

## Performing Place Promotion - Implaced Identity in Marketized Geographies

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### Abstract

In the period that has become known as late capitalism, processes of commercialization are continuously taking on new forms. These tendencies enact an influence on how people understand themselves, the social relations they engage in, and the world around them. Geographical knowledge is no exception and has become increasingly shrouded in the language, symbolism, and tropes of marketing. Following the work of Judith Butler, we explore how these tendencies have profound implications on our self-construal, making discursive ‘implacement’ an expedient factor in the marketization of identity. Further, we examine how two interrelated marketing discourses deal with place as commercial entities: the country-of-origin effect and place branding. In their commercial vernacular, they provide salient examples of subtle yet inescapable effects on the understanding of self-construal. In presenting this sensitizing diagnostic, we hope to further advance issues of stakeholderhood as it pertains to the place-world, and to offer new trajectories of critical inquiry into the commercial relevance of place.

**Keywords:** *Marketization, place branding, country of origin, performativity, Judith Butler, place attachment, rooting*

## Introduction

It has been broadly recognized that in contemporary late capitalism, described as a deepening or expansion of the principles and scope of the market (Jameson, 1991; Mandel, 1975), virtually no institution or human activity can be said to be decoupled from market interactions (Fisher, 2009; Harvey, 2012; Tadajewski and Saren, 2008; Wood and Ball, 2013). Intensified with online connectivity and global trade, the logics of market-based accumulation seem to be increasingly permeating all levels of social activity, rendering personal characteristics and histories marketable assets that can be acquired and traded as endless sets of derivative commodities (Arvidsson, 2016; Zwick and Denegri-Knott, 2009). All social activities are thus increasingly subsumed into significations of market-based value, and are thus understandable by virtue of their relative place in a system of exchange and consumption (Hietanen et al., 2018; Østergaard and Fitchett, 2012). Following these developments, we increasingly understand and describe the performance of human activities and institutions using nomenclature and terminology derived from managerial discourse (Fisher, 2009; Harvey, 2001, 2012; Wernick, 1991). What is at stake is how people's understandings of themselves become constituted as perennial capitalist entrepreneur-consumers, increasingly lacking the option of other frames of mind (Berardi, 2015; Fisher, 2009; Scharff, 2016). These societal tendencies, or the "colonization of a discourse by promotion" (Fairclough, 1993: 142), have also become known as *marketization*, in which a capitalist epistemology permeates the social to a point at which it constitutes the "dominant mode of the production of culture" (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2007: 146; also Arvidsson, 2005; Fitchett et al., 2014; Zwick and Bradshaw, 2016).

In light of these tendencies, we examine the implications of marketization on the formation of geographical knowledge, and the implications of its reach to our understanding of ourselves. The concept *geographical knowledge* is herein employed to indicate the summative means of making sense of the world around us, emphasizing a narrative and mythological understanding over that which is perceived through immediate experience. Inspired by recent re-invigorated interest in the spatial and geographical dimensions of marketing (e.g., Chatzidakis et al., 2018; Giovanardi and Lucarelli, 2018; Warnaby and Medway, 2013), we explore the marketization of places as well as the subsequent effects on the emergent subjectivities which they describe and normatively discipline. We apply the work of philosopher Judith Butler to uncover how subject positions are not only performed in relation to their geographical implacement, but also how marketing discourses concerning place ascribe a particular scope of acceptable rationalities for inhabiting them. While marketing scholarship has long demonstrated an interest in the uses of place (Applebaum, 1951; Kavaratzis, 2005; Warnaby and Medway, 2013), it has, unlike the tourism literature (e.g., Urry, 1992), seemed reluctant to explore how the commercialization of places happens discursively and how these changes do not only have the potential to alter the logics of worldly places but also self-worlds for those who dwell there. We thus argue that discourse affects and transforms geographical knowledge not only in regards to the logics and practices of marketing (Tadajewski, 2008, 2013), but also the very possibility of knowledge (Burton, 2001; Catterall et al., 2005) and the constitution of subjectivity.

In exploring the marketization of geographical knowledge, we also seek to assess how this process is perpetuated in academic literature and how it discursively comes to influence appropriate performances of the self. This pertains to how the place-world is ‘written’, and that such language

implies certain demands on the subject by establishing a scope of possibility for being and acting. Here, we make a key distinction in not primarily engaging with what can be described as the marketization of *space* and spatialities (see Castilhos and Dolbec, 2018), which is an important aspect of the wider process often captured under the rubric of gentrification (Smith, 1996; also Harvey, 2001). Rather, we are engaging with the marketization of the symbolic orders of *place*, answering a call to examine how place takes on new meaning in the era of “the jet, ’net and the fast food outlet” (Gieryn, 2000: 463). While the processes that warp place and space overlap in many ways, we emphasize that marketized geographical knowledge engages with symbolic meanings directly, and thus engages the making of place on the level of myth and narrative. Thus, we instead focus on what Borer (2006) identified as a longstanding lacuna in urban geography, which is the way in which “people attach meaning and symbolic value” (p. 180) to places. In light of the proliferation of place-related marketing literatures, we thus wish to offer a critical perspective through which the implicit tendencies of these discourses can be brought under further scrutiny.

More specifically, we assess how, in performing identity, the literacy of geographical knowledge emerges as a disciplinary force on subjectivity in two ways. First, it provides a means for extracting meaning from ‘implacement’, which denotes what one’s being in place means (Casey, 1993). Second, it qualifies this meaning through the subject’s historical relations to place, in that it provides a scene of ‘recognition’ (Butler, 1990) for the ‘I, who originated from there, is now here’. These forces discipline the ways in which particular subjectivities are performed and how social power relations are reproduced as a result. Places are also multitudinous in their rich and varied arrays of meaning, infinitely divisible into smaller parts from different vantage points. This

profusion of contexts, contingent on ‘readings’ of place, comes to form discursive geographical knowledge, which describes how the world is continuously in the state of being symbolically written and read by learning and relearning what meanings should be assigned to specific places and to those who inhabit them.

### **Place in marketing**

There is a growing interest to explore the intricacies of place in the context of marketing (e.g., Chatzidakis et al., 2018). In particular, the study of place branding has been developing rapidly as of late (e.g., Giovanardi and Lucarelli, 2018; Warnaby and Medway, 2013). These literatures typically draw from the influential account of place as generally constituted as in contrast to space; the former is understood as space with associated meaning, while the latter lacks meaning and thus fails to attain delimitation (Tuan, 2001). This dichotomy of place and space is also a mainstay of human geography (e.g., Amin, 2002; Wainwright and Barnes, 2009). In this view, places deprived of their unique meaning such as, for instance, the all-but universal form of the airport lounge (Augé, 2008; Hietanen et al., 2016; Knox et al., 2008), do not truly ‘return to being space’, but can instead be thought of as being in a state of placelessness (Relph, 1976). Such in-between conditions can also manifest through market logics which can transform place-related objects, practices and activities (see Nieuwenshuis, 2016). These processes do not merely morph places and geographical notions into something akin to products, services, and firm-like entities that can be replicated and promoted as “sites for the production of geographical knowledges” (Harvey, 2001: 212), but they also affect our way of understanding geographical knowledge in an encompassing sense

(Giovanardi and Lucarelli, 2018). Broadly, they offer a frame for our ways of thinking and our encounters with the world, our very ‘literacy’ of being in place.

In order to explore how the symbolism of place is subject to marketization, we focus on two prominent place-related streams in the marketing literature. First, we examine the use of place mythologies in the context of promoting commodities; a practice typically captured under the rubric of the ‘country-of-origin effect’ (hereafter COO) (e.g., Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). Second, we turn to marketing scholarship that explores the various practices related to treating places as commercial entities in a general sense and which is known as ‘place branding’ (hereafter PB) (e.g., Kavartzis and Ashworth, 2005; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). These literatures largely presuppose the commercial as an inherent part of spatial and social relations, to the degree that these commercial aspects can be regarded as ‘natural’ or desirable (also Fitchett et al., 2014; Hietanen et al., 2018). We focus on how these research streams themselves constitute discourses in which geographical knowledge is reconstituted in the vernacular of marketing. Furthermore, we also examine the consequences of the proliferation of these marketized understandings. For theoretical grounding, however, we first examine Butler’s central concept of ‘performativity’ as the means and expression of identity, and outline how the marketization of geographical knowledge has various salient effects on this process.

### **Implaced performativity**

The work of Judith Butler (1990, 1997, 2004, 2005, 2010) has exerted an enormous influence in a number of academic fields. Her theorizing emphasizes an anti-essentialist and non-foundational

account of identity, painting it as something that should not be thought of as a given. Rather, identity is always something that comes into being in social contexts, where it is generally ‘ascribed’ to us and enacted by us in embodied arrays of social power relations (also Rose, 1997; Shankar et al., 2006). Butler’s work has been most prominent in how identity is enacted in the context of gender (e.g., Bell, 2010; Braidotti, 2008), where its profound disciplining influence is derived from its construal as a naturally given property that nevertheless does not constitute an ‘immutable’ force (see McNay, 1999). Butler (1990) construes identity as “performativity constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (p. 68), which shifts the focus from identity as an essential property to one continuously in a state of reproduction through the process of its enactment. Similarly, she observes how “our bodies come to us through language: the belief in the pre-culturally material body as the ground for identity itself depending on the circulation of meanings in culture” (Turner, 2000: 114). Butler (1990) herself makes clear that

The rules that govern intelligible identity, i.e., that enable and restrict the intelligible assertion of an “I” [...] operate through repetition. Indeed, when the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity (p. 145)

This account of subject formation thus perceives the performance of identity as being dependent on the discourses which constitute it, both by restricting the agency of the subject, and at the same time revealing the contextual and contingent nature of how subjectivities come into being.

Butler’s work has been employed to explore a vast variety of issues, including vulnerability and precarity (Bell, 2010; Maclaran, 2018), technologies (Mackenzie, 2005), branding (Nakassis, 2012), queer theory (Borgerson, 2005; Fraser, 1999; Kates, 1999), and geographical inquiries concerning how places and spatialities performatively co-exert subjection (Gregson and Rose,

2000). It is noteworthy, however, that Butler's work has typically not focused on capitalist market relations directly (Borgerson, 2005), even though she has briefly extended performativity to markets in relation to agency (see Butler, 2010). In spite of Butler's lack of direct engagement with power dynamics that can be said to be derived from the market as a social order, her influence has carried over to marketing and consumer research in a variety of ways. Her work is particularly discernible in scholarship exploring marketing from a critical perspective (Schroeder and Borgerson, 1998; Spicer et al., 2009; Tadajewski, 2010), as well as being prominently featured in literature on how managerial ideals are performed against the backdrop of gendered identity tropes (Johansson et al., 2017; Maclaran et al., 2009).

For the purposes of the present work, we concern ourselves primarily with two tenets of Butler's scholarship. First, Butler construes several facets of identity (gender, race, etc.) to be the result of their performance *as if* they were ontological givens. This implies that the very perception of something imbued with cultural meaning can be taken-for-granted as a precursor of identity, but is *also the means* that enact this function (Butler, 1990). This notion can be readily extended to place, as belonging to or originating from a place is readily an immediate precursor of how one is seen in social settings and performs one's identity in light of this gaze of recognition (Gregson and Rose, 2000). Second, this discursive injunction, when placed within the wider scope of social power relations, renders a performative 'rationality' that delimits the boundaries of behaviors that are acceptable and to be encouraged (Bell, 2010). In turn, this makes the performance of geographically constituted identity susceptible to the ways marketization can affect the symbolic meanings of places.



### *Discourse and recognition*

A central issue in Butler's work is how norms of what is 'known to be true' come into being in the context of performing subjectivity. This regime of truth is construed as something which

offers a framework for the scene of recognition, delineating who will qualify as a subject of recognition and offering available norms for the act of recognition [...] a mode of self-crafting that takes place in the context of the norms at issue and, specifically, negotiates an answer to the question of who the "I" will be in relation to these norms (Butler, 2005: 22).

The notion of *recognition* is central for performativity. Recognition does not assume an externality that would render the subject totally passive, but rather signifies an understanding of the self that can only come into being relationally in an encounter, hypothetical or real, with an 'other'. This situation is always encapsulated by norms that come to serve as a discursive injunction into our performativity of self as a frame of reference where "we are not deterministically decided by norms, although they do provide the framework and the point of reference for any set of decisions we subsequently make" (Butler, 2005: 22). The subject is thus in a continuous state of being reproduced through performativity, but the frames of this performance are temporarily stabilized in discourse, which relies on shared understandings that are not readily malleable in cultural contexts.

While Butler has discussed recognition pertaining to gender at length, her work can be extended to how geographical contexts carry powerful norms in and of themselves (see Holt, 2008; Nash, 2000). Places are not passive containers of subjects, and neither do they act only as formative knowledge regimes. Rather, places significantly affect the possibilities and ways subjectivity becomes constituted, as they provide us with a basis of enacting ourselves in various ways and should thus also be considered performative (Gregson and Rose, 2000). While places exert a

powerful influence in this sense, they by no means give finality to identity formation, but they do integrate into the latticework of cultural referents available to us in our self-construal. Butler (2005) describes this impossibility of proving a final account of one's own self, observing that "prehistory interrupts the story I have to give of myself, makes every account of myself partial and failed" (p. 78). Contextual social norms condition the self and its ways of acting as sense-making devices that in turn guide the performances that constitute the subject. Borgerson (2001) has observed how this makes identity something akin to an "epistemology of difference" (p. 177) in that I can only be 'I' by drawing on the social norms that render me understandable to myself in relation to others. Butler (2005) further elucidates this by noting "that there is no final or adequate narrative reconstruction of the prehistory of the speaking 'I' does not mean we cannot narrate it; it only means that at the moment when we narrate we become speculative philosophers or fiction writers" (p. 78). It is exactly in the act of writing the fiction of self that place becomes a regime of 'truth' that extends its formative influence on performance. It is in this context that geographical knowledge emerges as a constituent element of the social norms that comes to constitute the scope of possibility of a performable subjectivity. It does so by offering a means of 'recognition' which forms a disciplining normative force through which identities can be performed without encountering resistance.

Butler (1997) also develops the notion of *foreclosure*. Foreclosure denotes the delimiting potential of understanding through which performances are *available* in a given context, in that it "works not to prohibit existing desire but [also] to produce certain kinds of objects and to bar others from the field of social production" (p. 9). This process is pivotal in formulating a subject, as the 'I' answers the question of what is possible and what is impossible, and thus captures the limits of

subjectivity while simultaneously setting up a frame for desiring beyond this limit. This delimitation provides the means by which the fiction of the subject can be sustained by reference to an understanding that is defined by reference to a non-I. In both of these situations, recognition and foreclosure, cultural norms discipline the emergent form of identity at its moment of determination.

### *Placing recognition*

Before we explore what the symbolic ‘writing’ of places that conditions their subsequent ‘reading’ means for the construction of subjectivity, it behooves us to explore Butler’s consideration of what happens to those who cannot maintain a position of power in the performative orders of the dominant discourse. For Butler, the outcome is severe, as those who are subjected to power relations are discursively induced to become increasingly silent, they virtually disappear and become invisible in social formations (see Swanson, 2005). There is a great deal of impending vulnerability at play, and indeed the stakes become “whose lives are worth grieving and whose are not?” (Bell, 2010: 147; also McNay, 1999). Discourse thus not only delineates what rationalities construct those with the capacity to perform, but also differentiates in terms of the categories evoked in judging performances, be it gender, ethnicity, religion or even able-bodiedness (Bell, 2010). Those who are shut out ‘cannot be grieved for’, disappear from being recognized as meaningful subjects, and are thus left to carry the psychic scars of disenfranchisement with them. These power relations produce discourses that guide performance in the sense that they are to be understood as “pre-given entities, already bounded, identifiable, and knowable” (Butler, 2010: 147). This makes any resistance to dominant symbolic orders a potential source of dissonance or

non-conformance akin to a violation of a ‘natural’ order. As such, the resistance is likely to be met with counter-resistance, with an enactment of a symbolic violence in tow.

While Butler is invested in actual phenomena such as the possibilities of resistance, it has been argued that she is more inclined towards posing theoretical questions than opposed to postulating actionable emancipatory practices (McNay, 1999; Nussbaum, 1999). Nevertheless, her work allows for the identification of the subtle effects of language and how discursive systems both assign and allow some to perform and employ power positions in society. In this sense, her work facilitates the exposure of how discourse simultaneously disciplines and produces the potential of subjectivity, as well as capturing how “identities do not pre-exist their performance” (Gregson and Rose, 2000: 438). For scholars making inroads into geography based on Butler’s work, space is never an empty container where social relations manifest, but rather a prompt for “specific performances [that] bring these spaces into being” (Gregson and Rose, 2000: 441; also Massey, 2004). The same, we argue, can be said about place.

The process of formulating the place world thus imbues a historical trajectory to places as stages, props, actors, and trope-carriers simultaneously, defined by meaning (Tuan, 2001) and fundamentally contingent on emplacement (Casey, 1993). Before we explicate the influence enacted by increasingly marketized geographical knowledge, we begin by exploring its basis as it is reproduced in scholarly literature, exemplified here by two marketing discourses that reify a reading of place in a commercial nomenclature.

### **Marketing by place, marketing of place**

### *Selling place mythology*

The COO, a research stream in international marketing with more than 50 years of history (e.g., Dichter, 1962; Schooler, 1965), focuses on the alteration of attitudes and purchase intentions of commodities, such as products (Bilkey and Nes, 1982), services (Javalgi et al., 2001) or brands (Thakor and Lavack, 2003), dependent on their perceived association to a place. While the literature generally examines countries as a specific category of place, any place can act as the source of an effect (see Van Ittersum et al., 2003). This effect is copiously applied in advertising and branding today, with most brands drawing from some sort of mythology of place in an attempt to construct their own associated meanings. Naturally, this practice also exerts an effect on the understanding of the places in question (see Ostberg, 2011; White, 2012). A brand of Vodka being marketed as Russian is a narrative, not only about a vodka brand, but about Russia as well (Kravets, 2012). In this example, it is the mythology of a specific brand dyad, rather than some more general quality of Russian products that serves as the key ingredient in the branding cocktail. Unsurprisingly, given the natural richness of meaning attributed to places, the practice of both assigning and extracting meaning from them for marketing purposes is commonplace and includes various formalizations, such as legally protected origin indications (Newman et al., 2014). This has led to a proliferation of geographical understanding based on commodities, or ‘product geographies’ (L’Espeir Decosta and Andéhn, 2018), that are becoming increasingly salient mappings of geographical meaning-makings worldwide.

On a more abstract level, COO literature can be seen as an engagement with the mythology of certain places and how they can affect the appeal of commodities which are made to embody these

mythologies (McCracken, 1988; Nakassis, 2012). In many cases, the marketed origin is fully decoupled from the actual location of manufacturing facilities, but can nevertheless be put to use in commercial messages. To date, there has been little in terms of inquiry into the issue of what COO represents as a social phenomenon, as the literature features almost no critical examination of the consequences of the widespread use of origin indications throughout the over 60-year long history of systematic study of the effect (Andéhn and L'Espoir Decosta, 2018; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000). Yet, it has been recognized that the effectiveness of COO unfolds in tandem with global power relations (Varman and Costa, 2013), and given its general managerially-oriented focus, COO literature often makes discursive use of essentializing and romantic narratives of places to expedite commercial aspirations. As pointed out by Varman and Costa (2013), the 'North-South' divide in the promotion of products remains particularly commonplace, with the North generally being attributed with a superior image for products with long value-chains (e.g. Germany and cars), and with the South having to rely more prominently on mythologies related to authenticity of culinary products and craftsmanship related to various traditional products (e.g. Colombia and coffee) (Josiassen et al., 2013; L'Espoir Decosta and Andéhn, 2018; Van Ittersum et al., 2003). Through repetitive reference to place in the marketing of commodities, consumers' understanding of certain brands and products as associated with a place can become naturalized and "may affect the perceptions of differences that consumers have of different countries" (Mittelstaedt et al., 2004: 23). COO perceptions can thus be seen to generally correlate with the economic development of a country (Schooler, 1965; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999), and this co-dependence between commodities and geographical knowledge also sustains power asymmetries across the globe (Varman and Costa, 2013). This can be seen in how entire swathes of places can

be ordered into either ‘developed’ or ‘developing’ economies, and how the commercial use of place myths intertwines with meaning of places constructed on other cultural grounds.

The construction of discursive relations is perhaps the most salient when COO ascribes a connection between an entire category of commodities and a particular place (Josiassen et al., 2013), causing entire nations to be associated with whole industries such as automobiles (Germany), or just as easily cocaine (Colombia) or cartoon pornography (Japan). Importantly, when there is a commercial motive in ascribing meaning to place, this ascription follows logics of marketization that differ from less goal-oriented or organic ascriptions, and thus typically commands far superior resources for infusing commercially useful meanings to place.

### *Places as brands*

In addition to the COO literature, marketing scholarship has also made inroads with the symbolic construction of places in the form of place branding (PB), which at its core renders place as approachable by managerial intervention in a similar fashion to commercial brands (e.g., O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2000). While largely conforming to what was once captured under the rubric of ‘public diplomacy’ (see Nye, 2008) and thus not constituting a novelty by any means (Olins, 2002), the practice and academic interest in PB has gained notable traction in recent years (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Lucarelli and Brorström, 2014). While there has been recent efforts to engage PB more critically (see Giovanardi et al., 2017; Zavattaro, 2018), it should be emphasized that PB scholarship focuses on the commercialized understanding of places, discursively casting them as marketized commodities that can be altered to meet specific market goals (see Ashworth and Voogd, 1994; Giovanardi and Lucarelli, 2018), and in so doing,

reinforces a hegemony that is rooted in an implicit capitalist epistemology. More specifically, PB often entails activities geared towards meeting an array of distinct commercial objectives (Insch and Florek, 2008), such as attracting visitors, turning a place into a ‘destination’ (Hanna and Rowley, 2008), attracting certain types of new residents (Florida, 2004), attracting investments (Kotler and Gertner, 2002), or engaging in general reputation management (Anholt, 2007).

By adopting and being understood through a marketized vernacular, a place can be understood as having a value or ‘equity’ (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002), and this and many other discursive reconfigurations have allowed various public entities to reinvent themselves as quasi-enterprises (Cerny, 1997). Once understood as commercial entities, places become subject to a new set of objectives, and even moralities, increasingly geared towards development according to market logics. While often calling for ambitious development projects, it has nevertheless been noted that PB campaigns are rarely successful, in essence often entailing little more than ‘mere cosmetics’ of place (Kaneva, 2011). It has also been argued that this development constitutes a tendril of a wider neoliberal propensity towards undermining citizenship in favor of market interests (Harvey, 2001). In much of the PB literature this ethos seems hidden in plain sight, echoed in how there is “no reason why nations, like companies, couldn’t modify the way they were seen” (Anholt, 1998: 397). So, even while PB may generally have limited potential for fully actualizing its promotional intent, in a more general sense of discursive inscription it has great potential to affect places and, by extrapolation, citizens by making them understandable as (un)desirable in reference to market objectives (also Zwick and Bradshaw, 2016).



This tendency is perhaps most noticeable in PB scholarship in the manner by which the residents of a place are commonly seen as a key factor in determining its market viability. This is a long-established understanding of the role of residents in the context of tourism, in which ‘ethnicity’ is a competitive factor in providing visitors with ‘authentic’ consumption experiences (see Van den Berghe and Keyes, 1984). For example, the idea of the ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2004) is seen to represent an ideal type of not only workers, but even citizens. It has been claimed to represent a “new economic power which can be regarded to be the most relevant *capital* for economic growth” (Zenker, 2009: 25, emphasis added). One can also find references to a marketized understanding of residents in various rankings of cities according to PB metrics, where measurements can represent

whether the inhabitants of the city are perceived as warm and welcoming, whether respondents think it would be easy for them to find and fit into a community that shares their language and culture and whether they would feel safe (Anholt, 2009: n/a)

As a consequence, PB literature and its applications provide a reference of whom ‘the city’ seeks to attract as an ideal. PB indeed often says a lot about those being branded (Kerrigan et al., 2012), signaling not only to visitors, investors, or potential new residents, but also the residents that inhabit the place, what they should or should not be. The idea that residents themselves can be employed as ‘brand elements’ has been explored at length in the literature (e.g., Zenker and Erfgen, 2014), and is readily populated by ideas of what constitutes the desirable identity of a resident. This can be exemplified in how Florek (2005) provides an implicit typology of (non)desirable resident profiles for Poland, where “the common image presents Poles as a religious and suffering people throughout their history” (p. 206), and that the “people who live in a given country can be a great attribute and important element in its brand image. Ambitious, young and well-educated Poles can no doubt become natural ambassadors for brand identity” (p. 213). In general, one can readily

discern the impetus to found typologies for different categories of citizens in the literature, and this tendency has been also been noted in the context of the marketization of public spaces (see Castilho and Dolbec, 2018). What PB thus effectively proposes is a common transformational discursive order (Anholt, 2007; Florida, 2004; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014), and this motive seems to ground the literature even if PB activities are performed in close collaboration with stakeholders (see Aitken and Campelo, 2011), or features elements that promote inclusiveness (Rabbiosi, 2016). Indeed, even if inclusiveness remains a perennial and well-intended interest for PB, and has been expressed with concerns for “how broad does participation need to be in order to qualify as adequate?” (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015: 1378; also Campelo et al., 2014), the greater issue of marketization continues to be employed as the language in which the branded places become re-written. This language and its inherent logic of valuation invariably creates various forms of symbolic boundaries (Castilhos, 2019) that come to enact disciplining forces on those who inhabit the places and their possibilities for performing selves. Further, as with marketing communications in general, PB delivers a strong tendency to streamline cultural complexity and ambiguity to the point where it is not only goal-oriented, but also a cost-effective and commercially impactful form of communication (e.g., Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Pasquinelli, 2010; Zavattaro, 2018). In PB, the production of place-meaning thus generally becomes standardized to fit a capitalist epistemology, and this ‘regression to the most readily promoted mean’ becomes the discursive formatting of the marketization of the place-world. The effect of this discursive tendency readily extends to performance of the self in subtle but inescapable ways.

### **Situating the ‘native’ in marketized place**

### *Rooting implaced performativity*

As both COO and PB literature attest to, marketing tends to assign the label of production or consumption to virtually any social act, and this ‘forced enjoyment’ as current consumer ideology and productive duty of citizenship has been widely recognized in critical scholarship in the field (e.g., Arnould, 2012; Cova et al., 2011; Gabriel and Lang, 2015). In addition, marketing literature tends to turn to theorizing that occludes the varying potential of people’s *means* to consume (Hietanen et al., 2018), and place-related marketing literature often fails to problematize this asymmetry. If we accept that places are increasingly viewed as things that are subject to consumption and commodification, it should also be recognized that they are never consumed in their ‘entirety’ or equally, but rather in a partial fashion, as differences in the *means* to consume a place vary in a number of ways. Some have the ability to ‘choose’ their commitments to place, some do not.

For instance, there is a vast body of scholarly work on the issue of place attachment dealing with places at scales varying from neighborhoods to cities (e.g., Hummon, 1992). While this literature is somewhat fragmented concerning its use of the term attachment, which may entail a variety of different ideas regarding the relationship between the self and a given place (Cross, 2015; Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001), it is generally agreed upon that places play an important constituent role in defining those who live there (Proshansky et al., 1983). While a person may enjoy attachment to any place, there is a distinction to be made between a more casual attachment and a more profound relationship to place, the latter sometimes being referred to as ‘rooting’ in the literature. Rooting indicates a stronger linkage than the term attachment, and has often been taken to imply a central constituting property of identity (Appadurai, 1990). As Malkki (1992) points out, metaphors like

‘motherland’ suggest highly intimate relations between place and subject self-construal. Similarly, it has been noted that displacement from one’s homestead, while entirely possible in the spatial sense, is not something that separates one from the status of rooting in terms of symbolic implacement (Casey, 1993). In this sense, rooting cannot be readily avoided or resisted. For instance, moving from place to place does not free one from the profound effects exerted on self-construal by historical implacement (see Leonard, 1997), as what it means to be ‘a native’ is to be understood not in the spatial but in the metaphysical sense (Appadurai, 1990).

Places are created by and then emanate meanings that make us knowable to ourselves and others through cultural expectations. Returning to Butler, the understanding of the self as belonging to a place provides a powerful means of the social staging that occurs in the process of ‘recognition’, and symbolic meanings embedded in place readily lend themselves as a means of ‘foreclosure’ that provide a scope of what social understanding and action can be performed without encountering resistance. In the act of recognition, individuals can be attributed meanings based on their historical implacement and the relevant contextual power relations embedded in discourse. Performative vantage points for consuming places varies depending on economic means, and this ‘advantage of vantage’ is one that often perpetuates economic power relations and cultural norms. For example, an affluent British person might consume Bavarian beer, visit Germany, or decide to take up residency in Munich. The same person can also playfully assume the subjectivity of a ‘constituent other’ in a place through the appropriation of marketized offerings<sup>1</sup>. The ‘native’ of the place, however, is left without ability to escape these references. There are no viable means of

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<sup>1</sup> As a particularly striking example, see the growing popularity of ‘ghetto tourism’ (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/features/photography/history-controversy-debate-slum-tourism/> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2016/07/16/slum-tourism-how-it-began-the-impact-it-has-and-why-its-become-so-popular/>)

detaching from such emerging market meanings, even by displacement, as long as the rootedness of the native inhabitant is identifiable to themselves and the 'other' engaged in recognition, whether 'real' or imagined. Implacement is thus a collective process of ascribing the basis of identity performance. In this sense, the social milieu of implaced identity becomes akin to a natural order that cannot be readily done away with.

As Butler (1997) notes, resistance in these contexts is impossible without reference to what is resisted in the first place, as "agency of the subject appears to be an effect of its subordination. Any effort to oppose that subordination will necessarily presuppose and re-invoke it" (p. 11). However, this 'identification' need not be invariably negative, as Butler (2005) observes that to

be hailed as a "woman" or "Jew" or "queer" or "Black" or "Chicana" may be heard or interpreted as an affirmation or an insult, depending on the context in which the hailing occurs [...] whether the foreclosure, indeed the violence, of the totalizing reduction of identity performed by that particular hailing is politically strategic or regressive or, if paralyzing and regressive, also enabling in some way (p. 96)

Whether referral to place in identity construal can be said to be positive or negative, it must not be forgotten that the effect was there to enact its disciplining influence in the first place. It is an influence that disproportionately favors the reproduction of the logic of extant power relations, as well as the invocation of essentialized versions of place and the identities that accompany them.

As we have seen, place exerts a subtle yet inescapable influence on identity construal, which becomes visible in culture in performative acts. One cannot fully escape place mythologies, as resisting them keeps them alive by recognizing their referentiality (also Butler, 1990). This is similar to what Appadurai (1990) has called captivity, where the 'prison' of implacement to a specific place can be escaped, but the former captive will always understand her 'freedom' through

the burden of this memory. Place is inescapable, and thus rootedness carries with itself a vulnerability to an infusion of meaning. In our context, the marketization of geographical knowledge would be particularly potent, as those ascribing a capitalist epistemology to the colonization of ever new facets of social life typically also have the extraordinary economic means to do so.

### *The absent cartographer*

The idea that all aspects of human sociality are increasingly commodified is hardly novel, even in the marketing literature (e.g., Tadajewski, 2010). Yet, there is no grey eminence behind the throne in the process of the marketization of geographical knowledge, just the machinations of mass-consumption and the flows of financial capital that are constantly finding new ways to tap into forces that enact a transformative potential and to continue experimenting on commodification seemingly without end (Fisher, 2009, 2013; Lazzarato, 2014; Zwick, 2013). The marketization of geographical knowledge thus appears faceless, an array of flows born from no single source (Hardt and Negri, 2000). It is everywhere in its continuous act of disappearance, moving from discursive emergence to mundanity (also Botez and Hietanen, 2017; Patterson et al., 2008; Tadajewski and Saren, 2008). Despite its opacity, what the flow, enactments, and machinations constituted by ‘the market’ leave in their wake is an intensified understanding of place through inherently commercial rationales. Its manifestations in particular cases may be resisted (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2013; Chatzidakis et al., 2012; Hietanen et al., 2016), but the process offers no point at which it can be readily negotiated (Fisher, 2013; Hietanen et al., 2019). Opposition to it is thus risks becoming little more than Canutism without some unimaginably radical realignment of thought, which in

itself has been argued to constitute one of the pivotal properties of capitalism (Fisher, 2013; 2009; Stavrakakis, 2007; Žižek, 2002). But still, it is perhaps not entirely impossible.

For Butler (2010), the “existence of something called ‘the economy’ or, indeed, ‘the market’ [is a] series of discursive and non-discursive practices and institutions re-constitute the idea of the market as an existing and autonomous reality” (p. 148). Identifying it as such is the first step to resisting its status as a ‘given’ (Cova et al., 2011). We can, after all, strive to refuse the narrative of marketization, but the trouble is that its exceptionally subtle seductive influence is to readily assimilate such acts (e.g., Cova and Dalli, 2009). What is more, how many COO or PB scholars would even identify themselves in our analysis of their performative influence towards marketization? Yet, their writing seemingly suggests otherwise, especially if taken *in toto*. It is here, in the implicit reproduction of a market logic, that a multitude of processes, institutions and discourses find themselves accessory to the unremitting creep of commercial logics.

### *Owning place*

The ways in which marketing communications can freely ascribe meanings to places and draw their content from them is often taken for granted, but it also reveals that these meanings are not truly ‘owned’ by anyone in particular. Simply implying that a certain brand of pasta is Italian does not come with an associated price tag, even though that attributed meaning may be highly valuable if the connection between brand and place is strong enough (Andéhn and L’Espoir Decosta, 2016). Formal declarations of origin or claiming ownership of places may be well regulated, but ‘creative’ use of place-based meanings is readily available for anyone who has the performative means to do so.

Similarly, PB has been observed to have many inherent problems relating to its lack of democratic governance (Braun et al., 2013; Eshuis and Edwards, 2013), or even a failure explicitly self-identify as political in the more encompassing sense (Lucarelli, 2018). In a typical situation where a PB campaign is undertaken, the details are generally decided upon by a committee of consultants and a small group of select stakeholders, whose objectives can often be readily identified as clashing with (at the very least some of) those that are ultimately affected by the effort (Eisenschitz, 2010; also Giovanardi et al., 2017). However, it is not uncommon that the marketization of geographies takes the form of localized grassroots initiatives, for instance observed in the typical development of a so-called agri-tourism, in which a variety of ‘tourism products’ (Getz, 2000) appear through the activities of the farmers themselves (Tew and Barbieri, 2012). Yet, such grassroots origins apparently do nothing to prevent simultaneous logics of exotification and selective hyper-enactment of commercially viable aspects of culture (Costa, 1998; Pasquinelli, 2010) inherent to marketization. Furthermore, the commercial repurposing of places is often due to a lack of alternative means of economic growth (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005). Is the question thus simply one of either abiding to the ascriptions of marketized rationalities or one of economic desolation? This framing leaves only one answer. It is here we arrive to a core constituent of the marketization of geographical knowledge, in the way it *extends the use of a cultural commons* such as the meaning of place itself to a capitalist epistemology.

Marketization of places also begets an air of competition between various administrative entities that can seemingly infiltrate governance under a shroud of ‘necessity’. Indeed, as the ‘competitiveness’ of all places (see Begg, 1999) is to be understandable by virtue of their



interrelation (Andéhn and Zenker, 2015), marketization is set to discursively accelerate the ways it ascribes its normative orders to place. In a similar vein, Escobar (1995) noted how the discourse of “development assumes a teleology to the extent that it proposes that the “natives” will sooner or later be reformed” (p. 53). Marketized orders of place spread, and in discourse this can become readily expressed in ways where marketization of one place becomes a template for another, which further engrains not just a commercial monoculture, but even prompts the idea that there is only a limited set of trajectories for an economy to take<sup>2</sup>. This tendency is likely to be further enforced if places are increasingly understood as engaged in market competition for limited resources (see Kavaratzis, 2005). We’ve seen how the marketization of geographical knowledge operates by colonializing the meanings of places situated in the cultural commons, of which no true ownership can be claimed, thus morphing them to be available for use by any actor that wishes to employ them as commercial objectives (Mills, 1988, also Arvidsson, 2005). Places, it becomes clear, are not truly owned by anyone as symbols, but to discursively change their meaning is a matter of resources that are disproportionally held by some over others.

### **Conclusion: Marketized place and performative entrepreneurial enthusiasm**

We have attempted to outline how place enacts an influence on identity construal which serves as a potent means of ordering power relations. The reading of places has been identified as serving a central function in “degrading or romanticizing figurations of otherness in all its various guises, guises that may range from an exoticizing primitivism to a paranoid vilification” (Stevens et al.,

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<sup>2</sup> As an example from popular press, see how Thailand becomes discursively constituted as the more developed and desirable alternative (in spite of having enormous problems in the wake of unsustainable tourism) for Vietnam to follow: <https://www.smartertravel.com/9-reasons-why-vietnam-is-the-new-thailand/>

2000: 407). But the very same reading they can readily serve as a means of valorizing some places at the cost of others. Place is a highly potent instrument of meaning-making shorthand for ascribing identity positions to large groups of people, events, and objects. In this way, the unspoken attributing of ‘normal/deviant’ or ‘insider/outsider’ is discursively assigned. Similar tendencies of ascription are repeated in marketized communications with small regions or towns being exotified by making them more attractive as sources of products, destinations, or as fulfilling some other commercial function (Costa, 1998; Cleave et al., 2017; Pasquinelli, 2010). They thus become translated into entities which allows them to be readily ‘recognizable’ as ideals determined by market logics. Following Butler (2005), all these promotional acts constitute disciplining force that enacts norms on the ‘speech’ deployed in the narration of self, setting the scene for the recognition that disciplines or forecloses trajectories of potential self-construal (also Butler, 1990). In a very direct sense, one may observe how the commercial impetus of marketized place exerts ideological constraints that serve to disqualify some identity performances as less ‘valuable’ than others when juxtaposed to their implacement.

While we can presume that scholars and consultants following COO and PB literatures have the best of intentions, we encounter profound power asymmetry at work in their research, as the ones ‘rendering the map’ may have different interests than those affected by the rewriting of places (Duarte, 2017; Harvey, 2001). That being said, it seems that perhaps we now all increasingly not only read, speak, and write in the language of markets, but also perform the subversion exerted upon us in ways not immediately appreciable to us, even over the course of producing scholarly texts. To date, the reluctance of mainstream marketing to critically assess its own inscriptions is

relatively seamlessly continued in place-based marketing scholarship. Gregson and Rose (2000) poignantly express that

Silences such as these [in an academic discourse] have some very serious consequences: notably, they permit the representation of academic activity as the performance of intentional, knowing, anterior subjects; able to interpret and represent a vast range of other social practices for academic audiences to interpret in turn, yet being themselves somehow immune from the same process; in other words, out with the academic power's script (p. 447)

Perhaps we cannot reverse the tide, but outlining these tendencies may allow scholars of place-based marketing to view their craft more reflexively and to further the debate on who has the right to define the parameters of our, often implicitly, experienced and reproduced social realities.

What we have sought to achieve is to provide a complex answer to the simple question of what 'selling the village does to the villagers', which we hope can inspire others to contribute to charting these unclaimed areas still left on the map of marketing scholarship, particularly centered on the issue of the marketing logic that seeps through the fissures of our daily lives. We see how discursive ascription of meaning to place carries over to the people implaced there, thus setting the scene for how the inhabitants are 'recognized' and also how their possibilities of selves experience 'foreclosure' in various ways. A marketized literacy of a place ascribes identity performances that could be seen as the requirement of 'able-productiveness' in capitalist orders, constituted by entrepreneurial desiring (McNay, 2009; Scharff, 2016). For an inhabitant, it is not only enough to comply, but the discourse also ascribes another demand; one needs to performatively partake in marketization with great *enthusiasm*, as this is the affective imperative dictated by capitalism that can only recognize entrepreneurial selves (e.g., Lazzarato, 2014). The way the absent cartographer of capitalist proliferation thus provides the ideological grounds of recognition, is a constant background murmur that keeps of asking "who are you, what are you worth on the scale of values

recognized by society?” (Guattari and Rolnik, 2008: 55). Failing to adhere to this central ‘competence’ in performing oneself exposes one to the repercussions of being understood as deviating from a socially acceptable mode of recognition, and here only a continuous dedication to a ‘capitalized subjectivity’ will suffice (e.g., Hietanen and Andéhn, 2018; Hietanen et al., 2019).

Marketized geographical knowledge is thus revealed as holding the potential to act as a constituent of the “normative schemes [that] operate not only by producing ideals of the human that differentiate among those who are more and less human” (Butler, 2004: 146). It does not only determine what subject can be considered to be qualified as valuable, contingent on its implacement, but also renders ‘effacement’ of the subject positions that lack value by the same logic. Performing one’s identity is thus doubly implicated by marketization. Not only is identity made subject to a capitalist epistemology that increasingly ascribes frames of possibility and desirability, but it is inescapably linked to its situatedness in geographical knowledge, which is *simultaneously* being discursively made to abide by market logics. The situation not only detracts from the ability to recognize that some ‘ontological givens’ are merely constituted by their performance and ability to make recognition possible (see Butler, 1990, 2004), but that marketization envelops virtually all social spheres simultaneously, making the very act of giving an account of oneself beyond this frame ever more challenging.

We have attempted to lay out the basis of how implaced identities come into being and recreate their being through discursive ascriptions that are increasingly dictated by market interest. We see nothing that would indicate that this process is slowing down or that it could readily be reversed, nor can we offer obvious actionable means by which it can be addressed. Butler (1997, 2005) also

holds a rather bleak outlook for the possibility of meaningful resistance towards what guides performativity writ large. Still, the act of exposing marketization in its many guises holds potential, as watchfulness towards how marketization is being formalized and propagated in ever new sectors of our life-world can, if not prevent, leave us more sensitized to its implications. Failing that, these creeping tendencies and their ultimate maturation into disappearance, will allow marketized geographical knowledge to increasingly become a natural premise, even in how we give an account of ourselves.

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