

On the bottle: situating *place-based discourses* in global production networks – a visual and textual analysis of craft beer labels

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ABSTRACT

Place remains a critical concept within globalization processes, often communicated via packaging, design, and branding. This article uses grounded theory methodology to develop a theory of Place-Based Discourses (PBDs) based on a dataset of beer labels collected, coded, memoed and analyzed between 2011–2019. I argue that the beer label incorporates all three elements and presents a primary site for studying value addition, providing a ready space for producers to introduce national motifs, such as flags and tartans in the case of Scotch Ales, or depictions of local working landscapes to connote ecological, social, and economic connections to place. Drawing on extant literature on conceptualizations of place within the Global Production Networks perspective (GPNs), this paper contributes to debates about food and drink branding and globalization by generating new ways of examining the sites and processes of representation of place within cultural-material hybrids (such as beer labels) imbricated through globalization mechanisms. I interpret three constituent themes which emerged during the theorization of PBDs – *historical imagination and local identity*, *thin place and thick networks*, and *performative globalizations* – and I argue that this approach provides an important contribution to the geographies of globalization, linking cultural analysis of branding and place to the GPN tradition. Future studies can apply this knowledge to move towards an understanding of other place-based sites and processes within GPNs, with specific research attention directed towards how PBDs can “reveal and rebalance” power structures vis-à-vis the *place dimensions* of globalization.

KEYWORDS

beer; grounded theory; global production networks; localism; globalization

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1. Introduction

This paper explores conceptions of place within Global Production Networks (GPNs), seeking to contribute to debates about food and drink branding and globalization by generating new conceptualizations of place within the contemporary globalizing economy of beer. Place remains a critical concept within globalization processes, often communicated via packaging, design, and branding. The beer label incorporates all three elements of packaging, design, and branding, presenting a primary site for value addition, providing a ready space for producers to introduce national motifs, such as flags and tartans in the case of Scotch Ales, or depictions of local working landscapes to connote ecological, social, and economic connections to place.

Labeling and design are an integral part of the presentation of localized knowledge at the regional, national, and global scales of innovation within the brewing industry (Pulec 2016; Dicken 2015; Bathelt, Malmberg, Maskell 2004; Gertler 2003). Previous research on craft beer has seen a sustained focus on understanding the processes of (neo)localism, branding, and identity on the development of senses of place and place-making within craft brewing in predominantly Anglophone spaces (i.e. United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) (Argent 2017; Murray, Overton 2016; Fletchall 2016; Elzinga, Tremblay, Tremblay 2015; Schnell, Reese 2014; McLaughlin, Reid, Moore 2014; Reid, McLaughlin, Moore 2014; Eberts 2014; Flack 1997). Other studies have considered the economics of craft beer from a comparative global, international, or regionally-scaled perspective, assessing spatial patterns of consumption and their impacts on foreign direct investment and public health policy, for example (Garavaglia, Swinnen 2018; Jernigan, Babor 2015; McCaig 2010; Jernigan 2009; Grigg 2004). Fewer studies have approached the organization of regional and national brewing industries from a GPN perspective (Pulec 2016; The Barth-Haas Group 2012; Smith 2012; Swinnen, Van Herck 2010). A third, adjacent body of literature focuses on local, material, and discursive processes within the organization of the global economy, promoting the integration of local knowledge creation and branding practices into GPNs (Floysand, Jakobsen, Bjarnar 2012; Marquis, Battilana 2009; Bathelt, Malmberg, and Maskell 2004; Aaker 1996). Local knowledge and a sense of place plays an important role in the sociocultural environment and identity of localities, nations, and regions in which global production networks are embedded.

This article directs research focus to the beer label as a site where local knowledge, often in the form of visual and textual representations of place, becomes materially 'attached' to the organizational and geographical territory of a GPN (Dicken 2015). Beer labels are also sites where consumers imbue place

with economic and cultural value, linking upstream processes (such as supplying and brewing) to downstream processes (such as wholesaling, distribution, and consumption) within Global Value Chains (GVCs) (Pulec 2016; Gereffi et al. 2005; Gereffi 1994). GPNs of beer globalize via joint ventures between multinational firms in local developmental contexts, often importing key elements (such as brewmasters and manufacturing technology) rather than embedding with local subcontractors. Control over the marketing of brands and the creation of brand identity remains a distinguishing feature of the GPN, as brand owners choose to embed value in the development of a loyal, readily identifying consumer base (Dicken 2015; Jernigan 2009; Aaker 1996). However, the emergence of fictive geographies of brewing where no tacit knowledge of the industry previously existed, concurrent with the fierce loyalty of (neo)local craft brewers speak to a rapidly evolving spatiality of craft brewing in previously underdeveloped markets, such as the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and developed markets alike (Argent 2017; Murray, Overton 2016; Dicken 2015; Eberts 2014). Coupled with what McLaughlin, Reid, and Moore (2014) term "the ubiquity of good taste", recent shifts in cultural, economic, and environmental geographies of consumption, driven by globalization and its attendant lifestyle changes, pose formidable challenge to the prevalent GPN perspective. Thus, further research attention must be directed at how representations of place alloy with value-addition as mechanisms of globalization.

To thoroughly understand the processes by which representations of place – understood as textual and visual indicators of local materials, traditions, landscapes, (sub)national iconographies, and histories depicted on the container label itself – becomes an integral part of the global systems of production, distribution, and consumption which constitute GPNs of beer, key factors and relationalities must be systematically observed, coded, and analyzed. By using qualitative interpretive approaches to examine the visual and textual processes by which place becomes situated within GPNs of beer, researchers can better analyze the role of *Place-Based Discourses* within multi-scalar, multi-territorial power relationships by which GPNs produce geographical outcomes (Coe et al. 2008: 271). Within the GPN approach, theoretical explanations for how culturally-bound notions of place imbricate with value-addition and spatial embeddedness to create *Place-Based Discourses* could provide a useful framework for rethinking the rules of meaning and relational power within a set of supplier-producer-customer relations (Bathelt, Taylor 2002; Clegg 1989; Latour 1986). The purpose of this study was to understand this process among GPNs of beer by generating an empirically-grounded theoretical framework which introduces a new theorization to the GPN perspective, the *Place-Based Discourse* (PBDs), and explains how this approach can be used

to explain points of integration where sociocultural sites and processes such as place, value-adding, and GPNs entangle.

Four main research questions are addressed in this article: i) What is the Place-Based Discourse (PBD)? ii) What are the processes (themes, situations) in which beer labels, as material sites of PBDs circulating within GPNs, are imbricated in globalization? iii) What qualitative-interpretive methods can be used to unpack the content of these packaging-based PBDs? iv) How can PBDs be used to examine other sites and processes within the global production network of beer?

This article is broken down into three sections. The first section presents a review of literature pertaining to the organization of GPNs and the geographies of beer. The second section introduces the grounded theory approach, sampling methods, data collection, and data analysis, offering a general definition for the PBD as the central phenomenon of study in this article. It also introduces the dataset, emergent codes and themes, and offers a justification of selected findings and the strategies used to thoroughly interpret the selections and illustrate how PBDs are constituted. The last part considers the practical implications of PBDs as well as the limitations of this study, and concludes by highlighting future areas of investigation.

2. Literature review

My approach considers the GPN perspective proposed by Henderson et al. (2002), and subsequently developed into a 'school' within economic geography (Smith 2014; Glassman 2011; Arnold, Pickles 2011; Coe et al. 2008, 2004). This approach, different from the Global Commodity Chains (GCC) theorized by Gereffi (2001; 1995; 1994) moves beyond the "vertical sequence" leading from production to consumption and maintenance of goods and services, and highlights the networked relationships between firms and states which "binds" these actors into larger economic and industrial organizational patterns (Sturgeon 2001; in Henderson et al. 2002: 442). The GPN perspective demands a multi-dimensional, multi-layered approach to understanding economic activity as networked actors that can only be understood through relational materiality and connectivity to other entities (Henderson 2002; Dicken 2001; Law 1999; Harvey 1969). Notably, in his study of the Czech brewing industry's integration into GPNs in 2013, Pulec (2016; 2014) identifies several important criteria by which he evaluates the integration of Czech brewing companies into GPN structures. He lists ownership by local Czech, Russian, British, or Trans National Corporation (TNC; e.g., the Canadian-American firm Molson Coors' ownership of the Staropramen brewery and brand); hops and malt suppliers; packaging suppliers (including glass, plastic, and metal packaging); and

distribution to customers via a GPN-connected export base as measures of regional and national scale integration of Czech brewers into GPNs. A multi-dimensional, multi-layered perspective presents the GPN as a complex, spatially differentiated network of brewers, firms, and the materials which constitute the production of beer.

While sociocultural factors, such as the textual and visual components enrolled in product branding, packaging, promotion, are absent from this (and other) GPN analyses, they are part of the play of local knowledge and power relations within the processes and mechanisms of economic globalization. Crucially, in defining network discourse, Henderson et al. go on to explain the potential benefits of the GPN perspective. They suggest going beyond charting vertical ties between firms and territorial embeddedness, instead formulating a more analytically flexible, approach to power geometries which between actors and institutions, looking at how institutional and local knowledge are mobilized across producer-consumer relations. Gereffi (2005) notes the capacity of a GPN perspective to approach organizational theory through a diversity of perspectives, enabling actors within the model – such as TNCs and developing countries within a world-system – to improve their standing by adopting developmental strategies which mobilize power asymmetries and networks of innovation. Place is a critical interface within the GPN network, specifically within theorizations of 'embedding,' however, the GPN perspective overlooks the central role of place in producing and sustaining a discourse of sense making.

The contextual openness of GPN lends itself to discursively-oriented qualitative analysis, such as the 'situational' praxis explained by Morrione as "both an object confronted and an ongoing process subsequent to that confrontation", connecting different social worlds and lattices of production (Morrione 1985: 161–162). These situations, then, are "construed as meaningful to the actors themselves", a core epistemological concern within symbolic interactionist paradigms of sociological analysis (Clarke 2005: 110; Strauss 1993; Clarke 1991). As with the Actor-Network Theory approach to GPN espoused by Henderson et al. (2002) and Law (1999), I take the perspective shared by Adele Clarke that "social worlds are 'universes of discourse' centered on collective social meaning-making ... hybridized/continuous with the nonhuman" (Clarke 2005: 109; Strauss 1978). Whereas in a GPN network ecology, the focus of the social world is largely production and consumption-driven, in my adaptation, interpretations of network structures and axiologies of land (more or less developmental spaces), labor, and capital recenter the social world around diverse cultural sense making (Goulding 2017).

This should come as no surprise, as economic geographers of beer, food, and other comestibles have

noted that the construction of place is an increasingly important factor in production and valorization (Murray, Overton 2016; Fletchall 2016; Schnell, Reese 2014; Marquis, Battilana 2009). The role of place within the discursive spaces which constitute the social world of the network is too often overlooked by GPN traditionalists. Fletchall quotes Yi-Fu Tuan in the introduction to her article on place-making in Montana's craft brewing scene: "[w]hat begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (Fletchall 2016: 539; Tuan 1977). Dicken is correct in stating that GPNs are 'grounded' in specific places; I contend that a grounded theory approach (Strauss, Corbin 1998) is useful here because of the gap in knowledge regarding the dynamic processes and relationships which create geographical outcomes, by relationalizing the 'nature' and power of place to value-adding sites and processes within GPNs (Coe et al. 2008). This approach enriches the economic geographer's understanding of place beyond the static definition as a bric-a-brac of firms and owners where "organizational networks connect into geographical networks" (Dicken 2015: 251–253). The role of place deserves more than the 'parts is parts' definition assumed by most GPN-focused analysis. Instead, as Flack (1997) asserted, the desire to attach to local places has long driven the microbrewery revolution, and that cultural, sense making work carries on throughout the industry at large, and often via Place-Based Discourses (PBDs).

Finally, this paper is not the first to tackle the idea of selling the local through a connection to place. In their landmark study of microbreweries, place, and identity in the U.S., Schnell and Reese (2014) conceive of imagery as a key to promoting local ties, interpreting how images make explicit the links "between place, identity, and uniqueness" (Schnell and Reese 2014: 169). Visual and textual imagery provide a critical link to unpacking meaning-making and localism in several ways: as mentioned above, social researchers have a robust toolkit at their disposal to theorize via empirical analysis and interpretive work by doing grounded theory in contexts specific and relevant to the actors framed by the gaze of research. Moreover, visual and textual images provide a durable connection to the land, labor, and capital aspect of GPNs which manifest in 'local' geographies of food and drink through concepts such as 'terroir.' Schnell and Reese observe that the place attachment evoked by brewing practices, coupled with narratives of place constructed through

label imagery, marketing and promotional material, provide ample local color to make up for brewcraft's lack of a characteristic *terroir*.¹ One problem inherent in this conceptualization, however, relates to the possible conflation of 'sense of place' with what Murray and Overton term a fictive geography on a "continuum of materiality in [geographical] clusters, moving from the 'real' towards the 'imagined,'" but are innovative and competitive enough on economic and cultural grounds "to maintain the sustainability of any given sector" (Murray and Overton 2016: 187; Fløysand et al. 2012).² PBDs can be helpful in understanding how 'thick' and 'thin' approaches to place, existing on a continuum, compete and can be seen as both factors of production and value-addition.

3. Methods

For this study, I took a situational analysis (SA) approach to grounded theory (Clarke et al. 2015; Clarke 2005; Strauss, Corbin 1998). SA is a "method of analysis ... especially useful in multi-site or multi-modal research that can draw together different sites, or both" (Clarke et al. 2015: 16–17). As a strategy of qualitative inquiry, SA builds on the traditional grounded theory approach in that it empowers researchers to collect data from the "bottom-up" and "outside-in" when developing propositions which ground empirically-based theorization (Clarke et al. 2015: 21). As a postmodern, poststructural extension of grounded theory, SA is especially helpful in research which seeks to locate and disentangle power hierarchies, specifically when considering how access to material, nonhuman *things* – internet connections, cell phones, housing, food, and drink – "instantiate and reproduce" social stratification (Clarke et al. 2015: 21). Such an approach is especially helpful when 'getting in on the ground floor' of GPNs; these materialities, their networks, and their power interrelations *condition what is possible* within a social situation (Foucault 1975).

Building on the adage that "data are generated, not 'given,'" I employ an interpretive constructivist methodology within grounded theory-SA (Yanow, Schwartz-Shea 2013: 5; Charmaz 2000). What counts as data in this methodological perspective is theory-dependent, bounded, and iteratively coded around emergent themes which are used to develop a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon of place on beer labels within GPNs. This theorization is grounded in

1 Examples of local arts globalized and *relocalized* include the German *Koelsch* and *Altbier* styles, which maintain deep sociological and technological associations to the cities of Cologne and Duesseldorf, respectively.

2 Elzinga et al. (2015: 247) note the rise of contract brewing in their analysis of Jim Koch's brand, Samuel Adams, which despite an obvious place attachment to the Boston historical-cultural milieu through the Adams name and the Boston Beer Company imprint, initially contracted the facilities of Pittsburgh Brewing Company to brew the Koch's Boston Lager for additional "capacity at marginal cost". Koch's 'billion dollar' Boston Lager brand is still brewed in eastern Pennsylvania, a point (perhaps strategically) underplayed by Boston's beer loving football fans in light of New England's loss to the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl LII. This example serves to illustrate Murray and Overton's observation that materiality and place often join *relationally* on a continuum.

data collected from the material objects themselves, then interpreted based on emergent categories aggregated around a common idea (a Place-Based Discourse, or PBD; Creswell, Poth 2018: 328). Pre-established sociological theories, per Layder (1998) inform the initial coding, while the systematic progression from codes to categories to theory and the analysis of their interrelation is the hallmark of the development of a grounded theory (Corbin, Strauss 2015; Saldaña 2016: 15).

The dataset was constructed between 2011 and 2019 using opportunistic sampling from retail sites throughout the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, France, and Germany, generating visual and textual data from 1,040 beer labels selected based on four main criteria: 1) *diversity of brewing styles*, 2) *(sub)national, regional, or local origins*, 3) *ownership (including TNC, foreign, national, private, cooperative, municipal and state-owned)* and 4) *label design*. Opportunistic sampling allows for the researcher to follow new leads and take advantage of unexpected developments within the situation of inquiry (Creswell, Poth 2018: 159). Each item within the dataset then received manual theoretical coding for visual and textual elements contained within the beer label. Theoretical codes, developed by Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (2006), emerge through data analysis and present a relational model through which all other codes and categories are related back to the core category of place (Hernandez 2009). Theoretical codes which I recorded include: *human, nonhuman/living, nonhuman/nonliving, ingredient* (such as depictions of water, hops, or malts), *spatial/temporal claims to tradition, language* (English, French, German, etc.), *typeface, placename, landscape, mobility, transportation, map/logo, folk motif, national iconography, and local history*. I then compiled short narratives in the form of 'first impressions' of the 'big' and 'little' pictures of specific visual images and texts from labels within my dataset, systematically deconstructing these narratives through the creation of specification memos, defined by Clarke (2005: 227–228) as a systematic narrative 'breaking of frame' designed to 'see' an image in multiple ways. I specifically included Clarke's topics of *framing, featuring, viewpoint, presence/absence, intended/unintended audience, image composition, technical elements, relations with local visual cultures, symbolic references within the image, and injunctions to the viewer*. I linked codes and memos, including visual, textual, and tasting narratives, into dynamic, richly and thickly described language-based data to create categories, concepts, and finally, a grounded theory (Clarke 2005: 227; Saldaña 2016).

Following the development of the grounded theory (PBD), I adapt Saldaña's approach for the purposes of this article, analyzing visual data using "a holistic,

interpretive lens guided by intuitive inquiry and strategic questions", (re)grounded in local and theory-based context, informed in part from the interpretive guidelines of visual grounded theory analysis espoused by Mey and Dietrich (2017) and Peez (2006). Samples presented for this article were selected using theory-based sampling strategies, examining visual data within the perspective of the GPN, using a theory of Place-Based Discourses (Creswell, Poth 2018).

4. Discussion and analysis

I define Place-Based Discourse³ as:

The site and process of 1) visual, textual, material, and sensorial ways of constituting knowledge as 2) a set of relations and practices presented across a social field, 3) representing and embodying a range of modes of subjectivity of the 'nature,' meaning, and power of a place, which can 4) 'attach' to strategies of domination and resistance through GPN-inherent processes of value-addition and spatial embedding.

The images in Figures 1–4 are grouped here as representative of a theory of PBD in GPNs of beer. Each example functions on two discursive levels: as a cultural-material text, printed on the bottle, and as a node within a GPN, where they present a social and cultural component of what Dicken (2015: 252) terms the "place dimension". In the first instance, each example represents both a *site* and a *process*, moving forward with Morrione's (1985) situational praxis. In the second instance, each example is both a *product* in a Globalized Production Circuit (GPC), a node in the global network which, according to Dicken (2015), creates value through the application of labor, technology, and organizational expertise, tying in traditionally downstream operations such as branding, marketing, logistics, distribution, and so forth. Furthermore, as nodes within a GPN, these beers are more than products: they mediate aspects of *place* which resonate with local producers and consumers, integrating local, regional, and national economic production with local conceptualizations and discourses of place.

Each of these PBDs demand interpretation of, in Schnell and Reese's words, "a history that requires familiarity with place" (Schnell, Reese 2014: 179). The first two cases interpreted in this section deal with the roles and tensions of place and history within PBDs, building upon the theme of *historical imagination and local identity* constructed iteratively from theoretical coding. The third case presents a locally-situated PBD of non-place, selected for narrative interpretation as a representative of the theme of *thin place and thick networks*. The fourth case interprets the theme of *performative globalizations* as a PBD. Furthermore, as PBDs within GPNs which must operate within local

3 Derived from Weedon's (1987) and Diamond and Quimby's (1988) interpretation of Foucault's discourse (1970).

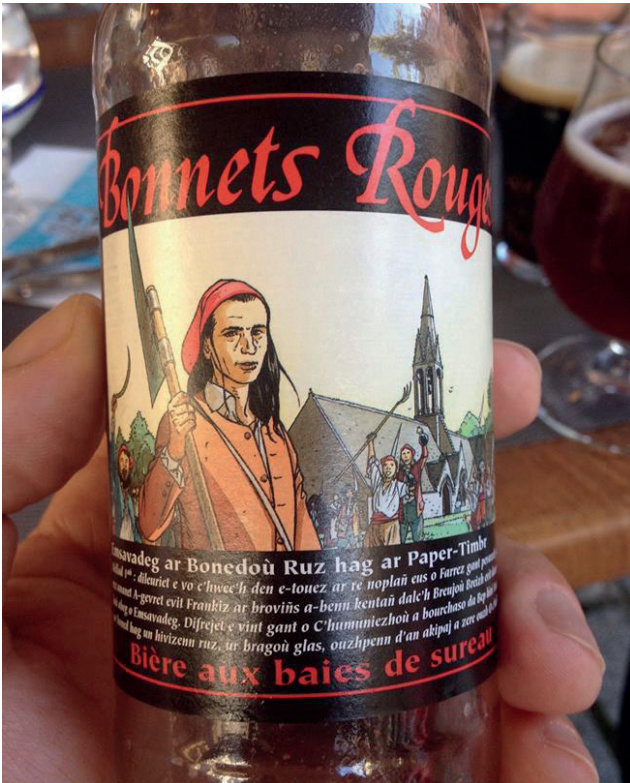


Fig. 1 Bonnets Rouge, Brittany, France.



Fig. 2 Grande Noirceur, Quebec, Canada.

legal-institutional parameters, it is important to note the presence and absence of references to military weapons technology within geographically situated histories of (inter)state and (counter) revolutionary violence (Figures 1 and 2). Within the U.S., Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms regulations prohibit the branding of alcohol with references to military or weapons technology, a development which would potentially ‘normalize’ the discursive force of some PBDs (Schnell, Reese 2014: 179).⁴

While microbrewery and craft beer imagery can tell us a lot about neolocalism and the variety of proclamative principles of difference and distinctiveness at the scale of the place, the images in Figures 1–4 speak to the polyvocal nature of place, beer style, and connectivity to the global economy. Figure 1 depicts a beer called Bonnets Rouges from Morbihan, a department in Brittany, France. The label imagery depicts a peasant wearing a red cap (the *bonnet rouges*, in French, or *bonedoù ruz* in Breton), symbol of the 1675 “révolte du papier timbre”, a widespread revolt in northwestern France and Brittany against the imposition of new taxes on stamped goods such as contracts, civil registries, deeds, and tobacco products (Berenger 1975). Irrepressibly local and ‘thickly’ historical in subject matter and brewcraft – the bottle

I enjoyed in Strasbourg in June, 2016 was a cross between a deep red rustic framboise and a Flemish sour, using strawberries to evoke a rustic attachment to fruit and field, and insinuating a colorful, flavorful play on the social history of the ‘*bonnets rouges*’ history – the beer’s motif of Breton local, anti-tax insurrection is likely not lost on French nationalists, as a recent wave of anti-tax upheaval led by self-proclaimed ‘red hats’ swept through urban centers of Brittany in 2013 (Reuters 2013). Brasserie Lancelot, the brewer of Bonnets Rouge, is owned by former employees, and remains the largest brewer by volume in Brittany, producing 30,000 hl of beer annually; Bonnets Rouge, like other Breton culture-themed beers in B. Lancelot’s production line, imbricates local knowledge within a PBD which parallels broader themes and strategies of Breton resistance vis-à-vis state power in the development of modern France.

Figure 2 continues the themes and strategies of power, domination, and resistance in social history within a PBD situated in Montreal, Quebec. According to the text on the label, Grande Noirceur (The Great Darkness), a Russian imperial stout-style beer brewed by Montreal’s Brasserie Dieu du Ciel!, takes its name from the conservative policies of mid-century

4 Schnell and Reese (2014) offer that the aforementioned government regulations account for two limitations to their methodology: a smaller portion of the imagery in their primarily U.S.-sourced dataset features visuals of Revolutionary or Civil War local history than anticipated, and where references to historical conflicts are made, they tend towards ‘thick’ accounts of local folk heroes or events. Notably, none of the U.S. beers within were coded in relation to military history.

Quebec. The label art employs a cinematic visual aesthetic, depicting the looming face of conservative premier Maurice Duplessis at a Dutch angle from the viewer, with the skyline of Montreal's churches forming a distorted bracket around Duplessis' shadowy face through the implementation of a wide-angle lens effect. Dutch angles and wide-angle lens effects are common cinematic techniques used to imbue a subject with tension or physiological uneasiness (Danieau et al. 2014). In the foreground, Duplessis' hands control the populace as *marionettes*. The label art uses technical elements to present a "mythistorical" critique of the personalistic politics of Duplessis, who ruled Quebec by proxy through the ardently Catholic, anti-unionist National Union party from 1936–39 and again in the postwar years from 1944–1959, noting specifically the pervasive presence of the Catholic church in the historical reconstruction of the events of the *Grande noirceur* (Meunier 2016; MacLennan 2007). Duplessis's figure, steeped in the 'great darkness' that gives this imperial stout its name and brand tonality, controls the rural masses like puppets, presenting an image which establishes an anti-brand for Montreal – a particularly oppositional relation to social history, which instead operates via a tacit, 'lived' connection between local history and audaciously non-conformist local brewcraft. In a 2016 article in Canadian broadsheet *The Globe and Mail*, Montreal-based columnist Robert Everett-Green (The Globe and Mail 2016) comments that "labels that trumpet a sense of place make obvious sense for small brewing operations ... standing apart from the universal branding of multinational conglomerates is both a *raison d'être* and a marketing plan". Everett-Green (The Globe and Mail 2016) notes the tension between PBDs deployed by Brasserie Dieu du Ciel! (its name a French-Canadian curse) and other local firms and Sapporo-owned Unibroue's nostalgic depictions of French colonial conquest and cultural heritage, while challenging the assumed centrality of alcohol to potential PBDs of resistance in Quebec, observing that the use of transgressive religious imagery to forge local identity with brewcraft is dissonant with history. Many Quebec beers are based on Belgian Trappist (i.e., Catholic) brewing traditions, and even in the darkest days of the Grande Noirceur, the Church in Quebec did not use its power to enact temperance laws, which were replaced in Ontario by government-managed liquor distribution in 1927.

The beer labels pictured in Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate how the practice of local history represents the power of place within a PBD in Brittany, France and Montreal, Canada. They speak to the contested power relations which spatially embed "imagined" communities and generate potential value-addition within GPNs, especially in the case of locally-owned Brasserie Dieu du Ciel! and TNC-owned Unibroue, both of which generate their own, agonistically opposed historical visions of place, their power relations via



Fig. 3 DELAYED, New York, United States.

local history (Anderson 1991). Here, value is generated by PBDs which circulate social fields at the scale of the nation-state and constituent historical-cultural regional units; these discourses form a site, or node in GPNs. Through beer labels, these PBDs present local history in a way that is uniquely coded but legible to outsiders; access to place is thickly coded through brew style itself (Figure 1 evoking the color of the symbolic red cap of freedom and the 'field and fruit' of Brittany; Figure 2 evoking the great darkness through sensorial experience), in addition to the textual content, visual metaphors (marionettes in the case of Figure 2) and symbolic references (red phrygian caps in the case of Figure 1) inscribed within the label.

Access to place also calls into question of transportation and transience of place. Figure 3 depicts 'DELAYED,' a German Pilsener brewed by Blue Point, Long Island, New York's largest brewer by volume, subsidiary of AB InBev since 2014. Launched in August 2017, DELAYED debuted at the Shake Shack on the lower concourse of New York City's Pennsylvania Station, the busiest commuter rail hub in the United States. The label depicts the electronic scheduling boards of Penn Station, showing color coded routes and destinations served by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) Long Island Rail Road (LIRR). Next to each destination, in LED-style typeface, the word 'DELAYED' appears, noting the widespread and major service disruptions

triggered by long-delayed track repairs at Penn Station. These delays defined what many New York City-area commuters experienced as “the summer of hell”, immortalizing New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s announcement at a May 2017 press conference the details of the MTA’s summer infrastructure modernization plan for Penn Station (The New York Times 2017; New York Magazine 2017). Blue Point’s president, Todd Ahsmann quipped that the beer was crafted using honey with a “touch of bitterness” from hops: “this beer should hold you over while you wait for the train but provide just enough bite to keep you critical of the current state of transit” (New York Daily News 2017).

The beer’s release, limited in distribution to in and around Penn Station, was the subject of the hashtag #drinkthedelay on social media. Tongue-in-cheek posters alluding to official MTA service updates were plastered to ceramic subway walls around Penn Station and posted on Twitter, reading (in the MTA’s *de rigueur* Helvetica typeface): “Your Train Is Delayed: January 1 – December 31, Days, Nights, Weekends” under a black and white “Service Update” header listing all 23 scheduled services of the New York City subway system. Beneath the mock announcement, a stylized depiction of a mustachioed MTA technician in safety glasses, a yellow hardhat and orange safety vest holds a can of Blue Point ‘DELAYED’ in a workgloved hand. The media event surrounding the branding of Blue Point’s summer lager offering suggests a PBD circulating within a social field that Marc Auge (1995) terms a “non-place”. Auge offers a hypothetical encounter with non-place through installations like Penn Station, designed exclusively for the circulation of passengers and goods:

A person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer, or driver ... The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude. There is no room for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle, usually in allusive texts. (Auge 1995: 34)

‘DELAYED’ exhibits a goodness of fit with the non-place discourse, and its label eschews traditional visual discourses otherwise reserved for the interpretation of landscapes – there are no representations of land or water on the label, other than within the Blue Point imprint ‘stamped’ on the forehead of the can. No working landscape or ecology recreates an original nature to which the beer owes an origin. Missing from the scene are liberty-capped peasants there to drive state agents away from their land, labor, history, and the rightful possession of capital tied to place. The label does not engage the viewer with a cinematographer’s eye for reconstructing a past scene of an



Fig. 4 Austrian Amber Ale, Salzburg, Austria.

oppressed class of laborers and immigrants ensnared in the strings of a populist leviathan. Absent are skylines, agricultural produce, animals or any other readily interpretable markers of place beyond thin text: typeface and colored boxes replicating the outmoded split-flap displays which once noisily clattered up-to-the-minute departure data for Penn Station’s beleaguered commuters but have since been replaced by LCD/LED electronic displays. Placenames familiar to Long Island denizens mark possible routes of escape, but ‘thick’ local histories are absent from the scenario. If the commuter is consuming a ‘DELAYED’ Pilsener, she is inhabiting a sequence of qualitatively ‘thin’ social roles, with a limited social grammar, freed as it were from the “places of identity, relations, and history” which account for the PBDs illustrated by Figures 1 and 2 (Auge 1995: 52). She transits through a ‘thin’ site within a stalled process of transportation from node to home within her designated GPN with a crisp, cold AB InBev product in hand. If, as Auge intimates, “non-places are the real measure of our time”, then beers like Blue Point’s ‘DELAYED’ may offer a thickly explanatory PBD for non-places embedded within GPNs.

Figure 4 situates the PBD on the fringes of the institutional environment of the European supranational state. Brauhaus Gusswerk’s Austrian Amber Ale presents a label narrative which prefigures Austria’s 2016 bond devaluation by several years:

The A^A is the safe haven in the current global beer diversity crisis. TRUST US! This organic Ale guarantees for a long lasting performance on the most important areas of taste and flavor. It’s a concrete asset in these uncertain times! Get yourself a Triple-A rating! Get an A^A! The last one in Austria ...

This discourse, satirizing Austria's financial woes in the language of beer, originated from a viral video released by Gusswerk brewmaster Reinhold Barta, in which the brewer plays the role of former Austrian People's Party member and Austrian federal minister Ernst Strasser, who was jailed on charges of corruption in 2013 for attempting to influence EU legislation in exchange for money (BBC 2013). Barta's undercover parody video features the brewmaster impersonating then-Member of European Parliament (MEP) Strasser, sitting at his desk in front of a chart showing the crash of Austria's "rating agency value development 2011/2012", surrounded by photoshopped pictures of Barta meeting with Angela Merkel, Nicholas Sarkozy, and Barack Obama as he rails against sovereign bond ratings and indulges a hidden camera about his side gig in as a Salzburg brewmaster: "When you go there as a brewmaster, it opens doors in a totally different way!" (Brauhaus Gusswerk 2012a). The A^{AA} promotional story, as quoted from Brauhaus Gusswerk's website, tells a story of globalization gone right against the backdrop of a transnational scandal involving MEPs: Barta's amber ale is "based on the Irish model" of infusion mash, made with "English ale yeast", and authentic Cascade and Summit hops from the United States (Brauhaus Gusswerk 2012b).

A^{AA} connects a unique PBD to GPNs of beer in two important ways. First, the language of the message is important – rather than express a message 'by locals for locals' in German, the brewer-marketers opted to print the label in English, conveying self-perception of Austria's global position as a fully developed, rich democracy. The 'joke' here jabs at the notion of 'first world problems,' in line with brewmaster Barta's impersonation of Strasser among the highest echelons of the global power elite, as to suggest if Austria's lobbyist in Belgium is jailed on bribery charges, then surely Austria's bond rating is a sham. Second, it playfully upends Miller's critique of consumption patterns in which "the material object being sold is never enough ... the most mundane necessities of daily life must be imbued with symbolic qualities and culturally endowed meanings," underscoring that these meanings may be necessary but need not suffer under the weight of their own grandiose pronouncements (Miller 1995: 1; Dicken 2015). To this point I would add that the 'imbuing' of symbolic qualities and culturally endowed meanings inherent to the label copy in Figure 4 alloy with a certain (healthy) dose of skepticism towards the political economy of globalization, while on the material level affirming the non-fictive production circuits and networks which constitute the high-value agro-food sector and its regulation by states and intrastate organizations alike. Note, for example, the "EU-/Non-EU-Agriculture" disclaimer printed beneath the copy, which speaks to the contested natures at the crux of sustaining local and organic products such as the Austrian Amber Ale.

5. Conclusion

The theory of PBDs proposed in this study presents a new framework for examining how discourses of place – often in the form of visual and textual representations – become materially 'attached' to the organizational and geographical territory of a GPN via labels. Beer labels are understood as sites where arguments about place meet the organizational ecology of the GPN. Three themes which emerged through this grounded theory study were analyzed through the lens of the PBD: *historical imagination and local identity*, *thin place and thick networks*, and *performative globalizations*. I contend that this approach provides an important contribution to the geographies of globalization, linking cultural analysis of branding and place to what Coe, et al. call the "GPN tradition" (Coe et al. 2014: 767). Future studies can use this knowledge to move the PBD theory towards an understanding of other sites and processes within GPNs, such as how *firm-place relationships* generate discourses around place that may "reveal and rebalance" power structures and influence community responsiveness to the local operations of a firm, while increasing access to knowledge (Clarke 2005: 145).

This approach, which integrates grounded theory methodology with the practice of situational analysis has specific limitations which derive from the selected methodology and data collection and analysis. Through meticulous documentation of the data collection, coding, memoing, analysis, and interpretation phases of the study, I have tried to ensure that data were up to the highest standards of rigorous, empirically-grounded qualitative inquiry. Furthermore, I believe the careful documentation and justification of choices made by the researcher within the data environment support the conclusions inferred, and that the theorization developed in this article was grounded in the data collected.

My goal here was not to readjudicate the internal debates of GPN 'traditions' or 'schools' nor to shift the focus of GPN structures from the operation of the network to the processes of global connectivity and the production of spaces of flows. Instead, I sought to provide a method and a new theorization of how 'thick' and 'situated' interpretive analysis of PBDs can help put into cultural context how GPNs are entangled with very specific, often hyperlocal conceptualizations of social worlds enlivened by formal and informal discourses on place, culture, and history. Thus, we can see how the examples of Breton and Quebecois PBDs function within specific (sub)national power structures, while Penn Station and Austrian discourses occupy different horizons of place. By seeking out the everyday texts of beer labels to analyze PBDs and their visual content and metaphors which communicate rich sociocultural understandings of place, the codified and tacit sites and processes which enliven local knowledge become central to a deeper understanding

of how spatial embedding and value-adding remain critical to the development (and contestation) of GPNs.

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