

DISSERTATION

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF ORGANIZATION PLACE BUILDING IN
COMMUNITIES

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2005

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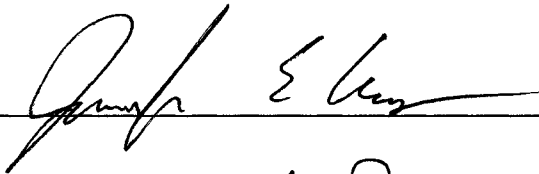
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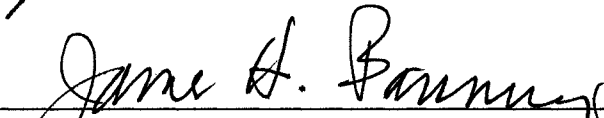
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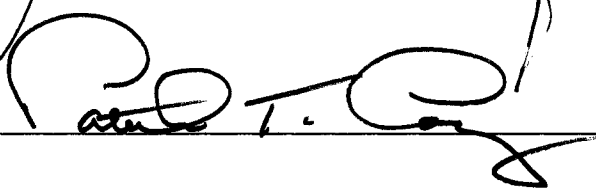
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ABSTRACT

**TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF ORGANIZATION PLACE BUILDING IN
COMMUNITIES**

This research introduces the concept of the organization as a co-constructor of place in their community. A review of the literature from across the disciplines of sociology, cultural geography and management informed the design and construction of a set of models that describe and explain how organizations construct place. This study was undertaken to discover the role of an organization in the construction of place in their community. Two premises underlie this study. The first is that organizations can be more efficient and effective if they can recognize the value of building place in their community. The second premise is that issues relative to constructing place are largely grounded in the notion that organizations behave in a community in a number of ways, some of which are likely to make a more positive contribution to the community. In this grounded theory study, several models emerged that help explain how an organization constructs place including a typology of organizations that casts or places an organization into one of four types. The typology reflects an organization's strategic intentions and behaviors associated with how they construct place in their community. Each typology, grounded in the data, can be a useful tool in assessing an organizations contributions and the outcome of their community interactions.

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Spring 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

When I started this journey there were those who cared and believed in my research. Along the way I met people who shared my ideas and enthusiasm for learning. The members of my committee each played an integral part in this journey. Dr. Geroy believed the research could be, rather should be, more than a “handbook” . He was more right than I knew at the time. Thanks for the inspiration and guidance. Dr. Banning, whose patience and insights were and remain a very positive influence in my learning and life. Dr. Long, our lone outside member from the University of Colorado, kept me grounded in the reality of the research and helped me focus my topic. Dr. Cross, our expert Sociologist, whose patience, especially with my writing, energy and enthusiasm helped me frame the complex issues of an interdisciplinary study. Thanks Jeni for your openness and honesty. Each of my committee members provided their own unique and special experience that I will carry with me throughout my career.

To my good friend Tom Howard, whose support, humor, and reality checks were an important ally in helping me keep my sanity and focus. We were and remain more than classmates. I’m thinking maybe we can do this again Tom. Thanks Martian. To Larry Wexler, friend and mentor, who listened, probed and encouraged me to stretch and grow beyond what I thought was possible.

To my Mom and Dad for a lifetime of support and love, without which I could not have imagined this day. Thanks Mom for your interest and reminding me that we are never too old to learn.

Finally, to Pam and Melissa. You are both the best of my world. Melissa’s love and fun reminded me this isn’t *just* another project. To Pam, my best friend and partner

who provided the love and dedication that gave me this gift we now share. I can not imagine going this alone without her at my side. We fought off the skeptics, the doubters, and others who questioned this path we have chosen. It is to Pam that I dedicate this study and my learning.

To all my friends and family. Thank You

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When communities understand the value of attracting and retaining a company with the best fit culturally, economically, and socially, communities then improve their chances for long-term economic viability and achieve a balance between environment, social ethics, and economic growth (Anderson & Gale, 1992; Sauer, 1925; Williams, 1989). The relationship between community and organization is important to understanding an organization's role and responsibilities with its community (Kemmis, 1990). Therefore, it is important for organizations to build place in their community in ways that contribute to the organization's ability to build their own advantages and capabilities, and for the community in terms of sustainability and economic viability.

Organizations behave in certain ways that are consistent with their culture, history, and strategic intentions. Likewise, communities operate in ways that are consistent with their own vision and stakeholders wishes (Wright, 2002). Communities recruit or import organizations that satisfy certain economic and social requirements that coincide with an effort to identify and describe the characteristics of the community which set it apart and give it a distinct identity (Kemmis, 1990).

According to J. Johnston, Director of the Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC) a 501(c) 6 designated, public/private, not-for-profit Corporation serving Northern Colorado, organizations locate and operate in a community to satisfy their unique economic needs and gain access to resources. Often organizations leave a community when the initial benefits of the community's original incentives are no longer attractive or are diminished by changes in its industry, competitive pressures that force organizations to seek a better arrangement elsewhere leaving in their wake empty

office buildings, declining real estate prices, and higher unemployment. Forecasts indicate that by the year 2008, as many as 1000 American companies will have relocated their entire corporate headquarters as a result of mergers or acquisitions because of tax incentives or to gain better access to raw materials (Bramlage, 1988).

Reasons will vary, of course, depending on the specific needs of the company, its customers, and its competitive market position. Among the other compelling reasons companies relocate is in response to the escalating pace of change and increasing competition and possibly the lack of local resources or relationship with their community. According to John Rhodes, President of Moran, Stahl & Boyer, a consulting company specializing in relocation, the only way to make a major, quick, cultural change is to pick up and drop into a new environment (Brett, Stroh, and Reilly, 1993; Mason, 1996). Although this may seem like a radical way to transform a corporate culture, relocation is often a valuable strategy for companies focusing on a new type of customer, doing business with a new vendor, or developing a new competitive position that can not be satisfied at its present locale. In these cases, a new community may be an important benefit. The increase of relocating organizations is a trend that provides few incentives for long-term commitments, individuality and investment in an organization's community (Dennis and Herring, 1999). Organizations and communities need to be aware of the outcomes and impacts of exiting and entering communities. And more critically, organizations need a coherent plan that studies and identifies the "best fit communities" that can help them build the long-term commitments necessary for success. Why is it that some communities successfully attract and retain an organization while others struggle? Why do some companies stay in a community and contribute to its well being, while

others drain local resources with little return or concern for the community and environment? Bio regionalists like Snyder (1995) suggest the answer may lie in an organization's view of its responsibility to contribute to the well being of the environment and the people who live there. Snyder perceived the organization as located in a place in which it either adds or detracts from the "great landscape." Snyder also suggested it is critical for an organization to understand the people, the rivers, and the mountains before being welcomed in that place. If bio regionalists and others are right about place, its construction, and the role of the organization, then advancing the notion of organizations as place builders takes on significant dimensions in terms of how place is created and its strategic value to the community and the organization.

Critical Components of Building Place

The initial review of the literature on the topic of place building suggested three critical components. First is the notion of organizations as cultural agents; second is the notion of community, and third is the notion of place.

Notion of Organizations as Cultural Agents

Organizations function as cultural agents by shaping and influencing, reinforcing, and defining social and behavioral norms within the community in which they reside. The view of organization as cultural agents helps people conceptualize the organization in terms of their values, their intentions and behavior, and how they behave as symbols of their culture (Morgan, 1997; Wright, 1994).

Organizations as cultural agents operate within a certain context that is consistent or congruent with their culture and that of their stakeholder groups. In addition, organizations behave in ways that are consistent with their history and strategic

intentions. Communities likewise operate in ways that are consistent with their own vision and stakeholder wishes (Morgan, 1997; Wright, 1994). Communities recruit organizations that satisfy certain economic and social requirements that go hand in hand with an effort to identify and describe the characteristics of the community that set it apart and give it a distinct identity (Kemmis, 1990).

Organizations as cultural agents step out of the traditional view of organizations as mechanistic and bureaucratic entities serving their own self interests, and place them as partners with its community. This is a “holistic” view of organizations as contributors to its environment and community.

Notion of Community

A recent examination of definitions of community revealed that most theorists were in basic agreement that community consists of persons in social interaction within a geographic area and having one or more additional common ties. Some consensus exists concerning at least three elements in the definition of community (Kaufman, 1959).

(1) Community is a social unit of which space is an integral part; community is a place in which the shared space is endowed with shared meanings that drive certain behavior. (2) Community indicates a configuration as to a way of life, both as to how people do things and how they want their organizations to behave in pursuit of their collective goals (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, and Vidal, 2001). (3) Community refers to a geographical area that is recognizable by a set of attributes tied to its physical location or appearance, such as natural boundaries, a recognized history, demographic patterns, or the presence and work within it of particular industries or organizations (Kaufman, 1959).

For the purposes of this study, *community* refers to a geographic area recognizable by a set of attributes tied to its physical location in which people and their organizations work and share a common culture and history that shape their interactions. Within the community each set of actors, including individuals, groups, and organizations serve as co-constructors in constructing place.

Notion of Place

Place, as Tuan (1977) stated, “is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to explain and be understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning” (p. 34). This concept of place takes on the meaning of events that occur in the community as driven in part by the interaction of the organization and the community. Place is also seen as that space we occupy and thus endow with meaning and experiences that become part of who we are and what we wish to become (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977).

Relph’s (1976) definition of place is “the focus of meanings or intention, either culturally or individually defined in knowing that a certain place is where one belongs” (p. 6). In addition, the meanings of events in a place are largely socially constructed. This suggests that it is the interaction among and between the organization and its community stakeholders that will largely determine the extent of the organization’s positive contribution to its community.

Premise of Study

Two premises underlie this study. The first is that organizations can be more efficient and effective if they can recognize the value of building place in its community. The second premise is that issues relative to constructing place are largely grounded in

the notion that organizations behave in a community in a number of ways, some of which are likely to make a more positive contribution to the community.

Significance of the Study

An organization can help construct place in a manner that contributes positively to its community. The significance of this research will be its introduction of the organization as an important agent in the construction of place and a key factor in how place is socially constructed. Constructing place may emerge as a strategy that produces a win-win collaborative for an organization and its community. However, organizations and their communities can find themselves at odds on local issues ranging from economic to cultural to social initiatives and goals. Most of these struggles revolve around space and its use (Mitchell, 2000), including land and other resources. This is similar to the disputes between Wal-Mart and its local communities over the impact a Wal-Mart retail center has on the community in terms of parking, traffic, and noise (“Thornton,” 2004).

Mitchell (2000) suggested these struggles can result in disruptive relationships when an organization’s values conflict or are in opposition to the values of the larger community in which it resides. Therefore, organizations are challenged to minimize conflict and maximize cultural congruence with their community as a strategy in building place in its community. In some cases, organizations may contribute or even help transform the community in ways that sustain the organization and community’s viability and economic success. In such scenarios, the organization’s culture and its strategic intentions may give important insights into the organization’s capabilities and intentions to assist the community in reaching its desired goals.

Very little research has addressed issues of how place comes to be shared across a community or groups of people as a collective feature of society. If place is not merely a geographical site or physical location, then what is it? The term *place* has typically been used in at least two different ways: first, to refer to a physical setting or locale acting as a context for social action, and second, as a referent for a socially constructed context of interpersonal interaction and practice (Agnew, 1987; Eyles, 1985).

Constructing place is not discussed in the management literature as a concept for guiding organizational strategies regarding location and behavior in a community. Consequently, no research has been found to address how an organization constructs place in its community. It is believed this may be due to a number of factors, not the least of which is the complex dynamic of the term *place*; as a result, the term has not yet reached the attention of organizations aside from its implications to climate and organizational attachment and affiliation (Hudson, 2001; Sagoff, 1996; Schoenberger, 1997; Wright, 1994).

From my initial inquiry and observations, it appeared there is a lack of discussion and understanding about how an organization contributes to the construction of place in its community. As a result, organizations may not be equipped to assess their cultural fit in a community and/or to guide their behaviors that ultimately result in constructing place. This study thus sets out to answer several key research questions such as outlined below.

Essentially the whole notion of place has not been used to discuss how an organization and its community interact. This study takes community and organization

problems and recasts them to see if place can contribute to an understanding of that relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to discover the role of an organization in the construction of place in its community.

Research Questions

The following enabling or issues questions will facilitate the collection of data.

1. How does an organization value place?
2. How does the culture of the organization influence its ability to build place?
3. How does the organization interact with the community and its environment in building place?

Next Phase of Research

The evolution of a theory on the role place plays in an organization and its community relationship will result from two activities. First there is a review of the literature, followed by the gathering and analysis of original data. The next chapter will present literature on place, the social construction of place, place building, and the role organizations play in building a relationship with its community.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter includes a review of the literature taken from across several disciplines that will explore place from a community and organizational view point. Three main areas will be explored: social construction of place, place building, and the role organizations play as cultural agents. The first part, social construction, will discuss how place is socially constructed and given meaning and the facets of place building. The second part will discuss a broad definition of organizations as cultural agents and their role in building place in the community. Management literature does not mention place building as an organizational strategy. The challenge then is to bring together the literature from various disciplines to form a coherent understanding of place building as an organizational strategy and its possible outcomes.

Social Construction of Place

This section will present the findings from the literature related to place building. First, this section will explore the literature to determine if there is a common definition of place. Second, the literature review will explore how meaning is constructed by the actors in a place. And third, the literature will explore the key characteristics and attributes of place building.

Historically, place has been the interest primarily of geographers, and phenomenologists studying landscape, space, and man's relationship to it. Most of the emphasis on place has been limited to office architecture and design to maximize use of office space. Place should be conceptually expanded to a larger view that focuses on the dimensions and interactions among groups that contribute to how organizations build

place. The key to studying the role of organizations as constructing place lies in the notion that if place is socially constructed, then, the construction of place can be seen as a social, and not merely an individual task. What people know about their community and organizations or feel about the places they live is initially mediated by others, especially those with whom an individual works and plays (Stokowski, 2002). In reviewing the literature on the social construction of place, it is important to start with a review of the literature on place.

Defining Place

There are two major reasons for attempting to understand the phenomenon of place. First, it's interesting in its own right as a fundamental expression of man's involvement in the world, and second, improved knowledge of the nature of place can contribute to the maintenance and manipulation of existing places and the creation of new places (Relph, 1976). Studying place as a phenomenon requires an approach and an attendant set of concepts that respond to the unity of 'place, person, and act' and stresses the *link* rather than the division between specific and general features of places (Relph, 1976). Relph's view suggests that place is linked to people and their activities in a place. An organization, by virtue of its organized activities of and for individuals and groups, can be seen then as an agent that govern and facilitates the interaction of people in certain places. Thus, we can see an organization as a co-constructor, with individuals and their groups, in the construction of place.

Lynch (1960) defines the identity of a place simply as, "that which provides its individuality or distinction from other places and serves as the basis for its recognition as a separable entity" (p. 6). While there are as many different identities of place as there are

people, every individual may assign self-consciously or unselfconsciously an identity to a place. These identities are nevertheless combined intersubjectively to form a common identity.

Anthropologists hold two seemingly opposing views with regard to place as a “setting” or a certain space, and as a socially constructed, spatialized experience borne out of social relationships and praxis. Place, then, is defined as social and organized around the meanings groups of people give to a place in its setting (Rodman, 1992). Place can also be seen as providing a fundamental means by which humans make sense of the world and through which they act. While place may at times seem to be out there, meaning not of our making, place is humanly constructed and is a product of our activities in it, such as the acts of consumption and consumerism that allow us to create places and instill them with meaning (Sack, 1988). Place as created out of human actions and intentions can be extended then to the thinking of organizations and their communities acting together as co-constructors of place, even when it is for the purpose of production and services. This concept of co-constructor is an important concept if we think of place as the product of the relationship between an organization and its community.

Relph (1976) holds a similar view of the relationship between place, community, and organization in his discussion of place as consisting of three components: (1) as the physical setting representing the buildings and objects; (2) the activities or the movement of the people there, how they interact and move around the area; and (3) as the meanings of a place are set by the intentions of the people who live there. These meanings may be rooted in the place and activities but they are not the property of them. Instead they are a

property of the human intentions and experiences. Therefore, if individuals and groups are capable of creating meanings out of their interactions, it makes sense that organizations, made up of people in a relatively common setting, can construct certain meanings to a place via the organization's behavior.

Relph's three components of place are reflected and supported in the work of Zelinsky (1973) and Sack (1988) who identified that the social construction of place is largely obvious in connecting the realm of nature, social relations, and meaning. Zelinsky (1973) posits, that "these three realms when drawn together help transform each of them into place as a context for social action" (p. 73). It is this intentionality that, while very complicated, involves both individual and cultural variations which reflect particular interests, experiences and viewpoints. These three realms are irreducible onto the other; yet are inseparably interwoven in our experiences of place and shape that we are (Buttimer and Seamon, 1980).

Place then is seen as important – as a vital element in the way we live our lives. Place is not simply an area or region, but is a product of man's intentions. Above all, place refers to being inside and belonging to place as an individual and member of a group without consciously reflecting on it (Eyles, 1985). Place is a reality to be explained and understood from the people and groups who give it meaning. Thus, an organization can be a key agent in communicating the intentions of its membership in ways that most likely contribute to place.

Place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there and to the various perspectives one has of a place. This relational context of people's interaction with others in a place is gathered from the meanings people attach to

their community and their place in it (Ingold, 2002). Since organizations are linked to the interaction among those who share its space, and culture, it is productive to think of an organization as a moral agent responsible to the social context in a community.

Steele's (1981) research agrees with that of Ingold (2002) who points to the 'social context' of a setting as the "collection of forces that operate on an individual as a result of the relationship to other people and institutions." These forces may not be visible as physical features, such as group and institutional norms about acceptable behavior in a community but their potential impact on a community and its organizations is significant (Steele, 1981). In many cases, the individual and the group are influenced by the physical settings and the psychological factors such as the individual's personality, needs, beliefs and other attributes such as employment and organizations. In essence, place is where people spend their time, act out their intentions and values, which affects who they are, who they become, and how they relate to each other (Hiss, 1990).

Places today are commodities in an international market, and they too must sell themselves to an unprecedented degree as tourist destinations, industrial sites, or bundles of amenities suited to those seeking a certain community that meets their needs (Light and Smith, 1998). How organizations, such as community governments and organizations, presently package and sell their communities as tourism destinations is an example of how an organization constructs place to meet certain needs of their constituencies.

Place continually changes and takes on new meanings. Small towns evacuate industrial centers, or drive out some industries and invite new ones and often are unaware of the consequences to its environment and residents (Lewis, 1972.). Changes are

prompting every place to adopt elaborate strategies to capture the flow of capital it finds attractive and escape those it finds distasteful (Gerson and Gerson, 1976; Harvey, 1989; Snyder, 1995).

The discussion thus far has focused on the definition of place and the social construction of place. The key to the social construction of place centers on how both space and place are seen as constituted out of the social relations that work to shape and re-shape the social and cultural identities of individuals and their organizations. Socially produced space can thus be conceptualized as a product of social relationships ‘stretched out’ over time and space that is materialized in the production of products (Hudson, 2001).

It is important to remember that place is made from space. As Tuan (1977) states, “space becomes place when it is endowed with meaning. And in so, doing a commitment to that place is made on both an emotional and physical level” (p. 6). That space may acquire important properties through cultural definition; an organization may possess certain sentiments about its space in a community, giving it a symbolic, culturally defined meaning. Thus we need to know a great deal about the culture of an organization and its relationship with its community and those who live there.

Understanding how meaning is given to a space requires a close look at the relationship between meaning and place as a key construct to how organizations build place in its community. The second part of this section will explore how meaning is constructed by the actors in a place, a key construct to understanding how organizations build place in its community.

Meaning and Place

Places take on the meaning of events that occur there, and their descriptions are fused with human goals, values, and intentions. Place is therefore not merely a phenomenon that exists in the minds of individuals but that develops from and becomes part of everyday life and experiences (Williams, 1998).

Entrikin (2000) sees our ability to “socially construct” places as a particularly modern view that recognizes our freedom to create meaning (p. 6). As such, individuals are agents in the world, free to make meaning from their environment in ways that will contribute to the construction of place. Finding meaning in space is both an individual and group process that can be guided by three premises. The first premise in analyzing meaning is that human beings act toward space on the basis of the meanings that space has for them, thus converting space to place. Second, the meaning of space and place is derived from or arises out of the interaction one has with others in that place (Tuan, 1977).

This notion of place as derived from the interaction is supported by Sauer (1925) and Zelinsky (1973), each of whom view place as not geographical in nature, but rather a function of relationships and interactions. For example, a place could be defined as an internet chat site, an online college course, or virtual learning labs and work places. However, in this study I will examine place as geographic consisting of the interactions between individuals, groups, and the organizations in their community.

The third premise is that the meanings one has about a place are handled in an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the spaces he encounters (Blumer, 1969). As Blumer (1969) posits, “the simple premise that human beings act

toward things on the basis of the meaning of things is much too simple (p. 10),” suggesting that there is more to consider when identifying how place creates meaning. Symbolic interactionism views meaning as arising from the process of interaction between people. The meaning of place for a group rises out of the ways in which people act toward each other with regard to place, be it in a community or organization of people (Blumer, 1969).

The actions of individuals in a community define the values they place on space and the meanings they form are in and through the behavior of people and their organizations in a community. Bell (1999) hinted at social interactionism when he presented society as comprised of three different realms that hang together over time in different ways and that move in different historical rhythms. These realms are the techno-economic system, the political order, and the cultural sphere. Similarly, Lofland (1998) suggested that three social realms make up place.

A *private* realm exists when the dominating relational form found in some physical space is *intimate*; a *parochial* realm exists when the dominating relational form found in some physical space is *communal*; A *public* realm exists when the dominating relational form found in some physical space is *stranger or categorical*. The organization operates in all three of Lofland’s realms and contributes in varying degrees. Lofland further indicates that the realm type (private, parochial, or public) is not defined by the physical space in which it is located but by the relational form, that is the social activity that dominates within it an activity that can be construed as place building.

Each of Lofland’s realms influence and are influential in the social construction of place. There is no question but that the connections humans forge between themselves

and place are somehow coupled to the connection they forge between themselves and others in those places, producing what Lofland (1998) refers to as the 'relational web' in a community, or how persons connect to a place. If we can think of individuals and their groups as part of this relational web, then it makes sense to think about organizations as agents playing an important and contributing role as part of the 'relational web.'

Place then is a site of meaningful action for the individual. But this action cannot be territorially delimiting as with nations and communities, but rather derived from links across space and time which make place more of a dynamic. A view similar to Geertz's "web of significance" in which people are involved and through their interaction define place as the 'attribute' of things (Oakes,1997; Jones and Eyles, 1977). Things that have meaning for us are those we create by our activities of work, play, holidays, and family, and can add to our knowledge of space as well as endowing it with meaning. The relationship, then, between an organization and its community is essentially two-way.

The two-way or relational aspect adds substantially to the concept of organizations as co-constructors of place in their community. This is further supported by Geertz (1973) who proposed that the social relationships between individuals and their community can be seen as an intricate network of ties, and ideas that Geertz (1973) refers to as "webs of significance" in which these webs provide a stable and consistent way of perceiving and conducting daily life in a particular geographical setting such as a community.

Thus far a definitional framework of place as socially constructed, and one in which people and organizations ascribe some meaning, is an important component of the literature, and contributes to one's thinking about the role of an organization in the

construction of place in its community. The next section of the literature explores the key characteristics and attributes of building place.

Building Place

The dimensions of space are key aspects toward an understanding of how an organization constructs place in its community. There are several theorists across multiple disciplines that are considered in how an organization constructs place. First, the work of Agnew (1987) suggests that three dimensions of space direct our thinking about place: sense of place, locale, and community, working together in creating a texture of place in a community.

Dimensions of Space

These three dimensions of sense of place, locale, and community are important to organizations in understanding the interplay each of these has in constructing place. Sense of place, the first dimension of space, helps organizations understand the value and nature of place. This is an important dimension as it frames the pattern of reactions that a setting, such as a community, stimulates for a person (Steele, 1981). Altman and Low (1992) define sense of place as “inevitably dual in nature, involving both an interpretive perspective on the environment and an emotional reaction to the environment” (P. 262). Entrikin (2000) posits that “sense of place” is therefore not merely a phenomenon that exists in the minds of individuals but that develops from and becomes part of everyday life and experiences” (p. 4) which might explain why sense of place and place building or attachment are inseparable concepts.

Hudson (2001) states, “sense of place refers to the feelings that people have for place and their attachments to them” (p. 262). He further points out that the identities of

places are relationally defined and constructed through relationships linked to each other and other places. Therefore, how people and groups construct meaning to a place is a central tenant to understanding place (Light & Smith, 1998).

Agnew's second dimension of space, locale, the setting in which social relations is constituted, is akin to community and is further explained below. The third dimension of space: location is the setting of the activities, size and shape of the community, and its impact on the wider world. These three major elements of locale, location, and sense of place are interwoven in the concept of place, and suggest that place therefore refers to discrete if elastic areas in which settings for the social relations are located, and with which people can identify (Agnew, 1987).

Agnew takes a broader view of place as constructed by both the individual, as in sense of place, and by groups as suggested in locale or community. Lofland views place as the center of social interaction in which people relate and connect. Both Lofland and Agnew's views help build toward an understanding of the role organizations play in the construction of place. Further, since community is a key concept in this research, it requires further discussion.

Community

Community, as Jones and Eyles (1977) state, "is almost impossible to define to everyone's satisfaction." While defining community is a challenge, a general understanding of the term is important to give this study foundation. For example, (Snyder, 1995) refers to community as the *sharing of certain social attributes* and interests that reflects their culture. Eyles (1985) focuses on the *grounding of human beings in place* explored in the context of community, where he believes place building

often resides. Eyles (1985) identified three salient elements of community as: place, people and their institutions and the sense of belonging. Each of these three elements is further defined. First, Eyles defined place by the values a community ascribes to its space or area. Second, the relationship between people and their institutions shapes how people value work and develop their affiliations with institutions of employment and education. Third, a sense of belonging which is seen as the affiliation or connectedness between people and their institutions, developed out of the affective, normative and social attachments people make to their community (Butz and Eyles, 1997).

Each of these elements described by Eyles, place or area, people and their institutions, and sense of belonging, are key concepts in understanding the relationship between an institution and its community which creates the character or personality of the region, nation or community (Eyles, 1985). Eyles' suggests that a community is a place of interactions among and between its individuals and their groups in which meaning is constructed. Further, Eyles suggests that an organization plays an important role in not only how they treat the space around them, but how they interact and communicate with the individuals and their groups in its community. Each of the above definitions is important concepts in shaping this project's definition of community.

Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, and Vidal (2001) believe that community refers to a geographical area that is recognizable by a set of attributes tied to its physical location or appearance, such as natural boundaries, a recognized history, demographic patterns or the presence and work of particular industries or organizations. Both Eyles (1985) and Chaskin, et al, (2001) agree that community is related to a set of attributes that make that community unique.

As a management strategy, it would make sense then for an organization to know its environment, understand the community's perspectives, and behave in ways that share the responsibility of what happens in its community. The output is being the positive contribution to the community. Sagoff (1986) defines the group or community as, "having a life of its own and is not simply a logical aggregate." The key point here is that a community is not an aggregate of individuals or a set of preferences to be satisfied; people in communities know the purposes it seeks to accomplish, however unlimited. This further suggests that a community has a life and character of its own that is largely shaped by the individuals and groups who live there.

Communities may be differentiated in many ways and are assumed to contain a wide array of qualities. They are functional units for the delivery (and sometimes production) of goods and service. They are often considered to be natural political units around which collective action may be mobilized. They may serve as a source and a nexus for interpersonal networks and be recognized as units of identity and belonging for residents. For the purposes of this study, *community* refers to a geographic area recognizable by a set of attributes tied to its physical location in which people and their organizations work and share common culture and history that shape their interactions. Within the community each set of actors, including individual, groups and organizations are co-constructors in constructing place.

Putting all the definitions of community together, suggests agreement on definition that reflects this study and the literature. First, the communities are the pools of resources ranging from the skills of individuals to the strengths of organizations to access financial, human and social capital. Second, networks of relationships (sometimes

stressing affective terms), and leadership, while not always precisely defined, is nevertheless an important issue. Therefore, it makes sense to think of organizations as playing a key role as partners vested in sustaining community capacity and constructing place.

This definition puts in play the organization's relationship to its community from two perspectives. First, organizations as cultural agents are part of the "web" of relationships that make up the cultural texture of the community, and second, when organizations construct place, they contribute to community capacity in ways that are perhaps unique to the nature of the organization and community. If this is so, then, it is helpful to define communities in terms of its capacity to build place.

Community Capacity

It is important to define community in terms of how it works and contributes to the general environment, solves problems and attracts labor and other resources, particularly organizations. An easy definition of community capacity is, "what makes a community work." What makes a community work is largely due to the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community (Kaufman, 1959).

Organizations can be seen as agents for contributing to community capacity. A criterion for organizational contributions and effectiveness are likely to go beyond a simple accounting of services provided or goods produced to incorporate issues of constituent representation. Such a network of relationships provides organizations with greater access to resources. In practical terms, community capacity will probably always

operate as a function of the relationships between and among people, their organizations, and the environment (Kaufman, 1959), thus suggesting that capacity building and constructing place may operate at more than one level of social agency at a time. Some consensus exists concerning at least three elements in the definition of community. One, community is a social unit of which space is an integral part; community is a place. Two, community indicates a configuration as to way of life, both as to how people do things and what they want and need from their institutions and organizations. A third notion is that of collective action defined as persons in a community frequently acting together in the common concerns of life.

As organizations act together with their constituents in protecting the common concerns and priorities, they are engaged in constructing a place where values are shared and meaning is constructed out of their interactions with each other in a certain space or, in this case, community. The section of the literature review will discuss organizations and their role in constructing place.

Organizations as Cultural Agents

In this section we will explore the many dimensions of culture and organizations as cultural agents in the construction of place. Second, we'll explore the idea that organizations exist relative to their culture and intentions, values and behaviors in a community.

Culture

Culture is a useful concept in understanding the hidden and complex aspects of how organizations construct place. Simply put, one cannot talk about space and its use, which leads to place making, if we are limited to the traditional concepts of place and the

relationship between organizations and its community. Therefore I will explore culture from a geographer and anthropologist's perspective which broadens our view of culture apart from the traditional view of corporate culture.

Culture is really about creating a way of life. Humans, through their actions and social interactions and relationships, actually produce culture while culture is producing them (Schoenberger, 1997). The notion that culture is constitutive strongly supports the notion then that place creates the culture in which people interact with their environment in ways that are meaningful to them and by extension to the organization. As Smircich (1983) states, "culture is a process. It cannot be fixed onto a checklist of attributes of a delineated group: that would be to treat culture as a thing." Mitchell (1995) agrees when he claims, "culture is simply that which is not nature." He goes on to say, "Culture is represented in terms of maps, levels or domains. It becomes a *medium* of meaning and action (emphasis *added*)."

Geertz (1973) sees culture as located in public institutions, performances and symbols, including how space is treated and the significance of place on certain areas and landscapes as representative of a culture. Anderson, Domosh, Pile, & Thrift (2003) posit that "culture as a way of life refers to the diverse properties of people in a place" (p. 2). Their definition is shared by many who believe that culture becomes imbedded with individual and cultural meaning which ultimately influence how space is used. As Williams (1989) claims,

"Culture is common meanings, the product of a man's whole committed social and personal experience. We can understand the elements of a culture as reflected in how space is treated and in so doing interpret the environment as artifacts of that culture, what is valued and revered" (p.8).

Williams is suggesting that organizations, by virtue of their strategies and culture, influence their relationships with the community. This relationship in many ways is the image or reflection of their values. Zelinsky (1973) asserts that in “its ultimate, most essential sense, culture is an image of the world, of oneself and one’s community” (p. 70). Therefore, it is important to understand how an organization’s culture and strategic intentions relate to its space and relationships in its community. This may result in a view of organizations as ‘partners’ with its community seeking strategies that build place.

Organization and Community

Organizations are part of the community, its history, and its culture. The organization’s behavior is a product of its culture (Anderson & Gale, 1992). How an organization constructs place, then, is intrinsically tied to the notion that organizations act as agents of the culture. In the course of generating new meanings, and decoding existing ones, people construct places, spaces, landscape, regions, and environments.

In short, people construct geographies and their view of the world (Wagner and Mikesell, 1962). How people and organizations construct their understanding of the world is illustrated in Chris Wilson’s (1997) book, *The Myth of Sante Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*, in which he details the history of Sante Fe, New Mexico’s rise from a frontier outpost to a prominent tourism destination accomplished through what historians refer to as “invention of tradition” deemed necessary in a constantly changing world. In the case of Sante Fe, people created what Wilson (1997) refers to as “plausible fictions” that gave way to new ways of looking at their community based on the reality of the situation and on a set of common or shared values.

The people of Santa Fe arranged their spaces in distinct ways. They fashioned certain types of landscapes, townscape; they erected monuments and destroyed others. They evaluated spaces and places and adapted them accordingly; they organized the relations between territories at a range of scales from the local to the international.

In direct and indirect ways, both willful, and unintentional, people construct environments, regions, and places (Anderson & Gale, 1992). Organizations play a vital role in the processes of cultural construction. Just as people frame their actions in terms of shared definitions of situations, so do organizations operate as cultural agents sharing community space, and values. As a requisite to constructing place, organizations must understand the powerful and often conflict-ridden relationship between cultural meanings, and landscapes that embody, reflect, and shape those meanings. Thus, enabling organizations to see the 'wide angle' view of the community and their power to influence and construct place. Just as individuals in a culture can have different personalities while sharing much in common, so too, do groups and organizations.

Organizations end up being what they think and say about their ideas and visions for themselves and their constituencies. One of the major strengths of describing organizations as culture is that it directs attention to the symbolic significance of almost every aspect of organizational life. And it points toward another means of creating and shaping an organization's behavior by influencing the ideologies, values, beliefs and norms and other social practices that ultimately share and guide organized action (Morgan, 1997).

In addition, thinking of organizations as cultural agents encourages us to recognize that the relationship between an organization and its community is socially

constructed. In other words, organizations choose their community and their behavior in its community through a host of decisions that are extensions of the organizations culture. The geographers have presented a broad view of how organizations and their communities can collaborate on the construction of place from a cultural perspective. The study of place and culture can offer a new framework for discovering what role place plays in community and organization's relationships.

When individuals understand and know the space or environment in ways that are important and meaningful, they act in ways that are congruent with their community's culture (Tuan, 1977). Therefore, we might expect organizations to have the capacity to do the same thing, suggesting when an organization understands how to construct place in a community will aid the organization in its decisions regarding the selection of a location and how to behave in its community. An understanding of organization as culture opens our eyes to many crucial insights that elude other ways of thinking about organizations, but they do not always provide the easy recipe for solving organizational problems. Instead, they produce a new way of thinking about organizations as culture (Weick, 1995; Wheatley, 1999).

There is not a great deal of conversation among theorists in place or management, about an organization's role in constructing place. Symbolic interactionism theory suggests that place is the result of a variety of actors creating and recreating meanings in space. Organizations are clearing actors in a place; therefore organizations can act as agents in a culture contributing to the construction of place.

Treating organizations as culture helps avoid conceptualizing organizations as bounded units, and changes our paradigm from an authoritative one to a context that

places are cultural settings which are ideological as well as material. Ideological in the sense that an organization treats and relates its behavior as holistic and integrative to the community culture (Schein, 1992). As the management literature has taken up the idea of corporate culture, it has emphasized a fairly consistent set of themes and problems. Corporate culture is generally viewed as a set of social conventions embracing behavioral norms, standards, customs, and the rules of the game underlying social interactions within the firm (Schoenberger, 1997). However, the literature on corporate culture reveals there is ample information on how an organization constructs culture within the organization, but little literature that looks outside the organization in terms of its role as contributing to the construction of place in its community.

Since organizations are typically defined by their structure, hierarchy, and culture and what they produce and the processes they employ, it may be more fruitful to consider organizations as partners or 'compadres' with its community sharing common values and intentions about how their common space is treated (Gallagher, 1993; Lynch, 1960). In this view of an organization as a 'partner' with its community, frames the relationship as relational or two-way. i.e. consisting of various social actors.

Therefore, the relationship between an organization and other groups and individuals is integral to constructing place. This view also suggests a broader role for organizations and communities as they struggle to reach agreement on issues of space and culture that are at the heart of constructing place. As a practical matter, this agreement requires some thinking about the organization's place in its community on a number of levels as suggested in the conceptual framework that follows.

Discussion

It appears that the literature can be best conceptualized and explained in a conceptual framework (see figure 1). This framework organizes the principle variables of cultural congruence, place perspectives, and environmental knowledge in a way that helps explain and direct thinking about the role of an organization in the construction of place in its community.

Conceptual Framework for Exploring Place

Understanding a community and an organization's role in it starts with an understanding of community as a network of linked relationships (Chaskin et al, 2001). It is proposed that a network of relationships can be described by a conceptual framework that embraces the dynamics associated with constructing place. This network is similar to what Geertz (1973) referred to as *webs of significance*, be it in a school, a community, or the organization itself. The notion of 'webs of significance' forces us to think about community's history, social rules, and patterns of participation and community building, as well as the role an organization plays in its community.

Light and Smith (1998) suggested that the concepts of place and place attachment can serve to underpin a process for orienting an organization's relationship within its community. They also postulate that with only a few exceptions, the unit of analysis in place research has typically been the individual. It can be concluded that the concept of place is used colloquially to refer to an individual's ability to develop feelings of attachment to a particular setting (Light & Smith, 1998). Therefore, we are challenged to make a critical examination of the usage of place as a social construct that focuses on the interaction and affiliation among social groups in a community that are committed to the

productive use of a community's resources. If organizations are integral to the social and cultural relationships necessary to build place in their communities, an organization requires a framework that guides its activities and relationships in constructing place.

The conceptual framework illustrates how the three dimensions of cultural congruence, environmental knowledge, and place perspectives intersect to suggest how an organization might construct place. The conceptual framework could include outer or external pressures pushing (external factors) or pulling (internal factors) these dimensions in different or similar directions based on the organization's culture and behavior.

At the process level, an organization must acquire certain knowledge of what resources the environment affords or offers the community (environmental knowledge). Also, an organization must understand and interpret the mix of social factors that make up the characteristics of the community and its influence on individuals and the organization (place perspectives). Finally, a business strategy is developed which is congruent or aligned with the culture of the community and organization (cultural congruence).

The conceptual framework suggests a way of dealing in a community that evaluates and utilizes the resources afforded the community from its environment, and for optimizing environmental and human resources in ways that are consistent with the character and culture of the community. The conceptual framework is constructed around three principal dimensions with sub-dimensions. These are individually presented in the following discussion.

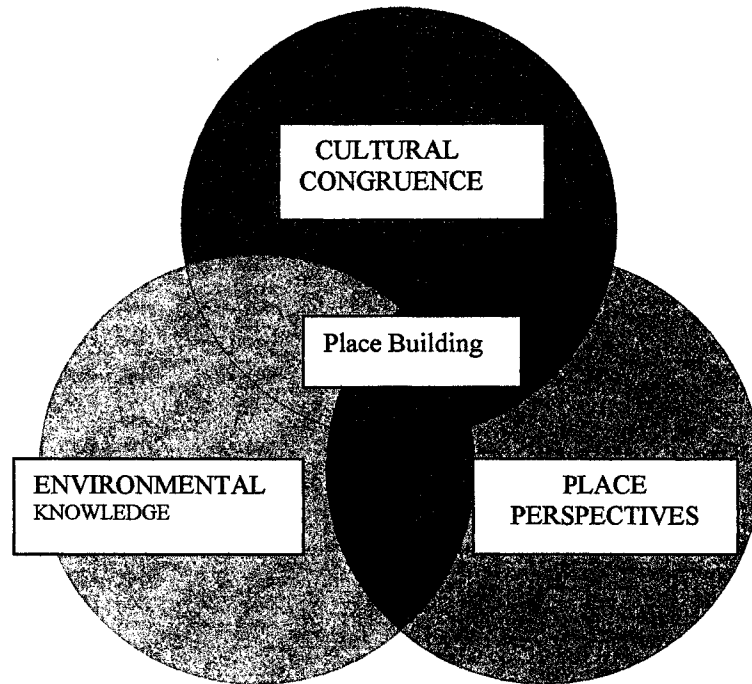


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: The Place Based Network Model.

Culture Congruence

When people talk about culture, they typically speak of things like shared or commonly held beliefs (Schein, 1992). When organizations and communities share a common set of intentions regarding the use of the community's resources, they will, in effect, have negotiated settlements that group them together as cultural *compadres* seeking similar outcomes that are congruent or consistent with their cultures and produce

favorable physical settings for all stakeholders (Hardesty, 1974). In the course of generating new meanings and decoding existing ones, people construct space, places, landscapes, regions, and environments (Williams, 1989).

This means that, although place may be very personal, places are not entirely the result of an individual's feelings and meanings the individual fixes to a place; rather, such feelings and meanings are shaped in large part by the social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances in which organizations and their communities find themselves (Massey & Jess, 1995). Understanding the perspectives of a place is equally important, as this leads to a better knowledge of the environment and the resources it affords.

Place Perspectives

Studying place from an organizational viewpoint requires a set of perspectives that build on how the organization understands the social order of a community as characterized by the community's social characteristics. Gerson & Gerson (1976) proposed four aspects to place perspectives that can help frame how an organization and communities may understand their social position. The first aspect is temporal order of a community, which refers to how the community is geared to a different time, scale, pace, and rhythm. The second aspect, monetary order, refers to the perspective of where and how money and finance mediate the relations between people. A resort community, for example, may place tax revenues and the strategies to increase them as their principal activity and concern.

The third aspect, sentimental order, is the emotional tone of the people who live and visit the community. Conflict often occurs when development and growth initiatives strike against what the people cherish or view as the heart and soul of a community. The

fourth aspect, ideological order, represents the fundamental assumptions people have about the values they hold for how the community works and is governed (Gerson & Gerson, as cited in Moore & Golledge, 1976).

Variations in place perspectives are important to understand because they can inform and direct an organization's strategy that might otherwise generate conflict around use of certain resources (Moore & Golledge, 1976). Place perspectives prepare an organization to understand in greater detail the manner in which individuals and the community interacts with one another and what frames their issues relative to the use of space and other natural resources (Light & Smith, 1998).

Environmental Knowing

An organization and its community are mutually constitutive components of the same place. Therefore, their perception and consumption of environmental resources construct meanings that are embodied in how they deal with each other and are grounded in how they know their environment. *Knowing the environment* refers to the awareness, images, information, impressions, and beliefs that individuals and groups have about the functional and symbolic aspects of real and imagined physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environments (Gerson & Gerson, 1976).

The third dimension of the conceptual framework, environmental knowing, is divided into two areas: resource affordances and effectivities. Each of these describes how the organization and community utilize the human and natural resources as presented to them in their environment (Hardesty, 1974).

Affordances. Affordances are what the environment offers, what it provides or furnishes in the way of resources to the community and its organizations (Gibson, 1979).

To an organization, it means those natural and human resources that are accessible and provide unique opportunities to the organization that create advantage for the organization in the market place and help sustain the community. The relationship between man and environment is essentially two-way, and to a large extent, organizations and communities can and do decide how to live within certain limits of nature and community. Therefore, the environment that presents man with a variety of options or alternatives from which he can chose to satisfy his needs is largely the outcome of man's culture (Jones & Eyles, 1977). These options then seen as affordances, and the capacity to act on these are the effectivities.

Effectivities. Affordances are properties of the real environment as directly perceived by the organization and the community, such as human capital and natural resources. The reciprocal term *effectivity* denotes the action capabilities of the organization, that is, what it is practically equipped to do. Thus, the range of affordances of a resource will be constrained by the effectivities of the organization and the community. In other words, is the organization equipped with the tools that can enlarge its effectivities in ways that contribute to the community? Therefore it is important for an organization and its community to act in concert as they find ways to *leverage* their resources into organizational and community advantages that can construct a special meaning to their relationship (Ingold, 2000).

Organizations may engage their communities through the process suggested in the conceptual framework that result in building webs of influence that link or connect the organization with the community in ways that protect the environment, help build human capital, and work to sustain the community's economic, social, and cultural vitality (Dear

& Flusty, 2002). The conceptual framework parallels the work of Gladwin, Kennelly, and Krause (1995) on sustainability-centered communities and organizations. These authors pointed to the need for a “sustaincentric” paradigm that focuses on strategies that work to sustain the environment in a balanced and equitable manner that benefits society and the environment. Similarly, the conceptual framework suggests a similar praxis wherein an organization contributes to sustaining the community’s culture and resources through inclusiveness, improving human development over time and space and connectivity. In this regard, we can think of organizations as endowing certain meanings to their community that generate a certain image of themselves and by extension their community.

Thus, the social relations that a community signifies may be equally or more important to the attachment process and how place is constructed (Altman & Low, 1992). Consider the images Fort Collins, Colorado, and Colorado State University, located in Fort Collins, use in their marketing campaigns to attract businesses and students. What aspects of place and of the community, do they emphasize and which do they neglect? These decisions are made by organizations that reflect their level of congruence, their perception of the environment, and what it affords.

The concept of place is easier to grasp when we think of ourselves as agents always “in place,” much as we are always “in culture.” For this reason our relations to place and culture become elements in the construction of our individual and collective identities and are reflected in how we market and manage a community’s resources. Entrikin (2000) posited that “individuals are ‘situated’ in the world.” Further, he stated, “the significance of place is to be associated with this fact of ‘situatedness’ and the

closely related issues of identity and action” (p. 2). How organizations are situated in a community may impact their contribution to their own organization and the community.

The conceptual framework offers a basis for a discussion on how an organization constructs place through the interaction and affiliation of an organization in its community. The conceptual framework does not offer a complete structure or picture for the description of all experiences and strategies; nor is it intended that these dimensions or categories are absolute. Rather, it is a foundation for an interpretation of explaining and describing the literature. Further, it will not guide or judge field inquiry.

The conceptual framework reflects a concept that supports the social construction of place and how organizations may operate as co-constructors of place in the real world. Further, the conceptual framework proposes how organizations might construct place out of a social network of ideas, concepts, and meanings about the community and environment that are embedded in the community’s culture, as expressed by their activities: symbolic, language, rituals, and everyday living.

The conceptual framework relates to the literature review in three important ways: (1) place is interactive between the organization and its community, (2) the culture of the organization and the community are intrinsically linked as partners in how place is culturally defined, and (3) environmental knowledge in terms of awareness, images, information, and beliefs that individuals and groups have about the functional and symbolic aspects of the community. The conceptual framework is a product of an interdisciplinary approach that integrates concepts across several disciplines to formulate an idea that does not bias the field work, but only serves to compare the data and findings.

Response to the Research Questions

First, there is general agreement among researchers that place is defined as assigning meaning to space from both a social and personal context, indicating that human interaction in a given space can give meaning and value to a certain place.

Second, the management literature did not provide sufficient data on constructing place as an organizational strategy. Third, management scholars such as Wheatley (1999), Morgan (1997) Schein (1992) and Wright (1994) whose roots in anthropology, ecology and physics, offered a perspective of organizations as both “cultural agent” and “partner” with its community when an organization behaves in a community in ways that make a positive contribution to all stakeholders.

While no one discipline directly addresses the issue of constructing place, the literature from multiple disciplines suggested that organizations may be actors in the construction of place. From these perspectives and conclusions, the literature leads me directly to the gap on place and organizations as a constructor of place. This gap has lead me directly to the research question: what is the role of organizations in the construction of place in its community?

A conceptual framework pulls together divergent literature and explains how the variables of culture, place, and environment are key elements for how an organization constructs place in its community. Chapter three will explore the appropriate research design to gather and analyze data.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will begin with a restatement of the research purpose and questions as posed in Chapter 1. Next, it will address the research approach and rationale. The next part will explain why a Grounded Theory design is appropriate to this study. Finally, trustworthiness for assessing the study's validity will be addressed. At the end of Chapter 2, it was concluded that the literature review does not provide sufficient information on the study's research question to form propositions concerning the question.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to discover the role of organizations in the construction of place in their community.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study.

1. How does an organization value place?
2. How does the culture of the organization influence its ability to construct place?
3. How does the organization interact with the community and its environment in constructing place?

Research Approach and Rationale

Qualitative Research

The literature does not examine the role an organization plays in the construction of place. Therefore, there is a need for an exploratory study. My role, as active learner, will allow me to listen about how organizations construct place from their point of view. In attempting to explain why a qualitative approach is used, it is critical to delineate its

foci and its goals. First, qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth. Instead of drawing from a large, representative sample of all businesses in Northern Colorado, I am seeking to acquire in-depth and intimate information from a group of executives in three organizations. Second, qualitative research is particularly well suited to the study of place because it involves discovery on how humans and their groups construct meaning in their place, and the process by which an organization constructs place in its community.

Third, qualitative research supports a focus on discovery rather than verification. The new information gathered from this research may reflect new practices or behaviors, new forms of organizational structure, and/or new ways of thinking or interpreting how place is constructed by an organization. Fourth, qualitative research explores the complex and holistic picture of how an organization constructs place. In a qualitative design, I will rely on few cases and many variables. This will require a commitment to extensive time in the field, complex and time consuming processing of data analysis, writing long passages, and participating in a form of social research that does not have firm guidelines (Creswell, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Patton, 2002).

I will rely on the voices, and interpretation of informants through extensive quotes, present themes that reflect words used by informants, and advance evidence. I will attempt to find multiple perspectives within each theme, and divergent views of how an organization constructs place.

Qualitative research methods reflect an inductive mode of analysis or a process of moving from specific observations to a general theory. This mode of analysis is in contrast to quantitative research methods, which rely on deductive thinking or a process of moving from a general theory to specific observations. Grounded theory, a mode of

inductive analysis, can be thought of as a theory that is derived from or "grounded" in everyday experiences (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Ground Theory Approach

Grounded Theory (GT) is an appropriate design for this study as it will undertake research to develop a theory about the role organizations play in the construction of place in their community. Grounded theory is a research method that seeks to develop theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Grounded theory is not generated *a priori* and then subsequently tested. Rather, it is *inductively* derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory should stand in *reciprocal* relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002).

Study Plan

I plan to look at a variety of organizations and gather certain information about their relationship in their community and their role in the construction of place in its community. The community of Fort Collins, Colorado has been selected as the community from which organizations will be selected. The influence of a large state university, the geographic proximity to the Rocky Mountains and the Denver Metropolitan area, a diverse business community, and access to research resources are the principle reasons for this selection. The criterion for the selection of organizations and participants follow.

Organization Selection Criteria

A group of organizations that meet a certain criterion (see below) will be selected from the total population of organizations in the Fort Collins area. The Northern Colorado Economic Council Directory of corporations and the Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce Business Directory will be used to identify the total list of all organizations that satisfy the following criterion.

Criterion one. Consider only those organizations that have been in business in the community for at least five years with a history of contributing to the community.

Criterion two. Organizations that have a record of demonstrated participation in various community programs and are viewed as leaders in this regard as measured by local media and community leaders.

Criterion three. Organizations will be segmented from three types of ownership and management structure. The business segments are: (1) small (less than 30 employees) entrepreneurial business enterprise locally owned and operated by a single owner or group, (2) mid business that has grown in revenues to exceed \$1 million in sales and has a history of community participation and contribution, and (3) a corporation in the Fortune 1000 group that will provide a corporate perspective of how an organization contributes to the local community.

This study plan will ensure that organizations selected will help build theory about how an organization constructs place. Further, the selection of different organizations studied will provide varying conditions for generating, examining, and making the emerging concepts more conceptually dense. In this way, the constant

comparative method makes probable the achievement of a complex theory that corresponds closely to the data. Three organizations from each segment will be selected.

Participant Selection Criteria

Individual Chief Executive Officers (CEO) or presidents will be contacted in each of the eight organizations to determine if that organization has an interest in participating. The CEO or president is determined to be the first and best contact in each organization since that individual is in a position to describe the organization's strategies and culture and the relationship of the community and organization. Second, he/she has the authority to endorse the research and encourage participation. And, third, the individual CEO or president can identify those individuals within the organization that may be able to provide important data on how the organization works and interacts in its community.

These individual decision makers and organizations are selected (theoretical sampling) in order to test assumptions about emerging analytic concepts and their properties. The purposeful sampling of individual participants stops when there is redundancy of information, cessation (no new codes) or saturation. The participants interviewed are theoretically chosen to help me best form the theory.

Data Collection

There are four basic types of information to collect: observations (which may include attending company meetings and functions), interviews (ranging from semi-structured to open-ended), and documents (ranging from private to public that detail organization policies and procedures relating to community activities) and artifacts.

Interviewing

I plan to interview 10-20 individuals per organization. One-on-one interviews will use a recording procedure, such as a lapel mike for both the interviewer and interviewee that filter out noises and assure higher quality recording. An interview protocol will be designed to guide a number of semi-structured questions with ample space between questions to write responses and interviewers comments. Other key strategies such as location of interview, issues of status and position of participant must be considered in arranging the interview and the professionalism of the material and other considerations.

Interviewing require skills of observation. In addition, reading the nonverbal messages, being sensitive to how the interview setting can affect what is said, and carefully attuning to the nuances of the setting and the interviewer and interviewee interaction and relationship add important interviewing techniques. Lofland and Lofland (1995) suggested that there are four people oriented mandates in collecting qualitative data: First, the researcher must get close to the situation being studied to personally understand in depth the details of what goes on. Second, the researcher must aim at capturing what actually takes place and what people actually say: the perceived facts. Third, qualitative data must include a great deal of pure description of people's activities and interactions and settings. Fourth, qualitative data must include direct quotations from people, both what they speak and what they write down.

The protocol of questions (See Appendix A) is intended to guide the interview conversation toward an understanding of how organizations build place. As a form of ecological validity, I plan to consult with one or two business leaders in the community regarding the applicability and understandability of the interview questions prior to my

first set of interviews. In a naturalistic inquiry designs cannot usually be completely specified in advance of fieldwork. I will take an empathic stance in interviewing seeking to understand without judgment (neutrality) by showing openness, sensitivity, respect, and responsiveness to the interviewee about their organizations culture and processes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Other Data Collection

In addition to interviewing, the researcher will collect and analyze documents and artifacts that add description and validate or add to interview data. Observations of the organizations activities in the community and organization that give insights to its culture and intentions. Guba and Lincoln (1985), state that,

“A major advantage of direct observation is that it provides here and now experience in depth. It allows the inquirer’s ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, and customs and to grasp the culture in its own natural an ongoing environment” (p 273).

Documents and records will be collected for their value as a stable source of information, both in the sense that they may accurately reflect the policies and procedures related to how an organization deals with its community and issues related to space. Documents and records, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “represent a rich source of information, contextually relevant and grounded in the contexts they represent” (p 277).

Cultural artifacts give alternative insights into the ways in which people and their organizations contribute to the construction of place. The study of material culture is thus of importance to this research as it offers a way to explore the multiple variations that may be present in an organization. Artifacts may include the organizations visible symbols and tangible evidence that supports or undermines what it preaches for example.

Data Analysis

Data collected from interviews will transcribed from tape recordings to a document for the purposes of analysis and interpretation. I plan to transcribe the data into documents which is an important step in discovering and coding. In a ground theory study *inductive coding* is employed such as the *constant comparative analysis*. The codes are, "induced" from the text; the coding moves from the more literal to the more abstract. The method (process) starts by open coding (I will look at the data line by line or meaning unit by meaning unit) for the purpose of attaching a code name. These open code "names" are examined through the process of *constant comparative analysis* to produce a more analytic or abstract category that holds a group of the open codes together (axial codes).

The axial codes form the major categories that induce a theory or conceptual framework that denotes the relationships between and among categories (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This final code or summary is referred to as the "selective code" or the "core category." At the third or final level, I will move from data analysis to concept and theory development. Data usually are collected until no further new information is found. This process is termed *saturation* and signals the end of data collection (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). A conditional or conceptually ordered display may be useful in interpreting the data, and helpful in presenting a model or theory (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

A cross-case analysis will be employed to enhance generalizability and deepen understanding and provide an explanation of how organizations build place. Examining multiple organizations can pin down the specific conditions under which a finding will

occur and help form the more general categories of how those conditions may be related. However, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of each particular case before proceeding to cross-case explanation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Although a general idea about the properties of constructing place are presented, such variables do not usually come clear until real case data have been explored in some depth. Thus, a cross-case construct table may be an excellent way to understand the emerging core concepts.

Trustworthiness

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) state:

“The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of the inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked that would be persuasive on this issue?” (p. 290).

In view of Lincoln’s and Guba’s basic tenants of trustworthiness, I plan to involve evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective. These sources include: (1) multiple data collection methods (interviews, documents, artifacts, and observations); (2) member checks, whereby data, interpretations, and conclusions will be tested with those participants from whom the original data were collected.

This process is both formal and informal and will occur continuously throughout the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; (3) peer debriefing which is the process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer. This process keeps the inquirer “honest,” exposing any potential biases or ‘blindness’ that may keep me from being open to the data and an opportunity to ‘vent’ or clear the mind of emotions that may be clouding my judgment (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Further, both the peer and I will keep written accounts of the sessions to which I can refer and use to improve the studies credibility.

(4). Reflectivity means the researcher *is* the instrument. Therefore, the credibility of qualitative methods hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork, as well as those things that are going on that might prove to be a distraction (Patton, 2002). Finally, it is important to clarify my bias from the outset of the study so that the reader understands my position and assumptions that may carry over into the study (Creswell, 1998). To that end, I have presented my perspective as a researcher below.

Researcher's Perspective

I believe organizations can be more efficient and effective when they know how to define place. In so doing, they improve their capacity to make better decisions regarding the location of their business and align their activities or behavior in their community. I chose this study because I value the contribution organizations can provide to their communities. Further, my background and experiences tell me that organizations act as a 'moral' agent in its community, thus making them responsible partners in the events and activities that take place.

I begin with the premise that the human world is different from the natural, physical world and, therefore, must be studied differently. And so I will study the *multiple realities* constructed by people and organizations about the meaning of place, how it is created in a community, and the implications of these constructions for their lives and interactions with others (in this case, their communities [Patton, 2002]). Organizations and the people who live in them are the constructors of their own reality about how place is built. Social construction, or constructivist philosophy, is built on the thesis of ontological relativity, which hold that all tenable statements about existence

depend on a worldview and no worldview is uniquely determined by empirical or sense data about the world. Place is given meaning in a social construct not only by each individual but also by an organization that imposes its views (hegemony) on society and community as to the value of the place they cohabit (Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Blumer, 1967; Patton, 2002).

My world view is based in large part on the notion that we can not know an absolute truth about how an organization constructs place. Place making is intrinsically tied to an individual's experiences and relationships that are *shared* within the organization and its community. My ideological perspective is thus constructive as I believe organizations are responsible on a social level for building a place that can help transform the community in which it lives and thus will ultimately make the community or region in which they work a healthy and productive environment for all its stakeholders. However, more importantly, they will find the place based network as a model for how organizations go about building place. The perspective is forged out of concern for organizations and the communities in which they live.

As a professional manager for several different organizations in the travel and tourism industry, I have seen the impact tourism has had on the environment, and consequently, I am sensitized to the issues of environment, social, and culture struggles between an organization and its community. These views will filter my research in certain ways that I am presently unaware. I acknowledge these biases and will retain a neutral stance through the methods discussed above.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will report the results of the gathered data as presented in five sections. The first section is a review of the research questions, and data analysis. The second section details a within case analysis. The third section outlines a cross-case analysis intended to highlight the similarities and differences across all the cases. A fourth section will summarize the findings and the key categories in constructing a theory about how an organization constructs place.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to discover the role of organizations in the construction of place in its community.

Restatement of the Research Questions

1. How does an organization value place?
2. How does the culture of the organization influence its ability to construct place?
3. How does the organization interact with the community and its environment in constructing place?

Data Analysis

The coding process involved four stages. Stage one transpired over two months. During that time each transcript was read three times before any codes were created. Stage two involved a method (process) started by open coding. Stage three involved an “incubation” period of one week commencing after the last case was coded. During this period I wrote reflexive memos and continued to explore how the literature may apply to my learning.

At the end of this period I returned to the data to inspect and recode. In the fourth stage, a final code or summary, referred to as the “selective code” or the “core category,” was created. In this stage, I moved from data analysis to concept and theory development. The next section details the data collected and analyzed within each case. A cross-case analysis follows the within case analysis to deepen understanding, and explain how organizations construct place.

Within Case Analysis

In the discussion that will follow examines eight cases. Each of the following eight cases includes background information on the organization, the organization’s place perspectives, its contribution to community and how it interacts with the community.

The background section is intended to provide general information about the case, its size, respondent information and conditions under which data were collected, and a description of the organization. The section of place perspectives describes how an organization values place. As discussed in chapter two place perspectives build on how the organization understands the social order of a community as characterized by the community’s social, economic, geographic and cultural characteristics. Place perspectives explain how an organization interacts with one another and what frames their issues relative to the use of space and other natural resources.

The section on contribution reveals how an organization serves its singular and/or mutual goals as shared within the community. Contribution also explains the method or manner by which the organization serves or devotes certain resources intended to enhance or improve the community and its place or role.

Community interaction, as discussed in chapter two, refers to the relationship between people and their institutions. In each case the organization displays a sense of affiliation or connectedness between people and their institutions developed out of the affective, normative and social attachments to the community. In all cases the interaction is a highly structured and planned activity that is centered on the organizations culture and history in the community.

The within case analysis describes and explores in an effort to understand and explain how organizations go about constructing place in their community. In order to describe the cases, these major categories are presented as a logical way to talk about each case based on the research questions. In addition, these categories from the data as central or axial categories.

Benson Industry

Background

Benson Industry (pseudonym) is a globally recognized manufacturer with a reputation for quality products. The organization was recruited to the area in 1970 and currently employs over 2000. The researcher met with two executives from the organization in a single interview setting. Data were collected from interviews, observations of the company's work site, and documents including brochures and company documents.

Organization

Benson Industry maintains a "proactive stance" in the community by managing the communication of organization news and events that satisfy their overall business and brand strategies. Both participants pointed to the need to be seen as the "employer of choice" and as a "good corporate citizen" resulting in what one participant stated as,

“keeping the brand to remain number one out there.” The participants described the organization’s culture as, “impressive, and delivering what’s expected.”

Place Perspectives

Benson values place from a geographic and economic perspective. The organization defines place as “collective works” of the organization, such as, tax contributions, work place, and fund raising that help create their “place” in the community. Both participants emphasized the importance of creating a positive image that attracts low wage and productive employees. As one participant explained, “Our involvement, participation and donations are not all ‘one-sided’ but are rather a two-way relationship. It’s not just a one-sided thing but it’s what the community needs as well as the benefits to the firm.”

The participants both stated that being respected in the community is key to its construction of place in the community. One participant stated,

“If you are not credible you are not going to last in the community. You are not going to be an attractive voice if you are not trusted. So we spend a lot of time being fair, consistent, and credible. We have to have that positive reputation as a solid citizen. Otherwise people aren’t going to buy your products; people aren’t going to come to work for you.”

Contribution

The organization’s contribution is motivated in part by strategies to protect its brand image, and attract low cost employees. While the organization is concerned about the community’s social, political, and economic well being, they view their contribution and participation as calculated and intended to achieve a strategic return or benefit.

Community Interaction

The organization's interaction with their community is highly structured and planned. Benson places a great deal of emphasis on strategic communications with the community. One participant stated that, Benson's strategy is to "proactively" seek feedback on the organization's activities and various programs as a method of anticipating and controlling possible conflict that might damage its brand. As one participant claimed,

"We try to keep people well informed. The spokesperson is our single point of contact. She makes sure the information is correct and up to date and we inform the community on that. So our communication, our strategy is to keep people informed."

Summary

The data revealed that Benson constructs place largely out of an "inward" view or perspective that is geared to protecting its brand reputation, and achieve revenue and expense goals. The organization contributes to the community in terms of satisfying certain obligations such as taxes and expected financial donations. Benson, while highly structured in its interaction and relationships, is concerned about building its community relationships and protecting the people that work there.

Corbin Company

Background

The Corbin Company (pseudonym) is a small company that employs 20 employees. They sell and install electric support systems to large commercial users. The owner and the company's vice president were interviewed at their company's main office. A second interview was conducted with the owner to gather additional data relative to how the organization interacts in their community. Data were collected from

interviews, observations, and documents including brochures and company documents which were not available for reproduction.

Organization

The participant values the organization's place in the community as a contributing member to a network of business people and community leaders. The participant stated, "The purpose of all business is to simply make life better." He adds, "The only reason that we exist as a business is to improve life." The organization's internal policies and procedures direct employees to behave in specific ways in dealing with customers and others in the community are consistent with their stated goals.

In the participant's view, the way to make life better for everyone means touching all aspects of business that is morally and ethically correct. This philosophy is seen as the "power tool" that crafts how the owner, employee, and other business people partner to construct place. One participant stated,

"How we treat our employees, how we treat our customers, how we treat our suppliers – everyone we touch – how we treat the local government, state, federal government is how we build a place for ourselves and a place for the community."

Place Perspectives

The participant constructs place through his personal interaction with customers, fellow business owners and institutions. The interaction among these groups creates an intimate and "everyday" activity that he refers to as the "feel or the spirit of the relationship." Place, in his view, "flows out of the person, out into the environment and into the community."

The organization's contribution to place and community appear to pivot on the participant's energy and capacity to build relationships. As one participant stated, "It's more one on one, more relationship; it's you as opposed to the organization as an entity."

The participant stated that, "Place is where one 'feels at home. Our family atmosphere contributes to congeniality in the community that is central to our mutual support... As one participant put it,

"I feel loyal to the community because it's looked after my children right. I can leave my garage door open all day accidentally and nothing happens. It's a good place and we're trying to transfer that down. I think the organization has built a place for itself in the community."

Contribution

The participant stated, "The organization is an obvious contributor when the organization and community's culture coincide." He referred to the organization's contribution as the extent to which they help people in both economic and social terms. Giving back to the community is a strategy and goal driven primarily by the participant's personal commitment to the organization, the employees, and other business people that supported him through difficult economic periods.

Community Interaction

The owner participant is the primary person responsible for creating the organization's strategy for developing community relationships. The owner views the community as a social setting in which friendships are formed and supported. The participant further stated,

"I think you are the place that you are located as a company. That's why we have businesses to improve people's lives, to improve the customer's life. And in turn if you improve in life for people, you improve on the living environment, the city; I think it kind of goes hand in hand."

Summary

The organization values their place in the community as contributing to the network of business people who are committed to making life better for all citizens. The organization emphasizes networking, conducting moral and ethical business practices, as the key to making life better. The organization values place for its networking or connections to others and the spirituality of those connections for the owner. The organization represents and promotes strong ethical business practices. The owner believes in teaching its employees and customers the value of living life in ways that contribute and benefit those with whom they deal.

World Partners

Background

World Partners (pseudonym) is a mid-sized company specializing in integrated real estate services. The organization has been in business in the community since 1966 employing approximately 150 people. The researcher interviewed the Chief Operating Office (COO) in his corporate offices. Data were gathered from observations gathered during a tour of the facilities. The organization's annual report, web site, marketing collateral, and press releases were analyzed for their consistency with interview data.

Organization

The participant claimed, "Our organization has a dramatic impact on the community in both financial and cultural terms." He indicated that the organization values place in the community through the mediation of "shared learning" with clients

and community stakeholders including other organizations. He described the organization's culture as, pro learning and pro relationship.

The organization invests heavily in training their employees on how to communicate with each other and their clients. Building relationships is seen as central to how the organization constructs its place.

As the participant stated,

“We don't necessarily just do what we do because we think its good business, we also realize that training and teaching people how to take care of the community is critical. We carry that philosophy and concern into the community via our professional and personal lives.”

The organization emphasizes a teaching relationship with its clients. As the participant stated, “A lot of our clients take some of the things we do well and apply it to their own businesses. We aim to influence our clients and the community.”

Place Perspectives

The organization views its culture (values, beliefs, and learning traditions) as integral to how they build relationships and conduct business. the participant stated, “Place is a vital element in the way we live our lives.” The organization views place as not simply an area or region, but as a product of the organization's intentions to improve life.

Place is valued for its opportunities to teach or share the organizations commitment to learning. In a sense the organization views place as a locale in which they create a unique niche or status as a premier construction and design organization. The organization is strategic in how it views place and behaves in the community. In this case, the organization uses its training workshops, business practices, and strong learning culture as their investments in the community.

Contribution

The organization contributes to its community and the construction of place through its strategy to teach and learn in cooperation with their clients and other businesses. The organization encourages employees to contribute in ways that are unique and special to them. As the participant stated, “If somebody wants to volunteer for junior achievement which takes an hour or two during the work day, that’s hard, but if their work is done then we encourage them to find ways to participate in the community.”

Community Interaction

The organization interacts with its community in constructing place via its relationships with all members of the business and social community. Their role as teacher and learner is centered in the organization’s culture and strategy to improve life for all community members.

Encouraging employees to invest in certain construction projects, i.e. buildings/malls produce a more connected and committed employee. As the participant stated, “Employees can say I own a piece of that building, thus creating a positive attachment to the organization. And that is what makes this organization an important part of the community.”

Summary

The organization considers itself a learning organization. They define a learning organization as a culture of people who share and learn through highly collaborative and ethical business practices. Teaching clients how to maximize their design and construction projects in ways that promote a healthy community is equally important to

the organization. The organization views their community as a locale in which the organization is a critical agent for change and growth.

Health Inc.

Background

Health Inc. (pseudonym) is a mid-size organization operating four health clubs in the community. Each club serves a particular market segment, such as tennis, weight lifting, as well as women-only fitness and weight loss centers. The researcher interviewed the owner at the company's offices. Additional data were collected from observations of the facility, web site, and marketing collateral. The organization has been in the community since 1972 and employs 200 people.

Organization

The participant described Health Inc's culture as a servant culture. As the participant stated, "We are here to serve." An aspect of his servant culture is to contribute in ways that serve clients and the less fortunate in the community. The participant stated, "I feel we should be associated with health issues that are related to the business. This is our niche."

Place Perspectives

The organization values place as a social setting in which it can share a passion for promoting health and fitness that the participant believes contributes to the general welfare of the community. As he stated,

“I think being a smaller community; it’s more likely you’ll have people who will have a passion for the community. I think being a special place like this community encourages people wanting to put back into the community.”

He also indicated that some businesses are just “unrelated” or “unattached” to the community. He felt that while certain businesses employ locals and deal with suppliers, in the end they are not “invested” in ways that contribute and help create a place for themselves or the organization. For example, he stated,

“Different types of organizations may exist in the community. There are some organizations that exploit the community from within. It’s not a good deal. At the other end of the continuum, respectively, there are organizations that are totally the opposite of that. They help the community transform, to really influence it in certain ways. Then there are all of those in-between.”

The organization values place from the perspective that organizations must in some way demonstrate their value in the community. As the participant stated,

“I believe we have influenced other organizations in terms of how they value place or how they operate here. In essence how passionate they feel about the community.”

Contribution

The participant views the organization’s role as contributing at a level that improves life in the community. The participant’s desire to improve life is based on his personal standards of “giving back” to the community. As the participant stated,

“That’s what a business should do.” The organization has invested financial and human resources in the construction and maintenance of a shelter for at risk and homeless kids. As the owner stated, “We feel it’s very important that we participate in the community. I look upon it as an obligation just like the utility bill. You have an obligation depending upon what kind of business you are in to do something to put back into the community.”

Community Interaction

The participant described the community as, “People who value character, health and wellness. They value their families. All of those things are terrific for us. And those are the things we need to support.” The organization views its role as helping sustain the character and values of the community. These values fit the organization and motivate their investment.

Summary

The organization views their role as the vehicle to improve life in the community. The participant has a strong sense of commitment to the community and an obligation to contribute in ways that are congruent with the organization’s capabilities, expertise, and culture. The participant’s contribution is driven in part by his passion for health, maintaining his standing in the community and enriching his business and personal relationships.

Rio Company

Background

The Rio Company (pseudonym) is a mid-sized real estate development company that has been in business since 1972 and employs over 200 people. The researcher interviewed the owner of the organization in the company’s main office. Data were collected from interviews, observations, and documents including brochures and company documents.

Organization

The participant described the organization's culture as a "communal culture" where employees share common social and cultural values. The organization strives to create a place in which people can enjoy working, making money, and being productive. When people join the organization, they are asked to commit to their professional growth, a set of company values, and a working philosophy that centers on building intellectual capital. As the participant stated, "We make no bones about the fact that we are going to be involved in the community with our time, with our money. We are committed to building a great community."

In line with the organization's mission, they have committed space for individual work areas that enable employees to create their own place. As the participant stated,

"We feel it's very important for our sales people to have a 'sense of place'. What we found is they really don't want to work in an open bullpen area or cubicle. They can't see themselves long term working in a cubicle. They can't see themselves counseling a customer in a cubicle or in a conference room. They really want their own space. And a space that's theirs."

It is believed that the individual work places translate to improved productivity and a stronger attachment of employee to the organization and the client to the employee. The organization's employee-centered office design creates what he calls, "a sense of connection to something bigger." He continued, "I believe that people want to be a 'part' of something *and* they want to be 'apart' from something."

Both of these strategies of commitment to employee and community are the fabric of the organization's culture and the participant's personal beliefs and values. The culture of the organization influences its ability to build place in how its role is viewed as place builder for employees, clients, and community.

Place Perspectives

The organization values place as a geographic location offering various opportunities for businesses and families to prosper and grow. The organization values its place in the community as a leader and shaper of community projects and development opportunities. The organization has a history of contributing to charitable causes, and region wide initiatives.

The participant stated, “We are an organization that is willing to commit to the community and help make it a better place, a great place.” In this case, the organization has a specific strategy about how it constructs place in both the geographic and social environment.

The participant indicated that there are different kinds of organizations that contribute on multiple levels based on its corporate objectives and philosophies. He added, “There are organizations that contribute because it’s good for business, while others contribute because they believe in giving back to the community.” He indicated that some organizations come to the community for one purpose: to exploit resources.

He predicted that exploiting organizations will leave a community once they’ve determined they don’t fit or the return is not as lucrative as originally anticipated. As the participant put it, “They are just sort of here. And they return little if anything that builds their own role or that of the community.”

Contribution

The organization constructs its business relationships in ways that contribute to the community. As the participant put it, “we strive to influence other organizations in ways that help transform the community. Make it a better place to live.” The participant

cites a local fund raising activity in which other organizations helped design and build a multi-million dollar day care center for handicap children.

In the process of designing the center, a group of business people and leaders agreed the new center lacked what he called, “A sense of place. It did not feel like a home.” He added, “So whether it’s a design issue or the acquisition of open space, we are trying to lead our company and the community.”

Community Interaction

The organization operates over 12 offices in the community. Each office building is constructed to blend in with and support the surrounding neighborhood. The participant explained that one of their office buildings was constructed in the “gateway” area of the community. He commented, “The gateway building creates a sense of place in the community.”

The organization, through its owner, is sensitive to its presence in the community on both a physical and social level. In his view, both the physical buildings and his relationships with others contribute to the community. The web of relationships the participant constructs and sustains creates a shared vision among other key players. He and others view his organization and him personally as a visionary and a leader.

Summary

The organization defined place as both a geographic and social setting. The participant emphasized that the network of businesses that share common beliefs and practices as key to how he and others build place. The organization’s commitment to its community is described in two levels. The first level is the organization and its culture which the participant describes as the “inward community”.

The second level is the network of organizations that the participant describes as the “outward community”. The later is measured in terms of how they design and construct office space and buildings. The organization views itself as a critical agent in how place is constructed; that sense of place is a central philosophy in how they build structures, personal relationships, and visionary leadership.

Each of these is the well spring for the organization and the participant’s commitment to their constituencies (employees, clients and other in the community). These values are played out as a strategy in which the organization invests its financial, personal, and environmental resources in partnerships that help sustain and cultivate the organizations role as major investor.

Landscaping Partners

Background

Landscaping Partners (pseudonym) is a mid-sized family owned business that has been in the community since 1953. The researcher interviewed the owner and president of the firm in his company’s main office. Landscaping Partners is a land development firm that employs over 100 people of which 20 are family members. Data were collected from interviews, observations of company operations, and documents including promotional brochures and casual interviews with employees.

Organization

Landscaping Partners is a family owned firm with a tradition of contributing to the community and leading social and economic initiatives. Their mission “to help people to have lives” has been their mantra for over 50 years. The organization’s reputation as a

major contributor to the community has created long standing relationships. These relationships, formed early in the history of the organization and community, are viewed as central to the organization's ability to create its own place in the community.

The participant indicated there is a legacy of leaders who helped shape the landscape of today's community. Community leaders, including himself and his father, continue to shape how organizations contribute to the community. He referred to the, "valuable network" in the community as the glue that holds them together. He predicted that organizations that do not understand the history of the community or their organizations place will not be successful.

The participant views the organization and the community as intrinsically connected in history and culture. This connection is at the root of how the organization behaves in the community and how it treats its employees. As a result they consider themselves a critical agent in influencing how other organizations construct place. The participant stated, "An organization understands its role as constructing a place through its business practices that also reflect its values and that of the community."

Place Perspectives

The organization values and constructs place in terms of the organization's ability to invest in the community. The participant stated,

"I think that there is a lot of invested interest by a lot of different people here. Not only financially but just in terms of the love they have for the place and wanting to maintain the quality of life. There are a number of generational families and institutions that have been core institutions that give a lot to the community because they like it; they reward it for rewarding them."

The participant claims that his company and the community would be a totally different place and less of one without certain organizations. He also stated, "Part of the

reason we are involved in supporting some institutions is because of the contribution they make to the community as well as the contribution it makes to us. People who go to school here, work here, work at the university need places to be.”

The participant stated, “Creating a place for ourselves in this community require a knowledge of the community and the environment, reputation and image, and an understanding of the process (being an insider) of how to get things done. For example, the participant stated, “It’s relationships with the city, with citizen’s groups, and the community at large that bring all of the stakeholders together in creating a place that rings true with the community and what will add value to the community.”

The participant emphasized the organization’s sensitivity to a multitude of perspectives. But as the participant put it, “even though we might disagree at the end of the day. I think we are conscientious about how we live in a community and we want to be sensitive to that.”

Contribution

As the participant stated, “The organization contributes in a lot of different ways. We have an impact on the way the city grows, the way the city looks, the economics of it, and because we live here, we’re interested in kind of holistic outcomes of that.” The participant believes a good test or measure of their contribution is when others say “we are a good organization.”

However, the participant views what an organization “does” in a community they “do” to themselves. Organizations that “contribute” and make a positive impact on the community. Because as he put it, “When an organization’s interests are ‘aligned’ with the community’s interests, they tend to improve the community”. He adds,

“to a great extent we’re living here so we’re not bringing an agenda to the table to exploit. In this business you do get people that come from the outside that look to take advantage of the circumstances and not necessarily take into consideration some of the esthetic requirements or some of the long term impacts that a project might have that aren’t foreseen.”

The participant pointed to the differences between strategic intentions, which he called ‘corporate’ in the sense that an organization has an infatuation with the bottom line, and intentions to invest in the community in ways that help transform the community. The participant stated, “We have a holistic perspective that views the sum of the community as greater than its parts, and we work in ways that are congruent with the community and the organizations culture and responsibilities.”

Community Interaction

The organization views their role in the community as helping people “have lives” and value place. The participant views this role as important or critical to protecting the environment, building sustainable homes, developing land in ways that contribute to the community. In a sense, the participant has appointed the organization as the guardian or protector of the community culture and the people who live in it.

The participant described the community government as working to protect the community from being blind-sided by an outside developer that might harm the community and environment. The organization considers itself insurance against those who would exploit the area. As he stated, “When you’ve been here for 50 years, in many respects, you are part of the fabric of this community in terms of the influence they’ve had on the community.”

Relationship building and networking are what the participant views as the necessary parts to building place in concert with others and not just alone or by or

through ones own efforts. The relationships among and between each other create community and, in turn, a place that is open for individuals and organizations to measure their contribution as contributory, exploitive, or even transformational.

Landscaping Partners view themselves as having played and continue to play a role in the “changing scenery” of the community. As he puts it, “change has been a result of having our hands in the kitchen.” There is a committed sense of ownership in how the community is planned, and change is managed.

The organization constructs place that enhances the community, improves the environment, and is congruent with its own culture. These practices are community centered as opposed to organization centered. The organization views its community centered view as central to how it constructs place. As the participant claims,

“And at this place in our history what that means is we’re primarily in the space business. We’re provided space to live in, to work in, and to play in, whatever it might be. To the extent that we can do that to help people have lives, succeed in their business, enjoy the environment that they live in, help cement families and community together – all of those kinds of things which help people have lives.”

This emotional connection to place is the sense of belonging that is rooted in the organization and the participant and to a great extent explains their behavior to protect and guard the community. In this case, family tradition, values, and legacy have created a sense of place for him personally as he consciously acts to preserve the family legacy in the community.

Summary

The organization’s culture and its philosophies are rooted in its history and legacy as a founding member of the community. The organization’s family name determines in large part how it contributes to the community. They take an active role as “owner” in the

community and “guardian” of its environment and culture. The participant views his personal role and that of the organization to create special places out of the space they “live in” and as such consider it their responsibility to protect the environment.

The organization views itself a critical agent in how place is protected. Their role is viewed as guardian of a culture shaped by their family and their sense of place is the central philosophy in how they build structures and personal relationships. These values are played out as a strategy in which the organization invests its financial resources in developing a vision for the community and the organization.

Gourmet Foods

Background

Gourmet Foods (pseudonym) is a small family own restaurant located in the downtown area of the community. The participant is the son of the original owner and founder. The restaurant has a strong brand identity and is widely recognized for its cuisine, personalized service, and is favored for its location and atmosphere. The researcher interviewed the owner at the restaurant. Data were collected from a single interview, observations of company operations and working climate.

Organization

The participant’s family name identification and history in the community fashion his attachment and commitments. As he puts it, “If I didn’t have a high profile business in town I might act differently.” The fact that the business carries his family name creates stress on the organization and him personally to perform and act in certain ways. In his

words, “I feel as though the family name carries more weight than maybe it should. Protecting the name and the reputation is important to the community and the business.”

Place Perspectives

The organization values place in terms of how it creates meaning in the work place for its employees and customers. The participant stated, “We do a lot of the things a larger company should.” The culture of the organization influences its ability to build place through its business practices and relationship building. The participant stated,

“Organizations that create a place for employees to connect and belong tend to create a place for themselves in its community. So, in this respect, our business helps construct a place in the community and this it helps the community become a better place.”

The participant defined place as the restaurant (building and location), and as a social setting in which he creates relationships for himself, other business people, and for employees. He stated, “I think what gives this business a sense of place is its organizational climate that makes the organization a good employer.”

The participant indicated that the company’s contribution borders on a sense of pride and commitment. As he stated,

“I’ve had people say I’m so proud of what this place is. So in that sense, we really have something special here in our little town that we can take relatives to and we can make them feel like hey, this community is pretty hip and pretty cool.”

Contribution

The participant takes pride in giving the residents of the community a little piece of history. When the organization remodeled, the participant said that many customers were concerned about losing a piece of the history of the town and the restaurant. The participant views the organization’s commitment to community history and pride as the principle contribution to building place in the community.

Community Interaction

How the organization fits into the community is a function of the participant and his family's participation in local charities and institutions that serve the community. For example the participant stated,

“People know we are a part of the community. We've been here for 25 years. So we've ridden the highs and lows of the community. I think in today's world of newness and suburbia and all of the chain restaurants, a place like this automatically creates a sense of place because it's unique and you can't find it anywhere else. So all of a sudden it fits into the community. It's almost demanded by a lot of this community that there are places like this.”

Summary

The organization is recognized for its historical place in the community. In addition, there appears to be a strong organizational climate that favors learning, open and honest communication that the participant believes is at the root of their success. Place is constructed in how the organization creates its own status or niche in the community as both a historical site and a learning organization.

The participant viewed the organization's climate as a “spill out” of their business practices into the community which, in turn, has a favorable influence on employees and fellow employers. Place is viewed as a physical building rooted in history that has created a certain attachment within the employee ranks and general population. The organization's strategy in constructing place involves behavior that engages the general population and its employees.

Community Partners

Background

Community Partners (pseudonym) is a small nonprofit, membership-driven business organization in the community. The organization is dedicated to creating a climate in which business can succeed. The researcher interviewed the president and CEO of the organization in his business office. The CEO is in his second year of service to the organization. Other data collection included observations of employee activity, office operation, analysis of written documentation (annual report, monthly publications), and a tour of the facility.

Organization

The participant viewed the role of the organization as a “change agent” that supports a more balanced community business strategy intended to sustain the community’s economic and social vitality. The participant stated, “The community needs to know where it’s headed economically, where are the competitive advantages and disadvantages, and how are those assets leveraged to remove future obstacles.” He added, “In the past, the organization had taken a politically correct position that was no longer tenable given the challenges of today’s marketplace.”

As a change agent the organization is attempting to involve large organizations in the community as investors in the community’s future. The participant views the large organizations as “unanchored” from the economic reality of the community. He adds, “As a consequence these large organizations aren’t as concerned about the local economy as they should or could be.”

According to the participant, “These large business communities operate to protect what they have and resist change especially as it relates to community matters such as growth and support a common cause.” While the organizations may adapt to the community and take from it what contributes most to their bottom line they seldom adopt the culture or the community in ways that support or contribute and may be seen as exploitive.

Place Perspectives

Recent changes in the economy and the business environment required the organization to change the ‘conversation’ about what is important and urgent. The participant views his experience and temperament as important leadership qualities in how the organization constructs place.

The organization orients its place making broadly across political, social, cultural, and economic domains. In some respects the participant views place building as an act of balancing economic and social issues.

Contribution

The participant believes the organization and local government can work together in shaping a “preferred future” necessary for the town to grow. And while not all businesses share his view, he believes that many organizations are prepared to lead in the development of a “preferred future.”

However, since different organizations contribute in different ways, his organization is challenged to find ways to connect with those that may not see the importance of a strong local economy. Leading this cooperative among business and the local government is viewed as the organizations principle contribution.

The participant believes that an organization can exploit, contribute and transform the community. He described his organization as exploitive in the sense that they don't produce a product, yet they contribute to the discussion about the future of the community. As the participant views it, "We also contribute in the sense that we train 30 future community leaders every year. We're also in the business of taking on the status quo. We take on the no growth community and create a public debate about some of those issues."

Community Interaction

The participant stated that, "Different types of organizations live in the community, ranging from contributive, exploitive, to transformational types." He pointed to one company as an example of a transformational organization that helped transform the community. "Taking it (the community) to the next level". But he added, "This same company has also been exploitive. Exploitive in the sense that there is a mutual benefit by how they prospered and helped make the community we all enjoy today. "

The organization has created a series of "forums" that bring together various constituencies to voice their opinions and ideas about the future of the community. These forums encourage a conversation about growth, environment, and business. The participant is encouraged by the results and views these kinds of forums as the architecture of place building. As the participant put it, "These forums are literally building person by person and act by act an interaction among and between people that create place and a sense of belonging, and are an important tool in bringing the community together in a meaningful way.

Summary

The organization has structured a strategy that involves transforming the organization as an advocate for the business community and changing how the business community interacts with city government. This strategy is seen as critical to the economic viability and vitality of the community to attract and retain businesses. The organization intends to construct a specific role for itself and for those for whom it advocates.

Summary

The summary of the eight cases revealed four major categories of organization, place perspectives, contribution, and community from the data in each case. The next section of this chapter outlines the cross case analysis conducted to enhance generalizability and to know something about the properties of the major categories and how they compare.

Cross-Case Analysis

Each of the eight cases are stacked in a meta-matrix display (See Figure 2) which further condenses the data permitting systematic comparison. The matrix allows for what Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to as “interactive synthesis” in which each case is described, then a cross-case narrative highlighting categories followed by a summary or “general condensation” of what has been discovered (p.176). This synthesizing approach allows for an analysis of the parts in a way that does not obscure the wholes and compares whole cases as configurations of parts.

Meta-matrix Display

A meta-matrix display was selected as the best method for determining how cases share similar characteristics, and to give the researcher a general idea about the properties of major categories.

Organization	How the organization values place?	How the culture of the organization influences its ability to build place?	How the organization interacts with the community in the construction of place?
Benson	Economic and Geographic	Protecting Brand	Political
Corbin	Social Network	Improving Life	Partnerships
World	Social Network	Shared learning Advocating change and growth	Partnerships Influencing investment
Health Inc	Social Network	Improving life and serving others	Partnerships Social Obligation
Rio	Economic and Geographic	Advocating change and growth	Partnerships Influencing investment
Landscape	Social Network Geographic	Improving life	Partnerships Guardian
Gourmet	Physical building Social Network	Shared learning Protecting Brand	Relationships Employment activities
Community	Economic and Social Network	Advocating change and growth Improving life	Partnerships Influencing investment

Figure 2. Meta-matrix Display

Cross Case Narrative

In the cross-case analysis several major or axial categories appeared under each research question. The following cross-case narrative is intended to provide a definition and general condensation of the categories.

How the Organization Values Place

As the matrix indicates, organization's value place from an economic, geographic, and social perspective. An *economic perspective* is the view or attitude that governs how an organization acts towards local the local economy. An economic perspective is grounded in the organization's needs and strategies to view place as affording certain resources in the environment and community that advantage the organization.

For example, Benson values place as central distribution point for distributing its products and access to a favorable labor pool. Rio favors the areas high population growth as a source of new business. Community Partners views the areas potential for attracting new employers and growing labor pool as key ingredients. In each case these organizations view the economy of the area as favorable to their short and long term goals.

Geographic perspectives is the view or attitude toward the physical or environmental aspects of the community from which the organization draws certain benefits such as environmental beauty, quality of life, and certain physical attributes that favor the organizations place of business. Landscape and World Partners both value place for its environmental beauty and history. Gourmet and Rio value place for their businesses physical structure or building as reflecting their culture and social position in

the community. As a developer and real estate company Rio places a great deal of emphasis on how they construct new residential and commercial real estate.

Social network is the web of relationships in which the organization finds itself both a contributor and influencer in which an organization contributes and gains from the interaction among other organizations and individuals sharing a common set of values and practices. The extent to which the organization is allowed to participate in building partnerships and relationships with others can create a sense of attachment and belonging or fitting in with the larger community.

The participant values the organization's place in the community as a contributing member to a network of business people and community leaders. As one participant from Corbin stated, "The purpose of all business is to simply make life better." He adds, "The only reason that we exist as a business is to improve life." The organization's internal policies and procedures direct employees to behave in specific ways in dealing with customers and others in the community are consistent with their stated goals.

In the participant's view, the way to make life better for everyone means touching all aspects of business that is morally and ethically correct. This philosophy is seen as the "power tool" that crafts how the owner, employee, and other business people partner to construct place. One participant stated,

"How we treat our employees, how we treat our customers, how we treat our suppliers – everyone we touch – how we treat the local government, state, federal government is how we build a place for ourselves and a place for the community."

In the case of World Partners they considered the network of learning organizations, created out of their own design and culture, as a principle aspect of the social network. Rio considered the people who share and learn through highly

collaborative and ethical business practices as a key aspect of the value of a social network. Teaching clients how to maximize their design and construction projects in ways that promote a healthy community is equally important in how the organization networks its values. Benson, focuses on the reach of the social network in a community as a way to build its reputation

As the Benson participant stated, “It’s an important thing for our reputation that we treat people with dignity, with respect; we expect them to have an incredible performance here. So how we treat people is an important part of our reputation and how we can grow the company.”

How the Culture of the Organization Influences its Ability to Build Place

The organization’s culture influences its ability to build place as defined by improving life for its employees and the general community, and acting as an advocate for change and shared learning. In addition, organizations considered their image and reputation as a key to building their influence and ability to construct place.

Improving life is a strategy of serving others in their community that fit the organization and community values. In some cases, organizations, such as Corbin and Landscape would accept a short term financial lost in favor of long term gain for the community and their business. In addition, ethical business practices and financial contributions to certain causes were considered essential aspects of an organizations strategy and contribution.

As an advocate for change, organizations define their place or role in the community as an advocate for change and growth. In the case of Community Partners their mission is advocate for businesses and for creating community competitive

advantages. Landscape Partners view their role as both an advocate for change and guardian of what they call, “the community’s cultural treasury”.

Protecting reputation and brand is a major concern among all organizations studied. Each organization managed its brand protection strategy in ways unique to its situation and culture. In the case of Gourmet, World Partners, Health Inc. and Landscape, their family legacy and name, and the owner’s personal reputation directed their investment decisions. Conversely, Benson was solely focused on protect its image and brand by controlling or co-managing its relationships. Which they believe contributes to its market share, access to favorable labor and avoids unfavorable publicity.

Shared learning is the act of promoting and teaching others the value of “mutual investment” that help transform the community. For example, Health Inc shared its expertise with institutions in finding ways to reduce the causes of health problems and proactively building new weight loss programs for the community. Similarly, Rio shared its construction and architecture expertise in design and construction as ways to build a sustainable environment. Corbin likewise used its expertise to help its clients save operational costs.

These organizations acted out a strategy unique to the organization. These strategies can be further explained and coded as “*cultivating*” or “*authoring*” their place in the community. In essence, an organization constructs place out of a specific intention or strategy. Although each organization’s strategy varies, each employs a specific strategy unique to its culture and perceived place and role in the community.

*How does the Organization Interacts with the Community and its Environment in
Constructing Place?*

How the organization interacts with their community generated categories such as; *influencing investment, partnerships, and building relationships* that serve organizational and community needs. *Influencing investment* in certain projects such the organizations principles as their social obligation to pay back or give back to the community which also acts as representative of their duty.

Partnering or building partnerships is an activity or behavior in which an organization creates alliances and associations intended to achieve a common set of goals. In all cases the organizations shared a local knowledge about the community and how their practices and activities were an appropriate fit for the community and the organization.

Partnerships and building relationships take on very specific activities. For example, in the case of Community Partners, the organization created forums for improving communication among businesses and the town government. Landscape Partners and Corbin participated in building an ethical and moral business climate. World Partners, Landscape and Corbin each indicated they have sacrificed profit on some projects as an investment in building their reputation for honesty and character. Rio, Health Inc. and World Partners each invested their expertise and resources to help build a “better life” for their fellow citizens and the less fortunate.

World Partners works with communities to help them achieve certain goals such as the construction of low cost school buildings. Benson created a “watchdog” group that alerts them to threats in the environment and opportunities to improve their image.

Landscape and Gourmet both act to protect their family name and legacy. Health Inc. stresses improving the health and life of the community as their social obligation to which they are strategically committed.

Influencing investment is a conscious behavior that intends to mold or shape how organizations and the community invest their resources for some desired outcome, and leaves the organization's imprint or mark in the community. In many respects influencing investment is a measure of the organizations status and presence in the community. As the owner participant at Health Inc stated,

“We've all seen deals where if one company is investing in the program, then I'm going to touch it. So hopefully you develop that type of leadership that type of respect in the community that other people will come in just because you are a part of it.”

He indicated that here are a number of individuals in the community who participate and help transform the community in the same way he does. This kind of relationship guides each other and helps set the stage for how contribution are made and defined.

Landscape's strategy is not a “rape and pillage.” The participant views the organization as “insiders”. He stated, “Because this is our home we act differently.” The organization's legacy of helping build the community resonates in their mission and influences how they behave in both their personal and professional lives. The participant noted that some organizations exploit the community. However, once they are identified as exploiters they find very few supporters and eventually leave the area.

The organization's culture and its philosophies are rooted in its history and legacy as a founding member of the community. In the case of Gourmet, and Landscape the organization's family name determines, in large part, how it contributes to the community. They take an active role as "owner" in the community and "guardian" of its environment and culture. The participant views his personal role and that of the organization to create special places out of the space they "live in" and as such consider it their responsibility to protect the environment. The properties of the categories described above can be condensed into two principle behaviors that describe organizational behavior as "investing" and or "engaging" others in their community.

Summary

The data revealed that organizations strategically construct place. Further, that a set of strategies tend to fall into one of two categories labeled as "*authoring*" and/or "*cultivating*" place. These strategies result in certain behaviors or activities labeled as "*investing*" and/or "*engaging*". Finally, the organization values place and its role in both specific and general terms that are directly related to its culture. In chapter five these concepts of organizational place building will be further defined and described as key indicators of an organizational typology.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

Introduction

The data analysis in chapter four revealed that organizations strategically construct place in their communities. The data also suggested that the construction of place is a dynamic and interactive process in which an organization constructs place on a geographic, social and economic level.

All data were transcribed and coded using a process of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) with the development of specific categories and types being an evolving and iterative process. For example, one set of categories captured the strategies by which an organization constructs its place or role in the community, such as, authoring and cultivating.

Another set of categories captured how organizations value and perceive place for its geographic, social and economic assets. How organizations interact with their community revealed categories such as “investment”, and “engagement”.

The findings section of this chapter includes insights into the research questions, development of two theoretical models that explain and describe the research findings, a comparison of the research findings to literature and an evaluation of the study.

Insights Into Research Questions

As reported in chapter four, ten participants were interviewed in eight organizations providing data on the organization’s culture, how the organization values place and interacts with the community. Insights gained from the research questions are addressed below.

Research Question Number One: How Does an Organization Value Place?

Several summary notions emerged relative to the research question. The first set of notions address perspectives. The data suggested that an organization values place from several perspectives: geographic, social and economic. Each perspective is unique to the organization's culture, leadership, and business strategies. The second set of notions address the "fit" concept.

While organizations varied in terms of how they value place, each participant expressed a strong commitment to the social network, responsibility for guarding or protecting the environment, and participating in ways that contribute to the community. Each organization demonstrated some degree of "fit" with their community that was highly valued on both a personal and professional basis.

Research Question Number Two: How does the Culture of the Organization Influence its Ability to Construct Place?

The issue of organization culture produced several notions relative to the research question. The data suggests that an organization's culture does influence its ability to construct place. The second notion is that an organization participates in ways that protect and advance the organization's image and reputation.

How does the Organization Interact with the Community and its Environment in Constructing Place?

The data suggests that an organization interacts with its community in very specific and purposeful ways. First, the interaction in some cases is shared by the organization's membership. In other cases the interaction is carried on by a single

individual, such as the owner. In all cases, the interaction is a highly personal and planned activity that is largely based on the individual owner's reputation and affiliation with other key players in the community.

Second, the culture of the organization, reflected in the participant's values and business practices, manifests a certain strategy that "cultivates" or fosters and promotes its role in the community. Conversely, the organization may adopt an "*authoring*" strategy that focuses on its "*fit*" in the community that primarily serves its needs. Each of these strategies produces a behavior or activity in which the organization "*invests*" and/or "*engages*" in its community. The differences between investing and engaging are subtle and important to understand. Each behavior is a product of the organization's strategy and the degree to which the organization contributes to the community.

Theory of How an Organization Constructs Place

The purpose of the research was to discover the role of an organization in the construction of place in its community. A Grounded Theory approach was utilized to develop a theory about the role organizations play in the construction of place in their community. The research questions each addressed how an organization values place, interacts with their community and the influencing role culture plays in the construction of place.

The findings of the research, grounded in the data, suggested that an organization strategically constructs place to achieve some specific purpose that benefits the organization and contributes to the community. The data further suggested that the culture of the organization is the driving force behind their strategies and behavior. Third, organizations interact in their community largely out of a concern for either investing its

resources or engaging others in ways that often work to protect or advance the organization's business objectives.

To give the data context, meaning and structure a theory of how organizations construct place is now advanced. The discussion that follows is organized in the three sections.

The first section explains in greater detail how each organization constructs place. The second section introduces the Cultivating and Authoring Organizational Strategy Matrix (see Figure 4) and the Investing and Engaging Organization Behavior Matrix (See Figure 5). The third section introduces the Place Construction Model (See Figure 6) which provides an overview of each typology and the characteristics of attendant strategies, place perspectives and behaviors for each organization..

Organizational Place Construction

The following provides a definition of the major components of place construction such as; strategy, place perspectives, and behavior.

Strategy

Strategy is defined as the process by which the organization has crafted a declaration or description of the organization's place in the community, how it values place, and interacts with its community. As mentioned in chapter four, "*authoring*" and "*cultivating*" place emerged as the principal strategies for constructing place.

Each of these strategies appears to pivot on how the organization constructed their role or place in the community. Both of these strategies share a common concern for the community and the organizations place in it. However, the distinction

between the two lay in the organizations intentions to create place as a niche unto itself (authoring) or as a partner (cultivating) acting in concert with other organizations.

Place Perspectives

Place Perspectives describes how an organization values and frames its view or shapes its approach to place. As mentioned earlier, some organizations value place for its geographic, social, and economic benefits. In the case of Corbin and Landscape each organization value place from a cultural and social perspective. These organizations indicated a willingness to forgo profits in order to preserve a moral and ethical business climate. These organizations see themselves as a part of the community and cultivate a collective sense of belonging to the larger community.

Organization Behavior

As discussed earlier, each organization behaves in ways that are consistent with its place building strategy. Investing refers to how an organization devotes or commits its resources in the interest of expanding or enhancing the community. Organizations that invest in their community tend to be highly affiliative, interdependent agents interested in creating partnerships and share a common ideology and business practices. Engaging refers to how an organization participates in community events and programs. Engaged in an active interplay between and among other organizations for the purpose of establishing its own niche.

However, first we shall explore how each of the following eight cases construct place. Corbin, Benson, World Partners, Health Inc., Landscape, Rio, Gourmet and Community Partners. While each of these is a pseudonym for a real

organization their data contributed to this study. The following section illustrates how each organization constructs place in their community.

Summary of Organization Cases

Benson

Benson's strategy to author its place in the community is largely based on protecting its brand image and generating specific corporate outcomes such as attracting low cost employees. Benson engages the community primarily on economic and political levels. They contribute to the community via taxes, fundraising, and exceeding certain environmental requirements.

The organization's culture values place for its economic benefits and access to labor. Benson values place inside the organization for its efficient distribution and manufacturing systems. They value place in the community (on a macro level) for what it affords them (labor and sales) in achieving corporate objectives.

Corbin

Corbin's strategy is to "author" and "cultivate" its place in the community. They are engaged and invested in the community primarily on a social and cultural level. Their contribution is viewed as contributing to the employee work place, building customer relationships, and practicing moral and ethical business practices intended to improve the life of their employees, customers and associates.

World Partners

World Partner's strategy is to "author" and "cultivate" its place in the community as a change agent that partners with customers and other organizations for

the purpose of improving the lives of their customer and those in the community. The organization's mission statement is consistent with its internal place making and external operations.

The organization seeks to create their own place in the community as an agent for change and shared learning. The organization is equally concerned about advancing the organization's values and protecting the environment and community from waste and misuse of natural resources. World Partners' strong culture encourages employees to create partnerships with clients, fundraising activities and promoting its values in their personal and professional lives.

Health Inc.

Health Inc. employs a strategy that rests on the organizations commitment and investment in building health fitness centers in the community. The organization seeks to influence the moral and ethical fabric of the community by investing its resources in service to the less fortunate, and the whole community.

The organization is invested in the community on a social, political, economic and cultural level. Their investment is viewed as contributing to the community and helping change the way people live. The participant's investment is, in part, motivated to establish and strengthen the organization's market position. The organization considers its principal contribution as educating people on the value of staying fit and convincing fellow business owners to contribute in ways that promote an ethical and moral business climate.

Landscape Partners

Landscape Partners employs a strategy that protects the family name and its legacy in the community. The organization promotes the founding father's mission to guard and protect the community from those who would exploit it. As self described "guardians of the community" the organization invests their resources in ways that direct and influence the political and economic policies that protect the environment and community culture.

On a political level the organization works to promote its vision of community, and lobbies local legislatures for smart growth initiatives. The organization considers its principal contribution as creating a place in which people can improve their lives.

Rio Company

The Rio Company employs a cultivating and authoring strategy that is driven by the founder's commitment to community and establishing its status as a premier construction and design firm. The organization invests its resources in various community fund raising activities, and political initiatives that favor their business.

The organization demonstrated a deep regard for the history of the community and engages others to share his vision. The organization values place for the opportunity to establish their brand and participate in the community's financial and social network. These perspectives of place drive the organization's strategy to create a unique niche for selling their product and cultivating a place in which they can contribute to sustaining a clean and healthy environment. The organization considers

its principal contribution as creating a sense of place for both employees, and customers.

Gourmet Foods

Gourmet employs a strategy that is driven by their founder's commitment to retain its prestige as a local landmark. The organization "cultivates" its place in the community by investing in a learning climate for employees and the creation of a special experience for customers.

The organization values their reputation and family legacy in the community. The organization views its contribution to the community as a role model promoting excellent service and a learning environment for employees. The participant/owner recognizes and appreciates the organization's strong brand identity and shares a common ideology, and knowledge of community values and accepted business practices.

The organization is engaged in political and economic issues for the primary purpose of protecting the organization's business, and to guard against the incursion of a city government he perceives as anti-business. The organization considers it their duty to create a place where employees can learn new skills and become productive citizens in the community.

The organization invests its resources in developing employees who are individual contributors to the community work ethic that serve set an example for other business owners. Thus creating a place that attracts visitors, customers and improves the overall quality of customer service and citizenry in the community.

Community Partners

Community Partner's strategy is to build a stronger business community. The organization cultivates its place in the community by investing its resources for advancing business issues and improving the organization's culture and structure. The organization values its role as a change agent focused on transforming its own organization in order to transform the community.

In this regard, the organization is creating their place as the center of an emerging social network that shares ideas and strategies for improving the economic vitality of the community. The organizations perspective of place focuses on improving the organization as a learning organization enabling it to determine how it can meet its constituent's needs.

The next section extends the theory of how organizations construct place from the case examples provided into a new model that describes certain characteristics of each strategy and behavior. The matrices presented are the second stage or step in building a coherent theory of how organizations construct place.

Organizational Strategy and Behavior Model

The organizational strategy and behavior model illustrates the specific strategies and behaviors that emerged from the eight cases. A set of matrices were designed to place and illustrate the characteristics of organizations behaviors are illustrated in the Investing and Engaging Organization Behavior (IEOB) Matrix . The characteristics of an organizations strategy are place in the Cultivating and Authoring Organizational Strategy (CAOS) Matrix. Each matrix is explained in greater detail below.

Investing and Engaging Organization Behavior (IEOB) Matrix

The IEOB matrix (See Figure 3) is divided into four quadrants along two axis of organization behavior of investing and engaging. High/High as Transformational; High/Low as Contributive; Low/High as Contingent; and Low/Low as Exploitive. Each quadrant is described below.

High/High

An organization in quadrant A (Transformational) is likely to invest in activities that help build a more ethical and moral business place. They act as an interdependent and highly affiliative agent in the community with a stake in how the community grows and improves.

High/Low

An organization in quadrant C (Contributive) is eager to adopt certain strategies and behaviors that help them fit into the community. They view their contribution as participative and value the interaction among their peer groups.

Low/Low

An organization in quadrant D (Exploitive) emphasizes achieving organizational goals and profits irrespective of its impact and influence on the community. The organization acts as an independent agent that is isolated from the community's business group. Engagement with other organizations is limited and their participation is based on meeting its own internal needs.

Low/High

An organization in quadrant B (Contingent) is centered on its organization's needs. They utilize community and environmental resources and their contribution is

primarily focused on what they can expect or gain from their participation. They are engaged in ways that generate or satisfy a certain outcome.

		I N V E S T I N G	
		H I G H	L O W
E N G A G I N G	H I G H	A <i>Transformational</i> High/High Highly affiliative and interdependent Partnering and stake in common ideology	B <i>Contingent</i> Low/High Measured contribution Expected return or pay back
	L O W	C <i>Contributive</i> High /Low Interactive relationship Participative and easily adoptive	D <i>Exploitive</i> Low/Low No interplay or connection with community

Figure 3. Investing and Engaging Organization Behavior Matrix

Cultivating and Authoring Organizational Strategy (CAOS) Matrix

The CAOS matrix (See Figure 4) is divided into four quadrants along two axes: a cultivating and authoring stratagem. *High/High*. An organization in quadrant E (Transformational) fashions a commitment to building and sustaining relationships among organizations with similar goals and culture. They view their role as helping

transform the community by fostering change and promoting growth in both the organization and in the community. These organizations indicated they would accept a project financial loss (in the short term) if it meant helping build a more ethical and moral business place. They also view themselves as change agents willing to share learning and advancing mutual goals.

High/ Low

An organization in quadrant F (Contingent) conducts a strategy to improve its own operations with some consideration to how it contributes to the community. The organization focuses on meeting community needs when the activity satisfies its internal needs first. They view the community and place for its geographic and economic assets.

Low/High

An organization in quadrant G (Contributive) places emphasis on contributing to the community in ways that benefit the organization and the community. The organization values cooperative efforts to improve the community and its influence in the community. Their perspective of place is primarily as a social network in which they cultivate relationships and promote a certain business ethic that improves life.

Low/Low

An organization in quadrant H (Exploitive) utilizes community and environmental resources for their own good and is concerned about returning or contributing to their employees, community stakeholders and other important groups. The organization acts as an independent agent that is isolated from the community's business group. Its role is defined primarily by economic and political considerations.

Engagement with other organizations is limited and their participation is based on meeting its own internal needs.

		C U L T I V A T I N G	
		H I G H	L O W
A U T H O R I T Y	H I G H	E High/ High <i>Transformational</i> Teaching role Shared learning Promote change and growth	F High / Low <i>Contingent</i> Advances self-causes Proffers help/ assistance that fits with organization
	L O W	G Low/High <i>Contributive</i> Values social network Invests in community Works to improve life	H Low/Low <i>Exploitive</i> Organization centric Manipulative and politically motivated

Figure 4. Cultivating and Authoring Organizational Strategy

This next section, Place Construction, will layout the Place Construction Model that places each organization in one of four typologies (See Figure 5) as prescribed by the characteristics of their predominant strategy and behavior as presented in the IEOB and the CAOS Matrices. A definition of each typology precedes a description of the Place Construction model.

Place Construction Model

As discussed, the outcome or product of the organization's strategy and behavior place it as one of four typologies: contributive, contingent, exploitive, or transformational. In all cases an organization possesses some degree of each strategy and behavior. Each typology is described below.

Transformational Organization

A transformational organization has a *shared learning* orientation. These organizations view their role as a "change agent" investing personal and organization resources that improve the community and the organization.

Characteristic of transformational organizations is an ongoing engagement in community dialogue; investment of its resources that change the community; adapt to changing environment and helps create a positive vision of the future.

Transformational organizations contribute in ways that favor change, adapt new systems and build partnerships.

Exploitive Organizations

These organizations exploit local natural and human resources with no apparent strategy to construct a positive place or role for itself in the community. These organizations show little interest in investing or engaging other organizations or individuals in terms building the economic, cultural, social or political landscape. These organizations are centered on meeting their own needs and are detached and isolated from others in the community.

None of the organizations studied could be considered exploitive. However, respondents indicated that these types of organizations do exist. However, none are presented in this study.

Contributive Organizations

These organizations act out a two way strategy that promotes mutual sharing in community and organization values. Thus creating a stronger attachment among employees to the organization and the organization to the community as a result. A high level of commitment in developing networks and affiliations with others in which they invest the organizations resources.

Contingent Organizations

These organizations are prepared to contribute in ways that help them gain an expected return from their contribution. Their role is limited and specifically constructed to achieve a very narrow and calculated return on its investment of time and resources. They are engaged in local affairs on a superficial and often temporary basis.

Place Construction Model

The *Place Construction Model* (PCM) provides an overview of each type and the characteristics of attendant strategies, place perspectives and behaviors.

<u>Types</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Place Perspective</u>	<u>Behavior</u>
Contributive	Corbin	Improving life/ ethical practices	Ethical business community	Relationship building
	Health Inc	Improving life/ serving others	Shared ideologies	Influencing contribution
	Rio	Business and social leadership	Development opportunities	Partnering
Transformational	World Partners	Shared learning	Cultural and social assets	Teaching/ partnering
	Community Partner's	Advocating change/growth	Economic and geographic assets	Facilitating progress
	Landscaping Partners	Guarding environment	History /family legacy	Stewardship
	Gourmet	Enriching lives of employees	Social and cultural assets	Leading advocating
Contingent	Benson	Establish niche and grow business	Economic advantages	Seeks fit advantages
Exploitive	No organizations were found to be exploitive			

Figure 5. Place Construction Model

The next section will match or compare the findings of the research to the literature. In this section will we see how the literature in chapter 2 fits as well as the new literature that resulted from the thinking about organizations as place builders that came out the models.

Comparison of Findings to Literature

In Chapter Two, a review of the literature, taken from across several disciplines, explored place from a community and organizational view point. The limited literature on the topic did not provide a guide to the research in general or how organizations construct place. Three main areas were explored: social construction of place, place building, and the role organizations play as cultural agents.

The first part, social construction, discussed how place is socially constructed and given meaning as a key facet of place building. The second part discussed a broad definition of organizations as cultural agents and their role in constructing place in their community. The literature from these diverse sections was brought together into a single model that described the key components of place building in the PBN model (see Figure 1).

The model formed a coherent understanding of place constructing as an organizational strategy and its possible outcomes, and formed much of the researcher's thinking about the relationships that might exist among organizations in their community. The research findings are compared and contrasted to the literature as outlined in the areas of place, organization, culture, and community.

Place

The findings confirmed that place is seen as a vital element in the way participants and their organizations live in and contribute to their community. Further, place was not seen as simply an area or region, but as a product of their individual and collective intentions and organizational strategies.

Second, that place is explained and understood in part by the participant and the organization's role or place in their community. Thus, an organization's contribution pivots on how it views its role and place. Third, and perhaps the strongest link, is how the organization interacts in the community. Since organizations are linked to those who share its space, and culture, it is productive to think of an organization as a critical agent responsible to the social and cultural context in a community.

The findings and the literature on place together enhanced the understanding of how place is socially constructed and is foundational to understanding how organizations strategically construct place. Finally, the relationship between an organization and their community are a two-way and interdependent relationship. The degree or intensity of the relationship leads to investment and interdependency that defines the organization as transformational.

While participants viewed the community as both a geographic and social area, place is a constructed on a highly social and strategic level. For example, in the case of World Partners, the participant stated, "Place is a vital element in the way we live our lives." Echoing Eyles (1985) who claimed that place is not simply an area or region, but is a product of man's intentions. As the literature claims, place refers to being inside and belonging to place as an individual and member of a group without consciously reflecting on it (Eyles, 1985).

The participants in the small and mid sized organizations demonstrated a strong emotional connection to the community as a special place. Tuan (1977) explained that attachment and sense of belonging is rooted in the persons meaning as he/she

experiences it in a place. In this case, the family tradition, values and legacy of several organizations created a sense of place for the participant on a professional and personal level. This connection or sense of place to a large degree motivated certain strategies to invest and help transform the community.

Organizations

Throughout the development of administrative theory and practice, organization theorist and managers alike have used a variety of metaphors or images, to frame and differentiate their world and their strategies (Smircich, 1983). Morgan's well known metaphors of organizations as machines; culture, interpretive and organism are particularly relevant to understanding an organization as a place builder.

While this new literature was not included in Chapter Two, it is relevant to the findings in two important ways. First, it is consistent with the researcher's earlier claim that new organizational practices and strategies, and new ways of thinking or interpreting how place is constructed by an organization will emerge from the research.

Second, the findings and literature combine to construct a notion that place building is a strategy that is largely formed out of the organization's culture. A brief description of the terms of organization as culture, organism and system are explained here relative to the findings.

Organization as Machine. When we discuss organizations as machines we tend to expect them to operate in a routinized, efficient, reliable and predictable ways. Meaning that organizations are instruments serving some specific purpose for which only the organization understands. Organization as machine emphasizes process,

authority, and responsibility (Morgan, 1977, 1980). For example, Benson can be described as machine in the sense that it controls its relationships, protects its image and views place largely on economic and political levels. In this case, the research found that the Benson (a large organization) constructed place in a routinized and predictable manner.

Organization as Interpretive. The notion of interpretation supports place building in two key ways. First, understanding or knowing the environment and what it affords can direct how an organization treats its space and the community. Second, organizations themselves develop relationships with other organizations that bind them to their community in ways that may contribute to their survival. The organization's relationship within its community is seen as a key determinant and influencing factor in how place is constructed. (Baum, 1996).

Third, as Daft and Weick (1984) suggest, how the organization interprets their environment and the resources the community affords them is a critical component of organization as interpretive. The extent to which organizations take advantage of these resources is largely a function of how the organization interprets and translates events in the environment from which they develop models for understanding and acting.

While place building is not simple or fully understood process, it does consist of learning new ways to understand the environment, and behave in ways that fit the organization's culture and strategic intentions. In the case of World Partners they interpreted their role in the community as teaching and facilitating change.

Organizations like World Partners, Community Partners, and Landscape each develop

strategies that “cultivate” place and lead to an investment of their resources that are intended to transform the organization and the community.

Thinking about organizations as interpretation systems is an important ally in our view of organizations as place constructors or builders. Daft and Weick (1984) view the critical issue for organizations is to find ways to know the environment in ways that contribute to the organizations specific goals and strategies.

Organization as Cultural Agents. Thinking of organizations as culture promotes a broad view of organizations as contributing primarily on a social and cultural level in their community. Organizations function as cultural agents by shaping and influencing, reinforcing, and defining social and behavioral norms within the community. This kind of activity was apparent in how both small and mid sized firms conducted business that centered on “serving people” and “improving life”.

Organizations as cultural agents steps out of the traditional view of organizations as mechanistic and bureaucratic entities serving their own self interests, and place them as partners with their community. This is a “holistic” view of organizations as contributors to its environment and community.

Morgan (1997) posits, “The organization is itself a cultural phenomenon that varies according to a society’s stage of development. Shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning, shared understanding and shared sense making are all different ways of describing culture” (p.120). Morgan is thus recognizing that organizations participate in the construction of a culture. Organizations as co-constructors of a culture embody the cultural values and practices of a community that are central to the organization’s contribution.

The culture metaphor also points toward another means of creating and shaping organization behavior and strategies that influence the ideologies, values, beliefs, norms, ceremonies and other social practices in the community. The data further suggested that organizations structure their environment and relationships through a host of decisions and strategies that are extensions of the culture.

Organizations as Organism. Thinking of organizations as organism promotes the idea that organizations, as living systems, living in an environment in which they depend on various groups and entities for their survival and growth. The organism metaphor has helped identify different organizational needs by focusing on organization as “open systems” with a certain interdependency that drives its contribution. How the organization relates to and interacts with other organizations and individuals within the community is seen as a major element of organizations as organism (Morgan, 1997; Wright, 1995).

The strength of the organism metaphor stems from the emphasis placed on understanding relations between organizations and their community and environments. However, both Morgan (1997) and Smircich (1983) point to the notion of organizations as contributing to the ecology and their community when the health of the organization and its community is intrinsically tied. Small and mid sized organizations view their role as living within the community. They value their interdependence with each other as helping transform themselves and the community.

Culture

As discussed in the literature and confirmed in the research, culture is a useful concept in understanding the hidden and complex aspects of how organizations

construct place. Culture must be understood as an active, living phenomenon though which people jointly create and recast the world in which they live (Morgan, 1997, 1980; Williams, 1983). We view organizational culture as not what an organization 'does' but what it 'is'. It makes sense then to think of organizations as critical agents behaving in ways that contribute to their community (Smircich, 1983).

Williams (1989) claims:

“Culture is common meanings, the product of a man’s whole committed social and personal experience. We can understand the elements of a culture as reflected in how space is treated and in so doing interpret the environment as artifacts of that culture, what is valued and revered” (p.8).

Williams’ is suggesting that organizations, by virtue of their strategies and culture, influence relationships within the community. This relationship in many ways is the image or reflection of their values. Zelinsky (1992) asserts that in “its ultimate, most essential sense, culture is an image of the world, of oneself and one’s community” (p. 70). Therefore, it is important to understand how an organization’s culture and strategic intentions relate to its relationships in their community. This may result in a view of organizations as ‘partners’ with its community seeking strategies that build place.

Organizations such as, Rio, World Partners and Landscape each developed formalized roles and procedures for enforcing their rules and a code of professional ethics. Marketing and sales strategies governed the direction and level of contribution at Benson. Other organizations like Corbin and Gourmet valued the organization as an instrument for improving the lives of their customer and employees.

Because organizations play key roles in their community and in society, the direction, and speed of social change in large part depends on the culture and values

of the organization, and to what extent they are congruent with both society and their community's culture. This view of organizations as playing a key role in their community is supported by Smircich (as cited in Morgan 1983) who emphasized, "That people and their organizations then, are not mere bystanders, but active partners in how they define their community and practice the values that are in concert or harmony with each other."

Each of the metaphors focuses attention in selective ways and provides slightly different ways of knowing how organizations construct place. The findings tie in to the literature in significant ways that help explain how organizations construct place.

Community

Three elements of community emerged from the finding that is consistent with the literature. The three elements of community as an ecological structure, social structure, and ideological structure in which people and their organization's construct a sense of belonging was common to each organization. The findings indicate that the respondents defined their community as having geographic, economic, social and cultural domains. In addition, there was general agreement that the community was situated in a larger geographic area with special environmental qualities. Moreover, the social aspects of the community as ecology, social and ideological structure were the predominant themes (Eyles, 1985). Each of these themes is explored below.

Community as an Ecological Structure. Ecological is that element of a community based on the geographical area. Participants viewed the area as the arena of activities, institutions, and practices as important in how they contribute and invest

in the area. An investment that most believed will return certain benefits to them and their organization.

Community as Social Structure. The social component of the community shows how a place gains its meaning mainly through its people and their activities, institutions and ideas. The participants viewed the social interaction among business people as a key asset. Notably the moral and ethical fabric of the community was supportive to their business practices and created a sense of belonging and attachment.

Community as Ideological Structure. The data suggested organizations carry a shared ideology or set of commonly held beliefs, and notions about the community and its values and goals. The social network supported these notions and reinforced certain behavior as highly respected and treasured among those organizations and individuals who invested in the community.

World Partners, Community Partners and Landscape viewed their role as representing and protecting the values of the community as both a geographic place and social setting. Infact, they gauged their contributions in terms of how they improved lives and the culture of the community.

Each of the structures create a certain place perspective consistent with the work of Gerson & Gerson (1976) who claimed that in order to understand place as a social phenomena it is necessary to grasp the characteristics of the interaction among organizations and individuals. Places, like the organization's community, have a certain pace and rhythm, and a monetary or financial order that was generally viewed the same by all the organizations.

Participants generally agreed that they held a strong emotional and sentimental attachment to the community and to each other. These ideologies and structures guided the conduct of those who live in the community, and they contain the fundamental assumptions about the place that everyone must have in order to act there at all.

Syntheses of the Literature Reviewed

For the most part, the data gathered from the participants in this study supports the research done on place, culture and organizational culture. The participants, through their responses to the interview questions, validated the importance of the organizations culture in the construction of place, participation in a social network and the importance of symbols in the construction of meaning. The research on organizations as metaphors leant strong support to thinking about organizations as “place builders” as supported by organizations as culture, interpretative and organism.

Recommendations for Further Research

While I have advanced two models. There are now more questions to be answered. As such these become the basis for recommendations for future research. Future research needs to focus on creating a viable device or instrument to create the organizational typology. For example, if we are able to type an organization based on its strategies and behaviors how might that the strategies and behaviors look in an organization? And what predictors could we use to identify these organizations?

I am challenged to look at two things. First, theoretically at least, if it is possible to create an instrument to create a typology, then it may be possible to plot an organization as an example of how a transformational organization operates.

Second, do the strategies such as cultivating and authoring influence the casting of an organization into one typology?

On paper the organizations are different but in fact they are very interrelated. In this point of the research there is the challenge of how to bring these together. I am convinced, however, that an organizations place construction is related to a certain typology, but I do not know how at this time, as it is beyond the scope of this study.

In addition, future research can benefit both the organization and the community. Several obvious research inquiries emerged from this study. For example we might ask: What are the influencing factors of organization culture in a community? Can organizations build and sustain competitive advantage from its place in a community?

Can an organization that participates in ways that serve the community and its organization be viewed as “community centric”. “Community centric” organizations behave in ways that “cultivate” their role as helping transform and change the community for the betterment of its employees, its business and the community. In essence, improving the competitiveness of the area, by improving the organization.

Implications of the Research

The research can benefit organizations by providing a well defined set of concepts that can direct their strategies for constructing place in their community and identifying communities that best fit or match their culture and strategic imperatives. Further, a theoretical understanding of how place is constructed on an organizational level can advance the field of management by advancing a new way of thinking about organizations as critical agents in the construction of place in their community

Evaluation of Study

The most notable improvement in the study was the decision to increase the number of organizations under study from three to ten organizations. The increase provided a more in-depth analysis of an organizations role or place in the community and helped frame the notions of strategic construction of place.

The grounded theory method proved powerful in producing a theory that addresses how organizations construct place in a strategic and purposivefull way. The openness and natural inquiry of the approach lent itself well to working with professionals who were engaged and enthusiastic and eager to participate. Use of an active and conversational interview style engaged participants in meaningful dialogue and introspective leading to confidential comments about the community and their organization.

Local community leaders were instrumental in gaining researcher access to key managers in selected organizations. In addition, these leaders offered advice on how to contact and deal with the organization and the interviewees. The leaders also provided local knowledge and ecological validity on both the research questions and interview guide.

An area for improving the study would have been the inclusion of three large organizations. This study was only able to access one large organization. This limitation appears to be grounded in a large organizations concern for internal political sensitivities and access to key informants.

Final Reflections

The dissertation advanced a theory that organizations strategically construct place in ways that are unique to their culture. The notion of strategic motives and actions support the construct of the four typologies as shown in Model 3.

The research provided a well defined set of concepts that can direct an organization's strategies for constructing place in their community that may lead to some level of competitive advantage. Second, a theoretical understanding of how place is constructed on an organizational level can advance a view of organizations as critical agents in the construction of place in their community.

The models produced herein are an excellent start in illustrating the power and influence of organizations in their community. They offer the possibility of casting organizations as critical actors whose influence can not be underestimated and should be calculated for the benefit of the organization and community stakeholders.

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for your time today. My name is David Thomas. I am a PhD student at Colorado State University conducting research as a requirement for graduation.

The interview will be tape recorded. Before I start the recording I wish to advise you of the process and procedures.

- First, this interview is strictly voluntary. Should you feel uncomfortable to answer any questions please say so I will move on to the next questions. You are free to end the interview for any reason .
- Please review the attached consent form and sign and initial on each page should you wish to move ahead with the interview.

Interview Questions

Organizational issues and opinion questions

1. How long have you lived in Fort Collins? How long have you been with the firm?
2. What do believe are the challenges facing the organization and the community today and in the next 5-10 years?
3. How would you describe the community: its culture, business climate?
4. What are the organizations priorities and challenges in dealing with the community?
5. What in your opinion are the key assets and resources available for the organization in the community ?
6. How are these assets or resources utilized?
7. What is the impact of this usage?
8. What have been the positive changes in the community over the last 3 years?
9. What have been the negative changes?
10. How would you describe the organizations relationship with the community?
11. What have been the challenges in that relationship?
12. How would you define the organizations relationship

Cultural setting and Social Setting

13. In what ways does the organization reflect the community's spirit of the people? Its history, future and values?

> Where are the majority of employees hired? Locally? Out of town?

> In what ways is the organization's culture reflected in the community? How is it celebrated in the community?

> In what ways does the organization contribute to the community's stated economic, political and social viability

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