The subject of place: staying with the trouble

DRAFT VERSION! PLEASE CONSULT PRINTED TEXT FOR FINAL VERSION BEFORE CITING

It appears, however, to be something overwhelming and hard to grasp, the topos [place]

- Aristotle, *Physics*, Book IV[i]

Places haunt us, and we haunt them

- Nigel Thrift, *Steps to an ecology of place*

What makes a place *a place*? A question that has eluded thinkers, from Aristotle to some of the leading social scientists of our age. Intuitively it can be sensed that 'place' belongs to a different register or modality of existence than other geographic signifiers such as 'space' or 'site'. As Kim Dovey (2010:3), has put it: "In everyday life we all know what place means, even if we do not experience particular places in the same ways. There is a crucial difference between the terms space and place in everyday language. To ask 'what kind of place is New York?' , may generate a variety of answers but this question has a sense that 'what kind of space is New York' does not". Relatedly, social scientists and philosophers have for decades been engaged in sometimes heated debate regarding how to conceptually distinguish between 'places' and 'spaces' (for an introduction, see Agnew, 2011).

It thus appears as if places exist in registers of intensities that are wickedly challenging to grasp or enumerate, to put into words or agree upon a definition of, to map or sketch exhaustively – at least without committing a serious fallacy of unwarranted reduction. Place-phenomena nevertheless appear to be crucial to be aware of in any endeavor to understand the complex

entanglements of social realities, perhaps particularly for those active in so-called 'place-making' professions, in which Dovey (2010:3) claims that taken-for-granted understandings of the concept presently underwrite "some dangerous practices" (Dovey, 2010:3).

For the past fifty years or so, the most common way in academic research to grapple with the challenging ontological status of place has been to render the concept operationalizable as either an 'objective' entity, that is: as part of the 'furniture of the universe', or as a 'subjective', individual human sentiment or private experience. In the first case, which could be called an *objectivist reductionism*, place is rendered manageable through an objectivistic reduction which removes from attention all the aspects of places that are apprehended as 'soft' or 'subjective'. In the second case, what could be called a subjectivist reductionism, place is instead made intelligible through a turn away from the world and solely into the internal realm of individual human psyches.

The question I wish to pose in this chapter is how we can find ways to begin to re-conceptualize place in a manner that, with the words of Donna Haraway (2010), 'stays with the trouble' of the entangled ontological complexity of the phenomenon of place instead of forcing us to succumb to unwarranted reductions. A conceptualization that may be of help in highlighting just how the concept of place appears to transverse the ingrained but highly artificial subject/object-divide which is latent in much of Western thinking. Instead I hope to showcase some of the intellectual tooling that may be of help in tracing the intertwinement, or even mutual constitution, of the 'subjective' and 'objective', as well as the 'material' and the 'social', which complex ontological phenomena such as places may help to open our eyes to. Borrowing words from Dovey, we can hopefully find some ways to explorehow to "move beyond a false choice between place as pre-given or as socially constructed" (Dovey, 2010:6).

The proposition that I wish to offer is that we do not approach place as either a subjective or objective entity, but rather as a relation that enacts both subjects and objects, what Karen Barad – drawing on Niels Bohr – dubs a *phenomenon*, or what Michel Serres calls a *quasi-object*. These are concepts that purports to highlight the existence of things material and really-real indeed, but at the same time always inextricably bound up with sensing subjects – without

prematurely circumscribing who or *what* such a subject might be. I will be drawing upon the thinking of these two philosophers of science, as well as partially on the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, as resources to help staying with the trouble of place. I will do so through weaving them into a broader relational-materialist sensibility to generate an ontological speculation – not stating that 'this is the way things are', but rather asking: what happens if we think of these things this way instead? Or, again with the apt words of Donna Haraway, exploring "what comes into the world that way, whether one chooses to throw ones lot with it or not" (Haraway, 2013).

From Cartesian dualism to relational materialism

As intimated above, 'place' is a philosophical and social scientific concept with an intellectual pedigree countable in millennia. In this context, there is unfortunately no room for a deeper investigation of the history of the concept (see instead e.g. Casey, 1997; Cresswell, 2004; Massey & Thrift, 2003). Most academic writing on place, while displaying distinct variances in the level of nuance, broadly falls within either the objectivist reductionist or the subjectivist reductionist folds. For instance, much of the classical work in the field of environmental psychology could easily be placed in the first category (see Stedman, 2003:674), defining 'real' places as essences-above-and-beyond human experience, while influential thinkers in the humanistic geography-movement such as Yi-Fu Tuan generally have posited places as subjective or inter-subjective essences-in-experience, thus clearly falling into the second (see e.g. Tuan, 1977).

The crucial problem with all the variants of either objectivist or subjectivist reductionism in relation to place is that they are both helplessly stuck in a solidified and unquestioned Cartesian dualism, positing subjects and objects as fundamentally different and separate ontological entities. Thus, even though, at an early glance, they may appear to be diametrically opposed positions, upon closer scrutiny they rather appear as two sides to the same coin, for whom the disagreement only pertains to which side of the coin 'place' should be sorted on A 'debate' which by now has degenerated into a never-ending and since long stale-mated turf battle on a

mutually recognized battleground. As Karen Barad has noted, according to this dualist set-up, the only alternatives on offer appear to be "the naîvite of empiricism or the same old narcissistic bedtime stories" (Barad, 1998:827).

This intellectual stalemate was partially broken, or rather bypassed, with the strong wave of relational geography that emerged in the late 1990's and early 2000's. The scholars associated with this movement primarily positioned themselves against humanistic and discourse-oriented geographers, whom they criticized for excessive subjectivism and anthropocentrism leading to a loss of attention to the material aspects of spatial entities and processes. Leading relational geographers such as Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift instead argued that spatial entities, such as places, can best be understood by focusing on the relations that constitute them – further understanding these relations as being always both social (or rather "associational", cf. Latour, 2005) *and* material (see e.g. Thrift, 1996; Massey, 2005a). Their perspective was thus fundamentally *relational-materialist*, heavily drawing upon developments in so-called Actor-Network Theory (see Massey & Thrift, 2003 and further Law, 1992).

Abandoning the unproductive quarrel over whether to locate place on either the 'social' (subjective/intersubjective) or 'material' (objective) side of a taken-for-granted divide between these, the relational geographers instead proposed that it may be more fruitful to investigate how agency is produced in the world through the constant interweaving and co-affectation of elements that are normally placed on either side of this divide, but which upon closer examination turn out to be fundamentally entangled in the unfolding of worldly events. The basic unit of investigation instead became the *heterogeneous assemblage*, skirting any a priori distinction between the social or material aspects of the unfolding of worldly events (or discursive, cultural, economic, technological, etc. either for that part).

The relational approach to place thus built upon an intuition that we can only ever gain an understanding of places by empirically studying how human and non-human elements interact and mutually affect each other in the world, that is – by studying the relations between humans and non-humans in a specific environment *agnostically*: without prejudice concerning how the mechanics of mutual affectation between those elements we often categorize as 'material' and

those that we categorize as 'social', 'symbolic' or 'discursive', will play out (see also Callon, 1986).[1]

Bringing the subject of place back in

Relational geographers managed to side-step the fruitless quarrels of the various reductionist takes on place through conceptualizing places as "thrown-together" and entangled "bundles of trajectories" always concomitantly both 'social' and 'material' (Massey, 2005a: 119, 142), thus side-stepping the fruitless quarrels of the objectivist and subjectivist reductionists. Nevertheless, Stenner (2008) raises a caution regarding aspects of relational geography through highlighting some problematic aspects relating to the thorny issue of subjects and objects. Effectively, Stenner argues that relational geographers such as Thrift are at such pains to combat what they perceive to be the anthropocentric excesses of humanistically inclined geographers that they are at risk of throwing out the baby of the subject with the bathwater of unwarranted subjectivism through a "too hasty dismissal of the concept of subjectivity as such" which risks a "return to a bleak anti-subjectivism" (Stenner, 2008:92; see also Dawney, 2013).[2]

Taking Stenner's argument to the particular concept of place, we may pose the question that if places are bundles of heterogeneous, socio-material relations – what holds these bundles together and grants them identity and coherence *as places*? That is: what is it that enacts particular places as entities with some level of integrity or identity, instead of just endlessly interwoven, partially connecting socio-material patterns stretching in space and time? According to Stenner, we can never get a grasp of questions such as these without bringing the subject

---

[1] It appears as if some leading researchers within the field of environmental psychology have also begun to approximate a relational understanding of places, see e.g. Stedman, 2003; Davenport & Anderson, 2005).

2 The fairness of this critique qua Thrift's work specifically is certainly debatable. It may well be that the general angle of argumentation in e.g. Thrift, 2007 is in the spirit sketched by Stenner, but Thrift is also at pains to point out that "dropping the human subject entirely seems to me to be a step too far" (p. 13).

'back in' to our analysis, but at the same time doing so in a way that does not privilege *a priori* some subjectivities over other – which might in turn demand a thorough re-definition of the concept of 'subjectivity' itself. Stenner draws primarily upon the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead to make this argument, and we will have reason to return to it, but first it might be gainful to turn to a philosopher of science who has particularly engaged with the role of subjectivity in the context of a broad relational-materialist sensibility.

Karen Barad is a feminist philosopher of science trained as a quantum physicist. In her scholarly project she develops and (for good and bad) philosophically formalizes some of the crucial insights of groundbreaking relational materialists such as John Law, Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour (see e.g. Haraway, 1994; Latour, 1994; Law 2000). In addition to these thinkers, her main inspiration is physicist Niels Bohr and his rendition of the concept "phenomenon", which is very different from the classical phenomenological definition. Barad writes that to Bohr, the primary epistemological unity –the unit that is graspable in knowledge – is not "independent objects with inherent boundaries" but "phenomena" consisting of both subject-effects and object-effects in "dynamic relationality" (Barad, 2003:819). Or as Barad elaborates, "phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of "observer" and "observed"; rather, *phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting "components"*.

Thus, to Barad, it is only in the phenomenon – in the relation between elements – that elements become endowed with concrete properties. It is only in relations that 'form takes form' and 'content becomes content' of the elements in relation: "In other words, relata do not preexist relations; rather, relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions. Crucially then, intra-actions enact *agential separability*—the local condition of *exteriority-within-phenomena*. " (Barad, 2003:819). In Barad's elaboration of Bohr's philosophy, 'becoming' not only takes precedence over 'being' as the fundamental state of things, but also: these 'things' only become enacted and recognizable as such in specific webs of relations. Meaning that 'objects' only becomes objects in relation to other elements relating to them in a 'subjective' way as part of a phenomenon-event: in which""part" of the world becomes determinately bounded and propertied in its emergent intelligibility to another "part" of the world" (Barad,2003:821). Thus conceptualized, phenomena evince the "inseparability of 'objects' and

'agencies of observation'"(Barad, 1998: 96), further implying that ""Subjects" and "objects" do not preexist as such, but are constituted through and within particular practices" (Barad, 1998:106).

Far from any type of stable essences, Barad rather conceptualizes subjects and objects as relational effects: as 'objects for subjects' and 'subjects in becoming with objects', in specific events or series of interlinked events of more or less lasting durability. This way of conceptualizing the subject/object relation also resonates deeply with the revolutionary *process philosophy* proposed by leading mathematician Alfred North Whitehead already in the early 20th century, but broadly forgotten until its timely revival in recent years (see e.g. Stenner, 2008; Stengers, 2011). Whitehead calls subject/object generating-phenomena "actual occasions" (Whitehead, 1929/1978). In an actual occasion, a graspable 'image' of the world is generated (or "prehended") from the flow of immanent materiality through an emergent sensing/synthesizing, but also positioned, subject.[3] To Whitehead, objects (or "objectifications") – as discrete and bounded entities – are prehended or sensed aspects of the universe that are always an effect of an instantiation of subjectivity within the universe (i.e. of a subject placed neither above nor beyond it).[4] From such a perspective, "subjectivity" becomes understandable as a specific, positioned 'perspective' on the world, a particular nexus of sensing the world at a unique occasion – a partial view of the whole that at the same time makes up a part of the whole (cf. Latour et al ,2013).

---

[3] Whitehead (1929/1978:61ff) teases out the complexity of the notion of 'imaging' in a way that is difficult to do justice to in the present context. It is important to note, though, that to Whitehead – any apprehension of the world is in a way an 'image', e.g. in more complex organisms also individual organs in a body generate 'images' of its surroundings, which are then further processed in the brain into a type of composite (or 'impure') image of the world. This idea resonates with both the material-semiotic sensibility of for instance Donna Haraway, and also with the philosophy of the image developed by Gilles Deleuze (see e.g. Deleuze, 1986-1989).

[4] I am here consciously (over)simplifying Whitehead's complicated and highly nuanced philosophical terminology, thus not anyway near making justice to his elaborately laid out argumentation. I can only direct the interested reader to the original works of Whitehead for a fuller introduction to his original and creative philosophical vocabulary and reasoning.

The relational-materialist world of Barad and Whitehead, which in many ways intersect with for instance that of philosopher Gilles Deleuze (see Stenner, 2008 and e.g. Hillier, 2007; Dovey, 2010), is a world in which beings and entities constantly generate images of the world and each other, thus enacting each other as objects in the world – a world in which beings and entities thus constantly 'read' each other in a constantly ongoing, ever-present, "material semiotics" (cf. Haraway, 1988). Where to draw the boundary of what constitutes part of the sensing and the sensed, the subject and the object – and the entangled nature of all the elements of a phenomenon and intersecting object/subjects is a question of deep (onto)political dignity, which will be further discussed below. But first it is important to explore how this novel ontological take may contribute to refresh our understanding of the phenomenon of place.

Place *as place*, seen from a subject-recognizing relational-materialist position, is both neither and more than "objective brute matter", as the objectivist reductionists would have it, or "subjective projected sentiments" as per the subjectivist reductionists. Rather, place as a phenomenon becomes defined as the full gamut of spatially positioned interrelated subject/object becomings in which intra-acting elements are endowed with identity and integrity, and thus generate spatial entities through which "the many become one and are increased by one" (Whithead, 1929/1978:21) in a process through which disparate elements in space, Massey's "thrown-togetherness", becomes "bounded and propertied in… emergent intelligibility" (Barad, 2003:821). Or in other words: becomes joined together as an articulated place through the integrative, synthesizing function of an instantiation of subjectivity-objectivity which senses the world in situated ways and generates specific images of the world.

Nevertheless, this is not a philosophical idealist argument claiming that places are 'mere social constructions' that can be altered at a whim. Rather, it is a recognition that phenomena such as places become in heterogeneous arrangements of variously patterned 'stuff' in the world, thus they are not completely 'subjective', but still: they always appear as phenomena for a sensing and imaging subject (or ensemble of subjects), where 'subjectivity' is one of the products of the

phenomena that generates both 'objects' such as place as well as the subjects more or less attached to them.

From such a perspective, places appear as entities that by necessity are always very much both/and. Always both objective *and* subjective, both always 'social' *and* 'material' with subjects always attached in various ways to the places they sense (cf. Metzger, 2013a; Latour, 1999) – as well as, I will now add: both singular *and* multiple, individual *and* collective. Having touched upon the previous conceptual pairings above, it is now time to turn to the final two.

The ontological politics of place

In a discussion moving more on the meta-conceptual level, but also applicable in the present context, Barnes (2008:1552) has argued that "an idea of place will be sustained only as long as there is a community to support it". This assertion chimes well with the above discussed crucial role of subjectivity in the articulation of place as place. It also points towards the possibility that it may be gainful to understand or investigate places as a type of quasi-object, following Serres' (2007) discussion of the concept as an entity which is not a mere "marker of the subject", but which is "in the world" and to which the subject is "sub-mitted" to (Serres, 2007: 225ff; see further also Latour, 1993:51ff). It is an "astonishing constructer of intersubjectivity" (2007:227) around which subjects coalesce, "a quasi-us" coming together as an entity, "more a contract than a thing" (Serres, 1995:88).

Stating that place is gainfully understood as a quasi-object, by no means implies that it is a little less "real" compared to other objects. Rather, it serves to highlight that just as atoms, coke bottles or nations, it is dependent on subjectivity for its articulation, to be "bounded" and "propertied", to again use Barad's terms. What Serres wishes to highlight with the concept is how an object such as a place, and the group of subjects that sense that object in similar ways, are deeply entangled. So one could say that the place always appears in the world with its subjects attached, whether willingly or not - caring or not. The important thing, in this context,

with Serres' conceptualization is that it defines the quasi-object as a volatile and mutable entity, the fate of which is "calumny", as it develops in constant mutations – it is a whirlwind, twisting and turning as it is passed between its attached subjects (Serres, 1995:58).

Thus, this understanding of place also functions as an important corrective to a too-strong emphasis on "communities" as coalescing around place, if this term is understood with the usual connotations of harmony, stability and mutual recognition. When empirically studying articulations of 'place' in the world, we can also see that harmonious community is far from the norm in relation to places (see also Massey, 1991). On the contrary, controversies concerning the correct definition of the identity, boundaries, components and important values related to a specific place are legion. These conflicts often go far beyond the recognized 'politics of place', and instead signify a deeper disagreement concerning what a specific place really *is* – what could perhaps be called the *ontological politics* of place, using a concept borrowed from Annemarie Mol (1999). In ontological-political controversies over place there is fundamental disagreement or conflict concerning the fundamental elements or properties of things in the world (i.e. 'places') and how/why they come to matter, what Stengers labels as a case of *cosmopolitics* – fundamental struggles over our understanding and enactment of the world (Stengers, 2010-2011). So rather than a stabilized and stabilizing "community", places instead seem to often be carried by unruly and divisive "publics", according to how Marres (2005) defines the concept as a definition of actors mutually implicated or attached to an issue or entity in one way or the other, without necessarily having any agreement on either the broader definition, nor the ramifications of the thing in question.

In relation to places, this insight signifies how a disparate group of subjects might all have concern or care for a specific place, they might all carry only partially connecting or even totally conflicting articulations of a place, so to say different articulations of the 'essence' of this place (cf. Metzger, 2013b). We might have competing architects, preservation activists, different groups of residents, all with different types of attachments to a particular place, and all with their very different articulations of what that place 'really is'. As a result, places often come

across as 'out there', but nevertheless hopelessly 'fuzzy' or ungraspable. Annemarie Mol calls this type of thing a "multiple object", a thing which "hangs together, but not quite as a *whole*. It is more than one and less than many" (Mol, 2002:84, emphasis in original; see further Metzger & Schmitt, 2012; Metzger, 2013b), it is a nexus of partially connecting and overlapping, as well as sometimes conflicting, versions of an object.

In analyzing multiple versions of place that are articulated by various subjects at a given point, an objectivist reductionist would generally consider some (or all) of the versions to be simply incorrect while arguing that there is one correct way – beyond subjectivity – as to how the place should be defined. The subjectivist reductionist would on the other hand argue that everyone is right to assert their individual version of the place, claiming that any version is as true as any other since they are all anyway just arbitrary projections of sentiment onto unknowable, mute matter. A relational-materialist perspective recognizing the role of subjectivity, drawing upon Barad among other inspirations would argue that, far from being arbitrary, places as multiple objects can rather be conceptualized as complex, malleable and sometimes volatile coming-togethers of heterogenous elements assembled subjectively, but always also dependent on elements that become externalized as beyond or outside of neatly outlined subjects.

From such a perspective, there can be no 'right' or 'wrong' in the definition of a specific place or statement concerning what a place *is*, as this is never ontologically given – only versions of place with variable situationally given probabilities of becoming to some degrees stabilized and spread. In a way, different – conflicting – versions of place can thus in one way be considered as alternative worlds colliding in a specific place. This does not imply, though, that differences must always turn out to be unbridgeable in some antagonistic fashion à la Carl Schmitt. But it does imply that much is at stake in sometimes superficially banal confrontations over place, as evinced for instance by the Gezi-park protests in Istanbul in or in the less dramatic but still heated controversies over public drinking in parks studied by Bylund & Byerley (2014). Both these examples point towards the concrete specificity of *this* place, *this* park, *these* trees or benches but they also flicker in, as absent-presences or concrete presences (cf. Law, 2004) the

'big' questions: what is a good society? What is a good life? And further: as we wrestle with these questions, while concerning ourselves with *this* place: whose perspectives and views count? Whose definitions and values? As Barad, and also John Law, have asserted time and again – these are deeply ethical and political questions that in the end also point towards another question: who gets recognized as a valid subject of the specific context, and not a mere mute object?

Towards a more-than-human understanding of place?

Following Dovey (2010:23) I have in this chapter made the case that places are neither self-sufficient objects nor "figments of imagination". To use a too-often grossly abused word, they can rather be considered inter-subjective entities; but only granted that in the next breath we add that they are also at the same time inter-objective and (quasi-)objective/subjective, and further granted that we are prepared to see subjectivity as a situated effect of a phenomenon rather than as an ontological constant. Simply put: places appear to be ontologically and epistemologically really *messy* entities (Law, 2004) – complex compounds of entangled subject/object relations and often friction-ridden nexuses of strong attachments. Place conceptualized in the above terms is thus both fully 'real' and 'really-out-there', but at the same time a collectively and relationally constituted phenomenon prone to both iterative evolution and radical mutation.

But even if we fully acknowledge and embrace the fundamental ontological messiness of 'place' – what is there to possibly learn from such a fuzzy conceptualization of an even fuzzier phenomenon, for instance for a member of the 'place-making professions'? To begin with: we cannot grasp the full complexity of the phenomenon of place if we disqualify *a priori* its crucial subjective side from the analysis, but neither must we succumb to the temptation to conceptualize place as wholly subjective. The crucial question rather becomes: what subjects of place and related 'versions' of place become recognized? For if subjectivity is always a relational and placed effect, there can be no "view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1986) to describe place

'accurately' – and any pretention at this, positing an epistemological privilege of such a sort, amount to nothing else than what Donna Haraway has derided as "the god trick" (Haraway, 1988), a powerful device for claiming power. The question rather becomes: who, or what, is recognized as a legitimate subject to be taken into concern in a specific context?

Relatedly, Häkli & Kallio (2013:6) have argued that recognition as a subject "is not just a matter of due respect or courtesy, but a vital… need". I would go one step further and claim that recognition for a subject is a question of more than that – and that being seen as an "end" rather than a mere "means" is rather an existential question, in the purest sense of that word, to be recognized as worthy of consideration and concern (cf. Latour, 1998; Stengers, 2005). But immediately I have to confess that I am partially misquoting Häkli & Kallio above by leaving out the little word "human" between "vital" and "need". This is a word I haven't made use of previously in the text, and consciously so, because it is of crucial concern to me to leave open the question of just who, or *what*, is recognized as a subject worthy of recognition. Even some of the most nuanced investigators of the concept of place appear to take for granted that the subject of place is always human (see e.g. Gieryn, 2000:465 and my own premature assertions in Metzger, 2013a). But I think it is crucial, in an era when we have to learn to functionally co-exist with a myriad of other-than-human entities the well-being of which our own well-being as a species rests upon, to ask with Massey (2005b:356, emphasis in original): "Does place *become* place only with human engagement?... is place only place *for* humans?"

For instance to Whitehead any sensing and world-imaging entity counts as a 'subject', wherefore Stenner (2008:105) concludes that in his philosophy " It is important to recognize that the human being cannot be sharply differentiated from other highly complex forms of animal life, and, ultimately, cannot be sharply distinguished from the physical environment more generally" (and to add to that, if we take a fully relational view of the subject with the help of Barad, it may even be troublesome to attempt to rank 'highly complex forms' from less complex, considering the non-givenness of the relevant boundary-drawing around subjects). Thus we must ask ourselves: can we extend the definition of the concept of place to also find ways to recognize and encompass the place-making activities of other entities and beings, so as to find better ways to (albeit sometimes grudgingly) co-exist on this planet?

13

If we decide that this is desirable, there are many theoretical and practical avenues worthy of exploration towards such an end (see e.g. Metzger, 2014a). For instance, drawing upon Deleuze & Guattari, Dovey (2010) understands place as intimately linked up to Deleuze & Guattari's idea of "territory" and "place-making" to "territorialization": "a synthetic process that enables wholes to form from parts, identities from differences". But a fundamental insight from Deleuze & Guattari (1987) is that it is far from only humans that territorialize. If we are to begin to be able to grasp places as territories to which many types of subjects may be attached we will have to better learn to respectfully read the material-semiotic signals of non-humans, as for instance more radical ethologists do with animals (see e.g. Despret, 2004), and we have to decide if the territorial articulations and attachments of these beings and entities are worthy of our respect and consideration. Such a new understanding of place, and the subjects of place, would point into ethically quite unexplored territory, in which we must ask ourselves whose existence and experience counts, and why – and at what costs are the decisions made? (Metzger, 2014b). As Massey (2005a:141) writes, "the throwntogetherness of places demands negotiation… in our relations with nonhumans they ask how we shall respond to our temporary meeting up with these particular rocks and stones and trees. They require that, in one way or the other, we confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity". To which I would add: and to do so while staying with the trouble of subjectivity, and without prematurely reducing away the elusive subject of place.

References

Agnew, J. (2011). Space and place. In J. Agnew and D. Livingstone (eds*.*) *Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*. London: Sage, 2011

Barad, K. (1998). "Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10(2):87–126.

Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs*, *28*(3), 801-831.

Barnes, T. J. (2008). American pragmatism: towards a geographical introduction. *Geoforum*, *39*(4), 1542-1554.

Bylund, J. & Byerley, A. (2014). The fate of public space in parklife: hopeless postpolitics and professional idiots. In J. Metzger, P. Allmendinger & S. Oosterlynck (forthcoming), *Displacing the political: democratic deficits in contemporary European territorial governance*. London: Routledge.

Callon, M. (1986). "Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay". In J. Law (ed.), *Power, action and belief: a new sociology of knowledge?* London, Routledge, 1986, pp.196-223.

Casey, E.S. (1997). *The fate of place: a philosophical history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cresswell, T, *Place: a short introduction*, Blackwell, Malden MA, Oxford, Carlton, 2004

D Massey, & N Thrift, 'The passion of place' in R Johnston, & M Williams (eds.), *A Century of British Geography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, pp. 275–299

Davenport, M. A., & Anderson, D. H. (2005). Getting from sense of place to place-based management: An interpretive investigation of place meanings and perceptions of landscape change. *Society and Natural Resources*, *18*(7), 625-641.

Dawney, L. (2013). The interruption: investigating subjectivation and affect. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 31, 628-644.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G. (1986-1989). *Cinema*. London: Athlone.

Despret, V. (2004). The body we care for: Figures of anthropo-zoo-genesis. *Body & Society*, *10*(2-3), 111-134.

Dovey, K. (2010). *Becoming places: urbanism/architecture/identity/power*. London: Routledge.

Gieryn, T. F. (2000). A space for place in sociology. *Annual review of sociology*, 463-496.

Häkli, J., & Kallio, K. P. (2013). Subject, action and polis Theorizing political agency. *Progress in Human Geography*, DOI: 10.1177/0309132512473869

Haraway D, 2010, "*When Species Meet*: staying with the trouble" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* **28**(1) 53 – 55

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist studies*, *14*(3), 575-599.

Haraway, D. (1991). A cyborg manifesto: science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century. *Simians, cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature*, 149-181.

Haraway, D. (2013). Presentation given for the John E. Sawyer Seminar on the Comparative Study of Cultures "Indigenous Cosmopolitics: Dialogues About the Reconstitution of Worlds", UC Santa Cruz, 20th of May 2013.

Hillier, J. (2007). *Stretching beyond the horizon: a multiplanar theory of spatial planning and governance*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.

Latour, B. (1994). On technical mediation. *Common knowledge*, *3*(2), 29-64.

Latour, B. (1998). "To modernize or to ecologize? That's the question.", in N Castree and B Willems-Braun (editors) *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millenium* (London and New York: Routledge) 1998, pp. 221-242.

Latour, B. (1999). Factures/fractures: from the concept of network to the concept of attachment. *Res: Anthropology and aesthetics*, (36), 20-31.

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford: University Press.

Latour, B., Jensen, P., Venturini, T., Grauwin, S., & Boullier, D. (2012). 'The whole is always smaller than its parts'–a digital test of Gabriel Tardes' monads. *The British journal of sociology*, *63*(4), 590-615.

Law, J. (1992). Notes on the theory of the actor-network: ordering, strategy, and heterogeneity. *Systems practice*, *5*(4), 379-393.

Law, J. (2000). On the subject of the object: narrative, technology, and interpellation. *Configurations*, *8*(1), 1-29.

Law, J. (2004). *After method: mess in social science research*. London: Routledge.

Marres, N. S. (2005) *No issue, no public: democratic deficits after the displacement of politics*. Department of Philosophy, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam. Doctorate thesis.

Massey, D. (1991). A global sense of place. *Marxism today*, *35*(6), 24-29.

Massey, D. (2005b). Negotiating nonhuman/human place. *Antipode*, *37*(2), 353-357.

Massey, D.(2005a). *For space*. London: SAGE.

Metzger, J. (2013a). Placing the stakes: the enactment of territorial stakeholders in planning processes. *Environment and Planning A*, *45*(4), 781-796.

Metzger, J. (2013b). 'Raising the regional Leviathan: a relational-materialist conceptualization of regions-in-becoming as publics-in-stabilization'. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 37 (4): 1368-1395.

Metzger, J. (2014a) 'The moose are protesting: conceptualizing planning politics across the human/non-human divide'. In J. Metzger, P. Allmendinger & S. Oosterlynck (forthcoming), *Displacing the political: democratic deficits in contemporary European territorial governance*. London: Routledge.

Metzger, J. (2014b) 'The city is not a Menschenpark: conceptualizing the urban commons across the human/non-human divide'. In C. Borch, M. Kornberger & E. Barinaga (Forthcoming) *Urban commons: organizing the city*, London: Routledge.

Metzger, J., & Schmitt, P. (2012). When soft spaces harden: the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. *Environment and planning A*, *44*(2), 263-280.

Mol, A. (1998). Ontological politics. A word and some questions. *The Sociological Review*, *46*(S), 74-89.

Mol, A. (2002). *The body multiple: Ontology in medical practice*. Duke University Press.

Nagel, T. (1986). *The view from nowhere*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Serres, M. (1995). *Genesis*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press.

Serres, M. (2007). *The parasite*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stedman, R. C. (2003). Is it really just a social construction?: The contribution of the physical environment to sense of place. *Society &Natural Resources*, *16*(8), 671-685.

Stengers, I. (2005). Whitehead's account of the sixth day. *Configurations*, *13*(1), 35-55.

Stengers, I. (2010-2011). *Cosmopolitics I-II*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press.

Stengers, I. (2011). *Thinking with Whitehead: a free and wild creation of concepts*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Stenner, P. (2008). AN Whitehead and subjectivity. *Subjectivity*, *22*(1), 90-109.

Thrift, N. (1996). *Spatial formations*. London: Sage Publications.

Thrift, N.J. (2007). *Non-representational theory: space, politics, affect*. London: Routledge.

Tuan, Y. (1977). *Space and place: the perspective of experience*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press.

Whitehead, A.N. (1978). *Process and reality: an essay in cosmology*. (Corrected ed.) New York: Free Press.

ⁱ Translated by C. H. Seibert, extracted from Heidegger, M. "Art and Space", *Man and World* 6 (1973): 3-8.