

HCI & Re-Making Place

by
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Abstract

In recent years, technology, design and computing have been increasingly considered in public, media, and academic discourses as playing a significant role in supporting people affecting change in the places and communities in which they live. Drawing from three case studies that developed in North Tyneside's Tynemouth, Newcastle upon Tyne, and Oreth in South East London, this dissertation shows how cross-disciplinary methodological perspectives—combining ontological politics, discourse and public work philosophy—can be used to understand the role of technology in everyday political processes, and drive the design of processes and socio-technical tools to open up spaces of contestation and dialogue in the everyday politics of place. The argument put forward in this dissertation is that in order to produce spatial processes that are more just and democratic, we must attend to people's mundane communicative exchanges as forms of political action both conceptually and in practice; we must also recognize the heterogeneous actors and power dynamics involved, as well as the interpersonal and political work that contribute to forging and shaping these spatial processes.

Vernacular rhetoric—the conception of everyday communicative exchanges as political action—forms the basis of this thesis. It is first utilised to understand the appropriation of a Facebook page by a group of residents concerned with the development of a derelict swimming pool. The perspective is then used to drive the design of processes that employed digitally supported urban walks to involve city residents in political discussions and re-envisioning of places in and about the city. The third case study explores how such participatory processes might be used to support a group of residents concerned with 'rebuilding' their community and wishing to create a digital walking trail in and about their housing estate undergoing urban regeneration. Finally, learning from the three studies is synthesized in a discussion on the relationship between vernacular politics, technologies and issues of spatial justice, and the role that HCI research, designed tools and participatory processes can play in supporting spaces of contestation and dialogue and the development of capacities to formulate collective rights towards the re-making of the places that matter to us.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The role of technology in civic life and socio-political action has increasingly been at the centre of popular and scholarly attention. Researchers and designers in Human Computer Interaction (HCI) and Science, Technology and Society (STS) studies are increasingly concerned with the social and political impact of their work with and for communities and towards social change (Hayes, 2011; DiSalvo et al., 2014; Dourish, 2010; Björgvinsson et al., 2010, 2012; Olander et al., 2011). In a time when the deeply bureaucratic mechanism and procedures of politics are alienated from our everyday civic life (Boyte, 2005, 2011; Stevens and Malesh, 2010), there has been significant enthusiasm and hope for the role and potential of digital technology to support communication and (at times) dialogue between citizens, and between citizens and the State toward action and change for both local and global socio-political causes (Castells, 2012; Pietrucci, 2011).

HCI has begun exploring the potential emancipatory qualities of online and situated digital technologies opening avenues to alternative modes of political organisation (Wulf et al., 2013; Costanza-Chock, 2012), the broadening of participation in political discourses (Varnelis, 2012; Rotman et al., 2011), and social activism (Massung, 2013; Uldam and Askanius, 2013; Aoki et al., 2009; Kuznetsov et al., 2011). Equally, there are also deep preoccupations in relation to the effects of technologies on the ways people connect to one another (Turkle, 2011) and scepticism about whether socio-technical systems may actually be replicating existing unjust socio-political and economic systems and power relations or even increasing forms of exclusion in civic life (McCarthy and Wright, 2015; Varnelis, 2012; Olivier and Wright, 2015). Here we are contending with issues intertwined with the ‘promises’ of the digital that seem to over-simplify the complexities at the heart of human relations and obscure the limitations and politics embedded in technologies to support and increase the attainment of democratic principles and the safeguarding of human rights.

Democratic practices and human rights are not abstract entities or the domain of a few experts at specific sites, rather they are situated, socio-materially enacted in everyday practices and in political, cultural and economic contexts (Law and Singleton, 2014; Latour and Weibel, 2005). They can be traced in our bodies, environments and socio-material interactions in our

daily lives (Harvey, 2000). One of the democratic practices and human rights this thesis is concerned with is publics' ability to shape and affect change in the everyday politics of making place through participation (Soja, 2010; Harvey, 2012, 2008). The work presented in this thesis aligns with growing concerns with the Right to the City (Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey, 2000, 2012, 2008; Soja, 2010) and social movements around the globe dedicated to re-consider and enliven politics away from its expert-driven, stale, bureaucratic domain estranged from everyday life and re-position citizens as the engine of processes of change making and politics (Boyte 2005, 2011; Fowler and Biekart, 2008; Stevens and Malesh, 2010).

This thesis is written from the perspective of a European citizen and migrant, a creative practitioner, and it charts partial accounts (Haraway 1988) of the work that defined my journey of becoming a researcher committed to making my work more public, meaningful and political—that is, making research a civic site for intervening and affecting change in the everyday politics of place.

1.1 Placing politics in the everyday

Western politics has its ancient origins in the Greek city-state – the cradle of western democratic thought and practices, which saw (certain) citizens ('*politeis*' in ancient Greek) actively engaging in the making and governing of the City-State – the '*polis*'. While politics today has been confined to the mechanisms and procedure of governance – the domain of experts and the work of party-politics – there is resurgence everywhere in the world to return politics to the domain of everyday civic life (Boyte 2005), the local - which today is unavoidably also global (Massey 2005, Soja 2010). This movement departs from an acknowledgement that representative liberal democracy reduces citizenship to the vote without corresponding opportunities (and duties) to build communities (Boyte 2005, Stevens and Malesh 2009, Olivier and Wright 2015). The movement is also a reaction to an abstract, rationalised and homogeneous conception of the public sphere that misses the necessary qualities to accommodate citizens' everyday multiple modalities of expressions, fails to recognise social inequalities and people's diverse socio-cultural identities - therefore inactivating social actors' potential to influence and affect change through their cultural voices—the embodied ways of saying and doing that constitute our cultural identities (Mouffe 1999, Fraser 1991).

Instead, moving politics to the domain of everyday life means focusing on the way the things we commonly practice, say, do and use in our daily lives – including our technologies, material and designed objects, the built environment - actively shape us, others and our surroundings, affect and produce our common-wealth, society and the cities we live in (Massey 2005, Ingold 2000, Soja 2010, Hauser 1999, Hauser mcLellan 2009). That is, our daily actions entail all sorts of consequences. While this re-framing hands back civic agency as the ability and responsibility to influence, shape and make worlds, it also brings attention to the way the mechanisms and procedures of mainstream socio-political and economic systems are ever so present in the small things that collectively make our civic lives. This perspective brings into focus a way to conceive politics as the ‘work’ that we do to create the common good as well as the ways in which this is then distributed; while everyday politics then refers to a broad conception of the different ways we can contribute and participate in the production of the common-wealth and shaping our environments—one unit of analysis for understanding how we go about this is to turn our attention to the everyday political practices and vernacular communicative exchanges we perform in our daily lives (Hauser 1999).

‘Vernacular’ in the English dictionary is the “language or dialect spoken by ordinary people” (Hauser 1999). In the domain of architecture, it is used to refer to the “domestic and functional”. In Hauser’s terms, vernacular discourse - or what he calls ‘vernacular rhetoric’ - doesn’t refer to ornate manipulative discourse, but rather it refers to our daily communicative exchanges and in his terms to “the symbolic enticement of social cooperation” and the “symbolic transaction that affects people’s shared sense of the world” (Hauser 1999:14). For Hauser, Vernacular Rhetoric has pragmatic value, essential for the coordination of social action. Everyday discourse has a reflective and constitutive function in society: “through discourse, social actors produce society” (Hauser 1999: 113). In this sense rhetorical agency, manifest in the language that gives voice and performs action, is communal in awakening consciousness of shared identity and participation in collectivity (Kjeldsen and Hauser 2010), involving each members of a society as a point of articulation, realized through multimodal performances, but crucially it rests on the capacity to be heard (Hauser 1999). Civic action stems from past experiences, where experience is set against aspirations for a different imagined situation judged in terms of practicalities and opportunity for realization (Fowler and Biekart 2009). Vernacular rhetoric then gives voice and visibility to values, experiences and desires and can influence our understanding of the world and consequently our actions.

Yet, discursive practices do not happen in a vacuum. They are material, situated, contextual and contingent. More than just (and literally) taking place and taking on meaning according to their contexts and within particular situations, discursive practices, beyond affecting how people think, their actions and producing society (Hauser 1999, Hauser and mcLellan 2010), also shape spaces and places, as much as spaces and places shape people, their actions and discursive practices (Soja 2010). That is, as Soja suggests, “throughout our lives we are enmeshed in efforts to shape the spaces in which we live while at the same time these established and evolving spaces are shaping our lives in many different ways” (Soja 2010: 71). This can be understood as the work of place-making: the set of social, political and material processes by which people make and re-make the places in which they live (Pierce et al. 2010).

1.2 Everyday politics of place

Notions and understanding of place and space has been at the centre of HCI concerns for some time. In the last decade notions of embodiment (Dourish, 2004) and lived experience (McCarthy and Wright, 2004) implicated space/place as fundamental elements in the endeavor of technology design and use. Paying particular attention to the embodied and lived experiences as central aspects of place and space are seen also as important elements that concern human agency and consequently the potential for human actors to influence and affect their surroundings (McCarthy and Wright, 2004; Ciolfi, 2013; Soja, 2010). Further, as technologies come to be embedded in everyday life (Dourish, 2010), through the development and rise of social media, ubiquitous computing, Internet of Things (IoT), cyberspace and virtual reality, research has also focused on digital technologies’ implications and impact on our sense of place and how place is understood, practised and transformed (Varnelis, 2012; Ciolfi, 2013).

In our everyday life space and place are used to refer to different things, but they are also used interchangeably. As Harvey (1993) noted, place is one of the most multi-layered, multi-purpose words in our language. Place for instance, is used to refer to different sites such as the workplace, public square, a swimming pool, someone’s home, etc. Equally people might refer to a swimming pool as a public space, to the Internet as a digital space, to our planet as existing in space. There is not one agreed definition of place or space among scholars – rather many philosophers, geographers, anthropologists and so on, have formulated different conceptions of space and place (Tuan, 1977; Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2000; Soja, 2010) and

the depth of some of this thinking will be uncovered later in the dissertation. However, today many recognise that place - like space and time - is a social construct (Harvey 2000, Lefebvre 1991) and is broadly understood as governed by a set of 'laws' that dictate ways of being, modes of behaviour, movements and practices (de Certeau, 1988). Further spaces and places are also understood as imbued with symbolic and affective personal and public meaning, memories, and imaginings. The human experience of place and space is multifaceted and multi-dimensional and ultimately shapes who we are, our imagination and our understanding of the world (Harvey, 1993; Massey, 2005; Ciolfi, 2013).

Some scholars have considered place as a lived instance of the environment, an embodied experience of space. In this respect the sensorial aspects of experience in physical environments are seen as an important aspect for the development of meaning (Lentini, 2010) and the lived dimension of space involving human activities is seen as an essential ingredient of the identity of space itself (Ciolfi, 2013). From this perspective what defines a space or place is a set of activities and practices in it. However, the very ways in which places are constructed affect our perceptions, guide or even dictate our actions, signposts us to particular mode of behaviours, ways of thinking and serve particular objectives (Latour, 2004; Winner, 1980; de Certeau, 1988). That is urban design, architecture and planning are not neutral practices (Winner, 1980; Latour, 2004). For instance, de Certeau (1988) noted how the very way in which our built environment is constructed infers ways of moving within it in our everyday life.

Scholars have also argued that what it is to be human is strongly related to a sense of 'rootedness' and belonging to a place with its social and physical aspects (Heidegger in Harvey, 1993). Places here are seen as intrinsic in the formation of our identities and to the way we make sense of the world. In this respect, places have been defined as constitutive of one's sense of self (Casey, 2009) and of our cultural identity that while in constant transformation, are also informed by memory (Byrne, 2008). It is through our experiences, cultural values and related memories that we develop place meanings, which actively contribute to the making of places (Byrne, 2008; Tuan, 1977). Yet, place meanings and values are source of contestations as different people hold and assign different meanings and values to places leading to claims and counter-claims over the past and present of a place and contestations about its future (Massey, 1995). The struggles around the kind of place meanings that come to be considered important (or not), what pasts, presents and futures are made real (what not), what configurations of place are validated, are all processes of contestations over the terms that define places and govern

how they are made, used, lived and felt. This is what scholars have come to define as the ‘politics of place’ (Harvey, 1993; Pierce et al., 2011). As Harvey stated places “are the intense focus of discursive activity filled with symbolic and representational meanings and they are the distinctive products of institutionalized social and political economic power” (Harvey, 1996: 316).

While the politics of place might be regarded as the processes of negotiation and contestations over discursive representation of place, these are always connected and exercised via a network of actors, institutions and processes (Pierce et al., 2011). For example, Harvey suggests how the workings of capitalism dictates the way places are differently constructed, developed and re-developed (Harvey, 2000) and other scholars have highlighted how we are differently positioned in spatial processes prescribing who has the power to influence the way we understand places and the decisions making process towards the development of particular places (Massey, 1993). Crucially then, place cannot be understood outside of space relations just as space relations cannot be understood outside of place (Massey, 2005; Harvey, 2000; Soja, 2010). Far from being a fixed and dead backdrop, space is filled with politics, power dynamics and “actively involved in sustaining inequality, injustice, economic exploitation, and other forms of oppression” (Soja, 2010: 4) that have significant implications for the way we can participate in processes of place-making.

Place and its making, then, raise questions of democracy and justice in respect to the ways we can participate in spatial processes and the definition of their terms of production. The politics of place have been regarded as key to identifying how people and communities come to understand places and their reaction to the socio-spatial re-ordering of their environments, as well as what may motivate socio-political action to transform them (Pierce et al., 2011). Place-making then, might be understood as a future-oriented endeavor that is about envisioning possibilities and giving them form.

1.3 Design, place-making and envisioning futures

Broadly, design refers to professional practices to conceive and create tools, objects, services, and the built environment driven by specific goals and purposes. However, scholars suggested how design work actually predates its professional practice and can be regarded as human’s mundane activity and process that departs from the contemplating of a situation,

imagine a better situation and acting to give it form (Friedman, 2015; Ingold, 2000; Manzini, 2015). But design doesn't end there. Our ideas, imaginations and their forms are powerful means of spatial production that enact relations, modalities of thinking, saying and doing (Foucault, 1981; Said, 1994). That is, design is always a political proposition, an act that 'goes on living' in its use (Margolin, 2002; Suchman, 2007; Björgvinsson et al., 2012). This brings our attention not just to how and what services, situations or technological artifacts are designed but also to who participate in their creation and to what they *become*, the sort of futures they encourage or even make in the present (Galloway, 2010). Because of this, design is a practice that is both cultural and socio-political, determining and determined from the outset (Balsamo, 2011). Modalities of knowledges, design, and technology production are never neutral or 'innocent' endeavors (Haraway, 1988)—instead they have significant consequences in our everyday socio-political, cultural and economic civic life (Beck, 2002) and in processes of place-making.

In this respect, HCI research has advanced critical debates and insights on the value and diversity of design activities exploring the relationship between design, technology, and the political (Beck, 2002; DiSalvo et al., 2014; DiSalvo, 2012; Dourish, 2010; McCarthy & Wright, 2015). Political consciousness has been conceptualised in HCI as a process along and across time in which people come to define what matters to them and directions for change (Bidwell et al., 2008; Dourish, 2010). With a recognition of the politics inherent in any technology design (DiSalvo et al., 2012; Beck, 2002; Margolin 2002; Light, 2011), HCI has turned particular attention to questions of agency and modalities of participation in, through and with technology and design processes in order to support and illuminate different ways people and communities can, together, design their futures (McCarthy and Wright, 2015; Bjorgvisson et al., 2012; Light and Akama, 2014; Olander et al., 2011; Light, 2011), that is participate in processes of place-making. In this regard, there has been a shift in HCI design and research practice, involving a variety of design activities whose primary concern is not the design of artifacts, but the provision of opportunities for new forms of cultural practices, the crafting of spaces for engaging with issues and matters of concerns to support democratic practices and affect change (DiSalvo et al., 2008; DiSalvo et al., 2014; Bjorgvisson et al., 2012; Olander et al., 2012). This perspective also entails the potential for HCI to facilitate opinion formation and connect those affiliating to particular values and beliefs with each other (Dourish, 2010; Le Dantec and DiSalvo, 2013).

This re-orientation in HCI design practice has focused on the way design and computational artifacts can contribute to or participate in publics' formation, facilitating ways to draw attention to an issue, reflect on a present condition and act upon it (DiSalvo, 2012; Jenkins et al., 2016; Le Dantec and DiSalvo, 2013; Lindtner et al., 2011). In this sense, design and computation is considered to have the ability to assemble publics, and to engender potential transformative processes, through the exploration of issues, contestations and the definition of routes for action. In this sense design is seen as a practice that can “shape and contribute to public discourse and civic life” (DiSalvo et al., 2012: 12). Rather than aiming at generating consensus, these design practices aimed specifically at the initiation of “socio-material” relations and agonistic spaces in which different and diverse voices can come to the fore and engender innovative solutions in and about the places we live in (Bjorgvisson et al., 2012).

1.4 Motivations for research

Studies have shown the potential for digital technology and design interventions to engender critical reflection and discussions for socio-political change in and about place (DiSalvo, 2012; Bjorgvisson et al., 2012; Light and Akama, 2014; Olander et al., 2012). While these works assert HCI design positioned as initiator of inquiries around public issues and the potential for socio-digital system to engender political spaces, the political discursive spaces that design and these participatory processes aim at fostering where future visions of place and route for actions might emerge and be articulated, are largely under-examined in HCI. In this case, it can be difficult to understand the effects and potential transformations that digital interventions set out to achieve or actually achieve. Here authors have questioned how political artifacts might actually enter real-life human actions, and urged design to intervene in the urban space (Markussen, 2012). In this regard researchers have stressed the need to investigate further situated, embodied everyday practices and the interrelationship between space, place and technology (Harrison and Dourish, 1996; Dourish, 2006; Lentini, 2010)—stressing also how political issues must be understood in connection to the experiences and social practices in physical environments (Bidwell et al., 2008; Pink et al., 2008).

This dissertation addresses this challenge by embracing HCI research as a way to inquire into the possibilities that design and technologies can offer to support modalities of political participation in the everyday politics of place-making. As such, this dissertation will

look at developing understanding of the processes at play in place-making and the potential role of digital technologies in this realm. Given that our everyday actions and vernacular rhetoric (Hauser, 1999) are fundamental sites for the expression of values, meanings and means to build a politics and shape the future of the places we inhabit (place-making), this dissertation will explore how vernacular practice contributes to the ongoing processes of place-making and their relationships to institutional procedures at play in place production. It will also explore the potential for design, participatory processes and digital tools to open up spaces for vernacular rhetoric towards the re-envisioning of place and their re-making, including empirical analysis of the effects and political spaces HCI design might be able to engender, in order to begin to understand the effects of HCI work in this realm.

1.5 Research aims and questions

This dissertation aims at 1) developing understanding of the everyday politics of place and the role of technology in and for the everyday politics of place, and 2) investigating how HCI design and research can contribute towards progressive forms of participation for the making and re-making of places. In order to meet these aims I ask the following questions.

Question 1: How can we develop an understanding of the politics at play in place-making and the potential role of communication technologies in these processes in relation to issues of spatial justice?

Question 2: What technologies and interaction design methods and processes can be developed and used to foster engagement with the everyday politics of place-making and support people in re-envisioning their futures?

Question 3: How can participatory design processes and digital tools be used to support communities in their processes of re-making the places they live in?

1.6 Thesis structure

In exploring these questions, this dissertation develops through learning and reflection from three distinct case studies and it is organised as follows.

In *Chapter 2: HCI and making place*, I bring together literature to critically examine the multifaceted processes that ‘make place’, position place-making within the realm of politics,

democracy and questions of human rights, as well as examine the state of the art in HCI in this regard. In the chapter I discuss perspectives from various disciplines to uncover the ways place and its making has been conceptualised. Then the chapter discusses processes of place-making in relation to democratic practices and issues of spatial justice. I then proceed to examine more specifically HCI's efforts and contributions to civic engagement through the development of participatory processes and systems to support people engaging in place-making. The chapter argues that in order to inquire into the politics of place and the role of design and technology here, processes and practices of meaning making need to be related to the institutional procedures at play in the production of places and in the everyday.

In *Chapter 3: An everyday politics approach*, I introduce methodological perspectives grounded in an understanding of place and its politics as embodied, enacted and emerging from everyday practices (Mol, 1999, 2003; Law, 2015) and everyday discursive practices (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mclellan, 2010). In the chapter I describe the purpose of taking these perspectives within a practice-oriented inquiry in the everyday politics of place. These perspectives are then combined within a particular approach to Action Research—Everyday Politics, as articulated by Boyte (2005) that sees HCI research as a civic site for affecting change through action-based activities towards the co-production of the 'common good' (Boyte, 2005). In the chapter I explain how the cross-disciplinary methodological perspectives are combined to provide a set of orientations to design and how these orientations are applied in each case study.

In *Chapter 4: the emergence of a social movement online*, I address the first question this dissertation aims at investigating, by studying how ordinary citizens appropriated an online social media site to build an issue-based public, a movement and campaign around the contested future of a place in their locality. The chapter shows the process of engagement, negotiation and mobilisation as it unfolded on the social media page. In this chapter, I introduce a model of vernacular rhetoric in social movement (Hauser and mclallen, 2010), which I use as an analytical lens to guide the empirical analysis of online data. Overall this chapter explores the role of existing social technologies (Facebook) to support publics co-designing a vision for the future of a site in their locality that led to political action. I look at the role of multi-media storytelling and affection in the development of a collective with political will and capable of political action. This case study is used to explore processes at play in the everyday politics at place through the examination of civic activities and the role of existing technologies in these

processes. The chapter reveals the intrinsic relationship between cultural memory, imagination, affect and political action in the everyday politics of place-making and the significant role social media played in the process.

In *Chapter 5: Exploring a process for political engagement in place*, I begin to address the second question the dissertation attempts to investigate by deliberately designing a process to engage people with the everyday politics of place. In the chapter I illustrate the development of ‘City Walk’, a designed process to involve ordinary citizens in discussions and re-imagination of places in and about the city. The chapter describes how the theoretical model of vernacular rhetoric in social movement (Hauser and mclellan, 2010) was applied to established HCI methods, such as cultural probes and toolkits (Gaver et al., 1999; Sanders and Stappers, 2014) taking the forms of a set of tools and a process to create digitally supported urban walks (City Walk). The process aims at opening opportunities for situated dialogues between social practices of place making and the practices and politics of city planning while supporting re-imaginings of places in the city. The chapter presents an empirical analysis of the discursive and reflective processes City Walk engendered.

In *Chapter 6: Exploring material interventions in place*, I address the third question the dissertation proposes to investigate, examining how digitally supported processes and socio-technical artifacts could be used and appropriated by a community to support their causes. I illustrate how the process described in Chapter 5 (City Walk) was used to support residents and a housing institution in an estate undergoing urban regeneration, in SE London, to co-create their own digital walk. This chapter describes the collaboration with the residents and housing institution, which extended over the period of one year. The chapter reports on the overall processes of collaboration including initial engagements, collection of stories and curatorial activities; I describe initial engagements and related insights, which surfaced the emotional struggles residents were undergoing, and a complex interplay and tensions between different ideas of what may constitute place and community. I then describe how these initial engagements led to the design of a socio-technical system—Digital Travelling Suitcases—presented as a Vernacular Rhetoric, designed to support residents in collecting and re-distributing stories about community life on the estate. I explain how residents used the suitcases and follow up curatorial activities to review, discuss and allocate the stories collected in different locations on their estate. The chapter provides an analysis of the insights gained

drawing from data collected across the overall study to understand how the work supported residents in their process of re-building their community and re-making place.

In *Chapter 7: HCI and re-making places*, I discuss the insights gained and processes developed across the three case studies. The chapter discusses first what the insights gained across the case studies can tell us about the everyday politics of place and the role of technologies and socio-technical systems in respect to questions of democracy and issues of social justice. Then, the chapter discusses the design tools and processes developed in case studies two and three, in relation to the role of design and technology in the everyday politics of place and questions of empowerment. Finally, I discuss in what terms an everyday politics agenda might benefit HCI work in this area towards the development of processes and tools to support progressive forms of social activism in the everyday.

1.7 Contributions

This dissertation contributes to HCI as follows. I contribute a methodological approach to inquire into and design for the everyday politics of place. The methodological approach proposes to understand vernacular politics as enacted in everyday mundane discursive practices (vernacular rhetoric), including the use of technologies and digital systems. The methodological framework is then combined within an approach to Action Research—Public Work Philosophy—to drive the design of tools to open spaces of vernacular rhetoric. The methodological approach is recommended for HCI research concerned with its role as well as the role of digital systems in contributing to shaping more just and democratic spaces towards the re-making of the places that matter to us.

I contribute insights gained from the three case studies to advance HCI understanding of the processes and mechanisms at play in the everyday politics of place. The insights show the complex relationship between vernacular rhetorical spaces and the institutional mechanism and procedures at play in the production of places; the relationship between cultural memories, lived experiences and affect in political action; the way social technologies are implicated in spatial processes that come to constitute place.

I contribute a participatory process and a socio-technical system to open and re-distribute spaces of contestation and dialogues in the everyday politics of place. City Walk, as a two-stage process and the Digital Travelling Suitcases as a socio-technical artifact are

presented as both tools and processes to structure participation, re-configure existing spatial arrangements and provide opportunities for re-making place.

1.8 Prior Publications

Clarke, R., **Crivellaro, C.**, DiMascio, D. and Wright, P. 2016. Re-configuring Participatory Media for Citizen Elders in Urban Planning. In Proc. MAB'16, ACM New York (in press).

Crivellaro, C., Taylor, A., Vlachokyriakos, V., Comber, R., Nissen, B., and Wright, P. 2016. Re-Making Places: HCI, “Community Building” and Change, in Proc. CHI '16 ACM New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2016. pp. 2958–69

Talhouk, R., Ahmed, S.I., Wulf, V., **Crivellaro, C.**, Vlachokyriakos, V., and Olivier, P. 2016. ‘Refugees and HCI SIG: The Role of HCI in Responding to the Refugee Crisis’, in *Proc. CHI '16 Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI EA '16. New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2016, pp. 1073–76

Vlachokyriakos, V., **Crivellaro, C.**, Le Dantec, C.A., Gordon, E., Wright, P., and Olivier, P. 2015 ‘Digital Civics: Citizen Empowerment With and Through Technology’, in *Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI EA '16 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2016), pp. 1096–99

Bartindale, T., Schofield, G., **Crivellaro, C.** and Wright, P. 2016. ‘TryFilm: Situated Support for Interactive Media Productions’, in *Proceedings of the 19th ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing*, CSCW '16 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2016), pp. 1412–22

Crivellaro, C., Comber, R., Dade-Robertson, M., Bowen, S. J., Wright, P. C. and Olivier, P., ‘Contesting the City: Enacting the Political Through Digitally Supported Urban Walks’, in *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI '15 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2015), pp. 2853–62

Green, D., **Crivellaro, C.** and Tidey, J. 2015. ‘Interactive Design Documentary as a Method For Civic Engagement’, in *Proceedings of the ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video*, TVX '15 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2015), pp. 161–66

Vlachokyriakos, V., Comber, R., **Crivellaro, C.**, Taylor, N., Kuznetsov, S., Kavanaugh, A. et al. 2015. ‘Designing Alternative Systems for Local Communities’, in *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI EA ’15 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2015), pp. 2333–36

Clarke, R. E., Briggs, J., Light, A., Heitlinger, S., and **Crivellaro, C.** 2014. ‘Socially Engaged Arts Practice in HCI’, in *CHI ’14 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI EA ’14 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2014), pp. 69–74

Crivellaro, C., Comber, R., Bowers, J., Wright, P. C. and Olivier, P. 2014. ‘A Pool of Dreams: Facebook, Politics and the Emergence of a Social Movement’, in *Proceedings of the 32nd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI ’14 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2014), pp. 3573–82

Wood, G., Vines, J., Balaam, M., Taylor, N., Smith, T., **Crivellaro, C.**, et al., ‘The Dept. Of Hidden Stories: Playful Digital Storytelling for Children in a Public Library’, in *Proceedings of the 32nd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI ’14 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2014), pp. 1885–94

Chapter 2 HCI and making place

“Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not just about soldiers and cannons, but about ideas, forms, images and imaginings” (Edward Said, 1994)

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined how politics can be understood as embedded in our everyday lives and how place and processes at play in its making are complex and multi-faceted endeavors forming part of our everyday social, political and economic lives. I also outlined how design and technologies are intertwined with our everyday human existence (Balsamo, 2011; Dourish, 2010) and how design can be first and foremost understood as a mundane activity that is about ‘imagining’ futures and giving them form (Manzini, 2014, 2015; Friedman, 2015). Because of this, design is a practice that is both cultural and socio-political, determining and determined from the outset (Balsamo, 2011).

Of concern in this chapter is the relationship between HCI and practices and processes at play in place-making as well as how people participate in such processes. In proposing to inquire into the role of technology and design in supporting communities and publics in shaping the places that matter to them, it is important to uncover the different aspects that come to constitute place, the processes of political participation in place construction and production and how HCI has understood and accounted for the role of computing, the methods and socio-technical systems that HCI researchers have developed to support socio-political engagement in relation to processes of making place. To this end, the chapter develops through three sections, each unpacking three broad questions: What makes place? What is the relationship between making place and democratic practices? What has HCI research contributed to civic participation in processes of ‘making’ places?

Responding to the broad question of what “makes” places, the first section brings together perspectives on place and space and related embodied, affective and cultural dimensions that have influenced HCI practices in this area as well as complementing this body of work with perspectives from other disciplines. I describe understandings of place from an

experiential perspective (Tuan, 1977; McCarthy and Wright, 2004; McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008), the role of cultural representation in place construction and production (Foucault, 1980; Hauser, 1999; Said, 1993) including questions of place identities and ideas of community (Massey, 1995; Harvey, 2000); here I also look at the role of technology in spatial production (Dourish and Bell, 2014; Dourish, 2006; Harvey, 2000; Massey, 2005, 1993).

The second section unpacks the relationship between making places and democratic practices by specifically examining the notion of the public sphere and related critiques (Habermas, 1992; Mouffe, 1999; Fraser, 1990) and the concept of Spatial Justice and Right to the City (Lefebvre, 1996; Soja, 2010; Harvey, 2003). Here I sketch out social movements and publics studies (Stevens and Malesh, 2010; Hauser, 1999, 2010) as well as theories that have looked at the role of objects and technologies in democratic practices (Latour, 2004; Marres, 2015).

The third section examines the state of the art in HCI research and design in respect to understanding and supporting engagement and participation in and about processes of making place. I describe studies that have advanced understanding of people's appropriation and use of existing social technologies in the politics of place (Wulf, 2013; Halpern and Gibbs, 2013; Bennet and Segerberg, 2013; Segerberg and Bennet 2011; Tayebi, 2013; Pietrucci, 2011). Then I outline works and projects that have experimented with systems to support practices of place construction (Giaccardi and Palen, 2008; Balestrini et al., 2014; Klæbe et al., 2007; Korn and Back, 2012) and to understand the relationship between data and place production (Taylor et al., 2015; Vlachokyriakos et al., 2014). A range of design work that aims at fostering social relations and critical, imaginative engagement with issues in the politics of place is examined (Light and Akama, 2014; Bjögvínsson et al., 2012; DiSalvo et al., 2012), as well as work that have emphasised the importance of developing social capacity with and through design processes (Olander et al., 2011; Light, 2010; Le Dantec, 2012; Vines et al., 2013; Light and Akama, 2014; Fox and Le Dantec, 2014).

The review highlights further research opportunities and challenges in understanding and designing to support processes at play in making places. In inquiring into the politics of place an approach to HCI design is recommended that actively aims at bringing closer together processes of place construction and production towards the crafting of spaces where imaginings, values and rights can be formulated to guide collective actions and shape the places we inhabit and care about.

2.2 What makes place?

Despite place presents “the question of our living together—a question that is fundamentally about the political” (Massey, 2005: 151), to date, notions of place and processes in their making remain an often-overlooked part of political theory (Pierce et al., 2011). In HCI conceptions of space and place are, arguably, often under politicised. The purpose of this section then is to sketch out perspectives that have contributed to HCI’s understanding of place/space as well as literature from human geography, political theory and anthropology, in order to position place/space and processes at play in their constitution (including design and technologies and the spaces they forge) within the sphere of politics and the socio-political (Massey 1995, 2005; Mouffe, 1999; Fraser, 1990).

As briefly outlined in the previous chapter there isn’t an agreed definition for what constitute place/space across disciplines (Harvey, 1993; Massey, 2005), but there is certainly agreement on the complexity at play in their making—processes that intertwine the social, material, economic and political aspects of our everyday lives. HCI researchers have advocated for a necessary inter-disciplinary approach in striving to understand place (Ciolfi, 2013; Dourish and Bell, 2007; Harrison and Tatar, 2008; McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008) and have turned to distinct perspectives and disciplines such as human geography, philosophy and anthropology.

HCI practitioners have tended to distinguish between notions and processes of “place construction”—understood as the process of meaning making in and about place and “space/place production”—referring to the institutional infrastructures and mechanism in neo-liberal and capitalist societies that regulate space and its (re)production (Harrison and Tatar, 2008), including the very technologies HCI helps produce to sustain such processes (Dourish, 2006; Dourish and Bell, 2014). As I will go on to describe in the following sub-sections, the complexities at play in the various intertwined processes and practices that “make places”, a separation between production and construction of places can be misleading and unhelpful for a progressive sense of place and for processes at play in their making. In order to open up possibilities for HCI to support democratic and political participation and interventions in making places, processes and practices of meaning making (place construction) and practices of space/place production (institutional mechanisms) needs to be related to one another both conceptually and in practice.

In this section, I will describe the relationship between place, experience and embodiment; the relationship between place identities, cultural representation, discourse; and the economic and institutional mechanisms at play in the production of place. In ‘place as lived and felt’ I will outline how different thinkers have conceptualised place in relation to our lived and felt experiences, including notions of embodiment. Among such perspectives are theories that have examined the sensual, affective and emotional aspects of places (Tuan, 1977; McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008; Ciolfi, 2013). In ‘cultural representations and place identities’ I examine the way cultural representations relate to place meanings (Foucault, 1980, 2002; Hall, 1997; Gee, 2015) and processes of place construction and productions (Hauser, 1999; Said, 1994; Soja, 2010). I look at the relationship between notions of community and ways in which we can understand place has having multiple identities (Massey, 1995, 2005). In ‘technology and the production of spaces’ I examine the economic and technological processes at play in the development and production of space and place (Soja, 2010; Harvey, 2000) as well as the spatial practices and the role of technologies in this area (Dourish, 2006; Dourish and Bell, 2014; Rossitto, 2008).

2.2.1 *Place as lived and felt*

Among many divergent perspectives on place/space, their separation or mutual constitution, there is a general agreement of the centrality of experience, from which we derive meaning and the meaning making processes in the constitution of place. Tuan’s experiential perspective on space and place (Tuan, 1977) has been one of the most influential in HCI and CSCW and particularly in HCI’s work concerned with place, landscape and heritage (Ciolfi, 2007, 2013; Giaccardi et al., 2012; Giaccardi and Palen, 2008; McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008).

Tuan brought forward an understanding of place as inextricably linked to human experiences and advocated a distinction between place and space—whereby “*what begins as undifferentiated space, becomes place as we get to know it better, and endowed it with value*” (Tuan, 1977:6). Here space is presented as homogeneous and somewhat undifferentiated. Only through our engagement with space, by moving through it and accumulating experiences, space becomes place. Tuan’s conceptualisation of place as an instance of the physical environment that is lived and experienced focuses on four interrelated dimensions at play in its constitution: personal associations—memories and emotions associated with place; social events and interactions with other people in a place; cultural dimensions—delineating codes of behaviours;

and finally the physical dimension—referring to the qualities of a place, its materialities and sensorial aspects (Ciolfi, 2007; Tuan, 1977). Here each of these interrelated dimensions is seen as being a crucial aspect in processes of meaning making. Tuan's perspective also theorises place in relation to time. For Tuan the more we spend time in a space, the more space acquires value and meaning thus becoming place; here places are seen as moments of *pause* and *stasis* in the on-going spatial flow and movement (Tuan, 1977:6). It could be argued however that Tuan's perspective points towards a "static" notion of place as if place was standing still in time and with it, arguably, also our experiences. Even if Tuan's perspective suggests that there is an accumulation of experiences in place—with the notion of place as stasis comes also an idea of experiences as still and static.

McCarthy and Wright instead propose a dialogical understanding of experience and therefore dialogical understanding of our experiences in and of place, as well as of technology (McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008; McCarthy and Wright, 2004). Their perspective drawing from Dewey and Bakhtin (McCarthy and Wright, 2004), suggests experience can be understood as dialogue, like an "ongoing conversation" that by definition necessarily involve multiple voices and in which meaning making is seen as an ongoing future-oriented endeavor (McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008). Here any experience is seen as "simultaneously sensual emotional and intellectual, that is relational" (McCarthy and Wright, 2004: 86-87) and associated with "personal, social and cultural sense making processes" (McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008: 249). Drawing from Dewey's take on aesthetic experiences—described as a "pre-linguistic engagement in everyday situations in which we find ourselves directly connected to the world" (McCarthy and Wright, 2010: 15)—a significant aspect in their perspective is a recognition of our sensual and embodied engagements with our surroundings and an understanding of emotions and rational thought as inseparable and constitutional to our judgments and values. This perspective then suggests our material relations in respect to our environments and our feelings and reasoning processes through which we develop values, needs, desires and goals—that is the ways in which meanings are put to use and drive actions.

Embodiment and being in place

The notion that 'being in place' is a significant aspect for the constitution of place and for the development of place meaning positions our bodies as the central reference point for perception (Lentini and Decortis, 2010; Tuan, 1977; McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008). Dourish's

seminal work on embodied interaction began to illuminate not just how we act *on* the world and on technology, but how “we act *through* it” (Dourish, 2004: 154) and the way “we uncover meaning in the world by interacting with it”. Elsewhere, scholars highlighted the knowledge acquired through the body and bodily movements where sound, smell, touch and vision not only contribute to our awareness of the environment (Tuan, 1977), but also becomes an integral part for turning “space” into place (Ciolfi, 2013).

Vergunst and Ingold in this regard take this matter one step further proposing how our very being and moving through places actually create them as much as the other way around. They suggest moving through place/space, by walking for example, can be seen as a lived and embodied experience in which the environment “imprints onto the body and at the same time is affected by it” (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008: 77). They present the relationship between bodies and place, and movement and place as something akin to a process of co-creation and co-production. Their perspective, like McCarthy and Wright’s, takes on experience (McCarthy and Wright, 2004, 2010), brings forth a relational mode of understanding our presence and our environments (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008).

Crucially what Vergunst and Ingold are bringing forth here is an idea that places are necessarily and always co-produced in emergent and situated ways. They suggest, “the forms of the landscape—like the identities and capacities of its human inhabitants—are not imposed upon a material substrate but rather emerge as condensations or crystallizations of activity within a relational field” (Ingold, 2004: 333). Here then our lives appear to be interweaving into places and places into our lives in a process that is continuous and never ending (Tilley, 1994: 29-30 in Ingold, 2004). This perspective is crucially important as it points toward a notion that we don’t act *on* places or the material world (Heidegger in Ingold, 2004), neither exactly *through it* (Dourish, 2004) but rather *with* it (Ingold, 2000, 2004).

We have seen how ‘place’ can be regarded as constituted by the collection of experiences, bodily movements, meanings, values, and feelings that individuals and/or groups associate with a particular locality (McCarthy and Wright, 2004; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008). The notion of experience and place as dialogue (McCarthy and Wright, 2004; McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008)—invoke an idea that places are necessarily constantly unfolding. This understanding of place positions place meaning and the modes and means that can convey it as a continual and emergent accomplishment, socially and environmentally negotiated (McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008)—something we continuously co-create *with* our surroundings (Ingold and

Vergunst, 2008). However, despite our emotions, intellectual thinking and meanings associated with places are an emergent affair and always in the making—these might not necessarily be visible to others (Byrne, 2008; Lee and Ingold, 2006). One way in which place meanings are conveyed, (re)created and sustained is through cultural representations in their different forms (Hall 1997; Said, 1994; McCarthy and Wright, 2004).

2.2.2 *Cultural representations and place identities*

The production and distribution of place meanings is thought to be bound with the modes and media of representation in which these are articulated. Stuart Hall described representation as the processes and ways by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture or society through the use of language, signs and images which represent ‘things’ (Hall, 1997). Michel Foucault used the term “representation” to indicate the production of knowledges as well as meaning through the use of discourses (Foucault, 1980). Discourse has been described as the “distinctive ways of speaking, listening, reading and writing, coupled with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognizable activities” (Gee, 2015: 155). ‘Discursive practices’ then are not simply narratives, but include materials and resources people use in the construction of the self, other, realities and places. On Foucault’s account through discourse we produce ‘knowledges’ and meanings in whose terms ‘things’ are done. In this sense what is said, valued, etc. is inextricably linked to what is done and can be done, materially (Hook, 2001; Foucault, 1980, 2002). Discursive practices then are sites of political action, vehicles through which power is exercised and realities and places shaped and materialised (Foucault, 1980, 2002).

Hauser examined how the discourses we share in our everyday lives have a constitutive function in society (Hauser, 1999). He emphasises the roles of memory for its potential to generate common understanding, and motivate common action, where cultural memories and their representations in and about places are sites of conflict, resistance, but also imagination. Using two examples of narratives of cultural memory that in Poland led to the bloodless revolution and in the former Yugoslavia to despair and war, Hauser shows how these narratives of place were actually “means of productions, to build a politics and society rather than as forms of popular consumption” (Hauser, 1999: 157). Indeed, Hauser suggests that cultural memory

and cultural narratives in and about places relate to questions of power in two ways: how people draw resources from the past to shape their present and future; and how people resist attempts by others to distort and appropriate their memories and experiences. Similarly, sociologist Arthur Frank describes how stories are powerful means that can affect how people see reality and places and that can engender change. However, he also argues that “*a social system is assembled and reassembled from the dominance of some narrative representations of reality over others*” (Frank, 2010: 80). Places then are not only constructed and produced with and by cultural representations, but also by the mechanisms and structures of power that allow particular narratives in and about places to prevail over others.

Following Foucault (1980), Said pointed to the ways in which particular material representation, such as images, produce knowledges and imaginings that are distributed through various technologically enabled mediums and employed to bring about particular understanding of places and justify political actions (Said, 1994; Soja, 2010). Said looked at how the “politics of dispossession”, military occupation and economic exploitation that have defined the relationship between East and West, was not simply expressed through military power, but also through the distribution of particular ideas, images and imaginings of the East (Soja, 2010). Hauser’s and Said’s work is significant as they show the interrelationship between power, images and imagining of place, the ‘other’ and other places and how these are put to use to produce geographies and places. That is, cultural representations in all their forms are sites of struggles, wars and imaginings that produce oppressive and unjust geographies – but these geographies can also be enabling, creating the foundations for resistance and potential emancipation (Said, 1994; Soja, 2010). Said’s and Hauser’s studies show how understanding and imaginings of place forged through particular discourses and material representations lead to socio-political “mobilisations” and are put to use to legitimise particular understanding of the past and present, and a battle over what is to come (Massey, 1995).

Place identities and community

The development of identity—that is “*the story we tell of ourselves and which is also the story others tell of us*” (Madan, 1994: 95), used to be put in relation with an idea of an environmentally centered and fixed place. Here, according to Heidegger the “authenticity” of dwelling in a place, being connected to places, would be deeply affected, if not even destroyed, by the growth of technology. Referring to technological advance, he writes: “*Homelessness is*

coming to be the destiny of the world” (Heidegger in Harvey, 1993). With the emergence of technologies and the global/local nexus, scholars have pointed out a fascination with local knowledge and culture and how its construction led to ‘communitarism’ and localism (Harvey, 2000: 84-5). The idea of community first developed as a reaction to the processes that saw many moving from the villages to the cities in the post-industrial revolution (Applegate, 1993). The idea of community was then a construction associated to a sense of place and geographically bound groups of people (generally at the neighbourhood scale) who longed to maintain local traditions and social bonds while adapting to the changes brought by technological advance in post-industrial society (Applegate, 1993). Since then, the idea of community has been highly romanticised, lacking a “positive opposing term” (Williams in Cain, 2009) and remains attached to ideologies of authenticity and nostalgia, making it difficult to see the differences among residents or points of contention (Raynold in Cain, 2010:182).

Scholars have underlined how a nostalgic and backward looking sense of place has been significantly problematic, leading to reactionary nationalism, competitive localism, and introverted obsessions with heritage (Harvey, 2000; Young, 1990; Soja, 2010), resulting in hindrance to change and a progressive politics (Massey, 1995). In this view the concept of community implies a denial of time and space distancing, also nurtured at a local level in response to local struggles such as urban renewal processes. For example, Mary Jane Jacobs’ (Jacobs, 2000) critique of processes of city planning and urban renewal has been criticised for promoting a nostalgic conception of intimate and diverse neighbourhoods—something that Harvey argues could have worked only within particular socially diverse neighbourhoods in the “happy way” that she described. Today Jacobs’ thinking has been taken up by movements such as new urbanism that foster assumptions that geographical neighborhoods are equivalent to ‘community’ and promote an image of community and place-based civic pride arguably for those who already care for the places where they live while abandoning the “under-class” (Harvey, 2000:170). In practice, Harvey argues, this consensus driven ideal of community is meant to stabilise and control the processes meant to mobilise people, whereby the ‘spirit of community’ is presented as an antidote to threats of social disorder and class war (Harvey, 2000:173). While it may be argued that well-established communities often exclude and internalise forms of social controls, therefore are barriers of social change (Harvey, 2000: 170), communities are much more complex and can’t be simply defined in these polarising terms.

In this respect, other scholars have proposed an idea of community within a “politics of difference” (Massey, 1995, 2005). Massey set out to problematise the essentialist view on place that assumes a singular place-bound identity resting on ideas of traditions and of the past as static and unspoiled. Such views, she argues, fail to recognise places’ spatio-temporal hybridity and their interconnection with elsewhere (Massey, 1995). Massey suggests place is the result of ongoing connections, influences and contacts that “molding” into one another over time create something new. In this sense, place has 'multiple identities'—resulting from the ongoing construction between past, present and future (Massey, 1995: 186) and borne out of interpretations and reading of their past leading to claims or counter-claims about their present. Places can be understood as “articulations of social relations”, both global and local, and places’ identities should be seen as processes of constant formation. In a similar vein, communities in her account have 'internal structures', a differentiated specificity 'constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations' that are always in the process of making (Massey, 1995: 186). The production of communities then entails the productions of spaces where systems of norms and rules are defined, acknowledged and respected—however, these should be seen as in constant evolution and making. What this points to is a notion of community as the result of contentious and fluid processes and rules of belonging and associations (Harvey, 2000). Communities’ identities might be better understood in dialogical terms (McCarthy and Wright, 2015) as a process in constant formation.

The multiple evolving identities, meanings and cultural representations associated with place is an important shift not only because it destabilises places’ singular, essential identity, but also because diverging meanings, discourses and material representations of places have led to place-based socio-political struggles and even wars and are utilised to legitimise actions leading to particular futures instead of others. Place meanings, cultural representation and discourses that convey them, are more than simply perspectives as people’s understandings of place are transformed into action (Harvey, 1993).

2.2.3 Technology and the production of space and place

So far I have outlined how cultural representation and discourse in and of place distributed through various technologies, modes and media have significant implications for the construction and production of places (Hauser, 1999; Said, 1994; Soja, 2010). Ideals of ‘community’ can be highly problematic as they are often used as means of social control

(Harvey, 2000; Young, 1990) and communities and place identities instead should be understood as multiple fluid processes in constant formation (Massey, 1995). Scholars in HCI and human geography have highlighted how power, politics and technologies has implications for processes at play in ‘making’ place (Massey, 2005; Harvey, 2000; Soja, 2010; Dourish, 2006). I have already hinted at how our experience of place fundamentally changed due to technological advance and by what has been defined as time-space compression (Harvey, 1990; Massey, 1993) due to the movement of capital and communication across space—characterising “the *geographical stretching out of social relations* (Giddens in Massey, 1993).

In this regard, places are also the result of technological and economic practices and developments. Scholars here suggested that capitalism and social processes in neo-liberal societies determine through which social processes places are constructed and produced (Harvey, 2000; Soja, 2010). In this view places are constructed “under capitalism’s historical trajectory of geographical expansion—growth oriented, technologically dynamic and crisis prone” (Harvey, 1993: 5)—demonstrating how social struggles are “everywhere inscribed in space through the uneven development of the qualities of places” (Lefebvre in Soja 2010). Harvey points out how territorialisation, geographical boundaries and developments (from the neighbourhood scale, to regions, states, etc.) are outcomes of social struggles and institutional decisions made in the context of technological and politico-economic conditions (Harvey 2000). Here it appears that the scales (local, regional, national and global) at which human activities can be orchestrated depend on technological innovation (communications, transport, etc.) and politico-economic conditions.

Harvey’s theory of uneven development suggests the workings of capital, technologies and social processes produce uneven or differentiated urban developments everywhere in the world and how these arise from concentrated agglomeration of economic forces to develop particular areas/locations at the expense of others (Harvey, 2000; Soja, 2010). In this respect then capital and the regulation of space at scale materialises in very specific ways rendering areas and populations vulnerable to degradation of services, unemployment etc. while concentrating wealth on other selective areas and locations (Harvey, 2000: 81). Crucially he points out how such territorialisation and social processes have significant implications for the way people go about organising their communal life (Harvey 2000: 75-76). An example of this might be found in the way different parts of the city have differentiated transport systems

depriving people living in particular areas of equal access to services (Soja, 2010; Winner, 1980; Latour 2004).

Mobilities and place

Technologies, particularly mobile technologies, are actively embroiled in spatial production (Dourish, 2006; Brewer and Dourish, 2008) and therefore in the construction, production and development of places. Technologies shape, are shaped by and mediate our experience of space (Brewer and Dourish, 2008). In HCI, Dourish showed how space is the product of particular institutional practices such as cartography, land management, etc. which are increasingly technologically driven and enabled. For example, drawing from de Certeau's work (de Certeau, 1988)—he suggests how technologies (mobile mapping apps for example) are implicated in the ways in which we understand and navigate the city. In this view technologies are embroiled in the power relations and politics of spatial practices dictating modes of seeing, understanding and doing—where cartographies, for example, can be seen as modes of domination from above and resistance from below (de Certeau, 1988; Dourish, 2006). Yet, scholars suggest a less polarising way to understand the relationship between maps and places as lived on the grounds. We might instead see maps, places and technologies as open to potential subversions and alternative discourses (Ingold, 2004; Farias, 2011), where institutional and social practices might be understood as a “matter of every choices and actions” (Ingold, 2004: 76).

However, scholars highlight how we are all differently positioned in respect to the choices that we may be able to make in respect to the production of spaces and places and how technologies also play a significant role in this regard. Here Massey (1993) looked at the way the material production of place is not only dictated by the working of capitalism in neo-liberal societies (Harvey, 1993, 2000), but also influenced by colonialism, racism, gender relations, and wealth. She referred to ‘power geometry’ of time and space compression to highlight the way “social groups and individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to the flows, movements, and interconnections” (Massey, 1993: 61). In simple terms, what this means is that some people are in control of the communications (e.g. news, film distribution, currency transactions, etc.) and their movements, while others are not and/or are imprisoned by it. Such complexity reveals the dimension of the degree of movement and communication and the dimension of control and initiation.

Drawing from Massey, Dourish argues for a cultural view of mobilities paying attention to the meaning of different forms of mobility and the way movement and space are in effect sites for the production of social and cultural meaning, where technology is always involved in the production of these cultural patterns (Dourish, 2006; Brewer and Dourish, 2008). This perspective calls for the necessity to grapple with and sustain diversity, whereby diversity and agency should take a central role in the development of mobile computing. Here Galloway pointed out how locative media applications and mobile computing also requires thinking about the ‘associations and expectations’ we make about our digitally mediated futures, about who has the power to imagine and debate future scenarios and how predicting or envisioning particular futures create alliances in the present that help to bring about those futures and not others (Galloway, 2010).

2.2.4 *Summary of section*

In this section I have outlined aspects that characterise the construction and production of places/spaces. Our relationship to place is understood as embodied, emotional and intellectual in nature. We make places and places make us in our daily lives with our actions and discourses. Cultural representations and discourse are central in the way we construct knowledges, convey and (re)produce place meanings and therefore continuously exercise or are subject to our/others’ ability to “make” places. Modes of knowledge production are imbued with power (Foucault, 1980) and have significant consequences for the way we understand places at both local and global scale (Soja, 2010; Said, 1994).

There are complex power relations at play in these social, political and economic processes that technologies help create and sustain as some people have access to resources to influence the future of particular places and others do not. Ideas/notions of singular place identities and (homogeneous) communities are contested and deeply troubling affairs for a progressive politics. Established notions of space/place in HCI tend to overlook the political nature of processes of place construction and space production (Massey, 1995, 2005; Harvey, 1993, 2000; Soja, 2010; Said, 1994) and how these are mutually constitutive. The material, social and politico-economic aspects at play in making places/spaces—including technological innovation and development—cannot be understood in isolation, but as continuous processes that intertwine in highly complex and at times enigmatic ways. That is, technology is actively

involved in the production of spaces and places at the smallest and largest scale (Dourish, 2006, 2010; Brewer and Dourish, 2008; Dourish and Bell, 2014).

In reviewing the different aspects that constitute place, I have inevitably highlighted the ways in which we (citizens, researchers, technologists, institutions) are all differently positioned in processes at play in their making. That is, we all participate in these power saturated processes (where non-participation can be seen as a mode of participation). Socio-political, institutional and economic practices are the ways in which we construct and produce both space and place. When we examine place through a political lens—as the process of negotiating how we should live together (Massey 2005)—we find power relations, struggles, contestations, and questions of democracy. Next I sketch out the relationship between democratic practices and questions of participation in ‘making’ places with a particular focus on how political philosophers and radical geographers have articulated the struggles to participate in the mechanisms and procedures of politics as well as possible alternative directions.

2.3 Democracy and ‘making’ places

Soja pointed out how the birth of democracy was fundamentally urban, born out as it was in the Greek *Polis* (politics, police, polite) and the Latin equivalent *Civitas* (civic, citizen, city) where space, city and the State were interwoven. “The city with its meeting places and public spaces was the wellspring for thinking about democracy, equality, liberty, human rights, citizenship, cultural identity, resistance to the status quo, struggles for social and spatial justice” (Soja, 2010: 80). Democracy is commonly thought to center around three basic principles: “the right to deliberate, the right to vote (or express one’s opinion), and the expectation that the majority will prevail” (Hauser and mclellan, 2010: 23). Scholars pointed out how this idealistic view of democracy is fraught and far removed from the reality of everyday life as it ignores power differentials and downgrades citizenship to the vote without prospects to build the common good (Hauser and mclellan, 2010: 23-24; Boyte, 2005). We have already seen the extent to which discourse and the spaces it produces have implications for the way places are made. In this light, it may be helpful to examine the workings of the public sphere—where the right to deliberate is exercised.

In some respect our contemporary notion of the ‘public sphere’ and processes of deliberation to ascertain what is important and sketch direction for the future can be traced to ancient Civilizations. Ancient Greek citizens used to assemble to debate matters of concerns in the ‘*agorá*’—the public square. The ‘*agorá*’ was the *public place* where *private* and *public* matters and questions regarding the governing of the city-state, the common good and shared values were addressed and discussed (Bauman, 1999). Similarly, the etymological root of the word ‘*republic*’ comes from the Latin ‘*res publica*’ meaning ‘things pertaining to the public’ (Latour 2004). The public sphere in this respect has always required thinking about the *procedures* enabling people to assemble, the sites and the *content* of what is to be discussed (Latour 2004).

In contemporary thinking, the notion of the public sphere has been updated and advanced by philosopher Jurgen Habermas (Habermas, 1992). In his work, “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere”, Habermas proposed a theoretical construct to overcome the barrier to political participation in modern societies, by enabling citizens to ‘have a voice’ on public issues (Habermas, 1992). He conceptualised a ‘public body’ distinct from the state and the state economy, in which equal ‘private citizens’ discussed ‘public concerns’ in a rational manner in order to achieve consensus (Fraser, 1990). The function of the Habermasian public sphere was to mediate between society and state, by forming public opinion, via publicity and the media, thus keeping the state accountable to society. Open and accessible to all, Habermas’ concept of the public sphere can be seen as a “network for communicating information and points of view in which democratic deliberation takes place” (Varnelis, 2012: 78). A significant aspect of the public sphere includes the media, social media and information technologies, yet, according to Habermas, citizens’ ability to form opinions in the public sphere diminishes with and because of the advent of mass media and capitalism (Varnelis, 2012).

There are several critiques based on assumptions within Habermas’ conceptualisation. Mouffe has contended that consensus, obtained through rational ‘talk’, can never be objective, rational or neutral and that every social order is always the result of some form of exclusion (Mouffe, 1999). Fraser highlighted the need to recognise existing social inequality as well as accommodate citizens’ diverse and culturally specific mode of expressions (cultural identities) in order to foster participatory equality in public discourse (Fraser, 1990). While only those directly concerned can decide what may be regarded as common good through discursive spaces, the Habermasian public sphere appears to homogenise modalities of speech rather than

celebrating and valuing cultural diversity (Fraser 1990). Furthermore, the political and social sphere should be understood as intertwined, as the “political involves the visibility of the acts of its social institutions” (Mouffe, 1999: 2).

In this regard, Malesh and Stevens highlight how the delimitations of what is public and what is private has served to marginalise further already disenfranchised communities as by designating certain discourses and subjects as private these are removed from critique (Stevens and Malesh, 2010). Yet, they highlight how often “it is not the disenfranchised that are “publifying” private issues to expose power imbalances and fight hegemonic reproduction. Rather the dissolution of “the private” is being enacted by already dominant political and economic institutions that more likely benefit from inegalitarian norms than suffer from them” (Stevens and Malesh, 2010: 4). Here then we contend with questions of whether the dissolution of the boundaries between private and public might benefit or confine the possibilities for personal autonomy and collective action, whereby privacy can be seen as an important space in which “fractured communities can craft the types of collective identities necessary to any sincere challenge to inequality” (Fraser, 1990).

For Mouffe, a healthy public sphere and democratic politics should entail the continuous disruption of the social order—seen as always the result of some exclusion due to the necessary dominant consensus—in order to bring to the fore its repressive character. In her account this can be done by opening spaces where conflicting voices and alternative views can engage in passionate disputes and perpetual decision making—what she defines as agonistic public spaces (Mouffe, 1999, 2005). Mouffe, in this regard, discerns politics—understood as institutional mechanisms and procedures of governance—from what she defines as “the political condition” (Mouffe, 1999). Within her agonistic view, the political condition entails the continuous making and remaking of counter-hegemonic coalitions to contrast dominant powers at play in the control of the social order.

We have seen here how established modalities of communication in the public sphere in reality don’t accommodate social actors’ cultural voices, and how the drive to consensus always entails forms of exclusions. There are complex interrelationships between public and private and despite Mouffe’s call for an agonistic, vibrant democracy made of engaged and passionate citizens, there are all sort of barriers and injustices in processes of participation in political discourse in Western societies. In this regard, Young brought forward a multi-sided concept of justice focusing on ‘distributional fairness’ (Young, 1990). In her view this take

five distinct forms: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. Of particular relevance here are marginalisation—referring to the way participation in social life and access to resources is deficient for particular portions of society; powerlessness—entailing the shrinking of sense of political power, participation and capacity for self-expression and efficacy; and cultural imperialism—understood as a form of dominance in which particular groups or cultures are rendered inferior or invisible by other dominant ones (Young, 1990; Soja, 2010). Next I bring forward a perspective that looks at the way justice and democratic participation can be understood as spatially organised.

2.3.1 Spatial (in)justice and the right to the city

Scholars emphasised the spatial nature of politics and of democracy—highlighting the way in which the practices of socio-political, cultural and economic production and distributions are spatially and politically organised and because of this they produce uneven geographies of development that are unjust (Harvey, 2000; Soja, 2010; Said 1994). Soja (2010) sets out to re-balance a bias in our understanding of (in)justice seen as solely linked to social and historical (temporal) processes and typically framed in terms of the law. He uses “spatial” justice to underline the spatiality of social (in)justice—emphasising the way space and spatial production is connected with notions of democracy and human rights. He asks us to look at the ways geographies affect social processes and forms (as much as the other way around) and how “space is active and actively involved in sustaining inequalities, injustices, economic exploitations, and other forms of oppression” (Soja, 2010: 4). In his terms (in)justice is strictly linked to democratic practices of production, appropriation and distribution of spaces that allow a (re)configuring of the terms in which (in)justices are effected. One significant inspiration in Soja’s theory of spatial justice is Lefebvre’s notion of the “Right to the City” (Lefebvre, 1996).

First formulated by Lefebvre in the riotous Paris of the 1960s, “the Right to the City” (Lefebvre, 1996) entailed a call for the citizenry to take control over the urban process—a call to a spatial re-appropriation claiming an active presence in all who take place in urban life under capitalism (Soja, 2010 :96). Since, this concept has been taken up, revived and elaborated by academics, activists, social movements, urbanists as well as NGOs and other institutions in different ways within the last 60 years (Mayers, 2009; Marcuse, 2009; Mitchell, 2003; Soja, 2010). Mayer describes how the right to the city has been adopted by social movements as both ideal and ‘motto’ in different historical times: as a reaction to the crisis of Fordism in the 1960s

and contestation to the cultural norms of collective consumption and the limited options to participate in their design; in the 1980s as a response to the politics of austerity; in the 1990s against regimes prioritising market mechanisms and in the most recent transnational anti-globalisation movements (Mayers, 2009).

In contemporary terms the Right to the City has been adopted by movements and academics standing for principles of justice and the common good (rather than legal terms) and against processes of transformation in cities and society (Mayers, 2009; Soja, 2010). Equally though this concept has also been adopted by organisations (such as UNESCO and NGOs) that used it to simply make claims to inclusion in existing systems, in this way obliterating a foundational feature of Lefebvre's original proposition (Mayer, 2009). Indeed, Lefebvre's radical idea is that the right to the city is not sanctioned law with specific outlines (and/or to reinforce existing categories of citizens and related marginalisations), but rather it stands "*for the capacity and opportunities for movements and people to create rights through social and political action*" (Mayer 2009: 367). In this sense it is a right to make and (re)distribute spaces and goods and, crucially, a right that exists only as people appropriate it.

Harvey further develops this idea, calling for a collective effort to transform the very systems and procedures at play in processes of urbanisation:

"the question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights" (Harvey, 2008: 27).

The right to the city then appears as a process that demands us all to reflect on, share and negotiate values, meanings and desires towards the re-making of cities and places. It is a right that calls for its appropriation and appears as necessarily always in-the-making—a future oriented practice. Expanding further on this, Soja highlight ideals of open and fair participation in all the processes producing urban life with particular attention to the ways bureaucratic societies, planning and public policies affect our localities and also have an impact everywhere

in the globe though the operations of the state and market (Soja, 2010). The right to the city and spatial justice, beyond the borders of the law, is about seeking fairness and democracy as members of social groups whether legally defined as such or otherwise (Soja, 2010:74). Even more broadly, the right to the city can be understood as the ‘right to space’ —the right to “appropriate, occupy and define the terms in which space is produced within and beyond the urban scale” (Purcell, 2008: 102 in Soja, 2010). A spatial justice perspective includes spheres of cultural and political production and a multiplicity of agents, calling for the necessity to build diverse coalitions and social movements (Soja, 2010:109).

2.3.2 Social movements and public studies

Social movements have been regarded as “collective actions based on solidarity carrying a conflict and breaking the limit of a system in which action occurs” (Melucci in Stevens and Malesh, 2010: 8). Stevens and Malesh provide a brief history of how and who studied social movement. Prior the 1960s, social movement practices were theorised as non-institutional and distinct from everyday life and analysed through a behavioural lens to understand how individual discontent translate into collective action. After the 1960s with the rights movements, aiming at changing the political systems, research shifted its focus to activists being understood as rational beings whose actions were motivated by ethical choices. In this way, scholars’ analytical focus shifted towards understanding movements’ organisational processes of recruiting and mobilising to achieve their aims (Stevens and Malesh, 2010). Recently ‘new social movements studies’ have re-directed their focus on the social embeddedness of social movement’s actors, on their processes of meaning construction and related questions of agency (Stevens and Malesh, 2010; Hauser and mcLellan, 2010). For example, Snow and colleagues explored the framing mechanisms that are used to organize experience and guide collective action (Stevens and Malesh, 2010).

More critically for this dissertation, researchers in publics and counter-publics studies have begun focusing on the importance of the formation and efficacy of non-commonly regarded political communities (rather than solely social movements) to affect change (Stevens and Malesh, 2010: 12; Hauser, 1999, 2010). These perspectives, with Hauser being one of the most significant exponents (Hauser, 1999, 2010) build on Dewey’s notion of publics (Dewey, 1954) and Habermas’ critiques outlined above (Fraser, 1990; Mouffe, 1999; Stevens and Malesh, 2010). Hauser broadened significantly what may constitute a forum for discursive

deliberation, exploring the persuasive power of the visual, material, virtual and embodied rhetoric people perform in their daily lives. His work examines the ways people exercise persuasion and have the capacity to challenge the status quo and form publics in mundane, multimodal and material ways—such as through the use of “graffiti as dissent, flash mobs as the result of text messaging and wikis/blogs as interactive new media exemplifying ways in which they employ rhetoric materially” (Stevens and Malesh, 2010:13). The focus is the contexts in which meanings arise and a recognition that since contexts are constantly fluctuating, so will the meanings, identities-in-formation and publics from which they arise.

As we have seen here there is a history of movements and scholarly thinking that have worked towards ways in which we can think and understand what may constitute a forum for public discussion (Hauser 1999), and issues related to representation in different ways in contemporary democracies. In this respect, scholars have advanced unique perspectives on the role of objects—including digital technologies—in shifting and affecting the power dynamics and relations in societies (Castells, 2012) as well as unique perspectives in the way we can think of issues of representation in public discourse (Latour, 2005).

2.3.3 The digital in democratic participation

As anticipated, digital technology, the Web 2.0 and mobile computing have brought significant changes in western society, particularly in regards to the production, access and distribution of information and culture. The Internet has become the host of numerous sites, agoras, forums and theatres where political, cultural and vernacular rhetoric, narratives where multiple modalities of representation and expression are continuously produced, and disseminated to large numbers of people (Latour, 2005). Russell et al. (2008) have highlighted how the top-down model of cultural production and consumption has now extended to a many-to-many and peer-to-peer model of content production and consumption (Varnelis, 2012)—fundamentally altering the power dynamics and relations in society (Castells, 2012).

Here, scholars have also proposed to re-direct scholarly focus on the role that digital objects and technologies can have in democratic practices and participation asking what contributions to political and civic life material entities and digital objects might be capable of (Stengers, 2005; Latour, 2004; Marres, 2015). For example, Latour’s Object Oriented Democracy (OOD) proposed objects, digital artifacts and technologies have the potential to

represent issues and bring together assemblies of people concerned with the matters at stake—what he calls matters of concerns (Latour, 2005). Looking at the material conditions that allow actors to assemble, in his terms, “DingPolitik” (‘ding’ meaning ‘thing’) proposes to grapple with the difficulties associated with political representation and the representation of issues in democratic practices (Latour, 2005). In his accounts objects (‘things’, technologies of speech and complex sets of procedures, etc.) are endorsed with the potential to act as intermediaries and mediators in public assemblies.

Social media have been increasingly regarded as one space offering opportunities for alternative discursive modes, broadening participation in political discourses, and social activism (Castells, 2012; Varnelis, 2012). For example, studies have looked at the role social media played in large-scale social movements such as the Egyptian and Tunisian revolution (Wulf et al. 2013; Saeed et al., 2011; Castells, 2012) and the Occupy movement (Costanza-Chok, 2012; Castells, 2012), but also in localised action (Tayebi, 2013; Pietrucci, 2011). As social media and interactive systems have come to be enmeshed in everyday life (Dourish, 2010), they appear to be affecting power relations in society (Castells, 2012) and contributing to the change of the very notion of the public sphere (Varnelis, 2012)—the modalities and spaces where we come together to discuss what matters to us. For instance, Halpern and Gibbs (2012) argue for the democratic potential of social media to increase political participation where the quality of deliberation can benefit from identifiability and information access. Yet, other scholars have questioned to what extent these online practices are stimulating meaningful political participation and ‘deepening’ democracy in any significant way (Varnelis, 2012).

Scholarly attention has also been drawn to the uncertain interpersonal dynamics of such discursive spaces, and the need for facilitation in forming and co-constructing thoughtful political opinions and arguments (Halpern and Gibbs, 2012; Mascaro and Goggins, 2011; Uldam and Askanius, 2013). For instance, Mascaro and Goggins show, through empirical data analysis from a Facebook activist group, how administrators have considerable control in setting agendas, and debates, but that equally the most contentious debates emerged through posters’ engagement with the group (Mascaro and Goggins, 2011). Their findings highlighted a structural evolution on the media page where engagement and the role of administration changed over time. Through analysis of data from Twitter, Segerberg and Bennet find similar gatekeeping mechanisms in online practices, encouraging certain organising actions and preventing others (Bennet and Segerberg, 2013; Segerberg and Bennet, 2011). Equally, Uldam

and Askanius, examining the affordances of YouTube's architecture as a platform for political debate in the context of media activism, highlighted a complex interplay between political expression and censorship (Uldam and Askanius, 2013).

There has also been considerable skepticism in regard to online activists' practices, seen as ephemeral and limited in relation to the change they wish to achieve, with studies questioning the value of online and social media practices, also referred to as 'Slacktivism' (Lee and Hsieh, 2013; Rotman et al., 2011; McCafferty, 2011). Yet, other scholars highlighted the potential of these practices in providing an organisational aid for protests (Saeed et al., 2011), raising awareness in relation to citizen's concerns and rights in the city (Tayebi, 2013), and also providing a new space to enter into dialogue with the State (Pietrucci, 2011). In this regard, Pietrucci analyzed how local activists in post-earthquake L'Aquila appropriated a social media site, generating alternative modalities of dialogue with the government, thus questioning the efficacy of existing 'official' channels of communication between citizens and the State. Studies such as Pietrucci and Tayebi have demonstrated the significant implications of producing and sharing online media, highlighting public concerns and building connections between those affiliating with particular values towards action and change (Pietrucci, 2011; Tayebi, 2013). These studies have demonstrated the potential for technologies to offer alternative channels of communication between publics and the State, but have equally raised concerns in relation to the way online communities feature gate keeping mechanisms reproducing offline modalities of political participation (Varnelis, 2012; Bennet and Segerberg, 2013; Segerberg and Bennet, 2011).

In sum, social media have been regarded as offering different modalities of political participation and supporting public mobilisation for change in and about places. Despite this, processes of place construction play a fundamental role in driving socio-political action. As we have seen earlier in the chapter these studies have largely focused on the way people organise and mobilise for collective action – rather than striving to understand why and how people might become advocates for change, and how collectives are formed.

2.3.4 Summary of section

In the above section, we have seen the complexities at play in democratic practices and how these relate to 'making' places. In the section I outlined the ideal notion of the public

sphere (Habermas), its critique (Mouffe, 1999; Fraser, 1991; Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mclellan 2010; Stevens and Malesh, 2010). I have also outlined scholars' progressive ideas on the spatiality of democracy and justice and how this relates to people's capacities to affect change in and about the places they live in. In this respect, I briefly sketched out how scholars have studied and understood social movements as well as how scholars have significantly advance what may be regarded as a 'legitimate' forum for public discussion (Hauser 1999, 2010). In conclusion, I also outlined most recent thinking in relation to the potential role of technologies and social media in democratic practices. Next I will outline how HCI research and design practitioners have contributed to understanding and fostering civic participation in making places.

2.4 HCI's contribution to civic participation in 'making' places

HCI research has increasingly shown interest in playing a more significant role in civic life, with areas of research specifically focusing on the ways HCI might support public formation (Le Dantec, 2012; Le Dantec and DiSalvo, 2013; DiSalvo, 2009) and people shaping their place and communities (Taylor et al., 2015; Olander et al., 2011; McCarthy and Wright, 2015). Boeher and Di Salvo observed how HCI's turn to civic technology and design can be regarded as the logical move from the turn to the social and cultural (Boehner and Di Salvo, 2016). Examples of civic technology and design might be found within fields of urban interaction design and participatory design for example, with projects ranging from explorations of how civic technology might support socio-political practices and different forms of civic progress, to studies examining the relationship between data, technology and place (Taylor et al., 2015; McMillan et al., 2016), to yet other works aiming at questioning and examining technology's more negative aspects.

Concurrent to the turn to the civic, HCI research has also begun taking into critical consideration its role in forging and structuring political spaces (DiSalvo et al. 2012; DiSalvo et al. 2014, Björgvinsson et al., 2012; Le Dantec 2013) – in the forms of community workshops or through the deployment of technologies “in the wild”. Such a move has raised critical questions around HCI researchers' positioning in processes of participation (Suchman, 2007) and around the limitations, legacy, sustainability and longevity of HCI interventions (Taylor et al., 2015; Balestrini et al, 2014; Taylor et al., 2012; Light and Akama, 2014). Here scholars

have urged a critical look at processes of participation, bringing to the fore questions of accountability (Light and Akama, 2014; Drombowsky et al., 2016), who may benefit from participating in research and whether participation in research may be considered good from the outset (Vines et al. 2014, McCarthy and Wright, 2015).

In the following section I bring together HCI studies that have specifically been concerned with understanding the potential for HCI interventions in supporting people shaping their places and communities. I will uncover how HCI researchers have investigated the role of technologies in providing new spaces for socio-political discourse and action in and about places; I will look at the significant contribution of design and research projects that have focused on the role of computing in providing a platform for story and data production and sharing in and about places toward the shaping of communities and place; I will then look at design practices that have turned their focus on structuring spaces for publics and new social relations to form while providing visibility to civic issues as well as ways to build social capacity.

2.4.1 Community stories in place

As anticipated earlier in the chapter, HCI scholars have focused for some time now on the way design and technologies shape place meaning and how our understanding of places, in turn, shapes HCI design (Harrison and Tatar, 2008; Harrison and Dourish, 1996; Ciolfi, 2013, 2007). Research here has examined the role of HCI to support the development of place meaning through collective experiences (Lentini and Decortis, 2010; Giaccardi and Palen, 2008; Giaccardi et al., 2012). Scholars have also looked at processes of story sharing in and about place through technologies towards the formation and development of collective identities, civic pride and communal values (Balestrini, 2014; Fox and Le Dantec, 2014). Other authors have studied how such processes may also support city planning and localised change (Klaebe et al., 2007; Korn and Back, 2012).

Arguably, Jacobs' emphasis on the importance of situated face-to-face encounters (Jacobs, 2000) has partially translated in HCI in the design and deployment of location-based media applications (Varnelis, 2012:15). Here authors suggested that locative technologies could play a central role in the creation of "affective geographies" and support place making, community development and cultural interventions (Giaccardi and Palen, 2008). To this end,

authors developed a range of tools and mapping systems to support meaningful multi-media sharing (Giaccardi & Palen, 2008; Lentini, 2011; Balestrini, 2014; Frohlich et al., 2009). For example, Giaccardi and Palen experimented with cross media platforms to create land soundscapes allowing the public production of culture and value (Giaccardi & Palen, 2008). In a similar vein, Frohlich et al. and Balestrini et al. deployed respectively a situated system and readily available technology such as QR codes to create and share digital content in and about place (Frohlich et al., 2009; Balestrini et al., 2014). Here, Balestrini showed how the process produced a sense of pride in the community (Balestrini et al., 2014). These interventions and processes were arguably not meant to be political, rather they all aimed at experimenting with ways in which digital technologies and systems could support the creation of community.

HCI scholars have also attempted to see how processes of opinion and story sharing in and about place could influence change in and about places in the context of city planning (Till, 2005; Cross, 1993; Klæbe et al., 2007; Korn and Back, 2012). HCI efforts in this area can be traced to the Design Methods movement in the 1960s that set out to respond to the challenges of facilitating public participation in planning and urban renewal projects (Cross, 1993; Till, 2005). Here the use of computers was seen as a way to make urban design plans more transparent and engage 'non-experts' with the process (Till, 2005). This translated firstly in the application of systematic, rational scientific methods and later in systems, such as Rittel's Issue Based Information System for example (Cross, 1993) aiming to engage multiple stakeholders in argumentative processes where issues were posited and discussed by all parties (Till, 2005; Cross, 1993).

While these approaches were consensus and solution oriented, more recently scholars recognised the importance of the affective dimension inherent in the relationship between places and people (Klæbe et al., 2007; Korn and Back, 2012). For example, Klæbe's digital tool to 'geotag' community stories found that these contributed to a sense of shared belonging, with potential to support urban planning processes (Klæbe et al., 2007). Korn and Back developed and implemented locative platforms to engage young people in a local community (Korn and Back, 2012). Their process, aiming at engendering opportunities for change through a process of sharing of stories, showed how privileging feelings and emotions in contrast to rational 'talk' in civic discussions enabled others to better understand the reasons behind particular opinions and subsequently engender dialogue. Yet, they also point out how

communities' stories and comments needed to be connected to local political leaders, if civic contributions are to lead to change (Korn and Back, 2012).

While offering additional spaces for people to come together, develop and share both individual and collective place meanings through stories and comments, these projects rarely take a critical approach to community, arguably easily embracing the place-based civic pride that scholars have criticised (Harvey, 2000). Further, the studies point to the difficulties in opening spaces where such community stories and opinions could be mobilised for change or put in dialogue with institutional processes and practices at the heart of the production of places. Community stories and opinions are rarely formulated in terms of their potential political validity or civic data to be interpreted to shape directions for the future.

2.4.2 Data in and about place

A number of HCI researchers have sought to investigate the potential of a range of tools such as sensors, situated voting devices and displays to support the production, materialisation and visualisation of local data in place for action and change (Vlachokyriakos et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2012; Koeman et al., 2014, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015; DiSalvo et al., 2008; Aoki et al., 2009). For example, Vlachokyriakos and colleagues presented 'PosterVote' a low costs digital poster that allows local activists to ask questions and gather quantitative data to support or discourage particular urban planning projects (Vlachokiriakos et al., 2014). In a different vein, the Neighborhood Network project entailed community groups exploring their neighbourhood and discovering local issues through the use of sensor technologies to (Di Salvo et al. 2008). The sensors were used to gather evidence and inform the creation of design prototypes, which were then presented to local leaders and city planners. Di Salvo and colleagues demonstrated how a combination of technology, design and storytelling played a significant role in the "construction and delivery of arguments" (DiSalvo et al., 2008: 49). Yet, the authors pointed out the local leaders' hesitation around the potential of design methods to mobilize communities.

In this regard, researchers have also explored mobile mapping tools to support city residents to crowdsource and display place-specific data to support day-to-day civic activities (Balaam et al., 2015; Garbett et al., 2016) and of large scale urban planning projects (Le Dantec et al., 2015). Garbett developed a platform to allow citizens to create their map-based mobile

apps to support the collective rating of places and services (Garbett et al., 2016). An example of such an app is Feedfinder that supports women in finding breastfeeding friendly places in the city (Balaam et al., 2015). The authors show how data generated through the app can serve not simply as peer-to-peer support in the rating of public places and services, but also how these might also be utilised by local authorities to understand gaps in service provision and make changes accordingly (Garbett et al., 2016). Underlining similar premises is the work developed by Le Dantec and colleagues—Cycle Atlanta—whereby local cyclists' everyday routes in the city are mapped out through a mobile app to inform particular changes in city planning (Le Dantec et al., 2015). These works bring to the fore questions of who may own the data, how it is interpreted and by whom.

The vast amount of data produced and available becomes useless, unless a sense making process is undertaken—where sense making is understood as a process of storytelling that may lead to social action. Kim, Lund and Dombrowski have pointed out that context and the process in which data are accessed dramatically influence and change the kind of story that can be told from data (Kim et al., 2013:51). They stress the importance of interfaces that connect people with data, the necessity for transparent and rich metadata where quality, source and other information must be made available (Kim et al., 2013). More recently Taylor and colleagues provided a conceptual framework for thinking about the relationship between data, place and communities (Taylor et al. 2015). Their piece reflected on the way data production is inextricably bound to place and communities, with significant implications for the way data is understood and consequently put to use. Such a perspective problematises the tendency of 'extracting' and abstracting data from the actors, contexts and the contingent situations in which it is produced as well as highlighting the relationship between how data come to be manifested in material ways, how it comes to matter and for whom. These works come to grapple with the tensions arising from the processes of data collection, their representation and interpretation.

In this regard, researchers and designers took a critical approach to the politics embedded in the design of mapping interfaces and digital artifacts (Light, 2011; DiSalvo, 2012). For example, Light highlighted the power inherent in mapping interfaces, referencing Stuart Hall, she pointed out how in maps "every choice to show this instead of that, is a choice about how to represent other cultures and each choice has consequences for the kind of meanings produced and how they are produced" (Light, 2011). There is also other design work aiming at questioning assumptions around technologies, politics of representations and institutional

practices at play in the socio-political production of place. In *Adversarial Design*, DiSalvo draws from Mouffe's agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 1999) to consider how particular design might "do" the political work of contestation, while raising awareness around societal issues (DiSalvo 2012). An example of such work is the Million Dollar Block, which draws attention to the geographies of social justice by creating spatial representations of the residence of prison inmates in different cities in the USA using mapping tools (DiSalvo, 2012; Markussen, 2013). In DiSalvo's terms such work creates spaces in which to contest against those in power and authority. Yet, academics suggested that by focusing on the designer's intention to contest government and urban planners, such work runs the risk of leaving little room for the voices and concerns of citizens in respect to the issues represented, or exploring ways in which the work might actually benefit or enter their lives (Markussen, 2013). Notable in this respect is the work by Public Lab, which developed kits to support grassroots mapping practices of areas that Google maps did not account for (Public Lab). These were used in a participatory project where children living in favelas in South America alongside artists and researchers built DIY, low cost air balloons with cheap cameras attached to map out the area in which they lived, and add them to the Google map directory. This is a significant example of HCI's potential to play a role in spatial (in)justice through collective action and technology.

In sum, while these works outlined above direct our attention to the potential of civic platforms to allow people to produce and distribute place-based data – concerns over data ownership, interpretation and its uses remain open. Concurrently while political design and the politics of design draw attention to the "effects" of political design/practices such as contestation, these analytical orientations, aside from a few examples, seem to skim over the experiential and affective dimension of place and its politics—they do not always include the voices of those who are supposed to involve. In HCI a number of scholars whose practice stemmed from participatory design traditions have advanced understanding of the role of design in this regard.

2.4.3 Spaces to structure relations and imagining futures

HCI researchers have sought ways in which design may intervene in the construction of political spaces and structures advocating for an involvement of designers in the "bigger picture" of what it means to do socially and politically engaged design—where this is seen as necessarily a collaborative effort involving diverse participating stakeholders and competences

(Björgvinsson et al., 2010, 2012; Manzini 2015). The approach advocates trying out ideas, prototyping and exploring them in a “hands-on way” in urban contexts (Björgvinsson et al. 2012). Designers in this respect, have begun moving away from the design of objects and towards the design of processes, situations and structures to support social relations as the scope of their practice (Manzini, 2015, 2016; Björgvinsson et al., 2012; Light and Akama, 2014).

Such work ranges from the development of methods and processes to support community building (Olander et al. 2011), imagining possible futures—including future technologies (Light, 2011; DiSalvo et al., 2012; Light and Akama, 2014), the formation of publics and agonistic spaces (Le Dantec, 2012; Le Dantec and DiSalvo, 2012; Björgvinsson et al., 2012). The design process aims at scaffolding relations among people, rather than aiming at the production of digital services. Here then, the focus, rather than narrowly technological, is explicitly social (Manzini 2015, 2016). As Light and Akama observe, design is “no longer owned by the designer but becomes a co-articulation of concerns and issues in a highly mediated and mediatized world” (Light and Akama, 2014:153). This approach differs from traditionally understood Participatory Design consisting of the four phases of analysis, design, construction, and implementation, as it requires attending to the challenges of design understood as necessarily an ongoing endeavor of performative staging of collectives of humans and non-humans (Björgvinsson et al., 2012).

These works draw from Star et al.'s notion of “infrastructuring” and boundary objects—loosely referred to as “spaces” (Star and Griesemer, 1989) that support arrangements of human/non-human through which “different groups can work together without consensus” (Star and Griesemer 1989: 602). From such arrangements, “infrastructures” can emerge from the information and requirement necessary to co-operate (such as language, practices, structures). Drawing from Star and Griesemer (1989), a number of authors have developed innovative processes to open opportunities for socio-political engagements and agonistic or caring relations in the present and for the future (Björgvinsson et al., 2010, 2012; Olander et al., 2011; Light and Akama 2014). For example, Björgvinsson and colleagues have experimented with a range of processes in Malmo Living Labs to explore how participatory processes can open agonistic spaces where poly-vocal and passionate debates can take place and creatively engender innovative solutions in and about the urban space. Similarly, Olander collaborating with older adults, described the importance of creating agonistic spaces where multiple stakeholders might enter in dialogue with one another in order to create the structures

by which people might be able to craft together their own futures (Olander et al. 2011). In both studies the authors describe the tensions that arise in multi-stakeholder engagements and the critical role design can play in fostering autonomous spaces to ensure all voices are heard (Olander et al., 2011).

In this respect design processes as future-oriented endeavors become about opening spaces to imagine creatively and collectively future possibilities for social action and change (Manzini, 2015; Till, 2005; Light and Akama, 2014). Some of this work aligns with the cross-disciplinary practices of speculative design aiming at instigating imaginations and debates by highlighting uncomfortable or unintended consequences of issues (Lukens and DiSalvo, 2011). Critical design, for example, takes speculation as a way to challenge preconceptions about our present and future living. However, while critical design largely exists within the circuit of the art gallery and rarely concerns itself with what many people actually think of their objects and products (Galloway, 2013), other designers' work aims at instigating a process of discovery and inquiry, a "directed and controlled research, analysis, reflection and synthesis" (DiSalvo, 2009:59). Here designers are seen as employing 'tactics', of "projecting" onto the future and "tracing" from the past to facilitate the discovery and articulation of issues in the present in relational ways (DiSalvo, 2009). Light for example showed how designed artifacts and 'props' helped support older adults in imagining future technologies (Light, 2011a), while drawing attention to the importance of the notions of structuring relation and caring relations when thinking about researchers' ethical obligations (Light and Akama, 2014).

One significant aspect of these projects is the specific attention to the way research and design is positioned in processes of participation and the necessity to build social capacities and digital literacy and fluency when working with communities (Fox and Le Dantec, 2014; Light, 2010; Lukens and DiSalvo, 2011). Here researchers have raised questions of accountability and power relations at play in design practice. Researchers have examined the micro dynamics and power relations when working with groups for localised social change (Light, 2010; McCarthy and Wright, 2015; Le Dantec and Fox, 2015) and the way researchers themselves engage in "acts of configuring participation" (Vines et al., 2013: 431). Building social capacities for change departs from the critical question of who the problem "owner" is in a particular context and setting and who should have the authority to define it as such. Indeed, framing a problem as such is always-already a political act where "*any claim to expertise to diagnose a problem and devise interventions is a claim to power*" (Light, 2010: 184). Authors

have suggested paying attention to the way people are invited to participate in the way these may conceal and reinforce power imbalances and oppressions (Light, 2010; McCarthy and Wright, 2015) as well as to the need to be transparent about who are the beneficiaries and initiators of these processes and how the sharing of control occurs in the process (Vines et al., 2013). Suchman here suggests the separation between designers and users appears much more blurred and we should also recognise how we are all people with different histories, differently positioned and involved at different moments in the ongoing production process (Suchman 2009). This production process is ultimately about imagining *our* futures and giving them form.

2.5 Summary: Exploring design and technology in/for the politics of making place

In this chapter I have sketched out the different aspects at play in ‘making’ places—the experiential, cultural and economic dimensions at play in the construction and production of place and space—including the role of technology in spatial practices (section one). I have explored how ‘making’ place relates to questions of democracy and justice and how different scholars strived to open opportunities for democratic practices in processes of making place and the role of communication technologies here (section two). Then I outlined HCI contributions which strived to support socio-political engagement in this area in different ways (section three).

Place can be understood as a relational endeavor—something we co-create in daily life (McCarthy and Wright, 2004; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008). Cultural representations—far from mere matters of cultural consumption—can be understood as everyday modes of production, and source of imaginations, social struggles and even wars (Hauser, 1999; 2009, Said, 1993). Place meanings and their representations are more than simply perspectives—they justify and drive social and institutional actions bringing about particular futures instead of others (Harvey, 1993; Massey, 1995). Technologies play a constitutional role in spatial practices (Dourish, 2006; Dourish and Bell, 2014), but also in the access, production and re-production of discourses and cultural representations (Massey, 1993).

The review points towards the necessity to understand and engage with processes of place construction and place/space production as mutually intertwined and co-constitutive. It also points towards ways to understand technologies not as external or “added on” to these

processes but as internal and part of the processes that come to constitute place and space. If a progressive sense of place is really about the relationship between space and place (Massey, 1995, 2005) an approach that separates spaces and practices of place construction (production of meanings) from production (institutional mechanisms and procedures) may unwillingly do a disservice to the potential role of HCI to provide beneficial and constructive opportunities to support people and publics formulating values, meanings and rights leading to action for change in and about the future of the places that matter to them.

We have seen the public sphere, rather than being simply a matter of rational discourse, is instead culturally constructed and each person participates differently according to their particular cultural identities. Yet, institutionalised conceptions of the public sphere, failing to accommodate people's cultural voices, leave those in power with the ability to change the places we live in according to their values. A spatial justice perspective and the right to the city was particularly significant as it pointed to the necessity to build social capacities for people to be able to formulate collective values and *create rights* (according to these values) in and about the places they inhabit in order to demand and affect change.

Social media has been regarded as one space that potentially allows the shifting of power relations in society (Castells, 2012) and new spaces for political discourse and social activism about places (Varnelis, 2012). Still authors argued for the need for facilitation in online forums to assist people in forming and co-constructing thoughtful political considerations and opinions (Lim and Kann in Varnelis, 2012). Further to date, there is little understanding in respect to the processes and ways in which people become advocates for change in small-scale political action in and about the places that matter to them. Concurrently I have outlined the tensions arising from processes that abstract data from the places and people that produce it (Taylor et al., 2015) and how data in and of itself is meaningless unless significant work to make sense of it is undertaken (Kim et al., 2013).

I have described the significant contribution of HCI in supporting storytelling towards the formation of collective identities and the role of researchers in urging to link stories and opinions about place with institutional decision making in order to make these practices meaningful and progressive in comparison to any others. Yet we have seen the complex interplay between place identities and community, where tendencies to regard communities as made of identical citizens are troubling and incongruous with the notion that places have multiple contested identities. In this respect, HCI scholars have strived to open and structure

new relational spaces, for the collective articulation of issues, where poly-vocal publics might be able to engender alternatives to dominant ways to understand places and environments and craft their futures (Olander et al., 2011; Björgvinsson et al., 2012; Light and Akama, 2014). Authors encouraged HCI researchers to think of how participatory design processes might engender processes that enable people to increase their visibility and amplify their voices “to capture the imagination of others in support of their agendas (DiSalvo et al., 2012: 60). Yet little work has succeeded in shedding light on how agendas—collective values and rights—are created in the first place. Further, to date, there is little empirical research and analysis of the spaces, the imaginative and discursive processes and/or the transformations that technologies and HCI design set out to foster, create and instigate. HCI research has made significant efforts to examine its potential role in civic life, and has led HCI researchers to ask how might HCI “do” the work of politics (DiSalvo et al., 2014) as well as urging research to concern itself with the design of politics other than the politics of design (Dourish 2010). The question thus remains open: how do people formulate values and create rights to affect change in the politics of place and what might be the role of design and technology here?

Given the significance of meaning making and imagination in political action in and about place and the necessity to open spaces to build capacities to formulate values and rights across difference—as formulated within a spatial justice perspective (Soja, 2010; Mayer, 2009; Harvey, 2003), this dissertation builds on previous HCI efforts to investigate the interrelationship between meanings, cultural representations and political action while exploring why and how people might become advocates for change in and about place. It proposes to investigate further how design practice may be able to open spaces at the intersection of the processes of place construction and institutional processes of place/space construction. It will take an empirical approach to explore the nature of the spaces HCI design practice might be able to forge, aligning with the radical principle of the Right to the City and Spatial Justice (Soja, 2010; Mayer, 2009; Harvey, 2003), that is, opening spaces that aim at building capacities to develop and share values and meanings towards the formulation of collective rights and change in and about our common environments.

Chapter 3 An everyday politics approach

“Transforming the world around us while transforming ourselves in the process”
(Boyte, 2008:3)

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I outlined the complex processes at play in the construction and production of place and outlined the extent to which technology is implicated in these processes where technologies become the sites where social, political, cultural and economic worlds also develop and are shaped (Dourish, 2010). I examined the issues and barriers in processes by which people strive to shape and affect change in the places they live with issues relating to the politics of mobility, power differential and struggles. The role of HCI design in the politics of place is an area of research that presents significant challenges and opportunities for further inquiry. I suggested that a productive way to inquire into the potential for HCI to play a role in the politics of place requires bringing together the processes and practices of place construction (meaning making) with the institutional mechanisms and procedures at play in place production as well as a conspicuous and consistent empirical analysis of the political spaces HCI design might be able to forge.

Inquiring into the potential for HCI to support citizens in shaping their surroundings in the politics of place requires an approach that firstly provides ways to understand the relationship between processes of place construction (meaning making) and production (institutional processes that regulate space and place production) as well as the role of technology in such processes. Secondly the approach should recognize these processes as political and power saturated endeavors, embedded in the everyday and as lively continuous accomplishments. In this chapter, I describe the ontological and epistemological positioning upon which I develop my methodological and analytical orientation of inquiry. The methodology of inquiry developed for this dissertation aims at understanding the role of technology and HCI design in the practices and political processes that actively shape place; design to support processes and spaces to support place construction and production in the everyday; and account for my own positioning and intent as researcher and designer.

As such the chapter develops through two main sections. The first section brings together feminist perspectives from Science Technology and Society (Law and Mol, 1995; Mol, 2013; Haraway, 1988) with rhetorical studies (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mclellan, 2010; Hauser and Kjeldsen, 2010). More specifically, drawing from STS perspectives on Ontological Politics, I position reality, place and its politics as the result of everyday practices, rather than something that precedes the mundane practices in which we interact with it (Mol, 1999:75; Law and Mo, 1995). Then I draw from Vernacular Rhetoric to focus specifically on how we can understand everyday discursive practices as mundane ways in which actors induce cooperation and form publics to affect change (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mclellan, 2010). Based on these views, I suggest an understanding of the everyday politics of place as an active mode of “making” (everyday practices) by which we shape the world while emphasising the contested and open character of practices (Mol 1999: 75). Ontological Politics and Vernacular Rhetoric allow me to inquire into place as the result of a multiplicity of practices while recognising everyday discursive practices as mundane yet fundamental sites of socio-political action where power is performed (Hauser 1999, Hauser and Stevens 2010). These perspectives provide the theoretical (and practical) foundations for my empirical and design-led inquiry while also clarifying my commitment to empirical inquiry (Hauser, 1999; Mol, 2013).

The second section explicates how the two methodological perspectives are incorporated within an orientation to design practice that draws from Action Research (Hayes, 2011) and Public Work philosophy—Everyday Politics as articulated by Boyte (Boyte, 2005). The orientation for design addresses questions of the role of design in processes of making place and outlines principles for design practice. Drawing from the theoretical framework outlined in the first section and Boyte’s Everyday Politics (Boyte, 2005, 2011), I broadly position HCI research as action-based culture shaping practice (Boyte, 2005). In the section, I describe the design principles of relationality and cooperation, development and learning and accountability. Within the latter, the researcher’s voice is also considered in relation to the shaping of participatory processes as well as writing about research (Kenney, 2015; de La Bellacasa, 2011, 2012).

Applying these perspectives to the study and practice of HCI design offers critical and nuanced ways to understand and design in/for the everyday politics of place with heightened awareness of the worlds HCI research helps shape, define and even restrict through its cultural practices and ideas (Boyte, 2005; Kenney, 2015; de La Bellacasa, 2011, 2012). The chapter

concludes with an outline of how these methodological perspectives are used in the three cases this dissertation accounts for, detailing also data collection and analysis.

3.2 Practice-oriented inquiry in the politics of place

In HCI, practice-oriented approaches have begun to emerge in recent years in the field of sustainable HCI (Pierce et al., 2008; Bidwell, 2008; Pink, 2008; DiSalvo 2008). In order to consider issues of sustainability more effectively, such approaches shifted attention from individual action to everyday practices and decentered the human and/or the computer by looking at how objects (artifacts, computers, etc.) are instead necessary ingredients of practices rather than simply something we interact with or through (Pierce et al., 2008). For these authors, everyday practices become both the unit of analysis and the sites of design interventions (Pierce et al. 2008). There is a wealth of work in HCI that has applied practice-oriented inquiry to questions of place and space; little work has, arguably, focused specifically on the question of participation in place-making and the role of technology and design in these processes.

Beginning from an understanding of practices as made up of ‘images’ (meanings, symbols), ‘skills’ (know-how, forms of competence), and ‘materials’ (artifacts, technologies) that are actively and recursively integrated through everyday performance (Hargreaves, 2012:405), in this section I bring together two perspectives—Ontological Politics (Mol 1999, 2013; Law, 1999) and Vernacular Rhetoric (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mclellan, 2010)—that reframe how we can conceive of place and its politics as well as addressing questions of agency and the potential for actors to challenge the status quo. Ontological politics—developed by Law and Mol—build on STS studies (primarily Latour’s Actor Network Theory) that advocated a rejection of the Cartesian dualism dividing the world into opposing spheres with human/subject/cultures on one hand and things/objects/nature on the other (Gries 2015). By contrast, Ontological Politics point to the ontological hybridity and multiplicity at the core of reality, acknowledging the significant role that nonhuman things play in everyday existence alongside other entities (Gries, 2015:5). Ontological Politics points to an understanding of realities and places as emerging from or the result/effect of practices and recognises the multiple agencies at play in these processes as well as the ways in which the meaningful and the material (socialities and materialities) are produced together (Law and Mol, 1995). Vernacular Rhetoric reframes what may constitute a forum for public deliberation by looking at how everyday

discursive-material practices induce cooperation and have the potential to challenge the status quo and bring about change.

3.2.1 “Making” place in practice

Ontological politics

Drawing from Foucault’s study on how discursive practices construct realities (Foucault, 1980), Science Technology and Society feminist authors Mol and Law coined the composite term Ontological Politics advocating for an understanding of realities as the result of relational enactments/practices. The ontological turn in STS signified a shift from concerns over methods (how) to the objects (what) of knowledge production. As such, ontological politics denotes a concern with the question of how physical (rather than only social) realities are staged or being enacted in practical engagements between human and non-humans in an attempt to de-centre the human as the sole agent in the construction of reality.

Ontology in standard philosophical parlance defines what belongs to the real, the conditions of possibility we live with. If the term ontology is defined with that of politics, then this suggests that the conditions of possibility are not given. That reality does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it, but is rather shaped within these practices (Mol, 1999: 74-75).

We may then understand practice not as the process by which we find the world and our encounters with it meaningful (Dourish, 2006; Wenger, 2000) – but as actively involved in its shaping (Law, 2015; Mol, 1999, 2003; Kenney, 2015). This perspective contrasts an idea of an essentialist, reified and overarching reality “out there” or fixed singular place detached from the work and practices that constantly shape it and enact it (Law, 2015; Taylor, 2011). Rather than thinking of the world or place as a unitary entity in which we are contained, this view suggests that we are all participants of the world in its continual creation and that we perform and actually ‘do’ or make places in and through practice (Law, 2015:1)—thus exposing how realities can only be the results of local, contingent and practical engagements and arrangements.

Material semiotics and ontological multiplicity

Annemarie Mol's ontological politics suggest physical realities can be understood as "relational effects" of interactions among entities and practices (Mol, 2013). In this view realities are seen as "effects of contingent and heterogeneous enactments, performances or set of relations" (Law, 2015: 2)—where their constitutive elements achieve significance in relation to one another, not a priori. This view suggests that if realities are the effects of relational engagements between human/non-human, then materials are one of the constitutive elements of all knowledge production and the material and what is meaningful (material semiotics) are produced together and therefore inextricably connected (Haraway, 1988; Law and Mol, 1995; de La Bellacasa, 2011; Moser 2005). This is significant as it points towards an understanding of meaning making as the result of relational enactment *with* materials. "The bits and pieces [...] are constituted in the networks of which they form a part. Objects, entities, actors, processes are semiotic effects of their relations: network nodes are sets of relations; or they are sets of relations between relations" (Mol and Law, 1995:277). In practice then, particular realities depend on the particular practices from which they emerge and the way such realities are constantly and simultaneously negotiated.

By foregrounding relations, according to Mol, it is possible to say that objects or material entities are "enacted" (Mol, 2003: 33) and in this way 'objects' become multiple and mutable as different ways of performing them will have different *relational effects*. Practices, then, are seen as multiple material enactments of reality—that is, a multiplicity of practices and actors and their relations come to constitute and enact realities in different and multiple ways. In a study of lower limbs arteriosclerosis in health care contexts, Mol suggested that despite in theory the body is single, in practice it is multiple because there are many body-practices that 'make' many different bodies (Law, 2007:13). These different ways of "making" the body (body-practices) are entangled in a variety of ways: at times they overlap, do not get related to one and other times again are brought together (Law, 2007). That is, even the way in which the different practices that "make" the body relate to one another (if they are related at all) is also a matter of practical achievement (Mol, 2003)—practical work needs to be undertaken in order to bring the different practices together and in relation to one another.

Let's examine what the above means when thinking about place. Taking ontological politics into questions of place, means that place can be understood as the result of material relations and practices that "make" place. Since there are many place-practices—many ways in

which place is practiced or done (social, institutional, etc.), there will be many place-realities. For example, the Byker Wall is a council estate in Newcastle. Joe goes to visits his grandma every Saturday afternoon and he enjoys running around the estate and playing hide and seek among the cherry trees and houses. A council cleaner, John, performs Byker as a place where he carries out his cleaning job with dust-bins at hand. A housing institution officer, Fran, performs Byker yet again differently. With the statistical data that constitute her practice, Fran “makes” Byker as the place with high indexes of deprivation, anti-social behaviours and where economic investments (of different kinds) might be needed. Within ontological politics Joe, Fran and John contribute to different ways in which Byker is “made”— different embodied, lived and materially enacted ways of practising it and bringing it to life. Byker is a different reality for each one of them. However, ontological politics suggest that Fran, John and Joe don’t simply have different perspectives on Byker—but they actually “make” Byker with various material entities (cherry trees, houses, dust-bins, statistics) in different ways.

The notion that places are enacted in a multiplicity of ways relates to questions of politics in two significant ways. It suggests that materials and objects (including the material fabric, technologies and objects) are one of the constitutive elements at play in bringing about particular places. It disrupts the notions that there are different opinions/perspectives on one singular place. Since opinions can be relegated to questions and matters of authority, rather than asking “who” gets to speak/who has the authority to speak, an ontological politics of place asks “what” is the place that takes shape as a result of these practices and that people come to live with. This perspective positions place and its politics as something that emerge from practices—something that we actively do/make— rather than as pre-given, which means that we can intervene and change it. If place is multiple then we can ask which version of a place *should* be performed or “made” (Mol, 1999, 2013). This question is fundamentally a political question that relates to how the different practices should live together or what version of a place would be better to live with. Yet, it seems as if all the different practices (institutional, social, economic, cultural etc.) ‘live’ mostly side-by-side, without necessarily encountering one another and/or when they do, it happens with a significant amount of effort and work. That is, bringing the different practices that come to constitute place is in itself an achievement that is done in practice. Given that place concerns questions of communal living—how do we go about shaping our common surroundings *together*—next I lay out a perspective that recognise actors’

ability to induce cooperation in everyday discursive practices, form publics and open opportunities for change (Vernacular Rhetoric).

3.2.2 *Co-operation in everyday discursive practices*

What is vernacular rhetoric?

Hauser locates the possibilities for political action in and through everyday discursive practices—what he calls Vernacular Rhetoric—specifically focusing on the ‘vernacular’ exchanges we perform in our daily lives, rather than the rhetorical practices of leaders and institutions (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mcLellan, 2010). Hauser’s Vernacular Rhetoric looks at the persuasive power of everyday visual, material, virtual and embodied rhetoric as discursive practices through which we *induce co-operation*, perform power and as sites of/for socio-political action (Hauser 1999, Hauser and mcLellan, 2010). Such a perspective directs our attention to the way that through discursive practices (in all their material forms) social actors participate in society (and place) on-going self-production (Hauser, 1999: 112) and to the way political and power relations are enacted in dynamic terms in the everyday. Vernacular rhetoric includes all sorts of everyday interactions and cultural practices and material forms, it is “interactive and situated but also transformative and material” (Stevens and Malesh, 2010: 6-7). In this respect for example, in recent years, the study of rhetoric has expanded to include visual representations, everyday talk, graffiti, music and bodily displays (Hauser and Stevens 2010).

Vernacular Rhetoric has both a reflective and a constitutive function, as it is through Vernacular Rhetoric that social actors express their values, where what is to be considered meaningful is attained through discursive processes of negotiation within and between social actors. Like in Mol’s ontological politics, Hauser’s Vernacular Rhetoric is understood as a performative mode of production—a “doing” that has material consequences for the way people go about shaping their presents and futures. Here everyday performances and interactions situated, contingent and power saturated affairs, are important sites for the formation of collective meaning and publics leading to political action. Hauser and Kjeldsen (2010) explain how vernacular rhetoric, precisely because it is the language (in its expanded sense) spoken by those who are not in power, performs a critique of power. In this sense Vernacular Rhetoric is distinct from the rhetoric of the elite, political leaders or those in power. Since ordinary voices

are not heard in official forums – the vernacular is a practice that provides a language in which to speak of everyday experience and give it meaning. Such a distinction between official and unofficial leads to an examination of the ways rhetorical practices, resources and mechanism are actually used to achieve liberatory aims and change.

Characteristics of vernacular rhetoric

Vernacular Rhetoric as articulated by Hauser presents different features. Everyday discourse has pragmatic value, vital for the coordination of social action. Hauser's model of vernacular rhetoric highlights how the 'rubbing up' of multiple, diverging voices (*polyvocality*) has the potential to engender alternatives to dominant power structures. In this view it is through the interaction of different voices that dialogical exchanges to produce understanding ensue and it is from these understandings that other (or alternative) visions, ways of thinking and doing can take shape. In this sense then, Vernacular Rhetoric does not cast agency on the individual person or rhetorical act, but stresses the structural conditions that underlie power, requiring the union (or relations) of the various rhetorical elements in a discursive act. "Rhetorical agency [...] involves each members of a society as a point of articulation. It is multimodal and performative as it is realized through the performance of these forms; it is emergent and mutable therefore subject to change; it rests in the capacity to be heard" (Hauser and Kjeldsen, 2010: 95-96). In this sense vernacular exchanges are part of a rhetorical discourse that is formed by a situation that calls the discourse into existence in the first place (rhetorical situation) and where agency is constantly defined, re-defined and performed (Hauser and Kjeldsen, 2010).

Methodologically, Vernacular Rhetoric attends to discursive practices that shape actions and give form to our civic and public life and common surroundings on the terms of those engaged with it. Crucially, attention is given not only on how practices "do" or make place and realities (Law and Mol, 1995; Mol, 2003) but also to the ways discursive practices *induce cooperation*. That is, how political collectives and publics emerge through discursive practices. Vernacular Rhetoric aims at disrupting the notion that everyday actors are unaware of the mechanisms and procedures of politics and democracy thus positioning everyday rhetorical actors and publics as engaged with issues that concern/affect them and able to actively intervene in the collective shaping of their surroundings. From this perspective everyday discourse—in all its material forms—has the potential to shape and occasion publics and

collectives with political will. “Publics are concrete emergence whose contours forms through the materiality of the rhetoric through which they are attending, and how they made themselves evident through the materiality of their own vernacular modes of rhetoric” (Hauser, 1999: 271). Vernacular Rhetoric, then, as a mode of inquiry explores and attends to the dimensions of public and political life in terms of the concrete manifestations in the ongoing discourses of society though an empirical attitude of the ways publics and public spheres are manifested. Rhetorical exchange takes place among people engaged in sense-making processes within a situation but like in feminist perspectives, the “truths” that they may be able to forge have validity for them and in that particular situation (Hauser, 1999; Haraway, 1988).

3.2.3 *Summary of section*

In sum, these two perspectives call for the necessity to turn our attention to practices and the knowledges that derive from these as situated and partial (Haraway, 1988) and their significant implications for the way we go about shaping our common surroundings and bring about particular futures. Ontologies and politics are situated in place but they also are of place (Suchet-Pearson et al., 2016). This perspective calls for looking at how place (and its politics) is made in and with practices. It highlights the role of things, technologies and substances as ‘active’, constitutive elements of practices (Pugh, 2009:582). Vernacular Rhetoric directs attention to the ways people constitute the spaces of politics of place in the everyday. Here attention is given to the way mundane discursive practices have the capacity to induce cooperation, and the way materials and meaning making are co-produced (Stevens and Malesh , 2010; Hauser and Stevens, 2010; Moser, 2005; Law, 2015; de La Bellacasa, 2011; Haraway 1988). The politics of place can then be understood as the mundane ways in which places and realities are actively shaped through practices and how these are contested affairs, but equally open to possibilities and change. By adopting these perspectives, my approach to inquiry and design recognise the role that materials play in meaning making in the constitution of place and its politics.

By thinking of the politics of place as emerging from diverse practices giving rise to conditions of possibilities, we can then look at how HCI design practice, as a practice among many others (DiSalvo et al., 2008), might be part of “doing” place and its politics—that is, how it might be able to intervene in the ways places come to be constituted. Next I will explicate

how I apply these perspectives in design practice drawing from Action Research (Hayes, 2011) and Public Work Philosophy as articulated by Boyte (2005, 2008, 2011).

3.3 Opening conditions of possibility: HCI design in/for the politics of place

We have seen how the politics of place, rather than the domain of experts concerned solely with the institutional mechanism at play in place production, can be understood in terms of the conditions of possibility and the mundane practices at work in the shaping of place. In this respect, HCI research and design practice can be understood as a practice among others concerned with the production of knowledges that shape place within the domain of civic affairs and the domain of everyday life (Mol, 1999; Hauser and mclellan, 2010; Boyte, 2005). While Ontological politics (Mol, 1999) and Vernacular Rhetoric's (Hauser and mclellan, 2010; Hauser, 1999) are primarily concerned with understanding how reality/place emerge from practices, and publics come to be constituted through mundane discursive practices, in the following I explain how the two perspectives are combined within a particular approach to Action Research (Hayes, 2011) that positions HCI design within culture making activities to co-produce the common goods (Boyte, 2005). In the section I also outline a series of orientations that guide my design practice, understood as a practice among others contributing to the active shaping of spaces and places.

3.3.1 HCI design as action-based culture-shaping practice

Everyday politics, as articulated by Boyte, explores the development of a culture to support and sustain citizens' action and empowerment and as a function of institutional cultures, such as universities for example (Boyte, 2005, 2008). While politics associated with government is often defined in distributive terms of "who" gets what, everyday politics proposes to focus on the processes and practices of creating the "what"—the common goods—a process that often tends to be obscured from view (Boyte, 2005). Within conventional notions, politics is indeed rarely understood as a "cultural enterprise" (Boyte, 2008: 155)—so this perspective calls for processes of democratisation of politics as culture—with a recognition that culture itself is made, with heightened awareness of the significant influence of communication and technologies on the dissemination of particular ideas, images and imaginings. Boyte suggests a radical shift in meaning (and practice) from representative

democracy's focus on structures, and participatory democracy on processes, to what he defines as "developmental democracy", which focuses instead on "self/collective development through "growing capacities for self-direct collective action across differences for problem solving and for the creation of individual and common goods" (Boyte, 2008:2).

Drawing from Action Research traditions (Hayes, 2011)—everyday politics has its roots in civic engagement and popular education that sprung from philosophers and proponents such as Dewey and Jane Addams, who sought a role for intellectuals and universities in democratic practices and public life (Boyte, 2005). Action Research is an approach today commonly utilised in HCI, whose main concern is to bring about societal benefits through research towards change—such as a policy change, or introduction of a new technology, etc. (Hayes, 2011). Action Research is a mode of conducting research, which is open ended and iterative, characterised by devising interventions or actions in a particular context, reflecting on the results of the intervention and based on such results, devising a new action or intervention (Hayes, 2011). Action Research is collaborative and democratic in nature, aiming at the creation of knowledges and learning processes through action and reflection cycles, rather the production of a final solution (Hayes, 2011). Similarly, everyday politics is concerned with affecting change through action-based activities, yet its primary concern is not the production of knowledges but the production of the common-good and the promotion and nurturing of opportunities for self-development and empowerment. I adopt this approach to explore the role of HCI design in processes at play in the practices that come to constitute place and our common environments. That is, I aim at examining how HCI research, design and technologies might intervene in the cultures and politics of place and how these might be made more just and democratic aligning with principle of the Right to the City and a spatial justice agenda (Soja, 2010; Mayer, 2009; Harvey, 2003).

3.3.2 Design orientations

Incorporating Ontological Politics and Vernacular Rhetoric into Boyte's approach to Action Research, I outline three main orientations to HCI design interventions. These are articulated in terms of relationality and cooperation, development and learning and accountability.

Relationality and cooperation

Ontological politics allows us to embrace multiplicity as part of the nature of reality and place. Since practices are diverse then the places that are enacted through practices are multiple and diverse too (Law and Singleton, 2014; Mol, 2003). As we have seen, the different practices that constitute place are not always related to one another, but live side-by-side. Vernacular Rhetorics are important not only as they are means of enacting place, but also as they have the power to induce particular types of co-operation among people (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and McLellan, 2010). If places are enacted in different practices in specific sites, we can ask how might HCI design craft encounters across the different practices that shape place in order to open up spaces of dialogue and forge opportunities for cooperation to “create imaginaries that include differences” (Mol, 2003). In this sense, we might understand HCI research, technology and design practice as activities to craft encounters across the different institutional and social practices that enact (and do) places in order to make visible the different practices and their (hidden) labours and to open up spaces in which we can re-envision our futures.

Technology and design practice can be seen as a way to open spaces to nurture opportunities for co-operation across all sections of civil society (rather than concentrating on the “disadvantaged”). HCI design and technologies can support progressive forms of political activism in the everyday politics of place-making when and if it fosters spaces where diverse practices can be related to one another and thus open up possibilities (Boyte, 2005:137). Acknowledging the role of things (including technologies) as ‘active’, constitutive elements of practices, we can explore HCI design in the re-organisation of social and political spaces (Pugh, 2009) where different practices, cultures, life styles and ways of “making” place can be related to one another and where opportunities for cooperation might arise. These processes might be simply understood as ways to make visible hidden private issues in order to nurture spaces for public action “across lines of difference” through the creation of shared meanings. While firmly accounting for power, this view engages with the complex affective, aesthetic dimensions and nuances of cultural dynamics of politics avoiding simplistic views on dominant cultures as “monochromatically oppressive” (Boyte, 2005: 60). Instead we might be thinking of citizens as co-creators of democratic society where institutions might be seen as “catalysts and enablers of civic action” (Boyte, 2008: 1). This is not about the rejection of professionals/experts, but a re-

positioning of professionals and citizens as collaborators, equally expert in their own differing ways and domains.

Development and learning

At the forefront of everyday politics (Boyte, 2005) is the collective creation of public goods through action-based activities. Within this perspective HCI research becomes a means through which it may be possible to open up opportunities for the citizenry to exercise and craft their agencies and responsibilities in the shaping of their places and communities. That is, from this perspective, HCI research can open spaces in which people can “grow capacities” and skills to create the common good, thus positioning people as active co-creators of our common present and future cities, environments, and even countries. Adopting this orientation (growing capacities for collective action) in my inquiry highlights the necessity to recognise how civic action is inextricably linked to the development of skills and habits of civic agency and how this is not something that we innately possess but something that calls for cultivation and learning (popular education). As within Action Research traditions, the socio-political meaning and benefit of research as work comes to the forefront and is considered the main driver for doing research in the first place. However, here, political learning processes and cultivation becomes both the subject and object of the research where public work, made by the public, for the public and in public, is understood as the activity of “*transforming the world around us and ourselves in the process*” (Boyte 2008:3).

Drawing from Action Research (Lennie et al., 2003; Hayes, 2011) notions of civic agency and empowerment are seen as necessarily context specific, related to pedagogical practices as well as the production of knowledges. Yet, scholars have raised concerns in relation to the contradictions embedded in research projects that view participants as in need of empowerment and an assumption that research itself by definition might be empowering (Lennie et al., 2003:64). “Too often, transformation has come to be seen as a way of compensating previously disadvantage people, rather than creating opportunities for all citizens to contribute their talents, experience, and skills, to the process of developing our country. Development cannot be done “to” people. People have to become the agents of their own development” (Maphela Ramphela, in Boyte, 2008:1). At the core of this notion of ‘empowerment’ is the idea of people coming ‘to a sense of their own powers’ (talents, skills, etc.) and a ‘new relationship to their own contexts’ (Lather 1991:4 in Lennie et al., 2003).

Yet the researcher might occupy a peculiar position as the initiator or driver of processes – here empowerment has been defined as ‘the exercise of power (on the part of the researcher) in an “attempt to support others exercise power” (Lennie et al., 2003:62). Researchers then, might be regarded as “facilitators of the exercise of power in the production of knowledges”, while recognising the limits of human/non-human agency (Lennie et al., 2003:65). As we have seen in the previous chapter there are power struggles in the politics of place whereby people, technologies and ‘things’ are differently positioned in the processes and practices at play in place productions. I am also differently positioned in this endeavor as someone who is proposing to study and intervene in these processes (and have time and resources to do so). Here then questions around my own development as researcher committed to make my work more public and relevant to civic affairs cannot be discerned from the development of people with whom I engage. In addition, questions of accountability come to the fore, when asking people to join in processes I myself initiate.

Accountability

Proposing to place HCI research and the researcher as agent of change in spatial processes that come to constitute place inevitably brings to the fore questions of accountability and answerability in respect to our actions, the research and methods we produce and the contexts and worlds we are working with and writing about (De La Bellacasa, 2012; Kenney, 2015; Haraway, 1988). This must also include an acknowledgement of the personal and ethical agendas implicated in the way designed artifacts and technologies may constitute spaces of politics. Here accountability begins with an acknowledgement that empirical inquiry is a non-innocent practice that “makes” realities and places (Haraway, 1988; Kenney 2015) as well as an awareness of the ways particular practices are resisted, enacted or reinforced in and through HCI design, technology and research. This calls for a heightened awareness of the knowledge practices and knowledges that come to be generated with research, through keeping track of the “material-discursive” devices that generate data in order to remain accountable for “what matters and what is excluded from mattering” (Barad in Kenney, 2015: 220-224).

In this sense, I recognise how my own positioning—political and situated (Haraway, 1988)—influences the worlds I set out to study and how these come to be constituted by my motivations and interventions. Thus, I recognise how my own positioning and motivations influence, guide and even inspire the process of engaging with the particular contexts I set out

to inquire about, intervene or “interfere in” (Haraway 1988). That is, the social change I aspire to contribute to is one that I *personally* care about. De La Bellacasa suggests thinking about Matters of Concerns (Latour 2004), in terms of Matters of Care involving a notion of intervening, where to be concerned is to add an embodied dimension and affectively charged connotation and a sense of belonging and commitment to something (de La Bellacasa, 2011, 2012). Care is here understood as both everyday labour, but also an obligation: “we must care for things in order to remain responsible for their becoming” (de La Bellacasa 2011: 90). Agencies of care and of change, then, are affective and material tasks related to communication, production of sociability and capacity to affect. Matters of Care not only expose invisible labours of care but also generate care, whereby caring accounts produce conflicts but also caring relations. Thus, by including my own care and concerns and their impact my work asks what am I encouraging care for? Care then is an ethico-political commitment that affects the way we produce knowledge about things and how our ways of intervening, studying and representing things have effects and consequences, therefore calling for the necessity to engage with their becoming (de La Bellacasa, 2011, 2012).

Empirical inquiry can be usefully employed to account for the consequences and effects of our design interventions. Accountability can also be understood as a process to expose our hidden assumptions as “generative critique”—a critique that allows something new to happen by creating new relations and new connections (Kenney 2015). I take this as a way in which I can present my own critique while actively inserting my own positioning (and their uncertainties) in the process of revisiting the work presented in this dissertation—work that I have already been writing about (Crivellaro et al., 2014, 2015, 2016). Dissertation writing from this perspective can be seen as a form of both critique and storytelling to enable and nurture possibilities for the future (Kenney, 2015). This points also to an awareness that there could be many different ways in which the stories in this dissertation could be performed but also to a recognition of the way I actively participate in the worlds I describe and the work that is required to “stabilise” the uncertain nature of the cases this thesis presents (Kenney, 2015).

3.4 Case studies, data collection and analysis

The methodological perspectives outlined above are applied in the three case studies in different ways. I utilise Vernacular Rhetoric to understand how particular places and realities

emerge in practices and how publics and collectives of action form through mundane discursive practices (case study one). I then take Vernacular Rhetoric (Hauser, 1999) and Everyday Politics (Boyte, 2005) to guide the design of processes and tool to action-based approaches to place-making. An Everyday Politics approach recognises the voice and positioning of the researcher and the design he/she develops as active ingredients of change and adopts vernacular rhetoric as a way to understand how design practice might contribute to public formations, the constitutions of political spaces, as well as the effects and consequences, of the actions and processes used to interfere in the worlds and contexts, issues he/she cares about. That is data in case studies two and three is analysed in order to understand the affects and effects, and political spaces that the design intervention contributed to produce.

Each case study this thesis accounts for presents different contexts, therefore different analytical approaches to the qualitative data were utilised to suit context and data set. Each case study's chapter includes further details on how the broad approach outlined above was applied specifically to each case study. Below I provide a summary of how the methodological perspective supports particular examination of the everyday politics of place in each case. I also provide information about each case study's data collection and an indication of the analytical approach.

3.4.1 Case study one (Chapter 4)

In this case study, I set out to understand the relationship between cultural mundane practices, experiences and cultural memories, political action for change and technologies. In the chapter, I utilise Hauser's model of Vernacular Rhetoric in Social Movement (Hauser and McLellan 2010) to guide the empirical analysis of data. The specifics of the model are explained in more detail in the chapter. Through an empirical analysis of FB data from an emergent social movement and campaign concerned with the redevelopment of a derelict site I aim specifically at inquiring into the role of social technologies in political processes at play in the production of space and place. Data for case study one (Chapter 4) was collected from a Facebook (FB) page and analysed between February 2013 and September 2013.

3.4.2 *Case study two (Chapter 5)*

Reflecting and learning from case study one, I take Hauser's model of Vernacular Rhetoric in Social Movements and apply it to the design of a process that invites city residents to enter in political discussion and dialogue with one another and the political processes of city planning. More details on how the methodology was applied to the design of tools and socio-material design are provided within the chapter. In the chapter I explore what it may mean to situate discursive practices about the city in the city itself. The socio-material design and process developed and described in the chapter is presented as a way to intervene in the everyday politics of place through the construction of a digital walking trail (City Walk).

Data in case study two was collected and analysed from October 2013 and September 2014 in Newcastle upon Tyne following a thematic analysis approach (Brown and Clarke 2006). Data in the chapter comprises of recordings of the walks process, audio recording produced by participants during the walks and post-walk interviews.

3.4.3 *Case study three (Chapter 6)*

Learning from the previous chapter, this case study presents how the process and socio-material design described in Chapter 2, was adapted and changed, working alongside a group of residents and housing institutions to support the creation of a digital walking trail in and about their estate undergoing urban regeneration. The theoretical and ontological perspectives outlined above are utilised to guide and develop a participatory processes where designed tools aimed to support dialogues between institutions and residents.

Data in this chapter was collected in Oreth (South-East London) between October 2014 and August 2015 and was analysed following a thematic analysis approach (Brown and Clarke 2006). Data comprised interviews, workshops, field notes and audio stories collected as part of the process of creating a digital walking trail.

3.5 **Summary**

The methodology presented in this chapter was developed to inquire into the everyday politics of place and the role of HCI design in the processes and practices that come to constitute place. The methodology recognises how everyday mundane practices come to actively shape

place and its politics (Mol, 1999; Law, 2015; Mol, 2003; Hauser, 1999; Hauser and McLallen, 2010). That is, how ordinary people, institutions, objects, technologies etc. “do” or make place in and through practice (Mol, 2003). HCI design was positioned as a practice among others that contribute to the shaping of place and its politics. As such it can open political spaces for encounters and forge opportunities for cooperation between the different practices and actors that constitute place towards the crafting of our future communal living. The methodology pays particular attention to the necessity to build skills and social capacities to work collaboratively and across differences as well as drawing attention to questions of accountability in HCI research.

Chapter 4 The emergence of a social movement online

“Generations have enjoyed the simple pleasures of feeling the soft golden sand run through their toes & the cold rolling sea. Here kites fly, children dig for buried treasures & surfers dream of big Hawaiian sea. Memories are made of such things.” (Tynemouth Outdoor Pool Facebook Poster)

“Hope is a memory that desires” (David Harvey, 2000)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the role of social media in facilitating the emergence of a social movement comprised of citizens aiming at affecting change in their locality. The chapter sets out to enquire into the mechanisms that bring people together to advocate for change in their localities, as well as into the complexities of political participation in urban movements for everyday socio-political action. It aims at building an understanding of the relationship between personal experiences, cultural expressions, memories and socio-political action; examining how politics and the political, as a complex, contingent and contextual endeavor, can be understood as something that is performed and is embedded in the concerns of everyday life. To this end, the chapter focuses on a case study of small-scale socio-political action, where I am interested in understanding the mechanisms at play in the emergence of a social movement among citizens engaged in discussions on a Facebook (FB) page in order to affect change in their locality.

The chapter presents a discourse analysis of data from a FB page of a local activist group concerned with the redevelopment of a derelict outdoor swimming pool. In the chapter I offer Hauser’s model of Vernacular Rhetoric in social movements as an analytical framework for the analysis of data. The framework looks at the way power and resistance is performed through everyday rhetorical practices—with a focus on how people induce co-operation through communicative practices, that is “who is trying to do what to whom with emphasis on how and why they are doing it” (Stevens and Malesh, 2010:5). Through this analytical frame I explore the “work” of a political movement to form and emerge, and the role of FB technology at the heart of its formation. The analysis presents insights into how the social movement evolves from the re-imagining of the pool through the online sharing of personal stories and experiences of and in the pool. It shows how a multiplicity of perspectives exposed on the FB

page as a representation of posters' opinions and wishes fosters a political potential to affect change. The analysis describe how this political potential guides a successful political campaign and the development of plans to redevelop the site as a swimming pool. Following the analysis, the chapter presents a section where I reflect on the findings in respect to the relationship between cultural memories, imagination and hope; polyvocality and action and the appropriation of FB technology, including rhetorical uses of FB data to support the development of the campaign.

4.2 Context

Many seaside towns in the UK have been going through significant decay in the past decades. Originally important sites of national tourism and pride, according to a report from the British Hospitality Association several factors have contributed to the deterioration of British coastal towns—some of which are considered to be the most deprived communities in the UK. The collapse of shipbuilding and fishing, the decline of the traditional annual holiday by the seaside, and cutbacks in budgets affecting maintenance of public places, street cleaning, tourism promotion are seen as the contributing issues for the situation. This case study is concerned with one derelict site, which epitomises such a state of affairs—the Tynemouth Outdoor Pool in the coastal town of Tynemouth, in the north east of England.

4.2.1 *The Tynemouth Outdoor Pool*

Tynemouth is a small seaside town in the Borough of North Tyneside, situated in the north east of England. The town has 17,075 inhabitants and hosts an average of 3.8 million visitors each year. “Tynemouth Outdoor Swimming Pool” is a derelict site located on Tynemouth seafront (Figure 1). The open-air swimming pool, designed to be filled with seawater by the incoming tide, first opened to the public in 1925. Back then the swimming pool was an important attraction for local families and tourists as lidos and open-air swimming pools became symbols of civic pride and progress in post-war Britain. It also functioned as relief from hard work in the heavy industries (navy, mines and steel) in the North East offering a place to socialise and spend time with families and friends (Samuel, 1999). Following the arrival of overseas holiday packages, indoor leisure centres and the monitoring and regulation of health and safety, alongside the economic depression and the impact of policies and reforms in

Thatcher's Britain, the pool fell into disuse and became derelict in the 1980s. In 1996 the local council converted the site into a natural 'rock pool' intended to host natural flora and fauna by filling it with concrete, sand and rocks. However, the design of the natural rock pool never fulfilled its original intentions, and the site went through further dereliction causing significant disappointment in the local community. In recent years several proposals to convert the site back to its original use were put forward by private investors to the local council, unsuccessfully.



Figure 1. Tynemouth Outdoor Pool in 2015

4.2.2 *Friends of Tynemouth Outdoor Pool*

The 'Friends of Tynemouth Outdoor Pool' (FoTOP) FB page was set up in 2010 by a group of four local residents with the aim of probing public interest regarding the possibility of reconverting the site to its original use. The page, set up for "those who are interested in the past, present and future of Tynemouth Outdoor Pool", remained fairly inactive (having only nine followers) for a period of two years. The page gained sudden and significant interest following the publication online of the council's planning proposal on August 6th 2012 to convert the pool site into a multipurpose facility comprising of a beach volleyball court and an

open-air theatre¹. Under UK planning law, once a planning application is submitted, the general public has a relatively short period (three to eight weeks) to express ‘material’ objections², such as effects on listed buildings and conservation areas, parking, proposals in the development plan, design appearance and material, etc. via the council website.

From the publication of the local council planning proposal, the FoTOP FB page swiftly became a public forum, (growing from nine to 4463 followers within the first 48 hours, then to 8000 within the first month), where memories, opinions, discussions relating to the site and the possibility of reinstating the swimming pool unfolded. Public engagement on the social media page crystallised into an active campaign. The administrators of the page started a counter-consultation process in order to collect ‘official’ data to present to the local council through an online questionnaire. This was publicised on the FB page on August 16th, and on the streets. The campaigners convened a flash-mob protest on the pool site on August 19th, at which around 200 people attended. They also organised local mainstream media press coverage where the FB page campaign was further publicised. Residents also submitted online formal objections to the council proposal on the council website and wrote directly to the local mayor. The campaign was successful to the extent that the council withdrew its proposal on August 24th. Thereafter a number of offline meetings and ‘critical friends’ events took place, where volunteers and professionals convened to examine and discuss prospects of restoring the pool as a community project. FoTOP initiated cooperation with the council in order to bring the project to fruition. The group produced their own planning proposal³ to redevelop the pool (Figure 2), benefiting from voluntary and free professional help attained through the FoTOP page. The proposal was submitted on January 14th 2013 and the group is currently fundraising to make the swimming pool project a reality.

¹ <http://goo.gl/BOZ5ea>

² <http://goo.gl/VBn9G8>

³ <http://goo.gl/gPQgos>



Figure 2. The proposed redevelopment by FoTOP

The analysis I present below covers the interactions taking place on the social media page, focusing primarily on the emergence of the social movement and campaign as it is played out on the FB page alone from the day the council proposal was published on the FoTOP page. Although FB interactions are just one part of the campaign, the analysis looks at how the movement was formed predominantly through online interactions and the way social media became the site where socio-political, cultural and economic contexts were articulated and developed (Dourish, 2010). That is, the FB page is seen here as a site for the production of the social movement reflecting and enabling the offline actions of the movement, such as counter consultations, and the planning proposal and on site flash mobs (Figure 3), through shared articulation of values, aims and achievements. Next, I explicate the particular analytical frame that I adopted for the data analysis. This provides a unique perspective in understanding and analysing everyday discursive practices as means of co-operation, cultural expression, solidarity and resistance.

4.3 Analytical framework – Vernacular Rhetoric in Social Movements

A Vernacular Rhetoric in social movements approach was utilised for the analysis. As explained in Chapter 3, this approach draws on discourse analysis focusing on understanding what people ‘do’ with their talk and the resources they use in the construction of the self, other and alternative realities (Wodak et al., 2008), looking at how people’s versions of the world are gathered to perform social action and how these personal versions of the world can counter real

and potential alternatives. Hauser's model of Vernacular Rhetoric in Social Movements (VRSM) recognises social actors' fundamental capacity to challenge the status quo and expose opportunities for alternatives to emerge (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mclellan, 2010). As outlined in the previous chapter, in recent years, the study of rhetoric has expanded to include visual representations, everyday talk, graffiti, music and bodily displays (Hauser and mclellan 2010) and in this study, it is argued it can extend to the study of technology and social media in the course of political action. In this way, within an understanding of place and its politics as "done" in everyday practices (Mol 1999, 2013; Law 2015), vernacular rhetoric practices, including uses of social media, assume a central position as sites for collective reasoning processes, negotiation, dialogue and public opinion formation.

In the following, I describe the different features of Hauser's model of VRSM. In Hauser's model VRSM is polyvocal, evades detection, interrogates authority and performs power. Polyvocality refers to the way multiple, diverging voices and opinions emerge under the surface to generate mutual understanding (*'polyvocality'*) through enactments that give political joy to those out of power, evading censorship while disclosing the opportunity for an alternative reality. In this view, it is through the interaction of different opinions and undetected critiques of power that dialogical exchanges to produce understanding ensue – till a more radical consciousness breakthrough in an open act of resistance. Social movements' everyday rhetoric, in Hauser's terms, performs power, often in unnoticed ways, through mundane acts that construct social movements through *expressions of solidarity*. By expressing our own opinion or position in mundane gestures, people can oppose, support, or negate the position of others. For example, the owner/manager of a coffee shop might decide to display, hide or throw away a poster advertising information about a particular event/campaign, etc. Vernacular rhetoric then not only collectivises through mundane expression of solidarity but also through what Hauser and mclellan (2010) describe as *'markers of positionality'* (e.g. uses of particular language, bodily performance, clothing, or other modes of identification) that can also generate spaces for explorations of alternative meanings. An example of a marker of positionality, for example, can be compared to the adoption of a particular dress code by performance artist France Wright as a means to encourage sexual freedom in racist and sexually oppressed Nashoba. The everyday symbolic dress performance can be understood as a way to open spaces to question issues of marital and gender identity in Nashoba (Hauser and mclellan, 2010).



Figure 3. Flash-mob of the FoTOP campaign

In this model, social movement everyday rhetoric also entails practices of ‘negative bonding’—where a bond is built with the opposition in order to ascertain and define the movements’ visions and aims. That is, from an understanding of what the movement opposes, it can ascertain more clearly what instead it stands for. VRSM also performs what Hauser and mclellan define as ‘acts of gentle violence to conform’ with the values underpinning the movement (Hauser and mclellan, 2010). In this respect, social movements’ talk is at once inclusive and exclusive, defining participation and participants whose discourse displays membership and bonds of ambition toward a shared cause. ‘Acts of gentle violence to conform’ might thus be slight or subtle omissions, intentionally labeling someone or something as ‘our’ or ‘their’, ‘us’ or ‘them’.

This framework suggests that by exploring interactions in everyday talk as elements of change we can question the complexities of power relations in society and of personal and collective agency (Hauser and mclellan, 2010; Hauser, 1999). This theoretical perspective informs the analysis, highlighting the necessity to develop analytic sensitivities that uncover resistance and solidarity in symbolic enactments and seemingly mundane acts. By shifting the focus to “discourses that originate under the surface of an official discourse [...] a model of vernacular rhetoric may detect spontaneous moments of an alternative consciousness of reality as they form and emerge” (Hauser and mclellan, 2010: 45). In the analysis, I explore the use of FB as a platform that enables people to co-construct ‘alternative’ possibilities through

everyday talk, facilitating the formation of social collectives with a political potential to affect change. I argue therefore that FB can be seen as a social and material technology with which power is performed, exposed and concealed through the multiple layers which comprise digital objects: the semantic layer, such as the multi-modal content of a post, the network layer, which connects digital objects to other informational networks and a third layer establishing positions among users and digital objects (Langlois and Elmer 2013).

4.4 Data collection and analysis

The data set was retrieved through the FB graph API and comprises of 620 parent-posts and 3987 comments (a total of 4607 digital posts) that were posted on the page between August 2012 and January 2013. The data was retrieved through a script that categorised it as follows: ID (unique post ID), poster ID (posted by), message content, type of post (eg. link, status, photo, video), number of likes of post, number of comments of post, created time, created date.

I analyzed the empirical data applying Discourse Analysis (Wodak et al., 2008) to Facebook technology and using Vernacular Rhetoric in Social Movement (Hauser and McLellan 2010) to guide this analysis further. Following this approach, I looked for the way uses of language and social technology were utilised to induce ways of thinking and doing and in this way, were used to construct publics capable of socio-political action. I specifically looked for the way rhetorical uses of Facebook technology enticed cooperation among Facebook posters; I paid particular attention to the way Facebook technology, and its functionalities were used as “markers of positionality” and “expression of solidarity”, and “acts to conform”. These were specifically looked at in the narrative content and narrative sharing on the Facebook page; in the way Facebook technology was used in public construction and in the formulation of socio-political action. In terms of narrative content and sharing, I looked at how narrative content operated in terms of creating opportunities for the co-creation of shared values. In terms of agency and public constructions I considered who the actors engaged on the FB page might be, how they constructed and what might their qualities be, and how do they ‘become’. I also specifically looked at how the “I” and the “we” were constructed, performed and presented with the posts on the FB page. In regard to socio-political action I searched for the actions which were proposed, performed and done and how things were discussed and

debated. Finally, in respect to the appropriation of FB functionality, I looked for the way FB was appropriated in relation to narrative content and sharing, agency and public construction, socio-political action and in relation to the mobilisation to action.

I analyzed and generated candidate themes from the empirical data, which were discussed with Dr. Rob Comber, Professor John Bowers and Professor Pete Wright for validation and testing. From this, three analytic clusters were inductively generated in chronological order: ‘memories and nostalgia for the future’, ‘nurturing a political potential’, and ‘activating the political’. In each area, I explore how the functionalities and architecture of FB were appropriated to make it a tool and site where personal accounts and experiences in and about the swimming pool and socio-political opinions intertwined in discussions, leading to political action. In the analysis that follows, I report pseudonymised quotes from the data set to illustrate discursive processes in temporal order. Through this I chart the process in which FoTOP formed as a social movement capable of political action.

4.4.1 Memories and nostalgia for the future

Following the release of the council proposal to redevelop the site as a multi-purpose facility on the 6th of August 2013, a number of FB posters quickly began posting a variety of stories, photographs and videos on the FoTOP Facebook (FB) page. The FoTOP FB page quickly began to function as a repository of life moments – memories inviting others to remember, imagine and project their visions into the future. Old black and white photographs and old film footage of the swimming pool prompted stories and memories of the site when it was in use (Figure 4). As stories and memories accumulated, further stories and memories were posted in response to one another. These acts of remembrance sketched out moments of childhood, growing up, learning to swim, and social events that took place on the site: swimming galas, picnics with family members and neighbors. Here is a typical example.

“All of our neighbours used to meet in there we loved it, even when i look at it now it stirs millions of childhood fun filled memories, we always sat in the same spot, and as soon as mam dozed off to sleep i used to get my three sisters and climb over onto the beach, it was all such a big adventure. best years of my life, xxxxx” (Julie, 08.14.12)

It is significant here how the poster creates a vivid reminiscence of the past, connecting the pool to their habits as a family, to their cheeky unruliness as children, and to its status as a

meeting point for their neighborhood. This is underlined by quantifiers: *all of the neighbours* met at the pool, *millions of memories* are stirred. The glimpses of the past as given by such vignettes invite other posters to respond with and intertwine their reminiscences. The posts take on semi-ritualistic properties, whereby posters deposit their memories one after the other. For example, consider the following pair:

“I remember going there with mam and dad and my 2 brothers I learnt to swim there.” (Tom, 08.15.12)

“I learnt to swim in this pool as a little girl...” (Suzy, 08.15.12)

As a pair, the posts link up and intertextually reinforce each other, linking the end of the first with the beginning of the second to create an image of cultural ideal and practice of children learning to swim with their families. In the terms of Ingold, the sketchiness of the reminiscences invites the reader to “fill the gaps”, respond to and establish affinity with others (Ingold, 2013). These vignettes of experiences and stories in and about the swimming pool operate as windows across time: tracing a path that others can follow, they offer “guidance without specification” (Ingold 2013: 110). Indeed, it is their very under-specification which allows people to associate their experience with other’s stories and which gives the vignettes relevance across space and time. The stories and memories enable an imagining, which the readers and posters can project onto their own families and onto future generations.

“I have only known this pool in its current state yet got to see my dads’ photos and hear stories of it as a pool, I’d love to see this outdoor pool restored to its original use, so my kids get a chance to experience this pool – people don’t need a sea side theatre – it wouldn’t get used.” (Fiona, 08.20.12)

This post indicates how the stories of the pool can elicit support from those who did not actually experience it in its heyday and how these stories give the basis for assessing needs and endeavoring in action and resistance. However, posters also questioned such acts of remembrance as unhelpful “cosy nostalgia”.

“Guys, we’re talking about years ago now... Its never going to be like that again, its one of those things where they look at it as a statue, will never be taken down... Nor will it be changed, I would love for it, but the likelihood of it happening?” (John, 08.15.12)

The post here makes an appeal to a kind of “realism” to counter the imaginings based in reliving and reviving the past, by suggesting that returning to the past might be akin to creating something lifeless and fixed (a statue). However, the discourse is carefully articulated so that the poster is presented as a fellow reader, as one of the “guys” who “would love for” things to be changed. Here those who deposit memories and remember are distinguished from those who observe these enactments, and offer a discursive reflection about it. This acceptance is in turn challenged.

“Stick with it John Yep... its not gonna be the same, but the council just want to concrete it over and turn it into a raised artificial beach. The cheapest solution to their problem. [...] if we don't give it a go... we'll kick ourselves” (Ben, admin, 08.16.12)

The admin of the page shows awareness that remembering is not about the illusion of recreating those same experiences but to show that there are other avenues to the current council proposal. It is significant how in the post, the admin invites John to join in attempting to propose an alternative ‘solution’ from the current council proposal.

As the Facebook page gathers more public attention, FB’s multimodal functionalities begin to be seen as a way to raise awareness and build support. Photographs and links to related community-based successful swimming pool projects add to people’s responses and reflections. The next extract entails the possibility that enhancing people’s nostalgia will promote the campaign.

“[...] Also can photos be added to the group as I'm sure many people in the local area will have photos of the pool being used all those years ago. just might help to get more likes and help people feel nostalgic about it all?! [...]” (Harriet, 08.19.12)

In this case posting photographs on the FB page is a means to perform nostalgia and longing, and persuade others to ‘like’ the page and support the cause. As photographs and narratives prompt envisioning and re-imagining of the pool, they come to intertwine with other arguments: links to official documents regarding heritage legislations; documents of council consultations that led to the current planning proposal; and successful open-air swimming pools projects. This ‘meshwork’ of rhetorical materials and resources is used to inspire, validate and synthesise the “dream” in real-life contexts. In a sense, memories shared on the FB page are not about “cosy” and inert nostalgia, but means of production—ways in which the outdoor swimming pool begins to be shaped as a possible future.



Figure 4. Tynemouth Outdoor Pool in use

4.4.2 *Nurturing a political potential*

Discussions in relation to the possibility of reinstating the pool unfold and intertwine with values as well as explicit political discourses related to demands for activities for families and children, healthy lifestyles, effective economic regeneration of the area, and discourses expressing a general dissatisfaction with the current and previous council's management of the town. Various people bring their own socio-political issues to the page, recognising the possibility of seeing their wishes and desires brought to fruition.

"[...] Try to not make it too expensive to get in please as it will put a lot of people off.... And the public who would of appreciated the most would be put off coming [...]"
(Charlotte, 08.17.12)

"i am now of an age when it would be so good to have that pool [...] as with two active grandsons i could watch them every min and feel safe [...] while in the healthy sea air [...]"
(Sue, 08.15.12)

"Another thought...in the aftermath of the Olympics, the government supposedly want to encourage more sport, and it would be a great time to introduce a pool [...]. Also, by encouraging exercise in a fun way, people can lose weight and get healthy, so reducing costs to the NHS." (Thom, 08.16.12)

“I've been having a think about some of the issues that would make it difficult to turn it into a pool. I'm just stating them so we are all aware. [...] these are things that I don't know the solutions to [...]. But if you want to launch a credible opposition to the current plans you need to be clued up. Good luck as ever and see you on Sunday!” (Truman, 08.17.12)

Posters are discursively engaging with social, economic and political mechanisms at play in the construction of society. These initiate processes of discursive negotiation on how they should go about opposing the council proposal and restoring the pool. It is significant how the use of different pronouns, ‘we’, ‘you’, and ‘they’ indicate different modalities of participation and degrees of (devolution or retention) of responsibility in respect to the matter—while showing support for the endeavor. As Truman’s post shows FB page posters display a significant awareness of the political procedures and mechanism at the heart of city planning while initiating offline meetings as well as online interactions. However, despite there being significant enthusiasm for the redevelopment of the pool, and posters connecting this possibility to other political concerns such as public health, the discourse of the page is not unanimous.

“Am I the only person who thinks it is absolutely ridiculous to even consider restoring the pool!? let's start being sensible about this, rather than giving into childhood nostalgia!” (Nick, 08.15.12)

“It would definitely be better put to use as something else OTHER than a swimming pool. I have named a couple of ideas earlier. What else do you lot think it could be turned into?? [...] DEFFO NOT A FREEZING, OPEN AIR SWIMMING POOL, NO THANK YOU.” (Rachel, 08.16.12)

The poster above links into arguments previously made. Nick calls for responses that might share his same perspectives, while Rachel presents herself as a positive thinker, not to be rejected for contradicting the idea of redeveloping the pool. Indeed, this prompted discussions on the feasibility and costs of developing a heated pool. However, several posters were keen to formulate a sense of the majority view and recognised the impossibility of reaching unanimity.

“There are no public outdoor pools in the north east - plenty of skateboard parks and restaurants though - looking at the comments far more people for it than against it so the majority say its a great idea - the price of diplomacy is that not everyone can agree - but facts are facts. :-) BRING BACK THE POOL.” (Gemma, 08.17.12)

FB's functionality whereby people can scroll down and read other people's posts, is used to show where opinions appear to incline, in terms of supporting or opposing the possibility to redevelop the site as a swimming pool. The display of different comments on the page is used to validate the possibility that there might be a majority of consensus for the redevelopment of the swimming pool: "looking at the comments far more people for it than against it". While the discursive process includes different and diverging opinions, as a majority of consensus in respect to redeveloping the site into a swimming pool comes to be formulated, so does the formation of a collective whose aims are beyond simply dissenting the council proposal.

"surely the people who make the decisions about the whole issue should read all these comments, at the end of the day it is us the normal everyday family who would use this facility, an artificial beach is crazy. [...] Let us bring back a sense of community through fresh air and family enjoyment. Lets get behind this campaign" (Bob, 08.16.12)

The statement above, indirectly challenging and critiquing the authority, "the people who make the decisions", is directed to the FoTOP page readers and posters to initiate a collective that politically validates people's wishes and opinions as they unfold. The continued collective discourse exposes social actors' realisation of the efficacy of FB as a channel by which a variety of modalities of expression close to their everyday socio-cultural lives can be voiced.

"We have seen some very positive changes in our world by using social media [...] Let's not be misled by statements from our Council of what the majority what [want] - it has been made clear today that the restoration of our open air pool is what we really want" (Tina 16.08.12)

"I am glad this page is here, finally the public gets a say" (Joe, 16.08.12)

The FoTOP page is presented as addressing the lack of dialogue with the local council and a subsequent lack of understanding of people's daily realities and wishes. With this emerging political consciousness, the FB page begins to represent, for these posters, a potentially impactful form of expression. The FB page offers a platform where discursive processes take place, but also where a community of support is formed, one that can make the pool a reality.

“Consider forgetting about the council having the funding or the resource (or vision...) to develop this as a serious project on their own [...] call and visit the outdoor pools who have established a sustainable model, figure out how much money you need, raise it from multiple interested parties, craic on and run it as a social enterprise. Consider it not least cos you're onto a winner.” (Simon, 16.08.12)

“Now why didn't we think of that! Lets stop this farce of an application first and look at developing our own funding strategy, using the MASSIVE skill base that has surfaced on here over the last 48 hours!” (Ben, admin, 17.08.12)

Simon expresses mistrust in respect to the council capabilities (vision, resources) and instead proposes a way in which the swimming pool can be restored by the page admin and the emergent FB group of campaigners. The focus here shifts from the council to the political potentials of the emerging movement itself, which now comprises a constituency offering a range of voluntary and professional help to facilitate the pool redevelopment.

4.4.3 Activating the political

The rubbing together (Hauser and mcLellan, 2010) of these discourses delineates a polyvocal collective, fostering a process of political consciousness by which posters become more aware of what they want and come to perceive the FoTOP page as a political space. In this regard, the FB functionality of ‘likes’ and comments are considered means to call the council proposal into question.

“according to the current application lodged with planning for the artificial beach, 5 public consultations have revealed that no-one actually wants the pool back!!! The more people we get on here... ie "likes" and especially positive comments will go along way to disproving this.” (Ben, admin, 08.16.12)

Following the significant number of memories, opinions and discussions shared on the FoTOP page, the administrator proposes to collect opinions in a way that can to be used ‘officially’, as evidence to the local council.

“This FB page is a testament to how passionate you all are about the pool, and how you would like to see it used [...] However we need to turn all of this energy into something a little more useful, [...] I am going to set up a an online form which we'll use to collate responses

and opinions in a way that can be used 'officially' and in a way that will have a little more credibility than a FB page..." (Ben, admin, 08.17.12)

The statement above marks an important moment in three ways. First, the administrator openly recognises contributions on the FoTOP page. Second, by positioning his action (i.e. setting up an online form), as a means for collective action (i.e. "we'll use to collate responses and opinions") the admin starts an "official" campaign. Third, it heightens the credibility of the administration and the campaign through recognition of existing political power structures and "official" channels. The statement also illustrates how the administrator does not see FB as an "official" political tool. The campaign proceeds through a multidirectional approach to action. A flash-mob protest takes place on site on August 19th, providing mainstream media coverage. FB posters contribute to the group's "official" counter consultation, write to the local council and formally object to the proposal. The campaign successfully forces the council to withdraw its proposal.

"so proud to be part of something so special [...] we don't need to resort to back handed tactics or violent protests to get what we want, sometimes just a bit of well-mannered but firm objection (backed by 7000) can get the job done! Well done and keep up the good work, I hope we will find a solution that suits everyone!" (Lesley, 08.25.12)

The poster expresses here the close feeling developed in relation to the campaign and the formation of a collective striving towards the same aims. Being heard and obtaining their wishes (victory) are displayed as a rare achievement. Crucially, the poster presents the quantified support of 'likes' on the FB page (7000) as one of the elements contributing to their 'victory'. However, the validity, lack of identifiable information and geographical provenance of 'likes' are questioned and so is the consensus relating to the redevelopment of the pool.

"Sorry to put a downer on your jubilation, but the number of people who like your fb page do not necessarily agree that the pool should be reinstated. Also, your group represents a minority of residents and therefore is a minority voice." (Sarah, 08.24.12)

"So what if everyone who likes this page is not a local [...]. Change can be brought about by and I think we have proved there is sufficient support to at least attempt this challenge for future generations." (Angela, 08.25.12)

The ability to bring together a large number of people into a common cause simply through 'liking' a page creates a previously unknown constituency. The mundane act, 'like',

creates a strength and quantifiable support that can be used politically by the group in the endeavour to the redevelop the pool. In this regard FB functionality of ‘Insights’ provides the administrators with detailed data analysis of the numbers of people, gender, age, location, language spoken, and sources of like (recommended, mobile, on page). This information is used to suggest that through ‘friends of friends’ the group is a much larger political ‘constituency’ than its actual membership. Furthermore, the knowledge of quantification of the admin allows him to paint a picture of the state of the campaign that without FB wouldn’t be attainable.

“our Facebook page data tells us that we actually have a grand total of 1,047,591 friends between us [...] Imagine what we could achieve with that many supporters [...] The fact that so many people are actively participating, talking, debating (and even just reading) demonstrates how much we all care about this [...]. But what's even more exciting is that you're all part of what could potentially be one of the North East's biggest and most exciting coastal regeneration projects in a long, long time. This is how history is made, folks [...].” (Ben, admin, 08.27.12)

The quantification of likes and FB Insight enables the admin to prompt excitement for the campaign and establish a sense of support with FB others, whereby the page acts as a bonding mechanism among people. For the page admin, contributors and ‘likers’ of the FoTOP page are now equally considered part of the campaign. However, opposing political purposes are continually expressed, diverging opinions intersect on the page exposing a multiple, polyvocal collective, in the Hauserian sense (Hauser and mcLellan, 2010; Hauser, 1999).

“Regeneration...I'm so confused as to why residents say no to the councils proposals... I live in Whitley Bay and it upsets me to see the area so run down, the shops empty. May be residents need to start shopping locally and supporting local business we all need to put extra effort into helping rebuild the towns, but it starts with us not the council.” (Pauline, 08.30.12)

Here the poster disconnects with the campaigners’ motivations for dissent. She places herself ‘out’ of the emergent movement, but ‘in’ the collective of residents who share the same town. What is notable is the way Pauline encourage posters to take on responsibilities in reviving their town through everyday mundane practices, such as shopping locally, thus initiating a reflective process in relation to a broader proactive attitude beyond the cause.

“the residents want something worthwhile to draw in visitors. The council just wanted to stick a cheap, meaningless plaster on an eye sore...” (Roy, 08.30.12)

“[...] I would also ask you, again with no disrespect, not to be ashamed...but rather to be proud that people (even if you do think that over 8000 of us are in the minority) are standing up for something they believe passionately about. [...] This group does not exist simply to upset the council. [...] All I would do is ask you to read some of the posts/comments on this page and keep an open mind.” (Gavin, 08.31.12)

The movement is here presented as a committed collective with a proactive and positive attitude and the posts on the page are used to engender public understanding on the matter. Indeed, once rhetorical connections are made between intertwined personal recollections and opinions, criticism relating to the return of the pool is countered. These connections enable a strong sense of a collectivity to emerge, a sense of ‘we’ and what is ‘ours’, even to the point that negative thinking should be discouraged.

“as a child I was one of hundreds of children who every summer enjoyed that pool [...] and without romantic dreams and the enthusiasm of these people a fantastic piece of our heritage will just be another eyesore on our beautiful coastline and remember it is not just the people of Tynemouth that remember and loved this pool so quite frankly if you cannot be positive about this perhaps it would be better to keep your opinion about this to a minimum” (Rob, 09.01.12)

As the campaigners endeavor into making the outdoor pool a reality, they also come to realise the ‘dream’ is a big challenge, one that requires self-belief and positive thinking and a degree of like-mindedness. The control of the administrator over the content of the timeline that is considered unconstructive, and the comments that are allowed, is also significant.

“Hi P. constructive and/or critical feedback is always welcome. So, if you've got some in depth research, or inside/industry knowledge, or some solid financials/projections to back any of this up, or even if you know anyone who has, it would be great if you could share it/them with us. [...] you also now appear to be insulting and patronizing over 8,000 people while you're doing it. [...] Everyone else, you may want to read this: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troll_\(Internet\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troll_(Internet)) I'll be quite happy to delete any comments that are solely designed to provoke, rather than offer constructive debate.” (Ben, admin, 09.03.12)

Unconstructive provocations on the page are singled out. The administrator takes on an editorial control to ensure that both positive contributions and constructive debates are taking place providing ‘acceptable parameters’ of participation. However, this is done in a way that is

open to the rest of FB posters, with the admin signposting to an explanation of ‘trolling’ behavior and justifying the deletion of insulting comments. For the next poster, constructive discussions are essential requirements for the group in order to face the task ahead.

“[...] I must say I feel very passionate in the quest to re-open what was once an extremely popular community facility. In the main the comments on this page have been extremely constructive and professional. At the end of the day we really do need to work in partnership with our local council, who [...] have very much listened to the 'community' and abandoned their original redevelopment plans. Now we have arrived at this point let's keep the momentum and work alongside our council to bring this dream back to a reality. [...] I am a professional businessperson who would be more than willing to offer some of my time to this worthy project” (Dale, 30.08.12)

The poster’s reflection initiates the prospect and necessity to cooperate with the local council in order to realise the pool as a project. Of note is the use of the pronouns “we” and “I” denoting the interplay between personal agency and feelings and collective agency in the attainment of the common good. In the next post the potential realisation of the pool project through cooperation with the council produces enthusiasm also in relation to other future prospects.

“my family are very excited about this proposal getting the full backing off NCC, hopefully we can all work together and try to rebuild Tynemouth [...]” (Claire, 01.17.13)

Claire here presents the possibility of rebuilding the town itself as a collective matter that can be achieved through dialogue and cooperation between residents and the local council.

At the time of revising the original manuscript for this chapter (February 2016), the FoTOP are still fundraising for the four million pounds needed for the restoration of the Tynemouth Outdoor Pool on Tynemouth seafront.

4.5 Reflections

Apparent from the analysis is the significant role and the extent to which the FB page was intertwined with the re-imagination of the site as a swimming pool and the movement formation leading to action. In the following sections, I consider 1) the kind of political participation that was fostered in the process with particular focus on how memories,

experiences and practices in and of place, intertwined with personal concerns contributed to shaping discursive process leading to action; 2) how digital ‘objects’ and functionalities have been appropriated into everyday rhetorical acts; and 3) how discursive spaces and everyday ways of doing and saying, including the use of digital systems, might constitute the political and everyday politics.

4.5.1 Resistance, imagination and hope

The council proposal to regenerate the site of the derelict swimming pool unsettled the status quo—it opened an interstice of possibility. In the study, we have seen how personal accounts and memories intertwined with political discussions to reimagine the site as a swimming pool and craft a space in which hope led to political action.

Hauser highlights how cultural memory relates to questions of power in two ways: how people draw resources from the past to shape and envision their present and future; and how people resist attempts by others to distort and appropriate their memories and experiences (Hauser, 1999). In the analysis, the seemingly mundane acts of sharing memories, videos and old photographs on the FB page were not simply implicit acts of political resistance as those memories were antithetical to the council’s proposal, but they also became materials to shape and imagine collectively the future of the derelict site of the swimming pool. In some respect, they ‘materialised’ (gave form) and synthesised the ‘dream’ and brought back to life the swimming pool as a place with cultural meaning and significance. They invited others to associate, respond and join in acts of imagination, resistance and solidarity. They were acts that invited and embodied different forms of cooperation and solidarity.

Significant in the study is the way stories were triggered by photographs, videos and other stories in and of the pool. In this respect FB multimodal communication opens a space and avenues for different modalities of cultural expression and participation, embracing some of the diversity of everyday talk. FB provides a space where people can formulate their cultural voice (Fraser, 1990). The short glimpses of stories and lived experiences awakened embodied and felt practices, emotions, passion and a sense of connection and belonging to the site and between people engaged in discussions on FB. The photographs posted on the FB page turned images into imaginings—where imagination had the power to move teller and listener into a

place of possibility and hope. It was the hope that the outdoor swimming pool could be brought back to life that in turn called for action (Solnit, 2005).

Nostalgia, often understood as inert dwelling in the past and backward looking, here is about the awakening of a set of practices, values, inscribed in personal meanings, which collectively ‘make’ the outdoor pool, projecting in the present and into the future an imagining of communal life and its possible re-making. From the analysis, it appears that what bonded the FB posters was first and foremost their collective imagination and re-imagination of the pool. It is the exposure of individual and ‘private’ desires, values, practices and concerns that allowed the discovery and recognition of commonalities, and that engendered the formation of collectives (Pietrucci, 2011).

Cultural expressions of individuals who in their everyday life perform a multiplicity of roles (citizen, parent, tourist, shop keeper, etc.) comprise personal values and memories as well as economic and political discourses. In this respect, the findings illustrate a complex notion of the ‘civic’, one in which personal stories, memories, opinions and wishes blur with communitarian duties to achieve public good (Mainsah and Morrison, 2012; Boyte, 2005). The study presents a challenge to the dichotomy between private and public, the social and the political (Fraser, 1990; Mouffe, 1999). What is personally meaningful and what civic might be are contextual, contingent and dynamic affairs by which we continually form and express our identities through discursive processes and socio-material practices among any given social group (Hauser, 1999).

4.5.2 *Polyvocality and action*

Yet not everyone had the same ‘positive’ memories of the pool, or considered the restoration of the pool to be a good solution. As FB pages can be open to anyone to contribute to, the multiplicity of diverging memories, opinions, concerns and contestations around the site was manifest and a complex process to negotiate hopes, doubts and concerns unfolded. Diverging opinions and memories engendered discursive and reflective processes towards the definition of the movement’s aims and a political consciousness with a broader sense of activism—where posters reflected more broadly on the different ways (economic, cultural, etc.) they contribute or otherwise to the revitalisation of their town.

In this study the FB page is not just used to raise awareness of the issue and organise offline protests, but also as a forum for discussion, where public opinion develops. Significant here was the ability to share links to official documents, planning laws, as well as other successful community-led outdoor projects in the country and generate further discussions. Furthermore, the FB page structure, facilitating the visibility of discourses, is used to generate further discussions, engender understanding, and even indicate where people's values may lie. Overall here, the page was appropriated rhetorically as representation of the political will of the people assembled on it, and as a 'testament' and 'living' document of their wishes and opinions (Latour, 2004). It is used as a display of resistance and support, and as an argument upon which the campaign and plans to produce a counter proposal to reinstate the pool develop. Indeed, through the page the group was able to draw in professional support from a range of people who lent their spare time to contribute to the elaboration of plans to turn the swimming pool into a reality. In this sense, the FB page was used a space of publicity (Pietrucci, 2011).

However, here I account for a tension between multiple perspectives and the attainment of material change. As the movement's aims are defined beyond opposing the council proposal and toward the redevelopment of the pool, posters put a lot of effort into turning disapproving opinions into supportive ones and even discourage negative contributions. As people's imaginative energy intertwined with hope and enthusiasm, the page admin and other posters suggest censoring what are considered unconstructive and negative provocations that might hinder the development of their counter proposal. In Hauser's terms, these 'acts of gentle violence to conform' exemplify the way, once relations are established in social movements through affiliation with a common aim, a demand for commitment and allegiance to the aims of the movement is required (Hauser and mcLellan, 2010). Thus, we recognize that, as rules of engagement are shaped and established, what collectivizes also excludes in the struggle to affect material change.

4.5.3 Rhetorical appropriation of FB functionalities

Qualitative (memories, opinions, visuals, links) and quantitative data (likes and quantification) on the FB page work together to form the movement's discourses and rhetorical resources. For example, the mundane act of pressing 'like' establishes a network of support and affiliations that is used rhetorically by the campaigners, entailing consequences (Dourish, 2010). 'Likes' and corresponding quantification as well as metrics of posters' engagements are

appropriated as a means to distribute information, nurture hope and belief in the campaign and, as perceived by posters, apply pressure to authorities. Indeed, the sense of connection and belonging that arise from the posters' stories did not only resonate with the geographical community of Tynemouth—but also with geographically distributed posters worldwide who identified with the social practices and values that the Outdoor Pool represented. While some posters and the page admin interpret 'likes' (and quantification) as valid expressions of support, others dispute such interpretation. It is the hidden articulations behind the 'likes' (Langlois and Elmer, 2013), their ambiguous and polysemic meaning, which allows their use as rhetorical means. This shows the contested space and political nature of FB itself and related functionalities.

Contestation around validity of 'likes' raises larger and important questions concerning the politics of place: "who should have the right to have a say or a voice in what goes on in Tynemouth, should this be only of concern to the people who live there?". Crucially important then, is not only data collection, but also its interpretation, i.e. the 'story' that is constructed with it and, as previous studies in HCI pointed out, how this is put to use (Taylor et al., 2015). The work of 'likes' in this sense, is intertwined with the 'work' of memories and opinions displayed on the FB page. Yet this required also a great deal of 'work' and interpretation. This, however, was a contested affair, where quantifications, likes, memories even if mundane modes of participation, came to matter and were used in relation to the context of the council proposal.

4.5.4 Negative bonding and (dialogical) relation with institutional process

As we have seen, the FB page had a significant role, here providing a space of participation that enabled people to express through multimodal communication their cultural identities in a variety of ways and discuss matters of personal concern. Yet, the process of formation of the political movement, where cultural memories intertwined with political discussions, concerns, rhetorical uses of quantitative data, was not a straightforward or effortless process. The process appeared to be constituted by an ecology of intertwined practices and contributions (DiSalvo, 2008), which moved incrementally along the movement's formation. While hope to influence and change the future of the site stemmed from what I regarded as a collective imagination, hard work was undertaken to maintain and negotiate this 'fragile' and emergent space. What appeared significant in the analysis was the way this

imagining and visions could be formed in each individual's mind but also mobilised and organised in relation to the council's proposal and real life prospects to influence decisions around the future of the swimming pool site.

The relationship with the local council vision was significant if not necessary in the constitution of the movement. People had to understand the council vision in order to respond to it, but also understand how to proceed to get things done in ways that could be recognised as politically valid by the local authority. Dialogue doesn't equate with agreement or consensus but it is about a process that can forge mutual understanding. In the findings, FB interactions and data played a crucial role in the formation of the movement, but are also perceived by the admin as not 'officially' valid, at least not alone. This exemplifies the way social movements, aware of forms of governance and regulation, have an intrinsic need to react to those in power (Hauser and mclellan, 2010). Yet, the study shows how the two are entangled with one another—that is, the production of hope to influence the future of the site as a swimming pool was possible because the council in the first place displayed a will to redevelop that site. In this respect, unofficial and official discourses should not be conceived in opposition, but in dialogical relationship with one another, illustrating the necessary diversity of ways people strive to achieve change. Interactions of the FB page show a political learning process by which posters learnt about people's self-interests, expertise (Boyte, 2005) and acquire skills of negotiation as well as learning about planning processes, laws, etc. The passion felt for the redevelopment of the pool brought together people with a range of diverse expertise who lent their time to develop their proposal to redevelop the swimming pool and eventually began to co-operate with the local council.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter I have reported on the first case study through which I began inquiring into the role of social technologies (FB) in political participation and social activism in respect to the politics of place. The case looked at how a group concerned with the redevelopment of a derelict site in their locality appropriated a FB page as space for political discussion. In the study, the interactions on the FB page appeared to be a prominent means by which a collective capable of political action to affect material change formed.

In the study, I have used Hauser's model of vernacular rhetoric in social movement (Hauser and McLallen, 2010) to guide my analysis. This helped me understand and recognise agency and political resistance in everyday mundane acts. The findings show not only how the FB page rendered different perspectives (memories, opinions and 'likes') into 'objects' that could be seen, talked about and acted upon, leading to dynamic processes of negotiation, but also how FB technology itself offered distinct ways to participate in the process. The FB page facilitated the visibility of posters' memories cultural expressions, photographs, and discussions in the process of negotiation towards ascertaining what was meaningful among them and direction for action. The findings highlight the intrinsic relationship between cultural memory to re-envision the future of the site leading to discursive spaces and political action. In the context of the planning proposal, these were ways of saying and doing, through which individuals, and the collective, re-envision the site and begin to shape the outdoor pool as a possible reality.

In concluding, this study shows how lived experiences and meanings are entangled with places of cultural significance and their materiality, and how these should be understood as lively and dynamics affairs. This study shows how symbolic acts such as sharing a photograph, a memory or pressing a 'like' can have political power, influence and shape opinions that can be mobilised and organised for action. To borrow Solnit's words, it shows the way politics "arises out of the spread of ideas and the shaping of imaginations" (Solnit, 2005:35). The appropriation of FB's functionalities and exposure of the discursive processes had a central role in the construction of a vision and the definition of the movement's aims. However, the study also shows the complex interrelationship between polyvocal, divergent voices and the need to reach consensus in order to move to action and in this case the subsequent development of the new proposal. While interactions of the FB page show a political learning process, they also show how FB architecture, likes, and the possibility to censor posters' comments were both used rhetorically to influence decisions among posters and delineating what was acceptable or not among the people engaged in the discussions. This raises questions around the 'architecture' and politics of design and related concerns on the role of technologies for democratic practices.

In analysing, writing and revising this piece of research what mattered to me the most was the way personal stories, photographs and memories (and their materiality) inspired a re-imagination of place, and how these, entangling with socio-political discourses and political

procedures, constituted hope for change and drive for action. What mattered to me was also the possibility to be part of this by telling this story—a story that in times in which people are disillusioned with their abilities to affect change in their surroundings, could generate hope and inspire others as much as it inspired me. The findings suggest an understanding of politics as the result of people’s complex reflexive and discursive processes to envision, negotiate and ascertain what is common and meaningful in order to give it form. In a sense, the process that unfolded on the FB page can be regarded as a kind of participatory design—as ways in which people contemplating a situation imagined a better or a different one and acted to give it form (Friedman, 2015; McCarthy and Wright, 2015; Ingold, 2013; Manzini, 2015). The study shows significant potential for HCI design to create spaces where people can expose their self-interests, concerns, feelings and passions and negotiate routes to action for change.

Chapter 5 Exploring a process for political engagement in place

“There was a rarefied atmosphere of politics divorced in my view from the mass movement. What is it that the ordinary man wants to achieve as opposed to what he is led into believing he wants to achieve.” (T. Dan Smith, 1984)

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw how institutional and vernacular visions of and for place collided on an online social media page. The online space supported the re-imagination of practices in and of place and opened a space filled with hope to potentially influence the course of events, which led to action. Memories and stories shared on the online page captured peoples’ desires, values and practices of communal living that forged a re-imagination and subsequent ‘re-making’ of place. These, intertwining with personal concerns, socio-political discourses and institutional visions opened up a space in which hope drove the formation of a social movement capable of political action. The socio-political process analysed in the previous chapter inspired me to explore how I may be able to initiate or contribute to shaping alternative processes of political engagement for making place through the re-envisioning of specific sites in the city and political discursive spaces with design and technology.

This chapter describes how, learning from the process analysed in the first case study, I developed a process for political engagement in place. The design exploration that the chapter presents started with the following questions: what if HCI design and research could open alternative spaces for people to come together and express and share the things that personally mattered to them and re-envision their city? What if these were in dialogue with the political processes at the heart of production of the city? In the chapter I describe the context of the study and how the theoretical framework positioned in vernacular political discourse in social movements (Hauser and mclellan, 2010) utilised in the first case study informed the design and development of ‘City Walks’ and related digitally supported tools. I outline the mixed method approach adopted for this work and I describe the design of a process and method— ‘City Walks’ —aiming at opening discussions about the past and future of particular sites in the city and facilitating the situated discovery and articulation of issues, practices and lived experiences connecting city residents with the processes and mechanism at play in city planning. City Walks

developed in collaboration with four stakeholders: Amber Films, Northern Architecture, Amblr and Martyn Dade-Robertson—lecturer in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University. City Walks involved a two-stage socio-material design of digitally supported walks that situates vernacular practices and discussions about the city in the city itself, and puts historical and institutional practices into play with the practices and lived and felt experiences of local people (Wright and McCarthy, 2010). In the first stage I conducted situated research, which informed the design and deployment of tools in the first part of the method. Then I describe how findings and learning from the first stage of the method were integrated in the design and deployment of tools in the second stage of the method, which combined digital archive material and newly generated content on the walks. The chapter provides an analysis of both deployment and the data collected through the walks and post-walk interviews to understand the political process the method engendered and the design tools in use (Suchman, 2006). I then reflect on the analysis in respect to the effectiveness of the method in facilitating a political process that entailed a re-discovery of vernacular, social and institutional practices that come to constitute places in the city. Finally, I consider how the different designed tools and resources were utilised to support situated discussions, and a re-imagining of particular sites in the city.

5.2 Research context

The ‘City Walks’ method developed in Newcastle upon Tyne, a city of 279,100 inhabitants, located in the north east of England. The research grew out of a Creative Exchange partnership⁴ and involved the collaboration with Amber – a local Film and Photography Collective; Northern Architecture – a local charity championing architecture and place making; and Amblr – a multi-media company based in London.

Amber Film Collective’s extensive archive documenting life and urban regeneration in the North-East spanning over 60 years appeared to go hand in hand with my particular interest in inquiring into political participation and engagement for place making. Amber’s collective artistic agenda, dedicated to documenting urban regeneration in Northern England has been

⁴ Creative Exchange (CX) was an AHRC funded Knowledge Exchange Hub. CX aimed at bringing together creative industries and academic to explore the broad notion of the “Digital Public Space”. See here: <https://goo.gl/JauRou>

regarded as oppositional due to their aspiration to produce alternative representations of working class communities through photography and filmmaking (Holland and Vail, 2012). At the start of the research it appeared that a compelling investigation would entail the examination of how a political and historical archive could be utilised to invite public discussion about the past, present and future of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. It was agreed to focus on a specific historical archive—a 1960s film archive provided by Amber comprising local politicians' interviews revealing controversies and anecdotes about major redesign and infrastructural developments aimed at turning Newcastle upon Tyne into the modern city of the 21st century.

5.2.1 Newcastle regeneration and city planning in the 1960s

Newcastle, as many other cities in the UK, had been subject to radical processes of transformation and regeneration in the 1960s. This followed a trend in planning and architecture that aspired to modernise city living and, due to the increased use of cars, sought to separate pedestrians from cars through visionary architecture entailing the re-organisation of city living on different levels (Burns, 1967; Pendlebury, 2001). Newcastle City Council's political leader at the time was Thomas Daniel Smith—also known as T. Dan Smith—who alongside chief council planner of the time, Wilfred Burns, established the first planning department in a local authority in the UK in order to bring together under one visionary plan all developments in the city (Burns, 1967; Pendlebury, 2001). The vision for urban developments in the city involved both significant conservation and housing policies as well as major infrastructural changes in the city.

Dan Smith's radical plan entailed the construction of new roads and motorways, the creation of new public transportation systems including the metro system, the establishment of an 'urban core' and zones allocated to specific practices—the education zone with the establishment of Newcastle University and the Polytechnic (today known as Northumbria University), the shopping zone with the creation of a new shopping mall today known as Eldon Square, the recreational zone with the upgrade of a football stadium in the heart of the city, the creation of Science City, a new city library. Such major and radical regeneration and changes in the city entailed both the preservation of buildings considered of architecturally significant (namely neoclassical and Georgian Newcastle—Grainger Town and Grey Street) and the eradication of Victorian buildings and housing, considered outdated and of less architectural importance at the time. Also implemented at the time were major housing regeneration projects,

that became infamously known as ‘slum clearances’, aiming at replacing entire housing estates with high-rise tower blocks, epitomising ideas of modern living at the time. Through this major investment and changes, Dan Smith’s political vision included the creation of a capital city and a hub for culture in the North, enabling Newcastle to compete with all the other major cities in UK and Europe (Burns, 1967; Pendlebury, 2001). Furthermore, T. Dan Smith’s urban political vision also advocated for a process of devolution—aiming at devolving decisional power from London into the cities and regions.

Unsurprisingly, such dramatic material and social changes had been a significant source of contestations with various committees that strove to preserve particular areas in the city. Furthermore, the major housing regeneration plans and the establishment of an urban core was also associated with fast growing building speculations, which most controversially were later associated with allegation of corruptions on the part of various politicians including T. Dan Smith and building firms. Thus, Smith’s radical plans came to an abrupt standstill and were carried out only partially, leaving traces of his original plan scattered throughout the city today.

The political film archive given by Amber comprised interviews with T. Dan Smith and colleagues, in which they describe the political visions and major regeneration project of the time. The archive provided a rich resource to engage with the political processes that led to the city’s present social and material constitution and elicit reflection and discussions around the city’s possible futures.

5.3 Methodology

The ‘City Walk’ method was inspired by Hauser’s analysis of the politics of everyday talk (vernacular rhetoric) in social movements, the model outlined in detail in the previous chapter. More specifically, ‘City Walk’ aimed at applying Hauser’s theoretical model of vernacular rhetoric in social movements features—negative bonding, markers of positionality and polyvocality (Hauser and mclellan, 2010) to the design of tools to facilitate a political participation process. For the construction of the tools I also took as a starting point and adapted HCI design methods such as cultural probes (Gaver et al., 1999; Paulos and Jenkins, 2005) and generative toolkits (Sanders and Stappers, 2014). The next sections briefly outline these methods.

5.3.1 *Cultural probes and generative toolkits*

Cultural probes were originally conceived as a way to playfully involve and engage participants within a design process through a series of “open ended” creative and provocative tasks (Gaver et al., 1999). In designing cultural probes, Gaver and colleagues drew significantly on Arts movements such as surrealism and DADA, and more specifically on the psychogeographic maps developed by the Situationists International (SI) (Gaver et al., 1999). Cultural probes comprise “oblique” tasks generally handed over to participants in order to imaginatively invite the revealing of the personal multiple and hidden layers and meanings that participants assign to their everyday environments and lives. Of importance in cultural probes is their aesthetic qualities and materiality, as well as their capacities to spark a multitude of interpretations and responses (Gaver and Sengers, 2006).

Cultural Probes have been used to explore issues of self-identity, place-identity and personal significance (Gaver et al., 1999; Gaver and Sengers, 2006; Wallace et al., 2014, Boehner et al., 2007), but also the urban environment. In this respect, cultural probes have also been adapted by Paulos and Jenkins to the urban context (2005). Paulos and Jenkins sought to specifically explore computing in urban environments through observation, experimentation and interventions—a methodology coined as ‘Urban Probes’—to provoke reflection among urban dwellers in respect to their role and experiences in urban everyday life (Paulos and Jenkins, 2005).

However, despite drawing from SI, whose practices were inspired by Lefebvre’s radical thinking and driven by a determination to address fundamental issues about the politics of space and the way cities were increasingly produced and homogenised through capital (Sadler, 1999)—Cultural Probes’ uses in HCI do not particularly reflect this radical political stance (Boehner et al., 2007). Furthermore, ‘Urban Probes’ aiming at exploring, deconstructing and understanding the urban landscapes, while empowering city dwellers to participate in the construction of their emerging digital urban landscape, often fail to explore in detail spaces for dialogue or account for the power dynamics among city residents.

Sanders and Stappers have instead explored the potential of toolkits in bringing people into processes to express and negotiate their future everyday lives. ‘Generative toolkits’ are a set of collaborative tasks generally taking place in a workshop environment, aiming at providing participatory creative acts involving the construction and transformation of meaning within a

process that aims at describing future objects, concerns or opportunities (Sanders and Stappers, 2014). Generative toolkits elicit and utilise participants' past experiences in order to facilitate a creative, participatory and reflective process, aiming at engendering mutual understanding about the present, while bridging visions, ideas and hopes for the future (Sanders and Stappers, 2014).

Taking these two established approaches in HCI and applying them to my specific interests and epistemological positioning (Boehner et al., 2007), I adopt them as a “form of political activism” (Boehner et al., 2007) concerned with the everyday politics of place. I apply my methodological perspective and use “probes” as originally understood and used by Gaver and colleagues (Boehner et al., 2007), aiming at opening opportunities for political discussions and envisioning futures in and about places. Applying Hauser's analysis of social movement to design means that design methods and process should aim at bringing political and social practices in dialogue with one another (negative bonding), offering opportunities for dis/association (markers of positionality) and bringing different voices together (polyvocality) while opening opportunities for co-operation and re-appropriation of spaces/places in the city.

5.4 The research process

The research developed over a period of nine months (see Figure 5). From an initial examination of Amber's archive coupled with situated inquiry, a walk, and co-design workshops with study partners, the research involved the socio-material design of the City Walks method, the recruitment of walker-participants and delivery of the walks. A total of 30 participants engaged in the walks, recruited by one of our study partners, and through a social media site. Participants were diverse in background, nationality, occupation and gender and ranged from 21 to 65 years of age.

September - December 2013	January - February 2014	March - April 2014
<u>Initial research</u> Walks, street diaries, interviews, co-design workshop with project partners.	<u>City Walk Stage One</u> Development and design of tools for City Walk stage one, and deployment.	<u>City Walk Stage Two</u> Analysis of City Walk stage one; development and design of tools for City Walk stage two, and deployment.

Figure 5. City Walk overall research process

In the next section I describe the initial research leading to the method's two stage socio-material designs.

5.5 Initial Research

Initial research included: an examination of Amber's Film Collective political archive; research on an online forum⁵ —a site where people passionate about city planning share and discuss documents, photographs and ideas relating to planning developments in the city; face-to-face interviews with a retired architect who had met T. Dan Smith in the 1970s and another passionate researcher who had spent years examining the work of T. Dan Smith and its legacy. Initial research also included site-specific research and co-design workshops with project partners. Content gathered during this initial research was then incorporated in the design and development of the tools in both the first and second part of 'City Walk'. In the following two sections I briefly describe the site-specific research and co-design workshops with project partners leading to the design of the first stage of City Walk.

5.5.1 *Personal walks, encounters in the city and street diaries*

Having firstly examined the political archive, I sought to conduct situated, site-specific research within the city's urban core in order to develop sensitivities and understanding on the

⁵ Skyscraper City – available at: <https://goo.gl/JpKBGO>

relationship between the issues raised in the archive, the visible material traces of the past and practices in the contemporary city. Taking Paulos's methodology (Paulos and Jenkins, 2005) and the Situationist's psychogeographic practice (Sadler, 1999) as a point of departure, I utilised photography, diaries, interviews and situated engagements with people met in these locations.

Between October and December 2014, I conducted seven walks by myself around the city's inner core lasting between two and three hours. Each walk's route was planned in advance and was inspired by narrations in the archives. Each walk aimed at re-discovering and exploring sites at different times of the day and through different routes through personal accounts, photography, video recording, sketches and street diaries (Figure 6). In these walks I met and conducted audio-interviews with people found in these locations: Perry, a city council employee and window cleaner; Jim, a NE1 street ranger; Tom, a car park attendant; Martin, a manager of an office block in the city; John, the owner a small family led coffee shop; a group of Newcastle residents originally from South Africa celebrating Nelson Mandela's life and commemorating his death in one of the city's inner squares. In this way the walks aimed at both revisiting the sites described in the political archives and in relation to T. Dan Smith's vision as well as witnessing current practices. In this initial exploratory work, I explicitly looked for sites in need of care and that somehow offered opportunities to influence their future.

This initial personal research, and related photo/street diaries are best conveyed through an example of a photo diary (see Appendix A.1). The diaries reflect the affective, embodied and situated dimension of my exploration and as such they are intended to be evocative. At the end of this cycle of walks I had a portfolio of maps, issues and impressions as well as extracts of interviews with people encountered in these sites. In this respect walks, street diaries, photographic documentations and encounters were an important step to develop sensitivities, imaginations and attachment to particular sites in the city as well as a wealth of audio recordings from non-structured interviews conducted on these sites. The walks, streets diaries, photographs, beside online research and semi-structured interviews constituted a wealth of resources to utilise for the construction of the 'City Walk' tools.

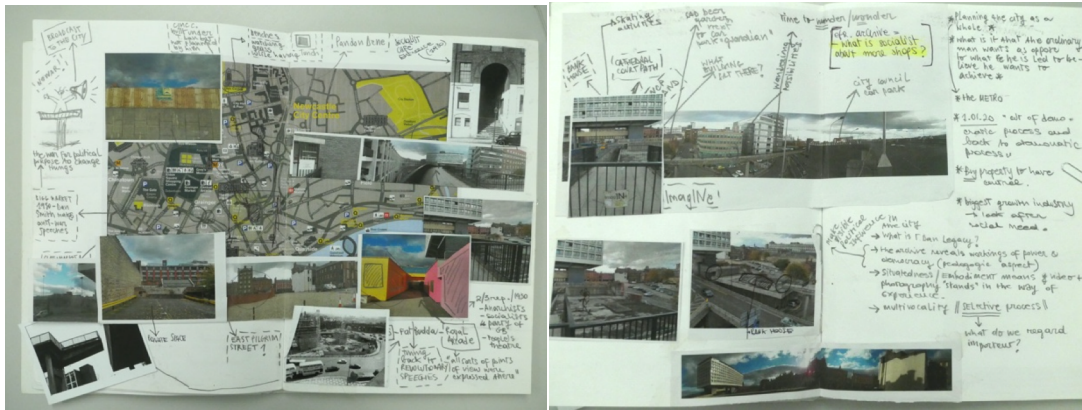


Figure 6. Sketches from initial research

5.5.2 Co-design walks and workshops with project partners

Besides my personal explorations and research, I also sought to explore the contemporary significance of the archive with research partners. To this end, I invited two project partners—Lowri Bond from Northern Architecture and Graeme Rigby from Amber Film Collective—to co-design a walk through the city *for me*. They were instructed to design a walk which would highlight and show materially compelling aspects of the archive from their perspectives in and about places in the city. Lowri Bond and Graeme Rigby then took me for the walk they had designed, which was audio and video recorded (Figure 7 - left). The walk raised questions around our relationships with civic space, authority and planning practices and the way individual and collective values are reflected in the material fabric of the city (or otherwise).

Following the walk, all research partners convened to co-design the first part of the ‘City Walk’ method (Figure 7 - right). In the co-design workshop insights and sketches from my personal walks and a selection of edited audio fragments from the T. Dan Smith archive were used as a starting point to devise collaboratively rules and sketch out tools for the first stage of City Walk, which I then further developed.



Figure 7. Left: Walk with project partners, Lowri Bond and Graeme Rigby. Right: Co-design workshop with project partners

5.6 The socio-material design of City Walk

The two-stage socio-material design for City Walk involved the design of tools and that would digitally support groups of people in co-creating issue-based walks in the city. For the development of tools comprising the first stage of City Walk, Hauser’s model of Vernacular Rhetoric in social movements coupled with the initial research, archive material, was applied to construct tools that would elicit participants’ expression of issues in and about places in the city while provoking and inviting discussions and envisioning about the future of those places. Data generated (places and related issues) in stage one of City Walk then informed the design of tools for the second stage of City Walk, where voices of walkers who participated in the first stage of City Walk were integrated with the archival material (see Figure 8). In the next two sections I illustrate in detail the socio-material design rationale of the digital elements and tools in the first and second stage of the method.

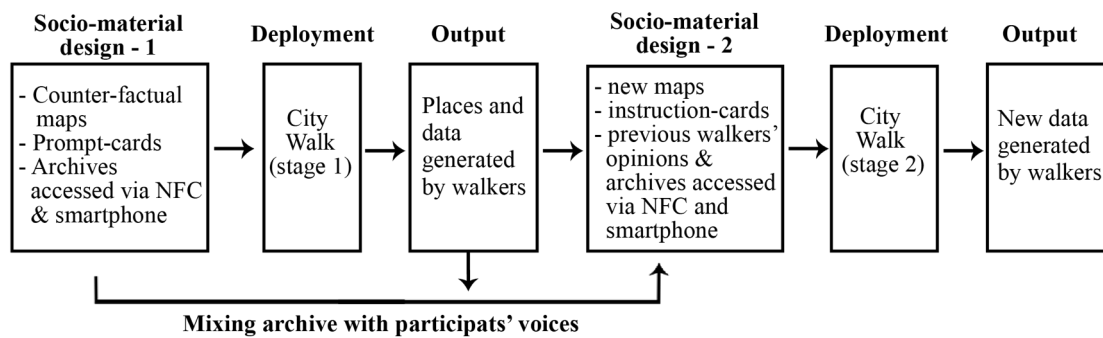


Figure 8. Diagram of the City Walk process stages one and two

5.6.1 Socio-material design of City Walk Stage One

Urban walking as an everyday act of resistance

In collaboration with the study partners, we chose to employ walking as an occasion for dialogue and a potential mundane expression of resistance. Walking has long been considered a practice of cultural, ecological and political significance. For instance, De Certeau regarded walking as a tactic of resistance, entailing enactments that either uphold or disregard the status quo (De Certeau 2011). Further, the Situationists International and more recently literary critic and artist Will Self (Sadler, 1999; Self, 2014) explored walking in cities as a democratising force seeking equality of access, freedom of movement and the dissolution of state control. In recent years, walking has also been utilised in the social sciences as a method to engage with our identities as reflected in our surroundings. For instance, Casey proposed an understanding of places as experiential ‘gathering’ processes, constitutive of one’s sense of self (Casey, 2009) and Vergunst and Ingold demonstrated how walking with people allows us to gain a better understanding of different ways of ‘being in the world’ (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008). Further, in their study on walking, Ingold and Vergunst showed how temporality in walking can be “shifting and unsettled: thinking and perceiving the past, present and future and combining them in reference to routes” (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008: 75). Furthermore, inviting people to walk the city with others in a group was chosen in order to create occasions for collective relational and dynamic experiences and opportunities for dialogue.



Figure 9. Counterfactual map and prompt cards

The city map as a rhetorical artifact

In order to initiate inquiry, in the co-design workshop, we chose to design a counterfactual map of the city as a way to problematise and unsettle the ‘real’. In this respect, Light highlighted the latent politics embedded in maps through the revelation or disguise of textual/visual information (Light, 2011). Further, Harvey noted maps’ power of naming as strongly connected with the power to individuate, reinforce or create identities (Harvey, 1993). The design of a counterfactual map intended to unsettle, stimulate reflection and new relationships between what is there in the city and what could be there. The counterfactual map’s design was informed by historically unrealised plans, a subjective interpretation of political visions as described in the political archives, and the initial situated research and walk with research partners described above. Even though the map had the same aesthetic language as the ordinary official tourist map of Newcastle upon Tyne, commonly found in any tourist point in the city, my design featured counterfactual streets and fictional buildings, highlighted unofficial practices in the city (e.g. graffiti, skateboarding) and, drawing from Dan Smith’s unrealised visions and my site-specific initial research, assigned existing buildings and areas with different purposes (e.g. university as a hub of free education, shopping center as the city parliament). The counterfactual map (see Figure 9) also intended to scaffold the negotiation of the walk among participants through a process of collaborative sense making as the group of walkers would be asked to navigate the city using it.

The political archive as a resource for negative bonding

At the co-design workshop, we decided to use the political archive as a way to engage walkers/participants with institutional processes. In so doing the aim was to stimulate

connections and relations between past and current mechanisms and practices of city planning and participants' expression of personal stances, practices, opinions and values. I selected audio material from the film archive according to the following categories: excerpts exposing political mechanism underpinning planning projects, particular regeneration efforts in the city and visions of democracy. Inspired by these archival extracts I designed 12 prompt cards featuring open-ended statements and questions inviting personal responses (Figure 9, also see Appendix A.2. for more details). NFC technology embedded in each card gave access to archival excerpts held on mobile phones. Extracts ranged from 30 seconds to 2.5 minutes in length and were listened to via a Bluetooth portable speaker, inviting participants to gather around it.

Prompt cards as markers of positionality in place and space

Each group member was given two prompt cards, which they were invited to associate with particular sites of their choice along the walk. Having identified a site, participants were asked to stop the group, explain their choice and then listen to the archival content embedded in the card. Talking time was set to two minutes per participant at a time and participants were also given the task of audio-recording and photo-documenting group members' opinions and site choices. In this way, through their card 'placement' participants would enact a 'marker of positionality' in both place and space: the situated place in the city and the discursive space in which meaning is constructed and exposed.

In summary, the socio-material design was intended to invite negotiation and implicate participants in shaping the walk by associating their cards with sites they found significant along the way. Groups were given routes based on the counterfactual map to provide a loose structure and ensure groups would do their walk within the time limit.

5.6.2 City Walk Socio-material design Stage One in action

Nineteen participants took part in walks during the first part of our method. Each walk involved small groups (four to six participants) to ensure each member had equal opportunity to have input in the walk within time constraints. Each walk lasted between 2.5 and 3.5 hours.



Figure 10. Walkers placing cards in City Walk stage one

During walks, participants spent time examining the map, discussing possible interpretations and navigational choices, which involved many playful moments that helped them socialise. Decoding the map, given its ambiguous design, was a slow, discursive and ongoing process unfolding with the act of walking, and comparing the counterfactual map with the city. Participants generated stops and topics for discussion by associating their cards to their particular sites of choice (Figure 10). Personal associations between the counterfactual map, cards and the city influenced choices. While for most participants these were serendipitous, others reserved their cards for particular sites on their routes. For instance, a participant placed his card ‘capitalism – making the rules and living within them’ at the University site, marked on the map as ‘Hub of Free Education’. This prompted a discussion around the capitalisation of education and the role of universities in forging new urban developments. Another participant placed her card ‘revolutionary perspective – what do you think would be beneficial in the city’ in a private car park where she had organised a public cultural event in the past. This was followed by a debate about the loss and re-appropriation of public places. Another participant placed his card ‘owning the future – properties snapped up by builders and developers’ at the site of a building used by local skateboarders that was recently demolished, and marked on the map as ‘old town’. In this way, the participant highlighted how new developments and policies dictate the exclusion of particular cultural practices in the city. Listening to the archive material on the walks sparked further questions, and was used to exemplify or extend discussions in other directions. Furthermore, having to take photos of each other as each walker ‘place’ his/her card, produced playful moments among participants, and

also provided opportunities to consider what aspects of the location highlighted particular issues that the walker/participant wanted to communicate (Figure 11).



Figure 11. City Walk Stage one – from top left, clock-wise: reading the map, card placement and recording, unlocking the audio & listening

5.6.3 *The socio-material design of City Walk Stage Two*

The walks comprising the first part of City Walks, as described above, provided new content—specific stops and locations in the city and related accounts, and opinions—that essentially constituted stops on a walking trail. These were taken to then drive the socio-material design in the second stage of City Walk.

Polyvocality - cumulating diverging voices

Content generated in City Walks Stage One informed a new counterfactual map and the participants' voices were put in dialogue with the voices of the archive and audio extracts that I had collected in the initial stage of the research. Participants' new audio material was mixed with short archival extracts. Each new mix of recordings featured diverging opinions and contradictory histories and was assigned to the particular locations pinpointed in previous walks by participants. In this way, the 'polyvocality' of multiple perspectives would be exposed at each location.

Hence, I designed a new map and mini booklets corresponding to particular locations in the new map, both inspired by the new audio materials. For instance, a construction site was renamed as ‘Owning the Future Square’ where a previous walker had talked about the loss of a culturally important place; an incomplete walkway was renamed ‘Monument to People’s Power’, referring to a campaign that stopped a planning development, and so on. Each booklet included instructions encouraging site exploration, NFC tags triggering related audio material and a question for groups to collectively consider at each place. Lastly a brochure was designed to contain booklets and map (Figure 12, also for more details see Appendix A.3).



Figure 12. Walk brochure, details of map and booklets

5.6.4 *Socio-material design Stage Two in action*

Eleven new participants took part in walks during the second stage of City Walk. Each walker/participant was given a brochure and each group the following instructions: collectively decide locations to visit from the ones presented in the brochure; collectively work out a route to get to those locations; at each location, open the booklet relating to it and follow the instructions. Participants were also given a camera, smart phone and Bluetooth portable speaker. A time limit for talking was not set for these walks leaving their unfolding purposely open to internal group dynamics.

As in previous walks, examining the map and negotiating ways to reach each location produced a playful atmosphere and helped participants socialise. Following the instructions at

each location produced excitement and curiosity (Figure 13). The mix of audio materials presenting divergent opinions and the ‘questions’ provoked notably different interpretations that led to animated discussions. Participants engaged in debates around issues of land ownerships in the city, new and old planning rules, the uncertain future of particular areas and possible alternative uses of specific places.

5.7 Insights

In the following, I report insights from the data gathered across the whole study. The data-set comprised of field notes from all walks performed in the study (eg. four walks) and from the two co-design workshops with project partners; six and half hours of audio recordings generated from the 4 walks performed as part of the first and second stage of the “City Walk”; audio recording from two co-design workshops with project partners (2.5 hours each); two post walk group discussions (2 hours each); and 5 semi-structured interviews conducted with walkers that partook in the second stage of the City Walk.

The data-set was analysed following a thematic analysis approach (Brown and Clarke 2006), comprising of open coding on paper. From this initial open-coding I generated paper diagrams and a set of initial candidate themes. Candidate themes from this initial coding for example comprised of memories of place, political controversies, etc. The candidate themes were discussed with my PhD supervisor Robert Comber. Our discussions did not aim at generating new codes, but rather served to validate, check, refine and test the candidate themes I had generated. The insights are grouped under the following themes: re-discovering the city and exposing issues, instigating discussions in place, and re-envisioning the city, sources and validations of imagining.

5.7.1 *Re-discovering the city and exposing issues*

City Walk invited each group to organise themselves in order to perform their walk. For some participants, the lack of a leader was “*challenging*”, entailing a realisation that “*working in small groups can be hard work*”. Yet the walks were also a creative process of discovering and “*questioning real things that you don’t normally talk about with other people*”. This is also reflected in the words of another participant who felt how the walk “*seemed to be more about the process of travelling rather than reaching a destination*”. In this respect the

tools provided were important in shaping group dynamics and the way walks and discussions unfolded. For instance, walks' duration and participants' negotiation of the counterfactual map were significant aspects that allowed personal contemplation of the map and developed participants' confidence in sharing their thoughts. Furthermore, for walkers "*having to physically come back together to listen closely to one sound output*" (i.e. the Bluetooth speaker) added to the social experience.

The cards in walks comprising stage one of the method provided walkers with a focus to pinpoint and articulate significant aspects of individual and/or collective identities expressed through everyday practices, (hi)stories and memories—exposing affiliations to particular values and social practices as reflected in chosen places. Personal anecdotes, discussions, and reflections took place whilst walking along as well as standing face-to-face. At times, participants detoured from the suggested route in order to take the group to the particular places they wanted to talk about. In this way, the exposure of personally meaningful stories, ideas and issues as reflected in the material city assembled walkers around specific urban situations and matters of concern – e.g. the city football stadium as symbol of local identity; a cycle route traversed by a participant every day under a road bypass; the proposal for a new public square; the capitalisation of education reflected in new developments; preclusion of cultural practices such as graffiti in public spaces.

In this way, places came to re-present personal concerns while uncovering tensions between institutional practices, city planning and people's lived experiences, values and socio-cultural practices in the city. For example, below, two participants draw a distinction between places driven by market imperatives and what people value doing in places.

"I used to hang around here a lot when I was a kid and it used to have a different atmosphere round here than it does now, now they've opened it out and made it quite corporate [...] There used to be little lovely dark cubby holes and stuff, where as a kid, when you wanted to get away from adult control or whatever, was good to hang around. Now there's a Wagamama. It just doesn't feel right, you know? It just doesn't know what it is anymore" (Kay - excerpt from a walk part of "City Walk" stage one)

"it is like a public square, but what is surrounding it is actually commercialised so it's all driving towards actual profit rather than community interaction. It's just a bit of a threat

that more public squares will becoming sterilised” (Drew - excerpt from a walk part of “City Walk” stage one)

Kay’s sketch of her activities as a youngster in the square highlight her embodied connections to the place. The square’s loss of identity due to new developments is re-contextualised in other locations and near-future prospects by Drew. The market driven values reflected in the square are illustrated as ‘sterile’ and presented in conflict to an idea of ‘publicness’ and ‘community interaction’ associated instead with idiosyncrasies and diversity. Another participant further emphasised such contrast, reflecting on young people’s practices in the city, the way they appropriate places in the city turning them into impromptu skate parks, for example.

“Some of that is about that kind of grass roots thing. It’s not about public consultation, but about the public doing things and then being recognised, which that kind of visionary, top down development doesn’t really allow” (Tom - excerpt from a walk part of “City Walk” stage one)

In this excerpt, Tom contributes a consideration of the tense relationship between place making and the bureaucratic and formal procedure of town planning, highlighting a central aspect of such tension: the necessity to acknowledge places’ social production processes by local authorities.

While participants in stage one of City Walk were given individual cards, in stage two groups were given tasks inviting site explorations and questions to collectively consider alongside the audio material. The paths walkers traversed and places they dwelled in engendered contingent associations, interpretations and feelings, entailing an aspect of ‘extra-ordinariness’ within the ordinary.

“you would never walk around spaces like that because you don’t make time in your day to do things like that [...] and you get the feeling, the atmosphere by being there” (Tina - excerpt from a walk part of “City Walk” stage two)

Tina refers here to walking across a site of a demolished building and climbing the roof of a car park – highlighting the embodied nature of her experiences. Maps and instructions prompted the discovery of issues, but also the revealing of dis/associations with particular places/practices in the city. For example, a group collectively identified a pub as the ‘City Parliament’ marked on the map. The booklet suggested entering the ‘Parliament’ and listening

to the conversations for a few minutes. However, the group jointly decided to abstain from it, labeling the place as “*not the kind of place where people like me go to*”. Yet, being there challenged participants’ own judgments. Here Joy reflects on a particular encounter.

“We sort of said we are not going in there, it looks really horrible, but then someone really nice came out and started to chat on with us” (Joy - excerpt from a walk part of “City Walk” stage two).

After spending time there, participants revisited their own assumptions. For some participants, standing in that particular place and the topic at hand (‘your own parliament’) assumed symbolic meaning, reflected in the influences that being there had on their discussion. In this way, re-discovering places and issues, through the audio materials gathered in previous walks and from the archive, turned locations in the city into public matters. Below, a participant reconsiders city planning as a matter of collective participation.

“You just take it for granted [...] as we are about as involved now as in the 60s that is we are not involved at all – somebody else is doing it all” (Joan - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of “City Walk” stage two)

Joan draws a connection between past and contemporary socio-political dynamics in city planning – making the past relevant to her perceived present state of affairs.



Figure 13. City Walk Stage 2

5.7.2 *Instigating discussions in place*

The groups engaged discursively in the walks, examining the causal nexus of the specific concerns at hand. Issues generated by participants and topics heard in related audio materials engendered challenging discussions. In this respect, holding a recording device while talking was significant in pacing and drawing attention to talking and listening times. Differences in individual and collective visions relating to social needs, urban developments and technologies were exposed also in respect to the tensions of past visions (heard in the archival material) and near-future developments. For instance, in the first part of the method a group standing in the construction site of a new development (marked in the map as ‘Citizens Lab’) engaged in a discussion around technological advance expressed in the new construction of a centre for scientific excellence. Yet, the group discourse was challenged by one of the participants.

“I think that his [politician] analysis of computing trips lots of people up – that is the infrastructure that we need to make things happen doesn’t rely on bricks and mortar. In many respects this is a very regressive development, precisely because of that [...] All of this stuff about big data, it’s all disappearing into air” (Andy - excerpt from a walk part of “City Walk” stage one)

Andy’s vision for a better communication infrastructure is contrasted with the near-future development, first proposed in the 1960s, highlighting how in his view interventions should adapt to collective needs. In this way, audio excerpts evoked in participants different interpretations and opinions reflecting individual worldviews.

Walkers engaged in debates assembling ‘knowledges’ and life experiences tied to particular notions of belonging, historical and socio-political circumstances. For example, in walks comprising stage two of City Walk, audio extracts around the distribution of decisional power regionally or nationally evoked different memories in participants: of a time of political turmoil in a participants’ youth; experiences participating in regional assemblies; cultural experiences in a participants’ native country.

“Up till I came to England I didn’t know I was working class I had no idea. I had no idea about that kind of politics you know the North East went through miners’ strike and some really hard times [...] I didn’t have to live through that so I can see why is a raw thing probably

in a lot of people's minds [...] you know politics in Ireland is religion while here is a class thing" (Joy - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of "City Walk" stage two)

Recollecting aspects of sensitive lived experiences of power (and powerlessness) in a time of political struggle engendered emotional reactions in some of the participants. Joy hints at the ways socio-political histories of place confer particular identities, also reflected in her understandings of what might constitute politics and the political. Joy here displays empathic engagement towards experiences and associated emotions evoked in walkers-others, but also reflects on the difficulty of fully comprehending them. In this regard, differences among walkers' life experiences were framed with an impossibility to agree on certain matters.

"I am from the North East [...] Lou is a lovely woman but she is not from the North East and she will never know what it was like to grow up in the North East under Thatcher regime [...] It's stuff that I am passionate about and my passion comes from a different way of thinking and growing up in a different way" (Vera - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of "City Walk" stage two)

Vera exposes boundaries of membership defined around her sense of belonging to a particular (hi)story and personal investment excluding those who don't share her same experiences. Boundaries of membership came to the fore also in other instances. For example, in the following excerpts, two participants reflecting on the walk experience in the post-walk interviews, expressed disengagement and uneasiness towards other member's modalities of debating.

"I always have been taught to be polite to let other people have their say. Unfortunately, other people aren't quite as polite in that respect [...] and sometimes it's pointless to argue with someone when you know that the argument can't be won" (Tim - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of "City Walk" stage two)

"I don't feel like I belong to a party because I still feel new to the area [...] You could see that people are really passionate [...] it goes to lots of arguments because lots of people don't know how to express themselves calmly or speak up their mind clearly" (Ella - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of "City Walk" stage two)

Participants illustrate debating as a civil, thoughtful, composed endeavor rather than a passionate one. Also, while Tim equates debating to a competition to be 'won', Ella—a EU migrant living in the UK—detached from debates relating to party politics due to a feeling of

lack of affiliation. Yet for most participants the confrontation with different worldviews played a crucial part in the experience. In the following extract Eve explains how these engendered reflections in regards to her personal values and the way her own values are mirrored in her daily actions.

“it was very honest that she [a walker-participant] was saying those things like I don’t bother getting interested and I thought well yes there are things that are happening that interest me or that I get concerned about but I don’t necessarily act on them [...] it actually had an impact. You know calling the council asking what’s going on, I don’t think I would have thought in that way before this [walk]” (Eve - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of “City Walk” stage two)

Eve refers to phoning the council the day after the walk to inquire about a new development in her neighborhood. Her action here is presented as a result of the walk experience and reflections around her role in respect to development in the local area.

5.7.3 *Re-envisioning the city, sources and validations of imagining*

For participants as well as for myself as a researcher, the walks were learning experiences—opportunities to listen to different perspectives, learn from others and reflect on institutional and social roles and practices that produce and make the city. Walkers’ accounts, such as the re-appropriation of a private car park for public events, and anecdotes from the archive opened prospects to re-consider places in the city in new ways.

“It does change things for how I perceive those parts of the city because it makes you think about other possibilities. I won’t be able to visit those places again without remembering reflections of things that happened, ’cos they sit in my memory” (Lou - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of “City Walk” stage two)

As the extract above from Lou’s post walk interview shows, the walks also produced new ‘memories’ in the participants’ life repertoire, but also opened up new ways of thinking. The experience is formulated below as having a situational, but also ongoing effect beyond the walk itself.

“I came home and I researched a lot of things that we did on the walk [...] so I looked at the maps and what used to be there [...] also what could it be used for in the future like

straight away I went and checked if there were any news about the site” (Tim - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of “City Walk” stage two)

The walk experience and tools designed for the walk sparked curiosity. The ambiguity of the counterfactual map opened avenues for further inquiries and readings. While walking, participants appropriated it, confronting it with the city, making conjectures, and becoming its ‘creative actor’. At the same time, some participants projected a strong sense of ‘locality’ and ‘local heritage’ in the map.

“I found the map really interesting, the fact that it seems a lot more socialist than we actually are at the minute, or that we’ve come to be in Newcastle because obviously, that’s our heritage, it’s very socialist and very much about the working man” (Kay - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of “City Walk” stage one)

Kay presents a particular characterisation of history and politics – a collective historical past at odds with the present state of affair. In this respect, the audio archives, and personal stories were used in walks’ discussions and reflections as resources, evidence and exemplars to hinder or validate the envisioning of other possibilities. For instance, in the following excerpt, Lou refers to the possibility of proposing and devising new rules in the city.

“You couldn’t really do, how would you do that but then when we heard that bit of the archive I thought ‘oh! They did do it so it’s not impossible and they just decided [...] and they did it” (Lou - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of “City Walk” stage two)

In this way, the archive provided a resource to validate and open up alternatives in respect to the way rules and political decisions are made. On the other hand, uncertainty around the future of particular sites, audio material with diverging opinions and situated explorations of places worked together affectively to entrust walkers with choices between alternatives and a sense of imminence in respect to the matter at hand. In the following, Ella and Fay comment on a moment in their walk when standing on a site located at one of the main entrances to the city and hearing various audio comments from previous walkers. The site, now bare, used to host a large brutalist building, is in need of development and there were proposals to turn it into a shopping mall.

“We were a bit concerned that it was going to be another shopping mall [...] so it got us thinking about what it could be and something that hopefully would be free for people to use” (Ella - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of “City Walk” stage two)

“I just thought leave it green [...] You live in the city and you pay all the taxes and nobody ask you [...] it could be my fault cause I don’t keep up on what’s on the website but they don’t tell you because they don’t want people to know because they already have plans [...] but if there we were more of [...] we could have a bit more control if the people had to listen to us” (Fay - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of “City Walk” stage two)

In these excerpts, walkers reflect on the tensions between institutional and civic roles, rights and responsibilities. Monetary-based (‘taxes’) relations to governance that presents ready-made solutions are contrasted with opportunities for publics to propose their own. Conceiving a different prospect for the place is coupled with a call for publics to ‘voice’ and institutions to ‘listen’, both necessary to achieve change. From Fay’s perspective, the institutions-people relationship is characterised by mutual promises and dependency.

Matters of mutual reliance and expectations around the action of others were also reflected in the visions afforded by technologies. For instance, in walks comprising the second part of City Walks, a group was tasked with envisaging what ‘citizens-led advertisements’ in the city would look like as opposed to commercially-led ones. A participant proposed a public LED display for tweets in the public square where they were standing, and the group engaged in a discussion around its practicalities considering issues of censorship.

“you don’t really have a stand on either way [...] it wouldn’t be possible, one people would abuse it, if it wasn’t policed and if it was policed then the police would abuse it” (Dom - excerpt from a walk part of “City Walk” stage two)

Despite being asked to ‘imagine’ a hypothetical (and ideal) situation, Dom suggests the impossibility of reaching freedom of expression in public places. His expectations around other people’s behaviour display a polarisation limiting the possibility of conceiving alternatives. Here, potentials afforded by technology are critically positioned in regard to issues of surveillance and authority.

In this respect, the use of a particular technology in the walks (smart phone and NFC tags) sparked concerns around its potential to support civic action and democratic processes.

“It’s not just about Wi-Fi richness though it’s about what you carry in your pocket. Some people won’t have a device. It’s like that from now on you have to pay a license to be able to comment on a planning application. It puts limitation on the right to comment for instance

[...] so it's a question of democracy and the landscape of access of connectivity" (Les - excerpt from a post-walk group discussion part of "City Walk" stage one)

Les exposes critical tensions in socio-technical prospects, which while potentially serving a re-distribution of power, may actually contribute to widening the gap of inequality and political exclusion. Yet, for other participants, the particular use of situated technology stimulated reflections not simply in terms of what technology might afford, but also around citizens' own conduct in relation to governance.

"I don't know the city well enough [...] I just stick to my own little place [...] but if you complain about something you are not really having a say as about what it becomes [...] We are the people who live here and we should say what we want [...] unless people went out and left messages, have a say you know—you might start and see things changing a bit for the better" (Joy - excerpt from a post-walk interview part of "City Walk" stage two)

Joy envisages people going for walks in the city and leaving messages about their concerns in places as a way to actively contribute to the making of places ('what it becomes'). It is significant how in Joy's terms, her everyday practice ('sticking to my own little place') are contrasted by a formulation of her own sense of (future oriented) 'civic' agency that appeared to have been somewhat inspired by the walk experiences.

5.8 Reflections

City Walk's two stage process and analysis of walks experiences illustrate my first attempt to experiment with the initiation of a political process with design and technology, aiming at opening spaces for political engagement in and about place, as well as spaces of dialogue between the practices and politics of city planning and the social practices and concerns of people. The design of tools and their uses in the subsequent processes exposed some of the complexities that arise when attempting to open political discursive spaces. In the next sections, I reflect on the process and findings, and consider the benefits and tensions afforded by the City Walk process as a method for political engagement. I consider how and whether the tools provided effective support for the construction of political spaces in place, and the difficulties associated with political discussions among divergent voices, and research challenges as an initiator of political processes to support democratic practice.

5.8.1 Political engagement in place and space

The tools in the ‘City Walk’ two-stage process implicated participants in the co-construction of a walking trail in the city as well as in the construction of spaces in place, which opened place to a multiplicity of practices, affects and imaginations. In the first stage of the method the cards invited people to associate their personal accounts, stories and opinions to particular sites and as reflected in the material fabric of the city. In this sense, the process and tools in the first stage of the City Walk intended to offer resources to imagine with and support the creation of content. This was then used for the creation of the tools and process in the second stage of City Walk, which re-distributed content for other walkers/people to access and add to it. In the second stage of the method the booklets invited participants to discover places and related issues pinpointed by previous walkers as well as archival political content as well as adding their own.

In this way, the City Walk process provided a framework for the revealing of issues, ‘positionings’ and social practices in and about places in the city, while also connecting them to political processes of city planning through the archival content. As we have seen, the ambiguous design of the counterfactual map in both first and second stages of City Walk was effective in unsettling singular modes of ‘seeing’ the city—opening possibilities for alternative relationships to form. Equally, the ambiguous design of the prompt cards offered individual walkers the opportunity to make their own associations to places while the unveiling of audio material added a layer of complexity for additional connections to institutional practices. In this respect the tools and process worked together effectively to scaffold and open imaginative and political spaces for alternative associations to form, conveying rich implications for the layering of meaning and the re-appropriation of places through both discursive spaces and symbolic acts (such as cards placements) and the physical occupation of places.

The City Walk tools and process adopted and exploited the politics of design and interfaces (maps and the material fabric of the city) alongside situated media, as a means to prompt embodied connections and different approaches by which the city can be understood, interpreted and re-imagined (Dourish and Mainwaring 2012). The use of a the socio-material and technical tools, including the political archive and data gathered across the walks, configured the city as material evidence for public discourse (DiSalvo, 2012; DiSalvo et al. 2014). The ordinary city, in this way, became something to inquire into through situated cross-

examination, while opening it to potential subversions and imaginations (Farias, 2011). Alternative imaginations in and of places in the city were scaffolded through the counterfactual map, but also by providing opportunities to listen to different experiences and practices (cultural, political, economic, etc.) in places in the city and to consider collectively questions and tasks in the second stage of the method. In this way, the process involved the situated connection of causal nexuses and institutional processes with the material city and the lived experience of people through the tools, successfully assembling walkers around buildings, specific locations and related issues. Yet the same tools could have generated significantly different walks depending on the walkers' choices, associations and routes. This points towards the contingent and contextual nature under which data is created, the partial character of the knowledges created in the processes and the uncertain qualities of data, whose meaning and uses depended on the subjective examination, and interpretative process.

5.8.2 *Contestations and dialogue*

Based on the adopted methodological perspective, the socio-material design of the tools operated in ways intended to foster opportunities for the expression of values, negative bonding with the historical political processes of city planning, and the coming together of different voices and practices in and about place. The prompt card placements (stage one) or the media content with diverging perspectives found on locations (stage two) assembled walkers around objects and places in the city inviting critical engagement and debates. The use of cards in the first stage of City Walk assured a 'safe' space for the individual expression of concerns, affording moments for self-reflection also when listening to others. Audio content in walks of the second stage of the process provoked discussions that despite pointing to an impossibility of agreement, provided an opportunity for walkers to re-discover or remember what mattered to them and connect to each other despite their differences through what they had in common—the counterfactual maps and the specific places in the city.

However, the audio material—particularly in the second stage of City Walk—provoked at times emotionally charged accounts of lived experiences and heated discussions which had an impact on walkers/participants. The analysis of discussions showed how memories, personal experiences of politics (experiences of power and powerlessness) and relations with political authority are sensitive affairs that significantly influence people's predisposition to enter in relation with authority. The analysis also showed tensions around

rules of engagement and equality in walkers' modalities of expression, bringing to the fore questions around notions of 'contestation' and debate—formulated by some of the walkers as something to be 'won'. The discussions that took place on the walk highlight that the passion we feel about the places we care about and their histories—the kind of passion Mouffe (1999) refers to when talking about agonistic publics and contestation—is a strong emotion that can be both positive and negative, constructive or also unhelpful. In this respect, the insights show how passions and strong emotions are not necessarily positive, but can also entail distress; furthermore, the findings show that listening skills and abilities to engage constructively with different world-views and accept other's views as legitimate can be assumed.

Based on this, it may be productive to engage with nuanced ways of conceiving of disputes and contestations, where 'con-testing' – from its etymological root 'bearing witness together' – might entail the provision of encounters between institutions and individuals and between city residents in which we can expose *together* and testify to one another (rather than against one another) the different meanings, practices and affects in and about places in the city and develop social capacities to do so. The study shows the benefits of providing moments in which different practices and ways to understand places in the city can be brought together, in order to unsettle preconceptions and widen our worldviews and advance public understanding towards dialogue. As we have seen, face-to-face discussions can entail challenging moments and unintended consequences. In this sense, ensuring individual spaces for people to expose their personal accounts and issues of concerns associated with places in the city was effective as it also afforded time for personal reflection without the 'burden' of the necessity to collectively achieve consensus. Here then, reciprocity and capacities to engage with others' world-views should not be seen as a given but something to be nurtured.

5.8.3 *Imagination and civic agency*

The counterfactual maps in the first and second stage of the process were effective in inducing modes of cooperation whereby walkers had to make sense of it collaboratively in order to perform their walk. Navigating the city using the counterfactual map was intended as a way to unsettle preconceptions and open up opportunities to imagine or think of other possibilities. The mismatch and cross examination between the map and the city situated walkers in a position where they could not be certain whether their destination would be "correct" in anticipation of what they might discover. Furthermore, the allocation of the cards along the way

also fostered anticipation and curiosity in relation to the associations and stops walkers might create. The imaginative process, however, was not simply fostered by the maps, but crucially through the sharing of different accounts and practices in and of places. In this sense the empty square could be re-imagined by walkers as the place where skateboarders used to gather, a private car park could be re-imagined in connection to specific planning rules and the values that underlined specific planning processes in the city.

In this sense, the use of the historical archives as a resource for negative bonding attempted to build social capacity by forging situated examinations of the past, present and future making of our socio-material environment. It also provided opportunities to discover, develop awareness, and re-articulate how political processes of city planning and the city could and ‘should be’ (Le Dantec, 2014) while reflecting on individual and collective roles and agency in this regard. Such reflections, contestation and imaginations critically also included, extended and were inextricably connected to the uses and consequences of technologies to facilitate current and near-future productions of the city. In this respect the very use of smart phone technology was questioned as a means for inclusive democratic participation and an imagined public twitter stream in the public square of the city was formulated in relation to issues of policing. Significant, then, was the way particular technologies provoked particular associations (smartphone with social exclusions and public twitter feeds with institutional and social policing)—formulating either technology as inherently problematic or anyway linked to social processes that the walkers perceive they were incapable of escaping or changing. On the other hand, other walkers projected the socio-technical tools and processes of City Walk as opportunities for proactive public engagement (beyond complaining) and action—something that could contribute to supporting publics formulating values and rights (eg. ‘we live here and we should say what we want’), thus making specific demands about the present and future of places in the city.

Given that the awareness of ourselves as agents of change is entwined with the institutional organisation and regulation that produce cities (Dourish, 2010), a central aspect of the method, then, is that it afforded explorations of our relationship with current and historical authority as well as technological possibilities and imaginations, while constituting new experiences in the life repertoire of walkers. If civic action stems from past experiences, where experience is set against aspirations for a different imagined situation judged in terms of practicalities and opportunity for realisation (Fowler and Biekart, 2008) the City Walk process

might prove to be a small step towards sustainable ways to support publics defining for themselves what might constitute their sense of agency and the ‘common good’. In this sense, City Walk is a small attempt into inquiring into how HCI design and technology might play a role in supporting civic imagination and the development of capacities to engage constructively with other’s life experiences, practices (including institutional) and enter in dialogue with the institutions that can actualise civic will (Boyte, 2005).

5.8.4 *Limitations*

The City Walk process did not hinge on a specific issue, but rather looked at ways in which issues could be invited and brought to the fore in dialogue with institutional process. Despite the tools and process being successful in forging spaces for political engagement in and about place (as well as highlighting the complexities and issues arising in these processes), it also presented some limitations. While the process focusing on historical processes of city planning provided ways to make sense of the contemporary city, it actually lacked opportunities to connect places to current planning proposals or current institutional voices (like in the case of Tynemouth for example). In this respect, apart from the one example whereby a walker inquired about the planning project in her locality, the process didn’t focus as much on offering opportunities to follow up the discussions with actions or actionable outcomes. Even though walkers spoke about ‘real’ and felt issues, practices and considerations in and about places in the city, the overall process was framed for research purposes from the outset, pointing towards a certain artificiality of the experiment. Furthermore, the fact that the City Walk process and tools was initiated and driven by me, opens questions in relation to accountability, transferability and sustainability of the process and tools. In terms of accountability the study raises serious questions in relation to the longevity of our engagement and the forging of processes that can have real impact and consequences on walkers/participants. In term of transferability and sustainability, it raises the questions of whether the City Walk process would be effective in supporting city residents in constructing their own digital walks in support of their causes.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter, I described the development and design of a process and tools that employed digitally supported walks to support political engagement and participation in and about the city. The design of the two-stage process ‘City Walk’ applied Hauser’s rhetorical model of everyday talk in social movements (Hauser and mcLellan, 2010) to established HCI methods such as cultural probes and toolkits (Gaver et al. 1999, Sanders and Stappers, 2014). The case study offers ways of putting into practice a theory and experiment with designed tools and technologies to support public discourse in and about place and in dialogue with the mechanisms and procedures of city planning towards a re-envisioning of places in the city.

I described the two stages of City Walk and related deployments. I detailed the design choices for the constructions of the tools and process, based on the methodological framework. Cooperation, negative bonding, markers of positionality in place and space as well as polyvocality were applied to the construction of the tools: counterfactual maps, prompt cards, use of political archives as resource for negative bonding, and mixing of walkers/participants’ voices produced in the first stage of City Walk with the political archives in and about place (polyvocality). In the chapter, I reported on the data analysis that looked at the different ways in which the process fostered a re-discovering of the city and the revealing of issues as reflected in the material fabric of the city. The analysis also explored the kind of discussions that the processes engendered and unfolded on the walks as well as examined how the tools and process scaffolded imaginative processes in and about places in the city. I then reflected on City Walk and related tools in relation to their effectiveness in opening political spaces in place and opening up possibilities for dialogue, contestations and imaginations. This process and method can be used to produce multiple maps and experience the city from different perspectives for an embodied engagement with concerns towards the development of political spaces, place meaning and the constitution of publics to affect change.

In the case presented I was the principal driver of the process which was artificially constructed with no ‘real’ presence or dialogue with contemporary institutions and/or authorities. The case then opened questions on whether such process could be appropriated by local communities to construct their own issue-based digital walks as a means of initiating dialogues between communities and between communities and institutions towards the making of places.

Chapter 6 Exploring material interventions in place

“We make the road by walking” (Horton, Freire, 1990)

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I described the development of a process, City Walks, that employed digitally supported walks, the city’s material fabric and designed tools to facilitate imagination (re-envisioning of places), socio-political engagement, and discussions in and about places in the city. The study utilised designed tools to invite the sharing of people’s everyday practices and stories in place and enter into dialogue with the political processes that led to the contemporary city in order to provoke reflections in relation to the various agencies at play in the production and construction of the city. Following the study, I asked whether the City Walk process and tools could be adopted and appropriated by people to develop their own socio-political walks in and about the places they care about. I asked whether, like for the case in Tynemouth, alternative processes of engagement could constitute effective ways to bring together the multiple practices, visions and opinions and open spaces of dialogue between people and institutions in order to shape their places and communities.

In this chapter I describe the process of working with a housing organisation and residents concerned with “re-building” their community in the context of the regeneration of their housing estate. The study hinges on the regeneration of the *Pala Road Estate*—now *Oreth Park*— where the reverberations and frictions of politically-led regeneration policies were being witnessed in a strikingly visceral way. The chapter reports on the engagement that centres on a participatory process through which residents and regeneration team developed their digital audio walking trail in and about their estate and efforts on behalf of the estate’s owners, the Ermit Group, to establish and build a cohesive and sustainable community where there was “none”. The work with residents and the regeneration team on the estate exposes the complexities that arise in such housing regeneration projects where, as already reported by the anthropologist Glucksberg (2014), an assumed absence (or degraded sense) of community can obscure valued ideas of place and community. Despite well-intentioned initiatives to promote diversity and build community, I had the opportunity to witness how regeneration projects like the one I have engaged in can introduce peculiarly singular ideas of what constitutes community

and place. The engagement process and intervention was designed to support the residents in collecting and distributing place-based narratives and bringing to the fore the material relations between residents, institutions, etc. to help surface the ‘polyvocality and polysemy’ inherent in notions of place and identity. Through this, the intervention sought to provide means for configuring new spaces, like in the case of the City Walk process, where diverse experiences and practices could be related to one another and wider social and political life (hooks, 2009).

Practically, this process involved working with the residents and regeneration staff through three phases. The first phase entailed experimentations with the ‘City Walk’ process. Activities comprising this initial phase allowed me to get to know the residents and the regeneration team while highlighting a number of issues that hindered the residents’ process of collecting narratives for their walking trail. Insights from these initial engagements highlighted some difficulties associated with the residents appropriating ‘City Walk’. Responding to initial insights, the second phase of the process entailed the development and deployment of a digital tool, ‘Digital Travelling Suitcases’, designed to support residents in collecting and re-distributing stories in and about their housing estate. The third phase involves curatorial activities comprising collective discussions of the stories collected and their allocation to six different places in the estate, the design of a walk guide and experimentation with graffiti chalk to mark specific location on the walking trail and, later, the design and installation of plaques, giving access to related media content.

The chapter then offers insights from an extensive body of data gathered over the year-long engagements on the difficulties associated with community organising in this particular context and an example of a process and a technological artifact that supported place-based narrative collection and re-distribution, one that actively brought together differently positioned diverse actors and voices. The chapter grapples with the implications of designing for ‘material relations’ and community organising and participation through a material intervention showing how technological artifacts can afford and authorise particular participatory modes and can offer vehicles for social change (Marres, 2012). Finally, I reflect on and discuss the ways the process of collecting multiple accounts that enact place over time can open up a space for more genuine and plural accounts of community, something that has significant implications for supporting, sustainably, communities participating in shaping their places. In conclusion, I consider the productive value of action based participatory processes to support political learning processes actively resisting urges to treat community cohesion as equivalent to

normative uniformity, but that bring together the diversity of institutional and vernacular practices that constitute the unfolding and always-evolving nature of places and communities.

The work presented in this chapter is also the result of a collaboration with Alex Taylor from Microsoft Research Cambridge with whom I discussed the work throughout the process and with whom I worked closely on the paper this chapter builds on (Crivellaro et al., 2016); Vasilis Vlachokyriakos, who developed the technical side of the socio-technical artifact (Digital Travelling Suitcase) I designed; Bettina Nissen who designed a 3D printed case to host a GSM phone in the Digital Travelling Suitcases; my PhD supervisors Prof. Pete Wright and Dr. Rob Comber with whom I discussed the process, resulting data and analysis.

6.2 Research context – housing regeneration policies in the UK

Since the 1980s, the UK—as with a number of other countries in the global North—has been subject to a series of urban renewal programmes prioritising mixed tenancy housing alongside ‘sustainable communities’. Government-led initiatives have promoted these programmes as a means of reversing socioeconomic decline, especially in inner-city areas where poverty and social deprivation have appeared to go hand-in-hand with an eroding built environment. Seen as key to the success of the regeneration efforts have been policies of “positive gentrification”, where the benefits of increased diversity and greater private ownership in city living have been put forward as stimulants for encouraging “less segregated, more livable and sustainable communities” (Lees, 2008: 2449). Legislation has thus precipitated a trend of investment in housing through public/local authorities and the increased ownership of ‘social housing’ by third sector and private organisations, as well as owner-occupiers. Here, a greater emphasis has been put on *affordable* housing, arguably prioritising a market-based model of housing over public *need* (Whitehead, 1991).

Unsurprisingly, this political investment in “social mixing” has been met with scepticism by academics and policy makers alike. Moderate critics have questioned the efficacy of tenurial diversity, and invited closer inspection of the underlying principles and expectations bound up with an imagined normative integration (Clay, 1979; Lees, 2008). Other hardline positions have vilified community mixing policies, seeing them as amounting to backdoor gentrification strategies that mask a social cleansing agenda (Allen et al., 2004).

6.2.1 *The Pala Road/Oreth Park Regeneration*

The political landscape and organisational investment

By the mid 1980s, Pala Road had become an estate famed, locally and nationally, for its deprivation and criminality. Built in the sixties—an era marked by brutalist architecture—the council estate in SE London had been envisioned as a symbol of modern, communal living materialised in Le Corbusier-style tower blocks serviced by shopping plazas and public amenities. However, like many similar, high-rise council estates across the UK, Pala Road deteriorated, arguably never achieving its promise of communal living.

In 1998, set alongside the political appetite for mixed and affordable housing initiatives, Oreth Council transferred the estate to the Ermit Group, one of the larger nationwide (private, non-profit) housing associations tasked with provisioning social housing and supported in large part by government subsidy. By late 2000, Ermit found the estate's seven tower blocks and low-rise maisonette complex (a total of 622 homes) to be both financially and socially untenable. The long-term structural and service failures were contributing to mounting costs, and the estate was seen to be failing its residents through severe and multiple forms of deprivation. Along with the local authorities Ermit issued an ordinance in 2010 to regenerate the area and in 2012 the local authorities granted planning permission.

“Building Community”

Since the inception of its flagship regeneration project at Pala Road/Oreth Park, Ermit's strap line, *“building community”*, has been core to its objectives. With a political backdrop prioritising mixed tenure housing and the legacy of a troubled estate, the aim of community building has been especially prominent—expressed with the overarching vision to create a mixed, balanced sustainable community. To this end, Ermit has significantly reduced the number of single occupancy and bedsit flats—seen as a contributing factor to anti-social behaviour and a fragmented community—and increased the proportion of two-bedroom and family homes. Furthermore, provision targets for the overall estate have shifted towards increasing the proportion of market tenure and privately owned housing. Reducing the availability of properties classed as ‘social housing’ and with an emphasis on affordable housing, the estate has pursued an innovative rent-to-buy initiative as well as supporting shared ownership schemes.

The regeneration project also stands out for Ermit with its concerted efforts to prioritise community involvement. Part way through the four year buildings programme, and into its second phase, those from Ermit working on the estate have instigated a range of community-based schemes to help long-term residents with the transition and to encourage stronger community ties for those who are both old and new to the estate. Such schemes, echoing efforts in the history of planning (Vall, 2013), have involved the recruitment of residents from Pala Road and neighbouring areas to join a ‘Core Group’, tasked with influencing plans for the estate and co-organising a range of community-based projects and events. Through regular fortnightly meetings with the regeneration engagement officer, the group discusses initiatives for the new housing estate aimed at generating a sense of civic pride and community. It is one of the latter community-led engagement initiatives that has been at the heart of the research this chapter presents.

6.3 Methodological orientation

Grounded in Action Research and Public Work philosophy, as outlined in chapter three, from the start of the process and in line with an action research ethos (Hayes, 2011), I was committed to support the residents and Ermit’s staff in developing their walking trail rather than doing it for them. I also considered the notion of the researcher as a “friendly outsider” (Hayes, 2011). The researcher as friendly outsider is an approach to research that rejects the notion that researchers should distance themselves from the communities and people they work with and with whom they carry out research, in the name of objectivity (Hayes, 2011). Instead this approach calls for researchers to become “trainers” and use their skills to “open up lines of communication and facilitating research activities with community partners rather than designing and implementing research about them” (Hayes, 2011: 8). In this sense, then, the research entails a process of co-design between researcher/designer and the communities and partners with whom she/he works. Yet the main focus was less on research and more on action. This approach recognises how all parties (researchers, communities, partners) contribute to the process of participation, lending their own expertise, and positions the research process in all its phases (problem posing, intervention and evaluation) as collaborative from the outset.

Given that I had been invited to support the residents and regeneration team because of my previous experience/design work of City Walk, I asked *how the ‘City Walk’ process*

could be appropriated by the residents to develop their digital walking trail and how such a process would support them in “re-building” their community in the context of the social and material changes of the regeneration of their housing estate. The methodological orientation then explored how HCI design might intervene in the ongoing process of the regeneration and support resident and the regeneration team in their endeavor of creating a digital walking trail. Grounded in an understanding of places as enacted through a multiplicity of practices and actors (residents, institutions, policies, etc.) (Law and Mol, 1995; Mol, 1999), the work with residents and the regeneration team also incorporate Mol’s materialist frame. That is, I sought to bring together the multiple practices and voices that exist side-by-side and that come to constitute place through material means (Mol, 2013, 1999). As I will describe, the material intervention this chapter presents, has been designed to intervene in an Estate’s spaces and the relations between community residents and the regeneration team to help surface the ‘multivocality and polysemy’ inherent in notions of identity and place. In this way, the intervention sought to provide ways to configuring new spaces where diverse experiences could be related to one another and wider social and political life (Mol, 1999, 2003; hook, 2009).

6.4 Process

Historic walking trail

The initiative proposed by the resident members of the core group began with the idea of a historic walking trail through the estate. Places of historic and geological importance had been identified in a preceding activity and the consensus was these landmarks might be somehow instrumented to allow people walking through the neighbourhood to listen to location-specific recordings. Alex Taylor from Microsoft Research Cambridge and one of my PhD supervisors, Dr. Rob Comber, were already in conversations with Ermit and given my previous work and experience suggested I could support the group of residents in developing their own digital walking trail using the City Walks process as described in the previous chapter.

The research and process of working with existing and previous residents, and Ermit’s regeneration staff evolved over the course of 12 months—from October 2014 to October 2015 and developed through three distinct phases. The first phase comprises Initial Engagements, including testing of the Walks for Change process and other activities covering the period from October 2014 to February 2015; the second phase involves the design and use of digital tools—

Digital Traveling Suitcases—from March to June 2015; and the third phase of the project includes curatorial activities that took place between July and September 2015. In the next sections, I will describe the first phase of the process in more detail and provide an analysis of related insights; then I will describe the second and third phases of the process.

6.5 Phase one - initial engagements

My work began with four visits to the estate between October 2014 and February 2015, when I met Pala Road residents Tracy, Harold, Janice and Steve, and the regeneration engagement officer, François, and regeneration manager, Caroline. Following this visit, in conversation with François, three subsequent workshops were organised which, for the most part, involved activities experimenting with the ‘City Walks’ process, and developing promotional material for their walks and project.

Getting to know the group and exploring possibilities

The first workshop aimed at getting to know the small working group of residents and collaboratively generating ideas for the walking trail using photographic and archival material (e.g., historical records, photos, postcards). For this workshop, three foam board panels were used to support the group in collaboratively pinning down ideas for their walking trail: ‘ideas for your walk’, ‘ways to collect audio’, ‘ways to access audio’. To prompt and share ideas, a set of postcards featuring found images on Oreth Park Facebook page and other archival images about Pala Road/Oreth Park, were utilised. Postcards aimed to prompt each group member to recount a place and/or a memory and someone they might have liked to share it with. Further, different examples of potential technologies to both access and record their audio stories were presented in order to spark ideas and discussion around the many different ways they may be able to collect and access stories (see Figure 14).

The postcards sparked stories about playgrounds and questions around areas in their neighbourhood they were curious to know more about. Further the groups exposed concerns around language and technological barriers, and discussed ways in which their walking trail could be made as accessible as possible. While there were stories being shared and questions raised, there was also a preoccupation around the many people who had left the estate already and how they would be able to reach them and invite their stories. Recollections and

conversations about the walking trail were also interpolated with discussions about the move, progress on their packing as well as concerns around the lack of information about the moving date and rent costs in their new property. Furthermore, the diversity of residents' skills and backgrounds pointed toward a difficulty to maintain focus for long periods of time during the workshop and a difficulty to collaboratively generate questions. At the end of this workshop it appeared that it would be best to try out the first part of the "City Walk" process on my next visit.



Figure 15. Exploring ideas for the digital walk

Trying out City Walk

The second workshop involved experimenting with the first part of the 'City Walks' process as well as a mapping activity. Based on the material generated from postcards in the first workshop, a pack of prompt-cards was made to inspire stories in and around the estate as well as a map to annotate locations on the go (Figure 15, bottom left and right).

The workshop comprised of two walks, one in the morning with Tracy, Rosemary, Steve and Donna; and another walk in the afternoon with Tracy, Steve and Ken—a local history enthusiast that François and the working group had invited (Figure 16). Across these walks, the residents generated six different stories in different locations around the estate. Despite the success and enthusiasm that the walks generated, the considerable stress and difficult time residents were experiencing with the preparation for the move to the new house in the new year also emerged. With this in mind we resolved to pin a later date in the new year to set up a walk event on the estate, where François and the working group would invite other current and previous residents to join in and generate more and diverse stories around the estate.



Figure 16. Flyers, coasters (top left, right), material for walk (bottom left and right)

Organising a 'City Walk' and preparing for a community event

In conversation with François a walk event was organised to coincide with Oreth Park's New Year, New Homes event in mid-February 2015. The New Year, New Homes event would mark the official opening of the Oreth Park estate and the end of the first phase of construction of the new houses. In order to promote their walk, I had prepared and sent to François advertisement materials featuring some of the photographs and archival material that had been shared in the first two workshops. Furthermore, an activity to design collectively

further promotional material for the New Year, New Homes event was designed. The activity involved the group collectively deciding ways to present their project through postcards, posters and promotional material to distribute to previous and new residents at the event (see Figure 15 top left and top right).

However, a number of issues emerged in relation to the promotional material, as it didn't comply with Oreth Park's communication procedures. Further, the group had found it very difficult to recruit people to join their walk event. So, beside the preparation for the community event, time was spent visiting the local allotment area both to collect stories and find more information about the potential to establish a community allotment.

Next I provide the main insights that emerged over these initial engagements. These provide some important elements that drove the design of the second and third phase of the process working with Pala Road/Oreth Park residents and regeneration team. The insights emerged through the specific social and material activities that I have outlined above as well as initial interviews with the regeneration team.



Figure 17. City Walk test

6.5.1 Phase one – analysis and initial insights

Data collected in phase one of the study comprised of field notes written in each visit; audio recordings from 3 workshops and 3 walks (a total of about 10 hours of audio recordings); and semi-structured interviews with members of the regeneration team and regeneration

manager. Following a thematic analysis approach (Brown and Clarke 2006), I analysed the data-set through open coding on paper and making paper annotations and diagrams. From these I generated a set of candidate themes, which were discussed with my PhD supervisor Robert Comber and Peter Wright. The discussions didn't entail the generation of new codes but aimed to validate, compare, test and refine the candidate themes. From the analysis and discussions, three broad themes were identified: re-configuring place and community, what is acceptable in Oreth Park and the walking trail (norms and values), and finally "building" and "growing" communities.

Re-configuring place and community

Upon arriving at Pala Road/Oreth Park in October 2014, I am startled by the radical split between the old and new estate. As I walk through the estate, I weave through a deserted, half demolished 1970s housing estate, torn by a large slogan: "A brighter future for Oreth" barricading the workings of a building site, where new buildings are slowly rising up. François, Ermit's regeneration engagement officer, has worked on site for a few months and Caroline, Oreth Park regeneration manager, for two years. The first phase of demolition and construction is due to end in the summer, and the first residents will be able to move into the new flats at the start of the new year.

Speaking to Ermit's staff, on-site, reveals a regeneration project that appear to be sensitive to the tight relationships between process, design and participation. Caroline, the regeneration project manager, is able to articulate in compelling terms how Ermit's commitment to "*create a place with a different culture*"—driven, partly, by the needs to change perceptions of the estate and produce value-outcomes—has translated into innovative initiatives on the estate and a programme to involve the remaining residents in "building community" and influence decisions concerning the design of the new estate. Thus, while concrete demands have put limitations on what residents can influence, the regeneration team has shown considerable investment in designing and delivering activities aimed at creating social capital, 'good' neighbourliness and community building with the core group.

Tracy and Steve—Pala Road long term residents, having lived on Pala Road for over 14 years—have joined the core group since it was formed in 2013. Initially both reluctant, they are now strongly committed to the regeneration and advocating for the need to "build

community”. With other residents and in conversation with François, they came up with the idea of a digital walking trail. They see it as a way to involve more people in community based activities and do something positive in the area. Steve has lived on the estate for over 15 years and, in his mind, the collection of stories in the walking trail will grow as new residents are moving into the new estate. For Tracy, the digital walking trail is an opportunity to involve children in getting to know more about the area.

However, next to these well intentioned initiatives and drive to “build community”, I find an organisational and indeed political strategy that is invested in very particular ideas of value—ones bound up with ‘affordable housing’ and, on the other, Ermit grappling with how to genuinely engage with the estate’s residents. Yet, the harsh realities of undertaking a regeneration project appear to dictate what and who should take priority. It’s Caroline’s details about the changes in housing provision that capture the organisational priorities of the project:

“We wanted to build more family sized houses because that is where the demand is and because if you want a sustainable community you need a mix [...] Whereas we do house vulnerable people as the old estate showed 84 vulnerable households in a tower block is a bit of a recipe for disaster [...] so the rules were if you left you left. No one argued because almost everyone wanted to get out [...] there were some people we had to say no to. We also said you couldn’t stay if you had got rent arrears or antisocial behaviour [...] I think about 66 properties from the old estate moved to the new estate.” (Caroline, excerpt of study interview)

Here Caroline presents a view of the motivations and constitution for the new configuration of community in an interview I conducted with her early on in the process. However, at the same time, the regeneration team must confront cases on the ground that can’t be so easily characterised in these terms.

It is on my second visit to the estate and over the course of the activities with the working group that the complexities at the heart of this new configuration of place and community begin to emerge. Indeed, despite the fact that Tracy’s commitment to community work has grown significantly through the regeneration with her role in the core group and involvement in community activities like blogging and citizen’s journalism, she found she wasn’t able to take up a home in the new estate. This was due to the unpredictability of her paid work and questions over her ability to pay rent reliably. Tracy still remains committed to the regeneration project and is determined to be heavily involved in the walking trail, but she

occupies a peculiar status, categorised as somehow not “right” for the new estate. I am left wondering how stories from past residents like her are to be viewed in Oreth’s new configurations of place and community.

What is acceptable in Oreth Park and in the walking trail? (Norms and values)

While the socio-economic and material contours of the new configuration of the estate begin to emerge, it also transpires how ideas of “building community” appear to advocate for particular kinds of behaviours considered valuable, “right” or “good”. It is Steve, while showing me the new houses under construction, who explains how the core group will encourage new residents to keep their gardens and balconies tidy and clean, and prevent drying clothes outside on a washing line as it does not look “good”. While such instances and ideas may seem trivial, parameters between good and bad behaviour, somehow also come to be reflected in the initial process of story sharing. Despite the enthusiasm for the walking trail, when we first begin to examine old maps, prompt cards and try out the first stage of the City Walks process, Janice and Harold—a married couple who had been living in the towers for over 30 years—as well as Steve appear uneasy, suggesting a lack of knowledge about life in the estate, and that their stories somehow had no value and were therefore not “right” for the walking trail.

These feelings are not, however, unanimous. Rose has also lived in Pala Road for over 30 years and joined the walking trail’s working group on the second workshop. At first incredulous about Ermit’s support for the project, Rose is inspired by the prospect of collecting and sharing stories in and about Pala Road; for her, *“telling and sharing stories about the past can help plan for the future”* and while looking at the maps she begins narrating stories in response to the cards.

“I was just thinking about a memorable time—when the football court was being open and the councillors bought lots of footballs for the kids and there was none of vandalism or anything like that, no graffiti and that was a memorable time.” (Rose, excerpt from a workshop)

Similarly, Donna recounts moments from her childhood on Pala Road. Donna originally joined the working group while she was helping her elderly mother prepare to move from her flat in Pala Road to one of the new flats in Oreth Park. She grew up and lived with her mother on the estate until she got married, in her late twenties. In our subsequent walks through the estate, she chose to tell stories from her childhood describing the towers as *“the best*

playground anyone could ever have". Donna and Rose's initial stories, expressing personal values in their experiences in and about the estate, in some way give license to others to open up and share snippets of their memories and everyday lives. For example, Tracy decides to tell a funny story about her wedding night. However, her story is found to be inappropriate by François who suggests it should not be part of the walking trail.

In this way from these initial engagements and testing of the City Walk process what emerges is some divergence in what may be valuable and deemed appropriate for recording. This is also reflected in François' invitation to his guest, Ken, to partake in the first City Walk trial. Ken—a retired policeman and amateur historian—is purposely invited to record historical accounts of the various prestigious and notable families in the area in order to link these histories to the new road names assigned to the new estate. However, besides accounts of famous families involved in commerce and engineering, in the walk, Ken tells of his childhood memories growing up on Pala Road and experiences working there as a policeman.

"My memories are quite painful of some of the places here. [...] But there you go. For every bad one, there were 10 good ones. [...] you know, it's a bit unfair to generalise but we did have problems. [...] the old Oreth Council used to send all our problem families here. From all over the borough." (Ken, excerpt from a workshop)

Ken's stories are rich and complex, providing nuanced readings of past life on the estate. Having grown up on Pala Road and worked there for many years, his accounts are not judgmental but rather frame issues and life on the estate as tied to larger socio-political matters and institutional procedures.

As we collectively experiment with the City Walk process, what begin to emerge are different accounts, experiences of life on the estate as well as tensions between what stories the regeneration team and housing institutions may deem acceptable on the walking trail. In this respect also tensions between Ermit's communication's standards, policies and procedures and the group's promotional materials and flyers to advertise their walks arise. This is of particular concern for François as all publicity materials need to be approved by Ermit's marketing department, that controls fonts, and wording for all flyers and posters. Here the research, led by the University, becomes a way to strategise around Ermit's communications rules and procedures.

“I know what we will do, we will just say that this is a community led project and it’s from the university! Yes cause that way we can get away with not being ermitised!” (François, excerpt from a workshop)

Tensions between the housing institution’s procedure and community begin to surface in and through very mundane ways. Such conflicts seem to speak of the way Pala Road/Ermit Park community and place might be enacted materially by and through Ermit’s official promotional materials (“being ermitised”), and the way residents instead may wish to talk about themselves with and through their flyers and posters. In this respect, serious questions in relation to who or what this walking trail should be for also come to the fore.

“Building” and “growing” communities

The activities, and in particular the coaster activity and design of advertising materials for their walking trail, come to surface some of the struggles between the institutional practices, values and the complexities at the heart of the regeneration endeavour. These tensions emerge through specific tasks and actions that pointed to deeper questions around what community is or should be as well as who the walking trail should be for. For example, during a workshop aiming at preparing materials for a community event, questions are raised around who the coasters and postcards inviting people to share their stories should be given to and why.

“it should be for the people who are living here and who have been moved from one place to another [...] because that road [Pala Road] was known everywhere as the place where you could buy passport, cocaine, heroine, just like this, guns and this is finished completely now [...] we have to explain them that what was here before doesn’t exists anymore and this could be just a little gift for them to make the change [...] because like I always said we have to create a community that doesn’t exists and to create it we need some little help like this, but little things like this will maybe move the people [...] it will take time but if we want to create a place where we can live happily we need little things like these...” (Pierre, excerpt from a workshop)

Pierre, a long term resident of Pala Road’s neighbouring area, had joined the working group on our third workshop. For him, the home coaster can be a meaningful act, a “*gift to make the change*”—a change in public opinion and perceptions about the area. While he presents an ideal of “happy” community and place yet to come, he also recognises the difficulty

of the endeavor they set out to achieve. However, his perspective is countered by others in the working group. For Rose, absence of community in Pala Road is not a ‘true’ representation of what life is like.

“no I think we have got a community [...] we want to enhance it or enlarge it...we wouldn’t be sitting around this table if we weren’t a community when you think about it so however few we are – for me the community is still there because nobody would have been interested, nobody would have gone for five years to meetings if we weren’t a community [...] there is something there whatever you would like to call it...” (Rose, excerpt from a workshop)

Rose attempts to restore a sense of collective value in respect to all the efforts residents have made in recent years. In doing so she implies a sense that “whatever” community might be, comes to be reflected in daily simple actions, efforts and care—like attending a community meeting, for instance. It is through these discussions, left open and without resolution, that the working group begins to grapple also with the meaning of their activities and their walking trail project. The formulation of their project in the advertising material for the community event becomes also significant. In this respect, the group collectively suggests talking about wanting to *grow* rather than “build” their community through the walking trail. This was interpreted as a wish to enhance communal life in Pala Road/Oreth Park through the sharing of stories from those who contributed to its past, present and future. The group collective also settled with a name for their project: *“Walk the Talk Oreth Park”*, meaning *“whatever you say, you should also back up in action – so it’s twisting in that you are walking where people normally wouldn’t, but you are reclaiming it from a negative into a positive”*.

As the group contend with these questions and ideas, what I find is a peculiar and uncomfortable institutional configuration of community, one driven by a rhetoric of “building community” that prescribes specific ways in which “community” should be. Such rhetoric is further contrasted by the New Year, New Home Event when community stalls are situated in the garages of the new housing complex, while housing VIP are celebrating the event in the marketing suite of the new housing estate. At the time, deep questions were raised in relation to the integrity of the project—what is the meaning of relegating the very community Ermit is supposedly working and advocating for in grim and cold garages? Despite my deep discomfort at the event, for the residents and François the community event was a big success and source of pride.

Yet Ermit's institutional ways of doing appear to impact François, who, as our work together proceeds, appears to be increasingly strained wanting to support the residents while having to comply with Ermit's rules and procedures. For example, while Ermit chooses to call residents, "customers", he strives to put in place community-based voluntary roles for the old residents. One such role is the 'community buddy', described as '*a friendly neighbour who can give helpful advice when you move to a neighbourhood*', as well as taking care of issues on the estate if and when they arise. However, not everyone can become a 'community buddy'. Tracey, for example, failed the interview to become a community buddy due to her lack of listening skills and "common sense". Thus, while the role of community buddy is developed to foster 'care', reciprocity and ownership towards the new community and place, serious questions are raised in respect to how such mechanisms might actually empower residents (or ex-residents) to grow and develop their skills while developing and growing their communities.

Similar questions emerge when efforts are geared towards promoting the walking trail project as a community-led endeavor and supporting residents' developing ownership towards their walking trail. Despite residents' enthusiasms, not all of them were seen as 'ready' or having the appropriate skills to take on an organisational role. For François, the residents are used to "*being asked what color the door handles should be, but what you are suggesting them to do [organising] requires a different set of skills*", furthermore, he adds "*when you are used to having things happened to you all the time, then it's really hard to be a leader*". However, while François advocates the need for residents to own their project, he appears also very hesitant in recognising the difficulties associated with entrusting residents with tasks that require them to develop leadership skills "overnight".

Here, it appears the work and intervention has found itself somewhere between a range of differently experienced contingencies, each shaping configurations of community that although perhaps not at direct odds with one another, seem to complicate one of the overriding objectives of the regeneration project, that of "building community". Via the process of making the digital walking trail, community starts to look like something that resists being neatly orchestrated or treated in any singular way. Rather, it appears fragmented, and enacted, processually, through different and multiple threads. Deep questions are raised around how participation might be configured if I took seriously the commitment to supporting residents engaging with others and "growing" their community.

Summary of initial insights

From these initial engagements, the stories people started to share expressed a sense of sadness and in some cases conveyed a pride in Pala Road's past. While there was excitement about the move into the carefully thought out new environment, and the clean and functional new homes, most of the working group had spent significant and formative parts of their lives on the old estate and readily recounted evocative memories. As I have described, there was also ambivalence towards the organisational context of the regeneration programme giving rise to a very different housing arrangement and accommodating only some from the old estate. Further, the estate's residents were going through a significantly stressful and emotionally loaded process watching their home being demolished, and having to move to different flats waiting for the new estate to be finished. In practice, then, the recruitment of others from across the neighbourhood proved difficult (especially with uncertainty about residents staying or leaving). Furthermore, these early engagements highlighted tensions with Ermit's communication team who, although supportive of the initiative, initially opposed the material promoting the walks because it deviated from Ermit's branding. Here a mismatch between the way Ermit and residents wanted to talk about themselves and their current and previous community came to the fore. Finally, as we have seen, despite François being keen on supporting the residents in developing responsibility and ownership in respect to their walking trail, there was also considerable hesitation in respect to assigning residents roles and tasks they may not be comfortable with or able to fulfill.

These issues, including the group's low digital and literacy skills, suggested a different approach was needed, one that provided a greater degree of independence in collecting stories but at the same time structured the activity to make it as accessible as possible, with small tasks towards developing the skills necessary to take on the walking trail. With a clearer idea of these challenges, and as we began to think, collectively, more openly about the possibilities, it became clear residents were keen to incorporate a greater degree of agency into the stories and walks.

6.6 Phase two - the design and use of Digital Travelling Suitcases

From the initial insights and in conversation with François, a story telling process using custom built 'Digital Travelling Suitcases' was designed in response to these initial insights

(Figure 17). Four suitcases were built to support four members of the working group in collecting stories for the walking trail.

The cases materialised an attempt to design an accessible system, but also to aid a trajectory of stories through residents' different abilities, technical skills, ages. Furthermore, the travelling suitcases' design aesthetic qualities were meant to convey an idea of something valuable and special. By enabling a technical and interpersonal system—a techno-social infrastructure—for prompting and recording stories, attributing them to places on the estate, sharing them in person and online, and passing the suitcases on to others on the estate, I sought to provide people with the opportunity to collect and record stories in their own time and in their chosen spaces. Similarly, the design of the suitcases aimed to encourage personal agency through individual responsibility for the suitcases and greater control over who should be invited to contribute a story and how. The suitcases came with a set of instructions, that is they would 'travel' by being passed on person to person in the estate prompting the cases' receivers to listen to previous stories and messages, record their own and then nominate someone else in the community to hand over the suitcase to.

The design of the digital suitcases was also partially inspired by the figure of the Community Buddy. Since not everyone in the neighborhood could become a 'community buddy', the suitcases sought to offer opportunities for face-to-face and mediated encounters while placing emphasis on listening and sharing personal recollections. Overall, these qualities of the suitcase were designed to invite what people valued about the estate and, at the same time allow for a distribution of both stories and practices—community based and institutional—showing the diversity of these values.



Figure 18. Digital Travelling Suitcases

6.6.1 *Technical and socio-material design*

The suitcases were carefully designed with particular consideration for the low digital and literacy skills of the group as well as their motivations for making the walking tour as articulated collectively in previous workshops. Their call for contributions to their walking tour was interpreted as a wish to “*re-construct*” Oreth park through an audio tour that tells the stories of those who lived and live there and those who contributed in its making in various ways (working, constructing, funding projects and sports centers, housing staff, etc.).

The cases then aimed to provide lightweight channels to share and collect stories between previous and current residents and between residents and the housing institution members of staff; to scaffold spaces for personal and collective reflection and dialogue, and mediated encounters between residents in the neighborhood; explore how residents might be able to appropriate a tool to construct their own walking tour of their neighborhood; reveal the multiplicity of practices and experience in and about the neighborhood; open opportunities for self-development. In this way, the socio-material design of the cases aimed at initiating reflection around the process of selecting and sharing stories (the sort of why you would tell a story, what story would you tell and to whom would you want to tell it to).

The socio-material design of the suitcase incorporated various elements, each carefully designed to aim to support residents in each step of the storytelling process and related instructions. The instructions for the storytelling processes included the following steps: choose a story-prompt (for someone/yourself); record a story; choose someone you want to share your story and write something about your story on a message tile; place your message tile on the top of the case and tie it to the previous tile; take the suitcase to your chosen person and explain them about the storytelling process. These instructions were designed with the idea that I would hand over the suitcases to each one of the residents I had been working closely with, and helped them record the first story. By doing so it was envisaged that residents would be able to replicate the same process with the next person of their choice in the neighbourhood or as part of the regeneration team.

Below I report the choices that guided the design of the various elements comprising the digital suitcase and how these were designed to support and enhance each instruction of the storytelling process (for more details see Appendix B.2).

Choosing a story prompt. A prompt/photo frame was placed centrally in order to bring focus and attention to it; the frame included a box underneath hosting further prompts to choose from (Figure 18-d, Figure 19). Prompts were inspired by the stories told so far, which provides themes and questions - such as for example, Rosemary's stories about the work with the young people in Pala Rd; Pierre's idea of beauty and the love for simple everyday things in Oreth (watching trees at sunset); Donna's stories of playing in the 'dump' when she was young and daydreaming at the window in her flat; Tracy's community celebrations and work, including the making of the Dell; Steve's changing name of the estate and constructing a "brand new history" for Pala Rd.; Francois' uneasiness with residents treated as customers and the mismatch between Ermit's management and community organizing. These stories were used to construct themes such as "change, play, community celebrations, everyday beauty and related questions. For example under the theme of change the following prompts were formulated: "tell me about a place to make a wish; Is there somewhere you'd like to be different in Oreth Park?; If you could change something about Oreth Park, where or what would it be?; Please tell me about a place you miss on the Pala Road Estate". Under the theme of "play" the following prompts were formulated: "Where did children play on the Pala Road Estate?; Tell me about a favorite place where you used to play; Tell me about a place that you particularly enjoy in the neighborhood, or a place that you used to enjoy in the past". Paper-based prompts were specifically chosen for simplicity and to allow opportunities for residents to formulate their own question and add them to the pool of prompts as well as use their own photos.

Record a story. The suitcases were designed to host a GSM phone embedded in a 3D printed case. Through the 3D printed case participants would press the actual phone's buttons to speed dial the pre-registered unique number on the phone and access an Interactive Voice Responsive (IVR) system (Figure 19-a). Recording messages on the suitcase meant the messages would be accessed via the suitcase, but also by either calling the equivalent phone number or by visiting the related webpage. In this way residents were able to access all the stories gathered with each suitcase throughout the process. The case included a box hosting a phone charger under the phone receiver. The instruction on the case was numbered and engraved as follows: "1. Pick up the phone and press 'Start' for a few second to record your story or listen to other stories."

Write something about your story. The suitcase included a case hosting small envelopes, which residents were invited to pick after recording their story (Figure 18-c, Figure

19-b). Each envelope contained a small card with embedded magnets and laces at each side, and a small gift of seeds (Figure 18-c, Figure 19-b). The small gift was purposely included as recognition of contribution to the story telling process as well as a metaphor for the ways stories can be thought of as seeds nurturing and helping communities “grow”. On the small envelope containing seeds it was written “all stories blossom”. The instruction on the case was numbered and engraved as follows: “2. Choose someone you want to share your story with & pick an envelope”.

Place your message on the top of the case and tie your message to the previous cards.

Participants were invited to tie the card to the previous participant’s using the laces on each side. The top part of the suitcase contained a large magnet so that the messages would stay put during the suitcase’s journey and to assure that each message-tile placed on it would stay in position. In this way, the top part of the suitcase was meant to visibly and tangibly map out the journey of the suitcase and relations in the community (Figure 18-e, Figure 19). The instruction on the case was numbered and engraved as follows: “3. Add your name and something about your story”.

Choose someone to take the suitcase to & take the suitcase there. The socio-material design also incorporated the nomination of someone in the community to hand over the suitcase to, inviting them to record their own stories. To this end a wooden cube was also included in the case in order to prompt ideas on who residents might like to engage with (Figure 18-d). As such the wooden cube integrated the following suggestions: ‘someone who works here’, ‘a previous neighbour’, ‘a new neighbour’, ‘someone who built your home’, ‘someone close’, ‘someone who’d like to see more’ (Figure 18-d and Figure 19-a). The instruction on the case was numbered and engraved as follows: “4. Take the suitcase to your chosen person”.



Figure 19. Digital Travelling Suitcase – socio-material design

Technical choices

For the purpose of building a robust, sustainable (in terms of monetary costs and technical expertise needed to use and maintain) and reliable system for the collection of place-related stories and their community dissemination, an Interactive Voice Responsive System (IVRS) was chosen. IVRS is a technology that allows interaction with callers, gathers information and routes calls to the appropriate recipient. For example, in telecommunications, IVRS allows customers to interact with a company's host system via a telephone keypad, after which they can service their own inquiries by following the IVR dialogue. IVRS can respond with prerecorded or dynamically generated audio to further direct users on how to proceed. IVR applications can then be used to control almost any function where the interface can be broken down into a series of simple interactions.

For the project, an IVRS was designed and developed in collaboration with Vasilis Vlachokyriakos, in Open Lab. A number of communications frameworks had been reviewed for this (including Asterisk and Freeswitch) but for the project a more reliable and quick solution was chosen: an already running cloud communications service (e.g. twilio.com and nexmo.com). One ten digit number was purchased per suitcase; each call would be redirected

to an Apache server (on an Ubuntu installation hosted at digitalocean.com/) where a PHP script would serve a Voice XML file with instructions of how the call should be handled (menu options, voice clips etc.); if the caller chose to record a message the story would be recorded and stored on the server; if the caller chose to listen to a message, a random (or sorted) story would be fetched by the server and played back to the caller; the messages would be accessed by either calling the equivalent phone number or by visiting the related webpage. In this way residents were able to access all the stories gathered with each suitcase throughout the process.

6.6.2 Travelling suitcases in action

Initially introduced into the community by four members of the working group (Steve, Tracy, Donna and Rosemary), the suitcases produced excitement, curiosity and enthusiasm among both the working group and the regeneration team from one hand, but also preoccupation in relation to the possibilities the suitcases could be stolen, or “stuck” in someone’s house for long periods of time.

In the first week of deployment, I spent time with the working group and individual members. During this time, Tracy, Donna, Steve and Rosemary tried out the suitcases by recording their own story and then nominating someone else to handover the suitcase to. During that week, I supported Steve with his story recording and witnessed him engaging with residents who had lived on the same estate for many years but had never spoken to each other; I watched Donna engaging with an Ermit’s employee who grew up on Pala Road, and now works on the construction site (Figure 20); I handed over a suitcase on behalf of Rosemary as her rheumatism didn’t allow her to leave her house; and observed Tracy record the story of a fellow resident from the core group. We also experimented with the suitcase in different ways, by bringing two of the suitcases to one of Ermit’s ‘Playing out’ events in the new “home zone” area. Collectively, Tracy, Steve and Francois decided one suitcase would ask “who or what do you miss from Pala Road” and the other would ask questions about the new estate and moving into the new house.

For the remainder of the month, each member of the working group developed his/her own strategies for the use of his/her suitcase. For example, Tracy and Francois decided to take it home to home around the estate. Steve invited friends to visit him in his house and asked them to record their stories. His suitcase, however, also remained in a neighbours’ house for two weeks at one point without travelling further. Donna left the suitcase in a previous resident’s house in a nearby town for a few days while it would travel person to person there. François brought Rose’s suitcases in Ermit’s office inviting members of staff there to listen and contribute stories. Unlike the envisaged use, the suitcases were adapted and used in a variety of ways, but rarely left travelling unguarded for very long apart from a few exceptions. Over this period, I was in regular conversations with both the working group and François, to ensure that the suitcases were technically sound and functioning properly. Over the first month the

suitcases gathered 25 stories, which were added to the other stories gathered since the start of the process (total = 35 stories) for the convivial curatorial activity.



Figure 20. Digital Travelling Suitcases in use

6.7 Phase three - Curatorial activities

A month after the suitcases began circulating, I returned to Pala Road/Oreth Park in July 2015 for five days. This was a particularly difficult time as the last two remaining towers in Pala Road were being demolished during that week. Over the week we conducted a series of activities aiming at curating the stories and allocating them to specific places around the estate.

6.7.1 *Collective listening and discussions*

A curatorial activity with the group and other Pala Road/Oreth Park residents was organised in order to listen to all stories collected, select five to feature as introductions to the bigger archive, and assign them to six locations on the estate. Since stories had been collected in a distributed way—the curatorial activity sought to bring together and offer an opportunity for everyone to hear all the stories collected and individual motivations. For this activity, besides all the stories collected through the suitcases, I also added the stories the working group had shared in the initial stage of the process, and extracts of stories and accounts that emerged during group workshops and meetings. The curatorial activity then aimed at deciding which

stories should feature, be deleted or take priority in the overall archive, but also offer opportunities for further discussions and reflections.

6.7.2 *Allocating stories in place*

In a separate workshop, working collaboratively with the working group and François we allocated six different pools of stories to six different places around the estate. Each pool of stories was then associated with a unique ten digit IVR number.

The system was adapted so that when calling the unique IVR number, the system would call back without having to be charged for the phone call and listen or record your own story. We firstly experimented with chalk graffiti to mark the stops for the walk around the estate (Figure 20); then we designed temporary plaques and placed them around the estate; finally, we co-designed a small walk guide for the walk, which was then distributed at a community event at the end of the week (see Appendix B.3).



Figure 21. Chalk-graffiti unique IVR numbers around the estate to access stories.

6.8 Insights

In this section I draw on the data gathered throughout the second and third phase of engagements. The data-set comprised of field notes written after each workshop, event and visit; audio-stories recorded via the suitcases; audio recordings of workshops sessions, informal

discussions, group meetings and curatorial activities; one-on-one semi-structured interviews with residents (Tracy, Steve, Rose, Jane, and Donna) and Ermit employees (François, Caroline and Tina) who engaged with the suitcases. The data-set was analysed following a thematic analysis approach (Brown and Clarke 2006), whereby from a phase of open coding and annotating these on paper and making diagrams I generated a set of initial candidate themes. I then discussed the candidate themes with my PhD supervisor Dr. Rob Comber in order to validate, test and refine the candidate themes (our discussions did not aim at generating new codes).

Below, I report the insights generated under three broad theme where I examine the extended engagements at Pala Road/Oreth Park and consider the role the suitcases and the process surrounding them had in the understanding of place and community in Oreth Park, and reflect on how they may have had a meaningful impact.

6.8.1 Engaging others and developing skills

From the outset, the walking trail and traveling suitcases were intended to give the residents agency by providing a distinctively material form to their own memories of the estate. The individual choices and responsibilities for telling stories and nominating others to tell stories placed the residents as central in producing a historical account of place and shaping its future. The engagements and especially the suitcases have come to be seen very much as part of Oreth Park's objectives of supporting social capital, 'good' neighbourliness and community building in Caroline's eyes. For her, the suitcases strongly resonate with her organisation's efforts to provide a quality environment that supports community life.

"I talked about having the build here of a quality that actually made people engage, feel ownership and want to be part of it and I think your stuff [suitcase] is kind of like the community equivalent [...] It felt special when I looked at it [suitcase] and a lot of people here don't have a lot of such special stuff in their lives." (Caroline, excerpt from interview)

However, as I have alluded to, looking past the impressive new buildings and organisational shorthand—exemplified in terms like "building community"—complications surface over what actually constitutes community and participation in "re-building" place, for those on the estate and what is thought to be valuable to the different actors who have a stake in the regeneration project. Here, the suitcases and walking trail process have done more than

embody organisational objectives, they reveal the tensions and challenges a project like this runs into when it prioritises community engagement and participation. In one of the visits to the site, François appeared frustrated about Ermit's sometimes poor understanding of the work that goes into making places and "building communities".

"I think Ermit believes you build people nice new homes you are putting a few things at the beginning and then hey presto it all works out. Well, reality check! It's not going to work like that..." (François, excerpt from an interview)

François, then, is speaking about the difficulties his organisation has in engaging, genuinely, with the residents. He voices the worries residents—long-time residents like Rosemary and Steve—speak of when they describe the necessarily "*slow process*" of "building community"—a process that calls for co-operation, engagement and "bottom up" development. In this respect the suitcases, more than surfacing the difficulties some of the working group residents face, actually offer a practical opening or entry point for them to engage with their own community and neighbours. For Tracy, the suitcases have a 'performative' quality. In her words, they serve as "*a prop...showing what we are doing in the community [...] and its wow. Look at that!*"

Moreover, the reciprocity involved in '*asking*' and '*giving*' questions and stories built into the system, aimed to give residents opportunities to shape narratives through collective experiences. Then, while there was an ongoing concern among the working group with engaging more people and new residents in the project and contributing also stories about the future—difficulties using the suitcases emerged particularly for Steve and Tracy due to a fear of "*rejection*" on the part of new residents as well as issues of self-confidence.

"I have had a lot of negativity in the past, people push me away you know [...] I got a bit confident then I slacked a bit then I gain a bit more confidence then I slacked a bit...but it seems an ongoing thing...its experience really you have to keep at it..." (Tracy excerpt from an interview)

Tracy here talks about her experience over the course of the project; for her using the suitcases was actually a challenging experience that required her to find and build confidence to invite and engage others in the project. Tracy then, is talking about a resilience and determination ("keep at it") reflected in the daily work required to collaborate with others and developing relations. It appears that using the suitcases is a means to exercise, practice and

rehearse in the everyday, the skills required to ‘make’ place—that is, work together and build relations. And it is from a similar standpoint that François has come to see the combination of the walking trail and suitcases as productive.

“there is no sense that actually they have any value and I suppose for them in this project it was sensing that they have value to give to people. [...] actually it’s quite a big step putting yourself out there when you don’t have any experience [...]. I think [The intervention] has made people grow into believing in themselves and [that] actually [the] Oreth Park [estate] has something to give back to Oreth” (François, excerpt from an interview)

What François refers to is how using the suitcases called for a different way of engaging with others on the estate, something the residents are not used to. The configuration and slow pace of the process is seen as a crucial factor in facilitating, from François’ perspective, the “*organic growth*” and the development of “*ownership*” of the walking trail. The importance of “*giving something back*” to the town of Oreth points to residents’ desire to find value in their stories and actions and see their contributions as having a wider and lasting impact. For the working group, this attitude has been extended into the actual use of the suitcases. The group members have developed their own sensitivities to the times and spaces people should be given to participate and come up with their stories. As Steve puts it: “*It will be a slow process, same as with building the community... it doesn’t happen overnight*”.

Yet for some in Ermit, the suitcases highlight the ease with which these perspectives and values can be overlooked. Jane is Ermit’s housing officer in charge of the process of moving residents from their homes to other houses or neighborhoods during the regeneration. Invited to contribute a story of her own using the suitcase, her first impressions of the intervention convey the difficulties of remembering how things are seen on the ground:

“it really surprises you and from our side we obviously see it from that tenancy side and anti-social behaviour side [...] so you actually can forget that this is somebody’s home [...] it’s that outside thing we are all looking at it from our own little angle” (Jane, excerpt from an interview)

Jane, in her role of housing manager, speaks of herself being outside the endeavour of the regeneration. But, with a suitcase in hand and a need for narrative, she is invited to produce a different account of the estate. The suitcases thus act as a vehicle for occasioning new encounters, and in this case highlight agendas that could be in conflict. So, unsurprisingly

perhaps, the suitcases and trails surface some real struggles in recognising the different values in configuring community and participation in place making.

“they [Ermit] don’t understand the citizens’ partnership concept so they go as far as information and consultation not partnership—we work together on this and we are equal even though we hold the power and the money and the employment we will still see you as equal because actually if you think about it – they have their jobs only because residents pay their rent...and so actually the residents have the power or they could have the power if they thought about it...” (François, excerpt from an interview)

François here reflects on the radical difference between the ways in which participation is configured in the process of creating the digital trail, and the way he sees the housing institutions maintaining very particular power relations with the residents. It appears here that the suitcases and making of the digital walking trail subtly mobilized a particular reflective process for François. Here though, institutional ways of establishing and developing relations with the residents are presented as far from ideal of democratic equality and notions of working in partnership—a power dynamic that residents, in François’ account, could reverse. Yet, as we have seen in the initial engagements, François’ own struggle working within the rules and contradictions of the institution he works for also come to the fore. These, however, appeared to be somewhat eased by having the opportunity to work with the university.

“I don’t break rules so the reason for me to say that it was to make it possible to break the rules without feeling subconsciously that I was breaking the rules because I was working with Newcastle I was actually facilitating them [...] because Ermit is very hierarchical, very top down, there is very little bottom up...” (François, excerpt from an interview)

Here then it appears the context of the research project itself gives license to take some risks and try out something different with the residents. More than facilitating engagement and supporting residents with their story collection’s process, I come to be seen as someone who has supported them taking a more self-conscious role in their community and within the working group of residents:

“A leader which is teaching us to lead the project – how to extend our roles in the project. You know, we are not just residents but we are leaders and a team...” (Tracy, excerpt from an interview)

The overall process of collecting and distributing place-based stories towards the construction of their digital trail, then was a learning process, a process of growth for both residents, François and myself. However, this process was not a smooth and “easy run”, rather it demanded continuous ‘working at’—as Tracy would put it. The process of making the walking trail appeared to have helped surface ongoing and real tensions between institutional and community values and practices, the work that making place actually demands, as well as raising questions around the way civic agency is and can be understood, practiced and nurtured in these contexts.

6.8.2 *Creating spaces for reflection*

As indicated earlier, using the suitcases was a process of experimentation, where the working group used the series of workshops to consider what might work best. At first, residents questioned whether they ‘knew anything’ about the estate or whether their stories would be worth recording. Shifting an understanding of history—seen as objective, sanctioned *knowledge* and singular registers—into the everyday and tied to familiar locations, though, allowed the working group to see their personal experiences as meaningful.

As confidence built, ideas were exchanged, suggesting ways to engage and approach current or previous residents, including doing it together. In a workshop session, I saw Tracy helping a fellow resident, Gavin, by suggesting his story of friends “*lost and gained*” through the regeneration be cast in more positive terms (to avoid “*moaning*”). While there was plenty of support amongst residents, what was most striking was how, collectively, the stories (and the processes through which they were decided upon) presented variability in narrative. More than simply different stories, the wider narrative—drawn together through photos, hand-written questions and recordings, and the four suitcases—brought to light much more fluid, and in some cases, divergent, accounts of the estate and its residents. This is best conveyed through a series of encounters with the residents involving the use of the suitcases.

Over the course of the process, Donna recounted many stories from the years in which she grew up on Pala Road—one of her stories recounts how she used to amuse herself as a child throwing glass bottles down the rubbish chute and how, just before the towers were closed for demolition, she re-enacted this, recording the sound on her phone for posterity. In a workshop, Tracy encourages Donna to replay the sound for her suitcase recording, and Donna obliges:

“Just before the block itself was actually locked off to the public, I went back with a carrier bag full of glass bottles and did it one more time, just to hear it, and I videoed it, so here it is [sound]” (Donna, excerpt from a story recorded on the Digital Travelling Suitcase)

Donna’s story illustrates her affective and embodied relation to the towers. In fact, Donna consistently documented the regeneration, taking photos, collecting old signage and researching historical photographs. In this way, her ‘anticipatory archaeological work’, performed throughout the regeneration process, was amplified and further legitimised through the group’s walks and suitcase recordings. For François, the alignment between Donna’s activities and the intervention chimed with her personal anxieties. The making of the walk trail supported Donna in efforts to “*let go*” of the towers:

“because she has got a story out there and she told those fantastic things she did - what makes this place special [...] it has empowered her to let go.” (François, excerpt from an interview)

This letting go, however, seems in conflict with the efforts to digitally *save* aspects of the past—a desire that drives Donna’s actions and storytelling. In this light, her efforts might also be understood as an attempt to safeguard a version of the past being expunged by the demolition and to preserve her affective attachment to the towers. Through *immortalising* her activities in the towers—in some sense converting the stark buildings into a deeply local vernacular—she has found a way not to let go, but rather repeatedly etch out a path from past to present, each time her story is replayed and listened to. It seems, confronted with the demolition, the suitcase recordings and walks with other members of the working group offer an opportunity to save, channel and share with others the things that made the towers meaningful for the community.

Ideas of the past come through differently in a story Rose recorded using the suitcase. Recollecting her move to the estate over 30 years ago, Rose talks of it being “*the best thing that ever happened*”, giving her the chance to “*do things she never dreamt of*”. Her story refers to long held ties between people on and around the estate, and their own investment in activities the community could take collective pride in:

“Some years ago, before Ermit came on the scene and we were Oreth Council tenants, we didn’t get any help with doing anything and we decided we wanted to do things for ourselves, so we had a little fun day on Banks Field and we used to do morning coffees,

ploughman's lunches and then afternoon teas. We did a lot of catering for all the people that came and we also used to invite different local groups to come..." (Rose, excerpt from a story recorded on the Digital Travelling Suitcase)

Passing the suitcase onto a friend and another long-time resident, Rose invites a similarly poignant story. She asks her friend, Rita, to talk "*about the way Pala Road changed your life*". The story Rita tells responds to the invitation; she talks about the 21 years in her much loved old flat on the 14th floor of a now demolished tower block, and describes the view she often shared with Rose. She also talks of the core group and friends she has made through the coffee mornings Ermit has organised alongside the building work. Together, in their stories and suitcase exchange, Rosemary and Rita conjure up a community that has taken shape through its relations to the built environment. Theirs is not a community that is absent, somehow, but one where people "*stuck it out*", to use Rosemary's words, and in which you "*looked for good things*" and discovered "*there was always good things*".

Yet unerringly positive accounts of life on the estate shared on the suitcases and in the curatorial activity, like those of Donna's and Rosemary's, give long-time resident Steve pause for thought:

"It's interesting to find out that, well, they actually grew up here when it was rough and to hear their stories, it's not about how rough it was. It's about the fun times that they remember." (Steve, excerpt from an interview)

Grappling with the different accounts, Steve's response is to suggest that the walking trail should feature all 'kinds' of personal stories, 'good' and 'bad'. His experiences of living in the towers were indeed not all positive. Steve moved to Pala Road as an adult and has lived on the estate for over twenty years. "*When I first moved in*" – he recounts – "*I kept myself to myself*". Slowly, he began getting to know some of his neighbours, but it was only with the regeneration that he got more involved. He sees the rebuild as an opportunity to influence decisions about improving the estate to "*create more of a community*".

Reflecting back on his earlier life on the estate, Steve tells an unsettling story about what life was like for him, which at the curatorial activity I brought back to the group for the purpose of discussion:

"I remember coming out of my flat at 3am [...] Frank was in a state of overdose, we got the paramedics here and Ian said "oh I called the ambulance" and I [said] "what for? I

would have just left him there to die.” [...] I said “He is a druggie, doesn’t matter how much help you throw at him the next day he is back on it” (Steve, excerpt from a workshop)

Steve talks of a neglect for people’s lives in the towers. Residents like him found themselves feeling powerless in the face of challenging conditions—frustrations festered to the point where the life of other residents seemed of little value. To protect the identity of people in the story, Steve eventually chose to delete his account. Yet, among the working group, it sparked a heated discussion in which we began to hear different sides to the antisocial behaviour on the estate:

“I had friends: he was an alcoholic and she was a heroin taker [...] and somebody said to me what are you doing knowing these people and I said they are my friends [...] they’d do anything for you...you know such lovely people...” (Rose, excerpt from the curatorial activity)

“This is just a demonstration of the bad side of Pala Road because there was people that were just put here and they didn’t really get the help that they needed.” (Steve, excerpt from the curatorial activity)

Steve, then, comes to see the “*bad side*” of the estate as emerging from a lack of provision or the ‘right’ support for those who were most in need. However, the talk appears not to hinge on an agreed on and sanctioned narrative, or of any resolution *per se*, but a recognition of multiple narratives and possibilities and how these might produce different understanding of the past and present life on the estate. Similarly, accounts about the regeneration process and the way some people were given the opportunity to stay in the housing estate, spark warm discussions.

“It’s good for the new people to know that some of the people who stayed here for a while didn’t want to move away...cause otherwise you think that was a massive exodus and everybody hated it that much which we didn’t...” (Rose, excerpt from the curatorial activity)

“It was a massive exodus really...what I am saying is that out of six blocks you got only 66 people [...] cause people didn’t like Pala Road cause it had the stigma...” (Steve, excerpt from the curatorial activity)

“but it’s surprising how many people you meet in Oreth and they all say how much they really missed it all...” (Rose, excerpt from the curatorial activity)

Here contrasting accounts are formulated in respect of the regeneration process that entailed the majority of the previous residents moving out of Pala Road. It is the coming together of different and at times contrasting accounts that nurture and support their sense making process. More broadly then, given the growing confidence and legitimacy to talk about the estate, what emerges from the residents is a collection of stories and encounters with shifting and sometimes diverging registers. The process of producing narratives and the orientation towards the suitcases/walks provide a space in which accounts continue to be worked over and grappled with. Here, I am led to ask how it may be possible to resist the urge to consolidate and stabilise the varied registers and normative alignments and, instead, hold on to such a multiplicity. The challenge is in seeing the differences and fluidity not as something to be solved, but rather resources for a community building that accommodates the lived concerns held by the multiple actors involved.

6.8.3 *Visions and ownership*

The collection of stories gathered since the start of the process exposes, as we have seen, a rich and diverse mix of values. The suitcases and the walking trail have come to be a means of ‘telling’ and sustaining the different versions of life on Pala Road. For example, Donna’s vision of the recorded stories was driven by a desire to show how life on the estate has often been far more positive than the largely negative portrayals suggest. For Donna, images often conjured up in the mainstream media have done a disservice to the community and she’s seen the stories and suitcases as a way to rectify this. She’s thus invested in cultivating the positive stories amongst her friends and old neighbours. After making her own recording, she passed her suitcase onto a fellow old resident, Joan, presumably with the idea that Joan would follow in her example by talking positively about the estate’s community. Joan recorded the following:

“Living in Pala Road we used to have a very close community of friends – years ago we used to have a twin set washing machine and people used to come on Friday [...] as some of the neighbor didn’t have one [...] and because we had young children basically some of the mums used to look after the children in my flat while others used to go out and hang their washing on the lines [...]” (Joan, excerpt from a story recorded on the Digital Travelling Suitcase)

Amongst the working group, there is a great deal of resonance with Donna's ambitions for the suitcases. As François put it in the curatorial workshop where the recordings were reviewed: "Joan's story [...] struck a cord with everybody about the whole notion that we used to work together in order to get by." However, there is also a real recognition by all that the different perspectives emerging through the stories must also be given prominence. This variety is seen as offering opportunities to "look at the estate in a different light". Paradoxically, perhaps, the shifting registers are seen as a way to provide historical "continuity" to and a sense of "being part of something" on an estate that has undergone constant transformation through the years:

"obviously it has changed over the years and there are so many diverse stories [...] that it all adds to everybody's knowledge of everybody else...we are all sharing and learn more about the past and as I said we meet people and they talk about what they would like for the future...it's all connected really..." (Rose, excerpt from a workshop)

Room then is given not just to the positive but also the negative accounts of the estate. Steve and Tracy come to strongly advocate for the necessity to include those stories that depict contentious events on the estate. Again in the curatorial activity, the group decides to combine two stories describing the time in which a murder took place on the estate. Recounting this particularly sad episode becomes an opportunity to 'put the story right' and contest mainstream media versions of the story, which omitted significant details.

"Everybody was so mad about all the bad things that had been saying about Pala Road regardless of the fact that there was a murder and that's because the murder had anything to do with Pala Road. It could have happened somewhere in Corner Street or somewhere in Oreth and the press wouldn't have been that bad [...] and then you realise that there is a community there or they wouldn't have got angry, would they?" (Rose, excerpt from the curatorial activity)

"People from the outside, they only focus on the bad and they didn't realise that there were good, normal decent people here. [...] there were bad things that happened but if you added them all up and divided them by the number of households [...] I think you will find that there are no more than if you were going in the middle of Sidcup and pick four streets" (Donna, excerpt from the curatorial activity)

Mary's and Donna's words disclose a strong sense of injustice for the way mainstream media's narratives have come to dominate public opinion. The mainstream media had a striking effect on life on the estate and contributed to its reputation—however the event and its complexity are here recounted to demonstrate the presence of community rather than a lack of it. Indeed, the inclusion of seemingly 'negative' stories alongside other experiences and diverse perspectives comes to be seen as engendering spaces for reflection, discussion or even transformations. Here Tracy explains how she thinks even the less positive stories can be used constructively.

“We don't want people to see that we are biased [...] if we say all good people are going to say that we are doing this to make Oreth Park look good but [...] we are doing this because we want people to know that everywhere you go there is going to be problems and sometimes you can make a negative into a positive thing. People know that everything is not perfect. I mean it's like the stabbing – sometimes when you have a tragedy that brings the community together [...] can help improve something.” (Tracy, excerpt from an interview)

Having a balance to the positive and negative stories on the walking trail is both associated with a concern for how people might perceive it as genuine as well as a matter of fairness. Tracy envisions the wider registers and values of the stories in the digital walking trail to resist homogeneous—and perhaps 'deceptive'—notions of a 'perfect harmonious community' and show how instead communities can be resilient in difficult situations. Moreover, Tracy comes to see, in the past, things that matter for the present and also recognises their capacity for shaping the future.

In some respects, this sharing of and openness to diverse accounts of the estate stood in contrast to the '*brighter future*' being set through the regeneration project. Talking about the renaming of the estate to Oreth Park, Caroline explains it was emblematic of the change to the estate, disassociating the new site from Pala Road while emphasising pride in its presence within Oreth. Chosen was "*a marketing name that was used to then establish the identity for the future*". In the same vein, Caroline and the regeneration team involved members of the core group in the process of deciding the new names for the estate's buildings and its streets. However, despite the presence of "*opposing factions*", the underlying premise wasn't questioned. Even though some saw it as a way to 'liberate' the place from the stigma attached to it and others wanted to keep names as they were when they grew up and raised their children, the register of change and *a better future* stayed the same.

Responding to this, Caroline rhetorically reflects; *“There is an issue I guess about how far you detach yourself from the past when that past is as contentious as Pala Road.”* Here she hints of the many discussions she and the regeneration team entertained with the group. The question of degrees of attachment/detachment opens things up in a way Caroline may not have thought possible in the past. Again, the suitcases and their recorded stories appear to offer something distinct. They are seen by Caroline as something *“for the people”* and not *“a corporate promotional tool”*. “Building communities” and the stories that members of the community might want to share need some distance from the economic and political demands to promote the estate, or at least the direction of influence comes to be understood as not only one way. However, one question that remains open is how people may be able to genuinely shape and grow their communities if economic and political decisions actually dictate who can be part of such communities and places.

Toward the end of my engagement with the working group, the suitcases and walking trail had received so much enthusiasm within the regeneration team that Caroline had decided to present them at one of Ermit’s general management meetings. The implications of this are still unknown, but the potential achievement may open up the door, if only a bit, to new means of genuinely engaging their ‘customers’ (as Ermit chooses to call them), and maybe ways of encountering a plurality of community that can resist being tied to something singular, and new channels of communication between residents and between residents and housing institutions. Possibly surprising is that this development is being met with resistance on the ground. Concerns have been raised about the ownership of the suitcases and the digital walking trail among members of the working group.

“It’s a residents thing [...] yes Ermit runs the estate but it’s not their baby [suitcases/walk] it’s Oreth Park’s baby [...]. I think it’s us who should decide which stories go on there whether they are good or bad... because at the end of the day Ermit bought an estate with a bad reputation” (Steve, excerpts from an interview)

The suitcases and the Walk the Talk intervention come to be regarded by Steve as belonging to the residents. Ownership of the estate is here contrasted with the right to safeguard spaces in which to express the stories, experiences, and opinions that comprise the tapestry of life on the estate in order to produce some public understanding. Whatever the case, it’s precisely this that the suitcases have come to make room for. The power and value of sharing stories on the walking trail may reside in their potential to connect, and start discussions about

the different ways people can contribute to the making and re-making of the estate. In this etched out space, values or normativities aren't constricted, and possibilities for the future don't feel settled, rather conversations are left to unfold and be open to revision. Much like the intended trajectory of the suitcases, the emphasis is on how preceding stories shape the subsequent ones and how the encounters sew relations together that sometimes align but at times also diverge.

6.9 Reflections

In the process of making the walking trail and engagements, life on Pala Road/Oreth Park has emerged as a rich entanglement of heterogeneous actors, processes and practices. Working alongside residents and the regeneration team has exposed me to the complexities, struggles and inherent conflicts of processes that aim at transforming and improving communal and civic life in and of place. Next I reflect further on the overall study, process and intervention.

6.9.1 *Material interventions and spatial configurations*

In the study, the processes and interventions aimed to open up and alter (if only slightly) the terms of participation and distribution of agency running through place-based narratives; in purposefully tangible ways, with the design of the suitcases I sought to offer opportunities to re-shape existing spatial configurations of participation. What I found in the regeneration of the old estate—in which the housing association was striving to establish a better future *for* the community—was a (sometimes explicit) reliance on a narrative of degraded community. Through the meetings, workshops, walking tours, interviews, suitcases, and so on, residents gathered a heterogeneous collection of stories tied to specific times and places on the estate that unsettled, questioned and countered singular and dominant narratives of life on Pala Road. More than place being constructed or produced by differentiated positions and 'spatialities' (Dourish, 2006) then, the residents exposed the extent to which 'spatialities' entangle with and continually bring into being social relations of multiple and diverse kinds—in short, they surfaced what Massey referred to as the unceasing 'throwntogetherness'—the conjunction of different configurations of space, social life and their histories (Massey, 2005, 1995).

The interventions (and specifically the suitcases) appeared to play a role not just in the articulation of place and collective identity, but also the way *affect* and *values* are bound to place. The affective dimensions, personal meaning and emotional attachments to the old estate was in effect a force that drove residents' actions (e.g. collecting stories with the suitcases). Yet, as we have seen, the recording and collection of stories were not simply a matter of 'saving' the towers or the 'past'. It appeared to be a matter of re-writing their history for the present and into the future (Massey 1995). Rather than 'extracting' the towers and the life stories lived in and about them from the 'dangerous', unstable and ever changing process of the regeneration (and of life), these acts of recording and re-collecting were a way to renew them and take those life experiences into the future. As Tracy suggested, even the "bad" stories can be helpful and guide the future.

Through their material presence and the relations they enabled, the process, and the suitcases in particular, provided opportunities to express what was valuable about their lived experiences on and around the old estate. They provided opportunities to "cultivate" relations (Mol, 2013)—not just relations among residents and the regeneration team but relations between the past, present and the future. The stories people recorded and passed on to one another through the walking trails and suitcases gave the community a way to normatively not just organise space, but also *produce* space in a way that was emergent and heterogeneous. More than probes eliciting participants' views for the purposes of design (Gaver, 1999), the interventions played a constructive role, locally, by allowing people to organise and produce space differently, and in effect re-make place. Broadly, the work points to the ways it is possible to intervene in prevailing, normative practices and existing spatial configurations in order to support the articulation of values, affects, issues and open up the conditions of possibility (Haraway, 1988).

6.9.2 *Multiplicity and place*

The process and the suitcases aimed specifically to support residents in bringing together the different practices, places, and voices that have, over time, been significant to Pala Road/Oreth Park. The assembling of diverse stories through the suitcases framed life on the estate as something to re-discover, to inquire into and make sense of. In a sense, particularly in the third phase of the process (the curatorial activities), what appeared is that the bringing together of radically different accounts and experiences on the estate were able not only to

unsettle stable categories of identification of people and places, and simplistic polarisations of what may be deemed ‘good’ or ‘bad’, but critically initiate a reflective process where residents also learned from one another through their stories collection and their personal motivation for collecting them.

From the insights though, these stories find their value not in their claims to legitimate truths about community and place. Instead, their value was found in their uncertain and open-ended nature, and in how they emerged through varied, situated encounters and contingent situations (Haraway, 1988)—positing an “equality of intelligence” rather than ‘sanctioned’ knowledge (Till, 2005). That they are plural, situated, partial and contingent doesn’t discount them, rather it is this that allows them to contain the possibilities for the future. Residents’ concerns over the ‘ownership’ of the suitcases stressed the importance of this; they were keen to safeguard spaces for critical reflection where different voices (and practices) might come *together*, and personal experiences connected to one another and to larger socio-political processes and structures (hooks) in order to ‘work out’ what place and community might *become*—rather than what *it is*. The insights point towards ways to understand and engage with places and communities as *always-becoming* configurations of communal life (Massey, 2005), and the pitfalls of treating these collective endeavours as singular, stable objects. Indeed, the case indicates there is no such thing as a ‘completed’ and single place and community (Coward, 2012), but that there is an *ongoing* processual quality to places and communities that cannot be avoided.

The suitcases and their uses didn’t appear to actually change or transform existing power relations. Yet, the comments of the regeneration officer, though, hint that other modalities of institutions-residents relations might be possible. Perhaps maybe more importantly, the cases initiated an opening where institutional and social practices could begin to be related to one another. The insights show that besides the visibility of practices and different voices, what really matters is how they actually relate to one another. That is, it is not that multiple and diverse voices, identities and practices co-existing side-by-side necessarily produce mutual understanding; rather it is through understanding how the different voices and practices are “mutually imbricated” (Coward, 2012) and constitutive of one another that transformative processes can be initiated. In this sense, a critical and productive participation calls for an understanding of the ways different practices and subjects are constitutively tied to one another through what we have in common—our surroundings.

6.9.3 Policies in practice and participatory spaces

Indisputably, regeneration projects are a complex entanglement of social, political and economic practices with their own agendas and priorities. At Oreth Park, I have seen and experienced at first-hand how, for example, these projects can become a struggle between the tensions of well-intentioned participation and marketing strategies. An assumption of a single place/community (dictated also by marketing imperatives) struggles to align with the lived experiences and interests of citizens and runs the risk of overriding their voices, values as well as their genuine opportunities to influence and shape the future of the places they live in. Similarly, political tensions arise. ‘Social mixing’ policies have been criticised by academics and policy-makers because they are often based on an imagined normative integration (Clay, 1979; Lees, 2008) and mask strategies with a social cleansing agenda (Allen et al., 2004). On the ground, Oreth Park’s efforts to involve residents with aspects of the design of the estate and activities to support shaping the new community further complicate these top-down perspectives. They show how a lot of ‘work’ and care is applied in enacting these organisational and political policies (Law and Singleton 2014).

Yet, critically, authors have warned of the way under the guise of inclusion old patterns that distance citizens from the ‘real’ spatial processes of spatial production can repeat themselves (Till, 2005). Till guards us against uncritically accepted participation, which is used as a means to get support of citizens for actions that have already been determined by professional agents (Till, 2005). My work on Pala Road/Oreth Park began at a time where the major decisions had been already taken place. Still I was able to witness the efforts and work that the regeneration team applied in supporting residents in rebuilding their community. At the same time, what the study shows is that there is a difference between being asked to choose the color of a door handle, to use Francois’ words, and being asked to take part in a process through which you might be able to make your own judgements on whether having a door handle is a ‘good’ solution in the first place. In some small way, however, the process of creating the Walk the Talk Oreth Park, the suitcases, their uses and the reflective processes, discussions, and actions that they engendered, was a way that allowed residents to participate in the production of discursive spaces in and about both the past and future of their estate and invite others to join in.

As we have seen, however, this was a demanding process that required time and effort. In some really practical and tangible way, taking a suitcase to someone's home required members of the working group to find the confidence, motivation as well as time to do so. For some of the residents this was both challenging and rewarding, as they came to 'rehearse' and develop their own skills and capacities, as well as appreciate the existing value they and others already had and could bring to both the process and to Pala Road/Oreth Park. However, as I mentioned above, it appeared as though it may not have been necessarily a desire to 'save' Pala Road but a wish to make it better, a wish to recover and affirm the existing voices, values, effects that made Pala Road/Oreth Park unique and special, which drove their actions. Residents' work with the suitcases and efforts in the process of creating the walking trail speak then about a desire to carve out and craft spaces for existing voices that mainstream media and the material clearing of the housing estate rendered somewhat unheard, devalued or that didn't have space. The suitcases and material interventions didn't simply offer a tangible place for these voices, but also an opportunity to re-configure and produce spaces where different belonging could be formulated at the intersection between pasts and futures. Belonging then, is not to be understood as existing somewhere fixed in the past or fixed in place, rather as an ongoing endeavor, something that we actively nurture, but also something that we have a right to nurture.

The study offers an illustration of how participatory and materially bound processes and interventions can have the capacity to open possibilities to enable dialogues between residents and between residents and the regeneration team. Rather than assuming place or communities as an 'object' to intervene in or a problem to solve (Taylor 2011), this case hopefully invites new models of participation, ones where through material engagements in place making and socio-political issues, lived experiences and practices are brought to the fore and given form. Here, form giving is an endeavor of connecting the different ways people contribute to making places—bringing together and (re)distributing the practices and actors (institutions, policies, lived experiences, etc.) that come to enact the places and communities to be reckoned with and made sense of (Marres, 2012; Till, 2005).

6.9.4 My role in the process

Working with the residents in Pala Road/Oreth Park was an emotionally challenging process for all involved. When I began working there, decisions had already been made and the

demolition of Pala Road was already under way, participatory processes led by the housing institution had already been configured. The context did not offer the opportunity to question the process of ‘decanting’ (in regeneration parlance the process of moving people from one place to another), which had largely already taken place. There was no room to affect policies, or to fine-tune them to the specific concerns of those involved (previous residents, new residents, etc.). But I hadn’t been invited to Pala Road to contribute to any of those processes and decisions. Yet, the process forced me to confront some of the ‘harsh realities’ foisted on people being subject to urban regeneration—the ‘cleaning’ and ‘clearing’ of multiple identities and histories. In a way, it could be said that when I started engaging with the people at Pala Road, there was no ‘hope’. In the process, I have learnt much from the residents and the regeneration team and I have lent to the process what I could: what my skills and life experiences allowed me. I carefully and delicately sought open spaces (with the travelling suitcases) in which it would be possible to openly yet carefully discuss, question (even if indirectly) the regeneration process and bring to the fore what ideas of place and community might be valued moving into the future in a way that would be constructive, positive, yet critical. Through the process, I found solace as the struggles and frictions embodied and performed through the interventions and suitcases made the tensions visible, and that value was found in this visibility. More significantly I cherished seeing how the care I put into the design of the travelling suitcases and the spaces I contributed to creating were valued by the residents and that, because of this, more care and hope was generated.

6.10 Summary of chapter

This chapter presented a process of working with a housing organisation and a group of residents, in the context of a housing estate undergoing urban regeneration. The process entailed the construction of a digital walking trail in and about their housing estate. In the chapter I described how the process unfolded through three distinct phases. I detailed a series of initial engagements and how insights drawn from these led to the design of a socio-technical system—the Digital Travelling Suitcases—designed to support residents in recording and playback of audio stories in and about Pala Road/Oreth Park. The design rationale for the suitcases, how residents appropriated and used them was outlined (second phase). I then sketched out the follow up curatorial activities where stories were reviewed and re-allocated to different places around the estate (phase three). I then provided an analysis of the insights

gained throughout the second and third phase of the process. Based on the insights I reflected on the way the process and material intervention highlighted possibilities for changing social and spatial configurations; how the interventions offered residents opportunities not only to reconfigure space but more critically to produce spaces in which different voices, with distinctive registers, could be understood in relation to one another. Overall, the time spent with the people of Pala Road/Oreth Park showed the extent to which existing configurations of space have significant implications for the way places are understood, and then made and re-made. The provision and production of spaces where people can talk about lives and values, connect these to socio-political practices and enact their communities and places is essentially about safeguarding the rights to affect one another and shape each other's common surroundings—that is making and re-making the places that matter to us.

Chapter 7 HCI and re-making place

“The problem of democracy is not that only of antifascism: it is the setting of goals, the construction of shared conflictual and projectual dimensions, it is to come together, to create the common through difference...it is the capacity to work in common” (Toni Negri, 2007: 298)

“We are united by the imagination, by creativity, by tomorrow. In the past we not only met defeat but found a desire for justice and the dream of being better. (...) Don’t forget that flowers like hope are harvested” (Subcommandante Marcos in Solnit, 2005:163)

7.1 Introduction

This dissertation aimed at inquiring into the role of HCI in and for processes at play in the everyday politics of place-making. In chapter three I brought together theoretical perspectives from STS (Mol, 1999, 2003), rhetorical studies (Hauser, 1999, Hauser and McLellan, 2010) and public work philosophy (Boyte, 2005) to develop a methodology that aimed to both understand and design action-based culture shaping activities and socio-technical tools in and for processes of place-making. I applied this methodology on the three cases studies this dissertation accounted for; in this sense, the studies can be understood as three exemplars of ways to inquiring into the framework and putting the methodology developed in Chapter 3 into practice.

The theoretical perspectives were used to understand the role of social media in the formation of a social movement concerned with the re-development of a derelict swimming pool, in case study one. Following this study, I positioned HCI research and design as a means to open spaces of contestation and dialogue in and for place-making. I took digital walking trails as a strategy for the creation of vernacular and political discursive spaces toward the making of our common surroundings. In the second case study, I instigated a two-stage participatory process—City Walk—to open spaces of dialogue and contestation at the intersection between the social, vernacular practices of place-making and the political processes of city planning. At the end of this study, I asked whether City Walk could be adopted by people and communities to create their own digital walks in support of their causes. The third case study, presented a collaboration with a group of residents and a housing institution wishing to

create a digital walking trail and concerned with the ‘re-building’ of their community in an estate undergoing urban regeneration. Initial engagements guided the design of four Digital Travelling Suitcases, aiming to support residents collecting and re-distributing place-based narratives in and about their estate. My primary interest in cases 2 and 3 was in inquiring into the ways the framework could guide the design of socio-technical tools in supporting the shaping of spaces in which collective productions of knowledges might be put to use to advance understanding and foster envisioning in and for place-making.

Drawing from the three case studies, this chapter discusses how the methodological framework can be useful for HCI to aid understanding on the everyday politics of place-making and the role of technologies here. The chapter also discusses how the methodological framework can be used to help guide the design of socio-technical tools and participatory processes in/for place-making and how HCI might be able to play a more significant role in forging more just and democratic spatial processes. The chapter develops in two sections, where I reflect on the methodological perspectives and how these were applied across the case studies. In the first section I broadly discuss in what ways the theoretical perspectives and framework developed can be useful to understand the everyday politics of place-making and technology’s involvement in spatial processes as well as in relation to issues of spatial justice. In the second section, I discuss what an Everyday Politics approach can offer to HCI concerned with supporting civic action in/for place-making and the utility of this framework to guide the design of socio-technical tools and the configuration of participatory processes in and for the everyday politics of place-making.

7.2 Everyday politics of place-making, technology and spatial justice

Broadly, the everyday politics of place-making concerns the multiple and diverse practices—ways of thinking, imaginings, saying, doing — that shape the spaces/places in which we live, while simultaneously these spaces shape our lives (Soja, 2010). The notion that realities and places do not exist *a priori*, but emerge in/from practices, which are relationally and materially enacted (Mol, 1999, 2003; Law, 2015), highlighted that places and realities must be understood as fundamentally multiple and as ongoing processes of co-production at the intersection of human and non-humans. In the methodological framework, I used Vernacular Rhetoric to focus on everyday discursive practices in order to inquire into the way social actors

enacts place and their abilities to induce cooperation and form publics and social movements (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mclellan, 2010). These perspectives were helpful in bringing into focus the way in which materials and materialities are intrinsically part of processes of place construction (meaning making), production and the shaping of spaces of vernacular politics. They were useful to inquire into the kind of vernacular spaces that technologies and socio-material, socio-technical tools and processes were able to contribute in forging and how these spaces, in turn, could re-make place. Next I discuss in more detail how these perspectives were useful in understanding the role of design and technology in the everyday politics of place-making and their implications for HCI.

7.2.1 Place and values as enactments of material relations

Ontological politics (Mol 1999, 2003) was useful to see how, in each case study presented, institutional, organisational and vernacular ideas, imaginings and meanings of place were enacted in practice in a multiplicity of ways and at the intersection of human and non-human actors. These multiple enactments of place entangled in complex ways, but also exemplified different modes of valuing, de-valuing or re-valuing place at both institutional and vernacular levels. The insights across the case studies highlighted how materials are implicated in the power struggles that exist in the interplay between institutional and vernacular material-discourses, images and imaginings of place and of communal living. For example, values and ideas of communal living enacted through the council proposal, Dan's Smith and Pala Road regeneration, were in contrast with vernacular discourses, images and imagining of walkers, the people at Pala Road enacted in City Walks, in the use of the suitcases, and those assembled on the Facebook page in the case of Tynemouth. Vernacular discourse in the three studies not simply claimed or counter-claimed particular identities for the places (Massey, 1995), but served to bring to the fore their multiplicity, and re-make place in different ways.

In the case of Tynemouth, an old photograph of the pool was enacted in different ways bringing to the fore the old swimming pool as a place that was both loved and despised; the tools in case study two and three were performed and practiced in radically different ways — assembling together many different places (Mol, 2003, 2013). Yet, as we have seen both tools and photographs in the case studies were used as themselves vernacular rhetoric—that is, they intended to induce particular ways of thinking, doing and they all strived to express a particular set of values. In this sense, the tools and socio-material design (the artefacts and a set of instructions as to how to use them), with their qualities, were both sites and means for the

expression of values while affording the opening of possibilities, yet these possibilities—the “sites, performances and issues involvements remained tasks to be accomplished” (Marres, 2015: 37) by walkers and residents across the two case studies. A material semiotics perspective was helpful in recognising the way in which meaning-making and the expression of values is necessarily relational and co-constituted at the intersection of human, environments and entities (including the material fabric of the city and computational artifacts). In this sense, materials, artifacts or technologies can be understood as *accomplices* in the enactment of practices and as such they can be utilised to surface the multiplicity and polysemy inherent in place and open up spaces for the layering and assembling of meaning, new possibilities and explorations. These though should always be understood as contingent and dynamic affairs (Suchman, 2007).

Authors in HCI and STS have begun inquiring into the potential for digital devices and objects to offer particular ways of participating in political matters and the formation of publics (Latour, 2004; Marres, 2012; DiSalvo et al., 2015; Jenkins et al., 2016). What the theoretical perspectives and case studies in this dissertation suggest is that material and technological devices are *already* implicated and play a constitutional role in the enactment of place and the expression of values as well as highlighting the values are themselves bound to place. The significance of adopting such perspectives then, might reside in bringing to the fore the relational aspect of human and non-human in the constitution of spaces of vernacular rhetoric, publics’ formation and place. Such approach highlight how, more than the way sociality might be understood as *in dialogue with* material objects (Jenkins, 2016:2), sociality and materiality are actually produced together (Mol 2003). That is, material artefacts and technologies are already implicated not only in the formulation, surfacing and assembling of values and meanings, but in the enactments of place and its making.

The implications for HCI then, are twofold. From one hand, besides thinking of place as dialogue (Ciolfi and McCarthy 2008) and understanding places as lived and felt (McCarthy and Wight 2004, 2010), the theoretical perspectives presented in this dissertation and the insights from across the case studies, point to the way place must be understood as alive, lively and as continuously made and re-made in/through material practices. On the other hand, such perspectives could be useful to HCI practitioners in areas such as Value Sensitive Design (Friedman, Kahn and Borning, 2006) and Experience Center Design (McCarthy and Wight 2010) to aid further awareness of the way the very means (materials, artefacts or technologies)

we may be used to invite peoples' articulation of values for design are already in and of themselves vernacular rhetoric—they enact values, realities and place.

7.2.2 *Vernacular rhetoric and spatial justice*

Applying Ontological Politics (Mol 1999, 2003) and Vernacular Rhetoric (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and McLellan, 2010) to the case studies offered some insights into the ways material and mundane practices—including technologies—are actively involved in spatial processes and in producing and sustaining social (in)justices (Soja, 2010) as much as social processes and institutional and vernacular rhetorics are actively implicated in the production of these spaces. Beyond the ways institutions and those in power shape the places we live in according to their values, and beside testifying to the way we are all differently positioned in processes of space/place production (Massey, 1995; Dourish, 2006), across the case studies, we have seen how power was manifested in pervasive and mundane ways and the extent to which technologies can play a role in the way we make meaning, express values as well as in the power dynamics between authorities and people and between social groups (Castells, 2012).

Technology was implicated in each case study, yet in very different ways. As we have seen in Tynemouth, the FB page was appropriated as a space where valued ideas of place could be enacted and made visible slowly forming a collective re-imagining of the site. Yet this was not the case for the people of Pala Road/Oreth Park, where the majority of the residents had limited access to digital resources, low digital skills and appeared to be subject to main stream media enactments of what life on Pala Road was like. The two cases then, speak of the struggle over geography Said (1994) referred to as being also about the production and distribution with technologies of ideas, images and imaginings of people and places. The cases also highlight how the materials with which places are enacted and related images can be oppressive, whereby people come to be trapped into images and imaginings that others formulate—as for the case of Oreth Parks' residents, but also how they can create the foundation for resistance—as in the case of Tynemouth. The cases speak of the way material-enactments and issues of representation, mis-representation as well as people's abilities and resources (or the lack of it) to enact their places, claim representation for their values and how these values come to be mobilised in different ways (Castells, 2012) and have significant implication for the way places are made and re-made.

Across the case studies, we have seen some of the varieties of vernacular rhetorics, enacted with social media (e.g. photographs as rhetorical means, likes as acts of solidarity), and

‘the socio-material designs in Case Studies 2 and 3 (e.g. association of concerns with buildings/places, the use of the suitcases, choice of story-prompt and people in Oreth Park). These vernacular enactments also entailed an affective dimension that was significant in assembling people and in the production of those spaces. The memories, discussions and ‘likes’ on FB generated enthusiasm as well as an imagining of a larger constituency, whose geographical provenance was contested; in City Walk, specific places and ‘being there’ were integral part of the speech-acts, and audio data generated surprise, indignation but also painful memories; the suitcases’ uses provided a way to give form and value to the stories, celebrated and nurtured new relationships, but also generated fear about being rejected. What the above points to is the way modalities of ‘speech’ and their materialities, also afforded by digital technology, produced imaginative and affective spaces that had the capacity to induce ways of thinking, affections, affiliations and open possibilities for actions as well as contestations and disconnections.

Most crucially, however, vernacular rhetorics in all their forms depended on the capacity to be heard, understood and recognised as salient (Hauser, 1999). Not just heard and understood by authorities but also by other citizens, residents, walkers. In the case of Tynemouth, the rhetorical uses of photos, likes as acts of solidarity and the ability to use FB networked space and data to build support points to a certain technological fluency, which however, cannot be assumed and low digital literacy among the people in Oreth Park testifies to this. What is also significant is the way, in the case of Tynemouth, support had to be formalised and more data collected in other formats in order to achieve political validity vis-à-vis the council’s procedures. Yet, arguably, the formalised questionnaires and data collected was far removed from the richness of modes of communication on the FB page, which played a crucial role in the formation of the movement. In other words, an old photograph of the swimming pool would not have ‘worked’ as material objection within the council procedures, yet it was a powerful means of inviting people’s affective responses. HCI practitioners have long pointed out how affect should be understood as culturally-determined and as part of a larger whole of experiences (McCarthy and Wright 2004, Gaver 2009). Here authors have suggested that HCI must consider affect and emotion within a holistic view of experiences (Gaver, 2009, McCarthy and Wright, 2004), and that when designing for emotions we must design for individual appropriation. What the methodological perspectives brings into focus

though is the way affect and emotions are implicated in the everyday politics of spatial production and linked to issues of (in)justice.

The cases, indeed, point to the way different format and data materialities have powerful affective dimensions, that can move people to action; and also, how data might be understood as enacted contingently and contextually performed and that indeed ‘speak’ to different people in different ways. Data-formats and their materialities also demand various interpretative skills, which can be easily assumed. Taylor et al. (2015) suggest a possible approach might be to think of an ecosystem of data-forms, including situated interactions, and rich varieties of data-driven systems to adapt to the material and spatial ways we live with data. Based on the cases in this dissertation, the questions we may also ask are what skills are assumed in the digital processes of data collection, sharing and interpretation; what kind of data forms can enable the production of affective spaces where collective of actions can be formed, and be used by people to reflect on their values, come to terms with their own potential and enhance people’s capacity for self-expression and political efficacy.

While thinking of technologies as a mode of rhetoric (Buchanan, 2001; Margolin 2002; DiSalvo et al., 2008, 2012 et al.; LeDantec 2014), as language and the activity of delivering arguments about how we could or should live” (DiSalvo et al., 2012:48-49) is not new—vernacular rhetoric applied to technologies point to an understanding of technologies as *means of production*: the production of socialities, spaces and places, and a practice that is embedded in the everyday. The methodological perspectives and the cases, then, point to the necessity of paying more attention to the power of data and their materialities, images and ‘things’ and the way these can be both oppressive or emancipatory as well as their tight relationship to spatial processes and issues of spatial (in)justice (Said, 1999; Soja, 2010). A spatial justice perspective provides HCI with the opportunity to be more sensitive and aware in respect to the (un)just data formats and materialities that HCI might impose on people or contribute to nurturing and sustaining.

7.2.3 *Technology and participation in spatial processes*

Vernacular rhetorics, methodologically (Hauser, 1999), call for the necessity to inquire into the way everyday discursive practices function to support cooperation and the formation of publics. In this respect, applying vernacular rhetoric to the study of technology in social movements’ formation also raised questions around technology’s implication in the visibility and formulation of what might be permitted (what *can* be said, seen and imagined) within

groups and collectives of action. In Tynemouth, as the movement formed, negative contributions were censored within the carefully managed deliberative space. In City Walk, some participants formulated a public display for twitter feeds as an impossibility, suggesting that either the police or the public would police it. In Pala Road/Oreth Park, what emerged initially was a multifaceted relationship between self-censoring, whereby some residents didn't consider their stories worth telling, and being censored, whereby some stories were not considered appropriate. The devaluing of life on Pala Road both socially through mainstream media portrayals and materially through the regeneration exercised a different type of disempowerment on residents. From one hand, then, these instances speak of that Foucauldian notion of the way institutionalised power can be so pervasive that we don't even realise we are re-producing it through self-disciplinary acts (Foucault 1998). On the other hand, they bring attention to the relationship between rules of membership, who formulates them, how and on whose terms, anything is "made public" and what might the benefits be. *'Acts of gentle violence to conform'* (Hauser and McLellan, 2010) is a double edge sword. That is, there is not necessarily a 'gentle' side to it as it speaks of the way dominant views of what may be acceptable (no matter where they come from) can render other views and ways of being invisible, thus removing them from reflection (Stevens and Malesh, 2010).

Yet, these insights speak of the complexities of processes of negotiation and normalisation that are practised at both institutional and vernacular level, which cannot be generalised. The FB community of action might resonate with the community of sense McCarthy and Wright refer to as "internally regulating, generating their own thresholds through controlling what is made sensible within their community" (McCarthy and Wright 2015:156). Yet Facebook's algorithm had significant implications for what was made sensible or otherwise. While the community at Pala Road appeared fragmented, as the residents grappled with the meaning of the walking trail *for* themselves and *for* the people of Oreth (rather than the housing organisation), they also came to contemplate why and in which/whose terms particular stories *should* or had the right be 'publified'. The case of Oreth Park shows the complex processes at play in 'making things public', highlighting the extent to which the reasons are not granted, but require working out. They require coming to terms with personal significance in respect to the collective. The work with the people at Pala Road, and their investment in valuing and vying for space for different voices, speak of the way, in the words

of Star, we “inhabit many different domains at once and how the negotiation of identities, within and across groups, is an extraordinarily complex and delicate task” (Star, 1991:52).

Lefebvre’s idea that our cities and lived spaces were socially produced by forces over which we had no control, brought him to formulate the ‘Right to the City’, which was foremost a call to citizens to participate more deeply in the production of spaces/places we live in (Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey, 2003; Soja, 2010). It was a call for the development of capacities to define the terms and relationships within spatial production and “*to create rights through social and political action*” (Mayer, 2009). As we have seen in the studies, the rules and procedure in planning processes and complex organisational strategies determine the terms, modalities and kind of spaces in which we can get together (or not) to discuss what matters to us. These have implications for pinpointing the objects of what is to be discussed and how, and we can easily forget that procedures too can be contested. As spaces have their own sorts of physical, social, historical, cultural, political infrastructures (Dourish and Bell, 2007: 423-424), the methodological perspectives applied in each case in some ways offered a glimpse of what might happen when the different practices at play in spatial processes (personal, social, political, institutional, cultural, etc.) come together. In a sense, the FB page’s use is symptomatic of a lack of political spaces where the different spheres and related practices can come together and be made sense of and the socio-material designs and technical systems in Chapter 5 and 6 aimed at creating spaces for vernacular rhetoric, exploring this potential.

In all three cases, technology and socio-technical tools were positioned critically as one of the means for shaping up vernacular spaces, which entailed also the formulation of what may be ‘(un)just’. Critically the cases raised questions around who should have (and why they should have) the right to enter a discourse community or have a say in regard to the future (or past) of a particular locality. In Tynemouth, the FB page became at once a site where voices were censored and a space where other FB posters recovered their rights of representation (Castells, 2012). Beyond the concern for the derelict site, the campaign generated an enthusiasm for opportunities, as one of the posters put it, to “rebuild our town and cities”. In City Walks, NFC technology and smart phones were pointed out as contributing to transforming the ‘right to comment’ on a planning proposal, but also generating new routes of engagement. Some of the reflective processes in City Walk, also spoke of a desire to contribute and account for what our cities and places “*become*”—highlighting more proactive roles for citizens. In Oreth Park, the suitcases attempted to replace statistics and fixed categories—‘the’ anti-social resident and ‘the’ housing officer decanting people—with faces and stories told in their chosen

words. Resident's preoccupations with the ownership of the cases and their content spoke about the value of spaces where different experiences and practices could come together and be worked with.

These instances point to questions around whose citizen's voice counts in spatial processes and the geographies that come with attempting to answer such question. Yet, what would happen if, rather than asking who has the 'right' and power to speak, we asked what is the place that is being enacted or made and which among the various/multiple places that are enacted might be better to live with (Mol 2002)? These are questions that we should not answer by technology and design, but use design and technology to open spaces where we can them and work towards the formulation of collective values and rights—especially since change at local level depends on national (and international) policies and economic structures, which require collective efforts. As such, the insights point to the ways the definition of the terms and relations within spatial production are indeed (or should be) a matter of participation, an ongoing achievement, which requires openness to change and be changed, ability not just to speak, but to listen and formulate *personally* and then *collectively* values and aspirations (Till, 2005).

Beyond recognising technology's role in the production of the 'spatial geometries' that govern access to resources (Dourish, 2006; Massey, 1995), what the framework developed and the insights across the studies show is that the material organisation of spatial production (including technologies) plays a constitutive role in enacting and reinforcing particular values, rights, hierarchies and exclusions, but also in the formulation of new rights. What an Ontological Politics points to then, is that the 'right to space' (Soja, 2010) can be understood as the right to multiplicity and the subsequent right to hear and understand, be heard and be understood. Here then when designing for more just spatial processes and in/for place-making, rather than looking for ways in which technologies can connect those affiliating to the same values and practices (Aoki et al. 2009, Dourish, 2010), we might instead design for ways in which technologies can bring to the fore and connect the multiple and various practices that make place to open up possibilities for its re-making. In this respect, designing for the right to space might be also understood first and foremost as designing for the 'right to multiplicity and polyvocality'—in its dialogical sense (Hauser and mclellan, 2010)—as a right to affect one another and our common surroundings, a right to transform and be transformed. In other words,

a right to spaces where we can change ourselves while changing our surroundings (Boyte, 2008).

7.3 Nurturing forms of social activism with HCI research

Of concern in this dissertation has been HCI involvement in ongoing processes of making place with the development of digital artifacts, tools and socio-technical processes as means of cultural and spatial production and distribution. In chapter 3, I combined Ontological Politics (Mol 2003) and Vernacular Rhetoric (Hauser, 1999; Hauser and mclellan, 2008) with Public Work Philosophy (Boyte, 2005, 2011, 2008) to orient my design practice and interventions in and for the everyday politics of place. The perspectives were beneficial as they allowed me to focus on the ‘effects’ and the spaces that design and technological artifacts might be able to assist in forging while recognizing how designed objects and socio-technical artefacts are themselves vernacular rhetorics; they allowed me to inquire into, not just how design and digital artefacts might enter the urban space (Markussen, 2012), but also what spaces might people create *with* them.

The design tools and socio-technical processes, then, as vernacular rhetorics, invited the creation of vernacular spaces but also expressed values: the purposeful disruption of place singularities to open possibilities and imagining in/of place; the assembling multiple practices and multiple spatio-temporalities (political, social, institutional, past and futures, etc.) with an aspiration to dialogue; the implication of the social and material fabric as a means to express issues, desires and visions with. The work, in this sense, extends established design methods, such as cultural probes (Gaver et al., 1999; Sanders and Stappers, 2014; Boehner et al., 2007), by shifting the focus from the design of a novel system to the way digital tools and socio-technical processes might help creating political spaces of vernacular rhetoric for the shaping and re-shaping of the places we live with.

The perspectives adopted and the insights in the case studies align with work that has sought a socio-political dimension for HCI design and research (DiSalvo et al., 2014, DiSalvo 2012, Le Dantec, 2016). Yet, the cases also force us to confront with the embodied and political dimension of place and questions around the nature of the labour involved in forging and maintaining these political spaces. In the following I discuss what an everyday politics approach can offer to HCI research concerned with experimenting and developing what may be regarded as progressive forms of social activism. I argue for the necessity to support and sustain civic

actions across difference (beyond us and them) as a pedagogical proposal, the potential for embracing the role of the researcher as an agent of change in these endeavors, and how we might frame imagination as an important political practice in the production of spatial processes.

7.3.1 *HCI in/for place-making as a pedagogical proposal*

In chapter 3, I suggested that the methodological perspective developed would allow me to explore the productive potential of multiplicity as well as inquire into the ways in which HCI research can open up conditions of possibilities through action-based activities (Boyte 2005). Across the case studies, digital objects, designed tools, digital artifacts and media operated in ways that brought people into a *place of possibility* and produced particular, yet contingent, effects. In different ways, the tools disrupted and unsettled singular views of place, and configured the activities in ways that would purposely structure personal responses inviting the co-construction of particular imaginings. Yet, the tools “offered guidance without specification” (Ingold, 2013), opening opportunities to imagine reflexively, where the *individual* cards (City Walk) and *individual* suitcase fostered a space where walker and resident had to “turn into him/herself” and make his/her own associations between places, the tools and him/herself and construct his/her own meaning, while engaging within cooperative relationships.

In this respect, the tools and processes opened relational spaces that were at once semi-public and semi-personal/private—personal responses against public places in the city, personal accounts ‘placed’ in a ‘collective’ case travelling person to person. In this way, the tools invited the revealing of positionalities, the exposure of who and what the walkers/residents considered important in respect to the collective production of places and communities in the city/estate and the walking trails. Positionality, then, can also be understood as a standpoint, ‘where we see from’—which give way to personal imaginings (Harvey, 2000), formulated within our past experiences, which conditions idea and images of the future that people aspire to (Udan, 2009). Technology allowed the bringing together of many positionalities, practices across different domains (political, social, cultural, etc.) and times. While authors criticised how the spatio-temporalities driven by technologies emphasising speed preclude time to imagine and construct alternatives (Harvey, 2000), the cases show instead their productive potential. Indeed, if “how far we can see” depends on spatio-temporal constructions (Harvey, 2000), the multiplicity of

practices (vernacular, institutional) across different times (past, present, future) opened opportunities to imagine what it may be to think (or be) in a different position or situation. In this respect, whichever ‘positionality’ we may display, this should always be understood as relational and open to change.

In this sense, then, resources for an everyday politics of place-making necessarily entail the relational formulation of life experiences and practices that support the imaginings of places and socialities we aspire to. In both studies, the bringing together of multiple voices, practices, multiple spaces and times in place was intentionally structured, in a way that gave purpose and coherence to discussions and conversations. The socio-material designs in both studies were ways through which voices were at once brought together and re-distributed materially. In Chapter 5 I argued that designing for ‘*con-testation*’ might be about opening opportunities to produce and re-distribute spaces to ‘bear witness together’, testify and acknowledge each other’s voices to start with. Yet, what the insights show is that the visibility of different voices and practices side by side doesn’t always generate polyvocal spaces (dialogue), and that hearing doesn’t necessarily mean *listening* and *understanding* how the different practices might be related to one another and to the places we live in. Indeed, given the significantly divergent histories, cultural backgrounds, meanings and interpretations of voices/practice, making sense *together* was not an easily accomplished task, which required instead time, effort and a certain degree of openness.

The processes fostered through City Walk and the Suitcases, entailing the bringing together and re-distribution of voices and enactment of place with associated tasks, might be regarded as something akin to a political learning process: learning about others’ life histories and values, about planning and institutional processes, re-accessing our own positions, and recognising each other’s potentials, while also developing new relationships to places. In some respect the tools and processes strived to support both cooperative and collaborative relationships. Yet, while cooperative work might be understood as a “doing” accomplished by dividing it among participants, collaborative relationships provide opportunity to learn from one another, negotiate meaning, and improve social skills involving mutual engagement in a coordinated effort (Roschelle and Teasley, 1995: 70). The process in Pala Road, then, can be understood as a collaborative process that through the making of the walking trail strived to support their search for what community and place might be.

The focus of design and participatory processes in Case Studies 2 and 3, was on enabling the creation and re-distribution of vernacular spaces in place to explore how such

processes might support practices, rehearsing of civic agency and opportunities for self-development. Rather than strictly problem-solving, the actions aspire at forging spaces of contestation and dialogue where alternative imaginations of place and forms of communal living might emerge. All of these activities did not try to set place aside from the flux of change (saving), rather they were ways that actively re-shaped places in the present, with a look into the future, investing our own connections between pasts and presents, and between different practices, thus attempting to create an alternative basis for a (different) future (Massey, 1995). These actions and activities had a performative dynamism capable of creating and disrupting orders of knowledges, discursive spaces to recover histories, values and formulate rights towards the ‘re-making’ of place.

In the cases, we have seen how it is in action and working together that we begin to make sense of our diverse practices, values and desires and what these may mean in respect to the collective production of the places that matter to us. From the cases, the development of skills to work in common requires the development of capacities to embrace uncertainty, to take risks and allow ourselves to imagine alternatives; to learn to live with and embrace multiplicity; to listen and to put ourselves in somebody else’s shoes—to imagine what is it to be in a different situation. Empathy here becomes not just an “ethical experience, a great act of humility but also a good political direction” (Oz, 2012: 32). As Verran reminds us, “listening and learning are important practices of crafting different futures, but these cannot be pre-defined in advance but are matters of “attentive participation” (Verran in Kenney, 2015:7) and action. The cases presented are just one modest, initial attempt of putting into practice what it may mean for HCI to take action-based approaches to forge spaces for the re-making of place and to develop habits of civic agency as a pedagogical proposal. Public Work Philosophy calls for the ‘reconstruction’ of the world through communal labor of co-creating the commons and realising our potential by working together across differences (Boyte, 2005). In the words of Dewey, we need to cooperate “by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience” (Dewey, 1939:3).

Yet, Boyte points out how through technologies more often than not, politics mobilises the ‘righteous’ on one side against the enemy on the other side and teaches nothing in the way people learn about the other or to negotiate difference (Boyte, 2005: 79-80). Indeed, in the words of Bowers:

it is this working with dissensus that is the major challenge and is so absent from political debate. Instead we have this parade of uniform separate antagonistic identities. The old. The young. The uneducated. The dispossessed. The underclass. The middle class. And people who speak about them or in their name while lamenting the tribalism of British politics and using a rhetoric to reproduce it. The easier it is to speak in these terms, the easier it is to make scapegoats and demons, and lay the ground for fascism (Bowers, 2016).

In the current socio-political climate, action-oriented approaches based on a politics of ‘adversarial activism’ might not be helpful in designing for progressive forms of social activism, as they reinforce already existing divisions, and nurture an “obsession with the enemy and with the use of alarmist narratives for mobilizing” (Solnit, 2005: 28). While community is often regarded as a collective of largely identical citizens (Coward 2012)—in designing for the civic sphere, our challenge should be to look for ways to keep the disparate stories going, to enable spaces where heterogeneous actors and collectives can be related and learn from one another, not to cement oppositional grounds (us and them, etc.), but where partial accounts and differences can be recognised and productively worked with. At the same time, while the aspiration might be to place citizens as co-creators of democratic society with governing bodies (Boyte, 2005), as we have seen in the third study, authorities’ and institutions’ openness to be transformed in participatory spatial processes cannot be assumed. Also, the subtle ways in which institutional processes can, unwillingly, disempower already disenfranchised communities, point to the importance of autonomous spaces where fractured communities can craft their collective identities of action. However, autonomous spaces across social groups, and collaborative spaces with authorities are not exclusive. Yet, the times and spaces, strategies and tactics as well as forms of dialogue need to be responsively devised.

As much as empowerment and social innovation with and through technologies might be predicated or aspired to in HCI, significant challenges arise when working in this area. Critical views on the effectiveness of empowerment in HCI interventions have problematised the typical life-span of research projects that sees researchers dipping in and out of communities and contexts (Taylor, 2013), with projects seen as too shortsighted in relation to ambitions of emancipation and potentially even producing detrimental effects on the communities and places they intended to support (McCarthy and Wright, 2015). If ‘empowerment’ can be understood as the process by which people can come ‘to a sense of their own powers’ (talents, skills, etc.) and a ‘new relationship to their own contexts (Lather 1991:4 in Lennie et al., 2003), then HCI research must strive to work with and take into account the times and spaces that such processes actually demand. This understanding of empowerment point to processes that are necessarily

and intrinsically pedagogical in nature. That is, in thinking about the contribution of HCI to social goals, civic pedagogies become both the subject and object of HCI research and innovation, which might be understood as a collection of socio-technical activities and processes aiming at “*transforming the world around us and ourselves in the process*” (Boyte 2005).

While technology might give an impression of being detached from the processes by which “things” and places get made, following Ingold, we might think about technology as techniques: as skills and capabilities of particular human subjects (Ingold, 2000). From this perspective, design and technologies can only be understood in such relational matrix (Ingold, 2010: 314, 318). Thus what may be empowering is not the technical artifacts, technologies or the design tools per se, but whether they can support the enactment of people’s values, the development and deployment of their skills of cooperation, of sense-making of the different values, meanings and points of articulation in a situation that can lead to a new appreciation of where we stand and where we might want to be, our powers, as well as to new transformative relationships with the people and places we live with.

7.3.2 *The role of the researcher*

Across the case studies, I observed, listened, mobilised and helped organise spaces and processes using a range of tools that my expertise allowed. My role in the second and third case studies was as central as the role of each and every walker and resident in the making of the walking trails. In the process, I listened, learned from others, but also proposed my own ideas, visions, values—not as something set in stone but as a contribution to the ongoing processes of spatial production. The tools I designed were a means to open up dialogue with people I engaged with about the issues and concerns that I also *personally* cared for. My role and positioning, particularly in the third study, was an ever-changing ongoing achievement between different expectation and aspirations, including my own, for the project (McCarthy and Wright, 2015). Rather than being simply a facilitator without creative input (Manzini 2016), I played an active role in the processes, at times helping ‘breaking the rules’, while also proposing and experimenting with new rules. This points to the way in which we, HCI researchers and the tools and technologies we design, can also be bearers of values and articulations of aspiration of communal living. The HCI researcher is not external but internal and constitutive of the transformative processes we might study or help create.

The understandings of design and the design of technologies as the products of research has shifted to HCI design research agenda comprising a constellation of activities that can support or strengthen social goals and innovative and progressive forms of service provision at local scale and/or socio-political action that may lead to social change (Le Dantec 2016; Manzini 2015, 2016). The role of the researcher is central in these processes, and we are only beginning to come to terms with the deeper implications of the values embedded in the systems and processes that she forges and the ways in which the researcher is herself a carrier of values of communal living and aspirations for better or more just systems and practices when working in these contexts. In this sense, the HCI researcher can be seen as forger of social movements and progressive forms of communal living. Through the processes described in both case studies, I opened spaces where multiple enactments of place, issues and values could manifest, be inter-subjectively questioned and made sense of, though not necessarily “resolved”. While the limits of solutionism entail the tendency to avoid accounting for complexities and leaving out all the critical discussions (Manzini, 2015, 16), my role entailed the opening of spaces where motivations, hurdles to action, reflection and rehearsal of our potential to affect others and our surroundings could feed into the broader conversation about the future (Manzini, 2016: 57; McCarthy and Wright 2015). While solution or change might give an impression of something finite, transformation is ongoing.

DiSalvo et al. (2012) suggests that one way of measuring success in politically-driven, civic projects, is to see whether the process has advanced understanding on the issues at stake. Arguably this might in effect be the hardest to track as it requires sensitivities in that understanding of issues entails an inter-subjective process of growth necessarily dictated by the times, rhythms and pace that such processes require and that therefore, it may also be uncomfortable, troublesome and lengthy. Such processes then require that we, researchers, develop sensibilities to the embodied dimension of issues (how they are felt and lived) as well as their becomings. The cases also show that the ‘measurement’ of success is also a complex endeavor, which may be different for all involved according to their own aspirations. The methodological perspective, concerned with embodied politics as a site for the expression of values and of social action, provides a way to begin to explore the consequences of our work in this realm. The challenge for HCI design in civic projects is that we also understand how issues and democracy are lived and felt contextually and subjectively (Hauser and mclellan, 2009) and how these might become and be transformed across time also because of our interventions.

Gordon (2014) refers to ‘meaningful inefficiencies’ to denote projects that use technologies to intervene in the urban space and offer alternative experiences and modes of understanding the city, thus differentiating these practices from the technocratic drive toward efficient computing in the smart city. What the cases show is how spaces of vernacular rhetoric, of (re)imaginings and negotiation of meanings in and about the city are means of productions, and have their own functionalities and ‘efficiencies’ that should not be discounted—but instead valorised. They are effective and capable of producing powerful organising forces. By calling them meaningful yet “inefficient’ we, HCI researchers, might run the risk of closing down the political and indeed practical opportunities they carry within. If it is true that social change takes place first in the imagination and that revolutions start in the mind of people (Castells, 2012), that politics arises out of the spread of ideas and the shaping of the imagination then the symbolic and cultural acts that HCI research can foster, have real political power (Solnit, 2005).

7.3.3 *Matter of hope and imagination*

We have seen across the studies, the ‘work’ and care that went on in the processes of FB posters, City Walk, and Pala Road/Oreth Park and how the affective qualities of these spaces and the possibilities for action were co-created at the intersection of human/non-human (Suchman, 2007; Law and Mol, 1995). These were material-doings that called for care and generated care (de La Bellacasa, 2011, 2012). They also generated imaginings and hopes. STS and HCI scholars have advocated for the political potential of ‘things’ due to their capacities to represent concerns (MoC) and call for assemblies (DiSalvo et al., 2014; Latour, 2004; de La Bellacasa, 2011, 2012; Marres, 2015). Aligning with feminist scholars who sought to add an embodied and affective dimension of ‘things politics’ with “matters of care”— I sought to engage with the everyday politics of place-making in a way that recognises their emotional dimension and their becoming (de La Bellacasa 2011, 2012). Yet, next to this recognition, in the three case studies what appeared to be productive was the positing of questions/issues as something that could be positively reframed as aspirations. Here perhaps in thinking about the production of spatial processes towards the formulation of rights (Mayer, 2009) it may be productive to ‘assemble’ around matters of hope.

Till suggests that all participatory spaces are political as they call for the negotiation of the personal with the social, and the individual with the collective, “where hope is about bringing to the fore mutual aspirations to make the world a better place” (Till, 2005:9). Hope

does not discount the uncertain nature of ‘MoC’ (de La Bellacasa, 2011, 2012; Latour, 2004) but includes an element of risk taking and trust: “hopefulness is risky, since it is after all a form of trust, trust in the unknown and the possible, even in discontinuity” (Solnit, 2005: 29). While the outcomes are not known, it draws attention to the underlying intentions that drive actions. Beside caring relations (Light and Akama, 2014), we must nurture desires for something to happen, and trust that they can happen. Hope in the everyday politics of place sets an intention for the possible and suggests that places and things can be re-made differently. It calls for aspiring for a better future (Till 2005), where defining what ‘better’ might be is precisely the political question that processes of re-making places call for. They call for place, the “civic” and communities not as something to be “policed” or “controlled” (Mol, 2013) but as something that deserves the freedom and right to be worked out collaboratively (Dewey, 1939), to aspire to and in need of the necessary skills to collectively consider and rehearse the varied possibilities and the varied practices that, across time, contribute to particular effects, affects and configurations of communal living. That is, how these practices collectively can make and re-make the places that *we, collectively, want to belong to*.

The frame of spatial justice (Soja, 2010) was helpful in aiding further understanding of the spaces HCI researchers might help disrupt or reconfigure through their work. It asserts that participation in spatial production as a human right is about the right to define and craft these space as well as the right to give form to our collective imaginations. The notion of ‘right to spaces’ points to the way these ‘rights’ and ‘spaces’ are in need of being defined and should always be understood as future-oriented practices in constant becoming, making, re(con)figuring. These perspectives call for HCI to search constructive and transforming ways in which we can be agents of our futures, to explore spaces for the expression, production and negotiation of meanings and forms of dialogue between citizens and institutions or spaces that at least can put us in the position to have that dialogue.

McCarthy and Wright (2015) suggested the notion of “in between” as a generative and productive space in which modes of ordering and categories of identifications can be questioned and unsettled. With HCI research and design we can support the surfacing of the inherent spatio-temporal hybridity of places and their interconnectedness with elsewhere (Soja, 2010; Massey, 1995), we may look at the potential of memory and places’ multiple (hi)stories as sites of resistance, not consumption (Hauser, 1999) to give form to imaginings with powerful performative and affective qualities. These imaginations are ones that can connect “things that were previously disconnected, for the creation of new pathways, possibilities, hopes, and

dreams” (George David Miller in Solnit, 2003). The task is to nurture imaginative and hopeful practices in the everyday—to re-imagine what a “justice” in and of place can be, to re-appropriate the city as site for imagining through practices that can awake the past and disrupt the present in order to transform both our presents and futures (Haraway 1988). We might also understand the right to space as the right to re-imagine, put in practice and *transforms* our civic lives and the places that we care about. Imagining then, is a political practice because the ways in which we re-imagine places and our communal livings have implications for the way we do politics (Massey, 2005; Mouffe, 1999) and the way we can re-imagine politics has implications for the way we can imagine and re-make places.

In the studies in this dissertation I have looked at the possibilities and imagining that design tools and processes could contribute in opening and the kind of participatory spaces they could afford. In his speech “Creative Democracy—The Task before Us”, Dewey emphasized how the endeavor of renewing democracy needed inventiveness and creative activity (Dewey, 1939). Creative activities and imagining are not abstract and detached from everyday life, but embedded in our daily life, practices and experiences. Yet imagination and creativity also need nurturing and need times and spaces for collective rehearsing. Imagination concerns democracy and politics as they are about the sort of futures we aspire to and hope for and might be understood as a pre-requisite for social action (Solnit, 2005). This is why opening spaces with design and technology to collectively “rehearse” possibilities and giving them form might be considered as an essential requirement for HCI research concerned with the crafting of our communal futures and re-making of places, and developing the necessary skills to never quite believe that ‘There Are No Alternatives’ (Thatcher in Harvey, 2000).

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to develop understanding on the everyday politics of place-making, the role of HCI and technologies in and for the everyday politics of place-making and design in/for this area. The dissertation contributed a methodological framework aiming to both understand the role of technology and design in the everyday politics of place-making, and guide the design of tools and participatory processes to support the making and re-making of places. The dissertation contributed three case studies and related insights and digital tools and socio-material/socio-technical processes as ways to inquire into the methodological framework. Below, I revisit and summarise how I have explored the key questions this dissertation set out to investigate in order to achieve its aims.

8.1 Research questions

Question 1: How can we develop understanding of the politics at play in place-making and the potential role of communication technologies in these processes in relation to issues of spatial justice?

Chapter 2 began to examine this question by bringing together a critical review of literature from a range of disciplines that served to develop understanding of the multiple aspects at play in the politics of place and place-making. Chapter 2 positioned firmly place-making within the realm of the political; it highlighted the central role of values, meaning making and imagination in the politics of place and the need for HCI to open spaces to support people develop skills and capacities to formulate values and rights across differences—as articulated within the right to the City and a spatial justice perspective (Soja, 2010; Mayer, 2009; Harvey, 2003). In Chapter 2, I pointed to the need to examine the interrelationship between meanings, cultural representations and political action, the intersection of processes of place construction (place-meaning) and institutional processes of place/space production, while exploring why and how people might become advocates for change in the places they live in. The chapter also highlighted the need for empirical approaches to explore the nature of the spaces that technologies and HCI design practice might be able to forge for public and social movements formation within a spatial justice perspective (Soja, 2010).

Chapter 3 presented an cross-disciplinary methodological perspective developed to inquire into both processes at play in place-making and the role of HCI technologies and design in/for the everyday politics of place-making. Firstly, the chapter positioned everyday practices and, more specifically, everyday discursive practices—Vernacular Rhetoric—as actively involved in the shaping of places and realities (Mol) and in the formation of publics (Hauser 1999, Hauser and mclellan 2010). Vernacular Rhetoric was particular useful as it draws attention to the ways in which through mundane discursive practice in all their forms—including technologies and their uses— movements, collectives of actions and publics are continuously shaped and how through such practices possible realities are imagined and then made. This methodological perspective was used in Chapter 4, which explored how Vernacular Rhetoric could be used to guide the empirical analysis of processes of spatial production and the role of technologies in the course of political action. The chapter also served to inquire into and develop understanding of the intrinsic relationship between cultural memory, meaning, affect and the formation of publics and social movement capable of political action. Here technologies appeared to play a significant role in providing a space where FB posters could formulate their cultural voice and rights leading to political action (Soja, 2010). The case study, as a way to inquire into how Vernacular Rhetoric can be applied to the study of technologies in the course of socio-political action, was useful in drawing attention to the significant implications of objects and technologies in processes of meaning-making and place-making.

In Chapter 3, I combined Ontological Politics (Mol 1999, 2003) and Vernacular Rhetoric with Public Work Philosophy (Boyte 2003)—Everyday Politics—to propose an action-based approach to HCI design practice, aligning with the radical principles of the Right to the City and Spatial Justice (Soja 2010, Mayer 2009, Harvey 2003). Everyday Politics looks at how HCI design and technologies might open spaces to build capacities, create and share values and meanings for the formulation of collective rights towards the shaping of our common environments. To this end, the approach proposed three orientations to design: relationality and cooperation, learning and development and accountability. Relationality and cooperation suggested that HCI design and technologies practice can contribute to the politics of place-making by fostering spaces of cooperation where diverse practices, values and meanings can be related to one another and thus open up possibilities (Boyte, 2005:137). Through such spaces HCI design and technologies can foster learning and development whereby empowerment might be understood as the processes by which we come to terms with our own powers and

new relationship to our surroundings. Here, I suggested a re-positioning of professionals and citizens as collaborators, equally expert in their own differing ways and domains. Accountability pointed to the need for the recognition of the active role of the researcher and his/her voice and political positionings in design practice, participatory processes and technological interventions. It also included the necessity to account for our intervention through empirical analysis of the effects generated through HCI design and technologies.

Question 2: What technologies and interaction design methods can be developed and used to foster engagement with the everyday politics of place-making and support people re-envisioning their futures?

Chapter 5 explored how the framework developed in Chapter 3 could be put in practice to design tools and socio-material processes for political engagement in the everyday politics of place-making. This was done through the development and enactment of a two-part method—City Walk—that employed digitally supported urban walks to support the articulation of issues and imagining in and about the city at the intersection between the social practices and procedures and mechanisms of city planning. The two-stage process aimed at fostering opportunities for cooperation where the diverse practices, values and meaning in and about places in the city could be related to one another. The processes also fostered spaces for civic learning: learning about planning procedures and laws, learning about participants’ concerns and desires, as well as reflective processes in which walkers could contemplate their relationship with authority and their own potential and agencies in processes of place-making. Here audio archives, walkers’ recorded opinions well as counterfactual maps were used to foster imaginings and re-envisioning of places in the city. The study showed significant potential for situated media relating to open spaces where different practices, opinions and stories could be brought together in place. Yet, the study also showed that, for place-making and the formulation and re-formulation of rights leading to action, more sustained encounters and opportunities for sense-making across the multiple and diverse practices, meanings, and values are required.

Question 3: How can participatory processes and digital tools be used to support communities in their processes of re-making the places they live in?

Chapter 6 explored this question by presenting a collaboration with a community of residents and a housing institution wishing to co-create a digital walking trail about their council estate undergoing urban regeneration and concerned with ‘rebuilding’ their community. The chapter explored how the methodological perspective developed in Chapter 3 could be used to

guide the design of socio-technical processes and digital artefacts—the Digital Travelling Suitcases—to support the residents in their process of story collection and re-distribution. The suitcases were purposely designed to support residents engage with people from around their neighbourhood, the housing institution’s and the regeneration’s team. All the stories collected were then reviewed in a convivial curatorial activity and made sense of in relation to one another and re-allocated to six different locations around the estate, which could be accessed via an Interactive Voice Responsive system. The insights revealed the nature of the complexities at play in regeneration projects; they showed the productive potential of such participatory processes that aim to reveal and bring together the multiple practices that come to constitute place and give them form. The insights also pointed to the difficulties associated with carving out spaces in power-saturated contexts where roles and ways of seeing and understanding residents and housing institutions appeared to be fixed. Empowerment, here emerged as a complex and challenging relational process that demanded its own times and pace. Yet, despite the difficulties residents encountered in using the cases, the value found in processes that supported spaces of dialogues (mutual understanding) between the multiple and diverse practices of re-making place as an ongoing endeavor, spoke of the right to affect one another towards the ongoing shaping of our common surroundings.

8.2 Conclusion

This dissertation contributed a methodological framework to both understand processes at play in place-making, technologies’ implications in these processes and design in/for the everyday politics of place-making. Through the three case studies, this dissertation accounted for, I contributed three examples of putting the methodological framework into practice. Future work might adopt an everyday politics approach within a spatial justice perspective—not only to analyse the active role of technologies in re-producing social (in)justices but also to employ it towards the production of more just participatory spatial processes as a matter of right to transformation. This dissertation invites future work to explore further what it may mean for HCI research and HCI researchers to be socially responsible agents of change—through action-based culture shaping activities towards the making and re-making of the places we inhabit. Such perspective requires an attuning to the spaces, paces and rhythms that ongoing transformative processes demand. Future work might explore further the potential for HCI work to open spaces where multiple and different values, practices, lifestyles and actors

(institutions, civics) can be related, understood as tied to one another and productively work with; spaces where rules can be broken and new rules and rights can be envisioned, formulated and put in practice. HCI research is in a prime position to open avenues of experimentation for new ways to imagine and put in practice what more fair and just democratic practices in the 21st century can be. This work necessitates HCI to develop sensibilities to recognise and accommodate the mundane multifaceted ways in which social actors strive to affect change in the everyday; it requires the development of capacities to take a chance at changing ourselves while changing our surroundings and the institutions that can actualise civic will.

Appendixes

A

A.1 Initial Research

A.1.1 Street Diary

From manors, I come to explore the Eastern motorway path and raised deck behind the Laing Art Gallery. With Manors behind my shoulders, I approach the walkway – alongside cars in the main road from the East side of the town, this is where the two pathways depart splitting on two levels: a path for the cars on one level and another for pedestrians on another level. I rise up towards buildings greeting my sight with desolation as paint shivers from windows to bricks to eyes. A quick and rushed job, neglect does not deserve care or manicure or time for that matter.



To my right I notice a white wall, with brushes and briefings at hand another quick paint job to cover up some vernacular cry, laughter or song: white on white, shadings, markings and pigments of white, establishing hierarchies and double standards. I turn and move forward to get to another island, where more paths and walkways split. I want to collect evidence of activities and life here. Yesterdays' nights, the night of the 4th of October or was it the 23rd of September. The sweeper has been through here many a times. Purple brushes on brick, purple on purple, brown on brown, red on red.

As I turn towards the opposite side I see through the metal bars another square into the dark. It stinks in here. It stinks of piss. But then this is another 'passing by'. There is nothing to buy here. Not even a drink. So? Why bother. Not even the Premiere Inn is bothered, or is it?

And why should they, should we. I was told that this place is dangerous. “I wouldn’t advise you to go through there at night. If you can help it. Or if you do, just be careful. Take a taxi. Its better.” I was also told that there are fights here some times. That a man, one night, was threatening a woman and her mate with a jam jar, first. Then, with a knife. I was told that two women clamped on each other, one pulling the hair of the other. In the end, the first had managed to rip off the hair extension of the other.



Jim comes here often. Every day or every other day. He is a street ranger. His job is to “patrol” this area. He tells me there are many areas in the city where homeless or heroin takers go to and he is paid by a private company contracted by shops in the city to keep Newcastle’s streets safe and clean. His job then is about checking that everything is in order and whenever it is not to report it so that the intervention team to come and clean it up. “Needles. Rubbish. Graffiti. They don’t look good”—he says— “they are not safe and they need to be removed.” Broken stage lights replaced by ceiling fixed beams. Dim and shy revealing slowly more cans and debris of meals and talks and talks and talks. What life is hosted and unfolds here. What are the dreams that come by, salute and depart from here? More shutters and previously opened shops perhaps. It is dark here. I bet nobody knows what to do with this place, that’s why there is not word about it in the strategy for the city of tomorrow. But what would the city of today say? What staging would you rather imagine for this? Yes, you.

A.2 City Walk Stage One – Socio-Material Design

A.2.1 List of prompt cards for City Walk Stage one

- Capitalism – making the rules and living within them
- Cars jamming – traffic control in the city
- Decisions in the city – who decides your future?
- Failure or success in the city – the gain and losses of modernity
- Growth industry – the creation of city environments
- Ideas for the future – resisting or embracing change?
- The new future – planning is for people and people is planning
- An ordinary man’s achievement – a place to share personal wishes, hopes and opinions
- Owning the future – property snapped up by builders and developers
- The patron of preservation – modern block in the city
- The people’s theatre – the place to go if you are interested in politics
- Planning practice – pockets developments in the city
- Planning rules – public lands in the city
- Planning strategies – ways in which plans are realized in the city
- Popular revolution – successful plans in the city realized through people participation
- Public relations in the city – the dissemination of proposals and objectives
- Revolutionary perspective – what do you think would be beneficial in the city
- Technological advance - resisting or embracing change?
- The regional forum – places and ways to discuss what concerns us.

A.2.2 Walk Routes for City Walk Stage One

Route A

Start at Peace Bridge

Walk around Newcastle University Hub of Free Education.

Have a look at the Participatory Budget Training Centre on you left hand side.

Turn left and walk down the West Central Motorway.

You will see the City Zoo at your right-hand side.

Head towards the Citizen Science and Technology Lab.

Once there, have a look around.

Resolve back and walk down Thoughtful Road.

At Poulson roundabout, take New Street.

Have a look at the Regional Parliament and Children University.

Walk down Jacobsen Street till the roundabout merging with New Street.

From there, head towards the T. Dan Smith Monument.

End at the T. Dan Smith monument.

Route B

Start at the Participatory Budget Training Centre.

Walk along Needle Street towards DreamMarket.

From DreamMarket head towards Scott place, then turn onto To NoWhere Street.

Proceed through Sound Street and head towards the Human Rights Monument.

From the Human Right Monument head towards Old Town.

Take a peek at the Graffiti Research Lab along the way.

At Old Town, walk down Anarchy Avenue.

Resort back to explore Old Town a bit more.

From Old Town go to the People's Theatre. Have a look inside.

From the People's Theatre head towards the T. Dan Smith monument.

End at T. Dan Smith monument.

A.2.3 Prompts, archival content and maps of discussions and outcomes

Below I report a sample selection of prompts and related archival audio content.

	Question/prompt	Archive content
The regional forum	Places to discuss what concerns us	The critical years were the one I led the city council and the city vision was to make Newcastle regional capital. And the philosophic background to that was the arts, NA which became the prototype for the rest, and the intention was and we pursue the intention to have all the other cities up here and the idea was that you would create the community democracies in the town and cities and they now existed, you would have three river conurbations and above them you would have a provincial authority controlling the social heights of the economy. And then you would abolish the House of Lords, select from the elected representative from each of the 11 provinces those who would serve in the House of Lords, which would be a shot in

		<p>the arms for democracy and a blow in the guts for the power structure as it now is. And then you would have the advantage of interprovincial discussion centered in the house of lord – generating its own influence and reaching out from the problems of regions like the north east into the third world developing new social technologies and creating employing in each of those spheres because that’s where the next growth will be not yesterday industry but in tomorrow’s needs. {European end of that}. [Now that may sound visionary]. That’s the only way that we can make democracy begins to live and involve the local communities and the people within that community: give them the right to discuss the things that concern them and that framework would enable to do that.</p>
Technological Advance	Embracing or resisting change	<p>Many of the leaders of those days, none of them were prepared to lose that post war election and consequently they were more interested in fighting the war than they were in fighting the peace. I mean war time who thought about ideas for the future? I mean tragically masses of the working class going down in the 100 and thousands to the graveyards and to the hospital to injury and death after 10 years of unemployment – the labor party concentrated on fighting that war rather than fighting the peace. There was some people who were concern and a lot of people did a lot of thinking, but there was none seriously looking at the advances and consequences of that technology which was the computer that was put together to split the atom on the future. I couldn’t pretend that I understood it, but what I did know was that the railway system, the mining system and the docks, and the ports and all of that kind of structure and infrastructure in Britain was going to be transformed and I was aware of that right. So, I could see the need to restructure government. so, you had a political structure that was incapable of absorbing change.</p>
The patron of preservation	Modern blocks in the city	<p>When I was speaking at the council on housing and planning the lobby was full of layers. When I fought the Midland back in grey street and Barkley bank and the speeches are there, when I fought the battle about cousin the builders. They were just waiting for me to tip over the edge but maybe I was a bit too smart for them. I don’t know I prepared a great length and made what they were and are very significant speeches. It had not been for the battle we would have big modern block in Grey Street and a bigger one in Collingwood Street. Now that was approved they had outlined and building planning permission they were to buy out. So, then I was attached for wasting rate-payers money buying out planning permissions. Now then I wanted to bring in a planning officer, who did I want to bring in? I didn’t know I went to those who knew planning officers and they said there is only one man in Britain W. Burn who was third down the line in surrey but he had been working in</p>

		Coventry. I knew the Coventry plan in 1939 but I knew the planning in Coventry before it was blown up, people will say ah! Because it was blown up! No way, Coventry were way ahead of their time long people [...]. That man was way ahead of its time and I was fortunate that I knew him. So, my concept of planning was rooted in the politics of the time. So, I went for Burn and I got Burn by one vote so much authority I had in the group.
Popular Revolution	What do you think would be beneficial for the city?	In 1950 there was a queue a mile long to be councillor down in walker where I was [...] it was the first time that labour got power in Newcastle and it was after the war, so I had to compete with them and sat at the back of the hall listening to them talking and I thought “oh what have I got myself into here” they hadn’t a clue as to what they could be doing in a city like Newcastle, a city in the heart of a declining region. A capital city of a declining region so 20 years’ work and maybe and we can use this as a base in order to radicalize and bring into revolutionary perspective what the labor movement should be doing in Britain and I set about it as I set about it in my early days and I go look for people, because it only takes ten people to do anything. I mean you don’t even need to know what you are going to do. Get ten people to agree on anything and you can achieve. If they have the conviction and between you, you have the ability to organize and then to publicize and get it across to ordinary people.
Owning the future	Properties snapped up by developers and builders	There was a great deal of animosity towards me because I was buying all the central areas land, I had declared that all the major sites would be developed by the local authority and where that wasn’t possible that no developer would develop unless the city had equity in the development. Now that required new rules because the LA didn’t have equity in joints developments and they certainly didn’t have equity. [...] So every site that became available we bought and the controversies are there to see in the press. What right might have the LA to buy the land and when we came to build like swan house I went for the architect who I thought was right for the job, I brought in Robert Matthews, for the library Basil Spence, for the city center Arnie Jacobson
An ordinary man’s achievement	A place to express personal wishes, hopes and opinions	A rarefied atmosphere of politics – what is it that the ordinary man wants to achieve as opposed to what he is misled to believing he wants to achieve.

<p>Capitalism</p>	<p>Making the rules and living within them</p>	<p>My view is that capitalism itself is amoral and fundamentally corrupt and if I were to give an example I would say that the major corruption within capitalism are all within the law and all legal. And that capitalist really make the law so they don't have to break them. They make them and then they live within them.</p>
<p>The new future</p>	<p>Planning is for people and people is planning</p>	<p>Smith always said that planning is for people and people is planning and you realize what has happened to a city and you have people agree with you its like a manner in the desert. So you come together and collective think well we can do this we got the power and you have that power but you got to take time. [I mean when we took the control of the group I said at the time it would take us two years and it did take us two years - these things are [..] and you got that burning ambition to do something and you do it and everyone will play a part and do it. You get the nasty phone calls, you make this move forward and you succeed, and then you still got a lot of convincing to do – so each one had to convince 20, 30, 40 others. And smith could convince most people. We were the new future and that what were trying to be the new future.</p>

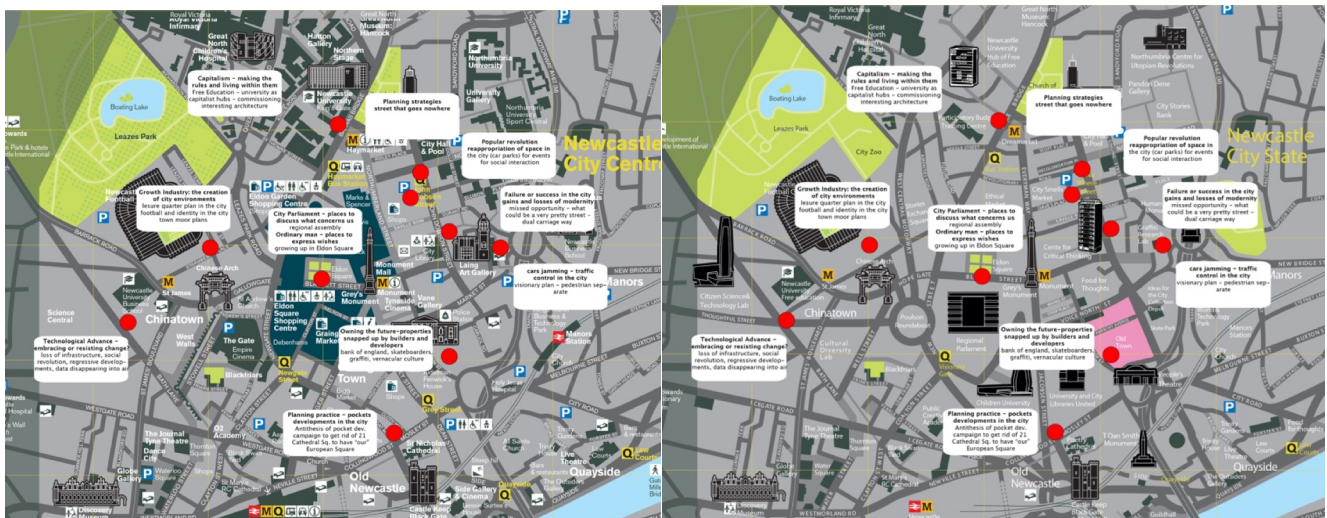


Figure above — Stops generated during City Walk Phase 1 on Newcastle map (left) and the designed counterfactual map (right)

A.3 City Walk Stage Two – Socio-Material Design



Figure above — Walk guide cards samples



Figure above — Walk guide' map (right) and image from the brochure design (left)

B**B.1 Initial engagements**

Figure 4 – materials for initial engagements: prompt cards (top right and left), coaster gift (bottom right)

B. 2 Suitcases Design Process

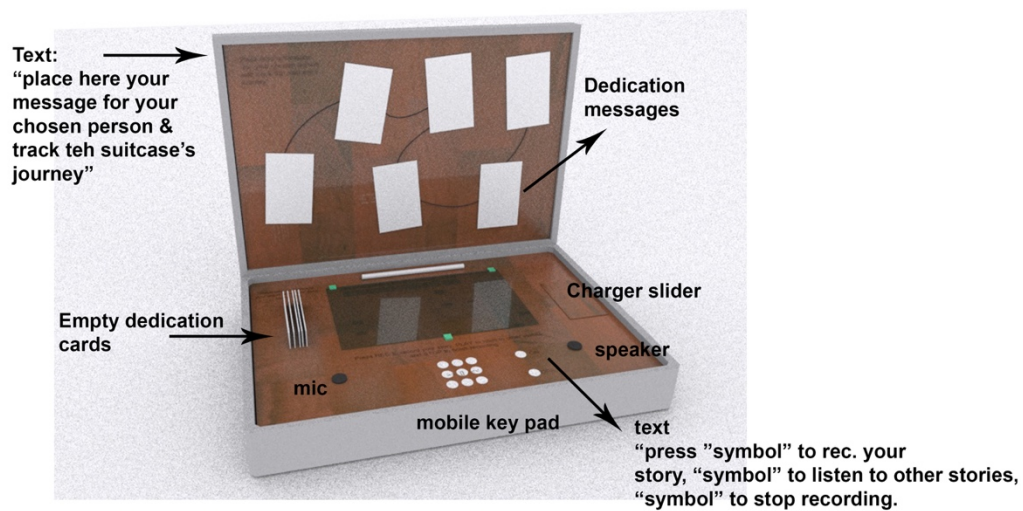
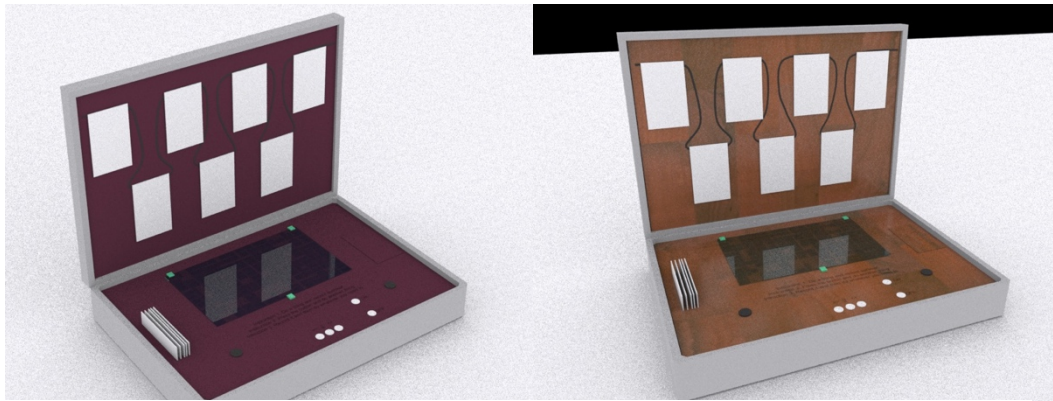
Each suitcase (there will be four in total) is given to a group member (they can also work in pair). In the suitcase, a range of prompts / possibilities (maximum 6) are provided to start with but as initiators of this process – they are also free to modify or add questions/prompts. Participants need to choose one prompt / question that gets asked to several people to achieve a multiplicity of responses form the same questions/ topic.

B.2.1 Suitcase – step-by-step

- 1) The participant (eg. Tracy, Steve, etc.) who initiates this process decides on a question prompt (with Clara). They can start off by recording their own response or use the existing snippets of stories we already have (this is good as it ties in work already done and participants wont feel like they haven't achieved anything).
- 2) S/he decides who is the first person she wants to share her story with / ask the question to. NOTE> range of prompts also might be provided e.g. someone who works here, someone who built your home, someone close, someone who used to live here, a new neighbor. (To be confirmed but this might take the form of a dice in the box or the prompt might be inside a bag of seeds).
- 3) The participant writes in a dedication / tag
eg. "Dear "name" I would like to share my story with you because...."
- 4) The participant then takes the suitcase to this person.
The suitcase can be left there overnight or for an agreed time. (Also the participant can actually stay with them while they record their response).
- 5) A photograph of the contributor (or of something that the contributor decides is important) is taken and added at the back of the original dedication. (Also here I am testing whether some stickers style photos would work better, which could be added on the outside of the suitcase as well. [Please note this the camera is not embedded in the suitcase at this stage / it is something aside].
The marker pen is used to draw where the luggage has been and is going.
- 6) Now the new participant who just recorded the story needs to think of another person to ask the question / prompt to – and so on.

Note. It could be that the "initiator" will have to keep track of the suitcase and maybe have to bring it herself/himself to the next person chosen by the last participant who contributed stories/opinions (Clara will be there to support this as well).

B.2.2 Render and initial plywood prototype



Note that the four suitcases are plain black and green in the outside (the one above is for testing).

Instructions on Suitcase

All instructions are numbered:

1) Press "X" to record your message / story, "X" to listen to other stories, and "X" to finish recording.

- 2) Choose someone you want to share your story with
- 3) Place here your message for the next person & keep track of the suitcase's journey
- 4) Take the suitcase to your chosen person.

Prompts

Prompts will be inspired by the stories told so far, which will provide themes and questions - such as:

Rosemary's stories about the work with the young people in *Pala Rd.* listening to them and the stories she used to hear.

Pierre's idea of beauty and the love for simple everyday things in *Oreth* (watching trees at sunset).

Donna's stories of playing in the dump when she was young and daydreaming at the window in her flat.

Tracy's community celebrations and work, including the making of the Dell.

Steve's changing name of the estate and constructing a "brand new history" for *Pala Rd.*

Francois – uneasiness with residents treated as customers and the mismatch between orbit's management and community organizing.

These should direct themes for the questions / prompts (still to be defined properly) – this also means that participants can choose to upload to the IVR number associate with their chosen prompt a story they have already told / share in previous walks/workshops (if they wish to).

Suitcase - external

Vynil wording outside the suitcase (to be confirmed) – something along the lines of "Walk the Talk Oreth Park" - "Stories to help us plan our futures...".

Place-holders for photo - stickers to be placed outside the luggage

Some small gift to be taken from the luggage

Still to be confirmed but something should be taken out of the luggage and left behind – something as small and simple (and symbolic) as a bag of seeds, a badge, or a sticker photograph (possibly a photograph of the giver).

Technical spec

The technology embedded in the suitcase is very simple and basic:

Mobile phone

External speaker

External mic

I encountered some problems with the sound quality with testing the IVR, which I am still getting around/ thinking about possible alternative solutions.

IVR spec

Associate each question/ prompt to a specific number (max 6 > prompts)

The initiator will be notified (text) every time someone adds a new story to the pool of messages.

Playback > the first time it is used it plays back the latest recording thereafter a random selection is played back.

The initiator also has access to a web-page (to be confirmed with Vas/) where s/he can listen to all the messages being recorded.

NB > Call back is an option as well but certainly would be good for later stage and for the paper based options > i.e. the same prompts are presented in envelopes form and sent them to people who are not living locally anymore.

B.2.4 Suitcases Design Parts Details

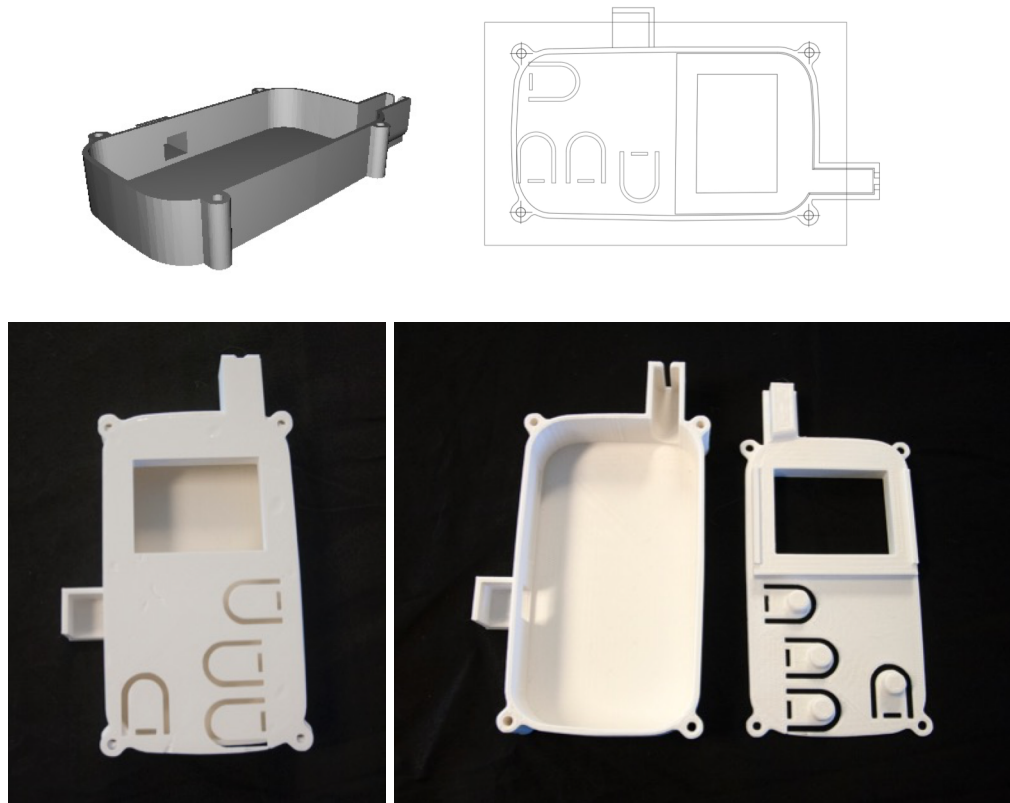


Figure above — 3D Printed case for GSM phone

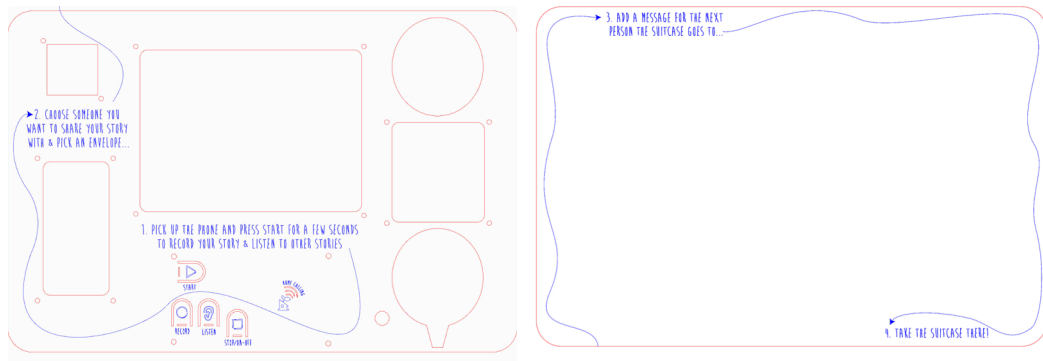


Figure above — Illustrator file sample of Suitcase design



Figure above— Suitcase interior parts (left); suitcase interior bottom case (right)



Figure above — Interior Suitcase - detail



Figure above — Detail - envelope with seeds-gift and cube

B.2.5 IVR Specifications

Press 7 (start) to speed dial

Welcome message that says *“to record your story press record and to listen to the story recorded for you press listen (6)”*

Record Function “#”

“Start recording after the sound of the beep, when you have finished press record again to stop recording”

Once they have recorded their story they should be able to listen to it straight after → *“Your recording was...”*

“If you would like to record your story again press the record button again and your previous story will be deleted.”

“If you are happy with your recordings just hold for a few seconds to return to the main menu or press stop to end the call.”

Listen function “6”

Audio recordings are played back in the reverse order they were recorded.

“The latest story that was recorded is...”

After listening to the latest story (story for you) – they have the option to listen to all other stories.

“If you would like to ear all other stories press listen again. Or if you would like to end the call press “Stop”

Stop function “off”

Ends the call.

B.3 “Walk the Talk Oreth Park” Walk guide and map

ABOUT
WALK THE TALK IS AN AUDIO TOUR PROJECT CREATED BY LOCAL RESIDENTS, THAT TELLS STORIES AND EXPERIENCES ABOUT LIVING IN ERITH PARK. WE THINK THAT SHARING STORIES CAN HELP US PLAN A BETTER FUTURE. PLEASE LISTEN TO OUR STORIES AND SHARE YOURS WITH US!

HOW IT WORKS
VISIT OUR SIX PLACES SHOWN ON THE MAP AND DISCOVER OUR PLAQUES. CALL THE NUMBER SHOWN ON THE PLAQUE AND OUR APP. WILL RING YOU BACK!

ERITH PARK WALK THE TALK
LISTEN & RECORD STORIES ABOUT THIS PLACE. CALL FREE 01491352037

SANDY ROW (1910)


THE WONDERMENT (1900)


OUR TOWERS (2015)


PARK LIFE (CIRCA 1900)


CONTACT US
ERITAWALKS.CO.UK


WALK THE TALK
OUR AUDIO STORY WALK




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