gender. The young Afghani women in this group valued the opportunity to spend time outside at the lake on a sunny afternoon and to socialise or meet others in a culturally safe and familiar space:

> Mariam: Yeah, [the] Shepp lake is really famous, you can go there (laughs) you can walk around the lake and take your family, take your friends
> Aisha: every weekend there's gathering, Afghanis gathering around, you know, you can go and join them
> Mariam: and you can see the whole town in there! (Laughs). (FG 12 - migrant community group).

With less freedom of independent movement within the town, these participants engaged in active micro-territorialising of this public locality. Meeting friends outside of the safety of their home neighbourhood in the darkness of the evening was not necessarily an option for these young Afghani women. It is important to note that the young men in the group were not very active in this particular part of the broader discussion. With more opportunity to freely traverse public places, it is possible they would have had an alternative perspective of the lake. Still, it is possible that the visibility and accessibility of the lake described by Penny in focus group 3 was part of its attractiveness as a place to socialise for many. While Aisha and Mariam's discussion is not necessarily surprising, and has certainly been canvassed in literature dedicated to the topic (see Wagner and Peters 2014, Green and Singleton 2006), it highlights their spatial embeddedness and micro-territorialising projects. This also supports my assertion that social marginalisation based on not just youth-status, but also cultural background and gender plays a role in their place-making practice. With an age range of 20-23 years, the members of focus group 12 were not the oldest focus group, but still were older than Harris and Wyn's (2009) original participants. Some members of this group, particularly the young women, still found themselves without independent means to move around, and talked about experiencing restrictions based on conservative cultural expectations, gender norms, and notions of vulnerable femininities. They were thus able to actively construct place

within the parameters in which they lived: by walking short distances across and within certain localities, making social, cultural and familial places as they went. In this way, the micro-territory of the lake was collectively co-produced by this section of the community, for whom it became a positive space of social participation.

By contrast, members of focus group 8 more explicitly characterised public visibility and surveillance as forms of spatial constraint (consistent with Green and Singleton 2006, Spierings, van Melik and van Aalst 2016, Wagner and Peters 2014):

> Sara:...no I wouldn't (go out very much). My parents would be like, nup, you're not going out, sit at home, you're going out once a month (laughs)…
> Dleen: yeah, ok...because the community is so close together, everyone feels like they're your parents. This is like for the Iraqi community, so they think that you have to be perfect...
> Noora: so like, because like this connects with culture as well. And like the culture here (in Shepparton) is like really strong... in Shepp it's different, like, we need to go in a group of girls shopping, so people can't talk about one or two girls. Do you know what I mean? Like, people can't judge one or two. There like, you have the group, you can't talk about a whole group of girls. They all come, like, a family, from good families
> Dleen: because they expect girls, if they're going out alone, like at a young age, it means they're going to go do something bad, like drugs (laughs).
> Sara: but we've sorta broken that barrier...
> Tota:...we don't care anymore...like before, if we would go out, everyone would be like 'oh my gosh, the lady saw us going out, what are we going to do', and now it’s just, whatever, whatever…
> Sara: whatever!
> Noora: we're almost 20 years old! (FG 8 - community volunteers, young women).

These young women from Shepparton's Iraqi community acknowledged how their socially conservative cultural and religious backgrounds shaped their movements as young women within and throughout public spaces of Shepparton (see Green and Singleton 2006, Spierings, van Melik and van Aalst 2016). Yet the discussion also illustrated the respondents' increasing sense of independence, and their 'emerging adulthoods' (although two respondents were 18, 19 years old respectively, two were both 16 years old) (see Arnett 2004). After explaining how their access to public spaces was discouraged by the disapproving gaze of their local community, who all "feel like they're your parents", there was a prevarication that did not emerge in other focus groups conducted in Shepparton's migrant community. Perhaps sharing a more established presence in the broader regional community (Afghani migration to Shepparton is more recent than Iraqi migration flows, see ABS 2006) has shaped these young women's relationships with the public localities in Shepparton, as well as their negotiation of sometimes restrictive cultural norms and behavioural expectations (see Green and Singleton 2006). Interestingly, despite the palpable frustration of the young women of focus group 9, they successfully found ways to subvert some of these constraints (see Wagner and Peters 2014). For example, organising outings with other female friends to innocuous, safe destinations, such as the mall. This was one means through which they could assert personal agencies, and autonomously traverse Shepparton's public spaces. In addition to youth-status then, gender, as well as cultural background, were social structures that served to embed these young participants in particular, and discrete micro-territories.

A third perspective on the lake was less positive in approach and, as was an underlying theme in discussions of other public places, focused on questions of safety and security. Following on from discussions (detailed in the first section of this chapter) about neighbourhoods, encountering violence and danger at the lake, and the surrounding areas, was a concern for some participants (see Green and Singleton 2006, Robinson 2009). In the context of recreational spaces, there was some disagreement among the members of focus group 11 in regards to optimal swimming locations:

> Ryan: or you can just swim in the lake, that's what we do
> Clara: Yuk! that's disgusting!
> Austin: ahh, the river's better
> Ryan: nah, its good
> Clara: swimming in the lake?

> Ryan: do you wanna know how fun it is?
> Clara: do you wanna know how fucking disgusting it is?
> Austin: or you can go to the river
> Dom: the river! That's even worse bro!
> Bree: yeah, you'll get stabbed down there!
> Ryan: there's like a Tarzan swing down there, you just go and chuck flips and stuff
> Clara: wait till' you impale yourself on a stick
> Bree: or a needle. (FG 11 – vocational students).

The muddy, reedy water of the lake, or the nearby Murray River were variously utilized for boating recreation, fishing and for swimming (see figures 6 and 4). These sometimes quite secluded areas near to the town come to represent more than the natural environment. While one half of the lake precinct is situated next to a busy highway, another significant section is much less visible and located on a quiet no-through road separating the lake area from the river. Various locations closer to the river are quiet, out-of-the-way spaces attractive for rough sleepers. Other activities like drug-taking and alcohol consumption take place out of the visible public locales within the town proper (Robinson 2009). The division among the members of focus group 11 concerning 'the river' or 'the lake' as a leisure space alludes to this association with those obscured, non-normative practices.

The conversation above is revealing of those gendered dynamics concerning young people's perceptions of security in public places as well (see Green and Singleton 2006, Bondi and Rose 2003). Somewhat reflective of the discussions analysed in the previous paragraphs, and consistent with other research on young women and perceptions of security in public places (Bondi and Rose 2003), it is the young women's voices that were most vehement in their disavowal of the space. However, young men were also part of this conversation, and Ryan indicates that he did not share the others' fears and is defensive of the river as a leisure space. While this is consistent with Gough and Franch's (2005) finding that low socio-economic young men report the greatest levels of spatial freedom when compared with their female counterparts, it is noteworthy that other young men in this conversation were in agreement that the river was a not a safe space as well. This suggests that perceptions of safety and spatial autonomy are not always gendered in a predictable way. While carving out their own sense of space and avoiding the parental gaze in out of the way places was important, a sense

of security and safety were central components in the young respondents' place-making practice (see Matthews et al. 2000, Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000).

The mall

The central business district in Shepparton is dominated by a pedestrian shopping precinct widely known, and referred to, as 'the mall' (see figures 7 and 4). This will be the final 'micro-territory of the local' (Harris and Wyn 2009) considered in this chapter. Like the lake, the mall is both a public, and a highly visible, space. However, like the lake, at certain times of the day, and in certain areas, the mall transforms into a more obscured, concealed locality. Somewhat more so than the lake, and in addition to its commercial function, the mall was a magnet for young people of varying ages. The mall was constructed by most focus groups as a somewhat risky public locality for hanging-out, socialising and shopping. A prominent type of locality in literature interrogating intersections between youthfulness and place, the mall is a place that has been described as a unique, demarcated, semi-public area (Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000, Matthews et al. 2000, Matthews et al. 1998). The mall is a place that represents consumerist enterprise, but also provides young people opportunities to meet, socialise and hang-out (Pyyry 2016). In this space, they can move about with relative independence within a bounded locality and make autonomous choices in regards to how they spend their time in relative safety. It is accessible, and thus attractive, for young people in particular, while being safer than other public areas, like for example, the lake (see Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000, Matthews et al. 2000). In other words, 'deeply embedded' in the discrete locality of the mall, young people re-appropriate the mall as place to hang-out, serendipitously meet others, and spend time (see Pyyry 2016). It is in this form that the young people in this study constructed the mall, and engaged in micro-territorialising to make a visible, public, although contested space within Shepparton.

Figure 7 – Image of Maude Street Mall, Shepparton

Source: http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bushtelegraph/shepparton-mall/4751704

Consistent with Matthews and colleagues (2000, Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000), the respondents of this study conceived the mall as a place to shop, as well as to hang-out, to socialize with their peer-group or to meet up with young people from other schools (see also Pyyry 2016, Nairn, Panelli and McCormack 2003):

> Zoe: Yeah, like, you'd catch up with, you all meet at the Notre (Dame, Catholic high school) bus stop, and then, you know, you'd have your friends from Shepp High (secondary school), Notre, Mooroopna (secondary school), like all there and that like the one place to just hang out with your friends outside of school.
> Jade: Well, yeah, when we were growing up, there were groups of us, like, we'd just come down….
> Zoe: there'd be hanging out with friends...or go to Timeout[13] and play pool…
> Jade: ...yeah, you'd go and get some chips from Maccas[14] and then just sit, and talk

[13] 'Timeout' is a local arcade within the mall, and is one of few legitimized 'hang-out' spaces for young people that is well patronized
[14] McDonalds fast food restaurant

> Zoe:...yeah and talk for ages...yeah. (FG 8 - community volunteers, young women, see also FG4 and 9 for similar discussion).

As discussed in several focus groups, respondents' constructions of the mall in Shepparton reflected the research of Vanderbeck and Johnson (2000, Matthews et al. 2000). These researchers found shopping malls to be bounded localities reappropriated from their primary adult-centric, commercial origins by young people as a place to socialise and hang-out. Traversing the locality by foot and embedding themselves in material spaces, the young women of focus group 8 engaged in classic micro-territorialising as conceived by Harris and Wyn (2009). As noted in earlier sections, neither member of focus group 8 had ready access to a car, nor independent means to move throughout the extended localities of the town. Zoe was working part-time in retail at the time of the focus group, while Jade was in her final year of high school. As such, a nearby bus stop became a meeting point, and the mall represented a geographically central space in which to meet other young people who were similarly spatially embedded in the dispersed secondary school localities (of 'Shepp high', 'Notre (Dame)', 'Mooroopna' representing three secondary schools). This was a space that was accessible to them by bus and in which they could move about with relative independence. They could be assured of meeting others in the same after-school-period from different secondary schools who would be there for the same reasons. As such, this was a space these young women sought out and valued as meaningful places for social action.

The mall was not wholly constructed in such positive terms by other respondents. For some, the mall was as an outdoor shopping precinct characterised, at times, by danger and insecurity. As for certain neighbourhoods discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the mall was perceived in some quarters as unsafe in a similar fashion to parts of the lake (see Harris 2014, McGrellis 2005). It is pertinent to note that the enclosed shopping malls with heating/cooling, artificial lighting, late-opening hours and security guards referred to in Vanderbeck and Johnson (2000) and Metthews et al. (2000)'s research are somewhat different to the open pedestrian precinct in Shepparton. In many of its physical features, the area shares more similarity with a public street, with little added security, lighting or inside comforts particularly in the evening when businesses closed. This was particularly salient considering there was also no through traffic, meaning that when businesses closed and shoppers went home, the mall lost its convivial atmosphere. In the evening and at night, the

mall in Shepparton had a reputation as a thoroughfare for nefarious individuals engaging in anti-social behaviours.

Changes to micro-territories after dark was a common theme among the participants discussing public places, neighbourhoods as well as the mall (see Robinson 2009, Sreetheran and Van Den Bosch 2014). For example, Mia from the 'Local tertiary students, A' focus group (FG1) did not relate her experiences in personal terms, but rather adopted the popular narrative of delinquent young people in need of control (see Kraack and Kenway 2002): Mia: "you have like all these people down the street in their school uniform at like 7o'clock as night, it's just like, go home, go tell your parents what you's are doing." (Mia, FG 1 - local tertiary students A). Similarly, the members of the focus group 10 agreed on changes to public spaces after dark, and identified the mall as a salient example:

> Frank: during the day, it's the mall is pretty good... It's fun during the day but probably wouldn't want to walk there at night…
> Lucas: and it can be uncomfortable when you're by yourself.
> Emma: yeah.
> Cathy (facilitator): at night, or...?
> Frank: even in the evening as the shops are closing, it's dead! and...
> Michael: I know friends that have gone walking down the mall, to get to, because there's sorta like clubs near the mall, like its walking distance. And like men have harassed them, and done all kinds of things, as they're walking down the, it's like, ohhhh, make sure you have group of friends... (FG 10 - support group).

Green and Singleton (2006) shared similar conclusions in their research about young women's relationships with public space. For them, anxiety was related to being outside, and darkness, in particular, was linked with perceptions of "men out of control" among other fears (see Green and Singleton 2006: 860). Safety could only be achieved by moving about in groups to mitigate potential victimisation. In this research, however, the conversation above involved both men and women, and the most prominent voices are young white, working-class LBGTI males. The strict gendering identified in similar research (Green and Singleton 2006, Dunkley 2005, Gough and Franch 2005) is less prominent here. Instead, spatial

exclusion was experienced and associated with having diverse gender and sexual orientations (consistent with Hubbard, Gorman-Murray and Nash 2015, Skeggs 1999).

Experiences of social marginalisation, associated with sexuality and gender, as well as social class, served to exclude many members of focus group 10 from some of the more legitimised, adult-centric localities of the town. While respondents like Michael and Ruby had cars, Michael talked about spending time picking up others who did not have cars and driving friends around. These respondents, although sharing a more privileged position than others, seemed to engage in youthful place-making, but this was alongside more adult projects. On the whole, the members of focus group 10 experienced exclusion and fear related to their personal security and this impacted their place-making practices in the public places of the Shepparton like the mall (consistent with Hubbard, Gorman-Murray and Nash 2015).

These fears related to personal security did not seem to apply across the entirety of the town, as these participants were actively involved in a thriving LBGTI community that took part in regular awareness events. Assumptions that rural places are more dangerous or less open than urban spaces did not seem to be borne out (echoing the findings of Kazyak 2011). Kazyak (2011) concluded that part of the reason LBGTI rural residents may not be excluded to the degree expected was related to the relatively powerful positions as white, middle-class, established members of the community who took part in that particular study. This dynamic was not necessarily shared by the members of focus group 10 (or other LBGTI respondents in other focus groups), although most in the group reported an Anglo-Australian cultural background. Rather, the young people in this group reflexively negotiated their use of public places, determining those in which they were comfortable expressing non-normative gender identities, and those where they deemed this less prudent, such as in the mall in the evening (see Gray 2007). This was consistent with the experiences of many others in the study, who associated Shepparton's night-time spaces, such as the lake, and the mall, with danger and nefarious others. As Michael in focus group 10 noted, some of the danger could be mitigated with a group of friends - an approach practised by others (see discussions in FG 9) for similar reasons.

As discussed in previous sections, the members of focus group 3 were perhaps the most socially advantaged members of the study. This influenced their micro-territorialising practices. Reflecting their relative disembeddedness from local place, the mall constituted a

place for the realisation of practical ends more than a space to hang-out. On the whole, a similar trend of othering 'disruptive young people' in public space (as discussed in FG1, also referenced in FG8) emerged. Most members of focus group 3 reported not regularly frequenting the space, nor finding it appealing to spend time there:

> Lily: I only go to the mall if I have to, I think, there's nothing exciting, so only if you have something specific to shop for, then you will be going.
> Liz: it's sort of like, I know in school holidays and after school and that, you always have that young groups of kids handing out with their skate boards and their bikes or, just smoking and...
> Ellie: loitering around
> Liz: yeah, it doesn't have a nice vibe
> Lily: and the car parking's not amazing there too, it's busy
> Liz: it's so painful
> Penny: …. Yeah, I can't remember the last time I was at the mall
> Hannah: I never go into the mall, I was, when they bought, like when they built Riverside[15], close to where my home is, so...
> Caleb: that's it, so they've built different little areas...
> Hannah: I can't remember the last time I was in central (Shepparton, the location of the mall)
> Caleb:...so people from the north will focus on the north, and people form the south will focus on the south and it's actually separated everyone out, it made people pick a side! (FG 3 - older professionals).

The members of focus group 3 discussed the mall along with other shopping precincts in Shepparton in utilitarian terms. Here they differed from some of the young members of other focus groups (for example discussions in FG8, FG9, FG4). The mall was primarily a place for shopping and for purchasing items. It was judged in terms of convenience of access, such as the ready availability of parking. In general, there was "nothing exciting" for them there. For these participants, 'excitement', socialising and meeting others could be found in other

[15] Riverside plaza is a competing, smaller shopping mall in the south end of town

localities. This group, as well as some of the older professional respondents in other focus groups such as FG6, could enjoy ready access to adult-centric spaces, such as restaurants, nightclubs or pubs. They had already passed some of those key transitional phases (such as independent living, full-time employment, see White and Wyn 1998, Cote and Bynner 2008), as well as having greater access to those resources allowing to them access to those spaces (see Matthews et al. 2000). As such, the members of focus group 3 did not experience the age-based structural mechanisms that were a factor in the lives of younger respondents, and as such, were not emplaced in public spaces like the mall or the lake in the same way. However, similar gendered and classed experiences shaped their movement in public places, with perceptions of danger (see Robinson 2009) and a focus on utilitarian purposes remaining important. These respondents comprised the consumer group targeted by these shopping precincts, and therefore were less likely to micro-territorialise such spaces in the same ways younger respondents were able to (see Harris and Wyn 2009).

Consistent with Harris and Wyn (2009), the mall did emerge as a 'micro-territory of the local' among younger participants who experienced greater degrees of material emplacement in Shepparton's public spaces. It was a relatively discrete public space variously occupied and constructed by the young people who chose to go there. Although often not dedicated consumers themselves, the mall constituted a valuable locale for young respondents to meet others and socialise, as well as serving as a conduit for global youth cultures representing values and meanings beyond respondents' everyday lives (Matthews et al. 2000). It was a space that was not associated with any one group, but was attended by a myriad of young people across a range of age-groups and backgrounds. Relatively central and convenient to a range of businesses, utilities and services in Shepparton, the mall was accessible to those experiencing age-based constraints on their physical movements and access to resources. However, limitations on movement were nonetheless experienced, roughly along the lines of gender and differed depending on the time of day. Perceptions of danger and insecurity, particularly after dark when the place changed from a convivial locality for serendipitous social interaction, to an unfamiliar, anti-social and dangerous territory, also emerged in clear ways. Nonetheless, the mall was a popular locale and constituted a busy and important micro-territory for the young people of this study (see Harris 2014, Harris and Wyn 2009).

Conclusion

The young respondents' discussion of discrete localities within their towns explicated a key mechanism in their broader place-making projects. These demarcated zones constituted a range of building blocks that informed their own versions of the town, and were thoroughly emergent within everyday lives lived in Shepparton. Harris and Wyn's (2009) 'micro-territories of the local' was a key analytical concept, aiding the exploration of respondents' construction of particular places. Young people's unique emplacement was complicated by the shaping influences of social class, gender, and cultural background. Their simultaneous experience of relative freedoms enabling them to readily traverse locales and construct diverse geographies across town was mediated by these structural influences. The respondents' micro-territorialising projects were characteristic of their relatively powerful, or more socially marginalised, structural positions. Those with greater degrees of power and social status in the town tended to exhibit less of the spatial embeddedness upon which these micro-territorialising projects were contingent. Public spaces within the town, such as the mall, the lake and the car wash, as well as different, distinct residential neighbourhoods, were extensively debated and defined by the participants. Demarcating 'micro-territories' in this way, and in such rich detail, demonstrated a vital place-making mechanism. It revealed the unique positioning of young people and their role constructing regional locales and their broader place-making projects. More affective, emotive connections and aversions to place played a key role (though this is explored in more detail in previous chapters), and circulating reputations are engaged with as part of micro-territorialising practices. The multiple strands of the young peoples place-making merged together in subtle, nuanced ways to construct places of meaning and places of avoidance within the context of mobilities, cultural diversity and labour insecurity.

The following chapter continues the analysis of young regional people's place-making projects in Shepparton. I move on from exploring respondents' micro-territorialising practices to focus on their engagement in place-making through digitally mediated socialites. By analysing place-making through the lens of social media technologies attention can be drawn to the role spatially embedded socialites that are digitally mediated play in place-making projects. In this analysis, there is less of an emphasis on expressive discursive

constructions of the town, or its constituent localities, and instead a greater focus on those socialites that ultimately mediate relationships with place, both materially and in mediated contexts.

Chapter 7: Making Shepparton through the lens of social media technologies

In this final analysis chapter, I examine young regional people's place-making projects by shifting the analytical gaze towards digitally mediated practices that serve to construct respondents' everyday places. This chapter adds further insight into various themes that have been explored in previous chapters. The role of more visceral, embodied relations with place emerge again, as do more practice-based constructions of place. Mobilities are implied in the eminently transportable nature of social media technologies, and the use of digital media to construct micro-territories is also apparent. Accounting for social media technologies in this analysis of youthful place-making also provides new insights into these areas. It illustrates the socio-spatial malleability that such technologies enable, as well as the role this plays in shaping how young people represent themselves and maintain key social relationships online. Place-making through the lens of social media technologies offers an additional perspective on this everyday, backgrounded social process.

Another facet of this chapter is the 'spectre of globalisation' (Cieslik and Simpson 2013) which underpins place-making in contemporary society. A focus on social media technologies become, in many ways, an opportunity to explore and clarify the shrinking, increasingly accessible world of information and opportunities that globalisation brings. Social media technologies have been the pivot point of a range of research agendas in youth studies, combining accounts of social change with the 'transformative' capacity of technologies to transmit information across cultural, geographic and social boundaries (see Cieslik and Simpson 2013). The rhetoric of social change, especially as it pertains to young people living in increasingly globalised regional towns, represents an opportunity to investigate the role social media technologies have in everyday places. Place-making practice mediated by social media technologies comes to represent one, of the three perspectives analysed in this thesis. This chapter will address the third research aim outlined in chapter four and clarify young people's place-making in Shepparton using the lens of social media technology use.

The chapter contains three main sections. First, examples of how young participants talk about bridging distances using digital media, and collapsing geographies online are

presented. This section considers sociality as a key motivator for going online among the young respondents. The respondents almost exclusively attributed their habitual and intimate virtual forays to some form of spatially embedded social action. The second section of the chapter explores the range of online practices discussed by respondents, and as analysed in chapter 5, these are considered as digitally mediated reflections of ultimately place-based practices. The construction of micro-territory-like localities is also explored as they are realised through social media technologies. Further, respondents' explanations of their traversal of proximate and distant geographies across a variety of digital affordances are explored. The final section explores how young people express themselves, and their embodied relationships with place, by producing and distributing images online. While shaped to some degree by age-based restrictions (in the manner of micro-territorialising practice explored in chapter six), the posting and sharing of images such as 'selfies' emerges as a key form of mediated place-making practice which enables young people to manage broader expectations about embodied identity.

Materially embedded sociality

Young people's online sociality tends to be materially embedded in their offline networks. Respondents' online interactions typically involved key social and familial relationships developed in their proximate material environments, and thus uncritically extended a range of everyday interactions with these known interlocutors into the online sphere. In the ways the young people talked about micro-territorialising by meeting their friends in the mall or at the car wash for instance, sociality was key for digitally mediated place-making. The convenience of being able to contact others at opportune times and places was cited by many respondents as a major advantage of mediating geographically embedded and proximate relationships in this way. Entertainment, humour and diversion were others. Aside from these motivations, the overwhelming majority of respondents were eager to talk about their appropriation of a constellation of social media affordances into their everyday lives (see Madianou and Miller 2012 on 'polymedia'). As conceptualised by Madianou and Miller (2012), it was affordance-based reasoning in regards to their use of particular devices, platforms, or applications. Choices were reflective of the young people's needs and desires in terms of online sociality, virtual representation, and the autonomy to engage at a time and place of their choosing. Participants adopted and utilised different devices and platforms in a multi-faceted way that was consistent with this aspect of polymedia (Madianou and Miller

2012). Participants were interested in exploing and examining their own complex use in detail. The mediated nature of sociality emerged as a key component of respondents' broader social lives that served to ultimately further embed them in place. This first section outlines the various ways respondents discussed their online forays, and considers the place-making dimensions that arose in their reported social media technology use.

Michael from focus group 10 neatly encapsulated the implicit spatial embeddedness of sociality traversing online and offline. He describes various affordances, in the form of making voice calls to friends, hanging out with others and retreating to the more removed environment of online chats and 'inboxing':

> Michael: I like both (online and face-to-face interaction). Like, I love ringing up people, chillin' stuff, and doing stuff together. Then again, when I'm not in the mood to do shit, I'll just be like, ohhh yeahhh, how you doin'? Like I'll talk to anyone and everyone, like if you inbox me, or like I see it and I'll be like, hey! I haven't spoken to you for a while. (Michael, FG 10 - support group).

On the other hand, some participants were very succinct when invited to opine on the role of socially mediating technologies in everyday lives: Lily: "Facebook or social media is a tool to get to that person, to see them, so..." (Lily, FG 3 - older professional). For Michael and Lily, as well as others in their respective focus groups, online spaces and social media represented key affordances relating to micro-social organisation. In this particular instance, social technologies were a means to an end and that was face-to-face meetings with close, intimate friends.

Here the spatial embeddedness of the participants' use was demonstrated in clear and unequivocal terms. The transcendent dis-embeddedness described (see for example Takahashi 2010, Zhao 2006, Gross 2007) or anticipated by other researchers (see Valentine and Holloway 2001, Sreekumar 2007, Stillman et al. 2010, Awan and Gauntlett 2013) was not realised here. Problems accessing technologies such as smartphones, computers, or the internet, owing to geographic isolation or socio-economic barriers (Willis and Tranter 2006), did not emerge during focus groups either. To some extent, this could be due to the fact that

respondents were not prompted to reflect on access issues, or that the focus group context discouraged some respondents from raising such issues. Nonetheless, it suggests a need to more critically evaluate the idea of access within broader discourses that portray rural and regional places as static, isolationist and a-mobile (see Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009). With stereotypes of rural residents disadvantaged by geographic isolation (see Geldens 2007, Pritchard and McManus 2000, Rye 2006, Hogan 2005), it is certainly tempting to posit digital communication technologies as a panacea to such isolation. What emerged during the focus group discussions, however, demonstrated a much more complex relationship between young digital technology users and material place. Crucially, this relationship cannot be simplistically rendered in deterministic terms, but rather was reflective of everyday, mundane, and ultimately, spatially embedded socialities.

In relation to other deterministic discourses which conceive an “unfocused anxiety” in the context of the intimate incorporation of social media technologies in everyday lives (Bell 2008), on the whole the young participants indicated a comfortable familiarity with social technologies that they used regularly. Perhaps more reminiscent of moralising discourses espoused by adults and directed at young people in particular, it is unsurprising that the young people themselves mostly did not reproduce moral panic narratives. This eschewal of moral panics is identified in previous chapters on more material and discursive place-making practices. Consistent with boyd (2014), this is because, for the most part, the young people of this study had grown up in a technology-saturated environment where the intimate incorporation of devices into everyday lives has been taken as a given. There is scarce opportunity to nostalgically pine for a ‘lost’ technology free past. In this same vein, articulating responses to questions about their devices were sometimes difficult for respondents. An intimate, ever-present item, it was difficult to direct respondents’ critical gaze towards their devices. This spoke to the uncritical, rarely reflected upon, mundane position technologies, such as smartphones, had in everyday lives.

In terms of affordances, sites such as *Facebook*, *Whatsapp* or *Viber* were deemed essential for those micro-social organisational capabilities. For the members of focus group 7, engaging in group-chats on *Viber*, was described as a key means to maintain contact, to organise social events, to share items sourced online and to enthusiastically interact with others similar to them:

> Ahmed: so I guess whoever starts it on the day, so if someone starts texting on Viber, and everyone just going to text back and it's going to drag along all day, and you've just gotta keep updating…
> Omar: it is convenience though, and it is easy, um...
> Ahmed:...like the most thing I think we use is that group chat
> Ayaan: yeah…
> Jamir:...yeah, pretty much, like, at 4 o'clock in the morning if you text, I think someone would reply (laughs)
> Omar: I wake up having about 240 messages between…
> Ahmed: and that's only between like 6 people?
> Omar: yeah, 6 people... (FG 7 - religious youth group, young men).

Like others, these participants talked about a revolving conversation held between a small group of male friends, all living in the same neighbourhood, sharing similar ages and backgrounds. They described a pleasure in the intimacy, ease and familiarity of these extensive group chats. There was a discernible sense of exclusivity and security knowing that this was a space just for them that others could not access. Also demonstrated during discussion in the 'Religious youth group, young women' focus group (FG9), this supported boyd's (2014, see also Livingstone 2009, Gibian 2003) argument that online spaces constitute a space away from adult control and surveillance, and also in this case, away from the surveilling gaze of a conservative migrant community (Green and Singleton 2006). In a sense, they are 'carving out a space for themselves' and micro-territorialising a discrete online space for themselves. Here, places constructed along cultural, social and familial markers were made by the young men and women across the focus groups (FG7, 9 and 12) recruited from the local migrant community. These connections were reflected online in a range of ways (see Gibian 2003). This was an opportunity appreciated by the young men of focus group 7 in particular, who reported relatively heavy use, especially when it came to text-based group-chat, as well as image sharing, or exchange of humorous and meaningful symbolic items, for instance, memes, sourced online.

More micro-level social organisation, contacting proximate others and arranging face-to-face meet-ups was a key social media technology affordance for many, including the members of focus group 2:

> Jayden: but also, a lot of the time, it might just be - phone call, come around. Something like that and they'll come over
> Sophie: I think, I use social media mostly to contact my friends that are in Shepparton, mainly. Or just texting, you know how you tag people in videos and stuff like that. Probably people you hang around with the most, and you see the most, and you have bonds with and stuff. Probably, yeah. (FG 2 - local tertiary students B).

While the potential for collapsing geographic boundaries was often the first ‘benefit’ young respondents acknowledged, in most instances it emerged during discussion that regular, everyday uses were much more mundane and interwoven with broader place-making. For Sophie, a type of place-ballet (Seamon 1979) emerged in which she talked about moving throughout habitual places that are familiar and intimate to her, hanging out with friends in Shepparton, and tagging or linking friends’ social media profiles to videos to share her embodied experience with a wider online audience. In this way, a relationship between materiality and social media becomes embodied and imbued with physical movement within the town. The respondents’ smartphones emerge as a constant, habitual accompaniment, variously mediating their social relationships, but also their traversal, and construction of material places (in the manner discussed in chapter five, see Sutherland 2012, Seamon 1979).

For many, it was difficult to articulate exactly why ready access to internet-enabled devices was important: Kylie: “I don't know why it’s important, my friends tell me I should leave my phone in my room and spend time with them and stuff. But, I just feel like I need it, I don't even know why…” (Kylie, FG 5 - young community volunteers, similar discussion in FG6). Kylie is referring here to a sense of what cannot be articulated (see Moores 2012, Tuan 1979). This sentiment was shared among several participants who agreed that their smartphones were important to them, but found it difficult to say exactly why. This inability, or unwillingness to explain why mobile phones might occupy a central position in Kylie’s everyday life could be a reflection of a more superficial, narrower use of social media (see

Hargittai 2010). Further, reluctance to dwell on the reasons why 'I just feel like I need it', could also relate to respondents' aversion to well-worn moral panics, and negative depictions of youthful addictions to social technologies (see Herring 2008). While the expressed desire to always be physically close to their mobile phones speaks to the importance of social relationships, accessed, and in many ways, maintained via these devices, as well as the obligation to be available and ready for interaction, a more emotive process is also at play.

Another possibility is that this response was reflective of those more non-representational aspects of the affective, and emotional 'stories that we narrate' via social medias and the meaningful social relationships mediated by them (Pink et al. 2016: 241, Moores 2014). The act of picking up the phone and taking it along to work or school emerged as a form of 'intimate tethering' (Ito et al. 2005), as well as a tactile, sensorimotor, experiential interaction with the material environment (Tuan 1979, Pink et al. 2016). This was an unconscious, taken-for-granted process that was not necessarily critically reflected upon by users (Pink et al. 2016). Still, this foregrounds a similar form of place-making 'in the background' discussed in chapter five. Rather, the 'hand' was seen to almost act on its own in picking up a device, swiping through screens to select habitual, familiar apps (for example Facebook). This occurred almost pre-cognitively in the case of Kylie, who explained she 'just felt' like she needed her smartphone device with her at all times.

A similar instance emerged in focus group 3. Somewhat incredulously, Lily from the 'Older professionals' focus group explained how she would finish checking her Facebook feed, put her smartphone away, only to automatically pick it up and open the recently closed Facebook app almost without consciously deciding to do so. While Lily recounted her experience by jokingly mocking what she saw as her own silliness, she too demonstrated the pre-cognitive, embodied physicality inherent in mobile phone usage (Hjorth 2013, Hjorth and Pink 2014). More than an unreflexive, pre-cognitive connection to hand-held digital devices, Lily and Kylie's explanations ultimately speak to the importance of the social relationships and obligations represented by their smart devices. Their emotive connections to their smart devices also suggested a more pre-reflective relationship with the material environment, of which mobile phones constitute a component. In this way, experiential data in the form of interpretations generated from the physical senses and emergent 'feelings' associated with being 'in place' (Tuan 1979) were gathered from digitally mediated, spatially embedded

interactions, as well as through an attraction to physical devices themselves and the digitally mediated relationships enabled by them.

While the intimate tethering of mobile social technologies was conceived by respondents as a positive, and valued extension of everyday socialites, a small number of respondents discussed some of the negative impacts of this. In particular, maintaining a constant state of contactability that was a source of comfort for respondents like Kylie, was a source of stress and anxiety for others (see Smith, Hewitt and Skrbis 2015):

> Abdul:...it's just like, ah keeping connected with each other, and ah, I use my phone for, even though I hate it sometimes because it's ringing all the time, and it's just annoying (laughs). (FG 12 - migrant community group).

In the same focus group, Dani described the social obligation, emphasizing "we *have* to answer, no matter what" (Dani, FG 12 - migrant community group), signaling the closeness of the community and the requirement that younger members in particular demonstrate their respect for older members, by answering their mobile phone calls whether it was convenient or not.

In this example, there is accountability across technologically mediated interaction and materially mediated interaction. And this did not emerge as a strong theme among other focus groups (although it was alluded to in FG5). In this case, the respondents reported being thoroughly accountable for their actions (see Green and Singleton 2006) whether they shared physical co-presence with their interlocutor or not. In some ways, digital media did not afford these young people with opportunities to avoid the surveilling gaze of the close migrant communities in which they lived (see Gibian 2003). The closeness of the local community described by Dani and Abdul, and their structural position as members of Shepparton's migrant community, was emergent in the intimate and thorough intersecting of digitally mediated and material realms for the young respondents above in the 'Migrant community' focus group. The centrality of place and young people's everyday experiences journeying within and across the localities of the town are realised in their digitally mediated experiences.

The role of social media technologies in place-making projects - as everyday mediators of intimate and regular social interactions - becomes clear in these discussions. This is because space is produced and places are made via processes involving social actions and interactions that occur and change over time (Ek 2006, see also Massey 2005, Soja 1996). The young participants' discussion of spatially embedded networks, maintained and developed online (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2006), demonstrates their participation in making local places, as well as localities further afield (Martin and Rzvi 2012). The common denominator in this discussion of place-making is sociality. Social life motivates the young respondents' online forays (ACMA 2009, boyd 2014), and sociality simultaneously embeds them materially. Rather than a dichotomous, antithetical relationship whereby social media technology de-territorialises and dis-embeds users from material places, a more fluid relationship melding online and offline emerges in this research. The place-making potential realized by the young respondents is demonstrated in the ways they utilize the variety of affordances, to engage in a variety of spatially embedded socialites. This practice was engendered by the 'constant' presence of technological devices, serving as a medium through which to bring those nearby, although not physically present, 'next to you' in the room.

While anchored in sociality for the most part, the time respondents spent online also involved and extended their broader hobbies and interests. These were realized and shared with others in a collective manner. Therefore, the materially embedded sociality that underscored time spent online, also provided opportunities for respondents to develop and pursue their interests online. The following section considers the types of practices respondents reported engaging in when they went online or utilized social media technologies.

Online practices

The following section considers some of the digitally mediated social practices that participants spoke about engaging in. These included various hobby or interest-based information searches and the online performances of self accompanying such practices. Ultimately, these are practices which cannot be disaggregated entirely from online socialites. In many ways, online practices such as going on Facebook to share memes, catch up on favourite television show gossip, or follow particular sports, as well as using hook-up apps like Grindr, can each be conceptualised as a digital extension of those 'acted-out' performances of place that ultimately serve to "bring place into being" (Gregson and Rose

2000: 434). Those regular activities engaged in while making place outlined in chapter five, such as sports, school/study, sports, hanging out, employment and entertainment, were all practised seamlessly across material and virtual environs. This constituted an added dynamic to respondents' place-making enterprise in mediated contexts.

Sharing interests and hobbies, in the form of images, videos, informational content, humorous content via Facebook feeds was a key means through which social interaction could be mediated among peers online. The pleasure and entertainment associated with the types of online activities that could be enjoyed online at any 'in-between' locality such as waiting for friends, or stolen moments at work, (see Hjorth and Pink 2014) were described enthusiastically:

> Cathy (facilitator): so what kinds of things come up on your (social media) feed in an average day?
> Johnno: golf, cars
> Travis: bulk memes, bulk memes
> Tom: hobbies
> Johnno: yeah, yeah, mainly hobbies…things I'm interested in, usually...whether it be a TV series, or perhaps, some of the freestyle motocross guys I follow, not specifically a hobby that participate it, but that I follow or enjoy…um, footy, that sort of thing
> Tom: pictures of people out clubbing
> Travis: yeah, there's someone having sexual involvement…(FG 4 - car hobbyist friends).

Johnno notes that his social media feeds are mostly populated by 'things I'm interested in…' Browsing social media feeds was a very personal everyday practice - one that was both spatially embedded and reflective of material social interaction - and which served to make respondents' mediated place-making more individualised in nature. The working-class men and woman of the 'Car hobbyist friends' focus group were relatively young in the context of the broader sample, and the young men took pleasure in their performance of masculinities (Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006). This performance was realised through their listed 'interests', including cars, golf, motocross, football, and an oblique, unelaborated

reference to sexualised online performances delivered by Travis with a knowing smile to his mates in the focus group. Above all, cars, including details surrounding driving and maintaining their own vehicles, dominated the discussion throughout the focus group (see Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006 and more detailed analysis in chapter 6). Explored in the previous chapter on micro-territorialising discrete localities in the town, territories for the performance of car cultures were clearly a material dimension of these young men's everyday lives. The practice of their car-related interests in online spaces extended and enhanced the construction of such territories.

Further, focus group 4's discussion of pursuing their car-related interests, as well as other mundane activities were revealing of how place could be 'done' through the performance of mundane, regular practices that served to "work on both the neighbourhood and the individual" (Benson and Jackson 2012: 794). Or in this case, rather than neighbourhood, it was a melding of the online/offline places in which they practiced their hobby by sharing images and online content via platforms such as Facebook and Snapchat, to the materiality of the car wash and the quiet streets of night-time Shepparton (see discussion in chapter 6). Their regular journeys across Shepparton and its constituent micro-territories were traversed and reflected in their collectively constructed semi-bounded online localities, and the members of focus group 4 were simultaneously shaped by both the online, and the offline places, constructed by them.

There was one young female participant in the 'Car hobbyist friends' focus group (FG4) who indicated she was in a romantic relationship with one of the male participants. Despite my efforts as the focus group facilitator to invite her into the discussion at numerous opportunities, Lucy chose not to substantively contribute to the discussion. Not being able to hear from Lucy was a limitation of the focus group method, and a drawback of having relied on focus groups as the primary means of data. However, she did contribute to the discussion about *Snapchat* (explored in the below section 'Images online'). For the most part, her voice was subsumed amongst the discussion of the young men. Consistent with Walker's (1998, see also Joelsson 2015) research on young men's car cultures, women may not be wholly excluded but they are oft-times marginalised. Indeed, gender was a structural position that deeply intersected much of the discussion among the members of focus group 4 and their place-making practice.

Gender and class certainly underscored discussion among the young people in focus group 10. As they talked about another common means to maintain material socialites online that were ultimately embedded in key territories, the relational nature of their gendered and classed subjectivities were expressed in very different terms to those discussed by focus group 4. Meaningful territories for focus group 10 included those surrounding school and the LBGTI community as described below:

> Michael: (Laughs)...no, like, no joke, that (Grindr) is how most of the gay men in the area communicate, and then like, Facebook and stuff is good for like school I guess...like we have the year 12 Facebook group that like, we have 30 year 12s at my school, how sad is that...anyway...
> Ruby: it's good (social media) though, it's definitely essential
> Jake:...it is, it is, we need it
> Ruby: even this group (LBGTI Support Group) uses it constantly, like..
> Michael:...this is how we communicate and tell people what's going on. Like, today we knew how many people were coming cos' they were texting me
> Ruby: yeah, and they like, (the Senior group leader) will post stuff, events that are happening in the area, and like events that are happening in Melbourne that we can go to, and all of that kind of stuff, it's definitely important, it's definitely essential as well. And I think that, even people who might not be able to afford credit and stuff will still go find any free Wi-Fi… (FG 10 - support group).

For the young, potentially disenfranchised and socially marginalised working-class young people in this focus group, where many members reported diverse gender and sexual orientations, accessing information and community events via online portals was another feature of materially embedded online communities. In some ways, the young respondents echoed discourses of a transcendent online experience (see Gross 2007) in their affirmations that social media technologies are "definitely essential". This approach is reproduced in the literature on young people, living on the geographic margins (see Gross 2007, Ei Chew et al.

2011, Vogl et al. 2016, Gray 2007) sharing LBGTI orientations (see Gross 2007). Here, social media technologies are posited as offering a unique, and important opportunity to overcome disadvantage associated with youthful lives on the social and geographic margins. In the case of the young people in this study, however, the discussion above indicated a much more embedded, everyday method of use than reported in some literature (see for example Gray 2007, Kazyak 2011).

Protected spaces such as a closed Facebook groups, or even hook-up apps like Grindr, served as an extension for many in this group's materially constructed micro-territories in the town (boyd 2014, Harris and Wyn 2009 for micro-territories). The physicality of the church hall where they conducted their bi-monthly meetings was a safe, familiar and intimate locality. This was a space tailored by them for ease and comfort, including sofas as well as a kitchen and table where they would prepare a meal to eat together. Achievements of group members were celebrated, and the issues, or experiences of living within the LBGTI community could be shared. The pleasure of these get-togethers and the experience of the group sociality embedded within the micro-territory of the hall, also emerged as a "digital overlay" (Hess 2015: 1642) through the reflection of these dynamics and interactions over various forms of social media. Further, focus group 10's discussion about their regular, digitally mediated, although spatially-embedded interactions were reflective of the performative dimension of place-making explored by Gregson and Rose (2000). Interactions were broadly concerned with the interests of the group, including the logistics of their get-togethers, but also other items related to their collective participation in the LBGTI community, and their broader construction of places in the town, including some public places (see chapter 6), as well as the church hall in which they regularly met.

This section has considered the various means and methods of online activity and interaction described by respondents of this study. Social relationships influenced how these respondents used social media technologies to regularly perform, and make place. The types of practices include a spectrum of socialites, including micro-social organisation, extensive group chats, as well as engaging in hobbies and entertainments. Differing skill levels intersected with a range of opportunities and motivations to engage online. These reflected an uneven structural positioning that situated respondents more broadly in this study (explored more fully in chapter 6). Structural positionings, such as class, gender and cultural

background emerged in the young people's discussion of performing place via social media technologies. These were most apparent in the conversations among focus group 4, 7 and 12.

So far in this analysis I have outlined a range of social practices that the respondents talked about engaging in through virtual and mediated contexts. For the most part, respondents did not report going online to forge new connections with geographically distant, or even proximate others. Nor did they commonly indicate engaging in global knowledge communities (see Valentine and Holloway 2001), or forming new or experimental 'selves' utilising the dis-embodying and de-territorialising potential of online spaces (see for example Plant 1998). Rather, commonly reported uses were a more mundane collection of materially based hobbies and interests shared with friends and others encountered in both off- and online contexts. Performances of place (Gregson and Rose 2000) were enacted offline so as to construct micro-territories, and these were extended to, and reflected in, online contexts. Seamlessly, and uncritically embedded in the young, regional respondents everyday lives, social media technologies therefore articulated and clarified their place-making practices as they merged across the digital and the material.

Micro-territories constructed via social media technologies

A sub-theme in respondents' discussion of place-making in the context of social media technologies reflects Hepp (2009), Martin and Rzvi (2012), and Moores' (2012) work on the implications of mediated sociality on people's material place-making projects. This research interrogates the dimensions of respondents' simultaneous embeddedness in place, including an individuals' own physical location and the separate locality of their online interlocutor. The social media usage of the young people of this study can be considered an "embodied practice of habitation through which the meaning of place is accomplished" (Martin and Rizvi 2014: 2). The embodied, physical habitation of participants in material locales while they conduct everyday place-making practices, of which visiting online social media websites in different spatial contexts is a key example, emerges as a place-making mechanism (see Martin and Rizvi 2012). The preceding section considered the role of social media technologies and respondents' performances of place enacted across online and offline contexts. This section examines how social media technologies affect the micro-territorialising processes through which respondents construct particular locales. It also

explores the features of various material places, both public and private, which lend themselves to being constructed as offline/online places by participants utilising social media technologies.

Firstly, respondents reported engaging in this form of social media technology-facilitated place-making when they discussed utilising Wi-Fi hotspots throughout the town, at school, or accessing private networks at home or friends' houses. These constituted practices that served to embed young internet users in local territories while simultaneously connecting them to territories further afield (see Martin and Rizvi 2012). This was demonstrated in several focus group discussions in the context of accessing Wi-Fi hotspots in the public places of Shepparton:

> Dom: … some people have Wi-Fi, like at their place
> Ryan: nearly everyone has Wi-Fi probably, what if you're like down the street?
> Zayan: there's hot spots
> Dom: yeah, there's hot spots
> Ryan: wait is that at the school?
> Zayan: at the mall
> Dom: there's heaps of hot spots...you can sit out front of EB Games[16] and just…
> Bree: the pay phone, they have Wi-Fi on top of it now
> Ryan: do they really? Holy fuck! Shows how long since I've been out
> Dom: even like most people, when they go out, then if they see like a Wi-Fi hotspot, they just stop, sit on their phone...
> Bree: yeah. (FG 11 – vocational students, see also FG10 for a similar discussion).

Further, the 'Migrant community' focus group (FG12) discussed accessing private Wi-Fi networks at friends' houses when their own access to the internet was curtailed.

[16] A retail shop selling games located in the mall

> Mariam: recently, at my home, we had no internet for two weeks cos' we changing to NBN[17] and life without internet was hard to be living there (Laughs)….
> Aisha: our one wasn't for two weeks, it was one and half weeks. I used to go to her house (gesturing to her fellow participant) for internet everyday (laughs) or if she wasn't home I would go to her house and stay there for a very long time use internet. And then like, why is, stop visiting, like, I've got internet here ok, stop bothering me! (Laughs)
> Mariam: you can never live without internet, I swear. (FG 12 - migrant community group).

This passage illustrates Hepp's (2009) notion of a more material social environment for engaging in digitally mediated practices. The context described here is somewhat different than in Hepp's (2009) account, insofar as the participants above indicate that it is only because they cannot access the internet in their homes at certain times due to infrastructure upgrades, that they travel to nearby domestic spaces where they can go online. However, there was a discernable pleasure related to the professed 'need' to visit close friends' homes to use the internet. More than an expression of Aisha's need to be online, her explanation also pointed to the closeness of her relationships from Shepparton's migrant community, and the role her structural position as a member of a cultural minority, plays in her place-making practice. Like Hepp's (2009) participants deliberately choosing to access online spheres within materially, face-to-face contexts like the internet café, the young people in this study reported a similar experience. They were able to solidify their micro-territorializing practice within their neighbourhoods (see Harris and Wyn 2009). They did this by independently traversing physical contexts, while simultaneously embodying the materiality of the domestic home. In turn, they were intersecting with elements of the virtual environments of the internet, combined with the destination localities of online interlocutors, be they geographically proximate, or more distant (see Martin and Rizvi 2012).

[17] The 'National Broadband network' is a nationwide telecommunications infrastructure project that was being rolled out in regional areas during the fieldwork stage of the research

The young women of focus group 11 reported a different, more negative experience resulting from the construction of online/offline micro-territories. They discussed how this enabled the external, gendered disciplining of their usage of public space and the role that social media technologies played in this. According to the participants, young women spectating at the local skate park (located at the lake, see figure 6) were vulnerable to being covertly photographed and their presence shared online in a Facebook group.

> Clara: And if you go to like certain places, there's like groups on Facebook and they like, like you can't go to the Shepp skate park anymore, like if you're a girl, you get put on this site, it’s like, ‘Skatepark sluts’
> Bree: ohh, is that still going?…
> Clara: yeah…
> Ryan: ah ha
> Austin: fucking hell
> Clara: and they take photos when you're not looking, like if you're at the skate park and then they'll put it up on there, and shame you out. (FG 11 – vocational students).

The material embedding and place-making process described by Clara is important. A particular type of punitive male gaze operated via the embodied form of a photograph that was uploaded to select online communities for the perusal of others (see Tanenbaum 2015). In a similar manner articulated by the young women of focus group 9, the surveilling gaze of nearby others can have a punitive impact when in public spaces. For the young women above, it made the discrete material location in which this takes place a no-go zone. The disciplinary ‘slut shaming’ process underway reserves the skate park for an exclusive gender-based set of interactants according to the young women of the ‘Vocational students’ focus group (FG11). As such, in a similar way to the car wash described among focus group 4 and 8, this locality emerged as a masculinised space in which women were sometimes deliberately excluded. The bordering, no doubt, was policed in a range of ways, one of which was through social media technologies. It is important to note, however, that while the skate park was mentioned in other groups, other respondents did not report experiencing exclusion in the same way. Still, some respondents indicated a degree of exclusion in localities like the skate park based on other parameters (for example, implied LBGTI discrimination reported in

focus group 10). Clearly gender, along with sexual orientation to a certain extent, became structural forms that played a role in the young respondents' place-making through the lens of social media technologies.

As explored by Hepp (2009), as well as Martin and Rizvi (2014), elements of online and offline intersect to construct discrete micro-territories for the young participants in Shepparton (in the manner of Harris and Wyn 2009). The skate park was constructed as an exclusive, gendered territory enforced through a digital disciplining gaze recorded offline and shared amongst a wider audience online. Further, Wi-fi hotspots scattered throughout public places like the mall, and the domestic localities of friends' homes, were additional examples. These localities emerged as places constructed via the intersection of online and materiality merged by young users' social media practices enacted in material places (Martin and Rizvi 2012). Micro-territorialising aspects emerged in the conditions of the young people's structural positioning, for example gender, youth status, or cultural background, embedding them in the materiality of Shepparton's public places (see Harris and Wyn 2009). This type of micro-territorialising represented somewhat of an inversion of the type of digital place-making explored in earlier sections. Rather than a range of places that individual respondents made by extending their material sociality to the online sphere, here, particular territories were constructed by groups of respondents utilising a diverse ecology of digital affordances. More place-based, rather than person-based, this form of place-making through the lens of social media technologies emerged as a sub-theme adding complexity to respondents' place-making projects in Shepparton.

Collapsing geographies online

The following section will consider some of the complexity emerging in young people's discussion of their online practices, and explore some of those less materially proximate components of their activities. In the focus groups, young people discussed going online to take advantage of the spatial malleability available in virtual environs. As in many aspects of respondents' online social forays, practices and interlocutors were almost always first encountered, and often intimately known, on a materially embedded, face-to-face basis. This is consistent with broader research (see boyd 2014, Wajcman 2004), including in the

Australian context (ACMA 2009), which cites place-based social applications (Hargittai 2007) as leading online destinations for young people.

While the sample for this study was not wholly comprised of highly mobile groups maintaining multiple, although dispersed places of meaning (as in Hepp 2009, Martin and Rizvi 2012, Moores 2012), most respondents did report maintaining geographically dispersed social and familial networks. In many ways, this is typical of a young, non-urban population who migrate across the countryside, from their regional homes to larger places for educative and employment opportunities (Wiborg 2002, Farrugia 2016, Alston 2004, Gabriel 2006). As discussed in chapter 5, rather than precluding effective engagement in place-making enterprises both at home, and in new residential locales, respondent mobilities served a role in their place-making projects (Wiborg 2002, see Fallov, Jorgensen and Knudsen 2013). Importantly, respondents' social and peer networks developed within local, proximate places, had, through the passage of time, dispersed beyond the geographic confines of Shepparton. These experiences were counter to pervasive discourses assuming static, passive a-mobile rural places (see Hidle, Farsund and Lysgard 2009) in which the cosmopolitan reach of globalisation is halted (see Hogan 2004).

Dispersed contacts

The following sub-section considers some of the complexities, and implications for place-making among respondents who discussed maintaining a more geographically dispersed network of social relationships using social media technologies. Among participants who had finished secondary school, and were in employment, the spatio-temporal malleability of online spaces such as Facebook presented advantages for maintaining increasingly geographically dispersed networks:

> Liz: yeah, all over, Facebook's become the communication tool for people our age, because everyone has moved away, some have family, some are single, some have people overseas, so, it's the tool we now have so we can keep in contact with everyone that we otherwise would have lost contact with altogether…

> Caleb: I suppose you go local first, and then, it's a good way to keep in touch with people who aren't close by. (FG 3 - older professionals, similar discussions in FG2,5 and 7).

If young people's key online interlocutors were made up of those regularly encountered in offline contexts, then it follows that when interactants move away from those materially embedded environments, this will be reflected in online environments as well. This is consistent with the findings of others researching rural young people's online habits (see Valentine and Holloway 2001, Stillman et al. 2010, Awan and Gauntlett 2013, Kehily and Nayak 2008). However, some respondents countered that digitally mediated environments enabled them to maintain relationships with geographically distant others. For example, the members of the Older professionals focus group went on to discuss staying in touch with extended family online, while the members of the 'Young community volunteers' talked about maintaining connections with friends made while abroad.

Essentially, platforms such as Facebook facilitated a partial collapse of those geographical boundaries heralded as the normally fixed boundary negatively impacting young rural lives (in the manner of Gross 2007). Yet the development and maintenance of social and familial relationships online also reflected a complex layering of social ties of varying strengths and with different expectations of obligation or reciprocation. As peers or extended family members moved away over time, and were no longer regular face-to-face interactants, opportunities arose for connections to be maintained online and a feeling of social closeness could be retained. However, the degree of social obligation typically accompanying stronger, materially embedded relationships was not necessarily present. The same level of social obligation became more difficult to convey. Thus, social media feeds came to function as archiving tools of evolving lives over time and of the changes to social relationships that inevitably occur (Robards and Lincoln 2017).

Respondents discussed transitions between key youth phases, including secondary school, employment, tertiary education, and independent housing (Cieslik and Simpson 2013). Implicit in this trajectory over time, groups incorporated individuals from among these different phases. Like many young people living in regional and rural places, respondents criss-crossed across the countryside to other larger places to pursue educative and employment opportunities, but returned to visit, or moved back to Shepparton after having

spent time away (see Wiborg 2002, see also Alston 2004, Gabriel 2006 on youth out-migration). The enduring material embeddedness of respondents' online networks, in spite of the geographic dispersal described among focus group respondents, indicated that the place-making potential of these mediated contexts is not always immediately apparent or straight-forward. However, the spatio-temporal malleability that participants reported taking advantage of did not necessarily interrupt their place-making projects online.

Disembedded online cultures

While relatively few participants discussed actively taking part in disembedded global networks online, some respondents chose to pursue hobbies and interests online by engaging in virtual practices mostly unanchored in respondents' immediate material environments (for example see Hull, Stornaiuolo and Sahni 2010 on global online youth cultures, see Banaji and Buckingham 2009 on civic participation and shopping). The transcendent potential of the internet imagined by Valentine and Holloway (2001) was therefore realised to a limited extent by the participants discussed in this section. Importantly, these more disembedded practices were constituent within broader online practices embedded in *offline*, local lives. Therefore, as established by researchers of young rural people's online habits (Sreekumar 2007, Stillman et al. 2010, Awan and Gauntlett 2013, Kehily and Nayak 2008, Valentine and Holloway 2001), ultimately, the types of interactions sought and established online did not subsume those more thoroughly based in material lives. Indeed, some more niche online activities were represented in the 62-strong respondent pool (for example, online activism in FG1, watching Korean Soap Operas on YouTube in FG9). These were perhaps more reflective of the types of use referenced in moral panic discourses (Herring 2008) characterising endlessly absorbed young internet users helplessly immersed in an otherwise foreign cultural context. Importantly, however, these did not interrupt the place-making practices of the young respondents concerned.

Seeking and participating in a materially disembedded online community was discussed among the 'Religious youth group, young women' focus group (FG9). Their conversation on information seeking turned into one about looking for religious counselling and identifying trustworthy individuals with whom to discuss personal issues and problems online. The issue of trust, and establishing identity was not a problem for them (as canvassed in research into

youthful online lives, see Livingstone 2009, boyd 2014). For these young women, seeking individuals online was considered 'safer' than talking to someone face-to-face in their own community. This was perhaps more reflective of the young participants in Gibian's (2003) research that found young women living within the conservative migrant community of Western Sydney forged connections online with others from Sydney's broader migrant community, but not necessarily from within their own immediate neighbourhoods. As discussed by the young women of focus group 9, this was a way to assert their independence as young women while avoiding the surveilling gaze of a close, socially conservative community. The similarity between these two cohorts is that both groups of young women sought cultural familiarity online, and did so without fear or concern of encountering an otherwise, unknown other. This may have related to the close-knit migrant community in Shepparton. Like Gibian's (2003) young respondents, in a community where surveillance, of young women in particular, was a daily reality, these participants could not guarantee confidentiality nor avoid gossip when seeking answers to sensitive problems. However, it is important to note that the reversal of trust and establishing identity described by focus group 9 contrasted with discussions among other focus groups (for example, discussion in FG10 on problems establishing identity in online hook-up apps).

A small number of participants indicated forging connections with unknown others which were sometimes continued in material contexts. Specifically, some of the members of the 'Support group' focus group (FG10) indicated meeting intimate partners using the online dating application Grindr. In contrast to the young women of focus group 9, for these young men, issues establishing trust and veracity when developing connections online in this way were a problem (see Livingstone 2009). While other respondents discussed negotiating geographically dispersed relationships using digital affordances, these connections were nonetheless rooted in materiality. Therefore, focus group 10's discussion of Grindr was somewhat unique in the context of the study.

Images online

The final section in this analysis of young regional people's digitally mediated place-making projects concerns the taking and sharing of images online. The sharing and uploading of images via a variety of social media technology platforms was a key affordance eagerly

utilised by the young people of this study. These images constituted a unique form of embodiment displaying an affective, experiential and aesthetic interpretation of self and crucially, of selves in material place (see Lee 2010). This was reflective of those embodied, experiential relationships with territorial spaces analysed by 'spatial turn' media researchers (Pink et al. 2016, Hjorth and Pink 2014, Frosh 2015). According to Lee (2010) those who take, edit and post photographs record their place-embedded perceptions to tell narratives about themselves, their locales and sites of meaning for the consumption of others in their online community. The broader online community can compare these images to their own experience and incorporate these into their own place-making practice (Lee 2010).

Participants discussed image sharing in online contexts in a variety of ways and reported that their motivations for sharing images were diverse. It was clear, however, that across different platforms, image sharing constituted an embodied and aesthetic rendering of material selves, and consequently of place, for the perusal and consumption of key interlocutors and broader audiences (Hjorth and Pink 2014, Frosh 2015, Carah 2014, Hjorth 2013, Lee 2010). Further, the participants' regular traversals across the everyday localities in Shepparton (and its surrounds), engendered a spatial embeddedness and produced a form of 'digital wayfarer' (Hjorth and Pink 2014). Both proximate and more distal mobilities (discussed more extensively in chapter 5) were realised as physical movements across the localities of Shepparton, as well as digitally mediated movements across the town. Respondents moved along paths going "hither and thither" to form place-embedded narratives of self (Ingold in Hjorth and Pink 2014: 45), situated in sites of meaning, and shared with others online via images. It was through intimately held, ever-present social media technologies, and regular recordings of their surrounds (taking photographs) that the respondents went about "creating a world in movement, (and) an ongoingness…" (Hjorth and Pink 2014: 9). In this way, sensory embodiment within the material environment is re-imagined through the lens of digital technologies via the taking and sharing of images online. This was the case even if the form and delivery of information are altered in comparison to a more immediate sensory experience of place (explored in chapter 5). Rather, the technologically mediated nature of shared images online did not preclude embodiment in place, but, in many ways, constituted an extension of the mediatory role of the body in the experience of place.

Some of the images that the young people talked about sharing were generated in materially embedded contexts, taken by participants themselves or their friends. These included

'selfies' or self-portraits, (see relevant research on selfies, e.g. Hess 2015, Hjorth and Pink 2014, Pink et al. 2016, Sutherland 2012, Frosh 2015) as well as other images depicting items, interactions or practices of importance and meaning. Alternatively, images sourced online, including memes, humorous or otherwise, images with inspirational quotes, and pictures relating to hobbies or interests accumulated on sites like *Pinterest* or *Instagram* (Rainie, Brenner and Purcell 2012), emerged as key symbols shared online as social currency within and between groups. These were less clearly linked with respondents' own online embodiment, but represented a constellation of pictorial representations carefully curated to convey particular connections or relationships, or to present one's self in more abstract forms.

According to respondents in the 'Older professionals' focus group (FG3), images punctuated their social media consumption across different platforms and sites:

> Penny: it's (Facebook) full of images, you don't see things unless they have an image attached…
> Ellie: someone's gone on holiday and then you flick through, someone's married, and then you find out, oh she's there, she's there, she's there. It's just, I guess to see what everyone's up to...sharing images… (FG 3 - older professionals).

For Penny, including images helps shape how a shared item is received. Penny alludes to why it is that attaching images to posts is meaningful and pervasive: if there is no image, then "you don't see things". The online audience is more likely to scroll past a text-only post than it is to dwell on, and respond, to it. The engagement of the visual sense here reflects the non-representational dimensions of a broader, more embodied interaction online (Pink et al. 2016, Moores 2014). Penny also articulates the material embeddedness and the importance of visuality in online, social contexts. The visuality engendered by sharing images such as these online, represents an additional dynamic of the place-making project for the young regional residents. Members of the group also discussed the types of photos that are routinely shared online using *Snapchat*. One of the few regular users in the group, Hannah, explained: "Like sometimes it could just be someone sitting in a car, or just little snippets, like it's not worth saving (for later), just funny little moments..." (Hannah, FG 3 - older professionals). Hjorth and Pink's (2014) digital wayfarer, and Lee's (2010) flaneur emerged perhaps most strongly in discussions about using *Snapchat*. Mundane movements from place to place in the

respondents' everyday lives were reflected and extended in online spheres through the taking and sharing of equally mundane 'funny little moments'. As well as making place through materially embedded socialites online, the participants were digital wayfarers who shared images generated in those places, conveying the physical features of the environment and their sociality embedded within it.

Self-portraits (or selfies) emerged as a widespread form of shared media content (Hess 2015, Frosh 2015, Hjorth and Pink 2014). For the members of the 'Religious youth group, young women' focus group (FG9), sharing 'selfies', along with other types of images, was a common practice:

> Sara: yeah...(selfies) we do that a lot
> Tota: it's the trend at the moment, not only selfies, but you can also put a video, inspirational quote
> Sara: yeah. (FG 9 - religious youth group, young women).

This practice was not necessarily a narcissistic, ego-centric expression of self, developed for, and performed to, an online audience. They did not necessarily reflect the 'spectacular' narrative (see Cieslik and Simpson 2013) of youthful self-obsession online (see Hess 2015). This is a pervasive assumption and young people are seen to be thoroughly implicated (see Gabriel 2014). The young women of focus group 9 talked about sharing a range of online-sourced image content, including 'inspirational quotes'. While this is certainly a common genre of content populating social media feeds, it is perhaps noteworthy that they are explicitly referenced in this group. As explained by Noora in relation to images and other content shared online later in the discussion on selfies: "…it doesn't have to be about them, you know, it could be about their religion, it can be about their culture, it can be about racism, you know" (Noora, FG 9 - religious youth group, young women). Noora lists some of the specific concerns of living in Shepparton's migrant community, including 'religion', 'culture' or 'racism', and explains how these are also rendered in image form and shared alongside images more explicitly centered on the 'self'. In this way, the members of focus group 9 were able to express and reflect spatially embedded cultural and religious concerns in the form of images and attached quotes, online. However, it was the selfies described by participants that were a clearer expression of embodiment online (Pink et al. 2016). Images of self, or socialising with others, recorded respondents' place-embedded perceptions. Unlike

other images, the self is squarely centered (not necessarily literally however) in a 'selfie', and the image serves to articulate a form of self-expression, as well as a representation of sociality and place-embeddedness. Posted to social media platforms and shared with a geographically embedded audience, selfies constituted a means to tell narratives about daily lives, their material surrounds and sites of meaning in the everyday (Lee 2010). Consequently, while the 'selfie' might be concerned with depictions of the self, they also constitute a reflection of place (Pink et al. 2016).

Situated within a 'polymedia' (Madianou and Miller 2012) of image-based affordances, *Snapchat* was one of the more common platforms used to exchange selfies, as well as other photographs taken within respondents' immediate surroundings: Ryan: "Snapchat's biiiiggg" (Ryan, FG 11 – vocational students) (see Kofoed and Larsen 2016). The discussion among focus group 4 revealed them to be among the keener Snapchatters within the respondent group. Amongst the cohort who took part in the study at least, it was younger respondents who tended to discuss selfies, particularly young women. On the whole, the otherwise popular social media platform *Snapchat* did not emerge in many discussions. Still, the emergent gender and age-based trend in regards to selfies (see Souza et al. 2015) is consistent with broader discourses locating visual representations associated with selfies more comfortably, and familiarly, with a feminised performance (see Burns 2015) making it more acceptable for women to part take, than men. Nonetheless, as the excerpt below shows, young men did participate in this common online practice. The young men of focus group 4, who in other parts of their discussion were keen to reproduce a more hyper-masculine performance of local car cultures and risky driving practices (see Walker 1998, Lumsden 2010, Joelsson 2010) eagerly discussed taking and sharing selfies:

> Johnno: terribly embarrassing selfies (laughs)
> Lucy: yeah
> Cathy (facilitator): selfies?
> Travis: yeah, generally people aren't watching you taking, snapping, then you draw stuff
> Johnno: generally I'll be at work and I'll do the whole awkward, is anyone watching me? Quick, got it, send and then I get screenshotted. And then he goes on Facebook and then you hate yourself for the next half an hour (laughs)

> Travis: that's what happens with girls and nudes…
> Johnno: you sorta require in context, or something. Like 'hey what’s up?' and you're like 'work', but if you're bored you're like...
> Tom: yeah...just take a photo, and say what you're doin'
> Johnno: ...yeah, it’s pretty much, it’s literally a visual text...
> Tom: it's quick, quick and easy
> Lucy: quick and easy, yeah...
> Johnno: and you can actually see what people are talking about... (FG 4 - car hobbyist friends, see similar discussion in FG11).

Responding to questions on the types of images they shared, selfies seemed to dominate among focus group 4. And Travis’ oblique reference to ‘girls and nudes’ alludes to the well canvassed male gaze that polices many gendered performances online (see Mascheroni, Vincent and Jimenez 2015). Many of the key dimensions of selfie practice are alluded to among the participants of this study (Hess 2015, Pink et al. 2016, Sutherland 2012, Frosh 2015). For example, the transient nature of the shared images is implied (Hess 2015), followed by the implications of this expectation not being met. The “terribly embarrassing selfie” is in danger of being ‘screenshotted’ by the receiving interlocutor. Fears of an image being saved and potentially distributed against the assumption that the image will be viewed once, then forgotten, emerged. As noted by one participant, this becomes a particular problem for ‘girls and nudes…’. Travis’ unelaborated reference to sexting and slut-shaming women online alludes to a more spectacularised practice associated with young people going online (see Gordon-Messer et al. 2013). It is unsurprising that Travis, Tom and Johnno were unwilling to speak further, given the broadly held moral unacceptability of the practice of which they were aware. However, in a more private setting, free from expectations of ethical conduct, it is possible a more toxic culture edged in (see Salter 2016). Selfies were clearly a complex domain of online representation and embodiment, reflecting a vast range of intersectional gendered and age-based performances in which clear norms of behaviour were not always apparent. Within participants’ discussion on selfies, the momentary need to connect with others while representing an authentic, digitally mediated self in the context of meaningful places emerges (Hess 2015).

Further, the notion of an embodied, mobile self, traversing everyday, material settings and filtering affective conceptions of the places they occupy are also referenced in the respondents' description of taking selfies while at work (Pink et al 2016) and are also reminiscent of digital wayfaring practices (Hjorth and Pink 2014). In many ways, the selfie described by Johnno is a picture taken within 'in-between' places of "routine and rhythm" (Hjorth and Pink 2014), insofar as he reports taking advantage of an illicit moment while at work to take a selfie and 'snapchat' it to his friends. Johnno's place of employment, an everyday territory experienced and made by him, alongside his colleagues, was rendered online in this instance and shared with his materially embedded social group. The material context represented in the image indicating his immediate environment, combined with his attire, furtive nature, as well as his somewhat ambivalent response: 'work'.

There is also a distinct sense of pleasure implied in the process (Hjorth and Pink 2014) reflected in focus groups' enthusiastic contribution to the discussion on selfie-taking and *Snapchat*. This is in spite of the pervasive discourse casting the practice of selfie-taking as a negative, narcissistic act (see Burns 2015, Sorokowski et al. 2015) that seemed to underscore some young people's engagement in the medium. The respondents here also allude to more non-representational components of images and selfies as a visual, rather than textual medium: the image based interaction described as 'literally a visual text' (see Pink et al. 2016). Here the relationship between the materiality of physical bodies situated in place and social media technologies can be 'felt' "through the tactile screen" (Pink et al. 2016: 214) and the knowledges gained from environmental stimuli across the material and the virtual ultimately informed their engagement with and construction of place.

A further facet of respondents' discussion regarding posting and sharing selfies, or other self-generated images online, concerns managing competing expectations. Similar elements including online embodiment, linking self with materiality (Pink et al. 2016, Hjorth and Pink 2014) as well as embedded socialites across peer and familial networks emerges here. The visuality of posting and sharing materially embedded selves online constitutes a particular expression of respondents' place-making projects. And a more nuanced practice of this is articulated in the context of managing the competing, and sometimes contradictory expectations of others such as family, friends, or peers in regards to how the self is presented online. This is particularly salient among young people negotiating and managing their transitions through the youth phase. There are changes to the nature of embodied

performances online according to expectations of different groups, for example family versus peers.

While this theme emerged across different focus groups, the members of focus group 8 discussed taking advantage of divisions separating different online platforms. They also took advantage of the malleability inherent in the medium in their crafting of embodied, although often stylised or idealised online representations using selfies. For this reason, the following paragraphs highlight their discussion as a means to explicate some of the place-making practices present across the broader group. According to Zoe and Jade (FG8), images of varying social selves could be presented, and internal consistency maintained because discrete groups of friends and family were mutually confirmed contacts on one platform and not another. Although both 'audiences' were materially embedded, and closely linked these young women's online performances to their offline selves, they maintained distinct differences in the types of images and content posted across platforms:

> Zoe: ...but there are postings on there that I won't post on Facebook because I've got family on Facebook. Like, you know, like if I'm drinking or smoking in photo, I'll post it on Instagram cos' my family's not on there. If it's just like a nice photo of me and my friends I'll put it on Facebook as well...
> (Zoe, FG 8 - community volunteers, young women)

Zoe demonstrates strategies that she had developed over time to manage distinct material domains in her everyday life, primarily, family and peers. By using different social media platforms, Zoe made distinct places in which she could represent herself in different ways, enabling her to conform to the competing expectations of her family and peers. In this respect, she was embedded in separate territories within Shepparton that aligned with the platforms discussed, including *Instagram* (for peers, and sociality), *Facebook* (for family, and her role as daughter) and *Tumblr* (the most spatially disembedded in which the online audience was wholly unknown and more experimental online representations could be crafted). Despite much-lauded problems concerning privacy (Livingstone 2009) and the consequences of sharing of images depicting problematic behaviours (see Ringrose et al. 2013, Henry and Powell 2015), Zoe and Jade were able to manage who in their lives saw

which images online in a relatively sophisticated way. Zoe was thus able to maintain the discreteness of her material relationships within the virtual sphere.

Respondents' online images and selfies tended to depict mundane elements of daily life and sociality embedded in places that were meaningful and familiar to them:

> Jade: just, whatever, yeah, like me and my friends at the lake, me and my friends before we go out, that kind of stuff...
> Zoe:… it's like, just selfies, family, like that sort of thing, not really, sometimes you're just doing something, like you're watching a cool movie, or you buy a new record, that sort of thing, like, yes! Look what I've got, this is awesome, you sorta show off, like... (FG 8 - community volunteers, young women)

The respondents' everyday lives were afforded virtual representation as the "here and now" (Hess 2015: 1631). Affective connections to others, as well as to place, are articulated in the generation and distribution of photos online as described by Zoe and Jade (FG8) (Pink et al. 2016). Further, Jade reflected more of a laid-back digital wayfarer (Hjorth and Pink 2014). Images were taken when she was "sometimes doing something" and at other times when she was more stationary. Yet at each time she was making places of meaning, sharing them with others, and engaging in practices (e.g. going to the movies or shopping) which served to perform place and acted to mutually construct the locale. Of all the discussions about selfies and sharing images online in other focus groups (FG4,5,9 and 11), the young women of focus group 8 were the most articulate and willing to share their selfie strategies.

Another common affordance of selfie practice, also expressed by respondents such as Zoe and Jade, was the ability to manipulate and manage one's embodied appearance in online contexts (see Ellison, Heino and Gibbs 2006). The "longing for authenticity through digitality…(and) compulsion to document ourselves in spaces and places" (Hess 2015: 1631) was demonstrated in their accounts. Rather than "authenticity", what they describe can be better understood as "representational authenticity…(and) performed legitimacy" (Hess 2015: 1633). The desire for 'legitimacy' is present in the decision to post a selfie, but the representation and 'performed legitimacy' emerges in their decision only to post particular photos depicting engagement in particular activities and within specific places.

The young women of focus group 8 removed photos from circulation that did not receive a positive response from online audiences. They did this to protect the “representational authenticity” of online, and material, social popularity. The gendered dimensions of selfie practice emerged between Zoe’s and Jade’s talk about sharing images online, and the discussion among the young men in focus group 4. While Zoe and Jade were one of few focus groups to explain sharing images online in such frank detail, others alluded to similar concerns.

For the young men of focus group 4 who also talked extensively about selfies, there was a less explicit focus on crafting a particular aesthetic (consistent with the gendering of online performances Siibak 2009). Still, Johnno expressed an awareness of the importance of how he appeared online when he indicated potential shame at the prospect of unflattering images being saved and shared with a wider audience. Maintaining a sense of “performed legitimacy” (Hess 2015) seems to be consistent in this instance with the particular nature of the performance. The gendered performances of self in the images discussed among focus group 4 and 8 is clearly not a clear-cut division, with complex representations across online and offline domains, and different norms variously challenged, and reproduced among the young respondents.

It is important to note that not all respondents were avid selfie takers. Among some, there emerged a need to avoid negative associations linking those engaging in selfie practices with egocentrism and narcissism (Burns 2015). This could have been a factor in some respondents’ disinclination to elucidate their own selfie practices, or why others discussed their experiences in a more self-deprecating, apologetic manner (for example, in FG3, FG4). The moral panic of internet ‘addiction’, which some participants attempted to distance themselves from, emerged in the ‘Older professionals’ focus group. Having related an anecdote centering on the perceived ‘social media addiction’ of a young family member, a discussion about distasteful youthful social media practice ensued:

> Liz: yeah, just every single day, a new selfie of someone, and you're just like, why? Like what's the point of this?
> Ellie:… But yeah, you see people posting photo after photo of themselves saying, look at me. (FG 3 - older professionals).

In deriding what they saw as 'problematic' selfie practice and social media cultures more generally, the relatively older professionals of focus group 3 reflected broader discursive constructs attributing narcissistic use to youthful online behaviours (see Burns 2015). Liz and Ellie focused on the 'spectacular' (see Cieslik and Simpson 2013) and imagined negative uses and negative consequences. They indicated in their discussion that they were seeking to differentiate their own developing social identities as emerging adults by distancing themselves from what they characterised as a negative form of youthful social media use (see Burns 2015). Here, structural positioning in regards to youth status, social class, and generational relationships to social media technologies shaped non-participation in selfie culture.

Finally, sharing images online did not always reflect the individua, tangible, material contexts as a selfie, but also represented interests from religion, politics, culture, to topics like fashion or food:

> Noora:…it (online interaction) doesn't have to be about them, you know, it could be about their religion, it can be about their culture, it can be about racism, you know..
> Dleen:...it can be about food, fashion, it's the way, yeah, how we can connect
> Noora:...yeah, fashion...
> Sara: it's how everything spreads...
> Noora: yeah...
> Sara: you just hash tag it and everything will come up. (FG 9 - religious youth group, young women).

The young women of focus group 9 were able to extend their performances of place (Benson and Jackson 2012, Gregson and Rose 2000), through their participation in hobbies and interests, as well as social and political interests embedded in their experiences of living and participating in Shepparton's migrant community. These topics of concern, collectively 'food', 'fashion', and also 'culture', 'religion', and 'racism' were rendered online and offline. They were seamlessly performed in material contexts, such as going shopping in the mall, eating a meal with friends, and discussing socio-political issues of concern to them. Crucially, image-based interactions such as these constituted a means to 'connect' locally, to

digitally mediate embedded concerns and interests, but also to link with a broader audience by "hashtag(ing) it', so that 'everything will come up". A more spatially disembedded mediation emerged, and a more transcendent online interaction was alluded to here (Gross 2007).

Similar to Noora's "hashtag it and everything will come up" approach to sourcing images online, Johnno from the 'Car hobbyist friends' focus group (FG4) discussed the reasons why he enjoyed using *Instagram*:

> Johnno:…so it's actually kind of cool in a sense, you can see the world without seeing it, does that make sense?
> Cathy (facilitator): what does that mean?
> Johnno: so you can see a photo of someone living in Spain, and you can see what Spain is like, but you're not in Spain…it's cool, you can kind of get a bit more culture about how the world is, from a real person's perspective, not just an advertising photo or a campaign like that...that's what I like about that…it's quite cool in the fact that it's kind of eye-opening in what other people can experience. (FG 4 - car hobbyist friends).

Less embedded in Johnno's own local place, and more an emancipatory online travel experience according to the example given above, image-sharing as it is described in the above examples, occupies an altered position to the more embodied image-sharing platforms discussed by other participants. Interestingly, it is not so much glossy, professional images that were sought after by Johnno, but photographs taken by non-professional 'real persons' that are seen to be representative of their own unique embeddedness in place.

This is an example of an alternate, less explicit expression of place than what is clarified in more embodied, self-generated image exchange. More reminiscent of Martin and Rizvi's (2014: 3) approach to digitally mediated place-making drawn from "both 'out here' and 'back home'" in which places "become fragmented and deterritorialised, woven in and through each other". Although, unlike Martin and Rizvi's (2014) respondents, Johnno did not have a personal connection to the source of the images he talked about viewing. The melding

intersection of his visual experience of these distant localities, with his own, more materially embedded, and embodied experience of place in Shepparton, added another dimension to his place-making project. Sharing visual content from other potentially distant locations sourced online develops relationships between geographically proximate networks of people. In this way, like other practices and activities online, and as outlined by humanist geographers (Massey 2005, Soja 1996), social relationships maintained in place, serve to strengthen the connection to place, and construct local place as a meaningful locale.

Conclusion

This final analysis chapter has focused on place-making practices through the lens of social media technology use. My analytical approach in chapter 7 constituted the third perspective that was used to highlight place, and place-making practices among young people living in a regional town. Several processes analysed in previous findings chapters were further highlighted in the context of respondents' digital place-making practices. These included the making of micro-territories; more embodied, experiential forms of understanding place; active performances of place; and the implicit role of mobilities. Examining the online dimension of these processes has enabled me to more comprehensively illustrate the place-making projects of young people in a regional town.

Young people's embedded socialities were enacted uncritically across online and face-to-face contexts. The material embeddedness of mediated socialites emerged as a key theme in respondents' place-making. Drawing on the work of phenomenologist, humanist geographers (including Seamon 1979, Tuan 1979, Massey 2005), and those applying these principles to social media lives (Hjorth and Pink 2014, Lee 2010 for example), the intimate connection between materialities and mediated socialites was made clear. Young people's performances of place and construction of discrete localities across material and digitally mediated contexts were also examined. Spatio-temporal malleability was certainly utilised by the respondents, particularly in regards to the less spatially embedded practices they reported such as contacting geographically distant friends, or crafting idealized selfie representations. This chapter also considered the role of taking and sharing images online. Such practices are influential in place-making given the intimate connection between materiality, bodies (so often rendered in shared images) and virtual spaces. Overall, as demonstrated in chapters 5

and 6, this chapter has shown that young people's place-making projects in a regional town are a complex process. Social media technologies emphasise the role of young people's own spatial embeddedness, and in so doing, they shape their place-making projects in important and meaningful ways.

Chapter 8: Discussion and conclusion

This thesis has investigated young people's place-making practices in a regional Australian town. The research has illuminated the process of constructing place, as well as the form of place that emerges. In so doing, it challenges several common assumptions narrating youthful lives in the country. These relate to young people's engagement with the local, their embeddedness in material places, as well as their interaction with globalising flows. The findings show that young regional people are not hopelessly disadvantaged and nor are they necessarily inevitable urban migrants. Moreover, counter to stereotypes of young people and social media technologies, rather than providing a transcendent window to the wider world, young people's usage of digital media was spatially embedded and locally framed.

Improved understandings in these areas are critical for informing the policies that will assist service providers and alleviate disadvantage amongst regional youth. Poor information based on assumptions, stereotypes, or rooted in the uncritical appropriation of research findings have consigned some policy in this area to failure (see for example Alston and Kent 2003 on educational disadvantage, Halsey 2009 on rural education and sustainability, Quine et al. 2003 on health care access). Significant funding is nonetheless directed towards the realisation of initiatives designed to improve regional lives and alleviate spatial disadvantage (see for example in relation to health AIHW 2016, education Budget.gov 2009-10, telecommunications infrastructure Budget.gov 2010-11). This further underscores the need for a thorough, nuanced understanding of Australia's regional places and the young people who live there.

This thesis also adds significant new research to the burgeoning literature investigating spatial-centric accounts of social life in the regions. Such an approach uniquely facilitates analysis of the spatial, alongside the social, as well as more macro processes such as globalisation. The coalescing of these phenomena within the context of Shepparton is in one sense unique, but similarly speaks to the stories of young people in the regions across Australia. Broadly comparable globalising processes, migratory trends, and digital media uses in Shepparton foreground the experiences of many. My research in Shepparton signals the new, and unanticipated ways that young people are negotiating their own pathways to adulthood in, and around, regional place. As such, the findings of this thesis contribute to a

more informed, judicious understanding of young, regional lives in Australia that will benefit a range of actors in academic and policymaking communities.

Making Shepparton

Shepparton is a regional town made by its young residents in a range of ways. It is formed by the collective appropriation, and re-writing of dominant place-based discourses. Beneath representational discourses, however, emerged more felt, sensory relationships with place. Expressed as experiential, embodied sensations associated with particular places, this approach to young people's place-making revealed those difficult to articulate aspects of the place-making project more generally (see Moores 2012). This finding confirms that place-making projects are an elusive research phenomenon requiring a mix of conceptual and methodological approaches in order to be captured. Young people's structural positioning within the regional town also shaped their place-making and their construction of meaningful localities. Structural factors such as youth status, socio-economic status, gender, and cultural background, served to variously embed the respondents within the material territories of their town. Their agentic traversals of these spaces, and the negotiation of everyday lives within such spaces, facilitated their construction of 'micro-territories of the local'. Finally, respondents' everyday place-making practices were reflected in the everyday online spaces they regularly occupied and socialised within.

Place-making projects were underscored by the contemporary, globalised landscape that pervades all regional places. One aspect of this is represented by the rising ubiquity of social media. Still, more traditional place-making explored in this thesis such as experiential, practical or discursive practices did remain relevant for the young people of this study. But the cohort who took part in the study were among the first to have grown up in a technologically saturated environment in which social media is taken as a given throughout the young peoples' early years. A key finding of this research was the way in which place-making has become digitally mediated. I found that this makes for a new form of place-making and a new process to construct material places. As such, a new form of place emerges.

Place-making through the lens of social technologies is emebedded in, and contingent on many of the traditional practices for making place (discursive, social interaction,

experiential), but these emerge in new, digitally mediated ways. Social media seamlessly intersperses local and global in an uncritical way for the young people, while serving as a way to embed and re-territorialise them under a unique set of digitally mediated parameters. Local places can be made, and the discreteness of localities previously anchored in material place can be stretched to the proximate localities of friends and peers, neighbourhoods, workplaces, and sites of leisure for example. Rather than being immediately transported to the 'global' web, digital media facilitates a localised, but still stretched, and extended construction of place. Thus, Shepparton is constructed by its youthful residents as a series of public localities, more broadly as a regional town, and as a series of person-based, elasticised localities. These latter forms of mediated place enlarge or contract according to the spatio-temporal malleability facilitated by online spaces as well as by the social relationships, practices, and mobilities of the young people themselves.

Research context

Regional places are left out of discussions on place and globalisation in which urban places are often assumed as the norm for such analyses (see Farrugia 2014). Further, in more dichotomous characterisations of place (see Hogan 2004), regional towns are more likely coupled with rural or remote places. Though rural and remote are a set of localities which has their own unique set of defining features. On the whole, the complexity of place has a tendency to be neglected in the driving need to categorise places based on external indicators. Irrespective of challenges categorising place, it looms large in people's everyday lives. In an everyday sense, it is the background material framework structuring movement and pause. Place also emerges as the locus of home, comfort, familiarity or conversely fear and anxiety. Further, the negative place-reputations that circulate are interspersed with more idyllic characterisations of non-urban living. Clearly, unpacking place for analysis, and how it comes to be, is complex. As such, the analytical process must rely on a multi-faceted approach. This facilitates a sufficiently comprehensive view of the complexity inherent in place-making projects.

In discussions of regional places, young people are prominent in several ways. In one respect, this is a portion of the population seen to represent the future of communities and the ongoing viability of regional towns. In this capacity, they attract significant attention from researchers, policy makers and concerned sections of the community. Young people are also

the subject of moralising discourses about a spectacularised range of behaviours seen to be risky, or criminalised. Further, there is a tradition for those concerned with young people to neglect the voices of young people themselves (Panelli, Nairn and McCormack 2002). While there is a more robust recent history of youth studies researchers privileging youthful perspectives, there is a notable absence in those moralising discourses that remain so pervasive.

Changes to place under the contemporary conditions of globalisation is the final contextual facet of this research project. Regional places are shaped and impacted by globalising flows in unique, and specific ways (see Woods 2007). Of relevance to this study is the broader context of human migration, as well as economic change. One symptom of the latter, for instance, is the collapse of the youth labour market obliging the outward migration of many, including young people, towards urban centres for educative and employment opportunities (see Alston 2004). The pervasive presence of digital technologies and their ability to deliver globally sourced information flows is another complicating dynamic. In many instances, young people are characterised as absorbed in digital social technologies at the expense of 'real' life of their regional homes. In one sense, globalisation is a macro-process with comparable dynamics across regions, in others, it elicits complex, individualised responses from communities and a suite of unanticipated symptoms.

Clarifying the role of place, and bringing the processes of its construction from out of the background is an important endeavour. This is particularly salient for young people, and those concerned with young people, among whom assumptions and stereotypes often prevail. Such misunderstandings can impact policy decision-making concerning young people intended to improve their lives in regional towns. Misinformed policies that do not properly account for the role of place in young lives can have broad-reaching impacts on young lives and the towns in which they live. Given the ingrained persistence of assumptions and discourses narrating young lives beyond the city, it is crucial to rectify these with a more informed, nuanced and critical analysis of young people in the regions.

Three pillars of place-making

As established, place-making is an opaque process that takes place in the background of everyday lives. There is a collective agreement among those researching similar phenomena (see for example Moores 2012) that it is difficult to reveal for the purposes of analytical scrutiny. As such, there is a need to approach the process from multiple, creative directions. Some of these are quite visible, for instance, discursive or practice-based processes, while others more are intangible, such as experiential or emotive processes. While other forms of making place emerge with a more classical sociological analysis of structures and agencies. Further, the use of digital media technologies illuminates a more contemporary iteration of many of these processes for making place. Rather than a reliance on face-to-face co-presence, place-making of materially localities can occur in online spaces. Held apart, none of these processes sufficiently illuminates the place-making process, it is only when the findings are combined that a more well-rounded image of place, and its construction, emerges.

My analysis in this thesis divided a multi-faceted approach into three streams to reflect the theoretical approaches informing the analysis (see figure 8). Crucially, each of these approaches has the same aim. That is, to expose young people's place-making in a regional town in a way that is sensitive to changes broadly attributed to globalisation. Revealing these processes allows the analytical gaze to be directed in an appropriate way and thus informs how place is made by young people (see figure 8, diagram 1), and the places that were constructed by them (see figure 8, diagram 2). The types of places made include Shepparton as a regional town, several key public localities within the town, and those stretched out, blurry-edged material localities within and beyond the town constructed by young people via the digital medium of social technologies.

In this way, Shepparton, as a regional town, is made by its young residents in a range of ways. While, young people were revealed as active participants in a process that includes the whole community, there were some youth-specific facets to their practice. One iteration of this is through many of the discursive constructions re-produced, and re-purposed by the participants that have been directed towards young people (though not always exclusively). For instance, the discourses of disadvantage encapsulated in the *Insight* episode on youth-employment scarcity, teen-age pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse (see Potaka 2015). Seen as

broadly 'youth problems', the participants in my study re-purposed and re-interpreted many of these negative place-discourses. Further, micro-territorialising is a place-making process that young people engage in more commonly, and participation is often conditioned on youth-status (among other structural positions such as cultural background). Digital media is another medium often associated with young people. Though this assumption has been critiqued (see Smith, Skrbis and Western 2013), and such technologies are popular across the age range. Still, young people are perhaps intimately familiar with social media technologies in a unique way (see boyd 2014). In light of this, the making of digitally mediated, material localities is a form of youthful place-making emerging from the nestling of digital technologies within their everyday lives.

Figure 8 – Thesis findings in diagram form

Diagram 1

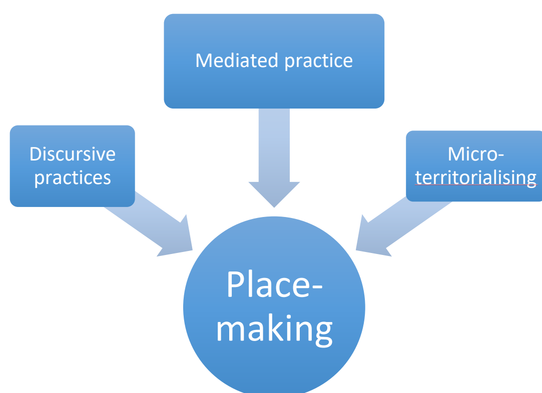
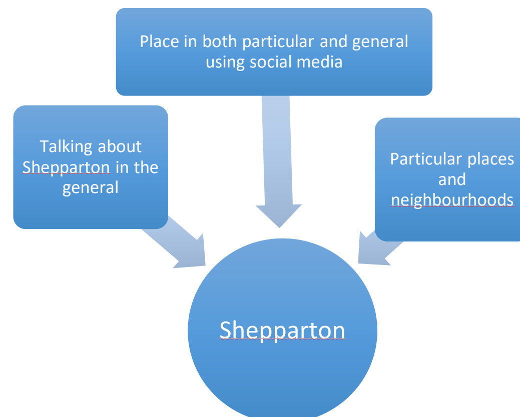


Diagram 2



Addressing the research questions

The key empirical insights from chapter five concern young people's discursive constructions of place, alongside more emotive, experiential relations with place. This related to the first research question guiding my analysis: *How is place, including the regional town, or particular places within the town, talked about*? Place reputation emerged a key mediator underscoring many respondents' interpretation of their town. Importantly, however, discourses narrating wholesale disadvantage and social deprivation were not uncritically reproduced. Respondents instead drew on their own experiences in Shepparton to variously

subvert, counter, or confirm the "discursive dominance" (Blokland 2012) of isolation and disadvantage impacting young people's opportunities in a regional town. Shepparton was constructed by the respondents in thoroughly relational terms, with an expansive interpretation of what constitutes 'Shepparton'. Nearby satellite towns anchored respondents' proximate mobilities and their traversal of nearby spaces and localities in the town. These localities were made by the young people and experienced in many instances in emotive terms. They were understood in more embodied, sensory ways, than in the cognitive, representational terms considered in the first half of chapter five.

Mundane, everyday practices such as going 'down the street' to the shopping mall with a group of friends, or driving cars around town after meeting friends at the lake, or the car wash, were the types of familiar, habitual performances. For the young participants, places and subjectivities did not necessarily emerge in a pre-existing form, rather both were shaped and made through the 'doing' of place while drawing on previously established knowledges (see Butler paraphrased in Gregson and Rose 2000). The intersections between respondents and places made by them existed to mutually shape the other. These localities were ultimately "…a discursive practice in action" (Benson and Jackson 2012: 796). Discursive constructions, experiential sensations, and practice were three closely related, intersecting forms of making place among the young people in Shepparton. Thus, obscured place-making practices were demonstrated and made visible for analysis by applying this theoretical schema.

The second research question was *What are the agentic and structural shaping mechanisms for young people's place-making in Shepparton?* To address this, a selection of micro-territories (Harris and Wyn 2009) were analysed in detail. Using Harris and Wyn's (2009) concept of micro-territories of the local enabled consideration of the shaping influences of various age-based social structures alongside young people's decisions to traverse their local geographies and undermine structural constraints on autonomous mobility. The young people of this study constructed, and embedded themselves within discrete, demarcated micro-territories in Shepparton that were uniquely reflective of youthful movements within and across place. These included residential neighbourhoods, public places such as the car wash, the lake, the mall as well as night-time meetings points. Young people's unique emplacement was complicated by a range of structural influences or characteristics, including social class, gender, cultural background and sexual orientation. Their experience of relative

freedoms and ready traversals of locales facilitated the construction of diverse geographies across town which were underscored by these structural factors.

Young people's participation in micro-territorialising is in many respects reflective of relationships with power and this was also the case in Shepparton. The dynamics of social privilege, and the impact on respondents' micro-territoralising practice emerged in focus group discussions, as it became clear that some respondents were more heavily involved in micro-territorialising than others. Indeed, some seemed to be almost entirely removed from this form of place-making. The lines of power corresponded with structural positions lending respondent's greater legitimacy and privilege in the community. This emerged most markedly among focus groups with relatively older respondents, working in professional careers, and sharing (mostly) Anglo-Australian cultural backgrounds. This is not to say that age was the only parameter impacting respondents' spatial-embeddedness and micro-territorialising practice. Rather, a complex intersection of structural positions served to embed the young people in place, and demonstrate their agentic traversals of Shepparton's public places. This was a salient finding that informed the complexity of youthful place-making in regional towns, in late-modern times. Various public spaces within the town, principally the mall, the lake and the car wash, as well as distinct residential neighbourhoods, were extensively debated and defined by the participants.

Chapter seven addresses the third research question: *How is local place made in the context of social media technologies utilised by young residents?* Digital media served as an important place-making lens deployed to a varying extent across the whole respondent pool. Respondents' lives, embedded and emplaced in their town, were also reflected online. This occurred through the digital mediation of close social and familial relationships, through practising place online, and by rendering materially embedded images online. The particular ecology of affordances did not necessarily narrate a particular form of material place, but rather *clarified* respondents' own sense of place in and beyond Shepparton, and made it visible for analysis in a new way. As in other forms of place-making, relational intersections of gender, age, cultural background and to a lesser extent, class, also emerged in digitally mediated place-making practice.

The material, physical core of these virtual interactions speaks to the thorough embeddedness of online social spheres in the young people's every-day, place-based lives. This was

demonstrated in respondents' discussion about avidly utilising social media for extended interactions with a spatially embedded network of intimate peers. This included mutually engaging in hobbies, interactions and entertainment online, as well as sharing images, selfies and representations of place-based lives across a variety of platforms. In a similar vein to boyd's (2014) findings, social gatherings from material settings could be transferred to online localities by the young people in a range of ways using a diversity of affordances (see Madianou and Milller 2012). Yet, for the young people in this study, the relationship was more multi-directional than articulated in boyd's (2014) work. Mediated and non-mediated interaction fluidly intersected virtual and material environs, each mutually impacting and co-constituting the other. Social media technologies shared an intimate, constant presence "on their person, in their pockets and their ears, embedded…in most spaces they enter" (Livingstone 2009: vii). Several participants were keen to profess that they were not 'experts', and implied a certain standard or level of use that they felt they did not adhere to. However, unsurprisingly, and consistent with the findings of others (Green 2007, boyd 2014, Smith, Skrbis and Western 2013), most of the young participants made use of the technologically saturated environment in which they had grown up, picking and choosing an 'ecology' of technical affordances designed to meet '*their* own' socially and culturally embedded requirements (Madianau and Miller 2012).

In conceptualising spatially embedded online socialites, it is salient to note that not all of the respondents' online interlocutors resided within a geographically proximate zone. Some young people's online spheres encompassed vast distances. However, in many ways, these online spheres were nonetheless materially emplaced and reflective of a materially embedded life. That is, chat interlocutors, or social media networks, were still made up of those sharing some kind of material connection (see Hargittai 2007, boyd 2014). As a new form of making place, the digitally mediated dynamics of the young people's place-making emerged as a key finding in this study.

The impacts of globalisation

As established, Shepparton is part of the global countryside (Woods 2007) that characterises much of Australia's regional and rural areas. The findings of this study revealed that there were several key aspects of globalisation that emerged for the young people and their place-making projects, either explicitly, or implicitly. These concern impacts related to industrial restructure, and the flow-on effects for the youth labour market. While Shepparton has proved relatively resilient in terms of the robustness of its local economy, change and uncertainty pervades the town. As such, these impacts emerge in a unique way, while shaping and impacting the young residents of the town in different and unexpected ways.

Participant responses reflected the impacts of economic change in discussions about future aspirations, or life-choices made in terms of pursuing tertiary education as a means to secure a stable job. Discussions during focus groups often concerned casual, part-time or full-time employment. However, respondents rarely reflected explicitly on macro-level processes affecting labour markets in Shepparton, nor the flow-on impacts for young people (for instance the recent foreign buy-out of a major industrial employer and the subsequent instability due to an anticipated closure). Still, the insecurity of the employment market emerged more implicitly in extensive discussions about the need to secure tertiary education, and the search for stable jobs. Further, older participants discussed either moving away, considering moving, or having returned from larger places generally due to education or employment. For many, this was an unquestioned norm, a taken-for-granted feature of living in the 'global countryside'.

The impacts of this particular set of globalising processes on place-making are complex. Restricted industrial sectors and insecure labour markets have obliged an outwards migration for young people in many instances (see Alston 2004). Indeed, this is a common research topic inspired by fears of declining rural towns with receding youth populations. This study revealed a more complex relationship with place than what is often implied in rural sustainability discourses however. This study found a relatively mobile population of young people, comfortable moving throughout regional Victoria and for many, with an interest in pursuing opportunities outside of Shepparton. Several however (two focus groups) were returning migrants, and this seemed to indicate a cyclical migratory trend. But mobilities such as this by no means preclude a robust place-making enterprise (see Walsh 2012). Rather

a more elastic form of locality is constructed through the back-and-forth mobilities criss-crossing regional Victoria's major centres (see Martin and Rizvi 2014). Irrespective of an apparent need to leave regional towns, other respondents talked about working in Shepparton, and expressed contentment to remain. Therefore, while industrial restructure is a facet of globalisation that has impacted Shepparton, it has shaped the lives of the participants in different ways without necessarily having a negative impact on their place-making projects.

The role of human migration, and the diversity of the community in Shepparton, is another facet of globalisation that shaped place-making. Shepparton, as the field of research for this study, has a rich history of immigration. The town is collectively understood as a 'multicultural town'. In this way, the shaping influences of globalisation have been present (most visibly) since the post-WW2 period when southern European migrants started arriving; a range of incomers have since settled in the town (ABS 2011b). The newness, and difference associated with different diaspora communities living in the same town is perhaps reduced somewhat in Shepparton given this historical context. In terms of the research study, the cultural diversity of Shepparton was demonstrated in the participant pool. A range of first, second and third generation migrant young people from several different backgrounds took part and contributed their voices to this exploration of place-making. Another dynamic emerged in references to diversity in discussions among all focus groups. In all focus groups, invariably, direct or euphemistic reference was made to the 'multicultural areas' of the town. Here, Shepparton's place-identity as a culturally diverse town was faithfully reproduced in the "circulating representations" of the town (Benson and Jackson 2012).

Like the changes associated with economic restructure, the context of cultural diversity shaped the place-making projects of the young respondents. Respondents in the most diverse groups (see FG 7, 9, and 12) discussed culturally shaped uses of some public spaces. These included, for instance, walking in particular local neighbourhoods, or taking part in large gatherings at the lake with family and friends from their community. Such discussions were characteristic of focus groups comprised of first or second-generation migrants more so than culturally homogenous groups. Conversely, in other focus groups, there emerged a fear of the ethnic other. There was a discernible trend equating neighbourhoods which were seen to be associated with a particular diaspora community with danger and risk. This precipitated discussions about places and neighbourhoods to avoid and skirt around. In this way, place-making became a process of bordering to separate 'us' from 'them'. In other ways, however,

there was only a negligible impact on place-making associated with the human migration flows in Shepparton. Places were socially, discursively, experientially, and digitally constructed similarly across all respondents irrespective of cultural background. Rather, differences emerged more in the form of place made, rather than the mode in which it came to be.

Lastly, flows of information delivered through digital media were a particularly visible symbol of globalisation and were indicative of the ease with which people could access globally sourced content and information. Participant responses indicated a territorially embedded form of use, though consuming non-local content was also common. Territoriality emerged in the embeddedness of the key social relationships that were the main motivators to go online. That is, interacting online with friends and family encountered in the everyday, material contexts of the town. The territorial embeddedness of use speaks to the place-making role played by digital media technologies.

The impacts of digital media technologies on place-making for the young people of this study were myriad and subtle. Here, the social construction of place extends to the digitally mediated sphere of social technologies. While the onus remains on material localities, there is a stretching of such localities reflecting on the spatio-temporal malleability available in online spaces. Even within a territorially embedded context, users can collapse proximate geographic boundaries to interact with friends living in neighbourhoods across town, or in the satellite towns of Shepparton's commuter belt. This can be achieved while sourcing memes, videos or conducting information searches that collapse even greater geographic boundaries. More proximate forays were seamlessly coupled with those dis-embedded interactions to meld unique, elastic places within, and beyond Shepparton. The spatio-temporal malleability available in online spaces was a unique element that allowed a stretching of the place-making projects enacted in other forms, such as discursive, experiential or practice-based. Invariably the material places of these young people's lives loomed large irrespective of the mediums for interaction.

While globalisation is certainly more complex, and encompasses greater fields of impact than what is discussed here, these key facets demonstrate the context of globalisation according to the participants of this study, and illuminate the role it plays in the making of Shepparton according to them. What is revealed is a particular regional town responding to globalising

flows in a range of ways. The young participants of this study variously negotiated these flows, and these came to foreground their place-making projects. Rather than wholesale change, or a disembedding of young people from local place, the participants responded to a set of mundane, everyday circumstances and drew what tools they could to construct place in a way that reflected the unique needs of their lives lived in a contemporary, regional town.

Directions for future research

The research I have presented in this thesis represents a significant contribution to collective understandings concerning place, and how it is made in late modern times. The findings challenge conventional wisdom through their disruption of common assumptions regarding regional places, young people and the role of social media technologies in everyday lives. The findings also contribute to a burgeoning academic literature on place-making, and provide unique insights into the construction of place among a particular cohort of young, regional people in Australia. It does this by applying a theoretical lens designed to expose the obscured processes of place-making in a comprehensive, and novel way appropriate to the contemporary globalised conditions underscoring everyday, youthful lives in the countryside.

Still, making place in globalised times is an increasingly complex process, and opportunities to highlight and reveal these for sociological analysis demand increasingly innovative theoretical and methodological design. To this end, future researchers in this area have a cornucopia of opportunities in terms of analysing these processes further. Developing online and digital methods would yield more thorough insights into young people's realisation of place in virtual contexts. For instance, a closer analysis of images, and video, including the types of performances recorded, would enable more detailed conclusions in regards to the types of places, and the types of embedded relationships that are rendered there. Further, more traditional phenomenological methodologies, for example participant observation, might facilitate a more detailed understanding of the intersections between movement, digital medias, place and people. Focus groups, the key method utilised in this study, enabled an exploration into many of these phenomena, but one finding is that more depth and detail would increase understanding, and knowledge of the complex, and messy mechanisms deployed to make place in contemporary, globalised times.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Focus group composition

FG #	Pax	Gender ratio	Age range	Current education	Current employment	Cultural background	Identifier	Pseudonyms
1	4	1 m; 3f	20-25	All tertiary students	2 state not employed	2 Aboriginal; 2 Anglo Australian	Local tertiary students A	Mia, Emily, Harper, Mason
2	4	1 m; 3f	18-20	All tertiary students	2 employed; 1 casually employed	All Anglo Australian, Southern European	Local tertiary students B	Hayley, Sophie, Grace, Jayden
3	6	1 m; 5 f	23-28	2 tertiary student	4 full-time employment in professional careers	5 Anglo Australian; 1 Indian	Older professionals	Hannah, Lily, Liz, Penny, Ellie, Caleb
4	4	3 m; 1 f	19-20	1 trade apprentice; 1 secondary school	3 full-time work	All Anglo/European Australian	Car hobbyist friends	Johnno, Travis, Tom, Lucy
5	4	1 m; 3 f	18-24	1 secondary student; 1 tertiary student	2 full-time employment	All Anglo Australian	Young community volunteers	Ava, Claire, Kylie, Connor
6	7	6 m; 1 f	20-27	1 secondary student; 2 tertiary students	5 full-time employment in professional careers; 1 casual work	5 Italian; 1 Anglo Australian; 1 Albanian	Soccer team	Marco, Luca, Daniel, Matt, Jacob, Stefan, Anna
7	6	6 m	17-25	4 secondary students	1 full-time employment; 3 part-time/casual employment	All Iraqi	Religious youth group, young men	Ahmed, Kiaan, Ayaan, Omar, Jamir, Sami
8	2	2 f	19-20	1 tertiary student; 1 secondary student	2 casual/part-time employment	All Anglo Australian	Community volunteers, young women	Zoe, Jade

9	4	4 f	16-19	3 secondary students; 1 tertiary student	Not completed	All Iraqi	Religious youth group, young women	Tota, Noora, Sara, Dleen
10	6	4 m; 2 f	17-24	2 secondary students; 1 tertiary student	1 full-time employment ; 5 casual/part-time employment	All Anglo Australian , Southern European, Russian	Support group	Michael, Frank, Lucas, Emma, Jake, Ruby
11	6	4 m; 2 f	16-20	6 VCAL students (1 also trade apprentice)	2 casual employment ; 1 full-time employment	2 Anglo Australian ; 1 Iraqi; 1 Afghani; 1 eastern European	VCAL students	Ryan, Austin, Dom, Clara, Bree, Zayan
12	8	3 m; 5 f	20-23	5 tertiary students; 1 trade apprentice	4 casual/part-time employment	All Afghani	Migrant community group	Aisha, Mariam, Duniya, Farah, Mina, Abdul, Dani, Ismail

*Open-ended items on the questionnaire were not always answered by respondents. Therefore, where the numbers in the ‘current education’, ‘current employment’, and ‘cultural background’ do not represent each individual present for the focus group, this means that these questions were left blank.
*the categories ‘current education’, and ‘current employment’ refer to respondents’ occupation at the time of the research and does not encompass past employment or education experiences.

Appendix 2 - Participant details

	Frequency	Percentage
Number of participants	62*	
Number of female participants	32	51.6
Number of male participants	30	48.4
Number of focus groups	12	
Mean age in years	21.5	
Number born in Australia	44	71
Number born outside of Australia	18	29
Number born in Shepparton	29	47.8
Range of time in years that incomers have spent in Shepparton 3-5 years 6-8 9-11 12-14 15-18	33 not born in Shepparton 12 3 6 5 6 (one not complete)	53.2 19.4 4.8 9.7 8.1 9.7
Number lived in Shepparton and surrounds whole life	29	47.8
Both parents born overseas	17	27.4
One parent born overseas, one in Australia	9	14.5
One parent born overseas, unsure of second parent	5	8.1
One parent born in Australia, unsure second parent	8	13
Both born in Australia	21	19.4
(Not completed or unsure)	2	
Neighbourhood (middle, edge or outside of town)* Middle Edge Outside	 22 20 17 (3 did not complete)	 35.5 32.3 27.4
Number in tertiary/secondary education Tertiary Secondary	31 19 12	50 30.6 19.4
Number of trade apprentices	3	5
Total number in education	34	54.8
Number in casual employment	14	23
Number in part time employment	4	6.5
Number in full time employment, in the areas of… Business Education Finance Health Sector Retail Misc Not specified	20 2 3 3 2 2 5 3	32.3 3.2 4.8 4.8 3.2 3.2 8 4.8
Number not in employment or who did not complete the question	24	39
Total number in employment	38	61.2
Anglo/ Australian/ European cultural background	24	39
Iraqi	10	16.1
Afghani	9	14.5
Italian	7	11.3
Eastern Europe (Albanian, Croatian, Lithuanian, Russian)	4	6.5
Aboriginal	2	3.2
Southern European	2	3.2
Miscellaneous (including South African, Indian)	3	4.8

*One interview took place and this participant did not take part in a focus group. This individuals' questionnaire information is included here.
*Three follow up interviews were undertaken with individuals who had already taken part in a focus group. These individual's questionnaire information is included here.
*13 participants specified south Shepparton as their neighbourhood, although these participants interpreted the question differently and indicated middle or edge of town in the initial component of the question. Additionally, six participants indicated they were from Mooroopna, although they also variously indicated edge and outside of town as their neighbourhood in the first component of the question.

Appendix 3 – Focus group protocol

1	**What is it like living in Shepparton?**
2	How would you describe Shepparton to someone from Melbourne?
2a	Or to someone from another country?
3	Some people might say 'noting is going on in country places like Shepparton': What do you think about that statement?
4	Tell me about particular parts of the town that you like better than others?
4a	Parts that you don't like? Why/why not? (explore affective connections/experiences of different places of meaning)
4b	Do these places *feel* different/better? (explore affective connections/experiences of different places of meaning)
5	Tell me about things do you like to do in Shepparton?
5a	For recreation, socialising, employment, education?
5b	Do you do these things in other places?
6	Tell me what you think an ethnically and culturally diverse place might look like?
6a	Is Shepparton a diverse community?
6b	Tell me about friends or people you interact with from different backgrounds?
7	Tell me about using your mobile phone/mediating technology to talk to people in Shepparton?
7a	What about the internet generally? (ie YouTube, shopping, entertainment, dating?)
7b	Or mainly face-to-face? Is that a better way to interact?
7c	Tell me about any 'global communities' you engage in?
8	People sometimes say 'young people are obsessed with social media', what do you think about that statement?
8a	So you think social technologies are important? Why/why not?
8b	Hypothetically, how would you react if your phone/computer was broken and you couldn't use it for – one day? One week?

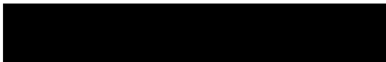
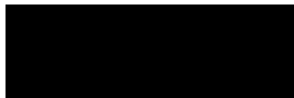
Appendix 4 - List of codes and sub-codes, and frequency of reference

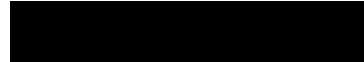
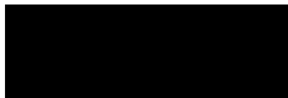
Code	Sub-code	Number of focus groups mentioning the code	Number of references within all transcripts
General negative regarding place		9	15
	Perceptions and judgements of Shepparton	2	3
General positive regarding place		5	10
Particular places in Shepparton		12	59
	Positive associations	11	30
	Negative associations	10	29
Regionality or rurality		10	19
	Regional as quiet or peaceful	7	16
Sense of community		9	22
	Community dynamics	3	9
Towns around Shepparton		6	8
	Mooroopna	9	13
Anti-city sentiment		6	8
Positive regarding city or other places		6	10
Getting things in larger places		1	1
Things to do and place		8	20
Diversity and place		12	28
Youth experience		1	1
Social technologies		12	57
	ICTs embedded in experience	6	10
	ICTs embedded in local place	11	27
	ICTs and entertainment	3	5
	ICTs and image based use	9	13
	ICTs as important	10	17
	ICTs for information gathering	3	7
	ICTs as less important	4	5
	Negative impacts of ICTs	2	4

Appendix 5 – Information Statement

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Regional places in Australia under the conditions of globalisation

Associate Professor Anita Harris

Monash University School of Social Sciences


Catherine Waite

Monash University School of Social Sciences


Catherine is a sociology PhD student living in Shepparton and Anita is supervising her project. We are inviting you to take part in Catherine's PhD research project. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact Catherine or Anita via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

What does the research involve?
We are interested to find out from you what it is like living in a place like Shepparton. We would like to hear how you might compare it to other places and where you think Shepparton sits within Australia, or the world. We are also interested in hearing about the types of social technologies you like to use and what you think about them.

We are inviting you to volunteer for a focus group that will be recorded. This will take about one hour and you will have an opportunity to talk with some other young people in Shepparton. We are also asking you to complete a short, one-page questionnaire. Afterwards, everyone will be invited to contribute to an online focus group where you can continue discussing some of the topics from the face-to-face focus group. We would also like to ask some of you to take part in an interview, which will take another hour. Further, if you are interested, we would like to come along to any daily activities or events you might want to share as part of the project (this is called 'participant observation'). You can choose to do one of these, or two. You do not have to do all three if you do not want to. Catherine will be conducting focus groups, interviews and participant observation. She will also be making notes throughout to help her remember your contributions.

Why were you chosen for this research?
We are interested to hear about living in Shepparton from young people aged 18 to 29 who have been living here for at least five years. We want to understand these topics from your perspective.

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research
Before taking part in the project, we will need to receive a signed consent form from you (see next page). The completed consent form will be held separately to any information collected. Participation in this research is voluntary which means that you do not have to take part if you do not want to. It also means that you can withdraw at any time, or choose to skip questions. You will not need to give a reason for this. Additionally, after the focus group or interview you can contact researchers and ask to have your information removed from the project if you choose (up to three months after). Unfortunately, in the case of focus groups, we cannot guarantee the removal of your specific contribution because it may be difficult to distinguish.

Possible benefits and risks to participants
Catherine and Anita anticipate that by participating in this project, you will gain a better understanding of what it is like for young people living in Shepparton, and how you use social technologies to keep up with others. There is a slight possibility that you may feel some discomfort if topics of discussion arise with which you are not comfortable

talking about. If this occurs, please let Catherine or Anita know, or contact one of the counselling services listed below.

Confidentiality
Participation in this project is confidential. Any answers or things that you say will be confidential. This means that we will not tell anyone that you were involved in the project and we will not talk specifically about what you said. Any materials (for example consent forms, questionnaires, focus group or interview transcripts) in which you might be able to be identified will be held in secure storage at Monash University. We will write reports and research articles that talk in general terms about what you said as group. There is a very small risk that we might inadvertently include something potentially identifiable. However, we will make every effort to avoid this, for example by using pseudonyms and leaving out distinguishing information.

In regards to the focus groups, we can guarantee that we will maintain strict confidentiality however this cannot be assured for the whole group. We will talk to the group about why it is important not to repeat what was said during the focus groups and everyone will be reminded to only share what they are comfortable talking about. Further, the online focus groups will be held in a secured 'group' page on Facebook that will be deleted at the end of the project. However, there is a small risk that your data will not be maintained to the same standards of confidentiality as the face-to-face focus groups and interviews.

Information for Participants
For your information, here are some local support services should you feel you need them.

Local Services			
The Bridge Youth Service	5831 2390	www.thebridge.org.au	Websites
Uniting Care Cutting Edge	5831 6157	www.ucce.org.au	www.reachout.com
Family Care	5823 7000	www.familycare.net.au	www.beyondblue.com
Goulburn Valley Community Health	5823 3200	www.gvchs.com.au	www.gvcasa.com.au

Storage of data
The information that you give us will be stored in secure, lockable filing cabinets at Monash University in Melbourne. Electronic files will be held in password protected personal computer drives belonging to Anita and Catherine at Monash University in Melbourne. Only Catherine and Anita will have access to this information. We will write reports and research articles based on your information which more people will have access to. Five years after we write the last research article and the information you gave us is no longer required, we will destroy it. The information will be permanently deleted from secured personal drives and hard copies will be shredded and disposed of in secure waste rubbish bins.

Results
The results of this project will be available via a number of sources. We will write a community report outlining the findings of the project and give this to anyone interested. Research articles and a PhD thesis will also be written. Research articles will be available online. The information we use to write these reports will not identify you, instead they will speak in general terms about what we have found.

Complaints
Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):
Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Thank you,

Anita Harris **Catherine Waite**

Appendix 6 – Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Regional places in Australia under the conditions of globalisation

Chief Investigator: Associate Professor Anita Harris

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
Take part in a face-to-face focus group of up to 8 people (which will be audio recorded)	☐	☐
Complete a short questionnaire	☐	☐
Take part in an online focus group of up to 30 people	☐	☐

Name of Participant ______________________________

Participant Signature ______________________________ Date ____________

Appendix 7 – Ethics approval

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: CF15/613 - 2015000275

Project Title: Regional places in Australia under the conditions of globalisation

Chief Investigator: Assoc Prof Anita Harris

Approved: **From:** 23 March 2015 **To:** 23 March 2020

Terms of approval - *Failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.*

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Professor Nip Thomson
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Catherine Waite

Monash University, Room 111, Chancellery Building E

Appendix 8 – Recruitment flyer

Regional places in Australia under the conditions of globalisation

My name is Catherine Waite. I am a PhD candidate at Monash University living in Shepparton. My research focus is young people aged 18-29 living in Shepparton. I would like to ask you what it is like living in a diverse, globalised regional place.

What: I am interested to find out from you:

- What is it like living in a place like Shepparton.
- How you compare Shepparton to other places.
- Where you think Shepparton sits within Australia and the world.
- The types of social technologies you like to use and what you think about them.

I invite you to volunteer for a confidential **focus group and short questionnaire**. It will take about one hour. You will have an opportunity to talk with other young people living in Shepparton. You will also be invited to contribute to an **online focus group** where we will continue the discussion. Further, you can take part in an **interview**. And, if you are interested, I will be happy to come along to any activities you might want to share as part of the project.

Who: I would like to hear from you about living in Shepparton. Specifically, young people aged **18 to 29 who have been living here for at least five years**. I want to understand from your perspective.

When and where: To find out details, please get in contact with Catherine today at cathy.waite@monash.edu

Come and have a conversation about living in Shepparton and to enjoy some afternoon/morning tea at the same time. I hope to see you there!

Afternoon tea/ Morning tea will be provided

Contact
Catherine Waite (PhD Researcher)

Anita Harris (Project Supervisor)