ABSTRACT This article focuses on the difference that place makes to methodological practice. It argues, following Sin, that the spatial contexts in which methods are carried out remain ‘largely excluded from any theorization of the social construction of knowledge’ (2003: 306). Through viewing ‘place’ as both a social and a geographical entity (following Cresswell, 1996), this article argues that although the importance of social relationships in methodology is widely accepted (through, for example, processes of researcher reflexivity), the influence of the ‘where of method’ has received less attention. The article addresses this issue by arguing for the explicit consideration of the geographical dimension of place in methodology. It does so by introducing the notion of a polylogic approach to method. The polylogic approach moves away from the conventional configuration of method as a dialogue (e.g. between researcher and researched) and towards method explicitly including researcher, researched, and the geographic place of methodology.

KEYWORDS: geography, methodology, place, polylogue, research

Introduction

Despite the plethora of spatial metaphors, the theorization of space in the setting of an interview has been curiously abstracted and removed from the concrete ‘place’ in which an interview takes place. The spatial contexts under which interviews are carried out remain largely excluded from any theorization of the social construction of knowledge. (Sin, 2003: 306)

Over recent years there has been a growing interest in the difference that places makes to everyday life. This ‘spatial’ turn across the social sciences (see Cook
et al., 2000; Levy, 2004; Lossau and Lippuner, 2004; Martin, 1999; Warf and Arias, 2008) has led to a refocusing of attention on the key terms of geography, and the effect they have not only on the subjects and objects of research, but also on the research encounter itself. Following Cresswell, the notion of place can be generally understood to have two key dimensions: it is at once a geographical and a social category. Place can be understood in a specific geographical sense, for example as a locale or a location, as well as in a specifically social sense, relating to a position in a group hierarchy or culture (and expressed in such common phrases as ‘we [they] know our [their] place’ [after Cresswell, 1996]). This article argues that while many disciplines have done much to demonstrate the significance of the social dimension of ‘place’ in methodological practice (through, for example, processes of reflexivity with regard to the positionality of researcher and respondent), the influence of the ‘where of method’ has received less attention. As Sin identifies (above) the turn towards the geographical has not resulted in the difference that place makes to methodology being fully accounted for. As Preston notes, ‘knowledge claims are readily given a social location in terms of gender, race, class, theoretical and cultural context, but they are rarely given a physical location in a particular geographical or material environment’ (2005: 374). In general terms, methodological textbooks often deal with the influence of place in a cursory fashion. For example, Bell dismisses the place of method as, ‘a venue ... [where] you will not be disturbed’ (1999: 141). Arskey and Knight (1999: 117–18) suggest that whilst focusing on specific geographical places (in this case a drawing of one respondent’s house) is a good method for generating conversation, interview methods should simply ‘take place’ (in the sense that they should occur). Many popular undergraduate texts go so far as to recommend that the place of method should be erased in the ‘name’ of anonymity (see for example Kitchin and Tate, 1999). In many cases therefore, methodological approaches have envisioned place as a simple backdrop that provides the means to exercise methodological praxis, rather than explicitly seeking to understand the spatiality of that praxis. This article argues that the geographical dimension of place can fundamentally affect the nature of knowledge accessible through a range of methodological techniques. Through using a range of examples which demonstrate the difference that place makes to method it proposes that the ‘where of method’ should be explicitly considered in the practice of methodology. To conceptualize this process the article introduces the polylogic approach. The polylogic approach moves away from configuring research method as a dialogue (e.g. between researcher and researched) and towards method explicitly including researcher, researched, and the place of methodology. From a polylogic approach, the material placing of methodological techniques should be deliberated over as systematically and reflexively as the choice of technique and the social positioning of the researcher is at present. Through so doing, geographers could operationalize their methodology ‘as if place mattered’.
The difference that place makes

The importance of place has been acknowledged in philosophy since the times of Greek antiquity. From Aristotle onwards, place as a term primarily functioned to geographically situate objects. However, this invocation of the 'simple location of things' as Casey (2005) puts it, does not suffice in exhausting the complex facets of this apparently straightforward term. With the spatial turn in the social sciences, and the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of much inquiry, place is being considered in new ways. Place can be thought of as something that not only locates, but also as something that surrounds and contains. Agnew and Duncan (1989: 2) define this trait as a site’s ‘locale’. A ‘locale’ comprises the built and social context of community relations, and the particular worldview or way of life associated with the place in general (see Wilborg, 2004). Agnew and Duncan also identify that place can generate a connection with people who live in or know the area: this range of subjective feelings they define as a ‘sense of place’ (1989: 2). Such emotional connections often lead to places being considered as static and stable; it ‘makes sense’ that places come to be defined when processes of attachment occur over a long period, stabilizing and making durable place identities so they are widely recognized and their values compounded. However, with the onset of relational approaches within the social sciences in general (see, for example, Jones, 2009) it is also possible to frame place as unstable and mobile (see, for example, Doel, 1999; Massey, 1993, 2005); from this perspective place has come to be understood as an emerging composition (Anderson, 2009), as a coming together of flows and trajectories (Massey, 2006), as a ‘pause’ in a ‘continuous line’ (Ingold, 2005), or as a ‘meeting place’ in a constellation of relations (Massey, 1993). In line with the increasingly interdisciplinary focus on place, sites are now rarely considered solely in terms of their narrowly-defined geographical dimensions, but rather as inherently connected to time, space and society (see Soja, 1996). This growing acknowledgement that physical places are also social and cultural (they are, in the words of Preston, ‘deeply woven into the fabric of who we are’ [2003: XVI]) has changed the study of place from one that was seen to be ‘highly abstract and remote from experience’ (Tuan, 1975: 151) and towards an approach that considers place as ‘thoroughly meshed’ (Casey, 2001: 684) into the human condition. As Tilley puts it, this perspective regards place as:

[A] medium rather than a container for action, something that is involved in the action and cannot be divorced from it. [Place] is meaningfully constituted in relation to human agency and activity. A humanized space forms both the medium and outcome of action, both constraining and enabling it. (1994: 10)

Cresswell (1996) sums up this indelible connection between people and place by arguing that place has two interrelated dimensions, it is both social and geographical. The geographical dimension of place may refer to a combination of site as location or locale, whilst place’s social dimension refers to the way in
which we as individuals are placed in relation to social hierarchy and opportunity, who gains access to particular sites, and what they can do there. Place in a social sense can therefore be understood in terms of its associated ideology and meaning, as well as the related social expectations of behaviour. As Cresswell states, ‘Someone can be “put in her place” or is supposed to “know his place”’. There is, we are told, ‘a place for everything and everything in its place’ (2004: 103). When used in this sense the word place, ‘clearly refers to something more than a spatial referent. Implied [here] is a sense of the proper ... [these] are expectations about behaviour that relate a position in the social structure to actions in space’ (Cresswell, 1996: 3). The unique combination of the social and geographical dimension of place has been the point of exploration for many disciplines, principally geography. Geography focuses on the places that ground cultural activity and, as a consequence, illuminates how experiences and processes differ from place to place. The following advice to apprentice geographers from Valentine (1997) highlights this primary aspect of geographical endeavour:

As geographers, we are ... concerned with the difference that place makes and so [for example, I] may choose interviewees who live in both rural and urban areas and who live in different types of housing so that [I] can explore the role of place in [my] interviews. (1997: 112–13)

Here Valentine outlines the conventional approach to studying the difference that place makes. Due to the unique combination of social and geographical dimensions in every place, practices differ from site to site and our methodologies require access to these processes to understand their particularity. In this sense research practice is focused on the relationship between ‘Respondent’ and ‘Place’, with the ‘Researcher’ outside these relations ‘looking in’ (see Figure 1).

However, despite the geographical turn in the social sciences, the difference that place makes to methodology has not been fully integrated into traditional research practice. Although, as we will see, the social dimensions of place are increasingly taken seriously as significant factors influencing the research encounter, the geographical dimensions of place often continue to be overlooked. To paraphrase Sin (above) the places in which methodology is carried out remain largely absent from any theorization of the social construction of knowledge (2003: 306). In the next section of this article we outline how the social dimensions of place have been considered in methodology, and how this consideration has often ignored or obscured the geographical influence of place.

**Placing methodology**

Place, in the sense of social (or indeed cultural, political, economic, etc.) positioning, has had a significant influence over the practice of methodology. Place as an academic location or positionality, for example, has been widely acknowledged as
affecting research practice, both constraining and enabling the research encounter (Bondi, 1997; Rose, 1997). The feminist tradition has been central in seeking to understand the influence of this social dimension of place. As Haraway has argued, the tendency for modern science to reject the connections between human and place has often rendered passive this crucial aspect of positionality. Through this rejection an ‘ideology of objectivity’ (1988: 584) was fostered where scientific researchers could ‘deny location, embodiment and partial perspective’ (1988: 584); in short they could dismiss their social, cultural and philosophical positioning. These ‘god tricks’, as Haraway dubs them, allowed scientific researchers to maintain the artifice that they see from nowhere and everywhere simultaneously, effectively refuting the social dimension of place in their inquiry. In contrast, Haraway argues for,

politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. (1988: 589)

Thus as Haraway, and later Rose, has argued, the feminist tradition has sought to overcome ‘the false neutrality and universality of so much academic knowledge’ (Rose, 1997: 306), reinstating the socially placed – or situated – dimensions of knowledge. This reinstatement is an important process. It is now customary that researchers and students systematically reflect on the affects their social placing may have on the research encounter – the role that their gender, ethnicity, language, professional positioning, bodily demeanour etc may have on the methodology and respondent in question. This is acknowledged in the ethnographic ‘field’, for example, where the social placing of the research encounter is of foremost significance. (As Amit identifies with reference to

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**Figure 1** Traditional approach to the research studying the difference that place makes

This approach coincides with the Cartesian approach of the disembodied scholar, remote and ‘objective’ from the objects of study (see, for example, Haraway, 1988). In this approach, the place of method is not considered as an active agent in the research encounter.
ethnography: ‘there is surely no other form of scholarly enquiry in which relationships of intimacy and familiarity between researcher and subject are envisioned as a fundamental medium of investigation rather than as an extraneous by-product or even an impediment’ [2002: 2]). Similarly in geography, the social placing of the research encounter is of increasing importance, as the following reflection by Rose on a specific research encounter identifies:

We were sitting in the cafe of an arts centre talking about his work, with my tape recorder sitting on the table between us. He’s Scottish and working class. As a friend of his, another worker at the centre, walked past us, he laughed and said, ‘look, I’m being interviewed for Radio 4’. She laughed and so did I, and the interview – a long and very helpful one for me – continued. But that joke has bothered me ever since; or, rather, my uncertainty about what it meant has bothered me. Was it just a reference to the tape recorder? Was it to do with his self-consciousness at being interviewed? But Radio 4 is a national station of the British Broadcasting Corporation, which means in effect it’s English, so was his joke a reference to the middle-class Englishness of my accent? If so, was the joke a sign of our different ‘positions’? But does he like Radio 4’s Englishness? And how do any of these possibilities relate to how the interview went? I don’t know the answer to these questions, and this, I felt, was my failure. (Rose, 1997: 306)

Rose’s story of her own ‘failure’ usefully demonstrates how social placing is commonly considered in much contemporary methodology. Rose questions her failure to analyse the social placing of herself and her interviewee, their respective positionalities and power relationships, and how these could influence the nature of knowledge obtained through their encounter. It is these ethical and practical constraints of social positioning that are considered to make a difference to methodology.

Social placing and research as ‘dialogue’

Acknowledging the difference that the social dimension of place has for methodology focuses attention on the researcher’s ability to interpret and reflect on the power structures and relationships generated through the research process. This focus suggests that the methodological encounter can be considered as a research ‘dialogue’. As Demeritt and Dyer (2002) have argued, many researchers use the notion of dialogue to describe their research practices. Literally, the dialogue of research can involve a conversation between the researcher and other informants (whilst metaphorically, such a conversation can be established between the researcher and either their particular academic community, or their ‘preconceptions of the object of study and the thing itself as it later appears through further study’ [2002: 234]). Demeritt and Dyer identify that the notion of a dialogic research encounter is useful as it positions the researcher’s interpretative and reflexive function at the heart of methodological practice. The highlighting of these functions is important as it can be seen as part of the broader social scientific
project to move away from modern positions of objectivity and acknowledge the social placement of research. This framing of research practice thus changes the conventional Cartesian approach outlined in Figure 1. As Figure 2 illustrates, now the researcher directly engages with the respondent, their social placing explicitly acknowledged as having an effect on the knowledge produced. The geographical dimension of place may remain if it is relevant to the subject under discussion, but in terms of methodology, it remains ignored as a key actor in these dialogic relations.

The purpose of this article is not to critique the reinstatement of the social dimension of place into methodological practice; rather it is to argue that this reinstatement can be extended by also explicitly considering the influence of the geographical dimension of place. In the case given by Rose for example (above), we would argue there is additional ‘failure’ in her method in terms of the difference that the geographical dimension of place makes to her research. We could ask, for example, what significance and meaning does where the research takes place have for the knowledge produced? From the macro-scale, i.e. the significance of Scotland, through to the meso-scale, i.e. the arts centre and the café in which they were sitting, down to the micro-scale, i.e. how they were sitting or the position of the tape recorder – how do each one of these geographic influences help or obstruct the knowledge production process? Rose may wonder the answers to the questions raised by her informant’s joke, yet one could also wonder whether these questions would have been raised at all if the place of method was not that particular arts centre? As documented by Rose, due to this particular place of method her research combined with another personal encounter to

![Figure 2](image.png)

**Figure 2** Research encounter as ‘dialogue’

In this approach the dialogue between the reflexive researcher and person of interest is of paramount importance. Geographical place may be relevant if it is connected to the practices of the respondent, but the place of method remains unacknowledged.
produce a different knowledge which then informed their understanding (or at least new research questions). A different, perhaps less familiar or less public, place may not have produced this idiosyncratic knowledge (but might of course have produced other data). It is this role of place in methodology that requires our attention. Our aim in the remainder of this article is to further activate the previously passive category of place (following Haraway, 1988: 593) and seek to consider the agency and influence that the geographical dimension of place has for methodological praxis.

The role of place in methodology

As we have seen, the geographical turn in social sciences has resulted in a partial consideration of the effects of place in methodology. However, these new concerns over the difference that place makes have yet to be systematically extended to include both the social and geographical dimensions of place in methodology. There are some examples where the geographical dimension of place has been given an explicit role in method in order to help harness the agency of place in the methodological encounter.

First, feminist academics have harnessed the ‘where of method’ to explore its role in knowledge-producing encounters. The domestic home, for example, is one place that has been explicitly chosen to interview women (Hyams, 2003). This place of method has been chosen due to its capacities as a ‘social space’ to overcome common power relations (Cresswell, 1996: 3). In other words, the home has been identified as a place where the geographical dimension of place coincides with the social dimension to break down potentially obtrusive social positionings – not only those associated with researchers and the researched (see Oberhauser, 1997: 171), but also between women and male-dominated societal contexts (see Falconer-Al-Hindi, 1997: 154). The agency of the office is also a place for method that has been explicitly experimented with. McDowell (1998), in her work on UK merchant bankers, acknowledges that power structures of the office lead employees to only discuss ‘more professional’ aspects of their lives, constantly aware of the listening ears of colleagues or the appearance of doing little work. Similarly, for Barker and Weller (2003) the place of method was taken as seriously as the traditional geographical focus of study. In using field diaries to explore children’s geographies of mobility, Barker and Weller were able to reflect upon attempts to gain access to the children studied and the particular interviewee dynamics of privacy and confidentiality. Using regular additions to diaries they were able to capture the nuances of the geographies of methodological encounters. As a consequence they suggested that,

... each individual methodological issue such as confidentiality is refracted and experienced in unique ways in each particular place in which we carry out our research. Rather than simply being a physical location, the place of research influences and permeates our attempts to develop children-centered research. (2003: 223)
Following these examples, Anderson’s research on environmental protest has demonstrated how place can be used to access knowledge through the interview situation (Anderson, 2004). Through focusing on talking and walking through politicized environments, Anderson, alongside his interviewees, collaboratively uncovered sedimented understandings of place and practice. This exploitation of geographical cues is not limited to explicitly contested sites (such as sites of environmental action), but is possible in all research projects. The place of method can influence the type of information obtained from oral responses – in this case excavating memories and meanings of spatialized practice (but see also Anderson and Moles, 2008; or Wylie, 2005) – but also provide insight that can be triangulated with other methodological data. As Sin writes, taking account of place can allow the researcher to, ‘continually assess and reassess the information provided in the interview in light of the sociospatial dynamics observed’ (Sin, 2003: 311). Place therefore provides the context to which oral, and bodily, responses to formal questions can be compared.

Strange et al. (2003) have also experimented with the where of method in their use of questionnaires with young people. They found that their place of method – the school – ‘effectively compromised’ the process of administering their questionnaire. Elements such as school timetables, class size, lesson length, room size, as well as social elements such as the relations between pupils and teachers all influenced their praxis. Through this process, Strange et al. identified that the interaction between the school/classroom (or ‘setting’ in their terms), the young people (the participants) and the gender/sexuality (the subject matter), resulted in, ‘the pupils responding to the questionnaire in particular ways’ (2003: 345). Anderson and Jones (2009) have also documented the ways in which the different places of the school structure the methodological encounter. In their case, methods were emplaced in three different locations in order to ‘get at’ young people’s lived experience. ‘Interviews-in-the-classroom’ enabled practical access to pupils, as well as affording locational insights and languages that outlined nascent personal experiences. However the proximity of peers and the positioning of authority figures limited this method’s capacity to fully access the lived experience of young people. ‘Interviews-in-the-cupboard’ offered a relatively ‘blank canvas’ to pupils who, alongside the researcher, constructed it as a ‘fun place, a private space, even a place of confession’ (2009: 298). As a consequence, this method was successful in accessing more emotional and intimate recollections about spatial practices. However, the distance (both social and spatial) between this site and the outdoor ‘action’ itself often led pupils to find it difficult to talk about their more mundane or ordinary experiences. ‘Interviews-in-hang-outs’ tackled this problem by facilitating access to not only the ordinary aspects of young people’s geographies, but also languages that recalled more detailed emotional and embodied experiences. These insights could not only be cross-referenced with earlier emplaced methods, but could also be supplemented with the more ethnographic first-hand experience of the researcher, which together facilitated the creation of a language of lived experience.
Recognizing the agency of place in method in these ways need not be limited to interview-based or ethnographic forms of research. We suggest that historical and archival forms of research can also take account of the where of method. Withers (2002), for example, has opened up the place of the archive to configure it not only as a site where scholars do research, but as a geographical place that embodies a complexity of relationships (see also deSilvey, 2007; Ogborn, 2004). The archive is not only a problematic site of power (Foote, 1990; Kurtz, 2001; Rose, 2000), but also includes and excludes, calls forth and hides particular histories and stories. As Rose states, ‘archives can be very different sorts of places’ (cited in Withers, 2002: 305), contributing to the complex meanings of documentary and photo evidence in their own unique setting. The archive, like all geographical locations for method, should not therefore be considered as lying passive passively in the background of the research encounter, but as an active participant in the constitution of relationships, and of the knowledge scholars seek to take away. As Withers states, these places are, ‘a centre of interpretation and open to interpretation as a constitutive site of knowledge’s making’ (2002: 305).

Towards a polylogic research method

The above examples show that the where of research, the research participants, and the subject matter are all important contingencies which influence the research encounter and the subsequent production of knowledge. The explicit consideration of all these contingencies we call the polylogic approach to methodology. We argue the term polylogue engages with and extends the ideas of monologue and dialogue. If monologue centres on the internal conversation within a human actor and the interior verbalization of inner beliefs (see Billig, 1987), then dialogue can be considered an external conversation between two or more actors creating a context of discussion and rhetorical controversy (see Hobson, 2001: 202). As we have seen, Demeritt and Dyer (2002) argue that many researchers use the notion of dialogue to describe their research practices, both as a conversation between the researcher and other informants, but also between the researcher and the broader social science community. We contend that the methodological dialogue, this conversation between two or more people, should from the first instance be conceived as a ‘polylogue’, including not simply the researcher, the researched, but also place. This place could be the location siting the cultural activity being researched, but significantly should also include the place in which the methodology is being practiced. This polylogic approach is graphically outlined in Figure 3.

In this situation the term polylogue has been adopted to differentiate a new approach to methodology in contrast to the conventional notion of research practice as dialogue. This new term is adopted to indicate the inclusion of other actants that influence the praxis of methodology, especially place. Therefore, if a place is said to include unique arrangements of people, landscape, weather,
buildings, animals, economies, politics, cultures and more, this new terminology is important as it alludes to a non-modern perspective that grants agency to non-human actors in constructive and discursive acts (see, for example, Hinchcliffe et al., 2005). As Iwachiw states, if ‘reality is a collective creation of human and nonhuman actors (and ‘actants’) engaged in a variety of activities and practices which produce, reproduce and negotiate the multiple ‘worlds’ we inhabit’ (1997: 7), then it is important to explicitly identify this in processes of methodological production. Through doing so this approach explicitly responds to Tilley’s call to view place as ‘something that is involved in the action... both constraining and enabling it’ (1994: 10). By exploring the polylogic approach, research can map out a terrain where place can be acknowledged and harnessed within the methodological action to contextualize, ground, and inscribe the knowledge that is produced with a geographical and social signature.

Conclusion

This article has argued for the adoption of a polylogic approach to research practice. Our introduction of this perspective is a response to current and accepted methodologies which neglect the relationship of the researcher and the researched to the research location – methodologies which disregard the place in which they occur. This argument is part of, and seeks to extend, the broader move within social sciences which sees the concept and agency of place to be an increasingly important influence on human activity. This geographical turn has resulted in the social dimension of place being extensively included and considered as integral to a rigorous and reflexive methodological strategy. Ironically perhaps, the more geographical dimensions of place have often been obscured as a consequence. Through this article we have
attempted to illustrate the value of introducing the full dimensions of place to methodological practice, and by introducing the notion of a polylogic approach we offer a formalization of these piecemeal explorations which move towards a fully accountable and authoritative knowledge. As Braidiotti has identified, by connecting research to the place and date it occurred a ‘situated ethics’ (1994: 17) is conferred on the data produced. By situating place, time and author centrally in the process, the research ‘consumer’ is given the capacity to acknowledge the existence of the politics of location within its production. The potential exists to acknowledge that if work is produced and written in a different place at a different time, the product itself takes on a different form. With such a literal and imbued geographical signature, the research encounter becomes further demystified from the ‘godlike’ process of science, and moves towards becoming a human and accountable process (see Bauman, 2000: 2; Haraway, 1991).

By making the agency of the researcher and the place of research explicit in the methodological process it is possible to highlight that investigators simultaneously lay down meaning in places as they attempt to uncover it. This knowledge-in-place approach is not only place-bound, but also place-making (see Basso, 1984). From this position, researchers can clearly make decisions as to the nature of their research encounter and the ways in which they impact on the lives of the researched-in-place in the knowledge production process. Explicitly situating the ethics of the researcher in this way not only confers accountability but also an authority to the work produced. This authority comes from explicitly ‘being there’ at the inception and production stages of the knowledge process (as Clifford [1988] has identified, noted in Demeritt and Dyer, 2002: 231). The polylogic approach produces a knowledge that is grounded in both people and place and as such offers the capacity for widening the audience of such research. By engaging with place it may be easier for this work to relate to readers who seek not only a grounded analysis but also a more engaging perspective, both in research and writing. This article suggests, therefore, that the material placing of methodological techniques ought to be deliberated over as systematically and reflexively as the choice of technique and the social positioning of the researcher is at present. Through so doing, geographers could operationalize their methodology ‘as if place mattered’.

NOTES

1. Agnew and Duncan (1989) offer a useful three-fold framing of geographical place: ‘location’, ‘locale’, and ‘sense of place’. Here ‘location’ refers to an objective point in space, as a node which is, for example, ‘so-and-so’ far from another node, defined perhaps by grid co-ordinates, or lines of latitude or longitude. However, even within this apparently two-dimensional view, the vibrancy of place is never far away. For example, Real Estate Agents identify the three most important aspects when buying property as location, location, location. Here, it is not so much the property itself that is crucial, but where it is, the crucial where of location one might say. The notion of ‘locale’ tells us a little more about the importance of this
crucial ‘where’. Locale can be understood as the broader context of the built, natural, and social environment in which cultural relations are generated and formed. It is the setting for the everyday routine and social interaction that a place provides.

In the words of O’Loughlin and Anselin (1992: 16), ‘locale is the setting of interaction and the contextuality of social life’. This notion of locale comes close to identifying the character and feel of a place, as outlined by Massey and Jess:

Places are unique, different from each other; they have singular characteristics, their own traditions, local cultures and festivals, accents and uses of language; they perhaps differ from each other in their economic character too: the financial activities of the City of London mould the nature of that part of the capital; the wide open fields of East Anglia give a particular feel that ‘it couldn’t be anywhere else’. (Massey and Jess, 1995: 46)

Agnew and Duncan extend the idea of ‘a particular feel’ of a location by referring to its ‘sense of place’. Drawing on the work of Relph (1976) a sense of place refers to the intensity of meaning that derives from emotional, experiential and affective relationships forged between humans and particular environments. These emotions can be positive and confer a sense of belonging in and to geographical place (and referred to by Tuan [1974] as ‘topophilia’), but can equally confer a sense of ‘outsiderness’ (Relph, 1976) and displacement.

2. These ‘interviews-in-a-cupboard’ were interviews with young people located in an old store cupboard within the school. This location served as an effective ‘third-space’ (Soja, 1996) or ‘liminal space’ (see, for examples, Shields, 1991) both within the school, but outside conventional adult and authoritarian space (see Anderson and Jones, 2009).

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