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Chapter 6 Belonging, Place and Entrepreneurial Selfhood

Julia Cook and Katherine Romei

Abstract

While research considering young adults' experiences of place has been marked by a variety of approaches, within this diversity there are two focal points. The first concerns the relationship between place, education and employment, while the second concerns immaterial aspects of place such as experiences of belonging and attachment. Previous research has worked across these focal points considering, for instance, how young people invest in education and training as a means of enabling them to remain in or return to places in which they experience belonging (Cuervo and Wyn 2012), and how symbolic and immaterial factors can inform their mobility choices (Farrugia 2016). In this chapter we build upon such work by considering how a sense of belonging or attachment to place can be used as an integral part of the formation of occupation-based identities, using the concept of the entrepreneurial self (Kelly 2006; 2013) to conceptualise this. Specifically, we draw on longitudinal qualitative data to explore how some young adults have remained in meaningful places not just by undertaking specific education and training, but by developing an occupational identity or personal brand that is intrinsically tied to a specific place.

Keywords mobility; rural stayers; youth; young adulthood; belonging; self as enterprise

Introduction

Young people have often been tacitly associated with mobility. Indeed mobility, as a metaphor, is woven through many of the key frames with which we understand young lives, from the concepts of developmental stages and milestones, to the very notion of transitions. However, the enduring association between youth, mobility and progress that is invoked by each of these frames suggests that immobility is tied to stasis, both in actual movement and in personal development. The implicit association between personal or psycho-social development and mobility is especially relevant to young people living in regional and rural parts of Australia as, within this context, the metropolis carries associations of opportunity and development,

while rural and regional places are framed as static spaces of deficit. While the precise contours of these associations are, in many ways, specific to an Australian context, aspects of them are echoed in other locales. For instance, David Cairns' (2014; 2017) recent work has considered young adults' geographical mobility on an international scale, exploring how youth from countries which are peripheral in the context of the European Union have been drawn to countries which essentially represent the economic and social core of this region and thus provide richer opportunities for education and employment, as well as for personal development. Indeed, Cairns' claims transcend the association between core (or urban) places with opportunity and peripheral (or regional) places with a deficit of opportunities by positing that the experience of mobility itself, rather than the specific nature of one's destination, imparts psycho-social resources to individuals.

While the association between urban spaces (and, indeed, mobility itself) and progress and rural and regional (as well as globally peripheral) spaces and stasis or deficit – and indeed the association between mobility itself and progress – may appear intuitive at first glance, in this chapter we contend that the ways in which these places have been characterised is due in part to a lack of attention to the highly heterogeneous experiences of those who remain in or return to them. The experiences of those who remain in specific locales – commonly termed 'stayers' – signifies an emerging point of focus for mobility scholars (see Stockdale and Haartsen's (2018) recent special issue of *Population, Space and Place* on this topic).

We seek in this chapter to contribute to this fledgling space of inquiry by focusing specifically on the occupation-based experiences and identities of several young adults who, more than ten years after the completion of their secondary education, have either remained in or returned to the areas in which they grew up. Specifically, we seek to disrupt the implicit associations between 'stayers' – or indeed 'returners' – and affective dimensions of place attachment on the one hand, and those who leave and rational, often progress-based concerns on the other. We do this by showing how specific places can be implicated in the formation of occupation-based identities which come about through the cultivation and performance of entrepreneurial forms of selfhood that are enacted by individuals as a means of remaining in or returning to places that are meaningful to them.

We begin with a discussion of the framing of mobility and immobility and rurality and urbanity in an Australian context. Specifically, we address literature focusing on the out-migration of rural and regional young adults to urban centres in pursuit of education and employment opportunities. We then discuss literature addressing some of the reasons why young adults desire to stay in rural and regional areas despite the allure of the metropolis. This literature concentrates largely on relational and place-based factors, thus contrasting with the material and instrumental focus of the preceding body of literature. We then move on to address scholarship that has begun to bridge this divide, and to which we seek to contribute. Following this discussion, we draw on case studies of three individuals from cohort two of the Life Patterns study who have interwoven place with their occupation-based identities as part of a concerted effort to resist the need to be mobile. While discussing

these cases we ultimately extend the reach of previous work which has focused on individuals' use of strategic education and employment choices as a means of remaining in or returning to specific places. We contend that individuals often engage in complex identity work to facilitate staying in place, and that this work – by drawing together material and immaterial considerations and aspects of place – disrupts the implicit dichotomy between material and instrumental, and relational and immaterial aspects of place in scholarly representations of mobility decision-making and experiences.

Youth, place and occupation-based identity-making

Over the last two decades numerous studies have addressed young people's migration from rural and regional areas to metropolitan centres in pursuit of further education and employment opportunities (see Alloway et al. 2004; Alston and Kent 2003; Argent and Walmsley 2008; Cuervo 2016; Kenway et al. 2006). This trend has been underpinned by Australia's transition to a post-industrial economy which has shifted emphasis from primary and secondary industry to the tertiary education and service sectors (Alloway et al. 2004; Kenway et al. 2006). The transition away from industry and manufacturing and towards so-called knowledge-based forms of employment has placed increasing pressure on individuals to acquire the qualifications and skills necessary to secure a place in the labour market (Alston and Kent 2001; Cuervo 2016). These shifts have contributed to the reshaping of employment opportunities for young Australians who are, at present, experiencing significant challenges in finding ongoing, secure employment (see Chapter 4). Indeed, in recent years the traditional trajectory of establishing a career and securing full-time work by the age of thirty has been disrupted for Australian young adults.

These economic shifts, and the normative expectations that they have produced in relation to post-secondary education, have impacted markedly on the lives of young adults living in rural and regional parts of Australia. When combined with the decline of family-owned farms in favour of large-scale corporate operations (Geldens 2007), as well as declining employment opportunities and the closure of many private and public services (e.g. post-offices, banks branches, schools), these shifts have resulted in high rates of youth out-migration from rural and regional areas (Alston and Kent 2003). These changing conditions (along with explicit encouragement to relocate for post-secondary education stemming from key institutions such as schools in many rural areas (Corbett 2007)) form 'push' factors, while the consequent 'valorisation of metropolitan lifestyles' and the material opportunities offered by urban areas form 'pull' factors. Taken together, these factors equate to what Farrugia (2016: 837) has termed a 'mobility imperative' in which rural and regional young people either relocate to urban areas or face the personal and professional consequences of failing to do so.

While much literature addressing the post-secondary mobility imperative faced by rural youth has focused on the draw of the metropolis, another body of literature has considered why some young adults may desire to remain in their local areas. This literature has focused predominantly on relational and place-based considerations addressing, for instance, the desire to remain proximate to family (Haartsen and Thissen 2014) and to familiar and affective or emotionally evocative landscapes (Rye 2006). The pull of relational and place-based considerations has been drawn together using the notion of belonging. Employing a relatively broad definition, Vanessa May (2011: 372) understands belonging as ‘a sense of ease with oneself and one’s surroundings’, drawing on Miller’s (2003: 218) claim that belonging is ‘the quintessential mode of being human ... in which all aspects of the self, as human, are perfectly integrated – a mode of being in which we are as we ought to be: fully ourselves’. Miller’s understanding of belonging aligns with strong links that have been drawn between belonging, place and ontology, and several authors have used the notion of belonging in a similar spirit. For instance, Cuervo and Wyn (2017) have drawn on the work of Duff (2010) to consider how spaces and places are constituted by individuals through their interactions with them, contending that everyday interactions with places result in a layering of affect which essentially draws individuals back to these locations, holding them in place. Such an approach is echoed in Edensor’s (2006) discussion of performing rurality through everyday practices which, in turn, echoes Bell’s (1999) notion of belonging as performative. Taken together, these approaches suggest a more-than-material understanding of one’s experience of and attachment to place, and by extension their experience of mobility and immobility (which, following Finn (2017), we treat as inseparable). Moreover, this work provides a counter-point to the specific focus of the previous body of literature on education and employment opportunities and post-secondary transitions, thus attending to the impact of place in a more holistic way.

The bodies of literature that we have addressed thus far consider what essentially amounts to material and immaterial aspects of place and (im)mobility. Interestingly, they also each reflect one side of the dichotomous way in which regional or peripheral spaces are often framed: as sites of problems due to a perceived deficit of education and employment opportunities, or as idylls due to the relational and place-based attachments that they offer (see Waite 2017). While these bodies of literature appear at first glance to stand in opposition to each other, several authors have recently begun to reconcile the gap between them, and in so doing to essentially draw together the impact and significance of material and immaterial dimensions of place. Eriksson (2017) has, for instance, considered how young adults from rural parts of Sweden manage the imperative to be mobile for education and employment opportunities alongside the sense of belonging and attachment that many of them had to their local area. Eriksson considered her participants’ narratives of mobility and immobility, ultimately contending that they were used to both resist and reproduce neoliberal associations between the city and progress in complex ways that disrupted overly simplistic accounts of each. Similarly, Farrugia (2016) has considered the role of symbolic and immaterial factors in prompting, rather than curtailing,

rural out-migration, contending that immaterial factors can prompt youth to migrate to urban areas due to their strong associations with the very notion or quality of youthfulness, just as they may encourage them to stay in specific rural locales due to the pull of relational and affective ties.

However, due to the focus on the end of secondary education as a watershed moment in young people's lives, especially in relation to mobility decision-making, much work on rural youth has addressed decision-making of this type solely in relation to the pursuit of further education. Previous scholarship from the Life Patterns study (Cuervo and Wyn 2012) has begun to broaden the scope of this work by focusing on the aims and completion, rather than solely relocation for and enrolment into, further education. Specifically, Cuervo and Wyn (2012) have identified rural and regional young people's engagement with further education as a strategy to remain in their local areas in a stable, long-term way. They have, for instance, found that several of their participants pursued courses of study (e.g. agriculture, nursing, teaching) that carried with them a high likelihood of employment in their rural or regional hometown. In the following discussion we seek to build upon this work by considering not just occupational choices that align with rural and regional labour markets, but the formation of specific, concerted occupational identities as part of a strategy for remaining in or returning to a specific place.

Belonging in place

The data presented in this chapter take the form of three in-depth cases. Rather than presenting the data thematically, we chose to focus on three participants who exemplified some of the tendencies that we identified in portions of the sample who found themselves in similar circumstances (specifically, desiring to stay in specific areas without entirely compromising on their professional ambitions). While we do not make claims as to the representativeness of the experiences that we present, predominantly because they reflect one response to a specific set of circumstances, we nevertheless contend that they do not stem from isolated or scattered cases. The cases presented in this chapter are each drawn from cohort 2 of the Life Patterns study. Each of the three participants discussed in this chapter entered the study in 2005, in their second last year of secondary school, remain in the study in 2019, and have been interviewed at least once over the course of the study. The bulk of the data presented in the cases are drawn from interviews conducted in 2017 in which the participants were asked to speak about their lives in a relatively holistic way with an emphasis on the impact of work on other aspects of their lives.

Jason, Matilda and Liam (not their real names) were selected because, following the work of Flyvberg (2006), they represent paradigmatic cases, meaning that they illustrate instances in which the interweaving of place and occupation-based identities is represented most strongly. Each of them either remained in or returned to the area in which they grew up and sought to shape an occupation-based identity that

not only allowed them to stay in these areas, but was consciously interwoven with these areas.

Jason

Jason grew up in a regional part of Tasmania and has remained there for the duration of his participation in the study. Although he was initially unsure of what he wanted to do after completing secondary school his mother aided him in finding a professional pathway. Specifically, while spectating at his sister's basketball game his mother discussed Jason's lack of certainty about his post-school plans with another parent who suggested a specialization in a specific aspect of real estate and offered to introduce him to the owners of a local business. Jason followed his mother's advice and began a cadetship with this business on the basis that it was local, and due to his perception that there would always be work for him. As part of his cadetship Jason completed a degree via correspondence, an option that he pursued because the only university in his local area did not offer the degree that he needed to undertake. Although he found studying by correspondence challenging due to both the lack of connection with the wider cohort in his course and the time management challenges it presented Jason did not consider relocating due to a strong desire to remain in his local area. His desire to stay in his local area was further solidified when, at the age of 22, he and his partner had their first child. Prior to this time each of them had been living with their parents. They bought their own home and moved out two months before their first child was born, choosing to remain in the same suburb as each of their parents due to the desire to remain close to family and the need for the assistance and childcare that each set of parents could provide. After three years Jason and his partner had a second child and soon after got married.

Throughout the 13 years in which Jason has taken part in the study he has consistently reflected on his strong attachment to his local area, and to Tasmania more generally. While doing so he has often focused on the natural environment, the accessibility of amenities and the lifestyle available to him. For instance, in 2017 he stated:

I do like it in [local area]. I like it in Tasmania, generally. Pure and simply because it's big enough to have department stores and all the services and, you know, we get the odd concert down here and all those sorts of things. But then, you've also got the mountain bike trails, World Heritage Areas, highland areas, coastal areas, rain forests, you know, all of that sort of stuff here... I mean, if we move to the mainland, yeah, you might get that in some of the regional areas, but you're not going to do it and then get all the natural features you can get in Tasmania in those areas. You know, and good food, good wine... Why wouldn't you want to live here?

The natural environment of his local area has also consistently provided Jason with a means of both enjoyment and stress relief. Over the course of the interviews that he has participated in, Jason has consistently discussed his enjoyment of hunting, fishing and marathon running as a means of spending time with family and friends, as well as relieving the stress of his job and family commitments. However, despite his appreciation for his local area Jason was cognisant of some of the

challenges that remaining in this area posed. For instance, when asked how he felt about some of his peers leaving the area he replied:

[I was] disappointed in one way that there weren't the opportunities there for them to stay here or that they weren't immediately apparent to them. But at the same time too I can see why those people would be better suited to the bigger cities and the mainland life.

However, beyond framing staying in his local area as a matter of personal preference, Jason went on to associate staying in his local area with specific personal attributes:

Down here there's no doubting that you need to make Tasmania work for you as opposed to the other way 'round. If they aren't suited to that type of approach down here then it probably is better that they move away.

When discussing how precisely he 'made Tasmania work for him' Jason emphasised the attainment of his professional qualification, as well as the work that he performed alongside his studies as part of his cadetship:

I knew from when I went through [senior secondary school] that I needed to make sure I had a qualification behind me. That's why I took the steps in order to get this qualification. Even getting the job and working through with the job like I did studying whilst working on the job, I took those deliberate steps to make sure that Tassie did work for me.

However, for Jason the attainment of a tertiary qualification and professional experience in his industry appeared to signify a starting point, rather than the sum of his efforts to make Tasmania work for him. Following on from his discussion of the need for education and relevant professional experience he strongly emphasised the importance of identity work, or what he termed 'building a brand':

[Local area] and Tasmania offer the ability to build yourself a brand and be recognised... Build yourself a brand surrounding your quality of work, how you approach your job, your approach to customer service, all those sorts of things. You can build yourself a brand. You're not as anonymous down here as what you might be in, say, some of the bigger cities where you're competing for space with a lot of different competitors. Down here there's a reduced number of competitors, so there's a greater awareness of who is in the marketplace that you're in.

Beyond focusing on the quality of his output and customer service, Jason also essentially 'built himself a brand' by specialising. Within his already relatively narrow field he chose to specialise in a specific type of property prevalent in regional areas. In so doing he capitalised on a specific aspect of his identity, as his family was from the local area and had lived on a property of this type. Evidently, Jason's 'personal brand' was not only facilitated by his local area, it emerged in and was inseparable from it. By developing this 'personal brand' Jason ultimately engaged in identity work that facilitated his desire to stay in his local area, while capitalising on his knowledge of and connection to it.

Matilda

Like Jason, Matilda grew up in a regional area. However, despite enjoying aspects of her local area she relocated from her regional hometown in Victoria to metropolitan Melbourne in order to pursue further study following the end of secondary school. Over the next eleven years she returned to her local area sporadically, occasionally using her parent's house as a landing pad following international travel. When she was interviewed in 2017 Matilda was living in Sydney. However, she was in the process of relocating to the regional Victorian town in which she had grown up. While discussing her choice to return to this area she emphasised her desire for proximity to family and friends:

I don't have any of my family up here [in Sydney] or long-time friends. So, it's always like regardless of where I am, I just want to be where my friends and families are at the end of the day.

However, upon further reflection she discussed the more general feeling of belonging and attachment that she associated with the area:

I love the community vibe that it has. I think that's part of why I want to move back as well, because as much as I feel like I can fit in in places like [current suburb in Sydney], I don't feel like I really belong there like long term.

Although Matilda originally left her local area for the education and employment opportunities available in Melbourne, and later Sydney, her decision to return did not correspond with a movement away from these ambitions as she did not view returning to her regional hometown as incongruous with her professional ambitions. Rather, she appeared to view her professional ambitions and her local area as mutually constitutive. Specifically, she reflected on the rapid gentrification of the area, stating:

[The last time I visited] I think I sort of found [local area] booming to be honest. In this last ten years, it has just come so far... I guess, they have taken a lot of cues from Melbourne as a, like, smaller, little brother or whatever. But also, they've got all that beautiful regional produce.

Evidently, Matilda viewed her local area as adopting some of the urban allure of Melbourne while still offering aspects of the natural appeal commonly associated with rural and regional areas. At the time of the interview Matilda was studying to be an interior designer and had a professional background in another area of design. Rather than viewing the relatively small size of the area that she was relocating to as a constraint on her plan to work as a designer, Matilda instead directly linked her professional ambitions to the gentrification of the area. For instance, she reflected on the prevalence of 'cute cafes' in the area and stated:

I want to be involved in [local area]. I want to be involved in the region and help it get better. [Local area] is really coming into its own in terms of like, like its own uniqueness as well, um, yeah, so I was like, I'm really proud of it (laughs).

Matilda viewed herself as well positioned to contribute to the ongoing aesthetic development of the area due to both her design experience and her intimate knowledge of the area. It thus ultimately appeared that the professional identity

work that Matilda was undertaking was drawn together with the development of the area, and her professional identity was interwoven with it in a way that would ultimately allow her to remain close to her family and friends. Furthermore, while Matilda felt that she had struggled to differentiate herself in the crowded and competitive markets of Melbourne and Sydney, she viewed her return to her regional hometown as a way to take advantage of her connections to and knowledge of the area.

Liam

While for Jason and Matilda the interweaving of occupational and place-based identities took place in regional parts of Australia, Liam illustrates the way in which these processes can also take on a global character. Liam grew up in Melbourne and remained there for the duration of his tertiary studies. He lived in the family home while completing Bachelor and Master's degrees, and although he attributed the decision to do so partly to financial considerations he also enjoyed living with his parents and younger brother, each of whom he identified as a key source of support. However, upon completing a Master's degree he was offered a job in a Middle Eastern country which he accepted. He remained in this position for four years before he began to assess his options and reflect on his desire to return to Australia. While discussing this he recounts a conversation with a career mentor who explicitly linked his professional identity to place:

He essentially said to me... He goes, 'you've got to make a choice, you're approaching the four-year mark and around then it's ... People sort of see you as the man of the Middle-East. Do you want to be known for that? Or do you want to be known as the man from Australia?' So he goes, 'you're gonna have to sort to make a call soon'.

Liam's desire to return to Australia, and to Melbourne more specifically, appeared to correspond predominantly with his desire to be close to his family. This appeared to be in part because his professional and personal plans involved his brother. Specifically, he planned to start a business with his brother at some time in the future as they had both studied in similar areas, and to buy and then sub-divide a block of land for their future housing. Liam attributed these plans to the trust that he had for his brother, stating 'who can you trust more than your family'. However, his desire – and eventual decision – to return to Melbourne also related to his attachment to his local area.

For Liam, the decision to return to Australia and to tie his work experience and occupational identity to that region, rather than the Middle East, was not simply a matter of relocating and securing work in Melbourne. Liam's return to Australia corresponded with what he termed a 'rebranding' in which he cut his surname down to an abbreviated version. He cited practical reasons for this, stating 'basically, people spell it wrong', and that 'emails get lost', 'it gets mispronounced over the phone'. However, he also acknowledged that while the Greek heritage that his name suggested was easily accepted in the Middle Eastern country in which he was working due to what he perceived as a 'similarity in culture', he felt that there was a stigma associated with being Greek in Australia that may disadvantage him in

professional contexts. This suggests that he went through concerted identity work to craft an occupational identity that was, he felt, a good fit with Australia, and with Melbourne specifically. By engaging in this identity work Liam developed a strategy for returning to Melbourne, and thus to his family, that would not compromise his professional development, something that he had identified as of great importance to him throughout his participation in the study.

Place as a career and identity resource

As already established, previous research stemming from the Life Patterns study has found that individuals from rural and regional areas have consciously pursued education and training that enabled them to find work in their local areas, and therefore to remain in these areas in a stable, long-term way. In a time in which young Australians are increasingly experiencing unemployment, underemployment and precarious employment (see Chapter 4) the findings that we have presented build upon this work, as the participants whom we have discussed did not simply make educational and occupational choices that allowed them to remain in regional areas. Rather, they engaged in complex identity work that essentially capitalised on their relational and affective attachments to place, drawing them together with their occupational identities in an effort to secure and maintain stable employment in their preferred area.

Notably, Jason, Matilda and Liam all expressed an attachment to place that had both relational and immaterial or affective dimensions. Indeed, place attachment is an enduring theme that has been reflected throughout data stemming from the Life Patterns study. It is evident in relation to both cohorts, and for those living in urban, regional and rural areas (see Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Cuervo and Cook 2018). Against this backdrop, our findings are notable because, for our participants, place attachment was not an insurmountable barrier to the attainment of educational and occupational ambitions often located elsewhere, nor was it an instrumentally neutral quality that simply added depth to their experiences of their local areas. Immobility, or perhaps more accurately the place attachment that can come about through a period of immobility, instead became a resource in of itself for our participants. This is significant because previous scholarship addressing mobility in a post-secondary context has suggested a view of mobility (rather than the attributes of one's destination) as a personal resource (e.g. Cairns 2014; 2017).

Returning to our findings, it is evident that our participants leveraged their attachment to and subsequent knowledge of their local areas within their professional lives. For instance, Jason utilised his experiential knowledge of his local area, as well as his family history in the area, to specialise in his career, while also using his knowledge of the nature of the local economy to emphasise the necessary components of a successful 'personal brand'. Similarly, Matilda viewed her status as a local (despite her time away) and her resulting knowledge of her local area as an

asset in her ambition to continue her career in design in the area to which she was returning while also viewing the smaller labour market in the area as offering an opportunity for her to stand out. Finally, Liam used his knowledge of the local employment climate in Australia, and Melbourne more specifically, to inform a personal rebranding in order to avoid the stigma which, he felt, may be associated with his surname in this context. These instances are each notable because they signify cases in which attachment to and knowledge of place, rather than mobility, was treated as a resource.

However, despite the fact that the participants used their knowledge of and attachment to their local areas to support their occupational aims, for Jason and Matilda who lived in regional areas this did not automatically equate to a knowledge of the natural environment – something that has often been associated with those living in rural areas. While we discuss the importance of the natural environment to young Australians in greater detail in Chapter 9, for the participants depicted in these cases, environment was central to the experience of place; it was characterised by an affective connection to and deep knowledge of the locale and the unique resources that it offered. As Eriksson (2017) has identified in a Swedish context, the ways in which urban and rural areas are imagined suggests the differing resources that they impact to subjects. Specifically, Eriksson (2017: 3) contends that ‘the cultural resources of large urban areas are typically manipulated for capital gain, with people being subjected to the marketing of creative cities and “cultural capitals”’ while rural areas are, in contrast, associated with the traditional and the natural. These associations were evident in the experiences of both Jason and Matilda. However, they each treated them in markedly different ways. Jason capitalised on the association between rurality and nature, and by extension the assumption of a closeness to or appreciation of the natural environment on the part of those living in rural areas by developing a professional specialisation in rural properties. In contrast, Matilda subverted the association between regional areas and nature by imagining her local area as ‘taking its cues from Melbourne’, and imagining a role for herself in the further development of the area in this way due to her experience of living in both rural and urban locales.

Importantly, for each of the participants, the use of their attachment to their local areas was not the sum of the occupational identity-work that they performed. Instead, the use of place attachment as a means of honing occupational identities appeared, for each of the participants, to be part of a more general project of the self through which they shaped their occupational (as well as personal) identities. Although this conceptualisation presents significant homology with the work of many authors (e.g. Giddens 1991; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), it can perhaps be understood best in this context in relation to Kelly’s (2006; 2013) notion of the entrepreneurial self which, working from scholars such as Foucault and Rose, draws together the responsibilisation of individuals and the intrusion of free market logics into other spheres of life that characterise contemporary (neo)liberal governance regimes to put forward a notion of the self as enterprise – signifying a figure which

stands in diametric opposition to the figure of the 'at-risk' young adult. As Kelly (2006: 24) states:

Where the meanings of life are transformed, largely autonomously, into meanings that are structured by the market form, then subjects of (Neo)Liberal rationalities of government emerge as 'free', 'entrepreneurial', competitive, and economically rational individuals.

In the case of our participants, market logics closely informed the occupation-based identity work that they performed, as they sought to position themselves to maximum advantage in employment markets that were, in many ways, highly competitive due to their relatively small size. However, these efforts are particularly relevant because, although they represent the material considerations based, for instance, on education and employment opportunities that many authors have focused on while discussing young people from rural and regional areas, they were also drawn into dialogue with affective relationships with place. This is significant because it disrupts the implicit binary distinction between material and immaterial aspects of place. Specifically, the participants did not simply make seemingly practical decisions (about, for instance, education and employment) in order to satisfy immaterial desires. Material and immaterial factors were instead interwoven and, indeed, mutually constitutive.

It is important to emphasise that the participants' relational and affective ties to place obviously did not exist solely for the instrumental purpose for which they were employed. Indeed, they both pre-existed and exceeded the point at which they were drawn on in the formation of occupation-based identities. While there is a temptation to critique instrumental uses of affective experiences (and, ironically, to thus re-establish a dichotomous conceptualisation of immaterial and material aspects of our relationships with place) it is equally important to emphasise that, by essentially capitalising on their strong sense of attachment to their local areas the participants were able to remain in the places that were meaningful to them in secure, long-term ways. However, perhaps the issue that is most worthy of attention at the end of this discussion is the fact that the entrepreneurial forms of selfhood that the participants engaged with in the process of forming occupational identities that were tied to place relied on specific forms of knowledge, and the ability to perform a specific type of self. This essentially means that while several scholars (e.g. Miller 2003) have identified belonging as something akin to a human need, individuals have differential access to the psychic resources that may aid them in staying in the areas in which they experience belonging in secure, long-term ways. Although Jason, Matilda and Liam put forward a concerted effort to remain in or return to these areas, developing concerted strategies to do so, they also drew on significant interpersonal and knowledge-based resources to do so, illustrating that although belonging may be akin to a human need, this means of realising it is unlikely to lie within the reach of individuals who do not have access to these considerable resources.

Conclusion

As argued elsewhere (Cook and Cuervo 2018) many of the same mechanisms that inform mobility – such as place-based decision-making – are relevant to, and experienced by, those who are not mobile. This was especially evident in relation to the finding that Life Patterns participants, although seeking to be immobile, nevertheless constructed their place-based identities in relation to other places. Specifically, they constructed their place-based identities, in many cases, in relation to places that they were resisting (whether this was the mainland, a general notion of the city, or another country). We thus follow critical geographers such as Amin and Thrift (2002) and Massey (2005) in contending that place can be best understood via its relations to both mobilities and immobilities. Moreover, we extend this point by contending that, much like experiences of mobility, efforts to resist mobility play out at varying scales. We draw particularly on Sheller and Urry's (2006) influential work on the differing geographical scales at which mobilities take form, contending that efforts to resist the mobility imperative implicate varying scales in similar ways. It is through work such as this that we draw parallels between mobility and immobility experiences that take place within a single locale (in the case of Jason) within a single region of a country (in the case of Matilda) and within a global context (in the case of Liam).

Finally, returning to the point from which we began, we ultimately contend that experiences of immobility are complex not least of which because they are implicated in both actual and imagined places and mobilities. Against the backdrop of the broader social and economic changes that have shaped the lives of Life Patterns participants, this chapter reveals the work that immobility entails, especially when one seeks to remain in an area that is better categorised as peripheral than core. This work cuts across material and immaterial or rational and affective dimensions of place and mobility decision-making, meaning that it is necessary to work across each of these dimensions while seeking to understand and conceptualise it. Our analysis adds depth and complexity to the nature of the new adulthood, by contending that a dichotomous understanding of relational and affective dimensions of place – much like a dichotomous understanding of mobility and immobility – places conceptual limitations that do not align with empirical experience and is therefore something that we must move beyond in our efforts to develop holistic accounts of individuals' experiences of belonging and place.

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